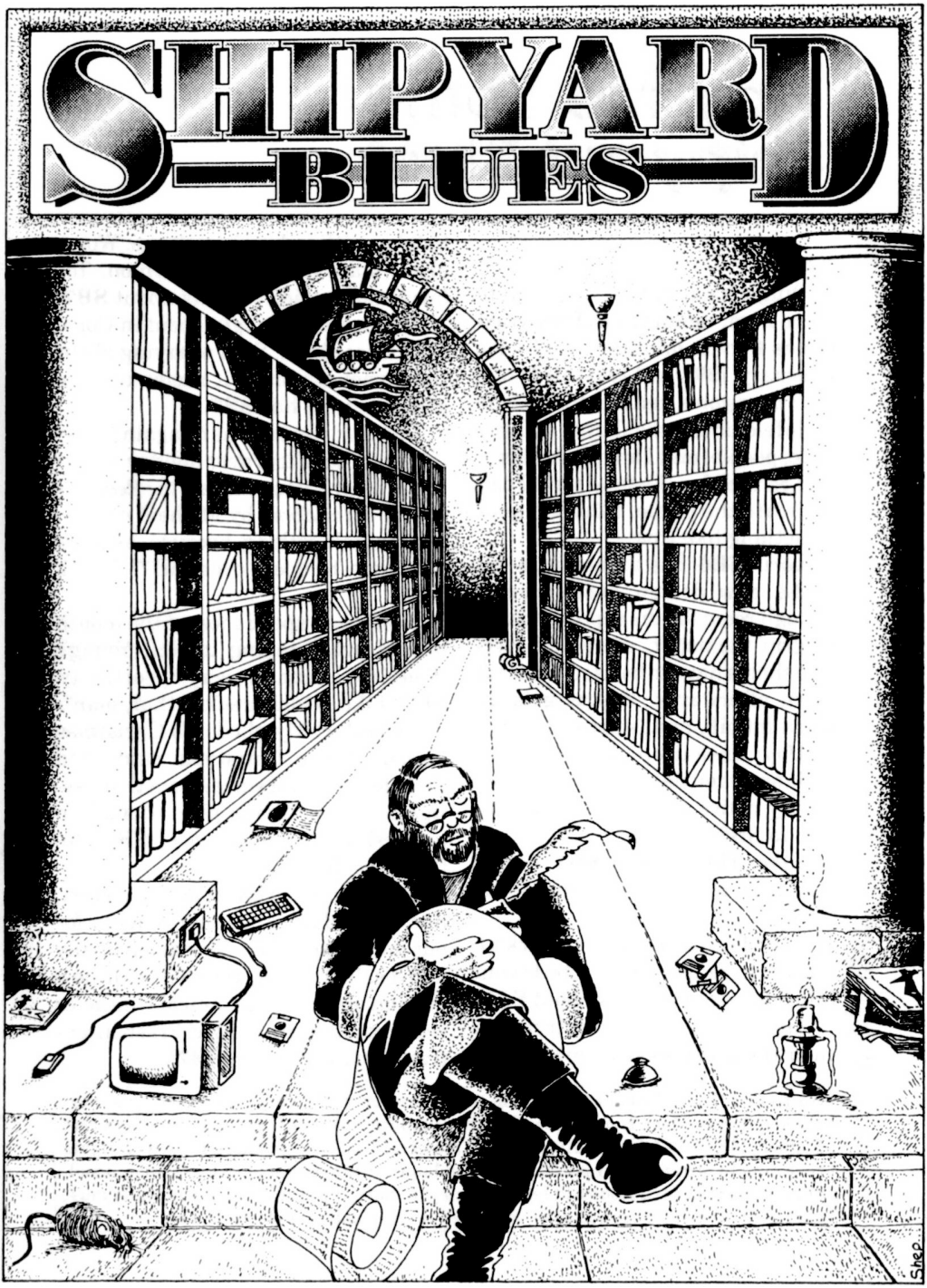

SHIPYARD
BLUES
Shep

Play Me Some Shipyard Blues...

Reelin' In The Year

Duh, wha'appened? One minute there I am, sending out **Shipyard Blues 6**, next minute – zip!! – it's February 1992 and two-thirds of a year have gone, just like that! Some dude feloniously monkeyed with my time, people, and I am pretty damn cool on the idea. Lemme see if I can re-create the crime. I think it goes something like this:–

April: **SB6** has a sting in its tail – the new design doesn't leave enough room for the repro machine to 'grip' the paper, so special oversize sheets have to be used, then cut down afterwards. Rastus gets an extra-fat bill, and is not amused.

May: knee-deep in work, still sulking from damage to wallet – hardly notice that the initial reaction to **SB6** is tepid.

June: Think about **SB7**: decide it's much too early to think about **SB7.**

July: Take week off from work to, uh, work: redecorating a bedroom. Much too tired to think about **SB7**.

August: it's work time, trying to clear the decks so I can go away on holiday with a clear conscience. Worry about state of the Soviet Union. Too busy and worried to think about **SB7**.

September: fortnight spent in Cornwall, blissed out. Stop worrying about the Soviet Union – it seems to have gone away. So has **SB7**.

October: working hard again, making up for time lost over holiday. Choking on description of **SB** as *"the Reader's Digest of fandom"* by Michael Ashley: stop myself puking because Ashley's not there to spew over. **SB7**? F@%k **SB7**!

November: spend most of the month blissed out listening to Neil Young's **Weld** live album at every opportunity. **SB7**? Like, which track is that, man?

December: My ghod, it's Christmas already. Write Christmas cards and three letters (first since August). Investigate the remaining piles of mail on my desk for the makings of **SB7**. Retire, horrified.

January 92: New Year, new start, new technology – scanner ordered for our department last November finally arrives. Try it out, coupled with new version of Omnipage optical character reading software – magic! Fresh incentive to really start on **SB7**.

Shipyard Blues 7 comes to you from the fevered brow of John D. Owen (and his overworked friend, Mac). It originates from his 'umble abode at 4 Highfield Close, Newport Pagnell, MK16 9AZ, United Kingdom. Available for the fundamentally fannish usual, or for a sub of £2 for 3 issues (at least – it may be more, if you're lucky) if you really must part with your hard-earned cash. Prepared in the shadow of electoral war.

Well, whadd'yu know, it's all there. A bit fuzzy in patches, especially over the summer, but then I've never known a summer that wasn't! Something to do with the brain overheating and losing efficiency during those long, hot balmy days. (Mind you, with my brain, efficiency is something of passing acquaintance anyway.)

The Tao Of Fandom

Fandom both pisses me off and amuses me in just about equal portions, which is probably just as well. If I was less pissed off at it, I might get frustrated at not being more involved than I am. If I was less amused, I might decide the aggravation of fandom was more than I needed, and disappear from the scene.

