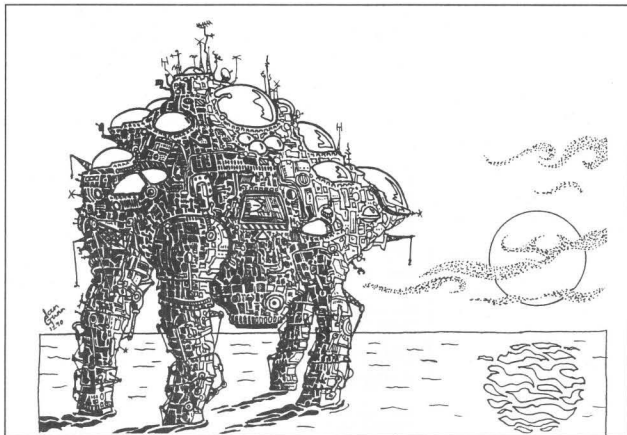


95p *Matrix* 96

The Newsletter of the British Science Fiction Association



**Hugo Awards for Bujold, Haldeman, Bisson,
Scott Card, Dozois, *Edward Scissorhands*,
Whelan, Laskowski, Harvia, *Locus* & Langford**

**International SF: Fandom in Eastern Europe and
Brian Aldiss on *World SF* in China**

**Death of Fanzines? *Chicon V* Report
BSFA Council Secrets Revealed**

October — November 1991

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Eastern Europe Postal Fund?

Are people interested in donating to a postal fund to despatch parcels of BSFA back issues to Eastern Europe? If so, please write to Maureen Speller (60 Bournemouth Road, Folkestone, Kent CT19 5AZ).

This issue's cover art and interior illustrations were produced by **Ian Gunn** (from his *Sillier Illoes*, produced for ANZAPA in February 1991).

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Determinants

Jenny Glover

Whether I'd be interested in juvenile Science Fiction without my two young children is a moot point; but certainly there are key themes which leap out of the text avoiding the space ships and all that travelling through time. To consider a book like *Dr. Xargle's Book of Earthlets* by Jeanne Willis and Tony Ross is to see an exercise in tolerance as Dr. Xargle lectures his class on the peculiar habits of an alien race with square claws (used to frighten off wild beasts known as Tibbles or Marmaduke) who must be patted and squeezed after drinking milk (to stop it exploding). The pictures which accompany this hilarious text show what we would call a very bemused baby complete with cloth nappy, an Earthlet which can be recognised by a fierce cry of WAAAAA!!! who possesses a very odd Earthling (aka "Grammy") who unravels sleep and makes Earthlet wrappers with two pointed sticks.

This subliminal plea for tolerance may be adequate preparation for living in a multi-racial society or simply a necessary camouflage to help personal survival. A toddler, for example, is unable to leave a room without permission from any available adult, though it may make its wishes quite plain. A young child is thrust into a world without a guidebook and has to learn how to appease those god-like giants who may hurt or cuddle indiscriminately.

If reared on this diet of adaptation to the unfamiliar (or, to use jargon, acquiescence to the bizarre), time travel is plain sailing, especially to an obnoxious boy called Alistair who initially builds a time travelling machine as entry for a school science competition (*Alistair and the Time Machine* - Marilyn Stabler). And that brings in another peculiarity of very juvenile Science Fiction: that no matter what happens, there is always a happy ending. The genuinely frightening events in Diana Wynne Jones' *Wilkin's Tooth*, which culminates in fifteen children paralysed by a witch spell perhaps about to be turned into fifteen grass roots and maybe stood on by their parents, desperate with worry, collapses into an anti-climax turning on whether the witch's cat knows the ending of *Puss in Boots*. Alistair returns home, unaware that two mammoths have also returned, but they are not his responsibility. No matter how far the protagonists travel in time or space, everything is sorted out a page or two from the end.

But this happy ending, which may seem forced and unnatural to the adult reader, is essential to the child. The concepts of being trapped away from home and having to mend the situation using one's own resources are very sophisticated, very frightening. A teenager could perhaps cope with this, because it feels vague stirrings of resentment against society in general and parents in particular, tyrants who insist on perfectly normal people being in hours before their friends, who go on for hours about AIDS when the person hasn't even sampled sex at all and who continually nag about the dangers of drugs to the extent that they sound moderately exciting.

A teenager could empathise with the concept of overturning society, which naturally is wrong, severe and in need of the special talents only that particular teenager can provide. This sort of teenager might be attracted by John Christopher's *The Tripods* trilogy and might struggle as firmly against conforming as Will Parker does against being capped, though *The White Mountains* represents a society of enforced contentment, which has a certain charm. When Will travels towards the perceived freedom of the uncapped guerrillas, he encounters a French family at Le Chateau de la Tour Rouge and sees that capped life can be pleasant and comforting. Will is effectively fighting for the right to decide his own fate, for the right to be unhappy. It is a theme echoed in Peter Dickinson's *The Weathermonger* which represents an artificially stable society, pseudo-medieval, where dissenters who try to make machines are stoned or drowned or

otherwise disposed of ruthlessly. It is a more suitable book for the generic teenager, since there are two protagonists, Geoffrey and Sally, who alternate in taking the initiative, whereas John Christopher's female characters are no sort of role model for a modern teenager. Eloise, who is the only female character of any note in *The White Mountains*, is sweet, gentle and positively drooling with anticipation at being allowed to serve the Tripods. Will's repulsion towards her is no sort of character model for a caring half boy-man to follow.

For this reason, no matter how influential John Christopher's works are, I would prefer my daughter to eventually read something like Monica Hughes' *Space Trap* to see that a girl can take control of her life and manipulate the situation to save herself. While I would encourage her to read perhaps Nicholas Stuart Grey's *The Wardens of the Weir* to show that gentleness is a strong and positive emotion, I would discourage works by Madeline L'Engle which appear too saccharine to be realistic.

To be the mother of a literate girl is difficult, but challenging in a worthwhile way. The boy is younger, but capable of bouncing on the sofa while watching tv news on Russia and shouting *Ozymandias!* I want both to grow up reading Science Fiction, but without going through the apprenticeship of Angus McVicar and Isaac Asimov that I encountered. (It's just that I would prefer the newer generation to read newer books and to explore the "classics" later). Which is why I am so interested in Science Fiction being published now, this instant. She will encounter Nicholas Fisk, much later. *Space Hostages*, for example. As nine village children are adrift in space with a dying adult, they need to interact with each other and for once Nicholas Fisk admits the possibility of returning to their homes - but he tends to be more realistic and that would probably put children off Science Fiction for life. *Granny* scared me, so did *Sweets from a Stranger* and *Time Trap*. And I'm an adult.

I'd like to get the book characters together, perhaps in the Old Phoenix, if Taverner would agree, so that they could compare notes. They could discuss the most ingenious paradox of time travel or reminisce about worlds they had known: ColSec, for example, or DeePeeThree.

Stop Press: as the last pages are being formatted, it is announced that advance orders for the *Midnight Rose* shared world anthology, *Temps*, topped 15,000 three weeks prior to publication.



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From: Cyril Sims, Phil Nichols, Ian Mundell, Dave Langford, Bridget Wilkison, Roelof Goudaans, Steve Grover, David Stewart, Ker McVeigh, Steve Rothman, Molly Brown, Arthur C Clarke, John Brunner and your editors

Contests

Grosch is looking for an original story of up to 2500 words, imaginative and well written. On offer is £2000 plus Tessa Sayle Agency who will act as the prizewinner's literary agent. The closing date is Thursday 12 December 1991. Entries (typed on white A4, double spaced with wide left margins and only your name and page number on the top of the sheet) to be sent with a covering letter to Grosch Showcase - Critical Writing, PO Box 4, Stourbridge, West Midlands DY9 8DQ. You are supposed to mention Sky magazine; why not freak them out and mention Matrix magazine as well.

BBC Radio 4 is searching for young Science Fiction writers under the age of 23 to submit plays aimed for transmission, which both entertain and explain a scientific concept to a lay audience, target length 30 minutes. The prizes are £500 cash plus a subsidised visit to either the Edinburgh Science Festival (11-25 April 1992) or Science '92, the British Association for the Advancement of Science's meeting in Southampton (24-28 August 1992). Entries to: Room 4119, BBC Broadcasting House, London W1A 1AA.

30th Annual NSF amateur SF and F contest is now accepting entries. Write with IRC's for rules and entry form to: Donald Franson, 6543 Babcock Avenue, North Hollywood, CA 916096, USA. Closing date is in November.

Fan Funds

After the razzmatazz of TAFF when Pam Wells went off to the States to represent European fandom where she hopefully accepted Dave Langford's sixth Hugo and possibly used his emergency acceptance speech and from where she telephoned back the Hugo results, it is now time to consider who to send to Australia with GUFF, sometimes known as Going Under Fan Fund. A European fan will attend the 1992 Australian National Convention in Sydney next Easter, and the deadline has been extended until October 31st to give aspiring travellers time to get nominators. Write to Roelof Goudaans, Caan van Necklaan 63, 2281 BB Rijswijk ZH, The Netherlands for details. But in the meantime, Alexander Vasilkovsky (Poste Restante, General PO, 252001 Kiev-1, USSR) suggests a new fund to enable Soviets and Ukrainians with "wooden" roubles to attend European events, while European visitors can have all the benefits of expert, enthusiastic guides who are also (great bonus) interested in Science Fiction. Book Aid will send books to the USSR - contact Tim Waterstone, Waterstones, 37 Ixworth Place, London SW3.

The TAFF race is still on though, this time sending an American to Britain to attend Illumination and the alternatives are Richard Brandt from Texas who runs cars, tells bizarre anecdotes and has a weird shaped beard and Jeanne Bowman from San Francisco who is a fanwriter and avid party goat. Details from Pam Wells, 24A Beech Road, Bowes Park, London N11 2DA.

Awards

The Hugos were awarded at the Chicago Worldcon with predictable results: Best Novel to Lois McMaster Bujold for *The Vor Game*; Best Novella to 'The Hemingway Hoax' by Joe Haldeman; Terry Bisson's 'Beans Discover Fire' picked up the award for Best Short Story and Best Non-Fiction Book was *How to Write Science Fiction and Fantasy* by Orson Scott Card. *Edward Scissorhands* won the Best Dramatic Presentation while the Best Professional Editor was Gardner Dozois; Best Professional Artist was Michael Whelan. George Laskowski won the Best Fanzine award for *Jan's Lantern*, while Teddy Harvia was the Best Fan Artist and as usual the Best Semi-Prozine went to *Locust*, though the convention presented a special award to Andy Porter for *Science Fiction Chronicle*. Finally, the John W. Campbell Award went to Julia Ecklar. And that is not forgetting the Best Fanwriter award which was deservedly awarded to Dave Langford, who provided the above news, with a little help from TAFF winner Pam Wells and Martin Tudor. Dave Langford adds that there is a new 'lite' Hugo design (fortunately for Paul Dorman who was volunteered to lug it back from Chicago) - the same old rocket, but now in transparent plastic.

The Romanian SF Awards were awarded at RomCon, the Romanian National Science Fiction Conference. While they went to Romanian authors, naturally - for example, Daniel Cristian Dimitriu won best novel, Diorel Pirligian

won best SF Album it is interesting to consider the categories. Apart from the usual Novel, Novella and Story, there is also Sketch, Essay, SF album, Publisher, Translator, Organizer, Fan, Audiovisual and Visual arts (subdivided into sculpture, painting, graphic art (monochrome and graphic art: colour). It is perhaps worth considering whether Western awards concentrate too much on new books: this theme is coincidentally developed in Peter Tennant's letter (see WriteBack).

The Seisun Japanese Awards were announced as: David Brin's *The Uplift War* for best translated novel; George Alex Effinger's 'Schrödinger's Kitten' for best translated short story; *Ginga-Uchu Odyssey* (after a story by Greg Benford) for the best dramatic presentation.

Workshops

Write Away Writing Retreats are sponsored by East Midlands Arts and offer a variety of courses. East Midlands residents qualify for an automatic 50% subsidy on courses. Details from Debbie Hicks, Literature Officer, East Midlands Arts, Mountfield House, Forest Road, Loughborough, Leics. LE11 3HU.

Science Fiction and Fantasy Writers' Workshop. This is to be held at Bulmershe Court, Woodlands Avenue, University of Reading (off Church Road) during the Lent term, 15th January to 18th March 1992 on Wednesday evenings, 1930-2130. The tutor is Dr. Brian M. Stableford and the course is intended as an introduction to both the artistic and the practical problems involved in writing fantastic fiction, however fantastic it is, or otherwise. The first classes will discuss the pragmatic problems writers find when setting stories in different worlds and stories by class members will be circulated and discussed. Submission of works is not compulsory and no previous experience in Science Fiction or Fantasy writing is required. Details from the Extramural Office, Building 5, Department of Extended Education, The University, London Road, Reading RG1 5AQ, course fee £23 or £11.50 to those unemployed or of pensionable age or both.

Birkbeck College is offering a course on the practical aspects of writing ie proposals, contracts, copyright. Tutor: Theresa Fitzgerald. Dates: November 23-24. Fee: £30. Contact: Birkbeck College, Information Bureau, 26 Russell Square, London WC1B 5DQ (tel: 071 631 6644, ask for course no. 425X40).

SF Radio

The Radio 4 season of Science Fiction plays was greeted with enthusiasm by SF readers: I cried my eyes out listening to "Flowers for Algernon" on 5th September. Other plays were *Brave New World*; "Kaleidoscope", adapted by the author, Ray Bradbury; *The Midas Plague*; *A Canticle for Leibowitz*; *The Chrysalis*; *Spacetrace* (Snoo Wilson's first play for radio set in a future state where commercial values have run riot and played havoc with the lives of the populace so that for many life has become unbearable. The remedy is to be frozen and sent into orbit for a million years (sounds familiar?), but for one young girl the process goes wrong and she finds herself recovered only minutes after take-off); *Who Goes There*; and finally *Tiger! Tiger!*

John Tydeman, Head of Drama, Radio, writes that although Science Fiction is a minority taste, it is quite a large minority and he feels that radio is an excellent medium for Science Fiction. He writes, with resignation, that he was misquoted in *The Sunday Times*, which claimed that he was not a "total" fan of new technology and that he admitted that Science Fiction "divided" the audience.

Phil Nichols is working on the post-production of *Imperial Boy*, a ten-part SF radio series originally created by Barry Hill. It starts in three places: an alien planet, Australia and a small English village (which just happens to be near Stonehenge). Sol is wanted by an alien, so his mother sends him along "the lines" to Earth where he lands in Australia to encounter Tommy, an Aborigine who has been waiting for him. While they travel across Australia and Sol has several painful dreamlike experiences, a teenager called Peter in England is having some rather strange dreams. Part of the fun will be spotting bits from other SF stories, like *Star Wars*, *Superman* or whatever and the music is particularly powerful - recorded by a Leeds group, Bushgiant, modelled on aborigine music.

Pete Darby is preparing a radio version of Alan Moore's *V for Vendetta* - part of the perks of power as head of radio drama at the student radio station.

Space News

Helen Sharman had a lucky escape on the Juno mission when the cabin pressure rose leading to a potential abort, fortunately it stabilised. Ms Sharman might have missed the tranquillity of space when she found that the press were more interested in her stumble during the Sheffield games, when she

extinguished the less than immortal flame, than in her experiments on the spaceship. Bad news also for the unlucky Hubble Space Telescope that has suffered further equipment deterioration; plus the main antenna on NASA's Galileo mission to Jupiter remains jammed in the closed position. If the antenna cannot be freed, most of the Jupiter data will be lost: probably permanently if the present stringent clamps on space exploration continue.

But the Mir station will be replaced in orbit and McDonnell Douglas will build the Delta Clipper single-stage-to-orbit manned reusable booster for the Strategic Defense Initiative, scheduled to fly in fall 1995; and Lockheed, McDonnell Douglas and TRW will combine forces to build a heavy-lift National Launch System for NASA and the US Air Force which will fly round about the turn of the century, give or take a year or two.

There is a special exhibition, *Soviet Space*, presented in conjunction with Glavkosmos, the Soviet civil space agency, at Fort Worth until January 1 1992 with an interactive computer exhibit to demonstrate Soviet Space Mission Control, a Soviet Space Camp-in for children to stay overnight and various lectures on subjects like "Inside the Soviet Space Program", "Living in Space" and "Exploring the Planets". More than 60 Soviet space artefacts are on show, including Sputnik, 30ft tall interplanetary satellites, a fully-operational lunar rover and a life-size model of the Mir space station crew quarters, that visitors can actually walk through. Details from the Fort Worth Museum of Science and History Association, Will Rogers Memorial Center, Cultural District, Fort Worth, Texas, USA.

People

Kevin J. Anderson, who works at Lawrence Livermore Lab., was called in to talk on ideas for monomolecular filaments, as used in *Lifeline*. This was not, however, so that the Pentagon could develop such filaments (cf Niven's variable swords or Clarke's space elevator cables) but rather that, as Anderson described producing the fibres in zero gravity, the idea can be used as a potential product of space-based industry, and hence as an advertisement for such.

J.G. Ballard is reported to have mentioned to *The Guardian* that the synopsis for *The Unlimited Dream Company* was 10,000 words longer than the unfinished book. Wow!

John Brunner was married in Yeovil on September 27th to Ms. Liyi Tan, formerly of Guangzhou, Guangdong, People's Republic of China. They met in Warsaw by one of those coincidences which often sound too romantic to be true. Congratulations! And in the meantime, John Brunner reports that he feels like laughing, for the first time in ages, and may well write a farce, which will contrast with the *Weird Tales* projected Brunner issue.

Angela Carter when asked about magical realism commented that: *I thought it was a bit of a poisoned kiss to be filed away under magical realism. It's got a lot of meaning in America; in relation to English fiction it tends to mean a certain kind of ungrounded fantasy, and that's what I don't like about it. I don't like fantasy; I think I write something else. Fantasy is for elves.*

Arthur C. Clarke read *Matrix 94* with great care and objected to being called "not active". What was actually meant by Maureen Speller, Roger Robinson and your humble scribe was that as he is in Sri Lanka, it is difficult for him to be active in the BSFA, purely through being so geographically remote. He has just completed: *How the World was One* (Bantam/Gollancz '92), *The Garden of Rama* (with Gentry Lee/Bantam '91); *Arthur C. Clarke's Century of Mysteries* (Fairley/Welfare; Collins); *God, the Universe and Everything Else* (TV: Hawking, Sagan); *A Fall of Moondust* (Movie script/Griffin); *Arthur C. Clarke: A Future Life* (Neil McAleer biography); *Arthur Clarke: TV Documentary* (Serendip Productions). In production are *The Deplorable Inventions of Arthur C. Clarke* (Yorkshire TV), *Contracted in Rama Revealed* (with Gentry Lee: Bantam/Gollancz '92), *Movie/TV options are Deplorable Inventions* (second series); *The Songs of Distant Earth* (Michael Phillips); *The Fountains of Paradise* (Robert Swarthe); *Cradle* (Peter Guber); *Childhood's End* (Universal). Finally, projected plans are *Ascenting Days* (TV: Simon Welfare); *Sky at Night* (TV: Patrick Moore); *Return to the Reef* (TV: Lamb); *Sinking Slowly in the East: An Aquasubjography*.

Diane Duane was interviewed on "Women's Hour" when attending the Irish Star Trek convention and commented entertainingly on Star Trek lifestyles, mentioning that Vulcans are vegetarian, that Romulan ale is like potent and people drink it to show they can, though humans tend to prefer Saurian brandy and that the Department of Entertainment on board the *USS Enterprise* is perceived as a medical necessity and is administered by Dr. McCoy who throws a party at any conceivable excuse.

Joe Haldeman wrote in a postal interview with Ian Covell with reference to whether violence was a necessary part of fiction and/or life that *Violence isn't necessary to fiction, but you can make a good argument that conflict is, and violence is the most dramatic physical manifestation of conflict ... I think that*

most stories written without conflict are tours de force - pun intentional - or farceful demonstrations.

Graham Joyce went off to the Greek islands to write *Dreamside* and found the roof leaking and angry scorpions crawling out of his typewriter to see what all that banging was about. He reports that being edited is like having a hot scalpel inserted into the tenderest lobes of your brain.

Dave Langford, who will be Special Guest at Boskone 29 next February (New England's Regional Science Fiction Convention; February 14-16, Springfield, MA, details from Boskone G, MIT Branch Post Office, Cambridge, MA 02139, USA), will feature in a special collection of his own fanwriting to be published then, edited by immaculately black bow-tied Ben Yalow and tentatively titled *Let's Hear it for the Deaf Man*.

Patricia McKillop says that she writes fantasy because although she may live in a prosaic world filled with taxes, bills and noises in the car engine, *imagination can be as compelling and make as many demands for attention as the think under the hood ... perhaps imagination is like a magnet, attracting bits of reality, along with poetry, myth, art, religion and history; somewhere in that gorgeous and disorderly mix, the fantasy novel is conceived.*

Michael Moorcock, who is doing a film script with Richard Dreyfuss, says that *there is something in me that cannot do anything unless it seems to me to be right morally - which is one reason why he goes to few conventions. I can't stand the idea of going [to a convention] where you are supposed to be socializing and exploiting the people who've actually paid for you to be there.*

Randi DeFence Fund: Mike Hutchinson has transferred the care of this to Lewis Jones (23 Woodbastwick Road, London SE26 5LG).

Russell Stannard, author of the bestselling *The Time and Space of Uncle Albert* (Faber £2.99) collected 17 rejection slips before hearing that *Lord of the Flies* had been turned down that number of times too. His wife suggested that he should send his work to the publisher who had been 18th on Golding's list: he did and Faber loved it. Before writing his book, he had a survey carried out on 250 12-year olds and found that 10% believe that stars have points; 45% believe that if keys and paper were dropped whilst on the moon, they would both float. He also spent many Saturday mornings looking through children's books in the library "counting up the date stamps" and found that the successful ingredients were illustrations, lots of conversation, short chapters, a sense of humour and someone to identify with.

Jean-Claude Vantroyen, lively SF columnist of *Le Soir*, wrote a special list of his recommendations for the 10 milestones of SF in the last decade. They were: *The Death of Fiction*, roughly the French equivalent of *Analog*, *IASFM* and *F&SF*; *The Death of Philip K. Dick* "the maddest explorer of SF, the most delirious discoverer, the most rational investigator in his irrationality"; Philip Jose Farmer's *Rivervold* saga; *L'enfant du cinquisme Nord* by Pierre Billon; *Sommeil de Sang* by Serge Brussolo, which he says should be read in one sitting. The first line of the novel is "La montagne ne se mit à saigner qu'à l'aube du troisième jour"; the merger of Rock and SF, with special reference to George R.R. Martin's *Armageddon Rag*, Norman Spinrad's *Rock Machine*, Joel Houssin's *Le Temps du Twist*, with the music of The Doors, Frank Zappa or Led Zeppelin; *Doctor Adder*, which he thinks is the most powerful novel he has read in the last few years; the rise of the Belgian author Alain Darville — look out for *Les Mauvais Reves de Marthe* or *Ocean Nord*; Kim Stanley Robinson with his exploration of themes, politics, metaphysics and humanism; Emmanuel Jouanne, whose *Terre* features a cat, a mole, men and marionettes. *Haut coups de coeur* he writes *deux coups au coeur*.

Roger Zelazny is collaborating on three books with Ralph Sheppard, not a trilogy but a related collection where people who are the major characters in the first book become minor ones in the second and is considering a collaboration with George R.R. Martin who both lives locally and is a friend. When asked about mixing Science Fiction and Fantasy, he said that although he intends to write pure Science Fiction and pure Fantasy in the future *Life itself, when you look at it from a personal viewpoint always has certain shadowy areas that you don't understand everything that's going on ... you can at least feel there are strange things going on in dark corners.*

Magazines

Far Point is a new bi-monthly SF and Fantasy magazine. It's being advertised as the place for stories about "Alien races, sword and sorcery, interstellar adventure, macabre fantasy, uncooperative robots, artificial intelligences, Arthurian romance ..." Issue 1 September/October 1991 has stories by Brian Stableford and Jo Ruane, the BSFA New Members Secretary, among others. Fiction submissions should be under 6,000 words. Editor: Charlie Rigby. (Details: Victoria Publications, PO Box 47, Grantham, Lincs. NG31 8RJ).

Spine Tingling Press needs short horror/suspense fiction, either novelettes, novellas, or collections of short stories, for audio books on cassette tape. They

pay 5 cents a word advance against 8% royalty on the price of a tape. Guidelines are available, write with IRC's to Richard Sutphen, Editor, Spine Tingling Press, Box 186, Agoura Hills, CA 91376, USA.

