

# Shipyard Blues



## Shipyard Blues



## Play Me Some Shipyard Blues...

Ah, this regular cycle of produce-an-issue/disappear-into-limbo-for-a-month/panic-and-produce-next-issue seems to be assuming all the appearances of a habit. Five issues since June 1989, and still going strong: I've amazed even myself (especially since it took me twelve years to produce fifteen issues of **Crystal Ship** – just goes to show the power of electronic publishing).

### *Peculiarly Long Ears*

I discovered recently that I have been breaking the law, and I now have to go down on bended knee to you lot and beg your forgiveness, promise that I've mended my ways and won't do it again, not-in-a-million-years-honest-guv!

This burst of guilt has come about because I attended a seminar on the Data Protection Act at the OU. The DPA is a strange piece of legislation that is supposed to enable people who believe data about them is being held on a computer to apply to see it. All very well and good, you might think, but there are two aspects to this Act which makes it more of a bureaucratic

nonsense than anything else.

First of all, there is the process of gaining the information. To start with, you have to know that somebody is holding data about you. That's no easy thing in itself, since business and Government use large scale computer databases all over the place, and any one person could be on hundreds of databases. As you have to pay a significant amount for each search, getting the full lowdown on what all these computers are holding on you could be a long, expensive drag. (And in any case, all the really interesting ones are exempted, like police and health records).

Secondly, there is no lowest point at which the law cuts off and says "Anything smaller than this doesn't really count." So, even the 'umble fanned like myself is caught up in the net if we use our computers to keep a database on our readers and contributors. As I do keep my records on a computer (and it doesn't have to be specifically a database file, either – keep your records on a word processor, spreadsheet or hypertext file and you're still caught by the Act) I have been breaking the law, as it hasn't been a registered database.

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So, what am I going to do? Plead ignorance and throw myself on the mercy of the court? Nah, where there's a will, there's a way, and in this case there are a couple of loopholes in the law. Firstly, I could simply throw my fan file away after printing it out on paper. That's right, if a file of information is kept on paper, and not in the computer, then you're untouchable. You can keep the most scurrilous, inaccurate data you like on paper, and there ain't a damn thing anyone can do about either seeing the file, or getting it changed, without all kinds of legal wrangles. Trouble is, keeping my fan file on paper is next to useless, as the main feature of it is the addresses, which I use to print labels for distribution.

I'm taking advantage of the second loophole, which says that files are outside the Act if they are used purely for mailing lists, and contain no information other than that needed to compile the list. So, I've modified my fan database to contain just essential information of name and address, plus response record (so I can tell when to cut the shy folk off for non-response). All the little pithy tid-bits ("Hey, this is one great guy." "This woman writes like her only dictionary is in Swahili." "Fantastic illustrator – shame about the b.o.") are being ditched (into a paper file, naturally – wouldn't want to lose all my black-mail material, would I?), and the Owen fan file will be clean from now on.

Why am I telling you all this? Because of another clause in the DPA, which says that even people whose

names are on computer mailing lists have to be *told* that they are on one. So now you've been told. If you don't like being on my computer, you can object, and I'll take your name off the mailing list database. Of course, that might mean that you don't get further issues of **Shipyard Blues**, since my (non-silicon) memory is lousy, and I'd never remember anyone on paper files. That's the way the database corrupts, I'm afraid.

As for what I really learned in the Data Protection Act seminar – well, I guess it could be summed up as the Law may not actually *be* an ass, but it does have *peculiarly* long ears.

### *Saving The World*

The recent report on global warming issued by the United Nations should, by all accounts, have laid to rest any lingering doubts that anybody might have about the reality of the Greenhouse Effect. However, counter-attacks by the conservative Establishment against environmentalists, in particular the Marshall Institute's earlier 'repudiation' of the Greenhouse Effect, show that there is an alarming number of head-in-the-sand attitudes coming to the fore. Conservative politicians and managers the world over are stalling on efforts to meet the environmental crisis because: 1/ it's always easier to prevaricate than it is to act. 2/ acting will inevitably cause some inconvenience to voters as change takes place – that might cost the instigators votes. 3/ it will cost lots of money, initially out of the profits of the industrial concerns and their shareholders,

in order to develop new, cleaner products.

So far, the government of the USA has been conspicuously silent on this issue. As the major industrial power in the world (alongside Japan) the USA has to be in the forefront of any effective actions to stabilise and control global warming. One of the key factors in this has to be rapid transfer of technology from the developed nations to the Third World, where burgeoning populations seeking higher standards of living are going to offset any savings that might be made in the more developed nations. If India and China supply their populations with refrigerators using the older CFC gases, and they continue to use carbon fuel sources (wood, peat, coal, oil, etc) for cooking and heating, then the Western world could reduce its output of CFCs and  $\text{CO}_2$  to zero and still not make any inroads into ozone depletion and global warming (other than preventing it going still further upwards). I can understand the reluctance of industrialists to give away technologies they'll spend billions developing (after all, few of the developing countries are rich enough to *buy* the new stuff), and yet this is precisely what they will have to do. This really means action on the part of governments the world over to ensure that this happens. Hard decisions need to be made, and I, for one, am not confident that the major governments are at all willing to make them.

One way that national governments could accelerate the process of clean up is by adopting legislation that taxed the polluters. This would

have three effects. First it would send up prices of raw materials like oil and coal by a substantial amount, giving added impetus to efforts to reduce the use of these energy sources. Secondly, higher carbon-fuel prices would undoubtedly encourage more research



into non-polluting, sustainable energy production, as the price differential would be much reduced. Thirdly, it would force industrialists to clean up their plants, to stop them dumping poisons from their various processes into the atmosphere or into the sea. The message would be clear – clean

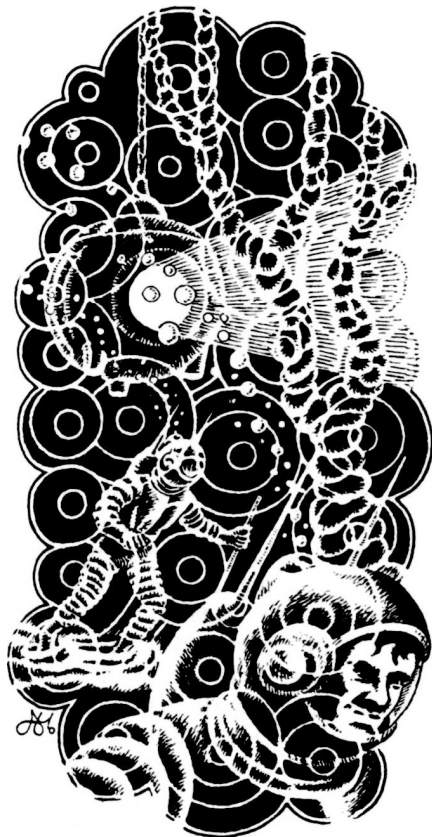
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up your act or be taxed out of business!

The other side of all of this is responsibility at the individual level. We are all of us contributing to global warming in some ways, whether by using our cars, by having a refrigerator and freezer filled with CFC gases, by keeping our heating turned up too much, and a thousand others ways. We all have to become aware of what we, as individual consumers, can do to bring about change. I don't have many answers to that yet, other than the obvious ones mentioned above. I'd like to find out more, though. Anyone got any ideas? (And, yes, the tree that goes into producing the paper on which **Shipyard Blues** is printed is a factor I'm already bothered about. If anyone knows where I can get good-quality white 100 gsm recycled paper, I'll investigate it.)

There is, of course, a third angle to this, too. The pressures are going to be on us all to adopt what I call the 'Terminus Approach', after the planet chosen for the establishment of the Foundation in Asimov's classic series. If you remember Terminus, it had one outstanding feature: it had very few natural resources of its own, so the Foundation had to develop new technologies that were very economical to manufacture and to run. That's what we have to do – develop far more products which are truly 'environmental friendly', using little resource in their manufacture, little energy in their use, and being fully recyclable when used up. You only have to look around your own house to see examples of things which could be made

more efficient – heating and refrigeration systems, TVs, washing machines, cars. They aren't made like that now because there is no demand, no incentive – but they could be!



### *Is Nuclear Really The Way To Go?*

A recent article in **The Guardian** raised doubts in my mind about whether any credence at all should be placed in the pronouncements of the British nuclear industry. It seems

that the Atomic Energy Authority at Harwell have had to admit that the figures they compiled in the eighties to convince the Government that the generation of electricity using wave power was uneconomical were themselves rather, ahem, uneconomical too, but with the truth. The AEA examined in some detail the claims made for a type of wave power generator known as Salter's Duck, which basically bobs up and down in the waves, converting the wave motion into electricity. It was proposed that strings of Salter's Ducks tethered off-coast could provide quite substantial amounts of electricity cheaply, and with little effect on the environment.

In its wisdom, the Government gave the AEA the job of evaluating the wave power machines, and, not surprisingly, the AEA came down on them like a ton of plutonium. "Costs would be much higher than originally claimed", said the AEA. On a cost per kilowatt basis, wave power would cost 9.85 pence/Kw, while good, wholesome nuclear energy could cost a mere 6.8 pence/Kw. "Oh good", said the Government, "that's that settled then", and promptly withdrew all grants from the Salter's Duck project.

Now the AEA are sheepishly admitting their figures were a teeny bit out. The actual figures for wave power are now calculated as costing 5.25 pence/Kw, handsomely undercutting nuclear power by 23% (even before the horrendous cost of decommissioning aging nuclear plant is taken into consideration). Little errors went to make up the 4.6 pence/Kw difference, like estimating the

cost of raw materials in building a Duck at £10,000, when the manufacturers' estimates were more like £850, like overestimating the breakdown rate by a factor of ten, and so on.

Seriously, though, can anyone now believe anything from an industry who are prepared to lie quite outrageously to kill off a potential competitor? How many other lies have they slipped past us without us noticing? (How about the one about power so cheap we wouldn't need to pay for it?) And what about the role of a Government that gives the job of evaluation to an outfit with such strong vested interests? I mean, would Ford accept Vauxhall being encouraged to write the road test reports on Ford cars? Seems to me we can now extend that old cliché: there are lies, damned lies, statistics and nuclear industry estimates!

### *Post-Literacy*

The discussion about illiteracy in SB's loccol is rather missing the point: what we have today is not illiteracy, but **postliteracy**, the state of no longer needing to read. Only very few people in our western societies are actually illiterate: many, however, are non-literate, that is, despite being able to read, their prime sources of information are not books, or other extended pieces of writing, but the visual media, TV, photographs, comics, **The Sun**, etc. This probably reflects the rather short-term attention span we are trained in as TV viewers from an early age. Nowadays, people can take in quite readily a chopped up/rapidly changing audio-visual input (as in TV

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commercials, pop videos, news broadcasts) much more easily than they can concentrate for the time required to assimilate information from a book.

I think I look on it as a change resulting from exposure to a multi-media world. In the past, the written word was the one true source of all learning: the other art forms, theatre, art, even music, were not so widely available that they could dominate the written text, whereas now the opposite is true. Through sound (radio, records, tapes, etc) and vision (photography, TV and cinema), people are enthralled and amused by a vast range of visual and aural input, and the solitary pursuits of literature have become a minority occupation.

The danger in this, of course, is that the populace as a whole are less independent-minded, and more tending to a homogeneous group, all watching and listening to the same material, with no leavening from more independent sources. Why are governments so obsessed with controlling the media, especially television? Because they know that it is the conduit of knowledge for the vast majority of the population. Control that, and they influence what the people think, within reason. You have to be sophisticated about it, and give the illusion of freedom, but control is always the ruling party's main objective, whatever their complexion.

So, if you want to undermine a government, encourage people to switch off their goggleboxes and read widely, whether books, magazines or newspapers (eschewing the lower end of the market, ie, the tabloids).

### *Jammin' With Jimi*

There aren't all that many really good books on rock music – the field throws up a fair amount of journeyman work, and an awful lot of sycophantic PR crap for every Charlie Gillett, Nik Cohn, Greil Marcus or Lester Bangs that comes along. So it's good to be able to report a new addition to the pantheon of outstanding rock writers, with the publication of Charles Shaar Murray's **Crosstown Traffic** (by Faber & Faber). Subtitled "Jimi Hendrix and Post-War Pop", **Crosstown Traffic** doesn't just draw an accurate picture of Jimi Hendrix and his work, but also places him firmly into context in the development of rock music from its roots in the blues through to the modern day performers influenced by Hendrix, like Prince (deny it though he may).

Murray weaves a fascinating picture of Hendrix's music as an important crossover point between black and white music, when a black performer moved over into white man's rock, and took it to new heights of daring improvisation. Murray's key point is that Hendrix did this all knowingly, taking his own roots on the black music scene, and fusing them with the white sounds coming out of Britain, New York and California. It took the transplantation of Hendrix to London to trigger that burst of creativity which shook the rock world at the time, and which still has repercussions even now. Charles Shaar Murray chronicles all of this clearly and honestly, and doesn't gloss over Jimi's faults, but does explain them.



**Crosstown Traffic** is a superb book, and deserves a place on any discerning rock aficionado's book shelf, regardless of whether you happen to be a fan of Jimi Hendrix or not.

### *Payin' Yer Dues*

In last issue's loccol, Cecil Nurse made a number of points about the 'pernicious attitude' that pervades fanzine fandom, in particular with regard to paying for fanzines. I've been firmly on the side of the argument that says the correct form of payment for a fanzine is either a letter of comment, a contribution (whether of art or article), or a trade in fanzines.

When I first started publishing **The Crystal Ship**, back in 1977/8, for a while I did set a subscription rate for those who might feel happier simply paying for the zine. I never got many takers, (which was hardly surprising!) and it always seemed to me at the time that the copies I sent to subscribers were wasted – I didn't get the payment I really wanted out of them, which was communication.