There have been times when I've got pretty close to making that decision to slope off, when the average number of fuggheads and piss-artists seemed to have climbed to a high enough point to endanger fandom as I know it: fortunately (so far) the tide of smegheads (if I may borrow a Red Dwarfism) has always ebbed before over-flowing my sea-wall, largely because fannish negativism, cynicism and aggression generally contain within them the seeds to their own destruction. I know what I like, and as long as I can find that within fandom, I see no reason to quit (even if the enthuisiasm with which I publish might ebb and flow with my own creative energies).

Sometimes, I can be pissed off and delighted by the same thing: Skel is responsible for the most recent occasion when this happened. He sent me a copy of a booklet called **Desert Island Eric**, seventy-four pages of selected fanwriting by Eric Mayer, and as delightful a collection of excellent writing as has ever seen the fannish light. Culled from pieces in a variety of fanzines between 1978 and 1987, **Desert Island Eric** should be required reading for everyone interested in fannish writing, to show that it doesn't have to be writing *about* fans to be good, to be engrossing, but that just about anything is grist to the mill, provided it is informed with what I regard as an es-

sential fannish attitude, a sense of wonder in the world as it stands.

In this collection, Eric writes about his life, his family (now, alas, sundered), the birth of his daughter, of fanzines and rock stars, and many other things, and he writes elegantly, simply and from the heart. He writes about reality as he sees it, without the fog of "faannishness" that has often made many good writers from this period amusing but largely inconsequental in the long term. Eric's stuff is well-worth reading

again, which is more than can be said for many more-lauded fanwriters then and now.

So why does it piss me off? Because it reminds me that Eric Mayer was carried away by one of those high tides of fuggheads and piss-artists, as a result of speaking his mind (never a crime, surely), and going up against one of the more belligerent characters prominent in fandom at the time. The resultant "unpleasantness" (if you'll pardon the euphemism, as I'd tactfully prefer not to elaborate) didn't so much as drive Eric out of fandom as persuade him that there were better things to do with his time. In the years since, he's put out the occasional little fanzine, circulating it amongst his friends, and, even when they are as painful as those that talked of the break-up of his marriage, they are always welcome as a breath of fresh air among the stale sameness of so many fanzines ostensibly more 'central' to fandom. It all helps keep the ying-yang of my own fandom in some kind of balance.

Thanks Eric, and thanks Skel, for making all these little gems available in one handy package. As for the rest of you, if you haven't seen **Desert Island Eric**, then pester Skel: if he's already run out of copies, maybe he could do a reprint!

Readin' and Rockin' 'til the break of day

In the absence of anything else distracting (like producing issues of **SB**), I've probably got more reading done this past year than for years. I've certainly managed to touch base with a substantial number of authors I'd not encountered before, some of whom are very good indeed. Here's my top ten for the period since last March, in no order.

1. Iain Banks: **Use Of Weapons**. The book that should be indicted for cruelty to readers, since the final twist stands the whole book on its head.

2. Brian Stableford: **The Empire of Fear**. Strange, but effective reworking of the vampire mythos, grounding it with scientific principles.

3. Terry Pratchett: **Reaper Man/ Witches Abroad**. How can one decide between the two of them? Both a bundle of laughs, and a tonic in gloomy times.

4. Mary Gentle: **The Architecture of Desire**. Would have been most shocking book of the year if it hadn't been for **Use of Weapons**. Intriguing.

5. Ian MacDonald: **King of Morning, Queen of Day**. Showing that he can tackle fantasy as well as SF: one of *the* writers of the nineties.

6. Pat Cadigan: **Synners**. Cyberpunk taken to the Nth degree, with virtual reality proving to be a real 'bleeding edge' of technology.

7. Tim Powers: **The Stress Of Her Regard**. Miasmic rendition of events in the Byron/Shelley circle. Head-spinning concoction.

8. Pat Murphy: **The City, Not Long After**. My favourite book of the year, I think. A very different look at America after the fall.

9. Anne Rice: **Interview with the Vampire**. I know, it's ancient history, but I've shied away from horror for years. This is brilliant.

10. R.A. MacAvoy: **Lens Of The World/King Of The Dead**. The story of Nazhuret, in two volumes (so far), and very personal, superior fantasy.

Lots of other near-misses, like Mike Resnick's **Ivory**, Guy Gaviel Kay's **Tigana**, Lucius Shepard's **The Jaguar Hunter** collection, Greg Bear's **Eon/ Eternity** pair (B-I-G SF), Walter Jon William's **Angel Station**, Sherri Tepper's **The Gate To Women's Country**.

Best non-fiction of the past year was David Darling's **Deep Time**, excellent pop physics, tracing the history of a particle from Big Bang to the end of time (with alternative endings, naturally). Short, sweet and pithy.

Naturally enough, I've also kept up with the CDs, too, though perhaps not as many as previous years (the prices are crippling!) Here's the list.

1. Neil Young and Crazy Horse: **Weld**. *The* album of the year, double live set (triple if you're daft enough to fork out for **Arc Weld**, with a third album of rubbish) of incandescent rock music.

2. Elvis Costello: **Mighty Like A Rose**. Not as sharp an album as **Spike**, but still great songs, excellent music.

3. Richard Thompson: **Rumour & Sigh**. Still British Rock's best kept secret, Thompson plays like a dream, sings like a devil.

4. The Bo Deans: **Black & White**. Spiritual successors to The Band? Maybe. Ace mix of country, folk and rock, getting more focussed by the album.

5. Tom Petty: **Into The Great Wide Open**. More from one of the classiest of the American rockers, fresh from his stints with the Travelling Wilburys.

6. Little Village: **Little Village**. Who? Need I say more than a stellar group made up of Ry Cooder, John Hiatt, Nick Lowe and Jim Keltner? Perfick!

7. The Smithereens: **Blow Up**. Belated follow-up to the superb **Eleven**, and more of the same. Very sixties, but that's not such a bad thing, is it?

8. Robbie Robertson: **Storyville**. Ex Band leader's appreciation of New Orleans honey-drips all over the tracks. Smooth!

9. Warren Zevon: **Mr Bad Example**. At last, Zevon's getting back on track (after a long period of drying out), with songs as sharp as a razor.

10. Johnnie Johnson: **Johnnie B. Bad**. Long-time piano player for Chuck Berry, doing a John Lee Hooker (he's almost as old). Superior blues.