Newfield, who are responsible for *Fear* magazine, have just gone into liquidation. John Gilbert, *Fear* editor, had tried to resign prior to this, but had his resignation refused. The future looks uncertain.

Sepulchre House is a new Canadian bi-monthly horror magazine, featuring writers like Charles de Lint, Steve Rasnic Tem, Brad Strickland and Dan Simmons. They are planning special issues on subjects like stalkers, childhood fears, technological horrors and things that go bump in the night. Pays 8-15 cents a word for new fiction, 2-9 cents for reprints. Write with IRC's for details to David Bond, Managing Editor, *Sepulchre House*, 11825 88th St. #102, Edmonton, Alberta, Canada T5B 3R9 (tel: 0101 403 477 0688).

Literary Events

In the Lancaster Literature Festival (October 26-November 2), interesting events include a *Comics Workshop* with John Freeman, Dan Abnett and Liam Sharp (Cathedral Social Centre, October 26, £12); *Howard Rheingold* discussing the implications of virtual reality research and demonstrating it with a working virtual reality machine provided by Bob Stone of Advanced Robotics Research (Whale Tail Cafe, October 27, £3.50); ghost stories in a haunted house (bring torch, stout boots, warm coats, sleeping bags and ground mats, but mulled wine and breakfast will be provided as well as ghost stories — tickets and details only from Atticus Books, 26 King Street, tel: Lancaster 381413). A free brochure and further details can be obtained from the Lancaster Literature Festival, 67 Church Street, Lancaster LA1 1ET (tel: 0524 621666).

SF Blues is being re-run at the Cardiff Literary Festival on October 12 at the Readon Smith Lecture Theatre (2 minutes from the Park Hotel) at 8pm.

The Leeds Film Festival publicity has been plagued with printing delays, but there will be a SF workshop on Saturday October 19 including at least John Brosnan, tickets ca. £6 from the Civic Theatre (tel: 0532 462453) and there will be a round the clock SF film spectacular on that weekend: but no firm information as yet.

SF TV

The Sci-Fi Channel will finally launch this autumn with 24 hours of SF, Fantasy and Science programming, seven days a week, on basic cable tv. Proposed programmes will include: *Isaac Asimov's Universe* (a robot detective solves crimes throughout the galaxy); all 1225 episodes of *Dark Shadows*; *Doctor Who*; and news programmes with all (they say) the top stories in the fantastic world of Science Fiction, not to mention quiz shows, haunted house games shows, space news from NASA and great and classic films from around the world. Details from the Sci-Fi Channel, 2000 Glades Road, Suite 206, Boca Raton, Florida 33431, USA.

Yang Xiao's Big Party

Brian Aldiss

When we founded World SF in Dublin in the mid-sixties, it was with the idea of circumventing the restrictions imposed by the Cold War. We wished those professionally involved in Science Fiction, in whatever country, to be able to meet on a cordial basis — in a neutral country wherever possible.

The guiding light was Harry Harrison, who had then moved to neutral Ireland. Among the most energetic of the founders were Frederick Pohl (USA), Sam J. Lundwall (Sweden) and I (UK). All four of us have served our term as president. Now Malcolm Edwards is in the chair.

Our meetings have been held all over the place, from Vancouver to Zagreb and many ports between. But we had never been to the East, although Singapore was discussed as a venue — it has a flourishing SF club.

To our surprise, the Chinese sent a delegation to the San Marino conference in '89, marking their bid for a meeting in Chengdu. In The Hague last year, they returned, making an even stronger presentation against a Polish bid for a meeting in Krakow. A rancorous argument ensued among the membership.

The Polish argument was that they had recently freed themselves from Communist tyranny and were not going to support another such elsewhere. My reply was that we had supported them when they were in that situation; it was up to us to do the same thing elsewhere. Under this political argument ran a hidden agenda: very few people could afford to fly to Chengdu. Certainly few, if any, from Eastern Europe.

In the end, Chengdu won the day. I believe this was correct, sorry though I was to disappoint our Polish friends. We had to live up to the title *World SF*. We had to go to Asia. We knew, of course, that the Chinese would have their own hidden agenda. I have always believed in keeping cultural links open with any country — there are always numerous individuals who disagree with their governments (even in Britain); we were not in any way condoning tyranny, despite the killings in Tiananmen Square. We are simply private people. Also, importantly, I knew some of the Chinese from a previous visit to China, and knew their minds. Another plus factor: Chengdu is a long way from Beijing. It often helps to stay out of the kitchen.

Chengdu is the capital of Sichuan Province. It's a rich province to the west of China, very populous, the size of France.

All this is a necessary prologue to understanding how our small delegation felt when it arrived in Chengdu, to find itself received by such dignitaries as the vice-governor of the province. The governor himself appeared and attended some of the ceremonies. Pomp and whoopee followed. Huge banners announcing WSF flew everywhere. Air balloons floated over the city bearing words of welcome for World SF. WSF also sponsored — with the help of a local mineral water — a lavish musical evening at the local equivalent of Wembley Stadium.

The great event was a two-day trip into the mountains — truly magnificent on the approaches to Tibet. We travelled in a convoy of twenty buses, and villages on the route had banners across the road welcoming their foreign SF visitors. I ask you: can you imagine Science Fiction being given such a grand reception elsewhere? Not on this planet, I can't.

I had many happy memories of those mountains and the gorges of the Pitiao River, flowing cold and fast. Many of the Chinese writers were my own age and had fought against the Japanese; that was a bond we had in common.

An air of adventure pervaded that particular trip. We were due to stay over night in the Wolong Panda Reserve. It's a restful and pleasant place — for visitors, if not for pandas. Several of us were able to tickle panda stomachs. But the real adventure arose during the night. A storm brought down avalanches, and nine or so kilometres of our road home were obliterated.

More seriously, all cables were down. We were completely cut off from the outside world. That was the sort of news I'd been hoping for all my life. As long as the kitchens kept serving those enormous meals ...

It seemed no one had a radio. Fortunately, the BBC were with us, covering the event, and through them I got a message out to my wife. It was her birthday.

A council of war was held. There was another way out, but it involved a six-hundred kilometre detour via Tibet, through what was described as "high yak pasturage". It sounded great, but the vote went against it.

So we stayed a second night, in our somewhat elementary accommodation. There was dancing that evening, and grand bonfires. During the night, seven hundred people were mustered along the route of the landladies. We rose at dawn the next morning, to be told they had cleared the way (almost) for us.

I should think all of us have photos of that journey back to civilisation in the twenty-vehicle convoy. We had to get out of the vehicles and walk by the cold and fast-flowing Pitiao as they bumped slowly through the remains of the landslide.

Back in Chengdu, our rooms in the Jin Jiang Hotel now seemed the height of luxury.

It was in our academic sessions that the attitudes of the Chinese (some Chinese, I should say) towards Science Fiction became clear. Chinese writers — and they were not necessarily SF writers — had come to our meeting from all the provinces of China, bar Hainan. Among them I must mention Wang Fangzhen, a particular friend of mine, who had stayed in Oxford with us and Zheng Wenguan, an astronomer and writer. Both of these men I had met in Beijing in 1979. Also a noted academic, Geuo Jianzhong, whom I had encountered in Lawrence, Kansas, in 1982.

And mention must be made of Mr. Shao Hua, a senior writer whom one immediately liked. He spoke no English, unlike the others I have mentioned, although I had a long talk with him through my pet interpreter. The paper he delivered really summarised a general feeling: that Science Fiction was an important contemporary branch of literature, which should not be suppressed, since it provided a valuable platform for social discussion and criticism.

Following the events in Tiananmen Square, to make such statements required a certain courage.

My supposition, as I mentioned, was that the Chinese had a hidden agenda. It was simply that if they were speaking out, in a country where free speech has

always been at a premium, they wanted someone from the West to bear witness. If so, what trust they have in us! But I am only guessing.

One of the academics there had appeared on Chinese TV after the massacre, speaking on behalf of the students who had protested. "That was a bit risky," I said. "What happened to you?" "I had to write a paper of self-criticism." "Pretty embarrassing?" He smiled. "Better than going to jail."

I'm not expert enough in Chinese politics to explain this too precisely, but when I was in Peking (as it then was) in 1979, the mood was optimistic and SF was encouraged, on the somewhat shaky grounds that it educated youngsters in science. A somewhat Gernsbackian view of the matter. Only four years later, SF was being discouraged, on the grounds that it led people to expect that scientific and technological progress would come quickly. Then, later, SF was banned along with Beethoven, as being part of Western spiritual pollution.

Now the door has opened again, just a few inches. Our writers had their shoulders to the door.

Malcolm Edwards, writing of the Chengdu occasion in *The Bookseller*, says he wishes that he could have had some British literary editors out there; they might then pay some attention to SF. He adds that he would have liked to have summoned certain SF writers and publishers "who see the genre solely in terms of advances and marketing" to see the situation here.

It should be said in response that we were most hospitably treated. Banquets were held in our honour; Sichuan food is, of course, world-famous. Malcolm is a good president, and made impromptu speeches whenever required. I wrote impromptu poems.

The only other British writer there was Brian Stableford, with his jolly wife, Jane. Among American writers were Betty Ann Hull and her husband, Frederik Pohl, Jack Williamson and Suzy McKee Charnas. Germany was represented by Thomas Mielke, Czechoslovakia by Jaroslav Oles and so on. I saw a lot of my pal, Charlie Brown, who edits *Locus*. We share a passionate curiosity about everything Chinese.

It remains to mention the organiser of all this productive activity. Her name is Mrs Yang Xiao, a pretty and energetic lady who edits China's one and only SF magazine, *Science Literature*. She it was who came to San Marino and to The Hague. It is of some significance that a young Chinese woman has such power.

Yang Xiao's two most able supporters, both of whom speak immaculate English, were schoolmates of Yang Xiao's, Mr. Shen Zaiwang and Mrs. Liu Xiyuan. It would be wonderful to see them in Britain some day; they're marvellous people. The last named was my special guide. I was always introduced as "friend of Chinese leaders" — a rather invidious honour to be sure — because, during my '79 visit, I had had an audience with Deng Xiao Ping and was photographed shaking his hand.

I've never been better treated, even at a World Con. Perhaps especially at a World Con. Doubtless Malcolm would say the same. As a final surprise, when I flew out of Chengdu at dawn on the last day, I was invited to lead a delegation of non-SF writers to Sichuan next spring. So I'm hoping to be back there. And to be witness to all sorts of progress, as this spring we witness all sorts of courage and courtesy.

[In order to join World SF, one must have a professional qualification: not necessarily as a writer, but as a (paid) editor, artist, publisher, critic, etc. We welcome new members. Applications to the Hon. Sec. Jim Goddard, Flat 4, 13 Lockwood Street, Driffield, North Humberside YO25 7RU].

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FIGURES ON THE
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Buckyballs, Adams & Art?

Ian Mundell

Being one fan's selection of morsels from the British Association for the Advancement of Science

The BA holds its annual meeting at a different institute of higher education each year, and for 1991 it was the turn of Polytechnic Southwest in Plymouth. It started off as a genuine scientific meeting, but in recent years has come to be the main forum for the scientific establishment to interact with the public, or rather with the press. Issues are raised, popular topics are bandied about and the scientists do their best to show that their work is worth the money the Government begrudges spending on it.

To this end, the potential wonders of science are laid out. Witness the orange cauliflower with built-in cheese flavouring widely reported in the press. Since the science correspondents from the nationals rarely go to the lectures, but work from 20-minute press conferences, they did not get the whole story. What the man described was a super *Brassic*: three feet tall, with an edible stalk like kale and Brussels sprouts growing up it, topped by a cauliflower-like head. All this from a project to wrap cauliflowers tighter to prevent frost damage.

Science Fiction reared its ugly head several times during the week-long conference. Douglas Adams was president of the conference's general session, and delivered a talk asking the question how could we expect to save the world when our brains haven't evolved since we left the Rift Valley? He waved his arms about and rather predictably was all over the papers the next day. Adams was followed by the satirist, Michael Bywater, who extended the theme, saying that some contemporary novelists were trying to make myths by misapprehending concepts such as chaos just because the words seem promising. What we needed was a *real* understanding of science. The film maker Max Whitby spoke next, representing the topic most recently raised for jargon, virtual reality. Not for video games, he said, but models to increase our understanding.

Charges of concept abuse were also levelled against Larry Niven and Paul Anderson, for one of their books on the *Man Kzin Wars*. Apparently, the authors had read an early paper by Professor Harry Kroto, of the University of Sussex, on the subject of buckminsterfullerene and borrowed some of the details. Buckyballs, as these molecules are known, are spherical cages of carbon atoms theorised about for the last four years, but only confirmed twelve months ago. Since then, research on the topic has exploded (mostly in the USA) and the potential of the molecules as superconductors has received a lot of attention. In a passage from the book, which Professor Kroto showed on a screen for all to see, Niven and Anderson had astronauts floundering around in a crater full of buckyballs, then discussing the science of the subject in some of the cheesiest dialogue imaginable. The question of whether SF had in part to play in the public understanding of science was not voiced out loud, but I think I know what the answer would have been.

This year, the popular science at the BA was dinosaurs (the term was apparently coined 150 years ago at a BA meeting in Plymouth), the Human Genome Project (again) and robots. Robots are a usual feature, and each year they move things more gently and precisely than the last. However, the most interesting related item — software rather than a robot — was Aaron, a programme that can draw and paint pictures.

Like its creator, Professor Harold Cohen of the University of California at San Diego, Aaron started off as an abstract painter, but as more information was put into the programme, its intentions changed. By studying the way children learn to draw, Professor Cohen taught Aaron how to conceptualise; with the addition of a detailed "map" of the human body, Aaron eventually went figurative. Would this have happened, asked the Professor, if Aaron had been autonomous — able to change its own code? All he did was to spot the trends in Aaron's work (which went contrary to his own inclinations) and help it to realise them.

"Aaron's paintings are good, but are they Art?" asked an audience member. Art is something done by human beings, replied one of the other speakers. Even if the paintings by computers or apes are as good as those by humans, there appears to be little interest from the public or the critics. What makes Art is that it comes from the human mind.

Although the BA is hugely entertaining, it is rare that anything really new in the sciences emerges. But, as one of *New Scientist's* correspondents is keen on saying, for 95% of the population, 95% of the discoveries of the last 100 years are news.

New Books

Anthon, Piers: *Isle of View* [NEL £14.99 pb £8.99 October]. Latest instalment of Xanth.

Barker, Clive: *Imajica* [HarperCollins £15.99 October]. Tales of a wanderer in 5 worlds where characters must confront magic, the divine and themselves.

Brooke, Keith: *Expatia Incorporated* [Gollancz £13.99 November]. Sequel to *Expatia*.

Brooks, Terry: *The Druid of Shannara* [Orbit £12.95 November]. Another tale of magic, honour and death in the 4 lands.

Cadigan, Pat: *Synners* [HarperCollins £12.99 October]. A post-cyberpunk futurama.

Cherry, C.J.: *Ygenie* [Methuen £14.99 November]. The final volume in the trilogy, following *Chernevog*.

Donaldson, Stephen: *The Gap into Vision: Forbidden Knowledge* [HarperCollins £14.99 November]. 2nd volume of a new epic, the long and hazardous voyage to forbidden space continues.

Eddings, David: *The Sapphire Rose* [HarperCollins £13.99 October]. The final volume in the "Elenium" series where Sparhawk recovers the magic jewel, but unleashes a deadly evil.

Gardner, Craig Shaw: *A Bad Day for Ali Baba* [Headline £14.95 pb £8.99 November]. More comic fantasy in the Arabian Nights style by the author of the *Malady of Magicks* series.

Gemmill, David: *Dark Prince* [Century Legend £14.99, pb £7.99, September]. The sequel to *Lion of Macedon*, a heroic fantasy, battles, military service and magic set against a backdrop of Ancient Greece.

Grant, John: *Albion* [Headline £14.99 pb £7.99 November]. A shipwrecked sailor is cast on shore to find that people have no long term memory and are being oppressed by the ruling house.

Harrison, M. John & Miller, Ian: *The Luck in the Head* [Gollancz VG Graphics £12.99 pb £8.99 November]. Ian Miller's "extravagant gothic style" combines with MJH's bleak portrayal of a poet's nightmare in an ancient and terrible city.

Holdstock, Robert: *The Fetch* [Orbit £12.95 December]. Ancient symbols, mystical powers and fantasy based on the stone, wood and earth of Britain.

Jones, Gwyneth: *White Queen* [Gollancz £13.99 October]. Sex, politics and betrayal - this author is the Guest of Honour at Lucon IV at Leeds University Union next February.

Maddox, Tom: *Halo* [Century Legend £12.99 pb £6.99 November]. 1st novel, praised by William Gibson and Bruce Sterling - artificial intelligence, virtual reality and genetic transformation.

Marley, Stephen: *Mortal Mask* [Century Legend £13.99, pb £7.99 December]. Mix of magic and sorcery and dark fantasy - an amoral sexy goddess in 2nd century China.

Moore, Alan & Zarate, Oscar: *A Small Killing* [Gollancz VG Graphics £12.99 pb £8.99 September]. A tense and ironic tale of murder and betrayal in the world of advertising. In this contemporary morality tale, an adman is pursued across Europe by a young assassin.

Savage, Jack: *The Torturer* [Gollancz £13.99 November]. A fantastical account of pain and torture in the underworld.

Swanwick, Michael: *Stations of the Tide* [Century Legend £12.99 pb £6.99 January]. Set on a distant planet in the far future, world about to be swept away by its own oceans.

Steele, Allen: *Lunar Descent* [Century Legend £14.99 January]. A "page-turning" mix of life on the 21st century moon base.

Volsky, Paula: *Illusion* [Gollancz £15.99 pb £7.99 October]. Epic of young girl cast adrift in a world torn apart by revolution.

Wingrove, David: *The White Mountain* [NEL £14.99 pb £8.99 September]. 3rd in the "Chung Kuo" series. The brutal war of two directions takes on a new fever pitch of intensity.

Anthologies

ed. Del Rey, Lester & Kessler, Rita: *Once upon a Time* [Century Legend, £14.99, pb £9.99 November]. Specially commissioned with work by Isaac Asimov, Terry Brooks and Anne McCaffery. Contains full colour illustrations.

ed. Haining, Peter: *Weird Tales* [Xanadu pb £7.99 November]. A facsimile collection from the pages of the classic fantasy magazine with authentic illustrations, advertisements and letters plus stories by authors like Ray Bradbury, Robert Bloch and Robert E. Howard.

Specifically Paperbacks

Aspirin, Robert: *Phule's Company* [Legend January]. Latest in the comic Myth series.

Baudouin, Gael: *Strands of Starlight*, vols. 1 & 2 [Orbit, £3.99 vol 1; £7.99 vol 2 January].

Brosnan, John: *The Fall of the Sky Lords* [Orbit £3.99 October]. Conclusion to the "Sky Lords" trilogy.

Chalker, Jack: *Spirits of Flux and Anchor* [Roc £4.50 September]; *Empires of Flux and Anchor* [Roc £4.50 October]; *Masters of Flux and Anchor* [Roc £4.50 December]. The "Soul Rider" series.

Clarke, Arthur C.: *The Ghost from the Grand Banks* [Orbit £4.50 October]. 2 lemons raise to raise the Titanic - 6 perfectly preserved bodies are recovered, one of whom was not on the passenger list.

Crichton, Michael: *Jurassic Park* [Arrow £4.99 January]. An attempt to avert a global emergency using genetically engineered dinosaurs.

David, Peter: *Q in Law* [Titan £3.50 October].

Gay, Anne: *Mindsail* [Orbit £3.99 September]. This explores the mysteries of the Green, a nature-based community on the colony planet, Rosaria. The author is being interviewed in the October *Fear* magazine. (See News)

Hawk, Simon: *Batman: To Stalk a Specter* [Roc £3.99 October]. An assassin comes to Gotham City.

Jordan, Robert: *The Eye of the World* [Orbit £4.50 December] and *The Great Hunt* [Orbit £7.99 December] which is a sequel of the above, with mighty struggles of good and evil set against epic landscapes.

Mann, Philip: *Wulfyard* [Orbit £3.99 November].

Pratchett, Terry: *Moving Pictures* [Legend pb £3.99 November]. The 9th Discworld book.

Reeves-Stevens, J & G: *Chronicles of Galen Sword Shifter 1* [Roc, November]. A New York playboy with a mission: to track down a new universe. This quest is continued in *Nightfeeder* [Roc, January].

Watson, Ian: *The Flies of Memory* [Orbit £3.99 October].

Williams, Tad: *Stone of Farewell* [Legend pb £5.99 December]. 2nd book in the trilogy "Memory, Sorrow and Thorn".

Wingrove, David: *Chung Kuo II: The Broken Wheel* [NEL £4.99 September].

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Science

Barry, John A: *Technobabble* [MIT Press £19.95 November]. An examination of the pervasive and indiscriminate use of computer terminology, especially when applied to situations which have nothing to do with technology.

Reigs, Ed: *Great Mamba Chicken and the Transhuman Condition: Science slightly over the edge* [Viking £16.99 September]. Explores the network of scientists bent on taking scientific research to the outermost boundaries, such as fusing human minds to the far side of the galaxy or hatching schemes for creating artificial life forms.

Reinhold, Howard: *Virtual Reality: Exploring the Brave New Technologies of Artificial Experience and Interactive Worlds - from Cyberspace to Teledildonics* [Secker & Warburg £16.99 October]. The implications of Virtual Reality, the new computer technology which creates the illusion of being immersed in an artificial world which exists only inside a computer.

Wolf, Fred Alan: *Parallel Universes* [Paladin £5.99 December]. Instead of 1 world or universe, there are an infinite number - all different, all interwoven.

Art

Dragon's World is producing superb Science Fiction art books like:

Foss, Chris: *21st Century Foss* [£9.95 limp October 150 colour illustrations 144pp 295x215mm]. This shows the 1978 collection with machines greater than ours, dizzy trains of planets which hurtle to distant galaxies.

Hildebrandt, Tim & Norton, Jack E (forward by Vallejo, Boris): *The Fantasy Art Techniques of Tim Hildebrandt* [£12.95 limp November 80 colour illustrations, 40 black and white illustrations 160 pp 305x240mm]. All the major paintings including D&D calendars and book jackets for Anne McCaffery's *Dragonsriders of Pern* series. There are also separate chapters for each stage of the creative process.

Kirby, Jose: *In the Garden of Unearthly Delights* [£9.95 limp October 100 colour illustrations 144pp 295x210mm]. This features his creations for *Discworld* and also darker worlds like those forgotten worlds inhabited by a galactic zoo of interplanetary people and creatures.

Pennington, Bruce: *Ultraterranium* [£9.95 limp September/October 100 colour illustrations 128pp 295x210mm]. Chilling visions of historical futures. There are separate chapters for his output in SF, gothic horror and fantasy.

It's not SF, but ...

Barth, John: *The Last Voyage of Somebody the Sailor* [Hodder £14.99 November]. A successful author sets out to retrace Sinbad's voyages - but gets plucked back in time and is desperate to get back.

Drakulic, Slavica, trans. Mosse, Greg: *Holograms of Fear* [Hutchinson £12.99 January]. A hospital room: memories of a woman awaiting a kidney transplant - 1st novel by this Yugoslavian author.

Frayling, Christopher ed: *Vampires: Lord Byron to Count Dracula* [Faber £10.99 February]. Anthology of vampire literature including Bram Stoker's notes for *Dracula*.

Gribbin, John & White, Michael: *Stephen Hawking: A Life in Science* [Viking £16.99 January].

Newman, Kim: *Jago* [Simon & Shuster £14.99 October]. An innocent looking Somerset village is chosen for epic battles between good and evil.

Peyton, Richard ed: *Sinister Gambits* [Souvenir £14.99 October]. Chess stories including ones by Isaac Asimov and J.G. Ballard.

Young Adult

Gales, Phil: *The Aliens are Coming* [Puffin December]. The impact of the greenhouse effect on a selection of alien plants.
 Gribbly, Mary & John: *Too hot to handle?* *The Greenhouse Effect* [Corgi £4.50 January]. Global warming and what to do about it.
 Leeson, Robert: *Landing in Cloud Valley & Fire on the Cloud* [Mammoth £2.50 October]. These form the beginning of his "Cloud Valley" SF series.
 Miller, Frank illus Darrow, Geoff: *Hardboiled* [Titan £8.99 November]. Bizarre and violent exploits of futuristic cyborg tax collector.