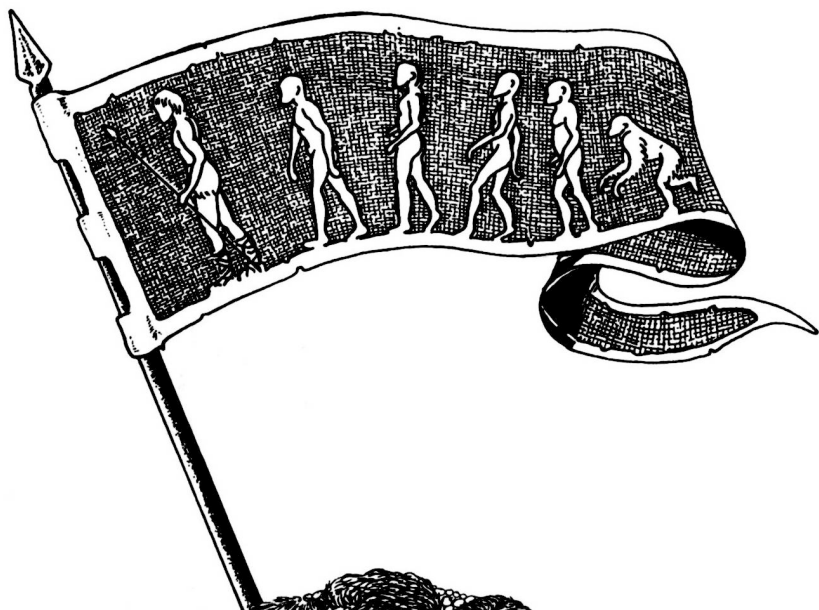
Well, I'm older and wiser (hah!) now, and perhaps not quite so dependent on the egoboo element of 'the fan-nish usual', so I'm re-instating subscription rates for readers who feel that they want to read the fanzine without the added burden of actually communicating with me about it. Copies will continue to be available for the usual fare of locs, contribs and trades (and this is still the preferred currency), but anyone who wants to contribute to the Owen coffers to the tune of £2 a year (or three issues, if there are any hiatuses in future pro-

duction) is now able to do so. By putting it at that figure I just about cover my costs on a three-issue year, and give the subs a bonus if I squeeze a fourth issue out within a twelve month period. Any subscriber con-



tributing in some way gets their subscription extended. Happier now Cecil? I expect the cheque Real Soon Now!

Right, that's my stuff over with (bit wordy this ish). On with the show, with a little number from Ken Lake.



Same Seed....

Shep...

## **KEN LAKE**

# ***Let Tribalism Flourish!***

Do you have a warm, comforting feeling that Margaret Thatcher and the Tory Party, despite all recent upsets, really has the interests of the British people at heart? Do you feel that, given a fair chance, the Labour Party could turn Neil Kinnock into a viable national leader and revive the flagging fortunes of the country's industry and commerce?

Would you support the entry into Britain of a quarter million, or six million, or fewer or more Hong Kong Chinese on the grounds either of honour and obligation, or their undoubted industriousness and ability to bring a new era of prosperity to this country? Have you really understood that with effect from 1992, anyone living in any EC country has the right of residence and work in Britain, and that this includes all the Macanese Chinese (those who live in Macao which is currently under Portuguese sovereignty but reverts to the People's Republic in 1997)?

Did you see that we admitted well over 100,000 new immigrants during 1989, most from the Caribbean, India and Pakistan, and would you feel better or worse if those people had

come instead from Australia, Vietnam or the Baltic States? Do you, like me, live in an "ethnically mixed" area, where on that short walk to the paper-shop one says cheerily "Good morning" three times and "Salaam aleikum" five times, not forgetting the odd "Namasti" and "Hi there man!"?

What we're talking about at the moment is a tight little island which by all accounts has far too many people in some parts but still vast empty spaces (grouse moors, hills and mountains) waiting to be developed. Back before World War II ended, the government of the time engaged what we would now call a "think tank" to look into the future and plan a Britain "fit for heroes"; their conclusion was so radical that the report has never again emerged from that Sargasso Sea into which all the most promising ideas are instantly dropped by governments with vested interests to consider.

In essence, the think tank concluded that the ideal size for Britain's population was 25 million. At that time we had 49 million, so the remaining people were to be transported

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(they called it "assisted emigration") to Australia, where a few million people sparsely inhabited a few coastal spots of a vast continent. Since then, we have taken in something like five million non-British inhabitants, and added some more of our own as well. How can we all live in amity in this crowded and increasingly crime-ridden and filthy environment?

Put that question to the Hungarians living in Rumania, the Moldavians absorbed into the USSR, the Russians shipped into the three Baltic States and seeing their futures menaced by growing nationalism there. Ask the Basques – split between France and Spain with neither government prepared to recognise their own genuine aspirations for freedom and independence. Have a word with the Welsh and the Bretons, whose children for a century or more were punished for speaking their own language in public, even in the playground. Talk to the Occitans – the Provençal peoples, the inhabitants of Languedoc – whose fine literature has been ignored by the French educational system and whose language is still banned from schools.

Think of the Aboriginal inhabitants of Australia, the Maori of New Zealand now "celebrating" the sesquicentenary of the swindle that goes under the name of the Treaty of Waitangi, and remember the poor Tasmanians, wiped out to a man in the 19th century because they just didn't fit into the colonial society of that Australian offshore island province. Go to a Sikh temple in London, to

the Ukrainian Uniate Cathedral and the fine Armenian Church of St Sarkis; harken to the call of the muezzin across many an English city, but listen in vain for the sound of churchbells throughout the Moslem lands. Investigate the aspirations, uncover the torture and murder, of the Crimean Tatars, the Gypsies and Jews under Hitler's Reich, the Russians themselves in the days of Stalin. Recall that Stalin was himself a Georgian, Kaganovitch a Jew, Khrushchov a Ukrainian, then see how many of their own people were killed to maintain the power of the centralised Soviet State. Then turn to the fate of the Amerindians under every government from the Declaration of Independence onward; remember that slavery formed a basic part of the practice and theory of those United States of America and their founding fathers.

Ask yourself for the single, obvious reason for this catalogue of murder and ghettoisation, prejudice and failure of what we should regard as basic human tolerance for fellow humans, from the times of Babylonian exile for the Jews to today's vicious campaign of repression against the whole Chinese people by their own rulers. It's so obvious, we always try to find reasons to disguise it: people only really like, understand, sympathise with, and wish to live with, those who share their language/dialect, their religion/sect, and their race/customs.

Mind you, we find it easy enough to fall out with noisy neighbours even if they share all these characteristics

with us; families split asunder to show that even "blood ties" cannot bind in the face of provocation, and the most loving of couples may suffer the traumas of divorce rather than prolong a relationship once disillusion sets in. But these all pale into insignificance when compared to the single universal trait of mankind: Tribalism.

Of course we all realise now that MAD (mutually assured destruction as a means of maintaining world peace) now stops us from destroying civilisation, but "brush wars" continue, peoples rise up against oppressors, the spirit of freedom continues to inspire us all to acts which may in fact bring no more than our own deaths. But inevitably, unfailingly, necessarily, almost all these stirrings are Tribal: the peoples who want out of a given system are seeking the right (as they see it – though how one defines or justifies any "rights" is always a question fraught with problems) to live with their own kind.

Not so long ago, Scotland and Wales were given the chance to have their own National Assemblies: the people voted against it. Yet the SNP and Plaid continue to exist, have wide support and declare that they want separation from what they see as the Dead Hand of Parliamentary Government, centralised on London and – they believe, wrongly as it happens – working to their disadvantage. There are two Cornish parties fighting for independence for the Duchy and encouraging the rebirth of the old Cornish language; in the Six Counties of Northern Ireland we have the ruined

detritus of a unilateral decision to separate an integral part of Ireland and govern it by what a sizeable part of its population has always seen and experienced as an alien and discriminatory group dedicated to the destruction of their beliefs and customs.

Yet all over the world, most nations are gradually finding that their power-driven leaders are prepared to hand over limited sovereignty to the United Nations, to the European Community and to other supranational bodies in the cause of economic, environmental, and even political improvement. The Tribes are still forcibly subsumed into the Nations, while those Nations are becoming closer and closer in their determination not to succumb to mutual destruction. I believe the time may finally be coming for the reassertion of Tribalism, coupled to a more sensible Internationalism.

The whole southern part of the United States is becoming a foreign land to English-speaking Americans, with Spanish radio and TV stations, street signs and taxi services, discrimination against English speakers in the labour market and growing demands for local autonomy. The Soviet Union is gradually being shattered as the Ukrainians and Moldavians and the peoples of the Moslem south all fight for their Tribal independence. The Tibetans have recently fought bloody major battles with the occupying Chinese forces, and it can only be a matter of time before the vast Moslem Tribes of North China start to agitate for separate recognition.

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For a century or so, the United States pretended to a policy of natural assimilation – yet still major differences exist. The Soviet Union embarked on the Russification of one-sixth of the world's surface, but ultimately failed. In Japan, the Koreans are a persecuted minority like the vast hordes of the lower castes in India – yet these we regard as “democratic” countries! The pretence that Flemings and Walloons can form a single country called Belgium has been maintained only by force and guile, and cannot last much longer. No matter where you look in the world, our increasingly mixed-up races, nations, creeds and peoples are pressing the merits of their own Tribalistic lifestyles.

When I was 14 years old, Otto Jespersen's “Mankind, Nation and Individual from a Linguistic Point of View” gave added impetus to my fascination with languages and peoples. In 1946, when I was 15, I read “Language as a Social and Political Factor in Europe” by Stanley Rundle – this contains maps galore showing the immense range of linguistic (and hence Tribal) enclaves in all European countries as they existed before World War II. Full of enthusiasm, I decided to write an update, and contacted the USSR Embassy to ask for current details of linguistic minorities in that vast Empire. Needless to say, I received a reply (from a man named Yastrebov, I recall) which gave me no help at all – it was decades later that the full horror of Stalin's treatment of these same minorities was revealed, for we were already

overburdened with our discoveries of the results of the Third Reich's racist policies.

Yet all the murders, all the transportations – Volga Germans are now returning to East Germany and indeed to West Germany from their exile in Uzbekistan – and all the determined attempts, by totalitarian and “democratic” governments alike, to wipe out Tribalism in Europe, Asia, Africa and the Americas have failed, as completely as they have failed to protect the interests of the Aborigines and Maoris in our two most “enlightened” dominions, the “Red” Indians, and the original inhabitants of Central and Southern America under the “democratic” rule of the New World's republics.

The answer, surely, has to be to forget all this stuff about Nations. What is a Nation but an area of land arbitrarily defined by conquest and forcible incorporation of unique Tribes? I cannot think of a Nation in the world today which does not in some way discriminate against minorities, and I cannot believe that there is any way this can be stopped other than by changing the way the world sees itself.

Of course we need universal peace and collaboration, the destruction of Customs barriers and armed forces, the rationalisation of world finances, the universal acceptance of the fundamental equality of all peoples and their equal right to whatever they can produce and sell and enjoy without harm to others.

But the world's people will not “internationalise” because they can-

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not: too many agelong animosities and inbuilt cultural differences make this quite impossible. The stumbling block is not Tribalism, because this is obviously a "natural state" of mankind – we create groups small enough, and homogeneous enough, to share basic attitudes, but we will probably always regard outsiders as a threat to our way of life.

National governments are not natural in any sense: they are all enforced. People *want* universal peace and collaboration. They *want* to be recognised as members of small, inward looking Tribes. They do not want or need Nations. If the United Nations ever really wanted to bring about world peace and collaboration, it would take the example that lurks already within its organisation and expand it to cover the world.

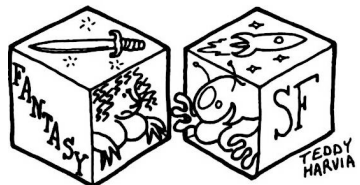
I refer to the fact that, to bolster Communist power immediately after the war, Stalin ensured that Belorussia and Ukrainia had their own seats in the UN as "independent nations." Now you and I know damn well that this is a parody of all that is sensible and reasonable: why, even Ukrainia is not a single entity, for its people are virulently split into two groups – the Russian Orthodox, and the Ukrainian Uniate which recognises the Pope as Head of its Church. To you this may seem unimportant: to the Ukrainians – who also have different dialects and other Tribal differences – it is all-important, and explains why so far Gorbachov has been able to control separatist movements in the Ukraine by playing off Orthodox against Catholic, just as in poor suffering

Armenia the Moslems were able to dirty up an already unfortunate oppression by an attempted genocide to match that of the Turks in 1915.

Let the UN say "From Year X, every group of people capable of mustering enough internal support to declare itself an integral Tribe shall be given international recognition as an independent Tribe within the UN," and yes, you would see the sparks fly. But you would at a stroke cut through all the nationalist pretence, the nationalist repression, the ongoing plot of the powermongers to hold on to control of minorities for the sake of that power itself. And all over the world, peoples would no longer have the need, the desire or the excuse to fight – instead, they would have every possible incentive to demonstrate the strength of their internal cohesion, and their ability to make a positive contribution to the good of mankind as a whole.

Remember Ovid's "Hic ego barbarus sum, quia non intelligor ulli," and try thinking of yourself as part of your own Tribe, willing to join with other Tribes worldwide so long as your own interests were protected. I think you'll enjoy the feeling: if so, get out and fight for it to happen!

How about us escaping  
our tight little boxes, babe,  
and cross-fertilizing.



MARY GENTLE

# Machiavelli, Marx And The Material Substratum

*Creating Worlds for Fun and Profit*

*The Truth About Orthe*

I think it was Liz Holliday, ex-editor of **Focus**, who started this one off. At least, it was Liz who told me that there's a correspondence course being run to teach people how to write fantasy novels. The question that sprang into my mind (after *Why? For God's sake, WHY?*) was, of course: How?

Well, the first thing you do is create the world in which your fantasy novel takes place; and the first thing you do to do that is draw a map...

We will draw a veil over the hysteria, bad language, and chewed carpets that follow. And over the hour-long Hyde Park harangue on how 'fantasy', from being the world's oldest tradition of literature, is latterly drowning in sub-Tolkienian, sub-Andre Nortonian dump-bin tripe, bearing American book covers that would not know costume or armour research if it stood up and bit them on the bum.

We will instead move on to the point where I thought *ulp!* and started wondering how it actually is done. World-building, I mean. The creation, for purposes of fantasy, sf,

surrealism, or whatever, of a world that isn't this one.

Individually, I suspect.

And given that I only know how one person does it, it's that one person's account of it that you're going to get....