Enough! Time to get on with the show, starting with K.V. Bailey, and a companion to his 'Domes' piece in **SB5**

SHIPYARD BLUES 7

Harry Turner © 1990

K.V. Bailey

CATHEDRALS

Will you build me a house of plaster, with corrugated roofing,
To be filled with a litter of Sunday newspapers?
T.S. Eliot: from THE ROCK, Chorus III,

The eastern light our spires touch at morning,
The light that slants upon our western doors at evening...
From THE ROCK, Chorus X.

Returning home from the Mexicon IV in Harrogate, I decided to spend a day in York to see again the Minster, now restored as good as new after its bolt from heaven. It was bank holiday, and York, with its plastic dinosaurs in the park, courier-loud buses and barouches rolling by day, and city ghost-tours by night, was high Disney, the vast cathedral its centre-piece. The Minster's milling interior had plenty of side-rides (crypt, chapter house etc.) at 60p a time, though the sanctuary was barred off with a "no entry: service in progress" sign. Everyone was happy, and so was I. Absolutely nothing could diminish the breath-taking symphonic perfection of the nave viewed from a stance beneath the glowing saints and archbishops of the great west window.

"Nave" is in descent from *navis*, a ship. Metaphorically the "ship of salvation", maybe: but Nikolaus Pevsner calls the nave a church's "middle vessel"; and the structural association of great church and ship is frequent, graphic and fruitful. Ely has often been likened to a high towering ship sailing the sea of the fens. Lincoln, viewed from the Witham valley, when morning mists swirl and subside about the limestone scarp, can appear as an ark freshly perched on a mountain. A cathedral may even be, imaginatively, analogue of a ship in space, voyaging eternity and energised by the magic of ministrants and the slow waves of plainsong and polyphony. The cathedral's prow is easterly oriented towards a rising star; its altar-space, a navigation deck; the throne ('cathedra') of the bishop ('episcopus' = overseer), the commander's chair. Bathetic, to say the least, it may be to evoke an image of the "Starship Enterprise" in this context, but its bridge is the scene of officers going about their drills and routines with an air as much sacerdotal as it is military or nautical, their ritual beamings-down and beamings-up quasi-numinous ascents and descents, if not of the spirit, then certainly of a dematerialised body.

That "beaming" operation perhaps offers, as trope in a post-Christian mythos, something profanely analogous to a widely-occurring cathedral motif: the interventional efficacy of what may take place on the site of a shrine. The shrines of the saints – Swithun at Win-

chester, Frideswide at Oxford, Becket at Canterbury – were points of interface between worlds: points at which immortal beings might intercede on behalf of earthly ones: points at which miracles might happen. At Canterbury stained glass medallions in the Becket Window commemorate such events. The soaring vertical dimensions of cathedrals accentuate this "between worlds" symbolism, from heaven-climbing spire to the below-ground, mundanely-aspected, crypt. The transitions and transcendences of mortal and immortal essences are exteriorally figured in stone: as on the west front at Wells, where rank upon rank, tier upon tier, saints, kings and princes mount towards the high celestial realm. Or as at Bath where, respectively on north and south roof-to-ground turrets of the facade, flights of angels "beam-down" and are "beamed-up", their passage calling to mind the vertical progressions in certain cabbalistic representations of the 'Tree of Life'.

Interiorally, angels may hover on high, as on transept hammer-beam roof supports at Ely, and in spandrels of the Angel Choir at Lincoln; or they may cluster in a clerestory gallery as at Exeter, where they play antique instruments – the rebec, the lute and the regals. On rood screen and reredos the patterns of horizontally tiered figures and of verticality are repeated, as may be seen at St.Albans and Southwark. If vertically the structure and ornaments of cathedrals suggest movement through space, or a transcending of space, their linear dimension has also spatial and inter-realm significance. Tracing a path of pilgrimage from font to altar, Alan Watts in **Myth and Ritual in Christianity** has suggested that the whole cruciform edifice of the church is that of Christus Pontifex, Christ the Bridgemaker. Earth (the outer narthex, the watery font, and the womb of creation symbolised in the western rose window) finds its representation at one linear extreme. At the church's eastern extreme the firmament, interface with infinity and eternity, may be imaged in high lancet windows (verticality) and be evidenced in the flow of light that they admit to the sanctuary; and there are the loci of ascension and transcendence in shrine and high altar, bathed in that light-flood and in the lesser symbolic lights of lamp and candle.

The structure, orientations and rituals of a finely architected mediaeval church are used to remarkable effect in Dorothy L. Sayers's novel **The Nine Tailors.** The symbology extends from a corpse dumped in the graveyard, which is then given Christian burial, to the high tower and its bells, the bells being instruments of warning and judgement and ultimately of rejoicing when the islanded church itself becomes the sheltering means of salvation from a destroying flood. Sayers's anonymous fenland church is not an actual cathedral; but I have always imagined it, rightly or wrongly, as an amalgam of two great churches with cathedral-like features: St. Wendreda's at March, with its wonderful angel hammer-beams, and St. Andrew's in the nearby village of Sutton-in-the-Isle, sometimes, and justly, particularly in respect of its dominant position, called (in rivalry to Ely!) the 'Cathedral of the Fens'. The crux of the 'mystery' (present in both a

metaphysical and a criminological sense) is revealed in 'stream of consciousness' passages on two occasions when Lord Peter Wimsey is present at church services. During the funeral service for the unidentified corpse, we are taken from "the deep shadows of the porch" through to a contemplation of the angel roof . As the Rector reads from *Corinthians I* that the body, as a seed, is sown a natural body but "raised a spiritual body", there runs through Wimsey's mind the words of Gerard Manley Hopkins: "In a flash, at a trumpet crash, this Jack, joke, poor potsherd, patch, matchwood, immortal diamond is – immortal diamond" (lines from the poem 'That Nature is a Heraclitian Fire and of the Comfort of the Resurrection'). Then the same associative route is traced through a succession of images summoned by the Rector in the course of a Sunday morning sermon, while Wimsey, via recollections of the Psalms and of Dante, in a flash realises that the heart of the mystery – the hidden emeralds – must have been lodged in the roof, high among the cherubim. In the novel's conclusion Wimsey looks out over the flood which has obliterated the story's evil, sighting the waters between framing battlements of the church tower, which swings as the bells ring, so that the drowned fen shows "like the sea seen through the portholes of a rolling ship."