Juvenile

Brompton, Keith: *Tig's Trip to Earth* [Orchard £7.99 October]. Spool space saga — includes sketches, snaps and a diary.
 Gibson, Andrew: *Jemima, Grandma and the Great Lost Zone* [Faber £8.99 November]. Set in the year 2791, deep in outer space, the sequel to *The Abroadist*.
 Lewis, C.S.: *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* [HarperCollins £12.99 October de luxe collector's ed.]. This contains new illustrations by Pauline Baynes.
 Reader, Dennis: *Fed Up* [HarperCollins £7.99 November]. Anthony's grandfather suggests he should save the whales and mend the ozone layer.
 Westall, Robert: *The Stories of Muncaster Cathedral* [Viking November]. Short stories of the supernatural.
 Willis, Jeanne & Ross, Tony: *Dr. Xargle's Book of Earthmobiles* [Andersen £6.99 September]. 4th Dr. X book — an alien's eye view of terrestrial transport.

Obituary

Sandy Brown died as the last issue of *Matrix* went to press. Although he was the BSFA Membership Secretary for some eight years and was active in Glasgow clubs and conventions, he would not have wished a fulsome eulogy. He would have preferred Jimmy Robertson's letter, published in Michael Ashley's *Salimonia*, which says, in part, one time ... me, him and Bill Carlin giggled at the back of the hall as Ian Watson told of this American airman who responded to his novels by writing about transcendental, tantric fucking. This was one of Sandy's bogus personae. One among very many. He was a wonderfully sneaky little bastard. So here is Sandy by Sandy.

Getting FOKT

I am trying to navigate from bed to the breakfast-table one morning, when my wife is announcing that she is reading a letter to her from one Bob Shaw. As far as is possible at such a ridiculously early time as eleven-thirty ack emma, I am expressing my astonishment more than somewhat.

"Amazing" I am saying, and likewise "Astounding", and "Thrilling Wonder", not to mention "Startling Stories", which no-one is mentioning lately. "No, no", she is saying. "Not the successful, popular, witty, entertaining author. On the contrary. This one is by way of being a local failed scribbler, commonly known as Robert P. Shaw, or even more commonly as Bob Pshaw, especially to those punters who are hearing his opinions".

Whereupon I am subsiding into my customary apathy, despite which she is informing me that we are being invited to pretake of a rare sensory delight entitled *The Friends of Kilgore Trout*, which is by way of being the Glasgow science fiction group which is meeting in a licensed establishment each Thursday evening.

"Ho hum", I am saying enthusiastically "I am feeling an attack of lethargy coming on", despite which I am finding us several days later walking through a doorway into the aforesaid premises. A few superannuated persons are sitting in this lounge bar, and are reminding me of Ena Sharples, likewise the women are looking like Mick McManus or similar jocks.

I am murmuring the words "Kilgore Trout", whereupon a sprightly ninety-year-old is belabouring me about the head with a copy of "Scandinavian Swingers" and shouting "Vile beast", and also "Filthy pervers".

Beating a retreat and fending her off with my wife, I am finding that I am falling backwards downstairs into yet another lounge bar, which is harbouring a semblance of life, many of which are under seventy, and are clutching glasses of beer. Under a fusillade of darts, we are making our way at a rate of knots from below the dartboard. Being the owner of an easily-punctured epidermis, I am not wishing to bring wrath upon my cranium by uttering certain words, and therefore I am guiding my spouse to a flight of stairs at the other end of this subterranean room, raising my optics from time to time in order to ascertain whether any of these feathered projectiles is cunningly fashioned into the likeness of a spaceship. Sadly, the only similarity to UFOs is in the beermats being skimmed through the air, leaving a decorative trail of

beer-drips on their trajectory above heads, to resoundingly strike walls with no hint of coruscating energies being released devastatingly.

Coming above ground level again, we are finding ourselves in yet another lounge bar, this one even being the possessor of the obligatorily badly-tuned TV set, and I am noting that the programme appears to be "Space Nineteen Ninety-nine" and that the four players in this spacious apartment are ostensibly facing away from the aforesaid idiot-box. "Aha" I am exclaiming, "Kilgore Trout's friends. How are you doing?" I am querying. "Nicely, nicely", a stout party is greeting us, "But we are by way of being friends of Harry the Horse, and we are laying odds that you are the bearer of certain substances that he is procuring for our edification".

"Cor, stone me" my spouse is remarking, to which the gent is responding, "You sure are slobbering a bibful, lady". After I am explaining that I am not wishing to be pushy, and that a mistake is being made, my wife is dusting me down and pulling me through a door into the public bar.

We are reviving me by the liberal application internally of a herbal mixture containing the distilled juice of juniper berries, with a dash of quinine water, all of which the barman is assuring me is in accordance with the British Pharmacopoeia Codex, and is denying knowledge of any group bearing the cognomen "Friends of Kilgore Trout", although he is repeatedly exhorting me to "Get FOKT", by which I am suspecting that he is holding out on me.

Leaving by yet another door, we are finding ourselves on the street once again, and I am insisting that we are entering the first door for Round Two. I am pleasantly being surprised to be observing that the elderly crone who is a black belt twenty-fifth dan in ikkebana is no longer in evidence. We are sitting freely imbibing alcoholic beverages when I am spying a jock strolling in and laying several books of a science-fictional nature on a table, namely, viz, and to wit "The Green Hills of Dune" by Robert A. Herbert, "Deathwounds Sixtythree to Eightyone Inclusive" by Harry Harrison and "An Annotated Bibliography of the Works of Kilgore Trout" by one Egon Spangus.

I am bounding (well, lurching) to my feet, intoning the words "Kilgore Trout, I am presuming?", seeing as how I am hailing from Blantyre, birthplace of David Livingstone, founder of the Afrika Korps. This is being greeted with a stony, not to mention granitic silence, and I am finding that it is necessary to be initiated into the mystic rites of Friendship with Kilgore Trout, which is comprising the taking of an oath of fealty to Barsom, and likewise undertakings not to leave Zim unguarded, nor to set fire to the Jenghik Palace. The completion of these perfunctory hour-long formalities is investing me with full rights to be playing all other Friends with beer to the detriment of their livers and my sporan, together with the aforementioned Mr. Pshaw regaling all and sundry with tales of his rejection slips, to their dejection and boredom, more than somewhat.

When our relations are paying our ransom, we are finally being permitted to leave, to be seeking sense and science fiction elsewhere.

That article was published in the first issue of *The Friends of Kilgore Trout* magazine, and contrasts well with the BSFA connection as reported in Sandy's own fanzine "Merulius Lacrimans". There's no title, just a diary entry:

22/5/83 (Sunday)

Phone call today; a guy from the *Daily Mirror* who has come across the BSFA's entry in a directory and wants to give it some publicity (he says). So I proceed to give him the usual spiel about aims, publications, blah, blah.

He interrupts: "Do you run any Dr. Who or Blake's 7 pressure groups?"

"Eh? Well, no. There are individuals who are into that sort of thing, but the Bosfa doesn't organise them".

"In that case, do any of your members have unusual hobbies?"

The penny drops, and I realise that I'd better give him a bodyswerve. He's looking for people in funny hats.

"Well, that's really their own business. The Bosfa is more of a literary society".

"Oh? Any famous members (who wear funny hats)?"

"Yeah, quite a number of authors. And publishers". I mention a few names, which I hear plopping into unreciprocated waters. The guy obviously reads no books — doesn't recognise the names of publishing companies.

"But do you have anybody who dresses up as *Star Wars* characters (with funny hats)?"

"Only at fancy dress parades at conventions". Now for the fancy footwork. There's a convention coming off in September in Glasgow. I'll give you their address. It's ..."

He cuts me off. "I'll take their address if ..." (they wear funny hats? crosses my mind) "no other paper is covering it. But have you anybody who goes about the streets wearing a funny hat?"

I think of Big Steve at the pub where FOXT meets. Viking enthusiast. Used to wear furry coats and fur leggings with denim shoes peeping out. Real Hagar the Horrible stuff. One night in the boozier, big strong Viking, and his wife says "Take off those wet leggings. You'll catch your death of cold!" No, Steve's a pleasant guy and doesn't deserve the *Daily Mirror* holding him up to ridicule.

"Anything really contentious being discussed in SF circles?" He's grasping at straws now. I decide that he's not really interested in Public Lending Right, disarmament, unemployment, whether or not lotsa programme items in Novacan, a use of the Parrot will return from Saudi in time for Novacan, *Anzible* polts, and eventually mumble "Well, er, no".

"Is there anything that would make a good story, or at least a picture?"

"Mum ... there's pictures". And I mention SF paintings and artists. He jumps at this, no doubt thinking of someone seated at the easel wearing a goldfish bowl. I feed him the name of Ed Buckley - someone dead enough to ham it up for him. I'm not sure if the reporter is pleased when I tell him that Ed is a security man in the Glasgow Art Gallery and Museum - this entails wearing a funny hat as part of his uniform. I spare him the info that Ed goes around the Museum smiling at the visitors - wearing a set of Dracula teeth and talking to his toy frog: there's no point in getting Ed chucked out of his job - he's already insulted some district councillors and been peripherally involved in a wife taking a header over the first-floor marble balustrade in the Museum. He doesn't need any assistance from me.

By this time I've convinced the reporter that he's drawn a blank and wasted half-an-hour on this phonecall - there's no-one to get a laff out of his newspaper. I'm bored and he's bored. A successful evasion of bad publicity accomplished.

Funny hats? Don't talk to me about funny hats!

Finally, the following was published in Dave Langford's *Anzible*, which reported all the SF news which was worth reading - besides it was entertaining. It is a postscript to one of the early Albacans:

At Glasgow Sheriff Court yesterday, Sgt. Hamish McPhee of the Strathclyde Constabulary, giving evidence in the trial of 120 delegates to a sci-fi convention held in Glasgow at Easter, accused of mobbing and rioting and attempting to lynch Robert P. Shaw (25, chairman of the convention, said "On the evening of Monday 7 April, as I was proceeding along Douglas St, Glasgow, in a northerly direction (that is, towards the big numbers), my attention was attracted by a riotous assembly exiting from the Albany Hotel where, I had reason to believe, a science fiction convention was ending. Upon closer investigation, I observed the chairman of the aforementioned convention being forcibly abducted from the hotel, whilst several unidentified persons sprayed him with a substance which I later ascertained to be red dye. He was thereupon tied to an adjacent lamppost and a jet of water from a hotel fire hose was directed onto his person. I immediately summoned reinforcements, but the assembly dispersed into the hotel before they could arrive. I was unable to ascertain whether the ringleaders were delegates or members of the convention committee".



SF in Eastern Europe

Bridget Wilkinson

Science fiction has existed in Eastern Europe since the early years of this century. In the Soviet Union, Zamiatin's *Wz*, Obuchov's novels and Alexei Tolstoy's works were published in the 1920s and the more eclectic works of Capek appeared in Czechoslovakia at about the same time. Apart from a postwar period of Czechoslovakia when Science Fiction all but vanished completely, Science Fiction has been a part of the literary scene in Eastern Europe ever since. A lot was deeply conformist, some formed a rare forum for unorthodox views. Yet despite a recognisable SF genre in the Soviet Union by shortly after World War II (possibly sooner), SF readers did not become SF fans: at least not as we define the term "fan". Fandom as we know it only really started in the last ten years and their SF readers there have always had access to translations from many languages besides Slav SF.

The Poles reckon that Polish fandom dates back to the last Polish Eurocon in 1976 when readers started setting up groups. Recognisable groups started up in Czechoslovakia at about the same time, Soviet groups perhaps a little later. In all of Eastern Europe, fandom took a different form from in the West, and while there were differences between the countries there are also a number of features in common.

British and US fans are proud of their lack of organisation. Apart from the University societies and the media fan clubs, named groups are mostly loose collections of individuals with labels given either by others or by the group themselves. In Eastern Europe the local situation favoured the setting up of formal clubs. Not only would groups of people meeting in bars, British style, have been looked upon with suspicion, but there were genuine advantages to becoming a formal group. For example, the authorities favoured collective activities and groups could get permanent meeting places at relatively cheap rates. Slaski Klub Fantastyki had rooms including an office, a storeroom, a video room, a bookshop and a library in 1988 when I visited (they have since moved). And the best way to get these subsidies was to say you had something to do with youth education, with the result that the form of some clubs mirrors that of the Community Party, with a children's section as well as a youth and adult section. Being a collective helped with other things as well.

One of the first things the clubs did was to set up libraries. SF was popular, but books were difficult to buy as not enough were printed of each edition. SF books would be placed in libraries, but they would soon get stolen, so the only SF on the library shelves would be SF that wasn't worth reading in the first place. The clubs, as officially approved organisations, could get hold of books and members would be unlikely to steal books from their own club library. Clubs also built up collections of foreign SF.

The clubs could also make it easier for people to obtain books for their own collections. Books were published on the basis of demand - that is, published to order. A few extra copies would be released to bookshops. Since paper was short, the run of any particular SF book had to be negotiated by the clubs as a consortium. Each club would order x copies for the members and they would be distributed on arrival. This would then be the sort of book which people would read on the way to work.

Getting hold of, and seeing, videos was even more difficult. Very few families had their own video players, but people could see videos at the club and also the club itself could obtain videos not otherwise passed by the censor and also videos which were simply very hard to get hold of.

The clubs also published fanzines. Here again, the role of fanzines was far different from British ones. Rather than being the equivalent of the British clubzine, in many ways they replaced the semiprofessionals. Apart from news columns, the standard fanzine contains reviews, stories, art work and bibliographic information. Many of the reviews are of books in English, the nearest to reading the books that many people thought they were ever likely to get, unless in an unofficial edition. The stories would be either by local authors or short stories in translation. Numbers of the Polish short stories are the equivalent of stories which would obtain publication in British or US small press SF magazines and the short stories in translation may well be the only publication these stories are ever likely to get in Poland. The situation with art work is similar, some is easily of professional standard by artists who have difficulties breaking into the "official" ranks.

The fanzines were passed by the government censor, the examination would be relatively cursory, although it would take some time; as the fanzines were for private circulation even though thousands of copies could be produced if the publishers so wanted, and could obtain the relevant amount of paper.

Unofficial publications came in under different regulations. If less than a hundred copies were produced they counted as private letters and were not subject to the censor at all, although the publisher could still get into trouble if they were deemed to have broken the law. As it was, not only did the publishers of these works sail very close to the wind, but rather more than one

hundred copies often appeared. I am the proud possessor of one item with the inscription "Number 150 of 99" and numbers are rumoured to have frequently read 350, though they didn't usually say so! Paper supplies were often very difficult to come across for these publishers and although they were often very closely linked with club officers in actual fact, officially a distance had to be maintained as the clubs had made themselves an eclectic part of the "system" and could not be seen to be openly condoning illegality. The books published in this manner could be either short runs of new Polish novels which could not get an official publication (a far cry from vanity publishing in the UK) or translations of foreign SF. They were poorly produced and very expensive.

SF conventions thus became a place to get hold of books, to view films and videos which were otherwise impossible to see and to swap information between groups. There were few of them, and by British standards they would be very intense. Members would be delegates, in a way that they were not in Britain, and programme items would be heavily attended. Not only would they provide information difficult to get hold of otherwise, but the seriousness of purpose would be more likely to convince any onlooker that SF conventions were a reputable activity for the clubs to be indulging in. The room parties at the evening were another matter!

All of this formed the smokescreen for a degree of political dissent.

SF is a literature easily used for purposes of political criticism. Many Polish works found their way past the censor, who couldn't see the ideas behind these or behind some of the translated SF either. Yet, despite these problems, the situation in Poland is easy in comparison to that elsewhere.

The rules in Czechoslovakia were much stricter. Although both fanzines and unofficial publications were illegal, many were produced as underground publications and new Czech short stories were published in (legal) convention programme books. There was no legal grey area. Even within the "official" writer's community, a professional writer wrote under a pseudonym to avoid the authority's ban.

But despite all this, there was contact with the West, some foreign SF was obtained, some local publishing was done. Fans and SF readers were definitely involved in the Velvet Revolution, fans were present at demonstrations in Wenceslas Square. And yet in many ways, even the Czechs had it easy in comparison to those in the Soviet Union.

There are clubs scattered through the Soviet Union. One, the Moscow University Science Fiction Society, runs its fanzine off on a line printer, while smaller clubs run fanzines off as carbons from a typewriter in true *samizdat* manner. These magazines got an extremely wide circulation, despite the difficulties of local politics and lack of equipment.

In Britain and the US, cons turned, in the 1950s, from their previous serious nature, to their present joking, fannish aspect. This strategy was not open to fans in the USSR who neither could nor would loosen up at the cons themselves, since too many people were looking on and accountants would be as dangerous to the survival of the subsidised clubs as the secret police. There was a way to relax though, through an alternative convention structure.

In 1984, a fan group in Kerch obtained the use of an island campsite in the Crimea for the whole of July and invited fans from all over the USSR to attend. The site was soon named Mosquito Spot (Komarinaya Plesh), partly with reference to the Strugatsky novel *Roadside Picnic*, partly with reference to the native fauna. Days are spent writing with portable typewriters, swimming, lazing about and in the evenings there are serious discussions alternating with campfire singing. A similar camp also takes place at Doshelets in the Siberian forests. It's colder and everyone jokes about being sent to Siberia.

The rest of Eastern European fandom knows about these camps. I first heard Mosquito Spot referred to by Polish fans in passing, as common knowledge. It took me a long time to work out what was going on: month long relaxations and bring your own tent!

This, in turn, has influenced other more recent Eastern European cons. The Polish SF Games convention Kontur holds open air live action role playing games involving the whole con. Last year the theme was space war, fans got hold of redundant Warsaw NBC suits and used those as costumes. I doubt if this is going to be the end of this particular path, even we may eventually feel its effects as con committees try to find ever more different new things to do.

The future?

Since the changes in Poland, there has been an explosion in publishing as the unofficial publishers convert themselves into small presses. And there aren't any large presses around! Print runs now tend to be ten thousand instead of a couple of hundred for books, and they are widely available in bookshops.

Videos and films are easily obtained, which is all very bad news for the clubs for now members can get SF to read on their way to work and can watch *Star Wars* at home, so memberships have lapsed. Likewise, fanzine circulations and convention sizes have shrunk.

There is a silver lining for translators as these new publishing houses are crying out for books to publish, and good Polish novels languish unpublished because they criticise a government which has not gone and anyway "the market dictates that everybody wants escapism".

Things haven't got to that stage in Czechoslovakia yet, where the clubs are still mushrooming. *Svet Fantazie*, a magazine that managed to convince the previous government that it was a book because it was the same shape as a children's picture book and had no number on the cover, survived. It has competition from *Ikarie*, which turned from a fanzine with a run of 350 to a prozine with a run of 50,000. The quality of artwork in both is superb.

Improvements have also been made in Hungary, Bulgaria and Roumania although the SF magazine *Ceausescu* closed down has reopened and a vigorous but eclectic Romanian fandom has survived. The one place where things have not improved in many ways is the erstwhile DDR. The professional SF community has effectively been closed down as publishers have been unable to get distribution in the bookshops which have been bought up by the big western firms and are using market stalls to sell their books. Many authors have gone out of fashion, and have had to find other work in order to survive, regardless of whether their work was good, bad or the other. They may be able to make a come back in the future, as the glitter rubs off the new toys, but in the meantime, one part of Germany looks like becoming the only part of the world that has had no history for over 50 years.

Many thanks to Yuri Savchenko, Cyril Simsa, Eva Hauser, Filip Skaba, Piotr Cholewa, Piotr Rak, Agnieszka Sylwanowicz, Hugo Preyer and Roelof Goudriaan (among others) for the information this article has been based on.



WriteBack

If something in this issue has caught your attention, if you have something to say — on Science Fiction, the BSFA or anything else — then please write to Jenny and/or Steve Glover, 16 Avary Place, Leeds LS12 2NP by the deadline

November 15,
1991.

The BSFA — Towards 2000 [Cautiously]

The feedback to Ian Sales' piece on the future of the BSFA continues showing the depth of feeling for our club.

Peter Tennant, 9 Henry Cross Close,
Shipdham, Thetford, Norfolk

Firstly, are we all agreed that expansion is a desirable thing? It seems to me that as the membership increases, the proportion willing and able to contribute letters, reviews, articles etc. will increase also. As the BSFA, to me at least, is primarily a clearing house for information and opinions, this fresh input will be of benefit to us all. Also as the membership increases, so will the BSFA's financial muscle and influence with publishers, enabling us to expect more tangible kickbacks in the form of cheaper fees, glossier magazines, perhaps even price reductions at specialist stores, publishers, etc. But even if this is all pie in the sky, it seems obvious that we must attract fresh blood, if only to replace lapsed members.

It also comes across quite strongly in *WriteBack* that the biggest obstacle to expansion is the problem of collating and stapling the magazines. We all owe a debt of gratitude to Keith Freeman and his helpers, but I don't see how we can continue to rely on their efforts in future. I find it hard to believe that if, as Pam Badely contends, to get the work done professionally is within the bounds of financial feasibility this step hasn't been taken already; but something must be done even if it involves a change in the magazine format or increased membership (surely nothing substantial). I'm glad that the Committee rate this problem a high priority one and hope they can come up with an acceptable solution.

One thing that occurs to me is that the BSFA may lose members simply because, when fees go up, people forget or can't be bothered to complete a new DDM (direct debit mandate) and take it into their banks. Might an idea be to use variable DDMs, which would enable the BSFA to collect the higher amount without members having to take any action? The onus would be on members to resign, rather than membership lapsing through default. Having said this though, I've no idea what, if any, extra work variable DDMs would involve for the Treasurer.

I have difficulty reconciling Sandy Brown's comments on the general futility of advertising with Jo Raine's statement in her BSFA profile that she receives 20-25 enquiries per week. This seems a reasonable response, though I'd be interested to know how many of these actually result in new members. What is necessary, I think, is to be more careful about the type of adverts we run. I remember one that featured a list of "name" authors the BSFA claimed to have helped (which is rather like recruiting for the army by listing generals). Most of these people were no longer active members and it is difficult to see how the BSFA actually helped them (*No, Mr. Wolfe, that's not how you spell A-U-T-A-R-C-H*). Let's concentrate on the magazines and the services the BSFA can provide. Perhaps an idea might be to advertise not the BSFA itself, but individual magazines. Sample copies could be sent at cover price plus p&p, which would help to pay for enquiries and dispose of surplus back issues also. Interested parties would get a true taste of what the BSFA is like and hopefully decide that they want more.

Extrapolating from this, I wonder if it would be feasible to run a magazine intended not just for members, but for general consumption as well. *Paperback Inferno* is the obvious choice, perhaps expanded to incorporate the review sections from *Vector*. With so much genre fiction in print, there's a need for a good review magazine that is economical and readily available (unlike most of the magazines currently trying to fill that gap in the market). The magazine could be available at a higher rate to non-members, with the extra revenue getting ploughed back into the BSFA. The extra circulation would result in the BSFA getting taken much more seriously by publishers and add weight to our opinions.

Earlier I mentioned the possibility of price reductions for members. As regards market publishers, speciality stores, etc., that's probably a pipe dream at current membership levels, but is there a chance of arranging any "money off" deals with some of the Small Press magazines that seem to be flourishing now? We need ways and means of making BSFA membership more attractive and they need more subscribers, a situation that would seem to suggest some mutually beneficial back scratching. Arthur Straker has already set a precedent by offering *R.E.M.* subscriptions at £1 off to BSFA members (and how, I wonder, did he feel about Roger Waddington's mention of *R.E.M.* in last issue, which totally ignored the magazine's fiction in favour of slagging off its, admittedly execrable, graphics?) BSFA membership is good value for money. The odd pound saved here and there on magazines would make it even more so.

Special offers aside, I feel quite strongly that there's a need for the BSFA to take the Small Press more seriously. Magazines such as *BRR* and *Dream* are treated as little more than glorified fanzines, yet their production values are higher than most professional publications and many of the new writers now emerging into prominence started writing in their pages. Where British magazines are concerned, the BSFA seems to suffer from tunnel vision, and the only thing in the tunnel is *Interzone*, which of late has grown too complacent by half. The Small Press magazines, whatever their faults, are taking chances and trying to inject vitality into the genre. Let's recognise their worth with proper reviews in *Paperback Inferno* alongside *Interzone* and the American magazines which can only be acquired with undue hassle.

In line with this, I'd suggest that the BSFA Awards be expanded or revised to recognise excellence in the Small Press, with an award for best semi-pro magazine and/or best fiction in a semi-pro magazine — "semi-pro" being defined in terms of circulation rather than quality. Perhaps the New SF Alliance members could be enlisted to help administer/judge such an award.