One of the comments about Orthe that surprised me most, and that I've had from more than one person, is: *but there are different languages on Orthe!* They don't all speak the same language the *whole world over*... To which my unspoken answer is always: But of course. That's the way things are in the real world.

That's when I realised where I turned for the model for my alien world. This one. Well, Orthe was going to serve as a metaphor for us, wasn't it?

Okay, but at least half the intention is that it should exist as a concrete reality, and be there for its own sake. This, I think, is what mainstream critics can't realise about sf: the simultaneous presence of literary construct and scientific construction. Everything is at once real, and a metaphor.



I knew all this when I was making Orthe. Dimly, and in my gut. Now I'm not there any more, I can step back and say how I did it; now that I don't have to believe in it any more. The first thing you have to do to create your world, you see, is believe. You know it isn't real, and you firmly believe that it is.

You don't just believe in a vacuum.

Take the name, Orthe. Long ago, when Methusaleh had just fallen off the Ark and I was seventeen, I took up a dictionary and played around with the roots of words. Orthe comes from Earth

The origins of anything fictional always go back further into your past than you think, that's Rule Two. Dig down. It's there. If you need to create a world, the chances are that you have at least one inside you.

Creating your world... In terms of planetary construction, and whether it's for sf or fantasy, there isn't any substitute for basic knowledge. Geology is an old interest of mine, and when at college I studied climatology: I can put an ecosphere together. Somewhere in my files there's a world-map of Orthe, with the prevailing winds on a transparent sheet, and I fiddled with latitudes until I had the Southland's climate the way I wanted it (Mediterranean). This put the Desert Coast just about where it should be to be desert providing I stuck in a range of mountains to steal rainfall from it. Following the logic gave me the length of the Kasabaarde Archipelago, the Storm Coast (where I wanted it), and jungles to the far south (offstage and fine by me).

When I wrote **Golden Witchbreed**, I knew where the devastated areas of 'ancient light' were, and I built them into the climatic

model. So when in **Ancient Light** I have weather moving out of millenially-established patterns, I know I can have that. I laid the groundwork for it.

The material substratum has its own logic. As Marx remarked, it controls the ideological superstructure. Or was it the other way around? I'm cheating a little. Before I ever drew a weather-map, I knew the Southland would be roughly European, and the Desert Coast North African. I had visited most of the Southland before I was seventeen. Tathcaer is all the Italian and French cities I ever fell in love with on annual camping holidays; the Wall of the World is partly walking on Dartmoor and partly driving over the Alps; Morvren Freeport is Venice before I ever went there, and Kasabaarde comes from the very first time I ever watched Casablanca as a child: that cosmopolitan city in which anything and anybody might come together...

Seeds and memories: memories and seeds. Worlds grow.

The seeds you make your world from are, in part, history. The Southland's *telestres* are partly an attempt to realise a 17th century parish community, with all the immobility that implies, but modified on matriarchal lines. And partly, *telestres* are the memories of my grandparents in similar parishes, and families that didn't, until my generation, change much over the past two hundred years. Inevitably, given that, my viewpoint character is an outsider; TathGaer is a quarantined city, and the time spent in Hanathra *telestre* is short. As we are exiled from our own history, so **Golden Witchbreed** and **Ancient Light** are narratives about exile. You

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can create a world: there is no guarantee you'll be able to get into all of it.

How do you create a world?

A world is people. People on a world-scale equals politics. Politics equals Machiavelli. Sorry about that. I get funny looks when I say I read Machiavelli for pleasure. It's true that most political philosophers are heavy-going, much as I love 'em; but not him: Niccolo's your man, he describes what men (and it generally is men) really do.

Since he was describing nascent capitalism, and I – in **Ancient Light** particularly – needed to create on the one hand postindustrial agrarianism and on the other post-industrial multinational feudal corporatism, the connection may seem faulty. All I know is that when I saw Sulis SuBannasen's conspiracies, the hired assassin Blaize, Ruric's treachery, and the Desert Coast's *hiyek* wars, I saw them all in the bright colours and passionate brutalities of Machiavelli.

Or is it, of Machiavelli on stage?

How do you create a world? You fall in love with Jacobean drama, and you justify it by creating a world in which it can happen; create it literally from the ground up. As the Jacobean writers used their ideas of their Roman and Greek past, so I knew I could use their tropes to say all I ever needed to say about power and the uses of politics, about the greed of companies and of individuals, about exploitation of worlds, and how worlds are damaged, and how, like diamonds, we are cut with our own dust.

I think, somehow, readers want to believe that worlds come extempore. Showing you round backstage, where you can see the battens holding up the painted scenery, and the deeply-dug

foundations, is less satisfying. Orthe is solidly researched in terms of rock and stone, rain and crops, political use of resources. Does that make it too prosaic? Or people want to believe that worlds come without roots. Orthe is bits of my teenage years, travelling, and what I read. Does that make it too derivative? It doesn't matter, if out of scraps and roots you can create something that *works*.

How do you make a world?

You work from character. In **Ancient Light**, there was always going to be Calil bel-Rioch, the last of the Golden Witchbreed; there were always going to be the *chiruzeth* ruins of cities in her visions. Given that my seminal (ovarian?) image, at seventeen, was the end of **Ancient Light**, and that all else in those two books tends inevitably towards that, I knew that at least one level of Orthe was going to be insupportable in 20th century scientific terms. That was fine by me. I knew I could invent the science by which it became possible. And build in the levels of religion, mysticism, and madness needed to buttress it.

How do you make a world? You start with ambition. Usually the ambition to be *better than*. Ultimately you build what doesn't exist out of what does. What tools you use – scientific research, metaphor, analogy, political analysis, wish-fulfilment, recycled memory – depends on the uses you want that world to serve.

I still remember Orthe as somewhere I have been, although I only ever saw it through someone else's eyes. I remember it real. I have the map to prove it.

How do you make a world? That's how. Of course, when I do it these days, that isn't how I do it at all.

## A Column by SKEL

### Worth Series Consideration 1

I've a few recommendations to pass on, on account of I've been doing a lot of reading lately. In fact I've been doing nothing much but read lately, although this last is probably a consequence of the former. Lots of miscellaneous material – SF, thrillers, Private Eye and spy stuff. I've even managed to luck onto some new-to-me series, all good-to-excellent.

I don't know if you're familiar with the works of Loren D. Estleman, but he's responsible for two of the series. His 'Amos Walker' private eye series has really hooked me. I started with the fairly recent **Lady Yesterday** which kinda creeps up on you, and went straight back to the library and grabbed **The Midnight Man** and **The Glass Highway**. Just the other day I found a couple more; **Downriver** and **Every Brilliant Eye**. I think those five will leave me halfway through the Walker canon, and there's a lot of other Stockport library branches I can hit once I've exhausted this particular branch's supply.

Yesterday I also picked up the same author's **Any Man's Death**, one of the series based around a mob hit-man named Macklin. It was **Roses Are Dead**, in the same series, which started me looking for an more books by the same author. I liked the way it brought the world of Major, Big-Time Crime into the world of everyday realities with which we all

must live. I mean, you don't think of Mob hit-men having the same problems as regular guys. If a hit-man had a problem he'd blow it away, right? "Whadya mean I can't park here?" \*BLAM\* "Hey, Loser, you charged me for two packets of breakfast cereal, and I've only got one." \*BLAM\* "Look asshole, I've queued for two hours just to get this goddamned form. Now you're telling me I've got to go away, fill it in, and rejoin the back of the line?" \*BLAM\*

But I guess these guys have the same problems as all the rest of us. One wouldn't normally stop to consider that a Mob hit-man might have problems with his marriage. It can happen to the 'best' of us, I guess. I thought one of the early scenes was brilliant, the one featuring Macklin's wife and her lawyer:—

"What does your husband do for a living, Mrs Macklin?" he asked.

"He's a killer."

It took him a moment to assimilate the answer. By then he had already written it down. He read it and looked up. "I'm afraid you misunderstand. Do you mean to say he beats you?" His inner cash register chimed.

"No, I mean he kills people for a living. He's a killer for hire."

He smiled tentatively. Her face didn't move. Smoke curled in front of it. "You're serious?"

"Ask the widows of his victims."

"A hit man."

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"A killer."

He nodded, made two marks with the pencil, and sat back, tickling his ear with the eraser. "And what is his gross income?"

God, I love that last line. There's no doubt that in Mr. Estleman's mind Mob hit-men are several rungs above divorce-lawyers. I also liked the way he wrote "made two marks with the pencil". He doesn't spell it out, but we all know immediately that the marks in question were '\$\$'. I won't spoil it for you. If you come across it, it's a damned fine read.

I don't know if you can call two books a series – maybe it's just wishful thinking – but Dick Lochte's **Sleeping Dog** was an absolute knockout. I picked it up on spec, on the strength of one of the back-cover blurbs which went, in part, "Imagine a cross between **The Maltese Falcon** and **Catcher In The Rye** and you'll have an idea of what Dick Lochte has pulled off here."

The basic premise is that "Serendipity Dalquist, a precocious fourteen-year-old from LA who's seen it all (on television), comes home to find that her beloved pet terrier, Groucho, is missing. She pesters the police who, as a practical joke, recommend Leo Bloodworth, private eye, as the right man for the job".

Not amused, Leo finally manages to fob off the tenacious teenager – "Call me a cockeyed optimist, but I figured that closed the book on Miss Serendipity Dalquist and her missing mutt. Four nights later it flipped open again". And how! It seems there's more to this missing mutt than meets even the private eye, and lots of folk start getting decidedly dead. In fact by the time it's solved the complex case achieves nationwide notoriety, and both of the principal protagonists

are persuaded to cash in on their 'fame' by writing a book on the case. A mischanced merger in the publishing business results in one publisher ending up with both books. Obviously two books on the same subject is one book too many from a single publisher, so the decision is taken to edit them into a joint opus, with alternate chapters from each viewpoint. The conceit is that **Sleeping Dog** is that book. Both 'voices' are excellently captured, and the result is a literary lagniappe that is simultaneously a sumptuously satisfying spread. The second novel in the series, **Laughing Dog**, while not quite as satisfying, comes creditably close.

"You gotta help me Doc."

"Ah, Mr. ...er...Skelton. What seems to be the trouble?"

"Look at that last chapter, Doc."

"Hmmm, yes, I see. 'Tenacious teenager', 'missing mutt', and 'decidedly dead'. Ah, and here's 'complex case', 'principal protagonists', and 'nationwide notoriety in the same sentence. Hmm, and 'mischanced merger', 'both books' and 'literary lagniappe', not to mention 'simultaneously a sumptuously satisfying spread' and 'comes creditably close'. You seem to have developed a severe case of the disease that we in the medical profession know as 'alliteritus'.

"If caught early it's usually not a serious problem, but it can metastasize into an invariably infectious, relatively rare, violently virulent, prodigiously painful, and finally fatal form... Oh shit!"

Providing he makes a miracle recovery Mr. Skelton will be back next issue with an instalment dedicated exclusively to the 'Charlie Muffin' books written by Brian Freemantle.

## ANDY SAWYER

### Lock Up Your Datestamps... Here Come The Librarians!

So here I am taking names at a registration desk as people turn up for the weekend, meeting people and getting to know them and looking forward to lots of drink and intensive discussion on the theme for this conference. But why the *deja vu*? When two or three fans are gathered together, they will assassinate the characters of Charles Stross, Joy Hibbert or Greg Pickersgill. When two or three members of the Community Services Group of the Library Association are gathered together, they will talk about Ron Sturridge or John Saunders or Joe Hendry. Otherwise, the atmosphere is ominously familiar. A convention, after all, is a convention, even if it's a weekend school. This one is about aspects of librarianship, but it could have been SF. There's the same sense of people leaping at friends they haven't seen since the last one. The same clustering of bodies around the bar and loud conversation about how the Association of Assistant Librarians weekend school in 1986 cleared the bar of everything alcoholic by the first night. The same huddling of eager young

acolytes around the Famous Writers – sorry, Chief Librarians. I take out my notebook and write the title of this piece in large letters on the first page.

Registration complete. One person is very stropky about her employing authority not being mentioned on the delegate list. Whose fault is this? Good grief, if this is the worst fate can throw at us, we'll have done OK. It must be her fault for not putting it on her application form: we later discover that it isn't and feel bad about it for thirty seconds. Then I meet a former boss whose authority *also* isn't mentioned. She doesn't care. Feel better.

Nice to see Marilyn again: she was branch librarian in the library at the end of my road in East Ham many years ago – a great job it was, at the time, made better by the fact that I could wake up at ten to nine and *still* be at work on time. I know she's had some promotions since. "So what are you doing now, Marilyn?"

"Chief Librarian."

Oh. God, it *was* a long time ago...

Conference kicks off with a panel discussion on the future of libraries

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post-Green Paper of 1989. Apparently the rush of defense of the principle of the free library service was almost unprecedented. A lot of sense was talked, with a sense of (cautious) optimism. Joe Hendry, charismatically inspirational, though quieter than the only other time I'd seen him in action – but he had only arrived from Scotland fifteen minutes ago. John Saunders from Surrey living up to his reputation as a gadfly – some outrageous ideas, but more ideas per minute than many a more ideologically right-on character would have in a week, and often making perfect sense – until you go away and think about it.

Later I talk with a prominent advocate of Community Information, now working for another Merseyside borough. When told where I'm from, he has a few words of praise for my chief, whom apparently he's met in some Merseyside Chief Librarians' forum. My chief is the man who, when I returned from a course given by the man I'm talking to with a lot of ideas about how we could improve our own abysmally low standard of community information, told me that the topic was this year's 'fad'. I say nothing.

Library Association Chief Executive George Cunningham is to give the 'Keynote Address'. I spend some time wondering what this craze for keynote addresses is, and what the hell a keynote address is, anyway? This one is forceful – plugging the "The Library Association is good for you" message to a group of people who are often cynical about their profes-

sional association – and complimentary – what a good turn-out. Well, considering that we aimed for sixty, hoped for seventy, and got a hundred plus, we've done pretty well. Then our mighty leader blows it by making unfortunate joke about cannibalism. He fails to respond to critical questioners with suggestions that cannibalism is a practice which has been attributed – mostly falsely – to most if not all ethnic groups, but on reflection feel he was wiser just to shut up. Perhaps critic missed essential existential nature of the joke, point of which is the rarity of M.P.s' brains. George Cunningham is ex-M.P. This seems to prove his punch-line.