If in Sayers the great church at times analogises ship or saving ark, in William Golding's **The Spire,** a fiction derived from the erection of Salisbury's 14th century spire, the cathedral/human body metaphor is domin.ant, church and body having each its substratum and substance of earthy elements, each being numinous in essence. This identification, stated on the first pages in the presentation of an architectural model of the cathedral, reaches a climax in the dying Dean Jocelin's confessional recall of the visionary experience which had prompted his spire-raising obsession: "I had seen the whole building as an image of living, praying man. But inside it was a richly written book to instruct that man." He continues: "A new movement seemed to be building the church in me, walls, pinnacles, sloping roof [...] My body lay on the soft stones, changed in a moment, the twinkling of an eye, resurrected from daily life." The erotic subtext of Golding's narrative profoundly enriches the duality of its symbolism, as this takes shape in terms of Jocelin's subjective response to the archetypes manifested in the history and destiny of a cathedral the foundations of which totter on the brink of a swamp-like pit, and whose glory he sees as being fulfilled in an all but impossibly towering spire.

That a cathedral will so exist as a temporal phenomenon in disparate consciousnesses is realised by Victor Hugo in his eponymous novel centred on Notre Dame de Paris. He writes of the devotion to it "at that period" of two beings "so unlike as [the archdeacon] Claude and Quasimodo – loved by one, a sort of half-human creature, for its beauty, for its stature, for the harmonies dwelling in the magnificent whole; loved by the other, a being of cultivated and ardent imagination, for its signification, its mystic meaning, the symbolic language lurking under the sculpture on its front, like the first text under the second in a *palimpsestus* – in short, for the enigma which it eternally proposes to the understanding." Throughout **Notre Dame de Paris** Hugo is constantly

aware of, as he expresses it, "'that singular assimilation, symmetrical, immediate – consubstantial almost – of a man to a building." And equally of a correspondence existing between cathedral as a creation and creation as a cathedral: "a sort of human Creation," he writes, "[...] mighty and prolific as the Divine Creation of which it seems to have caught the double character – variety and eternity." In that chapter of superlative descriptive genius , 'The Ringer-General of Notre Dame', Hugo envisages the cathedral as Quasimodo's "carapace". The hunchback is identified with the cathedral to the extent that when he swarmed the facade and towers, the people "would say something fantastic, supernatural, horrible, was to be seen in the whole church eyes and mouths opened in it here and there; the stone dogs, griffins, and the rest that watch day and night, with outstretched neck and open jaws, around the monstrous cathedral were heard to bark."

It was a contemporary of Hugo, Charles Baudelaire, who in **Les Fleurs du Mal** opened his poem 'Correspondances' with the stanza, here quoted in fairly free translation:

"Nature is a temple whose living columns
May breathe out barely distinguishable words;
Man goes his way through forests of symbols
Which pursue him with their intimate gaze."

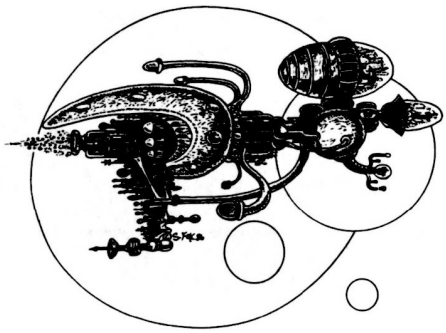
In these respective poetic images (Hugo's and Baudelaire's) we have a cathedral speaking with the voices of Nature, and Nature speaking with the voices of a cathedral. In Hugo's narrative, Quasimodo, in inhabiting the cathedral's stony carapace, appears to instil his own life into its emblematic figures: in Baudelaire's poem the organic/inorganic symbols found, or conceived, as man passes through the metaphoric living yet stony forest/temple, are in mysterious communion with him.

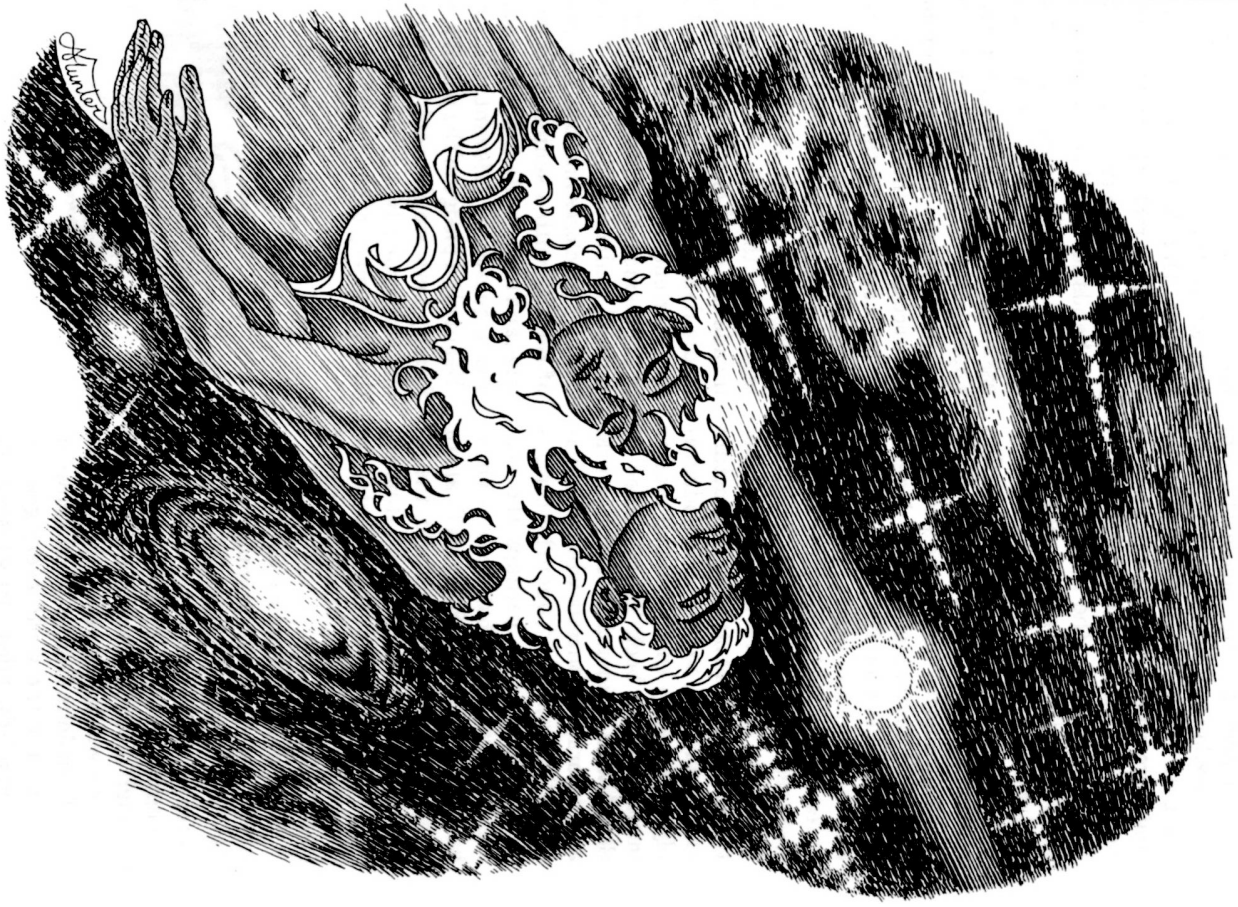
The very plan of a gothic cathedral is in correspondence with the human body; and at the same time it is a symbolic model of the cosmos. This dual coincidence is, moreover, expressed in many structural and decorative details – for example, at a regal level, in the Pythagorean/Platonic proportions of the sculptures which flank the western entrance to Chartres; at the level of primal man in the frequently-found carvings in stone and wood of the Green Man, whether he is seen to be growing out of forest vegetation, or with a labyrinth of twigs and leaves growing out of him. Writing of gothic cathedrals in **Rebirth of Nature,** Rupert Sheldrake remarks how often they occupy anciently dedicated sites: "The soaring columns and vaults recall sacred groves, and vegetation bursts out everywhere. Imps, demons, dragons and animals, and angels fly above. Again and again we find the mysterious figure of the Green Man..." Robert Holdstock's time-embracing forest in **Lavondyss** embodies some characteristics of such aboriginal groves, with its desired and feared "geistzone", its "mythagos", its "oakvortices", the haunts of such elemental image-forms as Green Jack and the Twigling.