Much discussion has been devoted to Ian Sales' suggestion of a high profile promotional magazine and although, as Pat Gardner points out, this is impractical as it stands, I don't see why we shouldn't be able to organise something. I'd suggest an annual publication, produced in conjunction with the Small Press. They could provide fiction and their production expertise. The BSFA for its part could offer information about itself, a couple of articles and the reviewers' year's best choices which currently feature in *Vector*. The result would be a prestigious quality magazine with wider distribution than normal for BSFA publications, an overview of the current British scene.

Well, those are my suggestions for what they're worth. I'm not a BSFA activist (the occasional letter aside), only a beneficiary of those who are, so I'll leave it to them to decide what action can and will be taken, if any.

One word of warning, though. It's no use attracting new members if the attitudes they find within the BSFA are repellent. My literary tastes have matured now, but once I was enthralled by the likes of Asimov and Burroughs.

Had I joined the BSFA at that time and found myself looked down on for my choice of reading matter, I would have soon left. I wonder how many new members, fans of Eddings and Donaldson, react in that manner today. Criticism isn't a bad thing, but few people will pay money to get insulted because of their views. Don't misunderstand me. I don't want reviewers to be nice about books to avoid hurting anyone's feelings, but often there's a clear need to exercise restraint when expressing strongly held opinions. It is possible to criticise a book without suggesting that anyone who disagrees with your views must have had a brain bypass operation. Gratuitous insults will only alienate people who might otherwise be won over by reasonable argument. After all, when all is said and done, good literature is only a matter of opinion. Let's say to new members "Yes, all right, you like Eddings and Donaldson, but have you tried Dick, Carr or Jonathan Carroll?" let's defend the things we love and extol their virtues, but without getting pompous about it and becoming entrenched in our thinking or smugly superior.

Lecture over. Thanks for another excellent *Matrix*, especially Chuck Connor's article which, for me, recreated all the excitement of first discovering this marvellous thing called Science Fiction. The reality may sometimes seem tarnished, but my memories are still golden. Thanks, Chuck, for giving them a polish.

In response to "WriteBack", Ian Sales now comes up with some more concrete proposals. He suggests that there should be some quotes for alternative printers and that the idea of placing BSFA adverts in *Gollancz* publications is a good idea. The BSFA advert in "New Worlds 1" cost £470, though it appears that future adverts in *Gollancz* books will be on a one for one basis.

**Ian Sales, 56 Southwell Road East,
Mansfield, Notts. NG21 0EW**

I still think a BSFA magazine devoted to film, tv, etc. is needed. I don't think I would be too far wrong if I predicted that it would prove to be more popular than *Focus* (not that I don't like *Focus*). Let's also start moving *Vector* towards a product that will attract customers, to start with, in specialist shops. The eventual aim will be to produce something with a bit more physical impact when on the shelf — four colour cover and all that. But it can be done gradually.

Concerning the profit motive, the BSFA needs to make more than it currently does, in order to evolve. Retained profit is marvellous stuff — it allows you to invest in all those things your company needs to get ahead. It lets a company grow. The profit margin on the current BSFA magazines, given the small circulation, is too low to be of much use. Other ways of using the BSFA's resources should be looked at. Charging an annual fee for the library service (discounted, of course, to BSFA members)? Merchandising T-shirts?

It may be a legal requirement, but the BSFA is still a limited company. It needs to be aware of the sort of behaviour this requires. You can rubbish the profit motive all you like, but it's still an extremely powerful tool for creating efficient and cost-effective firms. The BSFA is unique in a number of respects: it has a skilled labour pool that costs it nothing, and a more or less guaranteed income at regular intervals — most firms would kill to be in that position!

However, for the time being, we should set up a Suggestions Box. All suggestions by members towards the continuing survival of the BSFA should be sent to this. The Committee can investigate and evaluate these suggestions, perhaps set up project teams to realise them. This Box is only a small start, but it is a start. I can go on bashing my head against a brick wall for only so long.

Ian Sales then commented on the leaflet *Coventry Polytechnic Science Fiction Society* published. After asking around, he found that people are more than willing to try books by authors they had never tried - but not without an endorsement. And he concludes by saying that the BSFA may even find if members would sooner shoot something down in flames than try it. "The BSFA is its members" he writes.

Coventry Polytechnic Science Fiction Society recommendations

All listed below were published recently. "The mix is a catholic one" recommends the leaflet "ranging from the fantasy of *Tigana* to the cyberpunk of *Metropolis*".

Use of Weapons, Iain M. Banks; *Neverness*, David Zindell; *Out on Blue Six*, Ian McDonald; *Take Back Plenty*, Colin Greenland; *Cortex on Jupiter*, Ernest Hogan; *The Child Garden*, Geoff Ryan; *The Movement of Mountains*, Michael Blumlein; *Metropolis*, Richard Kadrey; *Earth*, David Brin; *The Gold Coast*, Kim Stanley Robinson; *Life During Wartime*, Lucius Shepard; *Kairo*, Gwyneth Jones; *Aegypt*, John Crowley; *Lavondaze*, Robert Holdstock; *Dreamside*, Graham Joyce; *Replay*, Ken Grimwood; *Rats and Gargoyles*, Mary Gentle; *Tigana*, Guy Gavriel Kay; *New Worlds 1*, ed. David Garnett; *The Difference Engine*, William Gibson and Bruce Sterling.

The final word (for now) on this issue comes from Ben Wharton, who researches future film projects for 'Matrix' with great enthusiasm.

Ben Wharton, 26 Canfield Gardens, West Hampstead, London NW6 3LA

Reading the reactions to Ian Sale's suggestions for improving the lot of the BSFA (*The Future of the BSFA - Does it Have One?*), the one area that seemed to have been forgotten was that of product.

I can't pretend to know what the BSFA does outside publishing *Matrix* - I'm relatively new to the organization - but as far as this newsletter is concerned, I think the majority of the comments aired in the last *WriteBack* are jumping the gun somewhat.

If the BSFA wants to expand, gain a greater membership, be able to afford larger print runs and attract advertisers, then *Matrix* - surely the BSFA's calling card - must become a far more desirable experience for its readers.

A loosely organized group of unpaid enthusiastic amateurs may be perfectly acceptable for a small "club", but it is a hopeless foundation for any type of commercial venture. Commercial pressures aren't something that anyone would want to embrace willingly, but without changing the attitudes of those within the decision-making hierarchy and of those who contribute outside of it to an all together more professional outlook, leveling off and loss of BSFA membership is almost inevitable.

Improving standards does not have to cost money. What it does cost is time and commitment. Expenditure on advertising should not be a priority. There is little point in giving a publication wide exposure if once it is sampled it disappoints. Greater attention to preselecting *Matrix*'s contents as well as making for a more enjoyable read will also make it more likely for major stores to place the publication on its shelves - far better advertising than an innocuous box swamped in a page of similar publications.

I'm no graphic designer, business manager, or experienced editor, but here are three main areas which I think need to be dealt with if *Matrix* is to become a better publication:

Improve Layout: Get to know your DTP software/get better software. Vary column widths/type faces (where appropriate). Design an overall "look" to the publication and use it as a "rule book" for everything printed. Use photographs to accompany and illustrate articles/reviews - use a photocopy that is sensitive to grey scales. Define consistent areas - news, letters, editorial etc. and give them their own layout style (following the "rules") to give regular structure to each issue.

Tighten Writing and Editing: Make strict deadlines - don't accept anything past them for the next issue. (I am terrible in this respect). Set tighter word limits - maximum and minimum. Don't allow contributions to be overly verbose in a newsletter that needs white space to breathe (layout wise). Don't just accept contributions but also "commission" material (several months before it is desired). Perhaps these issues could be developed - several contributors working on related areas every so often.

I could go on. Perhaps the above is expecting too much from a group of people who no doubt have other priorities and distractions in their lives without striving for high standards where such standards are not deemed to be necessary. I'm trying to take a long-term dispassionate view of the whole enterprise which may not sit happily with the reality of those involved. Only writing for *Matrix* and not having been part of the "production" process. I cannot know the work that is put in by its staff. I'm only putting forward my reaction to reading the finished article. And after all, that's what readers care about.

Data: Whiter than Gold

When Christine Campbell commented on the injustice of Gene Roddenberry getting a humanist award when he dared to make the android Data whiter than white, it certainly stirred up *Star Trek*-philes:

Mark Ogier, Laurelin, Clos de Sept, Rue Jacques, St. Sampsons, Guernsey

I am writing to pour oil on the troubled waters of Ms. Campbell's mind and to assure her that Mr. Roddenberry has not put a "whiter than white" superhuman into his (rapidly improving) series.

Ms. Campbell's vitriol should be aimed at the American tv producers who, in their slightly-less-than infinite wisdom, shoot the programme on film, then immediately transfer it to video for editing, before a final master is made, again on video.

This has a couple of consequences: it means the special effects can be added directly on to the video image and consequently can take advantage of digital technology (without this, I understand, the programme would cost much more and take weeks longer to produce) and it also means that when the video is converted from the American NTSC tv format to our own PAL system, there is a loss of picture quality.

Mr. Data, unfortunately, is one victim of this loss. As a result of the degraded colours, his gold skin looks more like white to the British viewer.

And why is Data cast in such an unusual colour? I would refer Ms. Campbell to the first season episode, *Datalore*, in which it was revealed that Data is in fact the second android made by the late Dr. Noonian Soong. Lore, Data's "brother" was the first. But he was so human, right down to his skin colour, speech and behaviour, that a less perfect android was made to satisfy those who moaned that they couldn't put up with the disquieting presence of such a powerful "man".

Data, in all his golden skinned, yellow eyed glory, was the result: minus the emotions that characterised Lore and plus a stilted way of speaking.

So, Mr. Roddenberry is not a racist after all and can sleep at nights knowing that he will not be the subject of Ms. Campbell's wrath.

Here endeth the lesson.

Well, not quite. There were a couple of extra comments on this subject:
Philip J. Knight (2 Cook Rees Ave, Hillside, Neath, West Glamorgan SA11 1UN) wrote that "when the original *Star Trek* was being made, it was at Mr. Roddenberry's insistence that non-white actors were cast in the show. In addition, a number of episodes have anti-racist themes, such as *Patterns of Force* and *Let this be your last battlefield*". D.A. Symes (3 Hainington Road, Boscombe, Bournemouth, Dorset BH7 6JT) commented that "It occurs to me that looking at something gold through rose coloured glasses, makes the gold look white" and **Leigh G. Barlow** (101 Darlton Drive, Arnold, Nottingham NG5 7LX) asks if "Ms. Campbell ... finds the rhyme Baa, Baa, Black Sheep racist?" Then again she does have a right to express her views - if they can be backed by logical arguments".

*This may be a point at which to mention a *Star Trek* Cruise: a 3 night cruise from Los Angeles to Mexico on the NCL's *Southward*, June 5-8 1992, calling at Catalina (beautiful island - lush tropical landscape - quaint Victorian houses) and Ensenada (boom town of 1970 Gold Rush - horseback riding - warm memories). Although no autographs will be granted on board, there will be cruise trek gifts, complimentary package of photographs, continuous Trek movies, informal Q&A sessions with celebrities and key Trek people, plus the usual Cocktail Party and Costume Party. Details: Cruise Trek, 5330 Derry Ave, Ste. F, Agoura Hills, CA 91301, USA.*

*Also there are plans for a spin-off series from *SF: TNG* for a sitcom based on Deanna Troi's mother, Lwaxana, plus the cast of *Star Trek* may also be getting their handprints in concrete at Mann's Chinese Theatre.*

The Decline of Bookshops?

If the recession encourages bookshop assistants to look after their customers and actually know what is on the shelf and how to find it if it is not, then all the hardship will have been worthwhile. In response to the item in the last "Matrix" concerning bad bookshop service:

Pete Darby, The Two Hollies, Harwich Rd, Great Bromley, Colchester CO7 7UL

The main talking point of the last *Matrix* is the decline of bookshops, doesn't seem to have spread to Colchester, and especially the SF sections. Waterstones is well stocked, Dillon's, while smaller, at least seems to risk more than simply the most commercial publications. One local independent (Red Lion Books) seems to be run by a sincere SF fan - a SF/Fantasy section the size of a small private library, a good stock of (gasp) new hardback books, and (swoon) copies of *Interzone* spread across the desk.

This is the sort of support service that keeps the genre alive.

Ken Lake, 115 Markhouse Avenue, London E17 8AY

What's all this whingeing about a dearth of "decent bookshops"? Have people no conception of the economics of running a shop these days? For almost any product other than fresh food, mail order is cheaper, more reliable, gives far better service and choice and may even be better for your health.

There must be many fine SF-orientated bookshops within my reach by, public transport. I've tried some of them, but never again! The whole idea of standing

on train, bus or tube, buying a costly meal out, fighting the crowds, running the risk of mugging, just to stand in a cramped shop while others grab at the books I'm seeking, dropping them on the floor, crumpling their covers, elbowing me, complaining about my essential lists, fills me with horror. It's also quite unnecessary.

Without wishing to suggest that these are the best of the many mail-order outlets in Britain, I cannot do other than praise the superbly informative regular catalogues of Andromeda Bookshop (84 Suffolk Street, Birmingham B1 1TA) and their personal and pleasant service and the very readable and informative new and second-hand lists under the title *Dreamberry Wine* which I get from Mike Don (233 Maine Road, Manchester M14 7WG); I also have a most enjoyable and fruitful ongoing relationship with Peter Pinto at The Paperback Back Shop (33 North Road, Lancaster LA1 1NS) although he does not issue lists.

Not long ago, I wrote about problems encountered by all importers of US SF; instead of pledging help to fight unfair practices, columnist Dave Hodson merely recommended that British SF readers buy from a US supplier. I saw this as a disgraceful betrayal of the sterling work undertaken by British importers, among whom Andromeda are undoubtedly the leaders, and I counsel all BSFA members to forget about bookshelf browsing with its attendant discomforts and disappointments, and concentrate on the bulging listings of the many fine British mail-order dealers, among whom of course the longest established and most popular must indeed be Ken Slater of Fantast (Medway) Ltd. (PO Box 23, Upwell, Wisbech, Cambs. PE14 9BU), a veritable encyclopedia of information and a mine of expertise going back to the war years.

Catalogues

These are the briefest of tasters, with no attempt to describe the condition or edition of the books. Also it's more fun to investigate yourself...

Fantasy Trader (Ron Bennett, 51 The Superstore, Merriem Centre, Leeds LS2 8LY). Hardbacks like John W. Campbell's *The Black Star Passes* (£25) or Ian Watson's *The Martian Inca* (£1); US paperbacks mostly £1-£2.50 with the exception of Ray Bradbury's *Fahrenheit 451* (£35, first edition, 1953); British paperbacks similar prices, though a fairly good copy of Michael Moorcock's *Soyuz* is available for 75p; a vast range of magazines including *Argo*, *Science Fiction Monthly* and *Weird Tales*; *Tarzan* books, annuals and a fair whack of comics from *X-Men 1* (£850) to the second series of *Green Lantern*.

The Book Bus (Ian T. Peters, Bankside, Town Hill, Lamberhurst, Kent TN3 8EN) has a wide range of vintage SF magazines and also the best part of E.C. Tubb's library. *Rocket Stories 1* (1953) is £2; Damien Broderick's *The Zeitgeist Machine* (Australian SF) is £4.50.

The Box of Delights (25 Otley Street, Skipton, N. Yorkshire BD23 1DY) specialises in children's books and blends Science Fiction into Fantasy (and Magic); but there is also Alan E. Nourse's *Pai High and others* (£3.50); A.M. Lightner's *Star Circus* (£4) and John Christopher's *The City of God and Lead* (£4).

Leonard Campbell (5 Yetts Crescent, Kirkintilloch, Glasgow G66 3RN) tends to esoterica, heresy and the paranormal rather than Science Fiction *per se*; a typical entry is J.L. Campbell and T.H. Hall's *Strange Things: The Enquiry by the Society for Psychical Research into Second Sight in the Scottish Highlands* which includes folklore collected by Fr. Alan McDonald of Eriskay (£18).

Catalogue 10 (Richard G. Lewis, 21 Brewster Road, London E10 6RG) has a number of signed copies, like *Cleaning Up* by Iain Banks, one of 500 numbered copies (£12) or Kurt Vonnegut's *Palm Sunday* (£8).

Dreamberry Wine (Mike Don, 233 Maine Road, Manchester M14 7WG) has a wide range of secondhand Science Fiction and Fantasy, mostly paperback, though he does stock SF magazines, media and other fiction. Storm Constantine's *The Monstrous Regiment* is £2; Olaf Stapledon's *Star Maker* is £1.80.

Elizabeth Sykes (52 Bridge Street, Ramsbottom, Bury, Lancashire BL0 9AQ) specialises in children's books; the occasional Science Fiction book like T.C. Bridges' *The Death Star* can be found, unfairly, in the "Books for Boys" section.

Fantast (Medway) (PO Box 23, Upwell, Wisbech, Cambs. PE14 9BU) offer regular catalogues with new British paperbacks, new magazines and new hardcovers. Look for the occasional comments, like Ken confessing that he found Philip K. Dick's later mainstream novels "bumdram" and that he would rather read Sam Clemens, Doris Yates, Ernest Bramah and John Buchan any day (if he had time, which he doesn't) - and that all of these authors pre-date PKD.

Andromeda (84 Suffolk Street, Birmingham B1 1TA) has regular signing sessions, hardcover and paperback fiction, magazines, tapes, video and media. There are normally brief comments on the plot and the publishing history. Look out for the section on non-SF goodies.

Red River Books (James Burden, 25 Chapel Road, Tuckmill, Camborne, Cornwall TR14 8QY) specialises in the more antiquarian side of used books, a place to get Michael Moorcock's *The Life and Times of Jerry Cornelius* for £8 (VG in d/w which has small closed tear to back panel).

Stewart Kidd (26 Broadway, Wilburton, Ely CB6 3RT) has a short but fascinating list with Science Fiction UK hardback firsts like Kate Wilhelm's *Huyman's Pets* (£8); anthologies like Jerry Pournelle's *Call to Battle* (£2) and paperbacks like M.S. Stirling's *Marching through Georgia* (£2) or Ursula Le Guin's *City of Illusions* (£2).

Soap Box No More Heroes: Random Chance or Psychohistory?

I have been reading *War and Peace*. As they say when reviewing space opera and fantasy epics, this one is a real page turner: two weeks from start to finish, which isn't bad going for one of those books that people joke about reading (perhaps I really should have a go at Proust next). At first I had the impression that it was a bit soppy, with lots of domestic detail and close-ups of various cries and goings-on, but then I started to come across Tolstoy's little lectures on history and life and everything.

He was writing only fifty or so years after the events that he was describing (Napoleon's march on Moscow) had occurred, so presumably he wouldn't have been able to get away with many important inaccuracies, and by giving detailed accounts of the experiences of his characters as they take part in battles and retreats, he is able to argue convincingly that the outcome of what we look back upon as major historical events cannot be attributed to the planning, foresight or genius of any of the individuals who took part in them.

As they wake up on the morning of a battle, these people are not necessarily aware that there is going to be a battle, let alone when it is going to occur or where the key encounters will happen. They are as enmeshed in the events that are happening that to them this day seems no different to any other, and if they were to be asked what they were worried about, would probably tell you about the shortage of fodder for the horses, or how they will cross a river a few days' march away, or whether their boots will last out the month. Tolstoy's argument is that if you look at what actually happened in a key battle, you find that the "genius" who is supposed to have won it was actually too far away to determine what was going on, and those orders that were given could not be carried out in time. Our detection of patterns and of cause and effect in history is pure artefact, coming about because we are predisposed to see effects as having definite identifiable causes rather than being the cumulative results of thousands of little, undetectable contributing factors.

A more sophisticated version of the "great man" theory of history would have us accept that, even though a particular battle may hinge on the fact that one person takes it into their head to pick up a flag and charge the enemy instead of running away, it is the genius of the commander who has so brought the situation about that it is inevitable that such an event will occur. Of course, the commander could not foresee exactly which man would turn the tide and rally their comrades, nor where, nor how, nor even that such an event would be necessary, but in the same way that a skillful card player discards and picks up so as to maximise their chances of winning without calculating all of the odds and counting all of the cards, it is the skill of the pivotal individuals in history to manipulate and organise situations such that there is a greater probability of their desired outcome occurring than of its not.

If you were an of reader, you could also call this the "psychohistory" approach, because Asimov's *Foundation* (we have all read the *Foundation* trilogy, I hope?) uses a similar technique to guide his Foundation through the galactic dark ages. Precise events and individuals cannot be predicted, but patterns and currents and waves can, and by taking into account the innate tendencies people have to behave in particular ways in particular situations, a skilled psychohistorian can plot period by period how things are going to develop. Seldon's science has refined prediction to the point where the probabilities of key events can be ascertained to virtually 100%. This version of historical determinism takes the emphasis away from reliance upon individuals, and instead places it upon inevitable patterns in the way of human affairs. But the galaxy is a large place, and eventually one of those events with a p<0.000000001 must occur. In *Foundation* a mutant telepath, the Mule, throws Seldon's virtual certainties out, and when the elders gather to see the holograph of their founder appear, they find he is talking irrelevant nonsense.

What Tolstoy and Asimov were recruiting the scientific paradigms of their respective ages to convey was the necessity for history to be indeterminate, to preserve the idea that the individuals acting it out have free will. If, as Tolstoy hinted and Asimov made explicit, you can look back and analyse history into a clean chain of cause and effect, then you can similarly reason forward, taking the current state of affairs as cause, and tomorrow's events as effect. If you can do this, then we are predestined to enact the events foreseen by theory, and Moscow will burn regardless, and Napoleon will take the wrong road back to France.

Science has progressed a little since then. The conflict between the deterministic reductionism of the scientific method and the need we have to feel that we are free to choose our actions now has chaos theory to turn to. Yes, Seldon was right, the new voice says: you can write a simple and precise formula that predicts the situation at $t+1$ given the parameters at $t=0$, where t is the time, measured as discretely (eg nanoseconds) or indistinctly (eg duration of the sexual act) as you wish. Unfortunately, it turns out that even though this equation may be extremely simple, if you do not know the parameters to an infinite degree of exactness, you cannot have any confidence in applying this formula repeatedly. You might get the right answer for $t=1$, and by feeding this answer back into the equation, you might predict $t=2$, and $t=3$, but sooner or later a tiny inaccuracy in your original measurement of the parameters back at $t=0$ will be magnified out of all proportion to its initial significance and totally blow your predicted values out of the window.

This is where Kim Stanley Robinson comes in, blatantly trumpeting the new historical method in "A Sensitivity Dependence on Initial Conditions" in *Interzone* 50. This title is a direct crib from the jargon of chaos, and he describes how tiny differences in the conditions leading up to the dropping of the atom bombs on Japan in 1945 had grossly different results. Or had exactly the same results. Is "had" the right word, since these events didn't (apparently) happen? "Might have had" isn't strong enough for those physicists like Stephen Hawking who unapologetically accept the possibility of multiple universes diverging along their irreconcilable histories at every moment. We need a new tense to describe events that manifestly didn't happen in our time stream, but certainly did in other.

Robinson's view is that since there are a hundred billion neurons in the brain, and any of these may have a hundred or more connections with other neurons, the scope for a deterministic measurement of the precise state of an individual's mind is limited, and so we cannot predict from the current state of one's mind what that person will be thinking tomorrow, nor how they will react to any given event. In case this marshalling of numbers of neurons doesn't faze you, he also introduces quantum theory, to suggest that even if you did know what each neuron was doing, you couldn't predict the release and absorption of neurotransmitters that relies, in the final analysis, upon the physics of electron activity levels, and hence Pauli's and Heisenberg's principles of exclusion and uncertainty. The universe is not measurable, even those little bits of it inside our heads, and so we are free.

New Worlds for Old

Dave Gillon

The steamy jungle swamps of Venus and the canal-crossed deserts of Mars were the images of Earth's sister planets from the turn of the century through to the Golden Age, like as not with John Carter trekking across them to rescue Dejah Thoris just one more time. Nowadays we know different: Venus is a planetary hell with a crushing atmosphere and a runaway greenhouse effect that makes Terrestrial problems seem trivial, Mars by contrast is a frigid world, any meaningful atmosphere long since lost to space.

Our early dreams of livable planets close may have been shattered by the Venera and Mariner probe evidence, by Viking and Magellan, but Mars in particular remains a driving force in our exploration of space, with both the US and USSR committed to manned missions in the early years of the next century. It is inevitable that humanity will eventually set foot on Mars, though what comes after is more problematic. Colonisation is likely, mankind seems drawn to new frontiers and even scientific missions will likely be of such long duration that families will travel alongside the researchers, or be started after arrival. Eventually there will be children who know no home other than the Red Planet, for whom Earth is only a particularly bright light in the night sky. Sealed environments and recycled atmospheres may satisfy the new Martians for a time, but eventually these children of Earth will wonder at ways of making their entire domain Earthlike, of terraforming it.