Phone home. Queue of people outside phone box, checking if husbands have not burnt dinner, know where clean socks are. "Mostly women?" asks Mary. "Well, it is librarians," I reply. "What about the organising committee?" I think of the three men and one woman on the organising committee, and the row of five (male) chief librarians on stage this afternoon, and change subject.

Bar Am bought drinks. Discover a librarian who worked for my authority before I did. Swap names of Wirral librarians to ascertain what happened to whom. Joined by another ex-Wirral librarian who left only a couple of years ago. More games of "What happened to —?" and "Is — still the same?" Am accused of being diplomatic. Finally, an admission that I wouldn't trust one boss as far as I could throw him is dragged out of me.

National Committee treasurer approaches me to arrange meeting to

discuss the conference accounts, which I, as conference treasurer, am supposed to organise. He is relieved to find out we should be in profit. I am relieved to find out he understands VAT as little as I do.

Bar closes far too early. Adjourn to Andrew's room, clutching stolen cups, in the hope that we can find coffee. Find kettle in kitchen. Kettle is embossed with the name of the accommodation block. We find the idea of a kettle named 'Harley' very funny. My question about whether it's related to 'Davidson' doesn't strike the same rich vein of wit.

Drink coffee and talk about teaching, libraries, how much money the conference should make, educational psychology, libraries, John Saunders and please can't we talk about something other than libraries. Andrew worms out of me my address when I first moved to London. Audience astounded at the idea of people *living* in the Tower. Discard "Political Prisoner" story and admit truth, that Dad was a beefeater. Long discussion follows regarding the difference between Yeoman Warders and Yeomen of the Guard. Fortunately, my darker secret remains uncovered, and I say nothing about SF or fandom.

Saturday. Various speakers give their papers to good response, though the questions of whether we should replace underused buildings with mobile libraries, or of stock selection for the lay person in the fields of illness and disability are perhaps too specialised to summarise here.

Joe Hendry, whom all good librarians believe walks on water, finishes

the afternoon. A working-class Scot who always wanted to be a librarian because libraries are one of the 'ways out' for the working class, Joe comes from Glasgow. 'Nuff said. He is inspirational – though the session is perhaps spoiled by questioners carrying on the previous talk about mobile libraries.

Talk again with former boss from the London days. Good god, she still remembers me. This was fourteen years ago. Cry inside for lost youth. Hear horror-stories of ratecapping, and wish I was a Conservative party voter so I could *stop* doing it. Talk with former colleague who appears to have scored. Perhaps her interest in librarian from Derbyshire purely professional?

Collared by National Committee Treasurer. Am I sure we are in profit, otherwise Group is in deep shit. We look at estimated figures, and add up and subtract. Four Grand. This is a/ bloody amazing; b/ impossible. Work out figures again, bearing in mind there are some unknown bills to pay. Estimated surplus comes to half that. Oh yes, and there's VAT. Well, that's still not bad. Great relief all round. Drains pint. Start negotiating for our cut.

Entertainment arrives. The Saturday night revels are in the form of a twmpath – which Andrew assures us is Welsh for ceilidh. Ethnic Welsh sound system is a caller with a box of scratchy records. It works surprisingly well, though not to everyone's taste. The biggest drawback by far is the food, and lots of people have deserted the bop in search of a good

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meal. Is there a good meal to be had in Crewe, you might well ask? I don't get a chance to find out, because I've decided to make an idiot of myself at the twmpath. I am now changed, wearing my famous red-striped jacket. Realise that not many people there have seen that jacket before, and fend off requests to see straw boater and cane. Explain once that it's part of my everyday work attire and give up. No wonder I don't get promotion, I say. "No, it's not a Chief Librarian's jacket," says someone. "Shame." Chief Librarian wearing grotty blue cardigan passes by.

Not many people on dance floor, so I take the plunge after second pint and persuade fellow course organiser to do some strange barn dance. Then find myself part of a peculiar and strenuous set in which two men swing two women around in a "basket dance". Almost fall over several times. Not only do I have two left feet, they're sticking in my ears. But this is normal for me and I finish the evening tired but feeling good. Pay caller. Paul says how much he enjoys barn dances and would if he could... Still, a broken arm is a reasonable excuse not to take part. Bar closes before I can get another drink. Long, wind-down conversation with same group as last night before I set off for my room.

Sunday. Up and packed surprisingly early. Head for the campus shop, looking for souvenirs for the family. It does a wonderful line in little key-rings stamped 'Crewe and Alsager College', so I buy three. Shop is full of SAGA holiday people buying Sunday tabloids. I make a grab for the final re-

maining copy of the **Correspondent** which is launched today. Not confident that it *will* be so different from the other so-called 'Qualities' (I don't buy *any* Sunday paper for the simple reason that they're *all* utterly boring) but there's an old comix fan down inside which says "Collect first issues". I only get around to reading it about 10 p.m., but that's another story.

Meet Chris on the way to breakfast and talk about his slipped disc. Collect food. Stare at lurid yellow poached haddock and chew on toast – then it's into the final sessions. John Saunders tells us about the new shape of Surrey library service, everybody buying bits of the organisation from each other. Sounds either very complicated or very simple. What you do if the reference service goes bankrupt I'm not sure. Illustrated by fiendishly complex overhead transparencies which John whips off as soon as he puts them on in case someone copies them down. This is all very hush-hush, apparently. Try to take notes, but give up. This actually won't be in the published proceedings as – I'm told – Saunders wanted a fee (not usual practice) and the National Committee decided that as the other contributors weren't receiving a fee this wasn't on. Also, there was no money in the kitty.

Collective "Wow" as Saunders winds up.

Next is John Dolan talking about performance indicators in St. Helens. I go and pick his brains as my managers wouldn't recognise performance indicators if they fell over them. I've



spent years asking for some basic information about the projected demographic trends of the community I serve, but it seems I can only get it via looking over my wife's shoulder when she brings home reports which ought to be available to library managers as well. Sorry, but this really gets my goat.

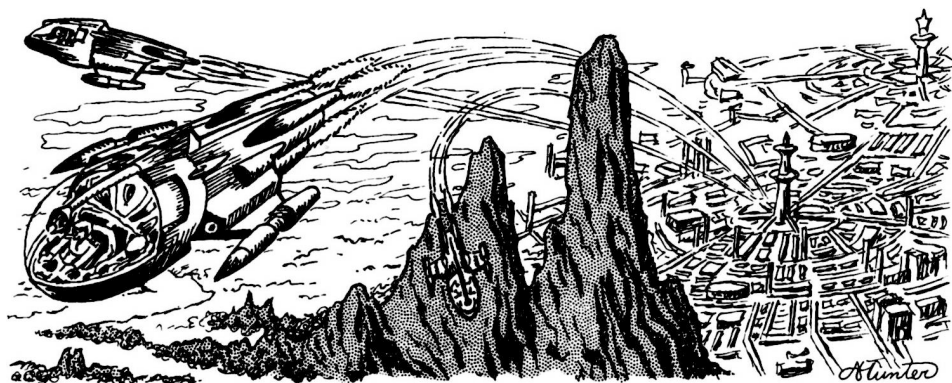
Final session – Pat Coleman, ex-Sheffield, now Birmingham. A curiously slight figure, calling for vision, though she has done more than anyone except perhaps Joe Hendry to supply it.

And that's it – end of the weekend (almost). Just time to say goodbye and arrange a meeting in October to do the hard work – go through the books! And we've *done* the weekend school for 1989 – apart from the food and the strange hissing noises from the coffee machines when people were speaking, everything went smoothly, but it's only now that I realise just how

shell-shocked I am, how tense I've been during the weekend. I suppose there are people who carry these things off as a matter of course, but we were asked to organise a weekend school with very little idea (except for one or two of the Committee) of what running a weekend school actually *meant*, and with the knowledge that the previous one ended up cancelled for lack of support. My own practical experience of even *attending* these things is somewhat less than my experiences of cons, so what I can compare this weekend with – well, you've got the analogy if you've read this far... but it was enjoyable and everything (almost) seemed to work the way it was meant to.

So I pick up lunch. Mary arrives with car. I look forward to a relaxing afternoon. Am taken on a walk around a cave/cliff system in Cheshire known as Rawhead.

Somehow it fits.



# Loccin' The Blues

*(Another issue, another loccol, and despite all my best and most bloodthirsty efforts, the monster continues to grow. Just over fourteen pages long last time, seventeen this. You guys really slay me with your comment-filled letters! Tell me honestly – it's a conspiracy, isn't it? The word has gone out, "Deluge Owen with killer locs", and lo and behold, in they come, an equatorial forest's worth of locs, requiring another orest to print. Very well – if that's the way it's gonna be – let battle commence, with Skel exhibiting a degree of paranoia.)*

### • Scripting The Headlines •

**Skel: 3rd April 1990.**

SB4 arrived this morning. Saved my life (I'm off work with some form of flu). I must query though whether you are reporting events or scripting them. The first paragraph on the back page starts "Following on from the recent Poll Tax disturbances" just days after the worst riots the Capital has seen for ages, and the second para continues with "...the recent panic on the world money markets..." and only yesterday the Japanese Stock Market's Nikkei Index had its biggest ever fall. Surely this is a worse form of 'Intrusive Journalism' (where journalism intrudes in our lives to the extent of rewriting them) than anything mentioned either in Mic Rogers' original article, or the various LoCs... Now if you'd also mentioned overcrowded prisons and the Strangeways riot I'd right now be ringing up the Home Secretary and screaming "John Owen is responsible. Send the SAS in to take him out before he pens a piece on the end of the world." (25 Bowland Close, Offerton, Stockport, Cheshire, SK2 5NW)

*(Curses, foiled again! Shep's ATomic tribute on last issue's cover certainly seemed to strike the note we hoped it would, even making the pages of Critical Wave as part of their tribute to ATom.)*

### • ATomic Response •

**Eric Bentcliffe: 12th May 1990**

My thanks for the latest SB and, in particular, that quite superb cover-tribute to ATom – it struck the perfect note and Shep and yourself did the lad proud. I suppose you feel the loss even more when Arthur has been part of your fannish activity for as long as he's been part of mine and when you are almost exactly the same age... I stopped smoking when warned, he didn't – I wish he had. (17 Riverside Crescent, Holmes Chapel, Cheshire, CW4 7NR)

**Rob Hansen: 16th April 1990**

I haven't much cared for Shep's work in the past, but his tribute to ATom on the cover of SB4 was *perfect!* (144 Plashet Grove, East Ham, London, E6 1AB)

**Ken Cheslin: May 1990**

I think Arthur would have liked the cover; it would be nice to think of him safe in some fantastic fandom in the sky. At least I hope he knew, while he was still here to appreciate it, that there were many people who thought a lot of him

Shep is to be congratulated on the cover not only from the artistic point of view, but also for catching something of the spirit. (10 Coney Green, Stourbridge, West Midlands, DY8 1LA)

**Sheryl Birkhead: 16th May 1990**

ATom will be sorely missed – a gentle mainstay is no longer there. The perpetual ATom beasties may now show up in parody, but the source is gone. (23629 Woodfield Road, Gaithersburg, MD 20882, USA)

**Bernard Earp: 14th May 1990**

Loved the cover. Shep has really captured the style and I couldn't imagine a better tribute to ATom than this. Words can tell us what ATom was but this shows us so movingly what we had and now will miss. (21 Moorfield Grove, Tonge Moor, Bolton, Lancs.)

**Skel: 3rd April 1990.**

This thing about fannish villages is particularly apt with this issue, because one thing you find with villagers is that they tend to miss out on happenings in the outside world, they tend to be less in touch. Amazingly, had it not been for the arrival of **Pulp 16** yesterday, **SB4** would have been the first I'd heard of ATom's death six weeks ago. I'd gone to work. The night bell rang at 0800 hours and I diverted the call to my phone. It was Cas. "You got a **Pulp**." she said. "I opened it. ATom's dead." I'd been to a funeral just over a week previously, my aunty, and afterwards we went back to my cousin's house. They are relatives, but I don't know them. I said as much to my parents on the way home. "I have no social graces. I can't talk to people I don't know. They're cousins, but I can never remember the names of their wives, and can never keep straight which kids belong to which cousin. Apart from immediate family line they're the closest relatives I've got and I don't know them. I've nothing to say to them."

The death of ATom though affected me much more than this recent family bereavement. I did have things to say to ATom, and said them. I sought him out whenever we were at the same gathering. He made me at ease. I made a couple of visits to London fanmeets precisely because it would be a chance to talk with him. In **Pulp 16** Rob reports Avedon as saying "he was the youngest person in British fandom", and that describes some aspects of him to a "T". He was also simply a great bloke. You could easily imagine that ATom was the guy after and for whom the phrase 'A Great Bloke' had been coined.

And now he's gone from us. He never won a Hugo, and now we can never rectify that gross injustice. This guy's style and ability for a time almost defined what was

fine and fannish and yet we never managed to properly acknowledge this fact. And that is the least regret. More important is that I won't get to talk with him again. We should do something. Though I don't know what we could or should do. He once told me he'd got so much out of fandom, and all by "Just doing a few drawings". At the heart of many of his drawings were of course the ATom-BEMs with which Shep paid such excellent homage on this issue's front cover, and which other artists have borrowed from time to time, usually when indulging in a light-hearted artists' 'feud'. It would be nice if Arthur's ATom-BEMs could continue somehow, embodying the ongoing nature of

fandom whilst at the same time reminding some of us of what we've lost and providing a symbol of continuity for new fanzine fans between that which was brilliant in the past and that which, however different, may be equally good in the future.

*(Seeing as how Skel has already raised the subject of Fannish Villages, that seems a good place to visit next.)*



## • Signposting The Fannish Village •

**Eric Bentcliffe: 12th May 1990**

Hmmm, yes, I like the perspective of current fandom as a number of fannish villages – back in the 40s and 50s it was more of one big city with the fannish fnz types inhabiting the centre and the fringe fans and sercon types way out in the suburbs. The smofs? They were in the financial district a little ways out to the right... It was a city with certain peculiarities, part-British, part-American, and with a touch of the Irish. (Possibly the reason it never completely became a city and eventually split into village groupings was that everyone drove on opposite sides of the road!) Certainly its postal service (due to the shorter distance between fans?) was much more one

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of the city's than rurality; you hardly had time to write to someone before you got a reply... Its immediacy was much of the fun and the reason for its integration, I think.