John Ruskin described the Chapter House of Southwell Minster, which

contains an overwhelming wealth of 13/14th Century nature carving (a galaxy of leaves, pristine meadow flowers and woodland animals, as the loveliest thing on English soil. There you will find a Green man, masklike, inhumanly human, peering out of, or perhaps organically part of, the hawthorn into which a pillar's capital has been sculpted. The hawthorn is traditionally a tree both sacred and secular, emblem of death and of renewal, of the crown of thorns, and of the flowering staff of Glastonbury's grail legend. Nikolaus Pevsner has said that the copying of nature in art may be motivated by reasons "ranging from primitive magic to sheer pride in imitative skill". He considers the balance between nature and style, and structure and decoration, to have been admirably achieved by the Southwell master mason. In his book **The Leaves of Southwell** he identifies architectural and decorative conceits where the artist "will have his fun", but in his conclusion suggests that perhaps the aesthetic and technical "balances" of which he had written are at Southwell "also a balance of God and the World, the invisible and the visible", and thus expressive of a theophany manifested "in every man and beast, in every herb and stone".

Such appraisal takes me back, in conclusion, to an earlier image, that of the carved angels regarded by Lord Peter during the funeral service. Thoughts and poetic fragments chase through his mind, counterpointing the Rector's words. He remembers a passage from John Donne: "God knows in what part of the world every grain of every man's dust lies... He whispers, he hisses, he beckons for the bodies of his saints." Scepticism in Wimsey's mind engages and challenges the aesthetic, the literal and the symbolic. As his eyes rest on the thronging hammerbeams, he asks: "Did the old boys who made that amazing roof believe? Or did they just make those wide wings and adoring hands for fun, because they liked the pattern?" In some sense it is a version of the question that Pevsner asks, and answers, in his earlier-quoted appreciation of the leaves of Southwell. What questions might subliminally have occupied the minds of individuals in that happily expectant bank holiday crowd paying their 60p to enter the Chapter House of York Minster (one comparable, almost, in beauty of content to Southwell's) – or indeed may invade the mind of any contemporary media-dazed, newsprint-fazed individual when encountering that microcosm of the cosmos, a gothic cathedral? The 'critical-realist' philosopher, George Santayana, closes his book **The Sense of Beauty** with a sentence I consider true, and in the context of that question about questions, relevant. He wrote: "Beauty is a pledge of the possible conformity between the soul and nature, and consequently a ground of faith in the supremacy of the good."




Hunter

Steve Palmer

MONEY I$ NOT INTERE$TING

There has been much in the media of late about interest rates. Our Conservative government decided some time ago that the only way to slow down growth in the British Economy was to raise interest rates to very high levels; typically 15%. This, they claimed, would inhibit consumer spending to levels that would reduce inflation, slow down growth, etc.

It was rather like trying to crack a nut by placing the nut on the ground, taking a large sledgehammer, then hitting the ground ten feet away. Interest rates as a mechanism of control is the monetarists' idea of a strategy. But, as is recognised by many who can see what is really happening in this country, and in all the Western capitalist countries, the real dictator of consumer spending is advertising. By raising interest rates and allowing advertising to continue in its insane, semi-hypnotic path, all that has been achieved is the depletion of all institutions and individuals who do not have large supplies of capital; people with mortgages, small businesses, and so on.

So the questions arise; why is there such a thing as interest rates? How do they work?

Interest as a financial ploy goes right back to the foundations of urban society; back to 3000BC, when the high priests of local temples in Mesopotamia (later to evolve into kings) lent out money that they and their temples had accumulated, but insisted that repayments include an additional sum. Naturally, they would benefit by this. Some of the earliest known documents are records of temple transactions. And ever since, money has been kept in circulation, so that it could perform actions for people, with this additional payback sum. In other words, interest is essentially a selfish invention. It benefits those people who have at start of events large sums of money, that is, an elite, an elite who in modern times have become that small number of business people who control the economies of Western countries.

Throughout society as a whole, then, because there is a finite amount of money available to the population, the effect of the interest mechanism is to channel money from those with less capital to those with more. If the population is divided into ten tenths, according to wealth, the lower eighty percent receive less money via interest than they pay out; in other words, money gained from, for example, building society accounts, is less than money lost through having to pay a mortgage. The

ninth tenth receive roughly what they pay out; and the richest tenth receive twice as much as they pay out. This would be expected, since they have more capital. But this is not the whole story. If this richest tenth is examined it too shows a similar pattern; those with most capital make the largest net profits. In short, in a society based on monetarist policy and which uses the interest rate mechanism, money is continually funnelled from the poor to the rich; the rich get richer and the poor get poorer.

Nor do we pay interest only when we borrow money. Because of our capitalist structure, all operations that involve capital have to waste money purely to service this borrowing. The examples I quote below are from West Germany, as it was then (early 1980's) but they serve to show how interest builds up into massive hidden costs.

For rubbish collection, where the proportion of capital to labour costs is small interest makes up 12% of total costs. For drinking water, the cost of interest on capital is 38% of total costs; the rest includes energy costs, maintenance, personnel, etc. For the use of sewage drains, the cost of interest on capital is 47%. And if the cost of rent in the sector of public housing is examined, the cost of interest reaches 77%; here, the proportion of capital to labour is especially high. It is possible to calculate that, on average, taking into account a suitable range of goods and services, the cost of interest – which is purely a cost of borrowing capital – is around 50%.