Terraforming is not a new concept: Olaf Stapledon's *Last and First Men* (1930) described the terraforming of Venus by the electrolysis of its sadly non-existent oceans; Heinlein's *Farmer in the Sky* (1950) went further out, to Jupiter and its satellite Ganymede; and John Wyndham's *The Kraken Wakes* (1953) shows terraforming as a weapon of war, with the interesting twist that on this occasion Earth is the target of the Bathies. Other authors have since used the concept: Arrakis (Dune) was transformed during the course of Frank Herbert's series from a stark desert to a green world, though at a cost to the

sandtrout and worms that reminds us what damage terraforming a living ecosphere would mean. Pamela Sargeant's *Venus of Dream* series took the terraforming of Venus as its backbone, Greg Bear's *The Forge of God* saw Mars transformed into a new home for the survivors of a destroyed Earth and the idea has been found in places as diverse as *ST:TNG* and *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*.

Yet it was probably Carl Sagan, with his proposals for terraforming Venus using blue-green algae seeded into the atmosphere to free oxygen from carbon dioxide and for transforming Mars by melting its icecaps, who did most to spread the concept of terraforming to the general public.

Venus and Mars represent opposite poles of a spectrum: to terraform Venus would involve cooling the climate and reducing its atmosphere to a livable pressure, while Mars would need to be warmed and its atmosphere augmented.

Sagan's concepts were big and bold: but were they practical? He suggested algae for Venus, or more likely some genetically-engineered analogue, which could be seeded into the atmosphere to break down carbon dioxide into oxygen and strip out the carbon into their cells as they sink towards the surface. This could break the runaway greenhouse effect as carbon dioxide levels fall and rain would wash the atmosphere clean of its acidic content. It would take centuries, but once begun would require relatively little attention.

Mars, by contrast, would need a more intensive approach. The planet can be warmed by decreasing its albedo through the spreading of dust or plants across the surface of the icecaps to absorb heat rather than reflect it, thereby freeing carbon dioxide into the atmosphere and water onto the surface. Icteroids can be collided with the surface, releasing further gases and liquids. Even the native Martian rock can be cracked, releasing the gases trapped in the ferrous oxide. CFCs could be released deliberately into the atmosphere to create an artificial greenhouse effect which would warm Mars beyond the temperature its orbit would suggest. There are even suggestions that the waters of an ancient Martian ocean are locked into the soil in the form of permafrost and may one day be released by warming the climate, until water flows across the Martian deserts in canals of our own making.

If all this talk of transforming planets seems ludicrous, then consider our own world. Terra, in two hundred years, the Industrial Revolution has increased the carbon dioxide content of the atmosphere by several percent, nudging the greenhouse effect ever closer to the point at which it becomes a runaway. Within our own lifetimes the rainforests have shrunk dramatically, the Aral Sea is in danger of drying up entirely and we have damaged the ozone layer to a degree we don't yet understand. We can change our planet, the damage is there to see, and now we have to put that damage right. The first planet we terraform will be our own.

Tales From Tinsel Town

Ben Wharton

After the idea comes the word.

When asked what the three most important elements of a film were, Hitchcock replied "Script, script and script" and today's film-makers who strive to create something worthwhile usually take that answer to heart.

The re-write: Hollywood's norm, Britain's and Europe's exception. The cream of screenplay writing is rarely the product of a first draft. In the community of extremes the old joke "Great script! Who can we get to re-write it?" is accompanied by strained laughter. Ideally, re-writes would be performed by the original author but it is commonplace for a whole host of writers to be brought in to "fix" problems. Anything from scene and dialogue "polishes" to completely new screenplays save for the title on the front cover are par for the course. Often left on the scrap heap is the writer, his or her vision, and emotional investment.

Alien III has had a great deal of investment in it since its inception, emotional or otherwise. Walter Hill and David Giler, chief cooks in a broth that has probably been spilt long ago, continue to try to get the ingredients right for another blockbuster. Principal photography wrapped around Easter on the ill-fated project with a tentative US release date of November announced. But then something curious happened. *Variety*, the US film industry's trade paper, ceased listing the film in its up-coming releases section. Inadequate performances, script, direction - whatever was witnessed by the two executive producers (and uncredited script doctors) was sufficient for the circus to set up camp yet again at Pinewood Studios for "extensive" re-shoots. Will another writer be added to the list of fatalities before the year is out?

Robocop, a project which ultimately fell prey to excessive violence, has also spawned two sequels. The original writers' rushed script for the first was passed on in favour of a sixty page treatment by graphic novel/comic writer Frank Miller. Two drafts and another writer (Walon Green) later, the interesting ideas contained in the treatment had gone. For *Robocop 3*, Miller

is at it again but this time "aided" by director Fred Dekker who is supposedly more concerned with human relationships than cyborgs bashing each other. Robert Burke (*The Unbelievable Truth*) follows in Peter Weller's clunking footsteps as the die-cast law enforcer.

Serial killers are terribly real and terribly hip at present. Rutger Hauer played such a creature in *The Hitcher*, a sequel-free success, when *Silence of the Lambs* was merely a cult novel. Stepping back over the line between law breakers and law makers, Hauer stars in *Split Second* as Harley Stone, a very tough cop on the trail of a serial killer with a penchant for ripping out its victims' hearts. Global warming has arrived in 2008 and Stone must track down his partner's nemesis accompanied by killer rats through London's flooded landscape. *Split Second's* British producers weren't after an E.M. Forster adaptation so looked across the Atlantic for a good commercial writer and found it in the virtually unknown Gary Scott Thompson. So enamoured were the producers and the film makers with the screenplay and the subsequent shoot, that *Split Second 2* is already slated for production early next year, soon after its predecessor is released.

If more home-grown films with a strong eye to commercial success are made in the future, there may yet be hope for the British film industry.

Joe Gannon is all too aware that a commercial attitude brings with it commercial pressures. Dublin born, raised in England but inspired by working in the US, Gannon has become a successful television writer and aspiring feature film author. Assigned out of the blue to script a multi-million dollar SF project, Gannon saw a chance to realise his dream. *Solar Crisis*, superficially based on an unpublished novel, rushed into production after Gannon's first draft was approved by its Japanese financiers. With futurist Syd Mead and Boss Films (second only to ILM for visual effects) on board, the tale of a mission to the Sun to prevent its extreme behaviour from destroying the Earth sounded like a solid proposition. But unknown to Gannon, his script was already on the operating table, the director's son holding the scapel. To date, *Variety* has slammed the film, Japan (the only audience to see it so far) has given it the thumbs up, and the film makers are re-editing and possibly re-shooting scenes in a bid to include important sections removed from Gannon's work... A US release has still to be announced.

Hollywood has been termed a "Dream Factory", but what do disillusioned screenwriters dream about? Inflicting great pain on the producers, directors and stars that make their life a misery might be a good guess. Michael Tolkin, an increasingly successful dreamer has now written a script based on his own novel *The Player* - one of Hollywood's favourites. Tim Robbins is Griffin Mill, vice-president of a major studio, and receiver of ever more threatening messages from an unknown script writer. Along with Greta Scacchi, Fred Ward and Peter Gallagher, the film contains surely the most well-known extras seen on the big screen. The stars finally get to play themselves in this Robert Altman directed piece.

Terminator 2: Judgement Day

(15) Director James Cameron

Leigh G Barlow

You would be hard pressed to find someone who missed all the hype in the tabloids about the special effects or the cost of the film, as you would also have difficulty discovering someone who didn't know at least a bit about the story line. So most of those who stepped into a theatre to see Schwarzenegger strut his stuff had some expectations, and more than likely a little voice at the back of their head asking if this was just another load of hype. To the relief of most it was exactly what it claimed to be — on the effects side anyway. This is of course well and good if there is a story line to back the faultless animation; and there was — well, almost.

The plot was integrated nearly with the end of the first film, although it was never quite explained how much time had elapsed in the future, between the first terminator being sent back and the second one following. There was also the small matter of John's mother — played by a now muscle bound Linda Hamilton — shifting from a well balanced pregnant woman, to someone locked away in a mental institution who pumps iron all day. "She fell in with some terrorists", explained her son.

Arnold's acting is, well, Arnold's acting, splashed here and there with a bit of black humour. (When asked not to kill anyone he starts shooting people in the legs. "They'll live" he tells the protesting John. This is funny?) The characters of Sarah and John both come across well, as the confused psycho mother and a teenager who has matured quickly in the face of attempts on his life and come to realise that his mum is not such a loon after all. The plot is let down, however, when you start to consider about the Terminator Schwarzenegger is fighting. It is supposed to be made of liquid metal, this being the reason why it can shift shape and survive fist sized holes in its head. What it can do, we are told by Arnold, is form complex objects or create chemical reactions. So, thinking along these lines, it would therefore have to

have prebuilt microprocessors and ROM and RAM chips with which to function; these would take up a certain amount of space in its body somewhere and be damage resistant only to a point. This however, does not seem to be the case as at one point the terminator walks (oozes) through a set of bars and later still is scattered in all directions. Still, it manages to reform as if the metal itself can think. Having said this, *Terminator 2* is a worthy successor to the first film, filled with brilliant effects and paradoxes that make your head spin. And after watching it, consider this: its box office sales were topped by \$1.8 million by a cheap budget spoof of *Top Gun*. Can even expensive SF films hold their own?

Stephen Mulligan adds:

Have you ever bought a book, read the back, then the actual story, only to discover that the synopsis has completely ruined whatever suspense the author has carefully lined up for you? *T2's* opening scenes suffer from a similar complaint — pre-publicity. You would have to have arrived from another planet not to know that Arnie is the good guy in this film, so to have him haring about menacingly for the first ten minutes seems totally pointless. It's well done — Arnie and a normal looking human trying to find Sarah Connor's son. You're meant to assume Arnie is reprising his role from *Terminator*, but no so; he's back to protect the boy — the normal looking human is the evil android.

Media Competition

Monkey Shines is a new video from MCEG Virgin Vision. Based on the best-seller by Michael Stewart, it relates how law student and athlete Allan Mann is left paralysed following a suicidal accident. Ella, an intelligent Capuchin monkey, is introduced as therapy, but Ella seems to have ideas of her own about who is control of Allan's mind...

10 copies are available as prizes for whoever can answer the following primate-related questions.

1. In the early days of 2000AD, Judge Dredd fought the Ape Gang — what were their names?
2. In which Arthur Clarke story does *Pan sapiens*, the Superchimp, get into the art business?
3. What is the connection between *The Planet of the Apes* and The Twilight Zone?
4. In 1940, Boris Karloff dressed as a gorilla to kill for it, and in 1943 it made a monkey out of Bela Lugosi. What is it, and in which films?
5. Even before *Chimera*, Charles Dance managed to mingle human and ape genes. What was the name of the series?

Answers to Ian Mundell, 21 Radford House, 1 Pembridge Gardens, Notting Hill Gate, London W2 4EE by the deadline November 15, 1991.

Page 3 of *Chinatown's* screenplay, written by Robert Towne, includes the following:

GITTES

I'll tell you the unwritten law, you dumb son of a bitch, you gotta be rich to kill somebody, anybody, and get away with it. You think you got that kind of dough, you think you got that kind of class?

Like I said, one of Hollywood's favourites.

But that's a minor complaint. You can't spend megabucks on a movie and then not push it. And megabucks were spent — this film contains the most incredible sfx. The T1000 (Arné's arch rival) is made of liquid steel and can change into any shape that takes its fancy, and does so frequently in front of our very eyes — flawlessly.

Flawless sfx, but not so the logic behind the film. Wasn't the time machine destroyed in *Terminator* after Arné I and Reese were sent back to the present? The time paradox was handled successfully in the first film, but for T2 Cameron must have had his fingers firmly crossed that no one would notice certain things. If the means of making the androids were destroyed, then they were never made — if they were never made, they could never come back to the present, etc.

Actually, this is nit-picking (pretty big nits). It's a terribly enjoyable film, well worth paying big money to see on the big screen. Isaac Asimov would probably be a bit disappointed though — only one of his three laws of robotics survive the years, the bit about robots not harming themselves. I think it goes something like: a robot shall not harm itself but shall bring much harm to all and sundry others in orgies of mindless violence whenever possible.

Is you is or is you ain't...

Ian Mundell

A re-examination of *Solaris* and *Stalker*, the SF films of Andrey Tarkovsky, following a retrospective at the ICA, London.

That SF becomes plain F from time to time is a fact of life, and most people realise it's just a marketing ploy. More irritating is when this move is accompanied by some statement of apostasy on the part of the author, witness Stanislaw Lem in *Foundation 15: I don't segregate Science Fiction from the rest of literature, which is why I don't think it should bear the burden of any different duties or roles from normal literature*.

Whether this is just basic insecurity, or a concern that his readers will not realise he transcends genre boundaries without him pointing it out, is not important here. The reason for picking on Lem is that one of film SF's few apostates worked from one of his works: As far as Stanislaw Lem's *Solaris* is concerned said Andrey Tarkovsky my decision to film it does not denote any affection for the Science Fiction genre. For me, the important thing is that *Solaris* poses a problem that means a lot to me: the problem of striving and achieving through your convictions; of moral transformation in the struggle of one man's life. The profound thought behind Lem's novel has nothing to do with the Science Fiction genre in which it was written, and a love for Science Fiction would not be enough to make you like the film.

This suggests that Tarkovsky knew comparatively little about what draws people to SF, since *Solaris* (1972) is one of the favourite films of SF's intellectual persuasion. The director's second outing into SF, *Stalker* (1979) is equally feted, and the two together led Brian Aldiss to call Tarkovsky A genuine SF talent working in a different medium.

The motive behind Tarkovsky's rejection of SF was probably nothing more than force of habit. He spent much of his career rejecting the symbolism, allegory, cynicism or political sub-texts that the critics continually read into his films. His message, he insisted, was more personal, relating to the soul, faith, childhood and nostalgia (in Russia, a longing for places lost rather than times).

But with *Solaris* and *Stalker*, the aspects he was interested in were very heavily woven onto the SF architecture of the source material, and although

Tarkovsky freely adapted from both sources, the SF remains — like the harmonics remaining on a tape after the notes have been removed.

With *Solaris*, Tarkovsky changed the emphasis of Lem's novel, moving the first third of the film from the space station to earth. This establishes the origins of the main character — a psychologist called Kelvin — so that when he reaches the space station, the Earth artefacts scattered around clearly resonate with him. This in turn forms an altered context for the simulacra sent to the station by the sentient ocean on the planet, Solaris. Lem disapproved, of course.

In the case of *Stalker*, the changes were more extreme. The source is *Roadside Picnic* (1972), a novella by Arkady and Boris Strugatsky, which describes the human reaction over a number of years to the Zone, the site of a fleeting visitation from some alien civilisation. The area, with its altered laws of nature, is monopolised by scientists, trying to recover and fathom the artefacts left behind by the aliens. The stalkers are a criminal class operating a parallel black market, negotiating the perils of the Zone for personal gain or more perverse reasons.

The first draft of the screenplay was by the authors themselves, and they changed so much that there were offers to publish it as a new, original novel. However, the bare bones of the plot and the SF element remained. When Tarkovsky re-wrote the screenplay, most of the SF disappeared, including the rationalisation for the existence of the Zone. The dangers of the Zone became

spiritual and psychological rather than physical, and the plot is barely resolved.

What turned Tarkovsky off about SF on film was the sense of wonder approach that almost all of them used, reminiscent of written SF from the 1940s and 50s.

For some reason he said in interview in all the Science Fiction films which I have ever seen, the audience is forced into a detailed close-up examination of what the future will look like. Indeed, often the directors call their films "visions of the future" ... I would like to film *Solaris* in such a way that the audiences are not faced with something technologically outlandish.

This lead him to film the future as if it were the present, where

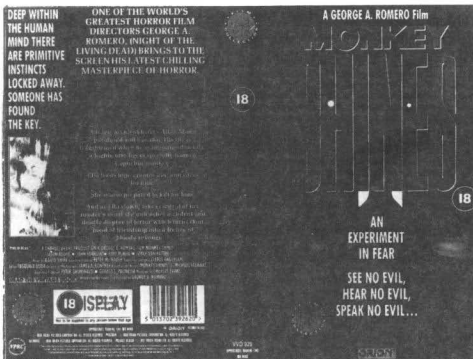
technology is largely taken for granted and people have to try to live normal lives. In doing this he was closer in approach to modern writing SF, although what he produced is quite unlike anything to be found in writing. Tarkovsky was not a SF talent, just one of the few directors in any genre working with film as if it was not just an extension of the novel. If the only way to make sophisticated SF films is by apostasy, or even outright heresy, then so be it. Look away and find the future.

Won't get fooled again

Ian Mundell

The British Film Institute's tour of the tv archives his the 1970's last month with episodes from *Doomwatch* and *The Survivors* to represent SF. Both owe their origins to the dreams of the '60s, and it is surprising to see the ideas given such a high degree of exposure for while the green manifestations of the late '80s claimed that only cranks and hippies believed this, here it was on prime time tv.

The Survivors (1975-77) was a fantasy on the "back to nature" tendency, but rather than have people drop out of their own accord, the series forced nature on an unsuspecting group of average citizens. The force comes as a plague which wipes out most of the world's population, and leaves a mere 7000 people in the British Isles.



The BFI showed the final episode of the second series, by which time the dark fight for survival initially devised by Terry Nation had become increasingly soapy — a sort of post-apocalypse *The Good Life*. The central community discovers that a group of Norwegians is trying to pull British survivors into a market economy to support the hydroelectric power stations in the fjords. And having gone through the motions of self-sufficiency, the survivors jump at the chance of technology and primitive government, and sail off in a methane balloon to rebuild the world [starting, like *Starbuckfast*, with the most intricate bits — Ed].

Doomwatch (1970-72), based around a Government department of the same name, was sent to save us from science gone mad. It exposed threats, it warned and it imposed controls. Gerry Davis and Kit Pedlar took their ideas for it from the press and scientific literature and were often close in their predictions. The 1972 episode shown, called *Sex and Violence*, followed *Doomwatch*'s investigations into the censorship laws, parallel to a Government inquiry and against a background of civil unrest prompted by a moral majority protest group. The protestors are, of course, just a bunch of repressed individuals, and the whole movement is being masterminded by a megalomaniac who feels that "a sexually repressed nation is ripe for a dictator".

The interesting thing is that *Sex and Violence* — which came down on the side of moderation — should be banned, the probably cause being a documentary section shown to the inquiry depicting Nigerian prisoners being executed. Surely if *Doomwatch* was so on the button, extrapolating warnings about how far things could go, the dramatised decision should have gone the other way. Indeed, why go to the trouble of a drama on censorship at all when the Oz trial less than a year old? How could *Doomwatch* suggest that the decision would go in favour of freedom of expression, when the editors of Oz magazine received such a monumental shaming at the hands of the Establishment?

The answer is that drama — and SF more than any other form — allows you to indulge in wish fulfilment, whether it be for the perfectly harmless end of entertainment or in presenting a political message. The makers of *The Survivors* set up a cosy, country soap opera in the middle of an apocalypse, while the *Doomwatch* team went looking for disasters and found them.

Extrapolation into SF may be a valid way of predicting eco-doom or the breakdown of society, but it is too susceptible to propaganda to be anything but fiction. If your evidence for prediction is that good, and you want to be taken seriously, then make documentaries.

Noticeboard

You can place your advertisement here for free — anything you want to sell or buy or find or know (or let everyone else know). Just get it in by the deadline (November 15) to Jenny and/or Steve Glover, 16 Aviary Place, Leeds LS12 2NP.

Books for Sale: These were review copies and half the price of whatever money is received will be donated to the BSFA:

Hardbacks:

Gordon R. Dickson, *Young Bleys* £6; Robert Silverberg, *Queen of Springtime* £7; Michael Moorcock, *The Fortress of the Pearl* £6; Douglas Hill, *The Colloqui Conspiracy* £6.50; Harry Harrison, *Bill the Galactic Hero on the Planet of Bottled Brains* £6.50; Fritz Leiber, *The Knight and Knaves of Swords* £7; David Britton, *Lord Horror* £5.50.

"Trade" Paperbacks:

Robert Reed, *The Hormone Jungle* £3.50; Greg Bear, *The Serpent Mage* £3; Greg Bear *The Infinity Concerto* £3.

Paperbacks

William Hope Hodgson, *The Boats of the "Glen Garrig"* £1.80; James Herbert, *Creed* £2.30.

Magazines

Analog, April 1966 £0.60; *Astounding* May 1988 £0.60. Prices include postage. If interested, please contact T.A. Jones, 14 Haywood, Haversham Park, Bracknell, Berkshire RG12 7WG (Tel: 0344 50003).

Books for Sale: Science Fiction and Fantasy: Paperbacks, magazines, pulps, hardcovers, comics. Send wants. Free search. BUYING: SF/F magazines, books, 50s British SF/F paperbacks, TV/film annuals, paperback comic. John Schneider, 1500 Main Ave, Kaukauna, Wisconsin 54130, USA.

Troy Club: Science Fiction evening last Wednesday of each month. Otherwise sport, back gammon, chess, connect 4, scrabble, cards — food available. Troy Club, 1st Floor, 22 Hanway Street, London W1 (tel: 071 636 9833).

For Sale: Venture SF series Nos 1 to 25 COMPLETE. New or nearly-new condition, immaculate. Offers to: Ken Lake, 115 Markhouse Avenue, London E17 8AX (tel: 081 520 2065) stating whether postage included or would collect from me.



Information Service — Mini-Guides

Phil Nichols

This issue, we continue with our mini-guide to SF with pieces on two British authors of note: Michael Moorcock and Keith Roberts. These guides are intended partly as a stimulus to further reading, although I appreciate that this

can be difficult when the books mentioned are hard to find. So to complement the items below, I have prepared an information sheet giving a bibliography of the two featured authors, including notes on what is (and isn't) in print. For a copy of this, please send a SAE to the usual address at the end of the column. And for more on Moorcock, look out for Colin Greenland's *Death is No Obstacle*, a book of interviews with the author, coming soon from Savoy Books.

Michael Moorcock

Colin Greenland

The importance and influence of Michael Moorcock in SF have been enormous, yet he's hardly written any. His fiction falls broadly into two kinds: sword and sorcery and the rest. The sprawling epic of the Eternal Champion remains his most popular work, with new Elric books hitting the bestseller charts. The huge generosity and humanity of Moorcock's imagination are better displayed elsewhere: in *Gloriana*, an alternative Elizabethan age written in homage to Mervyn Peake; in the gentle and funny *Dancers at the End of Time*; in *Mother London*, an odyssey through the streets and years of his beloved native city with three miraculous survivors of the Blitz; and in the Jerry Cornelius Quartet, a snarky, self-exploding myth for modernity that looks ever more astonishing and shrewd while officially-approved British fiction persists in its hushed parochialism.

Let me also put in a word for *The Brothel in Rosenstrasse*, the memoirs of a garrulous and self-deceptive old hedonist, recalling days of decadence and destruction in Mienburg, that noble city. Almost completely overlooked even by Moorcock fans, that's the one I'd take to my desert island.

Keith Roberts

Andy Mills

There are three things a newcomer to SF should know about Keith Roberts: he is a very fine writer; he has written works other than *Pavane*; and paperback publishers seem loathe to acknowledge the first two facts. If you want to read any book produced by Roberts within the last five years, you'll have to buy the hardback or visit the local library. The expense, or the trip, will certainly be worthwhile.

Roberts' first novel first appeared in 1966, a disaster story in the mould of John Wyndham. It is his second book — *Pavane* — for which he is best known. More significantly even than its treatment of an alternate England, the book displays the hallmarks, in both form and content, of much of Roberts' writing to come. The novel is really a re-worked collection of linked stories; arguably through this device, the finest of Roberts' work has been produced, including *The Chalk Giants*, *Kierworld* and the glorious *Kaeli & Company*. But what makes the fiction of Keith Roberts such a pleasure to read is simply the quality of his prose. His characters have real depth and come alive as individuals and through his descriptions of landscape and machinery, the reader is treated to an affinity for both which is unique amongst Science Fiction writers.

Finally, I just have to pass on to you the following plea from Fay Symes. Fay has engaged in many curious quests, including a search for the current whereabouts of *Time Tunnel* star Robert Colbert (don't know whether she ever found him). Now she has diverted her attention to another Irwin Allen series *Voyage to the Bottom of the Sea*, and another whatever-happened-to star of yesteryear, David Hedison. Over to Fay:

Hunt the Ring

Fay Symes

Noticing the signet ring David Hedison wears on his left hand through *Voyage to the Bottom of the Sea* (currently showing on Channel 4) appearing and disappearing from scene to scene, I started watching out for it. Continuity only lapses during the first few episodes, but an interesting event occurs during

"Turn Back the Clock", which contains stock footage from Allen's *The Lost World*. Hedison is minus his ring throughout the whole episode except for the clips of footage from *Lost World*. You can even tell which scenes of him handing on the log are stock (wearing ring) and which are new (no ring).