Yes, that is an analogy that will send people off out of 'their' villages in all directions; I reckon the next letter-column will need quite a few signposts...

### Lloyd Penney: 2nd May 1990

Each fanzine is its own village, it's true. Let's carry the analogy further, perhaps even to extremes. Communicating with the other denizens of the village is great fun, but it's even better to meet those fellow villagers face to face. Worldcons help me do that, as do Dittos and Corflus. (I'd like to attend both this year, seeing as they're both close, but money restraints and remaining holidays just don't allow me to do that.) Certainly, as the editor/mayor, it costs you some cash for upkeep of the fanzine/village. But us contributors/villagers are called upon for a mere pittance of tax, namely a loc, article or artwork. I am able to stay in many villages through my locs, and my stays in those villages are pleasant for the most part. I often wonder if my own taxes/contribs are sufficient to pay for my stay. (412-4 Lisa St., Brampton, ONT, Canada L6T 4B6)

### Sheryl Birkhead: 16th May 1990

Your village analogy is a nice one – if only the position of village idiot didn't have so many applicants. I suppose, myself most definitely included, that like *any* groupings, there are more watchers than doers, but I'd like to think that fans are at least a little more interactive than the population 'at large'.

*(Eric Mayer's pros and cons of 'professionalism' wracked up quite a debate.)*

### • Mayer & The Pros •

### Chuck Connor: 22nd May 1990

Eric Mayer puts up a good fight, and I agree with him all the way. There is really no such thing as a professional standard line – material is either good or not so good, and for it to sell you must have the market there in the first place. Provided that it can meet the market's requirements, then yes,

it can be called professional. Stephen King (no comment) can be called a professional because he gets paid for his work/writing, but then, so does Guy N. Smith (*positively* no comment!) who has churned out books for the self-same market, and who also must sell, though I doubt that many readers would put them in the same box when it came to the quality of their writings. I suppose that, if you wanted a definition that sticks no matter which way you shake it is that Professionals sell their writings, while amateurs don't. Simple, eh? (Sildan House, Chediston Road, Wissett, nr Halesworth, Suffolk)

### Mike Glicksohn: 16th April 1990

Most of what Eric Mayer seems to be agonizing over would appear to me to be fairly familiar to most fans. All of us can point to material in fanzines that is eminently saleable and to material in professional publications that we as faneds would have rejected. Eric really muddies the waters with his comments on competency, circulation, manner of payment etc, etc. To my admittedly simple mind it's a simple matter: a professional writer earns his living by selling his writing. The rest of us are not professionals, although some of us may be like Mrs Peel, "talented amateurs." (I'll tell you an amusing tale: many years ago I wrote a short story satirizing a certain type of nihilistic New Wave fiction. I called it "Dissenting" in honour of Tom Disch's "Descending." Since it dealt with fandom I sent it to a fanzine that occasionally published fan-fiction: they rejected it as not being well-enough written. So I sold it to *Fantastic* instead and got paid enough to have joined SFWA had I been so inclined!)

### Skel: 3rd April 1990.

I enjoyed the Eric Mayer article, but then I always do. My own definition of a 'professional' sale would be 1) Do they pay in cash?, and 2) Is it a reasonable amount? That is, if you were doing this full time, could you make a living at it? Obviously in the case of *Festivals*, who pay in subscriptions, the answer would be "No". You can't go down to the local supermarket and pay for a week's groceries with three annual

subscriptions to a magazine. It ain't legal tender. 'Professional' though is a very poor yardstick. I'd rather be 'good' than 'professional' (whilst accepting that in fact I'm neither). Let us assume that 1¢-a-word is a poor rate, but that you can churn it out and have a market that will take all you produce. If you can make a living you're a professional. Let us assume that 10¢-a-word is a good rate, and you can sell stuff at that rate, but you can't write it quickly enough to make a living. Then you're not a professional. You may be a better writer (though the guy who churns it out might be able to do as well were it not for the constraints of having to make a living), but you ain't a pro. So what?

## Mary Gentle: 3rd April 1990

Eric Mayer's piece on professionalism: I think he's looking at it from the wrong end of the process. Where the professionalism comes is in the attitude of the writer, and has to do with things as diverse as perfectionism, respect for the reader, heart, and engagement. Granted there isn't any way you can point at a piece of writing and say "I think this writer was being professional when s/he wrote", but you can at least say when you yourself are being professional, and that's where Mayer's piece seems aimed. (Flat 3, 56 Coombe Road, Croydon CRO 5SHG)

## David Bell: 9th April 1990

The weakness in Eric Mayer's piece on whether or not his writing is professional is that he fails to distinguish between the different meanings of the words 'professional' and 'amateur'. On one level the words do refer to the possibility of personal gain. On the other hand, they also carry strong implications concerning the quality of workmanship involved. He seems to spend far too much time equating apples and oranges, and misses the chance to attempt to define a professional attitude.

My own feeling is that the professional will tend to write with a market in mind, while the amateur will tend to write first, and then go plaguing editors with an inappropriate submission. Note that I am carefully avoiding certainty. By this rule J.R.R.

Tolkien was not a professional writer, despite the financial success of his work, while L. Ron Hubbard was. I shall leave it as an exercise for the reader to decide which of the two was a more amateurish writer.

And that shows the problem. We have the words 'amateur' and 'amateurish', clearly distinct in meaning, and both have to use the word 'professional' as an antonym. Also, with a further distinct meaning, there is the word 'unprofessional', implying an intentional failing rather than simple incompetence.

Now try to describe *Interzone*, bearing in mind the level of editorial remuneration. (Church Farm, North Kelsey, Lincoln, LN7 6EQ)

## Gene Van Troyer: 3rd May 1990

Eric Mayer is, of course, right about all the stuff and nonsense surrounding the idea of 'amateur' and 'professional'. I write stories and poetry for sale, mostly in the SF category, have sold most of what I've gotten around to writing, but can't see how I could be classified one way or the other, given the way most definitions of the terms go (ie, some 'indefinable quality').

It used to be that a 'professional' writer was one who made the bulk of one's living from what one wrote; an 'amateur' was one who might occasionally sell something, but whose living derived primarily from a non-writing source. The question of quality is moot. As far as I'm concerned, a work is a professional *credit* if accepted by an editor of a publication generally regarded as professional among members of the editing/writing community; it is amateur if it appears in a publication generally regarded as such by the same community. This is entirely independent of such considerations as 'quality' in writing, and is entirely arbitrary.

'Professionalism' as a classification is, I would say, more-or-less divorced from notions of quality or art, and I suggest that everyone save themselves a lot of headaches trying to equate 'quality or art' with 'professionalism'. As for myself, am I a professional writer? I certainly am, even though I don't earn but a bare fraction of my income from writing; and I would suggest that Eric is also a professional – not necessarily a

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professional *SF/F* writer, but certainly a pro in the non-fiction arena.

Eric did *not* touch upon that other slippery term, 'semi-pro'... (Miyagi 517, Urasoe City, Okinawa-ken 901-21, Japan)

**Buck Coulson: 9th May 1990**

'Professionalism' refers to people who can get 3-page articles out of a meaningless word. (2677W-500N, Hartford City, IN 47348, USA)

**Steve Sneyd: 29th April 1990**

Mayer does a very incisive job of shredding another old shibboleth. I fear, though, it will refuse to stay shredded. Like other such hoary chest-nuts as 'free verse isn't poetry' and 'the scientific method is truly objective', it will bounce on around the universe till the last BEM is strangled with the entrails of the last computer. (4 Nowell Place, Almondbury, Huddersfield, West Yorks HD5 8PB)

*(Hmm, it all rather proves Eric's original point, doesn't it? On to Martyn Taylor and his obsessions.)*

• **Martyn & Lacey** •

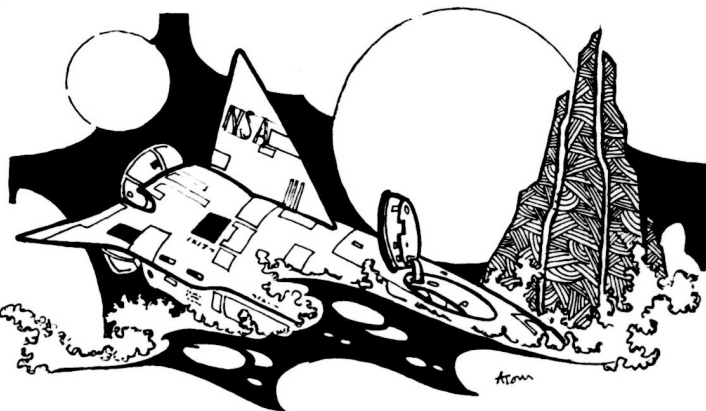
**Andy Sawyer: April 1990**

Talk about the Secret Life of Fandom! So Martyn Taylor lusts after Mary Beth Lacy, eh? we could have a whole series of this. *(And why not?)* The Elevation of the Ordinary, and a good thing too. Why should we unprepossessing individuals not be placed upon our pedestals? Mind you, things could get out of hand; I once read an almost serious article about the sexual attraction of the Prime Minister and the Queen – but there you get something else rather than physical ordinariness acting as an aphrodisiac, I suppose. I shall say no more on this topic: which,

from one who once confessed to carrying a torch for Penelope Keith, is probably wise. (I have been in deep and glorious love with Dusty Springfield for nearly thirty years, but that I have no doubt whatever is sheer perversity.) (1, The Flaxyard, Woodfall Lane, Little Neston, South Wirral, L64 4BT)

**Chuck Connor: 22nd April 1990**

Martyn Taylor's little piece amused me, though I would disagree with him on the comments about Rubens and his BBC-ism (Big Bummed Crumpet-ism). Personally, were it on offer, I think I would be more interested in someone like Roseanne, who is



a real, humorous, person (the kind of personality I could easily get on with, though I doubt that such institutions as Marriage are quite in my line at the moment) and a real feast for Rubens-ites. Will this be an ongoing series? *(If anyone wants to have a stab at it from other angles, sure.)*

**Dorothy Davies: 5th April 1990**

Martyn Taylor also makes interesting points. As a writer of 'blue- video' scripts, I have to constantly ask myself, what is it you men like/want/need in the way of visual stimulation? The answer appears to be – an available figure. That is, not some super goddess who overcomes all evil but someone who could be next door, might be next door (my uncle hopped the fence and moved in

next door while retaining relationships with wife 1 .....) which is why Strand Films International features sexy housewives and why when I write for Strand Films International I try to feature people we can all find somewhere. I'm not sure Martyn is that far out of time. Accessibility is the name of the game. Glad I hit the winning formula. (Ty Hydrif, 126 Marines Drive, Faringdon, Oxon SN7 7UG)

## David Bell: 9th April 1990

I'm inclined to agree with the principle implicit in Martyn Taylor's text. Looks are definitely not everything. I suspect one of the reasons why the Duchess of York attracts so much criticism from some sections of the press is that she does not obviously conform to any of the current standards of beauty, yet she's the one who married the Prince. There is a lot of money in the fashion business, and she tends to rather damage some of the assumptions that business is built on.

Such as the belief that the ideal woman is taller than I am and has a figure which resembles two poached eggs nailed to a broomstick. Not that I'm against tall women, or slim ones, but the few that I would consider driving through a snowstorm to collect from the local railway station are candidates for neither Page 3 nor The Clothes Show.

## Brian Haunton: June 1990

It's comforting to know that at least one person shares my preference for Lacey over Cagney; the latter was always too neurotic for my taste. Indeed I find it far stranger that someone should support Yorkshire CCC. (405 St Marys Lane, Upminster, Essex, RM14 3HR)

*(Ooh, careful Brian! You mustn't provoke a Yorkshireman about cricket! Rapidly moving out of the danger zone to...)*

## • Dreddful Ideas •

## Mike Glicksohn: 16th April 1990

David Redd was extremely amusing. In fact, one might say he was "dreddfully clever", eh? At least I hope he was extremely amusing. I have the disturbing thought that if he'd been smart enough to plan any one of

those ideas as a trilogy he might have sold them

## David Redd: April 90

SB4 was terrific, a little gem: my only complaint would be (as usual) the production values are too high for mere fannish ephemera, eg, superb printing, etc, of that scruffy little 'Dear Mr Pringle' piece. Centrefold was nice though – and I recall that Burt Reynolds started as a centrefold model. Will Hollywood beckon for me too?

## John F. Haines: 6th April 1990

I'm glad David Redd hasn't already thought of my super blockbuster which I've just mailed to his publishers: **Lord Of The Trilogies**, in which an unknown peasant becomes King of a mythical planet having defeated all the forces of Evil that spring up in his path, despite the fact that he is really a werewolf cloned from a parallel universe in which the House Of York won the Wars of the Roses... can't wait, can you? (5 Cross Farm, Station Road, Padgate, Warrington, WA2 0QG)

*(Quick! Sign him up, someone! Sounds like a real bestseller.)*

*(I was a little surprised at the amount of response to Dorothy Davies' Post Office piece – but then I guess it's just something everyone has experience of, and opinions about.)*

## • Poking The Post Office •

## Skel: 3rd April 1990.

Dorothy Davies' piece explains a lot. The reason why mail is delayed or never arrives is that it all has to be taken via 'Swindo'. After the poor drivers have checked their roadmaps for the umpteenth time, and driven round and round aimlessly for hours looking for this bloody 'Swindo' place, they give up and ditch the mail in a refuse dumpster behind the nearest Tesco's.

Of course with a real hi-tech office the mail would never have seen anything so plebeian as an envelope, and it certainly wouldn't have been entrusted to the GPO, such are the wonders of EDI, but I guess there are still concerns that, however reluctantly, must deal directly with members of the public rather than with other amor-

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phous business concerns, and therefore the GPO will be a necessary evil for many years to come. (Only kidding Dorothy, honest. A significant proportion of the pleasurable things in my life are brought to me via the ministrations of the GPO...even if the bug-gers did just go an entire week without bringing me any of them.)