Obviously, this system is unfair, divisive, wasteful; it a typical product of patriarchal society; a small, selfish, governing elite does very well for itself, largely by mystifying what actually happens.

This system does not apply only within countries. It is now well established that environmental damage in the so-called Third World countries, for example the despoiling of rain forests and the exploitation of local populations, happens because these countries have to service their foreign debts; they borrowed money from the rich Western countries and now have to repay, not only the capital. but the interest accrued annually. This leads to the unbelievable situation of some countries not even paying off the amount borrowed, merely servicing the debt by paying only the interest, which is all they can afford. This, of course, is a nice little earner for Western financial institutions. And it is why environmental groups such as Friends of the Earth are insisting that these institutions write off the relevant debts, something which is perfectly feasible.

So what could replace interest? In our present system, money accrues value merely by being owned. Unlike all other goods – food that goes off, consumer items that go out of fashion or become obsolete, money is immortal. It can simply be perpetually owned without costs.

One answer is to have a 'use-fee'. Money would be subject to a fee if it was simply kept: interest would not exist. In other words, instead of paying interest to those people who have more money than they need, these people would pay a small fee if they kept money

out of circulation. Interest, which is a private gain, would be replaced by this 'use-fee' which is a public gain.

This would revolutionise our economy (one reason that stops it from actually appearing). The fee would return into circulation to retain the balance between volume of money and volume of economic activities, that is, so that it did not simply do nothing. The fee would be directed to the government, which could then use it for public works, and thereby reduce taxation.

Surprising though it may seem, such a system has already been tried in reality. In 1932, the Austrian town of Worgl, because of the global depression of the time, and because of its huge unemployment, decided to try an experiment with interest-free money. The town council issued 5000 interest-free schillings, covering itself by keeping 5000 ordinary schillings in its bank. With this money, a bridge was built, along with other public works, and the money was accepted by the town's builders, bakers, cobblers, and so on. The use-fee in this case was 1% per month, or 12% per year; this fee had to be paid by whoever held the banknotes at the end of each month, and was in the form of a small stamp glued to the back of the note. The fee caused everybody to use the interest-free money rather than their ordinary money; people actually paid their taxes in advance in order not to pay the use-fee. Within one year, the money had circulated 463 times, creating goods and services worth almost two and a half million schillings. Also within this year, unemployment was reduced by 25%.

But the Austrian Bank, seeing that its own monopoly over the use and circulation of money was in danger, banned the creation of local money. And in 1933 the American 'stamp-scrip' movement, which planned to introduce interest-free money into 100 communities and cities, was banned for a similar reason; when the political leaders of the time realised what interest-free money meant to the small business elite that ran the country, they had it immediately banned.

This, then, is a possible future development. Interest-free money would remove many of the social problems, unfair systems. and inbuilt exploitation that plagues all capitalist systems. It has also been proved to work for the public, rather than the private individual, and this may, in the end, prove its downfall for we still live in a world where public spending has to be rigidly controlled, while private waste and inefficiency is tolerated.

Bruno Ogorolec

SWEET DREAMS ARE MADE OF THIS

The phone rang at an ungodly hour; it must have been two or three in the morning. My wife picked it up.

"Yes?" she said irritably. "Huh? Luciano who?" She pushed the receiver towards me with a quizzical look on her face. "It's for you," she said.

It was Pavarotti, with a theatrical tremor to his voice.

"Listen, man, I realize it's an awkward time of the day but you simply must come. I've managed to get everybody who is anybody; they will all be here. It's the last chance to get some kind of a consensus. Get dressed and come here as fast as you can." Click.

An excitable bunch, these Italians. Still, if everybody was going to be there I had to go. Over the heated objections of my wife I grabbed yesterday's clothes and got dressed.

"You can't go there in a corduroy jacket, Bruno," she said. "Be reasonable. You can't afford to look like a hayseed in that crowd. Nobody will listen to you." Ah, women!

The car raced along the Alpine road at a crackling pace. It's a rare machine, a dark blue 1939 Graham Supercharger 2-door Custom Coupe. It can still outperform most Japanese machinery, not to speak of the modern Detroit iron. The valves of the Continental Six engine clattered their urgent staccato, the supercharger whined, the tires whistled round the serpentine turns of the climb, and my mood was improving by the minute. Very soon Castello Malatesta was looming dramatically above the road.

Luciano himself greeted me at the drawbridge, looking rather ridiculous. Well, a mixture of magnificent and ridiculous, the way he always does. For some reason he wore a large black cape, falling in heavy folds from his shoulders, and a matching broad brimmed hat, like a flaming D'Artagnan or something. Christ, I thought, what's next?

He looked at my jacket with a trace of disdain but said nothing. The car, however, certainly made an impression.

"Madonna, what *is* this?" he asked.

"It's a dark blue 1939 Graham Supercharger 2-door Custom Coupe," I said. "It can still outperform most Japanese machinery, not to speak. . . "

"Yes, yes," said my host, suddenly impatient. "Please come in. We've already started."

The big bechandeliered ballroom was positively packed with people. Packed with celebrities, I should say. Conrad

Adenauer was there, in the flurry of familiar faces. Funny, I thought he'd been dead. Pat Boone. Haven't seen Pat Boone since 1959. Everything was kind of hazy, difficult to make out and remember now. What I do remember is that they were all wearing black capes and broad brimmed hats. They were all looking at me with mild disapproval. Maybe I should have dressed properly after all.

An unidentified woman was at the dais, lecturing on nationalism.

"What we have to imbue the new democracies with," she was saying in a strident tone, "is not nationalist patriotism. It is constitutional patriotism. Otherwise, one kind of collectivism going to be replaced by another kind of collectivism. Even if people gain a measure of freedom it will be collective freedom, not individual. That is not democracy."

Suddenly I recognized the speaker as Vanessa Redgrave. But why was she saying those things? Wasn't she a Maoist or something? Luciano was standing by her side, beaming proudly at her as if she were his favourite daughter. I expected him to break into a loving rendition of "Non Ti Scordar di Me" at any moment.

This was getting too farcical, I decided. There was a side exit nearby and I hurried towards the parking lot in the courtyard, closely followed by Don and Elsie Wollheim. Neither was cloaked, to my intense relief. As a matter of fact, Don wore a corduroy jacket just like mine, and a string tie.

"Do you have a car?" he asked.

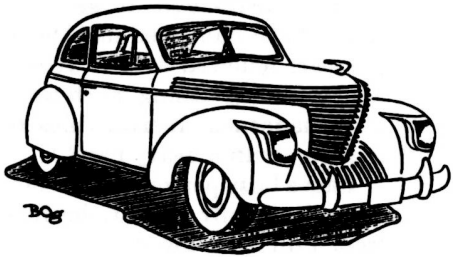
"Yes," I said, producing the car keys. "Want to come with me?"