So I watched *The Fly* (1958), *Son of Robin Hood* (1959) and *Lost World* (1960), and found him wearing an apparently identical ring in each film.

How come a prop from his *Voyage* costume (1964-68) appears in films he made in earlier years? Are we into a time warp? Did he just like that kind of ring and choose it from wardrobe each time? I asked the unofficial British David Hedison fan club, but they assure me that the ring he wore in *Voyage* had no particular significance, and was not his own.

I'm not convinced. Does anyone else know better?

I'm sure we'd all love to get to the bottom of this sweet little mystery. All suggestions should be sent to the usual address: BSFA Information Service, Phil Nichols, 57 Grange Road, West Bromwich, West Midlands B70 8PB, and don't forget the SAEs, please.

BSFA Profile

You may have noticed the change in "Vector" with the energetic new co-editor. When she telephoned one evening, I asked for her tastes in SF and music to print in "Matrix" — it arrived by return. So, introducing Catie Cary, "Vector" co-editor —

I love books, I was even named after one — my full name is Catriona. It's because more than half of you are pronouncing that incorrectly that I am generally known as Catie. I love SF in books, but I have little or no time for the bastardised forms found in TV and film.

I was probably an addict of the fantastic, way before I learnt to read, I was read to a great deal by both parents. My mother's readings of Christina Rossetti's *Goblin Market* are with me still and my grandfather (who was a Gaelic poet) was a limitless fount of improvised stories (Andy Pandey in *TVland* was a great favourite). I was a late reader, I refused to have anything to do with the limited doings of Janet & John, so my father taught me eventually using motoring magazines — I was car-mad at the time. The first books I remember falling for already carried some classic fantasy elements. The first which I read and re-read obsessively was about an absent-minded little girl who quite literally lost her head. This scared me shitless for reasons that will be no surprise to those who know me well. The rest was Beatrix Potter, these are also probably the only books about talking animals that I still enjoy.

I discovered libraries at the age of 7 and was thereafter very difficult to remove: if there were other children demanding to change their three books more than once a day, they certainly weren't letting on. I loved fairy tales, and read my way right through the Andrew Lang spectrum, after that I moved on to myth and cast my net as wide and as deep as the library would let me. At the same time, I also read the normal children's stuff — E.E. Nesbit, C.S. Lewis, Alan Garner, Lucy Boston, Philippa Pearce, Eleanor Farjeon, Robert Louis Stevenson and others. My parents, who had initially encouraged me to read were starting to come out with comments like *You'll damage your eyes, it's not normal* and my mother's classic — *You must be a freak — born with a man's brain*. I mention these because I doubt I'm alone in having suffered this kind of thing for a (relatively) harmless obsession.

I had reached the age of 12 before I read anything identifiable as SF. It was *The Time Machine* by H.G. Wells, I subsequently read a fair amount of scientific romance, mostly Wells and Verne. At the same time I was reading Sir Walter Scott, Louisa May Alcott, Anthony Hope, H. Rider Haggard, Frances Hodgson Burnett, Alexandre Dumas. I have always had an omnivorous appetite for books, as long as they are explorative in nature, and (unless I am ill) have preferred my books to have a touch of class. By the time I was 15, I was a full-blown literary snob. I fancied myself as a poet, and Poetry was mostly all I read (favourites still include John Donne, Robert Herrick, John Milton, Lord Byron, John Keats, Percy Bysshe Shelley and Leonard Cohen). A kindly friend set out to re-educate me and lent me books by Thomas Burnett Swann, Ursula Le Guin and Alec McCaffrey. Two out of three is not bad (and in that order). Fantasy had re-claimed me. I still wouldn't read anything to do with robots or spaceships or anything like that though.

I got engaged to be married at the age of 17, and was persuaded out of my original ambition to be a journalist. This is a blessing, as I'm probably still too idealistic in nature for that murky world. This however put me at the mercy of careers officers, who could not understand that I did not want to go to University and decided I must be more stupid than I looked, but could not miss the real love of my life, *Bookshop or Library* they said. I duly started as a library assistant. This was the first place I met Mills & Boon (kept under the counter for addicts) — they call SF unrealistic. Here I met John, the first fan I had come across. His mission in life seemed to be to encourage women to

read SF. He introduced me to the works of P.K. Dick, Roger Zelazny, Michael Moorcock, Josephine Saxton, John Brunner and probably others I can't remember. He was also the first person to explain to me the pleasures of the Convention. I married at 18 and moved away, but before I left he encouraged me to get over the awful first hundred hobby pages of *The Lord of the Rings*. The resultant lost weeks almost broke my marriage before it was started.

One of the few areas of mental common ground I seemed to have with my new husband was in the reading of the fantastic (this problem was that he believed it). He introduced me to Asimov, Heinlein and Clarke. Oh Wow! The ideal! Oh What? Had none of them ever met a woman? The seeds were sown though. I started to plunder the SF sections in earnest.

I'm 35 now, divorced with a live-in lover, two children in their early teens and four cats. Apart from those named above, many of whom I still read, my favoured authors include: Jane Austen, Peter Ackroyd, Gene Wolfe, Tim Powers, Octavia Butler, Cordwainer Smith, P.J. O'Rourke, Florence King, Joan Vinge, Daphne du Maurier, Gore Vidal, John Fowles, Christopher Priest, Vonda McIntyre, Paul McAuley, Greg Egan, Pat Murphy, Bruce Sterling, John Shirley, T.H. White, E.R. Eddison, Brian Stableford, Kate Wilhelm, Thorne Smith, Jane Yolen, Penelope Lively, Olaf Stapledon and Frederik Pohl just for starters. I have a soft spot for Time Travel and/or Alternative Histories. I dislike gratuitous violence — it tends to bore or disgust me. I don't generally care for series and I loathe soap opera.

When I'm not working on *Vector*, I work full-time in the computer industry. My other hobbies mostly involve alcohol and the company of other people. I like to listen to early Motown, most kinds of dance music, Punk/New Wave, New Order/Joy Division, the Pretenders, Blondie, Jesus & Mary Chain, Al Stewart, Billie Holiday, Etta James and Judy Garland, just to give you an inkling.

Empire Dreams

Kev McVeigh

Every couple of years whilst I've been around, somebody has raised the spectre of increasing the BSFA membership. Ian Sales is just the latest in a long line, except that two things are different. One is that it is my turn to make the usual excuses and I don't necessarily believe them myself, and the other is that Ian actually had some ideas amongst the criticisms.

The BSFA should make its presence felt more in the 1990s — I think we are agreed on that much. The question then becomes how, and in what direction(s)? We have recently been receiving new enquiries from several companies involved with TV and Video SF as a result of listings in *Trade Directors* (a form of advertising which the ordinary member won't see, but which is vital to our credibility with people like the BBC, for instance). Nevertheless, there is still work to be done in this area — nobody informed of the screening of the *Dr. Who* pilot recently.

We cannot, however, hope to compete with glossy magazines such as *Starburst* in terms of high profile features on SF series, and we should not aim to do so. Jenny has assembled a broad team of film and TV reviewers for *Matrix*, to the extent that space restrictions prevent further expansion for the moment.

Besides which, and at the risk of being labelled a bookish snob, I do feel that the BSFA is predominantly oriented around the literary aspects of the genre, and should remain that way. Ian Sales proposes that we aim towards the mass-market readability of David Eddings and co. Go on, then, Ian, try it. Will the people who read *Forgotten Realms* books want to know? And if we win them over, will it lose the Delany, Wolfe and Aldiss readership in equal numbers? I know from considerable hawking of *Vector* around SF groups, SF shops and anybody I see reading SF, that people who read "escapist" fiction are unlikely to want to read about it. See the rumoured lack of success achieved by *Milford*, see the sad failure of *Amaranth*. *Vector* has been promised articles on Eddings, Frank Herbert, and other popular SF. What has arrived are articles on *Dantean Motifs in Cyberpunk*, or Patrick Moore's juvenile SF. In my time, *Vector* has sought to publish (never merely print, by the way) material on all aspects of written SF, but we are bound by what we receive.

As it stands, however, there is still a larger market for the BSFA, even without a broader content base. How do we reach this? Advertising, of course, and word of mouth. Those of you who have brought a copy of *New Worlds* will have noted the BSFA advert in the back, similar ads will follow in other VG/SF paperbacks shortly, and hopefully other publishers can be persuaded to agree to similar deals. BSFA flyers and posters are being produced and will be circulated at conventions, SF groups and around bookshops when they are ready. I hope this will bring in a steady response (as adverts, in older paperback still do).

As for advertising in our magazines, this has been slow to one in of late. There is a recession on, of course, and publishing has been hit like anybody else. Brett Cockrell and I are producing a mailshot for all the British publishers

and some US publishers with all the necessary details for advertising and BSFA contact. Again, I hope this will remind people of our existence and bring in revenue as a result.

There is something we do need, to follow this, and that is an Advertising/Marketing Manager to arrange ads, and to organise possible merchandising and promotions. If you have ideas, enthusiasm and/or experience, get in touch with me, and I'll tell you more about it.

Other things the BSFA has been doing recently include sending samples of some of the new or expanding SF groups in Eastern Europe. Obviously we can't help everyone this way, and some letters which have seemed overly-demanding have been ignored, but I want to help where we can.

The state of the BSFA Council is still unresolved, largely due to wanting the right solution, rather than simply scrapping an unsatisfactory situation which will heal for an alternative which may be worse in the long term. Hence the provisionally announced EGM for Novacon will not now take place, the Council being its *raison d'être*. However, I would like to see as many BSFA members as possible over the weekend of the convention, and similarly at X-asm in Leeds a few weeks later. If you won't be there, but wish to comment about the BSFA, please write to me or to *Matrix*. Your opinions are essential.

And finally, *Focus*. There hasn't been an issue of *Focus* for several months now, but anyone who has been a BSFA member for any time will know this is a common situation — Cecil is simply keeping a tradition going. But seriously, Cecil Nura has had difficulties with *Focus* and would appreciate the assistance of a Production Editor as soon as possible.



The Periodic Table

Beside the very strong Glasgow in '95 bid to hold the Worldcon at the Scottish Exhibition and Conference Centre on the banks of the Clyde which will aim to show Science Fiction as an international literature form, there is a Bristol bid for the 1994 Eastercon bid, called *Sou'Wester*. This is chaired by Marcus Streets, who will aim to offer "a good, solid, well-run Eastercon" (details from 3 West Shrubbery, Redland, Bristol BS6 6SZ).

There is also a perhaps not-quite-serious bid called *Tweecon* which takes care to offer a "dinky" hotel which can be reached "by choo-choo train, seven-league boots or on your little red scooter". Programme item ideas so far include David V. Barrett, former editor of *Vector* lecturing on "Hugs in Space Opera" and Jon Cowie on the relativistic physics underlying Thomas the Tank Engine (and he will personally make all the engine noises himself).

Towards the end of the year, there is a major European con in Rotterdam, a sort of follow-up to ConFiction. The committee aim to keep SF alive in Holland and to show SF readers that "having fun, meeting friends" can be one of the most important ingredients in a new way of life. Tom Scheeling, who is leading the PR department and is very willing to be interviewed, comments that Dutch fans learned a lot at ConFiction, that it is *well to organise a con, to try to run things smoothly, to help on the spot as a gopher — the stress feeds your adrenaline, as does the feeling that you do not want to let your friends down*.

The main con event since the last *Matrix* must have been the Worldcon at Chicago. Initial reactions included the following gags:

"Worldcon was a trip ... Chicago, last week, was the capital of weird ... and that's a direct quote from no less than Timothy Leary. He, Robert Anton Wilson, Robert Shea and Philip Jose Farmer did a panel together ... not only was Worldcon in Chicago last week, but there was a major rally for the legalisation of certain drugs, the national libertarian convention and the jazz festival ...". "I haven't assimilated it all yet ... poofa Klingons and women in chain mail ... chocolate and Louisville lemonade ... Lois McMaster Bujold as the new Robert Heinlein ..."

A total of 2007 votes were cast to decide where the 1994 Worldcon would be and Winnipeg won closely with 1012 votes as against 957 for Louisville (details from Lloyd Penny, 412-4-Lisa Street, Brampton, ON, Canada L6T 4B6). The 1992 Worldcon will be in Orlando (details from Peter Watson, 14 St. Bernard's Road, Sutton Coldfield, W. Midlands B72 1LE); the 1993 Worldcon will be in San Francisco (details from Helicon, 63 Drake Road, Chessington, Surrey KT9 1LQ or Confrancisco, PO Box 22097, San Francisco, CA 94122).

Chicon V Steve Rothman

Within minutes of registering I met the handful of Americans I had hoped to see. Since it was 2100, it was straight to parties: Glasgow in '95 was throwing one, assisted by a good selection of single malts; also memorable were Winnipeg offering both alcoholic and non-alcoholic moose milk.

Saturday morning, I wandered into the mall beneath the Hyatt in search of breakfast. The Hyatt itself was a maze of artificially lit corridors — except for the greenhouse enclosing a mezzanine bar and a restaurant amid a lagoon (for which Dermott Dobson regretted not having brought his radio-controlled goose), but the Illinois centre was a sort of yuppie fallout shelter with subterranean French bakeries and speciality coffee shops. H.C. Wells got it wrong: in America, at least, of the future the white-collar Elot will be living in air-conditioned high-rises connected by underground complexes from which they need never emerge, while the Morlocks will be sweating it out at ground-level and in the open air.

The day-time programming at Chicon, I found somewhat thin — or rather, there were few panels and talks that sounded interesting — and those that I did go to were fairly superficial. One panel on "Intimate Technology" was very promising as the participants were Dr. Timothy Leary, David Brin, Joe Haldeman, the world's first robot psychology expert(!) and an expert on virtual reality. In practice, Timothy Leary spent fifteen minutes telling everyone how he's been a man ahead of his time in the sixties and then the discussion fragmented into the two subjects of robot sexual surrogates and interpersonal communication via computer networks, with a mention of dildoes thrown in every few minutes. There were a few interesting points raised, but these were never fully explored. The virtual reality man spoke once only when he was asked a direct question and the robot-psychologist — who was obviously both sincere and knowledgeable about her specialisation and had a great sense of humour — spent most of her time fending off crass jokes from the moderator. By coincidence, next day, CNN had a report on a cafe in San Francisco where they were introducing computers for electronic communication to replace chatting and chess-playing over a cup of coffee; and this report covered several points in as much depth as had been said on the subject at the panel.

Another panel on "Loopholes in Physics" boasted three university professors plus other experts, but consisted only of the briefest of mentions of various possibilities in the fields of wormholes, time travel and FTL travel and communication. Similarly, a panel on "Magical Realism" offered some amusing tales but no real meat. I think the problem is that while a con has no trouble getting experts on quantum physics, psychology, literature, etc., there is too little emphasis on planning the panel — the worst case being when a moderator introduces the panellists and then immediately asks the audience for questions, thus losing any direction of the panel — or there is a temptation to cover too much ground, get too many experts, and so mention a lot of things in no great detail. Thinking back, some of the most entertaining — and enlightening — events I've attended at cons have been those like talks by Jack Cohen on evolution or Tom Shippey on Tolkien. In short, panels need more structure and direction and need to not be diverted by questions from the audience. How would con committees like to consider more single person talks, or interviews, or formal debates?

The standard of the costumes in the masquerade was excellent, but the presentation ranged from pompously portentous through wanky, bleeding-heart, veggie ecologist mystical bullshit to embarrassingly not quite funny. I may be a chauvinist, but UK masquerades are more fun: the serious entries do not take themselves too seriously and the humorous ones are more spontaneous. People are out to have fun and to entertain. A notable exception at Chicon was "1901: A Space Odyssey" where a bemused NASA astronaut watched a couple in Edwardian dress (plus oxygen masks) unfurl a Union Jack and waltz to "The Blue Danube".

Sunday's and Saturday's parties were crowded and there were 15 minute waits for the lifts. As most bid parties used corner suites on different floors of the Hyatt, the rooms were identical and my memories of the parties blurred into one another even after only an hour or so. The Saturday Glasgow party was, however, distinctive: life-sized cardboard cutout bagpipers, tartan helium-filled balloons, more single malts and a haggis which was piped in between the best tradition.

Again I may be chauvinistic, but I prefer the UK late bar, or the Confection-style bid parties in adjacent function rooms. I've spent too much time wandering empty US hotel corridors, looking into rooms where a handful of strangers were talking quietly or watching a video, searching for a familiar face, so that I much prefer one or a few large parties where I can easily find someone to talk to.

It wasn't a wonderful con — the programme was bog-standard traditional Worldcon fare and no more, I'd missed a lot of interesting programming on Thursday and I didn't try the TV programme where they tried to show one episode of every English language SF series since the '40s. There were lulls

in the programme, but just enough to allow one to see something of the city. The masquerade was badly run, but the organisation was otherwise OK on the surface, although I'd heard that the con chair was "using the Red Queen style of management".

Where Chicon does do poorly is in comparison with Conspiracy or Confiction. Conspiracy had fireworks, a rock concert, a Bob Shaw series science talk. Conspiracy put in that extra little (7) bit of effort to provide something that Chicon didn't. Confiction had a great arrangement for parties with everything under one roof so one could easily check in on three or four parties and be sure one was not missing anything.

If anyone is reading this looking for guidance as to whether to go to a US Worldcon, my advice would be: if you go to a con for the programme, then any Worldcon will be great (I stopped relying on the programme at UK cons several years ago). If you go to socialise and are outgoing and can easily strike up a conversation with strangers, then go. If not, go with a friend, or don't go, or go as much to visit the host city as for the con.

For myself, I doubt if I will have the money to go to Orlando, San Francisco or Winnipeg, although I would like to go to the first two. I'm relying on Glasgow winning for '95. If previous European cons, and their ability to throw a good party, are anything to go by, it will be an excellent con. Party-on Caledonian dudes!

Contour Mapping

Philip K. Dick weekend (Connections, Epping Forest College Loughton; October 19-20; details from Jeff Merrifield, Connections, Epping Forest College, Borders Lane, Loughton IG10 3SA tel: 0621 891287). Confirmed attendees include Paul Williams, Geoff Ryman, Ken Campbell, Malcolm Edwards, Brian Aldiss and John Dowie. Saturday will take *Blade Runner* and *Total Recall* as a starting point to give greater exposure to PKD, the man behind the movies while Sunday will be a day for the die-hard PKD enthusiasts. There's a varied and enthusiastic programme.

Novacon (Fortie Post House, formerly the Exceolier, Birmingham Airport; November 1-3; membership £15, postal memberships by October 19, £20 on the door). Guest of Honour: **Colin Greenland**. The programme will include a talk by Danish SF translator **Ellen M. Pedersen** and **Ian Stewart**, who spoke on Chaos Theory at the last Novacon, has chosen a new subject. There will also be light-hearted events, including a snooker tournament.

Armadacon 3 (The Astor Hotel Plymouth; November 9-10 1991; details from Armadacon 3, c/o Glenage Avenue, Mansnhead, Plymouth PL3 5HL. Tel: 0752 267873). Guests to include Terry Pratchett and Adrian Cole with Ed Bishop and Michael Keating (subject to work commitments).

X-asm (The Hotel Metropole Leeds; November 29-December 1; membership £12, £15 on the door; details from Jenny Glover, 16 Aviary Place, Leeds LS12 2NP). Guest of Honour: **M. John Harrison**. The programme will include a stream on the senses and will aim to be active and participatory. There will be serious SF discussions during the day and even more serious relaxing at night.

Hilicon (Atlanta Hotel Rotterdam; November 22-24 1991; membership Dfl 50; details from Hilicon II, Van Eeghenstraat 93, 1071 EX Amsterdam, The Netherlands). Guests of Honour: **Owen Scott** and **Dan Simmons**. Fan Guest of Honour: **Kees van Toorn**. This is the 17th Beneluxcon, hopefully a major European convention. The two-stream programme will have everything that makes a con worthwhile: discussions, speeches and a review of Confiction.

Pentacon (The University Centre Cambridge; January 25 1992; membership £5; details from Helen Steele, Newnham College, Cambridge (hsl1@uk.ac.cam.phx). There will be academic guests as well as ones connected with SF literature and probably a strong participatory literary flavour (aka fun).

Fourplay (Victoria Park Hotel Wolverhampton; January 31-February 2 1992; membership £15; details from Alison Scott, 2 Craighie Road, Vane Cross, Chester CH3 5HL). Guests of Honour: **Cynthia McQuillan**, **Jane Robison** and **Colin Pine**. The unholy offspring of a long-forgotten typing error, filk is the folk music of SF. It covers everything from heavy rock and fancy guitar solos to what everyone really prefers (they say) raucously singing filthy Viking songs at ungodly hours of the night.

Lucon IV (Leeds University Union; February 21-23 1992; membership £7; details from LUCON IV, Leeds University SF Society, PO Box 157, Leeds LS1 1UH). Guest of Honour: **Gwyneth Jones**. Guest: **Colin Greenland**.

Illumination (Norbreck Castle Hotel Blackpool; April 17-20 1992; £20 until November 31; details from 379 Myrtle Road, Sheffield S2 3HQ). Guests of Honour: **Paul McAulay** and **Geoff Ryman**. Fan Guest of Honour: **Pam Wells**. Also, from the USA, one of **Richard Brandt** or **Jeanne Bowman** will be meeting as many British fans as possible, depending on who wins this year's

TAFF race. The programme will aim to get people involved and to make the workshops creative. It will focus on the fringes of SF.

Inconsequential (Aston Court Hotel Derby; May 22-25 1992; membership £21; details from 12 Crich Avenue, Littleover, Derby DE3 6ES). Guest of Honour: **Robert Rankin**. Possibly others to be announced later. Proposed programme items may include a church service with an irreverent Reverend, a full criminal trial and one of the two video streams will have a theme, like comedy or blood'n'gore'n'senseless violence.

Unlone (Clyde Halls Glasgow; August 7-9 1992; membership £12; details from Union 13, c/o Glasgow University Union, 32 University Avenue, Glasgow G12 8LX). The theme will be "Games in SF" partly because SF is full of games. As the flyer says "SF is not just Armageddon and Aliens, awful thoughts before bedtime and wet dreams. It's chess games that decide the destiny of worlds and wrestling matches that determine the fate of Enterprises" ...

Why is the BSFA Council?

Dave Langford

Jenny Glover posed the awkward question: I've often wondered what Directors of the BSFA do. I've never actually been asked to do anything, apart from edit "Matrix", and would be interested to hear your thoughts ...

These thoughts would be easier to organise if I had to hand a copy of the BSFA Articles of Association, instead of relying on a failing memory. The background is that in the beginning, the BSFA was set up as a company limited by guarantee. The people doing the guaranteeing are the members: we've all promised to cough up a quid should the company ever go bust and the Official Receiver demand his pound of flesh. It has been argued that this is a minor deterrent to recruitment, but we appear to be stuck with it.

Companies have directors — someone has to run the thing and carry the can. The BSFA has always had quite a number of these quaint creatures; Paul Kincaid tells me that the total is 16. As I understand it, the Committee consists of voting directors who handle all the day-to-day business and appear with interesting and prestigious job titles on the inside cover of *Matrix*. (Though not everyone listed there is necessarily a Committee member. That would be too easy). What the Committee does is easily defined: along with its fan volunteers and co-opted assistants, it carries out all the work of running the BSFA.

More remote and shadowy, partly ruse and partly squamous, like the Bavarian Illuminati or the Elders of Zion, there is the Council. Nervous readers may leave us at this stage.

Technically, the Council consists of all the BSFA directors, including the non-Committee, non-voting ones ... those mysterious names who only crop up in the AGM paperwork as "retiring by rotation" (which sounds like a rapid exit through a revolving door) and "offering themselves for re-election", as laid down in the awesome Articles. What is the point of them? What do they do?

Speaking as a Council member of long years' standing, I fearlessly reply: *Not a lot*. In the good old phrase, we render the BSFA every assistance short of actual help. Someone may sturdily suggest at this point that the non-voting directors should be abolished. Without checking the Articles, I can't say whether this would be feasible ... and besides, we might have our uses.

The original idea, I believe, was that the Committee did the work while the Council (I'll use this shorthand for "the remainder of the Council") was kept on tap as a mighty repository of SF wisdom and sagacity. When a Committee member asks my advice, I dish it out with remorseless prolixity, believe me. As Co-ordinator, Maureen Speller tried to improve communication with the back-seat drivers through her all-directors circular *Sounding Board*, an idea which could yet be revived. Alan Dorey had had the same notion when he was BSFA boss years and years before, although it never materialised. (I don't remember whether it was to be called *Soft Pedal* or *Mute*).