Then again, with computers talking directly to computers, reading in each others diskettes, and even scanning the printed word (and even the spoken word at the forefront of technology), much of which technology you have boasted of using for SB4, I wonder where your typos are coming from. For I am not really as green as I'm cabbage-looking. I know that 'Swindo' is really a typo (for 'Sweden' presumably, if I know the GPO), and you dropped a word from a sentence in my LoC, and had my postcode as 'SR2 SNW' (SR? I wonder what town that represents? Probably sodding Swindo), amongst several others.

*(Ooh, the fuss some people make over a few simple typos!)*

**Martin Helsdon: 4th April 1990**

The article on the Post Office was of particular interest to me and casts the hi-tech advertisements in an amusing light. There must be the kernel of a sit-com in the environment of the Post Office, surprising that no one's used it before. All the elements are there: slap-stick as the letters are poured into the wrong sacks, tragedy when another deadline is missed, the farce of the letter misdirected again and again, and the indomitable spirit of humanity struggling through the chaos. (32 Burns Crescent, Chelmsford, Essex, CM2 OTS)

**Lloyd Penney: 2nd May 1990**

The technology of communication is still at the write-letter, stick-in-a-mailbox stage. There were gasps of horror some time ago when it was suggested that with the sudden advent of fax machines, we'd all fax letters to one another, and horror of horrors, fax fanzines to one another (Faxzines?). Same goes for cellular telephones: why write when the world is available anywhere? This technology is wonderful, but there are limitations, and there are people

who demand a standard of reproduction and readability. (Which still doesn't explain the mania for twiltone... but that's another story.) Fax machines just don't do it, not yet anyway. And, for those who still believe in the written word (I think we're all pretty unanimous in this respect), something printed and held in the hand will still survive, no matter how good the faxes and cellular phones get. Cost-effectiveness will leave us to write letters and print fanzines for some time to come, too. Besides... I just can't see fanzines on film.. Some joker will try to put them on CD-ROM one of these days, and try to distribute them that way. Compilation disks? Fanthologies on tape? The entire run of **Energumen** or **Warhoon** on microfiche? The mind simply croggles...

**Buck Coulson: 9th May 1990**

Dorothy Davies' defence of the postal worker is interesting, though I was slightly boggled by her reference to bicycles. How English! American postal carriers walk (slog, slog, sloggin' through the city streets; thank you, Rudyard), or drive.

**Sheryl Birkhead: 16th May 1990**

Here the news recently reported that the average postal worker salary is \$40,000 (median salary would be more useful here, but...). The Post Office is toying (and believe me, that's all they *better* do for a while) with Postal Box delivery – ie, no one would get home delivery, you (*all of you*) would have to go to the post office to pick up mail daily. They are trying to sweeten the pot saying there could be 24 hour access to boxes, seven days a week and mail might (ha!) be delivered more frequently due to the dramatic drop in labour intensivity. Hmm – what about those who don't *live* near a post office? Ain't that how the whole system started in the first place? What goes around comes around.

**Ken Cheslin: May 1990**

Dorothy Davies... The phrase I picked out, because it applies so well to a lot of other things in Thatcher's Britain, including the NHS, Education, etc, is the "it needs more Indians and a lot less chiefs, it needs a vast injection of capital and a commitment to the labour force". As an example of which I can



quote that all the folk in the higher ranks of our LEA education service have been confirmed in their jobs, though there's many a teacher muttered "sack the lot", "put 'em in front of a class and see 'em manage" and so on. And the money to be cut from the education budget has got to come from teachers' jobs, capitation cuts of 25% in real terms, adult education largely washed out, 'rationalising' Special Provision – oh, you get the picture, I'm sure. But I bet the mayor and council don't have to pull their belts in by much. I sympathise, Dorothy.

## **Terry Broome: 4th April 1990**

Finally, back to postmen – after reading Dorothy Davies' article, I'll never be able to kick them again with quite the same enthusiasm as I used to do. Let's all send them sympathy cards – through the post! That'll cheer them up! (101 Malham Drive, Lakeside Park, Lincoln, LN6 0XD)

## **Bernard Earp: 14th May 1990**

Pity you put Skel's inspired ideas on a new Defence Strategy just after Dorothy's article. The super-efficient Print Shop might well be able to produce the junk mail, but now we know that it wouldn't have a hope in hell of getting delivered.

*(Probably the reason the MoD just cancelled the project in the latest round of defence cuts, Bernard! Onwards, towards that unearthly light on the horizon.)*

## **• Glowing Red Herrings •**

## **M.K. Digre: 13th April 1990**

In the latest contribution to the nuclear power debate, Pam Baddeley ignores a number of points: in calculating cost figures for building nuclear generation, she omits comparison to the cost of the alternatives (mostly building coal-fired generation). Given political acceptance of the program, the costs would be about the same for nuclear as for coal-fired generation. (The current high costs in the United States are due mostly to delays in design approval and operating permits – a year's delay can add \$100 million or more in interest expense on the money borrowed to build a \$1 billion plant, and once the plant is in operation, the interest on this additional amount must be

paid every year until the bonds are retired.) \$227 billion per year is a lot of money, but it is only about \$40 per person per year (figuring population at a bit over 5 billion), and I think we would be paying most of it even without the nuclear plants. These numbers would need to expand in the high-energy scenario, though, if my next point is taken into consideration. Further reductions in carbon dioxide emissions could be made by substituting electric energy for fossil fuels in heating and in ground transportation, starting with rail and battery-powered short haul vehicles, and gradually expanding to take in all ground transportation as technology and infrastructure improve. Aviation would then be the main user of fossil fuels. This scenario still ignores the limited availability of fissionable material; somehow, I have a hard time imagining a large scale breeder reactor program becoming politically feasible. No matter what we do to supply energy, we can make things easier on ourselves by assiduously working to eliminate wasteful uses of energy, and improving the efficiency of necessary uses, as Pam points out. (4629 Columbus Ave. Minneapolis, MN 55407, USA)

*(Trouble is, Mark, in the Third World \$40 exceeds most people's annual income!)*

## **Terry Jeeves: 12th April 1990**

Pam Baddeley's 'Red Herring' was certainly that. The prime drive for nuclear power is *not* to reduce Carbon Dioxide levels – if it does, that's a bonus. At the moment fission, and hopefully fusion, are the only two possible solutions to our current (let alone projected) needs when fossil fuels eventually peter out. I didn't claim the atom would solve the CO<sub>2</sub> problem. As for reducing levels by reducing power usage, this is a totally different argument. It must be done irrespective of power sources (at least nuclear energy makes a start along that road). What I would strongly suggest is cutting energy used for such purposes as sky signs, multicoloured moving displays as per Las Vegas, Picadilly and the like. Such signs consume fantastic amounts of power, to no useful end other than demonstrating opulence. Why not ban or place a 1Kw limit per building on any such sign.

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Likewise, reduce the wattage permitted per outside pop concert, football event and so on. This would also reduce the levels of CO<sub>2</sub> from people shouting their heads off. The facts of life (today) are these: 1. Fossil fuels will eventually finish. 2 *At the moment* only nuclear power shows the chance of meeting present, let alone projected, energy needs. 3. I'm all in favour of reducing energy expenditure, but can you see humanity en masse doing this? There is a *great* problem, but we'll not solve it by feeding red herrings to straw men. (56 Red Scar Drive, Scarborough, YO12 5RQ)

*(Dismissing Pam's figures doesn't make them go away, Terry – to supply the projected future energy needs does require the kind of expenditure stated in the article.)*

**David Bell: 9th April 1990**

There is no such thing as a safe nuclear reactor. Even at 93 million miles they give some people skin cancer.

So we use energy as efficiently as possible. There are still a lot of people who would like the benefits we enjoy today. I'm not sure if Pam Baddeley's sources have taken into account a rising Third World energy demand, but any approach that doesn't allow for everyone to have access to at least a poor-Western standard of living is, so far as I see, both politically and morally corrupt. Either we put the lid on the Third World or we have to abandon many of the comforts of modern life. Solar Power Satellites may be a wild gamble, but the difference between losing the bet and not trying seems to me to be irrelevant.

**Bernard Earp: 14th May 1990**

'Red Herring' reminds me of the theorists who predicted that by the mid-20th century the major cities would be three foot deep in horse manure.

We can't, by these figures, afford to build enough power stations, not just nuclear as Pam infers, but of any type now existing or envisaged.

Extrapolating trends can be useful and help us to plan the best way to go but it needs some kind of feedback. I remember Campbell in *Astounding* printing a completely solid and vigorously worked out one

on the speed that mankind had reached, walking till the horse, then a long period till the car when the curve went wild; on that scale I remember we should have broken the light barrier by now.

To come up with findings like these is rather like those people who went into print about the horse droppings without pointing out that they wouldn't have got that far, that there would have been a limiting point at which horses wouldn't have been able to get in to add further droppings well before the three feet mark... They were 'saved' by the invention of the car, which brought its own problems.

We can't rely on the invention of a 'car' to solve the future's energy needs, though wouldn't it have been nice if Cold Fusion had worked.

*(Yes it would have been nice, Bernard. Hey, nuclear power plants often have domed containment buildings, don't they? What a neat segue!)*

• **Dreaming Spires & Dozing Domes? •**

**Andy Sawyer: April 1990**

Ken Bailey's piece brought a topical flavour of architecture into the proceedings. Of course, one can speculate endlessly about the symbolism of domes and towers – particularly the combination of two domes and a central tower, but I'll refrain from doing so. More seriously, I think it's interesting that 'Big' buildings are nowadays more often than not towers rather than domes. St. Pauls is swallowed and shadowed by the buildings around it, for instance, which is rather a shame. I wonder if Western architects will ever get round (sorry - unintentional) to using the dome as a basis for 'real' buildings rather than the kind of recreational use it is given to now: the geodesic dome in a park, etc. Is it *possible* to have a dome as an office block, modern railway station, factory – functional use rather than decorative – or are we resigned to following the obvious symbolism. There's the dome-shape of the British Museum Reading Room/Library which, incidentally, is echoed by many other 19th-century libraries – Liverpool for one. By the way, I've always thought of the Metropolitan Cathedral as a

space shuttle about to take off – I do like it as a building, certainly more so than the Anglican cathedral which looks like what it is: a copy of the 'traditional' cathedral shape which is OK if you're into cathedrals.

**Mary Gentle: 3rd April 1990**

KV Bailey's architectural article deserves more than a cursory acknowledgement, especially as it touches on an interest of mine, but I don't have the oomph to check out whether dome = static civilisation holds true. It shouldn't do, domes are actually much harder to construct than spires – maybe dome civilisations are putting all their energies into architecture instead of expansion!

**Lloyd Penney: 2nd May 1990**

It may not have much to do with the article, but perhaps the connection between domes and pleasure extends to the dotting of the North American landscape with domed stadia. Toronto's had the SkyDome for a few years now, an enormous domed field (with a retractable roof) for baseball and football, and in a pinch for any other supporting event. It differs from many other domes in that it has support services built into the side of it. For example, there's restaurants ranging from a surf'n'turf to several McDonald's in the walls, plus a large hotel at one end of the stadium. The hotel has rooms with wall-sized windows looking down onto the playing field. The SkyDome was built at the base of the CN Tower, the world's tallest free-standing structure, so Toronto truly has Yggdrasil and Xanadu, right at the lakeshore.

Hmm, in my loc in the loccol, I say that Yggdrasil isn't at the foot of your garden. In this loc, I say it's on the Toronto lakeshore. Where will it be *next* issue?

*[Who knows, Lloyd? As an echo to Lloyd's comments last ish, here's Steve Sneyd.]*

**Steve Sneyd: 3rd April 1990**

...The average cynic would say Mordor does indeed border Yorkshire, probably at all points – a Saturday night in town, a visit to a tower block estate, or a look at ICI's chimneys pluming acid proves it.

**Roger Waddington: 16th April 1990**

I'll leave it to my elders and betters (well, in one respect at least) to respond fully to KV Bailey's piece, give it the attention it deserves; the question for me, about "the cloud-capped towers, the gorgeous palaces" is why the City has had such a good press in SF anyway, as opposed to the good green earth? Generalizing wildly, and taking little account of the many dystopias, it seems to me that ever since E.M Forster and 'The Machine Stops', the earth that we live on has been generally dismissed as second-



best, and in many cases downright dangerous. Whether living overground in hermetically sealed civilisation, or underground under a poisoned, irradiated or otherwise unliveable landscape, it's that human warren that's the state of Paradise. Of course, as a reflection of the times, it could be that with a growing Green awareness, science fiction will also come to realise the value of the land, see it as something more than target practice nor nuclear attack, or the realm of

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horse riding barbarians; but will it be in our lifetime? (4 Commercial Street, Norton, Malton, North Yorks, YO17 9ES)

*(After Andy Sawyer's attempt's to kill it off last issue...)*

## • The Cardy Strikes Back! •

**Chuck Connor: 22nd April 1990**

Andy Sawyer blows any possible cred by quoting from Leonard Cohen. No wonder he's worried about becoming bald. I've got a Marks & Sparks cardigan I use in colder times when doing some printing or writing – the pockets in mine are what I need to keep such things as corflu, tippex, felt pens, glue etc on the go. Trouble is, I take a large size normally, and went for a large size when I bought this one, little knowing that M&S have their little jokes now and again, and the thing hangs off my shoulders a little bit. Well, okay, rather a lot really, but it's friendly and amicable, and doesn't mind wrapping itself around anything it can catch itself onto.

**Mary Gentle: 3rd April 1990**

I hope by now Andy's nuked his grey cardigan. Personally being deeply attached to the seventeenth century, as I know he is, I'd have expected to find him wearing a cloak (if not a dagger). No sleeves – no problem! And definitely warm.

**Ken Cheslin: May 1990**

Andy Sawyer is a lucky sod – in our house it's the kids who pinch their parents' clothes, jumpers, socks, underpants, shirts, tee-shirts, nighties (and the wife's things, too).