"If possible, yes," said Don. "We've got to get away from those clowns." He stopped in his tracks. "What *is* this?" he asked, pointing at the car.

"Well, it's a dark blue 1939 Graham Supercharger 2-door Custom Coupe," I said. "It can still outperform..." And I woke up.

Another night gone, and to what purpose? The only meaningful result was having Vanessa Redgrave recite a few words on collectivism and democracy. They weren' t even original; I'd written them down myself last evening, before going to bed. No new synthesis, no progress at all.

It is so difficult, trying to solve problems in your sleep. You have very little control over the events. All too often things get completely out of hand, as in that Pavarotti episode. Oh, I suppose there are rich pickings in that dream for a Freudian analyst (the jutting snout of the 1939 Graham Supercharger, if nothing else) but that's not what I've been after.



1939 Graham Supercharger 2-Door Custom Coupé

You see, I'm the original cosmopolite. All the world is, intellectually speaking, my personal back garden. I have to know what makes it tick, and if the ticking is wrong I have to know the cure. All the world's problems are my personal problems, too. I don't actually

have to act, but I do feel I at least have to think about the problems, come to grips with them, and understand. The world is an immense four-dimensional puzzle and I am patiently studying the small pieces, trying to find ways of fitting them into the overall picture.

It's four-dimensional because I have to take history into account, too. I'm not always happy with history as is; very often I have to tinker with it in order to impose some sort of logic onto it. Once I invented an entirely different, fictitious history of the invention and development of aircraft, 1895-1925, to see what would have happened had the air pioneers followed a more reasonable course. (Nothing much would have happened. Inertia rules big industry with a heavy hand.)

I am a busy person: office from 8 to 3, the family soft toy business from 4 till 9, essential reading, TV news and fanac from 9 till midnight, and my daughter whenever she can be fitted into the schedule (which turns out to be about fifty times a day; she's nine and very persuasive). This means that the world's problems get very little conscious attention. Sometimes in the office, when mindless bureaucratic chores are the only order of the day and the mind is allowed to wander, a piece or two of the world puzzle may perhaps be put into their proper place, but that's all. The work on toys is mostly design work and I have to concentrate. Can't think of Pat Boone or the rain forest while working out the angle at which teddy bear's muzzle meets his cheeks, can I?

It is during the night that the Big Picture asserts itself. I dream of the government crackdown in Myanmar. An unhappy dream; something really should be done about Myanmar. Such a nice, potentially rich country, ruined so idiotically. How about an approach from the Japanese? They've displayed some common sense lately in their Asian policies. I sit at a round table with an inscrutable Toshiro Mifune, facing the even more inscrutable Burmese generals. It's a carrot-and-stick proposal, swapping foreign investment for democracy.

Saab-Scania showing record profit? I might dream of their board meeting, wheedling the directors into setting aside more money for R&D. They need it. Without a new line of medium size trucks they'll lose their market share even in Europe. There will be layoffs aplenty.

I must be a bit crazy. I mean, have *you* ever dreamed of a truck company board meeting?

There are skiffy dreams, too. The other day (or rather, the other night) I was having a beer at a convention bar with Wiktor Bukato, the best known Polish fan. The bar looked suspiciously like a cafe at my neighbourhood mall, but never mind. Wiktor was telling me about the East European SF writers hitting a bad patch. Why Wiktor? Why not one of the writers? I don't know. Anyway, the recent democratic advances have apparently yanked the carpet from under the writers; they are no longer attractive to their readers, having lost the charm of being subversive.

Well, I thought the answer was pretty much obvious. I was about to tell him but my wife beat me to it. (My wife? She

doesn't care for SF. She's never been to an international convention. She can't speak English. Never mind.)

"I suppose they should persevere in being subversive," she said. "All your newly democratic governments will soon start feeling sure of themselves. Subversion will again come handy, I'd wager." Mr Lem looked doubtful. I don't know why; it was probably his idea anyway. And why did Wiktor transmogrify into Stanislaw Lem in the first place? What would the Freudians say? Even they would find it rather difficult to ascribe any sexual connotations to Mr Lem, I'm sure. Or to Mr Bukato, for that matter.

Yesterday morning I had a breakfast with George Schultz, former U.S. Secretary of State. We were in his office, sitting at a table near the window, and the butler/waiter/whoever had some difficulty fitting all the cups, soucers, mugs and bowls on the rather small round tabletop.

My ham and eggs were done to a perfection, the ham crisped to chestnut brown at the edges, the egg whites firm and the yolks still soft. I dipped chunks of a crusty roll first in the yolk and then in a small mound of finely grated Parmesan cheese. Ripe Gorgonzola would have been better, grated much more coarsely, but one shouldn't quibble, I suppose. It was still a lovely breakfast.

We talked of my host's days with the Bechtel Corp.

"My dear Bruno," Mr Schultz was saying, "I would strongly advise anyone thinking of doing business in Africa to think twice." He sounded quite agitated. "The difficulties and complications cannot be overstated. In Nigeria we built this hotel, office and apartment complex in Lagos. Two thousand people were expected to spend the better part of the day there. That means, among other things, more than five tons of excrement a day through the sewage system, plus at least ten times as much bathing, flushing and dishwashing water. It turns out, however, that Lagos has no sewers. The municipal sewage system simply does not exist! By the time we discovered that, several million dollars had already been invested into the project. It was sheer madness."

"...and the butler had some difficulty..." (illustration by Hugh Lofting)

I tsk-tsked understandingly, wolfing down pancakes chased by some first class coffee. I certainly wasn't thinking of investing my money in Africa, no sir. I didn't have any. What I had in mind was investing *his* money. To my chagrin the alarm clock woke me up before I'd managed to persuade Mr Schultz. Too bad; Africa desperately needs investment, much more than it needs aid. I had such good arguments to pit against his, too. Well, perhaps some other night.

LOCCIN' THE BLUES

(Another issue, another loccol – ah me, the tedium of it all. I wonder if the real Reader's Digest has as much trouble squeezing all the letters in. Probably not – the editors undoubtedly write to each other to fill up the columns. No such problems here, no sirree: all genuwine goods on display, guaranteed to come from real live fans.)