As well as being founts of wisdom, Council members are traditionally authors and editors of at least some note, who by accepting the position are loaning the BSFA a portion of the clout which allegedly goes with their names. Hon. President **Arthur C. Clarke** is the obvious example of this. Merely infamous Council members like myself contribute less figurehead value, but every little helps ...

No, actually, it doesn't, since although Clarke's name appears on BSFA newspaper and so on, the lesser lights are never mentioned outside the AGM agenda and minutes. I'd guess that this failure to exploit Council names results from general poverty and the once daunting expense of re-doing the letterhead whenever Council membership changes. Now that plenty of our members have or can borrow desktop publishing equipment, this need no longer be daunting.

At Mexican IV, it took me only ten minutes to fudge up an urgently needed BSFA letterhead using the convention newsletter facilities. Over to you, O mighty Committee.

(A third and ignominious use for Council members, I suppose, is as lowly placeladders. The Committee has necessarily grown since the old days when membership was tiny and *Vector* the only magazine: a non-voting Council member can step down in favour of a dynamic new addition to the Committee, without the probable bother of an Extraordinary General Meeting to increase the total number of directors).

The final, unwritten part of a Council member's not very arduous job is — at least according to me — to do occasional reviews and things for our magazines when sufficiently bullied, and to plug the BSFA. I've slipped the contact address into several of my long-running computer and SF review columns (though sometimes the editor gets stroppy and takes it out again). It also goes to members of the Great British Public who write to me about SF: *Thank you so much for offering to send your 2,000,000 word trilogy "Lepermage of Elfspasm". I lack the time for this delightful reading experience, but Cecil Nurse of the BSFA's "Focus" is always eager to ...*

And that's all I do, lazy sod that I am. Next time I'm up for re-election you can always come to the AGM, make a lengthy speech of denunciation, and vote me into oblivion.

The Death of Fanzine Fandom & Other Myths

Michael Ashley

There have been a number of parrot cries while I've been an sf fan. What I mean by that is some catchphrase which a number of people latch on to and then use at every available opportunity so that it takes on the appearance of a self-evident truth, despite being nothing of the sort. For example, I can remember one of "sercon backlash!" from around about 1979. Although now of historical interest only, this was all to do with hordes of serious science fictional types supposedly discovering fandom at the 1979 worldcon in Brighton and subsequently flooding fanzines and fandom with serious science fictional material. Oddly enough, it never happened. What this "sercon backlash" business was, of course, was a *theory*. Sort of interesting, if you like that sort of thing, but with strictly no relevance to what actually went on in the real world.

There is another such parrot cry going round at the moment. This is one along the lines of "Fanzine fandom is dying!" Chief proponent of this theory is Joseph Nicholas. (Curiously enough, also the chief squawker of "sercon backlash!") He's written about this in a number of places. To get right up to date though, I have a letter from Joseph dated 29 August of this year in which he raises the subject again. As follows: "...fanzine fandom is slowly dying out, locked in a long downward spiral that will eventually end in its complete oblivion." He cites a number of reasons for this. In particular, the rise of other activities such as "filking", masquerades and, especially, conrunning and convention fandom. These have lured away younger newcomers. As for the older fans, these have too many other time-consuming concerns these days: "...marriages, mortgages, professional careers, children and their schooling." So, says Joseph, they are "too busy with other things to have the time to write more."

Personally, I think this is all a lot of old bollocks.

Joseph is very much an *either/or* adherent. You're either a conrunner or a fanzine fan. You're into filking and dressing up and partying or you're sat in your room scribbling your next issue. In reality, the one activity does not disbar you from the other: there is no reason why you can't do both. Yes, conventions do take up a lot of time and energy, as can doing a fanzine, but you'd have to be pretty much of a wimp that you were left so effete that you could not take part in any other activity whatsoever.

Much the same applies to his argument about older fans. According to Joseph, you're either bringing up kids or doing a fanzine; you're either all caught up in your job or writing articles. But there's no reason why you can't do both. After all, by the extension of Joseph's logic people with kids would never do anything that took up time — such as paint pictures, write books or compose music. Funny enough, they go right on doing those things. (Some of them even do all three. Surprising they don't spontaneously combust, really).

Joseph's arguments are spurious. Having come out with his dramatic (or melodramatic) Big Statement about the death of fanzines, he is forced into the position of rigging the evidence to prove his case. Actually, not only do I think his arguments are invalid, I don't think even his original premise has much truth to stand with.

Fanzine fandom is dying. Fanzines are well on the road to extinction. Right. So why have I got a pile of about twenty-odd titles that Jenny Glover wants me to review for *Matrix*. Ah — but why let reality get in the way of a good theory... Joseph seems to be an absolutist. If a week goes by without a fanzine then this is the end: there will never be another fanzine ever. Certainly I would agree that there are periods in which nothing much seems to be happening (like last year) but I see no reason why this should be regarded as a permanent state of affairs. As for why these fallow periods occur well, not being particularly adept at handling theoretical concepts and constructs (my original plan of doing philosophy at university was dealt a blow by the fact that I was no damn good at it), I tend to go for the simplest answer possible. So: my own reason for those periods in my life when I do not write anything is: I can't be bothered or, simpler still, I'm lazy.

I don't know if that fits in with the Hegelian dialectic or not but it's the way things are. I could make excuses and say I'm too busy feeding the cats, hoovering the baby, etc but it would not be true. I could write more but I simply won't bother. That's it. I imagine the same might apply to one or two others. The thing is, it does tend to spiral and affect everyone. After all, if no-one else is doing anything then why should I?

On the other hand, there is no particular reason why this should be permanent. For myself, I came away from Mexican IV this year and, for no real reason other than that I quite fancied the idea, I decided to put out a fanzine all about it. Having enjoyed doing that, I thought I'd do some more issues. I'll carry on until I stop enjoying it or I can't be bothered anymore. (At which point, Jeremiah Nicholas will doubtless dust off his sandwich board and trudge the streets once more, proclaiming the death of fanzines. Poor old Joe.)

This need not apply just to me. Despite what Nicholas might claim, there is nothing stopping any of you writing anything you want to write. If no-one will publish it (or publish it quick enough), put it out yourself. There is nothing stopping any of you putting out a fanzine either. That may be a little obvious but it needs saying, perhaps since things have been quiet recently people could do with a reminder. Whatever, participation is what it's all about. It certainly makes things more fun. After all, I know that when I go to the Adept in Leeds this Friday there may be a copy of *Daisnoid*, *LIP* or one of Richardson's daf titles, or maybe something from Steve or Jenny Glover. I presume that dropping through my letterbox in the next couple of days — aside from a shawl of letters of comment, of course — will be the new *Xyster*. And isn't it time Ian Sorensen did another issue?

I'm aware that it's not a big deal, but it's *my* deal. After all, it's not as if I'm doing much else creatively. Any starry-eyed plans I may have had once to write books and stories and be a real writer are unlikely to come to fruition at this late stage. Ditto being a cool white rock star. (I'm afraid I'm still not thin enough — must try harder.) It may not be a lot but this is what I do. I like it and a couple of other people like it so that's enough justification.

I could just do with a little more action from the rest of you, that's all. Leeds has just about got its act together (even Sarah Dibb is currently drafting her "My 50 Sexy Anecdotes About Sailors") but what about the rest of you? As some sort of starting point, there are some current (or recent) titles listed below with brief comments about them. If you haven't seen them, then send for them. If you have and you like them, then write for them. If you think they're crap (some are), then do better yourself. Just do something.

After all, would you like to see Joseph Nicholas proved right? I mean, can you imagine how inferably smug he could be? "Fanzines are dead — I told you so ..." That should be enough to inspire anyone ...

THE EDGE — Imperial College SF Society/TBD — Glasgow University
Unison

These are the lowest link in the evolutionary chain — literary amoebae. They appear isolated, cut off from the broad mass of science fiction fandom. They contain poor fiction, worse poetry, and unpeppable artwork. Other items include quizzes and feeble student-type "jokes". Beyond that, there is not a lot that can be said about them. In terms of quality they are very poor indeed. As editors and contributors come and go, university fanzines such as these tend to have little continuity or chance to improve. (The Leeds University fanzine *BLACK HOLE* is the only exception I can think of, off-hand. Not great but at least occasionally readable).

On the other hand, I presume that these are their collective editors' first attempts at doing fanzines. The only way is up, other than giving up altogether. The editors and contributors concerned may even find that they enjoy being involved in fanzines and continue with it after outgrowing their "zany" student personae (fun for them, tedious for everyone else).

Possibly I'm being overgenerous. There is little sign of intelligent life in either *THE EDGE* or *TBD*. Still, bear in mind that such disparate latter day fanish funsters as Alan Dorey, John Harvey and Mike Ford all emerged from the primordial shithed ooze of Leeds University and you get the idea that maybe there is life after rag week.

The sun is shining and I haven't got the shakes: let them live.

THE LIGHT STUFF — Rhodri James

This is just above the college soc level. The writer/editor has seen Dave Langford's now defunct newsmagazine ANSIBLE and Ian Sorensen's BOB so he has some idea of what it's all about. He manages to flounder around for a couple of pages rehearsing familiar issues ("what is fannish culture?", "why am I doing a fanzine?"). Nothing earth-shaking but certainly less dull than the 100 word short stories and of "poetry" of the previous two fanzines. Perhaps the most promising sign is at the bottom of the first page (a sort of semi-introduction called "Frontispiece"). After having unmed and a-h-d a bit, and got all defensive and paranoid ("of course, as one of the great unwashed outside the main stream of fanzine fandom I should be expected not to know about that sort of thing" ... etc. etc.), he ends by asking, "What do you think?" Right — this is what it's all about. If he gets any half-way decent replies he may do some more issues and they should certainly be better than this one.

Not all the signs are hopeful. At one point he asks, "Why is it that we are continually told that we shouldn't enjoy *Star Trek* or any other of my whizzo faves like Doc Smith, early Asimov and all?" This is a bit dim. But on the other hand I'm still young enough to recall reading Isaac Asimov books as a teenager. I didn't do it for the rest of my life. Maybe he won't either.

GOTTERDAMMERUNG — James McKee/Tommy Ferguson/Mark McCann

These days Tommy Ferguson probably counts as an experienced fan editor as he already has several issues of his own fanzine TASH behind him. I never saw it, though it lives on in its reputation for being more or less unreadable due to terrible duplicating. At least he's got that sorted out — GOTTERDAMMERUNG is produced using some kind of fancy desktop publishing. What is revealed, though, is not too inspiring. It's a mish-mash. Travel articles rub shoulders with articles on cyberpunk and reviews of Sergio Leone films. These are all about a page long and over as soon as they've begun. I've just checked the credits and, well well, no-one is credited as editor. Not surprising — it isn't edited. The whole thing is thrown together more or less at random.

This is lazy. It's also not good enough. They've had two issues to sort themselves out so I expect things to improve radically from issue 3 onwards. There's no reason why it shouldn't. The three of them seem smarter than the dim bulb college set. (I see that one of the co-editors (or co-producers to be more accurate) has not only read Nick Cave's AND THE ASS SAW THE ANGEL but read it all the way through. Somehow I can't imagine that Nick Cave features very prominently in Rhodri James' list of "whizzo faves" ...)

If only they weren't so bogged down in that jokey undergraduate semiseriousness. This means that GOTTERDAMMERUNG is little more than pissing about at present. Yeah, I know it's a free country, but all the same there comes a time when you have to stop pissing about and do a bit of work. Note for Tommy Ferguson: that time has come.

OUTSIDER — Steve Glover

Ditto. Ditto cubed.

Steve Glover had one of the most auspicious entrances to British fandom ever when he pulled out a gun one night at the West Riding in Leeds and threatened to shoot D. West. Pretty cool. (All I did was joining the BSFA in the early to mid-70s and send off for a few fanzines. Boring, huh?) Anyway, it's been downhill since then.

The Glovers have certainly not lacked for enthusiasm, putting out various titles with considerable frequency. Yet how little impression any of it has made. (Their small ultra-freaky DINOSAURS AND DISKETTE FAILURES rose without any trace at all.) And here's OUTSIDER, up to issue 8 now and yet still a potpourri of mediocrity. As far as I can tell, the only reason they print something is because it's there. Any old rubbish is slung together any old way. For the record, the current issue includes travel reportage, dodgy fiction, unfunny "humour" and "jokes", and a conreport by Kevin McVeigh that I should imagine he now regrets having written. There are the usual dire Ken Cheslin cartoons as well.

The whole thing is shoddy and inexcusable. Inexcusable because, for sure, the pair of them know better (and done better — Jenny Glover's MAVERICK has been the best of the various titles). They have been active a while now, have seen a whole load of fanzines and even have regular access to that collective fount of wisdom known as the Leeds Group. Yet they still persist in putting out fanzines that at best can only be described as barely competent.

I don't want them to stop, just get better. Maybe they need a re-think about why they are doing it, what fanzines actually are, who their audience is, and all that folderol. Maybe Steve Glover should cut back on his student-forever image. I don't know. Anyway, quality not quantity in the future. As Leeds fans, you are letting the side down: must try harder.

SHIPYARD BLUES — John Owen

SHIPYARD BLUES is in some ways a more literate version of GOTTERDAMMERUNG. Like them, Owen has access to the technology that provides decent typeset and layout. Like them, he prints very short articles about every subject under the sun. Unfortunately, also like them, the fanzine has very little cohesion. Again, it is not so much edited as compiled. In the current issue (no. 6), there are short pieces (too short, really, to be called proper articles) on electrostatic, detective fiction, robots, oil cartels and spaceflight. In the letter column various earnest correspondents take on literary, tribalism, environmentalism and nuclear power. A bewildering variety, really.

The impression I was left with was that this is the fannish version of *Readers Digest*. (There's even the straight plagiarism bit. Dave Langford's "Crime-watch" piece simply consists of quotes from Robert Adey's book, LOCKED ROOM MURDERS, shame on Langford for submitting it, shame on Owen for printing it.) I kept thinking: why? If I want to keep up with current affairs I'll read *The Sunday Times* or *The Economist*. If I want to know about spaceflight I'm sure Bradford Library has a whole shelf full of books about it.

Owen misses out two things: the personal and anything based on the shared community of fandom. In other words, the two things that make fanzines interesting and unique in the first place. It's a bit of a handicap that, restricting yourself to the topics and approaches that one can get elsewhere and deliberately leaving out all the potentially good bits.

This is ironic. There's the Glovers who know what's what but seem unable to put it into practice, and here's John Owen, literate and intelligent but seemingly unwilling to go all the way and publish a proper fanzine ie, one that is recognisable as such. Still, Owen's been around long enough to know what he likes. If he's happy with an inferior copy of *Readers Digest* then so what? All the same, I don't think it can ever aspire to anything much beyond competent dullness.

SGLODION — Dave Langford

SGLODION is, I suppose, a cross between two of Langford's previous fanzines, TWIL-DDU and ANSIBLE. It has the witty gossip of the former and vaguely sf-related items of the latter. This is an enjoyable enough mixture. My only complaint is that it appears so infrequently that it loses impact. For example, the letters refer to matters which you have to dig out the previous issue to recall. Still, if the worst I can say about SGLODION is that I want more, then this is no bad thing.

Why doesn't he do more issues? Well, nowadays of course, Langford's time is taken up with writing those numerous works of fiction and non-fiction which will soon be piled up in a remainder bookshop near you. It's a decent plug for fanzine culture that none of the "professional" stuff I've read by Langford has been anywhere near as good as his work for fanzines. It's true that some of the latter can appear as if written for autopilot at times (particularly his pieces for PULP) but so far SGLODION itself has been entertaining and enjoyable. (The stuff by Langford, that is. The current issue also contains an extended whine by Chris Priest that is of little interest to anyone other than Chris Priest.)

Langford really needs to win the pools. Then he could concentrate on putting out much-needed regular issues rather than post-boiling dullard "books".

(MATRIX exclusive: Ashley admits to liking something by Langford).

PULP — Rob Hansen/Avedon Carol/John Harvey

I face something of a dilemma with PULP. On the one hand, it is the real thing — a genuine fanzine that does not pretend to be anything else (such as a Small Press publication) and it always has been a decidedly fannish fanzine since its inception. On the other hand — well, it isn't very good.

Now up to issue 18, it can claim to be firmly established, almost something of a tradition. It also by now follows a safe and rather dull formula. Recent issues have been bland to the point of interchangeability. The newest issue seems typical. Dave Langford contributes a filler column originally written for a computer magazine, Bob Shaw recycles one of his by now not-all-that-funny convention talks (long past its sell-by date) and Rob Hansen continues with his ploddingly pedestrian TAFF report. This is all less than sparkling. By far the best contribution comes from Harry Bond with his refutation of some of Joseph Nicholas' recent sophistries (his death-of-fanzines spiel, in fact). Curious to note that Harry Bond, never particularly noticeable as an intellectual giant, is now in a position to run rings round one time master of Marxist dialectic, Joseph Nicholas. This is not just a reflection of the increasing roteness of Nicholas' arguments but shows how far Harry Bond has come on since his early days of sci-fi puppydom. Good for him. And tuff ah! Nicholas.

One article is not enough, though. It might help if there were a decent letter column. PULP is peculiar, though, in that the majority of its correspondents

are American. (Of the 14 letters printed in PULP 18, 10 are from the United States or Canada.) This tends to make it a little imbalanced. PULP is a British fanzine yet in terms of fandom community seems to look firmly to the U.S. Why? Well, for one thing the column is edited by former Yankette Avedon Carol, whose sympathies may be expected to lie across the ocean. For another, a number of British fans simply do not rate it very highly, or highly enough to bother writing to. Rightly or wrongly it has therefore acquired a reputation for being more or less irrelevant to the current British scene. Unfortunately, PULP is considerably stunted by this lack of involvement of a sizeable section of British fans.

This is all a shame. PULP could be a good, solid, middle-of-the-road fanzine. Not outstanding, but reliable. If it is to become so, it needs a substantial editorial shake-up and injection of fresh ideas. It may also be an idea to jettison the Langford filler column altogether. (It does neither him nor PULP any favours). As for the transatlantic correspondence, I'm afraid it's a coup. The real competition is over this side of the Atlantic. Personally, I'd like to see PULP take part and compete a bit more in the future. After all, why should the Leeds Group have to make all the running (and win all the awards)?

CONRUNNER/BOB — Ian Sorensen

I've only ever seen two out of the fifteen issues of CONRUNNER so it may be premature of me to comment on it. As it happens, my interest in running a convention is on the same level as running a mayonnaise factory: pretty minimal. Still, if there has to be a whole fanzine devoted to convention running (but why?) this is probably as good as it will get. Personally the dim and literal-minded plodder who inhabits the letter column are enough to up me off permanently. (Nigel E. Richardson recently summed them up as "joyless weekend bureaucrats, control freaks and jobsworths".) Sorensen himself seems less than happy in being associated with this lot of intellectual donkeys and has recently put out a more overtly fanzine called BOB. Obviously this is a step up, if only on the grounds that there's none of that cretinous burbling about "Tech Ops" and the like that infested CONRUNNER.

In the first issue Sorensen talks sense about fanzines and fandom, and there are some nice cartoons from his partner-in-tightness D. West. I could do without the ponderous set-piece humour though and could do with a bit more about Ian himself instead. Still, maybe next issue. For now, this is a decent first issue.

Message for conrunners: do not give up, there is hope for you all.

SISTERS — Pam Wells

Pam Wells has put out a number of different fanzines: NUTZ, SIX SHOOTER and now SISTERS. None have made a great impact; at the same time, none have been completely dire. Maybe Pam excels more in her role as non-stop Party Person. (As I write, she is winning friends and influencing people in the States in her current role of TAFF winner.) Personally, I'd like to see her put more effort into the written side of things.

The current fanzine, SISTERS, is an indication that might be worthwhile. It consists of three pieces by Pam, Jeanne Gonnell and Lucy Huntzinger, vaguely on a theme of sisters/sisterhood. Normally I'd have expected Lucy Huntzinger's to be the stand-out piece, as she is the best writer of the three. Still, she merely cruises this time with a slight piece about (yet again) the Bronte Sisters. This leaves Pam to steal the issue with a brief but effective bit of personal angst regarding her sister. Who'd have thought?

Pam certainly set off to the States full of fanzine enthusiasm. I hope she doesn't burn it all in her Party Reptile mode. When she comes back I'd like to see her carry on from SISTERS with some more stuff about herself. Beneath that shallow chocolate-gobbling exterior there would appear to lie something more serious.

THIS NEVER HAPPENS — Lilian Edwards & Christina Lake

An appropriate title, maybe, as it is possible that the editors are giving up on this. It's been two years since the last one and they seem uncertain about whether to carry it on.

This is a shame. Although always a hit and miss affair, I definitely miss this fanzine when it's not about. While the average of fan is male, plonking, bearded and sexless, Lilian and Christina are — well, neither male nor bearded, for a start. They acknowledge the fact that yes, there is more to life than science fiction and computers; and that music, parties, food, drink and generally being alive and having a good time is on the whole worth documenting rather than with William Gibson's latest "novel".

Maybe I'm looking back at it with rose-coloured spectacles because I think it's gone. Or maybe I'm biased because they printed my stuff and Nigel Richardson's. Whatever, it's one fanzine that I wish were still going. (Or if it is, appearing more frequently than it currently does.) Just to be objective, I must admit that the current issue is below their usual standard. It includes

literary pastiche by Colin Greenland (the No Men in Ponytails rule still applies, I'm afraid), Jan Ory on her ex-boyfriends (yet again) and Kevin McVeigh with something he probably now regrets writing. No matter, I'd still like to see this fanzine coming out regularly. Get on the case, twins.

XYSTER — Dave Wood

The same sort of thing applies to XYSTER. I want to say nice things about it because some of the earlier issues weren't too bad, Dave Wood seems pretty decent, and — again — he prints my stuff. But unfortunately something seems to have gone wrong this year. He's certainly been putting out frequent issues — within a few weeks of each other just recently — but the quality control seems to have gone out the window. Frequency is now all that matters; never mind if there's nothing to actually go in the issues. Issues 17 and 18 have been particularly sparse. Both consist of a solitary guest article (in issue 17 an article by me about frolicking in the snow in Bradford (how ya'll laugh!) while in the latest issue Rob Hansen looks at deviancy in Superman comics), while the rest of the fanzine is filled with Wood meandering on at what seems like first draft random. And that's it.

At his best, Wood has more of a grasp of what fanzines actually are and what they're for than most people mentioned so far — and this is a boring old fart as old as my dad, one of those old-time failed-out guys. But at the moment he needs to think more about what he's doing. XYSTER was never earth-shattering but it was good to have it there and personally I'd like it back in its original pre-vacuum state. You know — with something actually in it.

SLUBBERDEQUILLION — Nigel E. Richardson

Nigel Richardson is not the typical sf fan. He doesn't have a beard, wear badges or listen to folk music. He doesn't care much about fanzine traditions. On the other hand, he is smart, super-literate and aware of what goes on in the wider world. What he writes about, and always has done, is life from his own fucked-up perspective. Girl trouble, crap jobs, 30-something angst, yet more girl trouble. Life and Nigel do not always see eye to eye. This is okay by me because Nigel can be superbly funny when detailing the petty frustrations of his own life. Admittedly, he can also be exasperating. Nigel is never happy nor satisfied. His previous tendency towards squeamishness now verges on snobishness. Snobs are not renowned for their sense of humour. Unfortunately, without a sense of perspective his writing could degenerate into self-pity. As he's one of fandom's very few smart dogs, though, I presume he's aware of this.

SLUB has all the usual ingredients: Nigel sitting on a train despairing at the ugly wretches he's surrounded by, Nigel at work bored by the dullards he's forced to work with, Nigel at the Leeds Group on Friday night despairing at the lack of cute women in the Adelphi. This kind of lower white boy angst he still writes better than anyone else I know. It's been too long since he did a fanzine so it's nice to have something by him at last. On the other hand, he is covering familiar ground. Again, smart dog that he is, he even lets us know that he's quite aware of this "But I've said all this before. I'm repeating myself. Repeating myself both on paper and in life. I seem to be reliving a period of life that was no fun at all the first time around. Got myself into a loop." Well, get yourself out, boy. Just so long as you write about it afterwards.

Get this fanzine. If you're cute and female give him a kiss too. He needs it.

DAISNAID — D. West

The unfortunate thing about D. West is that his reputation goes before him. There are probably people in fandom, or on the fringes, who judge him more by other people's comments than what he actually says or writes himself. In some areas he seems to have acquired an image of a Messianic law-giver crossed with a Mafia godfather.