**Alan Sullivan: April 1990**

Grey cardigans are just the start – when your wardrobe is mainly from the Charity Shop label, the colour and variety of cardigans available are quite something. (My own is a brown zip-fastened job, with leather shoulder padding/trims. I'm told it looks more military than the military ones – but my main liking for it is due to a family cat. This cat has a preference for shoulder perching, with claws out. Nothing like leather shoulder pads to keep you safe from the claws.) Cardigans have had a bad press – although there could be hope. The current

trend in leisure 'shirts' seems to combine elements of the zip-front cardy and the sweatshirt. So hang on to that grey excrement – it could be the trendiest of garments some day. Just like flares. (c/o 13 Weir Gardens, Rayleigh, Essex, SS6 7TH)

**John F. Haines: 6th April 1990**

Would have loved to have seen the Who at Woodstock in grey cardigans! Heavy, maaan!

*(Ever been damned with real praise? Here's Glicksohn, to show how it's done.)*

## • Adjust Your Address •

**Mike Glicksohn: 16th April 1990**

Good system you've designed for the lettercol. Each new letter quoted from ends with the address of its sender and additional quotes from the same letter can obviously have the address omitted since people already know where to reach the writer should they feel so inclined. Each new letter, that is, except mine! Some philanthropic soul wants to send me a few hundred pounds in gratitude for my years of faithful service as a letterhack and since there's no address listed he's forced to send it on to John D. Owen to pass along and suddenly Owen has all this new upgraded computer equipment... Okay, John, fork over those piles of sterling pronto or I'll have Skelton send The Men With Big Sticks to your door! (And don't try to tell me all fandom already knows my address and you just wanted to save two lines so you could print a bit more from some egoboo-starved sod like Vinø Clarke 'cos I know for a fact there's a fan in northern Yorkshire who can never remember where I live.) (508 Windermere Avenue, Toronto, Ontario, Canada M6S 3L6, just for the Yorkshhireman, OK?)

*(Yeah, that Vinø Clarke sure does stir things up – here's the first dustcloud.)*

## • Freely Speaking Vinø •

**Stephen Rothman: 23rd April 1990**

My advice to Vinø Clarke (over whether to sign a petition against the National Front) is a definite "Yes". I believe strongly in freedom of speech but I also believe that no-one should have absolute freedom of

action. The NF are not just windbags but active advocates of repression and violence. They have no place in a democracy. As for Vinç's dilemma over his attitudes to alcohol, abortion, etc, I think that he need not link his decision on these issues. They are related by the underlying basic principle of whether to permit harm to some, but then complicated by many other particular factors such that each may be considered separately. Vinç should form his opinion on each case separately and act accordingly. I am not sure if Vinç means that being unable to do the right thing in all cases means that one shouldn't do merely what is in one's power. Vinç has the opportunity to oppose the NF and should do so; he doesn't have much power over arms sales (but, again, he should do what he can if he feels strongly enough about it).

Generally, I would urge people to stand up for their beliefs. The bigots (I agree fully with Julie Vaux's categorisation) need no encouragement, those with doubts and consciences are the ones who need to be prompted to act despite their reservations. And it is precisely these latter people – call them liberals or whatever – who, I believe, are more likely to be morally correct.

In my recent reflections on morality I have come to the conclusion that it is in some ways better to have questions rather than answers to moral problems. If you have questions you have been thinking seriously about the issues, you have been allowing for other people's viewpoints, you have recognised the fact that you may not possess all the necessary knowledge to make infallible judgements.

Answers are, however, ten a penny: any demagogue will be glad to provide you with them. It is only the Hitlers and the ayatollahs who have absolute moral certainty.

Perhaps this answers Pete Crump's question "... who is going to do the educating". Anyone unwilling to discuss their views is obviously unfit. Those who do consider their attitudes may still be wrong but, if they are capable of admitting the possibility that they may be in error, will not propound their views with the fanaticism of those with closed minds.

In a democracy we have the ability to question the authority of those in positions of power and can try to ensure that such positions are not occupied by unsuitable people – if the liberals will stop agonizing over wishing to be right rather than wrong and concentrate instead on being better rather than worse.

Doubts are good provided they do not lead to an inability to act and so leave the field free to those with no consciences and blind faith on their side. ( 49 Burney Bit, Pamber Heath, Basingstoke, Hants, RG26 6TL.)

*(That all makes good sense, Stephen, more so than the following.)*

## • We Are All Guilt-Ridden? •

**James Parker: 4th June 1990**

Pleased to see that my pronouncements on the ongoing Rushdie affair are still creating waves in the letters section.

I stand by every word I wrote, and it is my firm belief that coming events will fully vindicate my view.

Perhaps some clarification of my stance on this issue is required. I *do not* wish to slag off Rushdie, who is a very talented writer and a considerable intellect. I wish only that he would curb his cultural arrogance and acknowledge the simple truth that one man's intellectual freedom cannot be put above the needs of a society that desires to be fully integrated, tolerant of its minorities, and free of divisive voices and hate-ridden rhetoric. The important thing is that working people, whatever their colour or creed, should communicate with each other, learn about each other's ideas and needs. Religious extremists and petulant intellectuals poison the atmosphere as this whole sad saga clearly demonstrates.

Basic truth, John. The needs of society must always take precedence over the needs of the individual.

I condemn, with no hesitation, the burning of effigies of Rushdie. In fact, I condemn the burning of effigies of anyone, including Mrs. Thatcher. I find the whole exercise repugnant and barbaric. It must be remembered however, that the majority of Muslims in this country have demonstrated

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great tolerance and restraint...

My remark in my last letter concerning the idea that to be English is to be automatically racist was in no way thrown in gratuitously. This nation's wealth was largely built on the exploitation of black and yellow people; our whole culture is riddled with it, from Shakespeare's anti-semitism to today's patronisation and stereotyping of black culture. No matter how enlightened and liberal we affect to be, this historical programming is deeply ingrained in our minds. We should acknowledge this fact of our cultural conditioning and fight it. We are all guilty. We all have the blood of countless millions on our hands. Our precious liberal consciences, when put to the test, will almost invariably be revealed as skin deep...

Hope the above comments help to restore some balance to the Rushdie debate... (18 King William Street, Old Town, Swindon, Wilts SN1 3LB)

*(I didn't know sackcloth and ashes were supposed to be our national dress, James.)*

*(Look out, here's Vinç's second dustcloud.)*

## • In Defence Of Comix •

**Lawrence Watt-Evans: 8th May 1990**

In thumbing through SB4... I did want to reply to one item. Vinç Clarke's letter of 1/90, to be exact. "...But when one considers the fact that in the USA, the home of the comic, there's 10% 'functional illiteracy', one wonders how much damage the essentially simplistic nature of the genre is doing."

First off, some simple arithmetic.

There are 250 million people in the U.S. The

top-selling comic book in the country, **Uncanny X-Men**, sells maybe 450 thousand copies per issue. Including Canada, which has 30 million citizens of its own.

In other words, out of 280 million potential customers, comics reach maybe half a million, which is significantly less than the 10% of the population that's functionally illiterate. In fact, it's only 2% of the number who are functionally illiterate.

Speaking as someone who's lived in five states and seen a good bit of the country, let me assure you that functional illiterates don't read comic books. They don't read anything. I lived in rural Kentucky for several years, which is a hotbed of illiteracy, and the people around me didn't read comic books – or anything else. Most of the comic book readers I've known may be stupid, but they aren't functional illiterates.

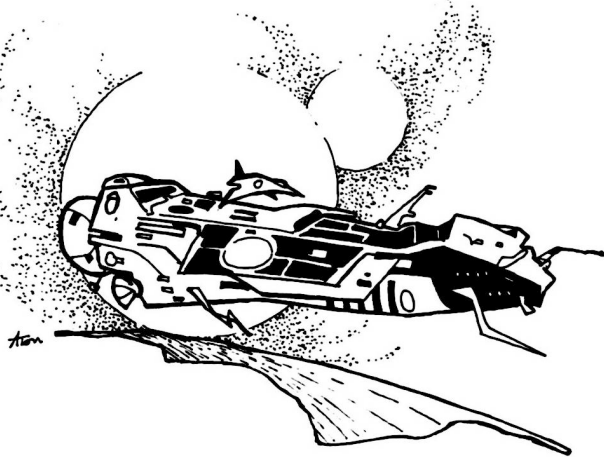
Nobody's done any convincing statistical work yet, but the evidence is that kids who read comic books do at least read. Which most people don't. There's a very large overlap between SF readers and comics readers here, for that matter, and also between comics readers and SF writers...

Functional illiterates don't read comics, they watch TV. (5 Solitaire Court, Gaithersburg, Maryland 20878-4119, USA)

**Peter Tennant: April 1990**

Vinç Clarke's lettercol response to Hilary Robinson's article on writing for comics

was grossly unfair, both to her and the medium itself. You cannot make a connection between illiteracy and reading comics simply by mentioning them in the same sentence. I have no idea what reading levels are like



in America. Vinç quote 10% 'functional illiteracy' and I see no reason to doubt him. He doesn't put this figure into into perspective though. Is illiteracy rising or falling? What percentage of these illiterates read comics as children? Offhand I'd say that the proliferation of television and cheap videos is a more likely spur to illiteracy, and anything that combats the appeal of the glass teat should be encouraged. For many children comics are the easiest route into the world of literature. Vinç goes on to take Hilary's 'black & white' remark entirely out of context and turn it against her. Hilary was merely commenting on a limitation of the publishing process, not offering value judgements. Anyone who's read comics during the last ten years knows that black and white simplifications are largely redundant. Yes, it's a grey world, and comics, except when they're targeted at the very young, reflect this. Comics are currently held in the low esteem that was once science fiction's bane. It's disparaging to find a science fiction fan sharing that attitude, especially when his criticism is so wide of the mark. (9 Henry Cross Close, Shipdham, Thetford, Norfolk, IP25 7LQ)

*(Hell, Peter, us SF fans have gotta have someone to look down on, other than Sun readers!)*

## • When The Lights Go Out •

**Skel: 3rd April 1990.**

I loved that delightfully phrased remark of Harry Warner's to the effect that "...there's not much else a fellow can do to maintain civilisation during a power failure." Fans can be such self-important egocentric nerds at times that I can just envisage this Grade-A dork, Joe Q. Fan, sitting there with the lights out saying to himself not "How can I LoC?", but rather "How can I maintain civilisation?" At least I was getting a chuckle out of it until I wondered how I'd cope if the power failed. I don't have a manual typer. I couldn't watch TV or listen to records. My 'walkman' would last only until the batteries needed recharging. I could always read of course, but when Cas and I checked the box of candles replenished after the last power cut many years ago we

discovered that the kids, with kids' fatal fascination for flickering flames, had blitzed the box and there was only one candle left! "Without candlelight to read by," I said to Cas, "we're stuck. We'll have to revive the art of conversation. Or maybe even go to bed and do \*certain things\*." She looked at me for a moment, her heart obviously racing, and then said "I'll get another box of candles first thing in the morning."

*(Hmm, that last sentence can be read several ways. Meantime, Skel has incurred the wrath of the Senior Service.)*

## • Speaking Of Skel... •

**Chuck Connor: 22nd April 1990**

Shifting onto the letters, it's so nice to see people like Skel telling the world that the defence budget is bottomless and endless. Maybe he was the person who awarded us the last pay rise (5% now, 2% next January, just in time to fuck up the April review), mainly as he seems to have the same attitude and up-to-the-minute information contact. I mean, let's face it, we could have a nice nuke boot sale to raise some of this endless cash – and if the Middle East comes up with the best bid, well, whose going to worry about some fanatic or other. I mean, let's face it, with the retention rate as it stands at the moment, give it another 15 to 20 years and you won't even need a defence budget because there won't be anyone let to play at armed services. (Of course, what the fuck do I know, I mean, I'm only on the inside of things after all....)

Sorry, I'm just a little too tired of hearing people mouthing off without using their eyes and ears first – that, and swallowing all the shite that gets dished out in the newspapers (for newspapers read tabloids in many respects, but not necessarily all).

*(Next in line for a drubbing is Cecil Nurse.)*

## • Educating Cecil •

**Ken Lake: 5th April 1990**

I'm afraid Cecil Nurse totally fails to grasp the point of my article when he starts on this profit/non-profit/loss/ equation: he mentions the BSFA for which we *do* pay (if we choose to join it), there's **Erg** for which one pays two 15p stamps (at the creator's

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justifiable insistence); I pay for **Critical Wave** as well as reviewing books for this and for the BSFA magazines... all these are neither more nor less fannish for seeking to cover costs. Quite honestly I cannot afford to pub my ish so I try to make up to all those who so kindly send me free fanzines by looting them in depth and as controversially as I can. (115 Markhouse Avenue, London, E17 8AY)

**Mike Glicksohn: 16th April 1990**

The loc from C.E. Nurse indicates that its writer has totally failed to understand the spirit that has always made fannish fanzine fandom my favourite part of the SF community. Apparently this person equates fannishness with perniciousness which makes me wonder just how isolated from contact with fannish thought he has been? Sure it takes money to publish fanzines but it takes vastly less money to contribute to fanzines and I seriously doubt there have been huge hordes of proto-fans who were forced out of fandom because of the rising costs of John Owen's' desk-top publishing empire. (Hell, three people is a vast horde of new fanzine fans nowadays!) Nor does CE understand the concept of the loc, probably because it's tied so closely to the other concepts about fanzine fandom he doesn't grok. My last letter was cut from two pages to one paragraph but that didn't stop me writing this one and it won't stop me writing the next one, or the one after that or the one after that. In fact, I can pretty well bet that SB will quit before I do but that's the way things are here in the backwater of fannish fanzine fandom. You should try it, CE, you might like it.

*(Let's ease back and lighten up a little.)*

• **A Few Gentle Pleas** •

**Mary Gentle: 3rd April 1990**

...Can I put in a word for the return of A. None, whoever s/he is? Not that I particularly agree (or disagree) with their comments on those books – in a large number of instances I couldn't give a toss – but I do agree with the idea of an anonymous reviews column. It may be true that in an ideal world people should have the 'guts' to put their names to what they write. The SF

world is something of a special case, being incestuous, faction-ridden, and (let's face it) all too much given to taking in each other's washing. I'd be inclined to give the A. None space to someone who wants to do well-written and no-holds-barred criticism of currently-published books, without having to worry about what they're going to say to that author, or that author's fans, next time they meet them at the bar. (*Any volunteers?*)

Incidentally, re John Haines' question about why fantasy writers feel compelled to write Gadzookery prose – the answer's the same as why bad historical novelists do it. (1) the imitation of Hollywood, which is a debased version of the real thing at umpteen removes, and Morris and the PreRaphaelites have a lot to answer for; and (2) it's easy. In the same way that genre fantasy writers don't research costume (you trying wearing that stuff – I've seen people do it, it's not a pretty, or indeed comfortable sight), and don't research weapons and armour (see previous parenthesis...), they don't bother to look at English as she has been mis-spoken through the centuries.