So, for the record, my own opinion is that he is the voice of sweet reason. He states his position clearly, and argues coolly and logically from that. You're always free to disagree but it seems reasonable that you should apply the same strict use of logic that he does. (Would you believe that in practice this doesn't always happen?) Fandom not usually being noted for its level of intellectual depth (for all the high IQs fans can seem a remarkably dim lot at times — you expected, of course), it seems reasonable to cherish West as one of the few people who can put the whole damn thing into some sort of meaningful perspective.

This is all rather heavy, a bit like one of his articles, really. And unlike DAISNAID itself. While his work for others has tended to be lengthy single-subject analysis and overview (of fanzines, fandom, artwork, con-running), DAISNAID is more a pithy synthesis of his various other pieces. The current issue covers, among other things, Mexican IV, the Leeds Group, Ian Sorensen's wallet, and what is or isn't a fanzine. What's particularly impressive is his ease at switching from anecdotal reporting to theoretical philosophising. (Or should that be philosophical theorising? You see — I can't do it.) The disparate subjects are all dovetailed neatly together. I should also

point out that West is a very funny writer. (Again, this is something that seems to get lost in the usual image of him).

All this and Joseph Nicholas too. Yes, that man turns up yet again, doing his fanzines-are-at-the-end-of-the-line parrot-squawk, once more (this time from the U.S. fanzine TRAPDOOR). West's demolition of Nicholas's fallacious arguments should be essential reading for anyone who is interested in fanzines or the future of fanzines. If you haven't read this then I urge you to. And if you haven't read anything by West in the past (and if you've been judging him on the strength of other people's opinion of him) then you should get hold of this fanzine. You have nothing to lose but your preconceptions.

Afterword ...

Fanzines are dying out! Go tell it to the above. They are all there and very much alive. I am very much alive and have no plans on going away. The thing that's wrong with the parrot-squawk of "fanzine fandom is dying" is that it is just a theory. (A bit like Marxism. Remember that?) Meanwhile things go on in the real world just the same. Why not join in? Life is short and full of enough disappointment as it is. So here are some addresses. Although I've indicated my preferences already, don't take my word for it.

This column of fanzine comments has been sponsored by Amnesty International. The rest is up to you, brothers and sisters. Thank you.

Addresses

THE EDGE — Imperial College SF Society, Imperial College Union, Beit Hall, Prince Consort Road, South Kensington, London SW7.

TBD — Glasgow University Union, 32 University Avenue, Glasgow G12 8LX. GOTTERDAMMERUNG — Flat 4, 27 Camden Street, Lisburn Road, Belfast BT9 6AT.

OUTSIDER — Steve Glover, 16 Aviary Place, Leeds LS12 2NP. SHIPYARD BLUES — John D. Owen, 4 Highfield Close, Newport Pagnell, Bucks. MK16 9AZ.

SGLODION — Dave Langford, 94 London Road, Reading, Berkshire RG1 5AU.

PULP — John Harvey, 8 The Orchard, Tonwell, Herts. SG12 0HR. CONRUNNER/BOB — Ian Sorenson, 7 Woodside Walk, Hamilton ML3 7BY.

SISTERS — Pam Wells, 24A Beech Road, Bowes Park, London N11 2DA. THIS NEVER HAPPENS — Christina Lake, 47 Wessex Avenue, Horfield, Bristol BS7 0DH.

XYSTER — Dave Wood, 1 Friary Close, Marine Hill, Clevedon, Avon BS21 7QA.

SLUBBERDEGUILLION — Nigel E. Richardson, 9 Windsor Green, Leeds LS25 2LG.

DAISNAID — D. West, 17 Carlisle Street, Keighley, W. Yorks. BD21 4PX.

You can get a sample copy of any of the above by sending an A4 SAE to the editor(s). SHIPYARD BLUES is also available by subscription (£2 for 3 issues). D. West is chronically skint so you might like to send him 50p, as well.

BSFA London Meetings

Maureen Speller

David Gemmell managed to double-book himself, and as Legend weren't able to offer a replacement speaker at short notice, so by the time you read this, I hope that another of our fiendishly controversial discussion meetings will have taken place, this time on the relationship between the media and Science Fiction.

Jane's discussion on the future of conventions has already apparently gone down in fanish lore as yet another attempt by the BSFA to slag off Eastercons, though quite how people deduce this when they weren't there, I don't know. Neither can I see why the BSFA isn't entitled to use its meetings as a forum for open discussion. I don't think being a BSFA member precludes one from discussing fandom in its rich diversity and the meeting was, on the whole, more interested in cons generally rather than Eastercons in particular. The tape is now with Jenny Glover and will be transcribed. Whatever the rumour, the actual discussion was lively, thought-provoking and gratifyingly well-attended as well as generally enjoyed. It also saw the attendance of out-of-towner Darroll Pardoe, from Chester, who happened to be passing through that day.

In July we welcomed Graham Joyce all the way from Leicester. Graham entertained the company with tales of his year's sojourn on a Greek island, writing his novel, the much-acclaimed *Dreamside* (and rightly so — it's a jolly good novel). It has to be admitted that the assembled throng were more interested in his experiences with the Great Celestial Ouzo and handy tips on how to prevent cockroaches climbing into your bed, but a good time was had by all, including yours truly, who forgot to pay for the room and had to send

a cheque later and P. Kincaid who had a memorable argument with a hanging basket.

In August, everyone was on holiday or at Wincon or both, so there was a hastily organised session of Devil's Advocate which produced some startling defences of Hannibal Lecter (Andrew Seaman), Jabba the Hut (Marcus Rowland), Nic Farey (Rob Newman), Dracula (someone known to me only as Mac), Satan from *Paradise Lost* (John D. Rickett) and The Predator (Ben Jeapes). I don't think it came as any surprise that Dracula was deemed to have been most misunderstood, at least not after Mac's remarkable performance, which almost brought the house down even if the accent did wear perilously close to *Spitting Image's* Pope at times. Oh, and he swears he likes garlic, honest.

In October, we will be featuring Kim Newman as our guest. Highly regarded as author and film critic, he will be talking about his new novel *Jago* and anything else which seems appropriate. That's October 17 — don't miss it. On November 21, we are looking forward to welcoming Ian Sinclair, author of *White Chappel*, *Scarlet Tracings*, *Downriver* and numerous books of poetry.

I'm still working on next year's programme — any suggestions will be gratefully received, as ever — but tentative guests include Stephen Marley, author of two exceptional fantasy novels, and Tom Holt, infant prodigy, E F Benson pasticheur and highly inventive author in his own right.

Pausing only to note the very respectable plug we received in a recent issue of *SF Chronicle* and to thank everyone for their support so far, let me remind you that the BSFA London meetings take place on the third Thursday of each month, excluding December, at the Old Coffee House, Beak Street, Soho. This is convenient for Leicester Square, Piccadilly and Oxford Circus tubes. Meetings are held in the upstairs room, which is open from 1830 onwards. We are always willing to distribute news and fliers at these meetings. For further information please contact Maureen Speller, 60 Bournemouth Road, Folkestone, Kent CT19 5AZ (Tel: 0303 529939).

Clubs Update

No column from Tommy Ferguson, this time, just a quick round-up of snippets that crossed the editorial desk...

Birmingham: Ken Campbell will talk on October 18, then there will be the annual debate with Birmingham University SF & F Society on November 15. There is no formal meeting on December 20 — but there will be a Christmas meal at the Wagon & Horses, Oldbury. Greg Bear wants to talk in February, but that is not confirmed as yet. Meetings are normally at the Australian Bar, Hurst Street/Bromsgrove Street, starting at 1945. Contact Martin Tudor for more details (845 Alum Rock Road, Ward End, Birmingham B8 2AG (tel: 021 327 3023).

Coventry: the Coventry Polytechnic Science Fiction Society meet weekly alternating between a drink and chat session in the Hand & Heart on Far Gosford Street and showing a video in a room somewhere on campus.

Hull: The Hull group have got an interesting programme arranged: Conventions on October 22, Children's SF on November 12, the Small Press Scene on November 26, Turkey reading on December 10, SF Art on January 14, Modern Technology in SF on January 28, Idiots Guide to Lit Crit. on February 11, Colin Greenland speaking on February 25, Feminism in SF on March 10 and a talk on R.A. Lafferty on March 26th. Details from Carol Ann Green, 5 Raglan Avenue, Raglan Street, Hull HU5 2JB (tel: 0482 445804).

Peterborough: On November 6, the Fantasy sculpture makers "Chimera" will give a talk at the Bluebell Inn, Dogthorpe, then on November 20, Writers in Peterborough will present Robert Swindells, the children's fantasy writer. Contact Pete (tel: 0733 292025) for more details.

Portsmouth: Meetings take place at the lounge bar of the Electric Arms, Fratton Road, Portsmouth. Details from Keith Cosslett, 12 Crowsbury Close, Emmsworth, Hants. PO10.



Statement of Account

It is a legal obligation to publish the accounts of the Association as approved by the Annual General Meeting.

THE BRITISH SCIENCE FICTION ASSOCIATION LIMITED

(A Company Limited by Guarantee)

Financial Statements
For the Year Ended 30 September 1990

Directors' Report

The Directors submit their Report and Financial Statements for the year ended 30 September 1990.

Results and Dividends

The profit for the year, after taxation, amounted to £330 as shown in the Profit and Loss Account on Page 4. The Directors do not propose the payment of a dividend.

Review of the Business

The principle activities of the Company during the year were the promotion of science fiction and the publication and distribution of science fiction magazines. The level of turnover achieved is consistent with the previous year and again a profit for the year has been achieved. The Directors hope to utilise the profits achieved over the last two years to ensure the continuation of the Association and its continued expansion. As in previous years the Directors have not been remunerated for their services which are provided on a voluntary basis.

Status of the Company

The Company is limited by guarantee and does not have a share capital.

Fixed Assets

The movements on fixed assets are shown in Note 5 to the Financial Statements.

Directors

The Directors who have held office since 1 October 1989 are as follows:-

A C Clarke	
J White	
M J Edwards	
D R Langford	
S Ounsley	
A Sawyer	
D V Barrett	(Resigned 18 January 1990)
M S Porter	(Resigned as Co-Ordinator 31 March 1991)
P Kincaid	
J Raine	
B Cockrell	
L Holliday	
K McVeigh	
B Parkinson	
C E Nurse	(Co-Opted 19 November 1989)
J Glover	

Arthur C Clarke, Paul Kincaid, James White and Andy Sawyer retire by rotation and being eligible offer themselves for re-election.

Taxation Status

Given the mutual trading status of the Company it is not subject to Corporation Tax on its trading profits.

Auditors

R G Vernaschi is to resign as Auditor at the Annual General Meeting and a resolution to appoint Mears Hinton, Chartered Accountants, will be put to the Members at the Annual General Meeting.

By Order of The Board
(signed) B Cockrell, Secretary, 40 Cyprus Road, Finchley, London N3 3SE
31 March 1991.

Report of the Auditors to the Members of The British Science Fiction Association Limited

I have audited the Financial Statements [as below] in accordance with Auditing Standards.

In my opinion the Financial Statements give a true and fair view of the state of affairs of the Company at 30 September 1990 and of the profit for the year then ended and have been properly prepared in accordance with the Companies Act 1985.

(signed) R G Vernaschi, Chartered Accountant, Stepping Stones, 1 Conigree Lane, Tewkesbury, Glos GL20 5TF.

31 March 1991.

Profit and Loss Account For the Year Ended 30 September 1990

	Notes	1990 £	1989 £
TURNOVER		11,428	10,768
Cost of Sales		7,090	6,549
GROSS PROFIT		4,338	4,219
Other Operating Expenses	1	4,008	3,202
OPERATING PROFIT		330	1,017
PROFIT ON ORDINARY ACTIVITIES BEFORE TAXATION	2	330	1,017
TAXATION	4	—	(22)
PROFIT FOR THE YEAR	9	330	1,039

The notes attached form part of these Financial Statements

Balance Sheet As At 30 September 1990

	Notes	1990 £	1989 £
FIXED ASSETS			
Tangible Fixed Assets	5	71	8
CURRENT ASSETS			
Debtors	6	496	754
Cash at Bank		4,270	3,525
		4,766	4,279
CREDITORS: Amounts falling due within one year	7	778	626
NET CURRENT ASSETS		3,988	3,653
TOTAL ASSETS LESS CURRENT LIABILITIES		4,059	3,729

Balance Sheet As At 30 September 1990

continued.

Notes	1990	1989
£	£	£
CAPITAL AND RESERVES		
Other Reserves	8 27	27
Profit and Loss Account	9 4,032	3,702
	<u>4,032</u>	<u>3,729</u>

These Financial Statements were approved by the Directors on 31 March 1991.

(signed) K. McVeigh, Director
(signed) Brett Cockrell, Director.

Accounting Policies

- The Financial Statements have been prepared under the historical cost convention.
- Depreciation is provided to write-off the cost of tangible fixed assets over their estimated useful lives using the reducing balance method at the following annual rates: Library - 10%. No depreciation is provided on the awards fixed asset as the cost was provided by the Members by request and was posted to an undistributable reserve.
- Turnover represents income from subscriptions, publications, advertising and associated sales.

Notes to the Accounts
For the Year Ended 30 September 1990

1.	<u>Other Operating Expenses</u>	1990 £	1989 £	
	Distribution Expenses	3,260	2,510	
	Administrative Expenses	748	692	
		<u>4,008</u>	<u>3,202</u>	
2.	<u>Profit On Ordinary Activities</u>			
	<u>Before Taxation</u>			
	Profit on ordinary activities before taxation is stated after charging:			
	Depreciation on Tangible Fixed Assets	5	6	
	Auditors Remuneration	<u>125</u>	<u>100</u>	
3.	<u>Employees</u>			
	There were no staff costs during the year and none of the Directors received any remuneration from the Company.			
	The average number of employees of the Company during the year was:			
	Directors	<u>15</u>		
4.	<u>Taxation</u>			
	Corporation tax at 25% on bank deposit interest received by the Company	—	(22)	
	Overprovision in previous years	—	<u>(22)</u>	
		—	<u>(22)</u>	
5.	<u>Tangible Fixed Assets</u>			
	<u>Library £</u> <u>Awards £</u> <u>Total £</u>			
	Cost at 1 October 1989	913	27	940
	Disposals	—	—	—
	At 30 September 1990	<u>913</u>	<u>27</u>	<u>940</u>
	Depreciation at 1 October 1989	—	—	864
	Charge for the Year	<u>5</u>	—	<u>5</u>
	At 30 September 1990	<u>869</u>	—	<u>869</u>
	Net Book Value:			
	At 30 September 1990	<u>44</u>	<u>27</u>	<u>71</u>
	At 30 September 1989	<u>49</u>	<u>27</u>	<u>76</u>

6. <u>Debtors</u>	1990 £	1989 £
Debts within one year:		
Trade Debtors	467	634
Prepayments and accrued income	29	37
Other Debtors	—	83
	<u>496</u>	<u>754</u>
7. <u>Creditors</u>		
Amounts Falling Due within one year:		
Trade Creditors	589	467
Corporation Tax	19	19
Accruals	<u>170</u>	<u>140</u>
	<u>778</u>	<u>626</u>
8. <u>Other Reserves</u>		
Balance As At 1 October 1989 And 30 October 1990	<u>27</u>	<u>27</u>
9. <u>Profit and Loss Account</u>		
Balance At 1 October 1989	3,702	2,663
Profit for the Year	<u>330</u>	<u>1,039</u>
	<u>4,032</u>	<u>3,702</u>
11. The Company does not have a share capital as it is a Company limited by guarantee.		

BSFA Back Issues
Service and Archives
Maureen Speller

Sales and requests for lists have dropped sharply in the last two or three months, probably because I didn't send a piece for the last issue. Neither are there any suggestions, not even obscure ones, as to what we might do with the magnificent collection of back issues we've amassed over the years. Disappointing but fairly typical in my experience, unless the BSFA membership is engaged in a collective piece of sadism to ensure that I'm buried alive under magazines. Surely not?

Basically, the options are that we continue trying to sell the issues piecemeal and recoup what revenue we can, a process that will be lengthy and do little to release any space in my box room; recycle the lot, for cash or not, depending on the state of the waterpaper market or else —

It has been suggested that perhaps we could consider mailing some of the back issues (I suggest the more recent ones, certainly in the case of *Matrix*) to fan groups in Eastern Europe. This would certainly be a lot more constructive than having them sit around doing nothing here. The only problem would be the cost.

So my next question is, would people be interested in donating to a postal fund to despatch parcels of magazines to Eastern Europe? If you are, don't send money in the first instance, but write and let me know that you are interested in contributing to this. I'm happy to carry out the posting — my local Post Office is quite used to dealing with my bizarre posting requirements — but I would like some doth and possibly suggestions from people about where to send this stuff. I'll be contacting other informed persons about this matter.

What do you think?

On the archives front — well, they're still here and still needing some work from me but are in a sufficient state for me to answer queries from members if there are any.

All enquiries concerning back issues and archives should be directed to Maureen Speller at 60 Bournemouth Road, Folkestone, Kent CT19 5AZ (tel: 0303 52939).

Stop Press

Andy Sawyer sent various recommendations for children's SF and Fantasy (he works as a children's librarian and has compiled a leaflet on the subject) including R.C. O'Brien's *Mrs. Frisby and the Rats of NIMH*; Terry Pratchett's 'Nomes' books — *Truckers*, *Diggers* and *Wings*; Anne Dalton, Monica Hughes, definitely Diana Wynne Jones, possibly Ann Halam, Louise Lawrence or Andre Norton.

Does anyone have any more suggestions? I'm getting interested in the subject too.

Competition Corner

Roger Robinson

Results of Competition #95

"Des. Res."

There were a very small number of entries, but all were entertaining. Three of you tried Gormenghast (which I thought might be favourite), two tried the Unseen University and a lone voice extolled the virtues (or otherwise) of Ballard's High Rise apartment.

As the entries are fairly lengthy — I overlooked (as most of you did) the limit of 150 words — I will only print in full the winning entry. This came from Steve Palmer who penned the following —

Gormenghast Castle

Huzzlematch and Diuno are delighted to offer this neo-Gothic residence to the discerning buyer (property is leasehold as there is a hereditary autocracy on site).

Property comprises n rooms, where n is a countable infinite number, n of which are in need of attention; also kitchen facilities, stables, school, graveyard, mountain, poet, and other modern conveniences.

Property is deceptively cosy. Would suit D.I.Y. enthusiast. Prospective buyers will need to be fit, and should possess some self-defence ability.

Viewing is according to property's private laws, i.e. every alternate Tuesday when it is not raining, provided the moon was visible on the previous night, with owls flying backwards. Offers invited: Huzzlematch and Diuno also offer mortgage facilities, so please bring your soul along as this will be required to complete any deal.

Lots of nice touches! — as there were in the three runners up — Dave Wood (Unseen University), Matthew Dickens (High Rise) and Daniel Buck (Gormenghast). As noted in the last *Matrix*, extra runners up prizes go to these three. What prizes? — well, you'll have to enter the next competition to find out!

S.C. Hatch added a surveyor's report to his Unseen University tower apartment piece suggesting "a parachute in case of war between cabals of lurking runes" and promises "Breakthru views over the Ankh river" while Dave Wood (on the same subject) mentions "Hint of Octarine paintwork" and "A satellite spell dish" and a "Weatherwax Micro-Thaum oven".

Daniel Buck at first thought he would not be able to remember enough about Gormenghast to submit an entry, but realised this lack didn't affect normal Estate Agents, so he embellished his description of the property with (among others) the adjectives — Superb, Secluded, Splendiferous, Majestic, Scenic, Ornamental, Classic — and that was only in the first three lines! Peter Ellis joined in the fun and promised "Helpful staff available for re-hire" and noted that the butresses were "Bestial in their beauty".

Matthew Dickens in the only Ballardian entry listed features The Terminal Flat such as "(2) A gallery of crash victims", "(5) A drained swimming pool" and "(14) A series of paintings of imaginary sex organs".

Competition No. 96

"Half Done"

The following list of 18 titles or series will lead you to 18 names (either first names or surnames) of 18 authors. To help you, they are presented in alphabetic order of the required name, and ALL the 18 names have five letters each. You will be able to complete the puzzle even if you do not identify all the authors.

- | | |
|-----------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| 1. The Dry Prescott series | 10. Oath of Fealty |
| 2. The Soul of the Robot | 11. Woman on the Edge of Time |
| 3. Red Moon & Black Mountains | 12. A Fine and Private Place |
| 4. The Pitypops of Doom | 13. The Xanthi series |
| 5. Gold the Man | 14. The Skylark of Space |
| 6. The Stunlines Steel Rnt series | 15. The Discworld series |
| 7. The Black Cloud | 16. The Dragon Minstrel |
| 8. Oath of Fealty | 17. 20,000 Leagues Under the Sea |
| 9. Dr. Adder | 18. Zoo 2000 |

Having got some or all of these 5-letter names, you have to place them in the 6x6 grid below so that each name can be spelled out by letters in adjacent squares (adjacent up, down, left, right or any of the 4 diagonals). The starting squares of each of the 18 names have already been filled in, and the only other rule is that you can't use the same square twice in the same name. Obviously as there are 90 letters from the 18 names, and only 36 squares in the diagram, lots of squares will be used in more than one name. A sample (smaller) square is given to show how twisted the names may be.

DIAGRAM — to be completed

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C Y H V .
. . V . N C
G . P . J S B
. T P .
M . . J . H
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SAMPLE hiding BETTY & PLUTO

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A B C Y H      A B C Y H
E F T H        E F T H
I N T O L      I N T O L
M N U P        M N U P
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The usual £5 book token for the winner and three surprise prizes for the runners up. All entries and comments to Roger Robinson, 75 Rosslyn Ave, Harold Wood, Essex RM3 0RG by November 15, 1991.

In Memoriam:

The Cock Tavern

Caroline Mullan

Nowadays the sign on what used to be the Rank Xerox building invites you to *Make this Your Landmark*. The sign is new, but the building has indeed been a landmark for fans, for behind it lies the Cock Tavern, where the City Illiterates and other fannish groups have been meeting for 21 years. No longer, though. On the 26th September the Cock closed its doors for the very last time.

It was a pleasant pub, not particularly distinguished in any way. It was moderate in all things: medium size, moderately comfortable, middling good beer and food, an upstairs room that could be hired for a moderate fee. But it had fannish virtues: it was open between 1730 and 2300 in the evenings; it was convenient for many people; it served pizzas for years before most pubs started serving proper food; it was quiet in the evening when the business boozers had left, except for us; and the juke box was tame. Best of all, the staff were friendly. And, love him or loathe him, we must not forget Boot, the Old English Sheepdog we first knew as a bouncing large pawed puppy in 1977, and who died last year of canine old age.

We did not let it go without a wake. On Friday 13th September more than 60 fans gathered to say goodbye, to the pub itself, and to Jack, Barbara and Bernie who had served up for 14 years. Philip Strick was there, who founded the Science Fiction Evening Class at the Stanhope Institute 21 years ago, thus forming a group which needed someone to drink when the class was over but not the conversation. Malcolm Davies, Roger Perkins and Mike Westhead, veterans of the earliest years, were there. John Clute, an ex-class-tutor, came, and Lisa Tuttle, another, sent her apologies from Scotland. City Illiterates of all generations were there, and others who were drawn after them; the conrunners, organisers of *Beacons*, *Contrivance* and *Helicon*, the Glasgow Worldcon bid; members of PAPA, and the Committee of Friends of Foundation; all of whom had been meeting regularly in the bar or the upstairs room. Some people came who hadn't been for years, or who had only visited once or twice; Tony Chester, many stones lighter and much prettier than when he last came, Chris Walton, Abi Frost, Tim Broadbribb and many more. Some people even came for the very first time ever — like Dave Langford!

But now it is gone. The refurbished building that was our landmark is empty and without its lunchtime trade (and despite fannish efforts) the Cock Tavern is not a viable business. The last guidedog has been bought with money collected across the bar. Jack has finally retired at the age of 78, Barbara and Bernie will look for a license somewhere on the South Coast — they fancy Brighton. The brewery has removed the pumps, the signs have been taken down, the doors closed. The Cock Tavern is no more.

The City Illiterates continue. The Class runs again this year, at the City Library Institute in Stokely Street, Holborn, with Brian Stubbledorf as tutor, and the rest of us will still meet every Friday, though now at the Lord Nelson on Stanhope Street a moment's walk from the Cock. The other groups that met at the Cock are also moving to the Lord Nelson, at least for now. The Lord Nelson is smaller, but quiet, the beer is better, and there are tables in the sheltered yard. Life goes on.