I mean, why bother? Everyone knows what fantasy costume looks like, it's there on fantasy book covers (feedback). Everyone knows what fantasy sounds like (feedback as above). And recreating period language accurately isn't as easy as John Haines makes it sound. If you were genuinely to write like, to take some representative chronological examples, Chaucer, Mallory, or Nashe, your chances of being understood by the punter plummet. But the attempt to give an archaic atmosphere, without complete archaic usage, is one of the easiest things in the world to get crashingly wrong.

As for fantasy novels written in 'taut 20th century prose': Graves' Claudius novels, anything by Zoe Oldenbourg, Dorothy Dunnett, Bunyan's **Pilgrim's Progress**, and... I've run out of ideas, and what do you mean, they're historical fiction! Now there's a question. What's the difference between historical and fantasy fiction? Is there a correlation between the fact that fantasy has boomed over the last decade, and historical fiction vanished (well, mutated into the bodice-ripper, actually, which is emotional soft-porn)?



One last thing, magic is not 'correctly defined as a science with inadequate methods', as Pavel Gregoric Jr suggests. Any given magic, science, or religion is a mutually-exclusive worldview that explains how the universe works. It pisses me off more than somewhat when I see the old 'magic is primitive science' routine. To give a plain example: alchemy is not chemistry. One demands a universe in which everything is animate, conscious, and responds to symmetries and correspondences; the other requires a universe made of inanimate matter, upon which consciousness has no effect. One seeks to enlighten the spirit, one to control matter. Magic is not trying to be science, or vice versa (although we might be better off if the latter were so). To think so is to be just as short-sighted as one culture calling another culture's gods, demons.

## • Egoboo For The Artists •

**Mic Rogers: 24th April 1990**

Martin Helsdon has done another good illo for the dome article, but not quite up to his usual standard. Maybe it didn't reproduce too well? I was struck by the blankness of the water compared to the details of the rest. It didn't make a happy union, for me.

Another superbly dramatic drawing from Krischan Holl... I am fascinated by the style of cross hatching used, it looks a lot more time-consuming than the usual crossed lines. It is a very satisfactory composition, too.

Steve Fox's effort on p.16 at first glance looks simple. It's when you look at it again more closely that you appreciate the details and skill of it.

I liked Shep's 'Apple' run, but thought the cartoon on p.14 wasn't up to his usual standard. That's the trouble when you set a consistently high standard: if you don't always achieve it, it shows noticeably. Sorry Shep! ('Pohutukawas', 22 Campfield Road, St. Albans, Herts, AL1 5JA)

**Bernard Earp: 14th May 1990**

Krischan Holl on p.19: can't say that I see any SF or Fantasy elements in there, but what the hell, a picture of this quality doesn't need any other reason for printing than that you had it.

## • The SF Poet •

**Gene Van Troyer: 3rd May 1990**

John F. Haines' lettercol comments concerning SF poetry interested me, in as much as I write it from time to time, and once edited, with Robert A. Frazier, *Star\*Line*, the newsletter of the SF Poetry Assn. Folks in the UK still sneer at SF poetry? Well, some in the USA do, too, but no one takes them very seriously.

It seems that SF ideas and viewpoints are invading the poetry mainstream of the USA. In my native neck of the woods, the Pacific Northwest, active literary presses have broadened their scope to include more and more SF-related materials, and numerous presses also publish chapbooks, single author collections, and anthologies of SF/F poetry. SF conventions in the States and Canada for the past several years have regularly featured panels on SF/F poetry – a practice that began in 1980 at Noreascon II and quickly spread.

Anyone with a genuine (open-minded) appreciation of Literature in all its forms will not sneer. In the meantime, the corpus of SF (and science oriented) poetry grows daily.

## • Descent Into Chaos •

**Mark Nelson: 3rd June 1990**

Ian Covell provides a nice description of Chaos Theory, but misses the main point – and this is the point that gets mathematicians excited – that there can be laws governing chaos. Chaos arises from models where *all* the underlying causes are understood. However, in order to predict accurately what happens in the future, the modeller needs to know what is happening originally with infinite precision. Since we do not have infinite precision, we can not predict with any great confidence.

If this were true for all models, the mathematics would be of no use! Fortunately, for most models we can get by with a reasonable approximation. For instance, in calculating the motion of a cannon ball we do not need completely accurate initial data.

The need for complete accuracy in initial data for chaotic models shows why it is impossible for long-term weather forecast-

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ing to be perfectly accurate. Current thinking is that the weather is a chaotic phenomenon. We can make reasonable short-term predictions with inaccurate data because the 'inaccuracies' take time to make themselves felt, but in long-term prediction the inaccuracies will distort the predictions and ensure that there is little correlation between prediction and reality.

There are an interesting group of models which feature intermediate chaotic behaviour. That is to say that the model may exhibit chaotic behaviour or it may exhibit perfectly 'normal' predictable behaviour. If you aren't aware that the model could show these two different types of behaviour then you might have thought – and probably would have done – that there were two different types of behaviour occurring.

Is the writing of articles 'chaotic'? No, but it's interesting to note that the standard of work produced by any one person can vary. Very few authors have a one hundred percent record in producing well-written, interesting material. So there probably is an existence of some actual quality which defines 'professional', although this level is certainly not absolute! Definition of 'professional' varies from journal to journal, even fanzines have been known to reject articles! But what is disconcerting to someone trying to break into the pro field is not only does 'professional' quality vary from journal to journal *but* it also varies according to your own professional reputation! The higher your reputation the lower, seemingly, your own personal quality level until by the time you are a big pro there is no professional quality level and you can get anything published regardless of any merit. Doubtless you can think of appropriate examples. (18 King William Street, Old Town, Swindon, Wilts SN1 3LB)

### • Werequackery & Mrs T •

#### Eric Bentcliffe: 12th May 1990

Speaking of which – well, of 'weres', anyway – I strongly suspect that much of the legend and folklore on [the subject of werewolves] stems from a certain type of person's tendency to see a 'mystery' where one ain't – this was permissible back in the dark ages

and makes an interesting basis for fantasy and horror stories still, but, honestly, does any of your readers really believe in such??? And if they do, could they perhaps explain to me why only certain types of animal are involved in shape-changing lore – I mean, whoever heard of a wereduck, a wererhinoceros, a weregiraffe, for instance? Alright, I can picture Cyril Fletcher as a werepenguin; but that's only the example that proves the rule. As is Greg Pickersgill as a weremuppet!

"... and as the light of his life was torn from his grasp, thrown over the shoulder of his assailant, the gross and supremely ugly Anton Vitchoy, he felt a strange stirring in his veins. Momentarily all his senses blacked out as his body spasmed... stretched... re-shaped itself... with the anguish he'd suffered... he screamed... and screamed again... as his webbed foot slipped unable to get purchase on the smooth surface of the floor. His veins bulged with eldritch power, but all that came out was a forlorn quack!!"

Perhaps Shep would like to illustrate the above. Well, perhaps not.

#### Lloyd Penney: 2nd May 1990

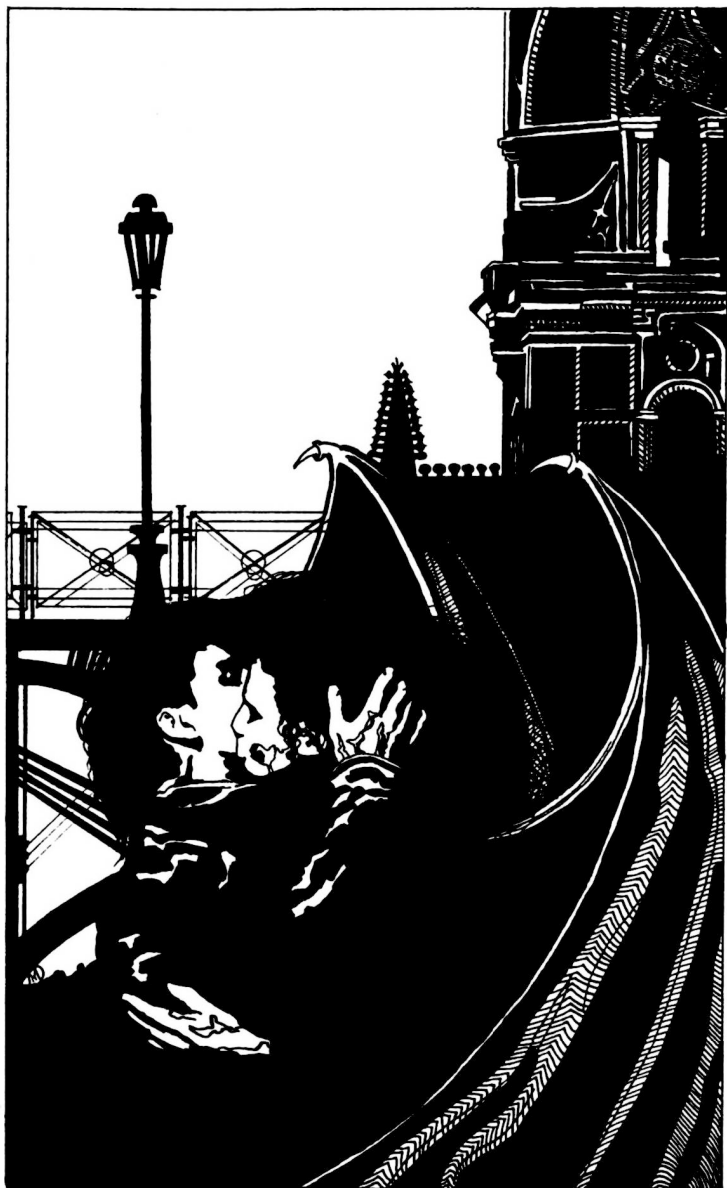
By the way, artists, an idea... seeing Maggie Thatcher seems to have picked up 'Mrs T.' as her latest monicker, any attempts at a black Maggie with 40 pounds of gold chain around her neck?

*(Any offers on the pair of these suggestions, artists?)*

### • WAHFs & Strays •

Harry Andruschak: Pam Boal; Syd Bounds; Keith Brooke; Daniel Buck; Ving Clarke; Jonathan Coleclough; Chester Cuthbert; Graham Evans; Paul Di Fillipo; Ed Griffiths; Margaret Hall; Alan Hunter; Dave Langford; Ethel Lindsay; Mary Long; Eric Mayer; John Miller; Cecil Nurse; Duncan Preston; Hilary Robinson; Peter Smith; David Thayer; Sue Thomason; Martin Tudor; Sue Walker; Bert Warnes

And that's all there's room for folks, as tightly packed a bunch of locs as I can manage without actually resorting to phone book text sizes. All aboard for SB6?



## Rastus Muses

An author's view of the Rushdie affair, from Thomas Pynchon:

"Our thanks, for recalling those of us who write to our duty as heretics, for reminding us again that power is as much our sworn enemy as unreason, for making us all look braver, wiser, more useful than we often think we are." (Reprinted from *The New York Times Book Review*, 12.3.89, in *Contemporary Literary Criticism*, Vol 56, 1989, which also contains many other comments on Rushdie.)

All over the world, there seems to be a cry going up of "It's all the scientists' fault" as man-made disasters follow one after the other. Of course, it never really is their fault. They give advice in most cases, but it is nearly always decision makers who are not scientists that choose the course ahead. In commercial outfits, this is particularly true, and the person with the chief say is nearly always the accountant, who holds the company's purse strings. It's that person who often says "If you do it the way the scientists want, it'll cost X million pounds more, and the shareholders won't stand for it." You eco terrorists want a scapegoat? Start grinding an ax against the nearest accountant!

Quotes from a recent *Guardian* article about James Boren, American philosopher & 'poet of bureaucracy'.

"Nothing is ever impossible until it is sent to a committee."

"Subsidies are the accepted way of redistributing wealth to those with the most political clout."

"Abstract: to destroy an idea, policy or concept by making it so abstract that no one can understand what is being abstracted."

"Bureaucrats rarely have sex with one another; what they do, they do to the public."

Recently I've been reading *Mirror-shades*, Bruce Sterling's cyber-punk anthology, and was surprised to discover how dated many of the stories seem. Not because they were now 'unfashionable', but simply

because events have already overtaken some of the stories. One of the perils of near-future extrapolation, I guess. They particularly come unstuck over the stability of the Soviet Empire – no one, *but no one*, expected the collapse of 1989. There is even one story where the re-unification of Germany occurs, but with influence going the other way! Otherwise a pretty effective and enjoyable overview of the cyberpunk movement.

I'm getting a bit worried about the perceived image of the Open University. The stock image, as appearing in comedy scripts across the TV/Radio spectrum, seems to be that we're totally staffed with academics still wearing flared trousers. No doubt this comes from some of the older TV programmes still being shown (because parts of our courses are often very long-lived, especially TV) that were originally recorded in the seventies. Nowadays, the only guys wearing flares around the place are new research students coming in from Manchester, honest!

## Contents & Credits

On the writers' side we have:

Ken Lake/Let Tribalism Flourish (p11-15)  
Mary Gentle/ Machiavelli, Marx and the Material Substratum (p16-18)  
Skel/Worth Series Consideration 1 (p19-20)  
Andy Sawyer/Lock Up Your Datestamps... (p21-25).

Representing the artists, we have:

Krischan Holl (Cover)  
David Mooring (p2, 43)  
Alan Hunter (p5, 6, 9, 25)  
Shep Kirkbride (p10)  
Teddy Harvia (p15)  
ATom (p27, 30,35,38)

Next Issue? You want me to make predictions about the next issue when you've only just had this one? Jeez, some people are never satisfied. OK, how about October? Yes, I do mean October 1990, three months from now. That's not to soon, is it? I mean, I'll make it December if you really want?