Detectives and otherwise

Maureen Speller: 18/9/91

It came as no surprise in all this to see that you are also including articles about detective, mystery and thriller fiction. Everyone I know in fandom seems to be reading, talking about and writing about it at the moment. Various apazines in TWP are full of useful lists of recommended reading and every second person I meet is a closet mystery reader. I read a lot of detective stories when I was a teenager but hadn't read much apart from the odd Dottie Sayers until I became a judge for the Arthur C Clarke Award. That may not make sense unless I explain that as Maxim Jakubowski was also a judge and administrator, we tended to meet at his shop, Murder One. After a while I noticed I was spending more time buying books than I was in judging books. If Maxim wasn't such a nice person I think I might suspect him of ulterior motives. As it is, I've become a loyal supporter of his shop and even gone so far as to subscribe to several of the American reviewzines.

The only problem I have is in distinguishing between detective fiction and spy thrillers. Despite honorable exceptions such as Le Carre's stories concerning George Smiley and the Circus, I tend to avoid the latter, not being terribly interested in spies and espionage, which is why, despite Skel's excellent piece, I'll probably give Charlie Muffin a miss. He's just not my style. I've heard various of the novels turned into plays – I trust Skel didn't miss the the recent series on Radio 4 – and read on things like 'Woman's Hour'. I guess I just don't like the loser, and to me Charlie does seem to be a loser when he is so often on the run, being spat on from a great height by everyone. In the same way, Jonathan Gash's Lovejoy doesn't really appeal to me for not dissimilar reasons. On the other hand, I like it when someone like Skel articulates their pleasure in something which fails to move me. There is, after all, the chance that I will be persuaded to change my mind and that at some point in the future I will take a Charlie Muffin book off the shelf.(60 Bournemouth Road, Folkestone, Kent CT19 5AZ)

David Bell: 17/6/91

I have a feeling that Skel has missed a Charlie Muffin book. I'm not sure, because I can't remember enough details of the plot, or the title, but it connects back to *Charlie Muffin & Russian Rose*. Some characters reappear, and Charlie looks as if he is going to get stitched up good and proper. The series is good enough that I'll borrow them from the library, but I find it a little too repetitive to chase after specifically. After all, Charlie always wins in the end.

I think that the spy thriller will continue. There isn't any reason yet for the KGB, the CIA, or MI6, to give up on spying. In fact, there may be more reason. There might not be the direct animosity, and both sides may be rather more discreet, but you can bet that the CIA is very interested in the internal politics of the Soviet Union, and all three might be very worried at the prospect of a Soviet ballistic missile coming under the control of a breakaway republic. It seemed ridiculous, but the movies which had James Bond working with the KGB to nail some maniac now look almost plausible.(Church Farm,North Kelsey, Lincoln, LN7 6EQ)

David Langford: 13/5/91

I don't know why Skel is so agin tragedy that he can rant at readers for being "too

dumb to read this fanzine" should they be willing to entertain – even, presumably, in the fictional spell of suspended disbelief – the notion that a series hero might not 'win'. Anyway, do they always? Van der Valk gets killed off in the end; so, indeed, does Poirot; Holmes went but came back. By the device of retaining running characters in his counter-intelligence outfit (Audley, Butler, etc) but dealing in new ones each book, Anthony Price can have his cake and eat it too: look at **Tomorrow's Ghost**, with its cumbersomely staged but extremely hard-hitting tragic end. No, I don't insist that lead characters 'fall to their death in the last chapter', but it does seem a bit much for Skel to denounce as 'dumb' anyone who finds a keener edge to the suspense when there's a possibility that it *might* just happen... (94 London Road, Reading, Berks, RG1 5AU)

Alan Sullivan: 27/5/91

Having enjoyed the film, I'm certainly on the lookout for the books, since it sounds as if they add a lot to the character. Strangely enough, these books sound like they would do quite well in a post-perestroika environment. Especially since many aspects of the plots seem revolve around the way that Charlie Muffin is double-crossed by his own employers, as part of their own petty politicking. Who needs the KGB when you've got MI6 ? (20 Shirley Road, Stratford,London, E15 4HX)

Brian Earl Brown: 22/8/91

After reading Skel's review of the Charlie Muffin series, I'll have to look see if they've been reprinted in the US. They sound nicely done and it's always fun watching some smart guy out-slicker the establishment. These stories remind me somewhat of the Ed Jenkins stories by Erle Stanley Gardner, some of which have been collected recently (**Dead Man's Letter** and **The Blonde In Lower Six**). The stories were written in the 30s and have a romanticised notion of the day, and of the criminal class (that it was a class was one of the quaint notions). Jenkins is a con who's trying to retire but other crooks and crooked cops are always trying to force him into pulling off one more scheme for them. Needless to say, he manouevres to put the joke on them. (11675 Beaconsfield, Detroit, MI 48224, USA)

(Changing tack, from Skel to Dave Langford, with a dire warning, from the man himself.)

David Langford: 13/5/91

I must warn you that **Censorship** has insinuated its foul tentacles into your pages. Yes, an **International Conspiracy** has cowed the once fearless editor into altering the idealogically dubious term 'Colin Watson' on page 13 to the bland, anodyne, mullah-appeasing 'Colin Wilson'. This can only be he **Thin End Of The Wedge.**

*(I hate it when a contributor is amongst the first to find the **mistakes** I've made – I have enough problems coping with errors I see within five seconds of picking up the printed copies. In this issue, it was the final sentence of Andy Sawyer's piece, where he warns against strange signals emanating from the local radion station – yes, I had forgotten to put the little 'TM' sign to give Unilever their due, though I must admit that I may change washing powders now, as I hadn't realised that Radion™ was quite **that** powerful!))*

Andy Sawyer: 5/6/91

Dave Langford's piece was bloody near perfect; what could be more brilliantly useless than a list of 'locked-room' murder mystery solutions? It should keep trivia fans in quiz-questions for months. I don't want to read any of the books from which the solutions have been taken. It would destroy too many illusions. I mean, take #147, "Murderer got past guard to victim by impersonating a horse ." Picture this: suspicious-looking character bristling with bludgeons, daggers, guns, vials of mysterious oriental poisons pulls up outside

guarded room. Pulls out two coconut shells and starts clapping them together, issuing equine whinnies at the same time. Guard thinks about instructions: not to let anyone in. But this is a horse, isn't it? Perhaps guard is blind and can't actually see that this is a human. Or perhaps the murderer, (with accomplice?) is actually in full drag as a pantomime horse? The possibilities are endless, the actual situation, I'm sure, wouldn't be half so ingenious.

And I'm sure I'm not alone in never having heard of Melville Davisson Post's **Uncle Abner** which appears to be one of the most triffic books of detective short stories ever written. There must be a future article for **SB** there somewhere.(1 The Flaxyard, Woodfall Lane, Little Neston, South Wirral L64 48T)

Dorothy Davies: 15/5/91

I fell about laughing at the solutions in the book Dave Langford owns; what wonderful story ideas there are there – I'm searching for new assignments to offer my [writing] students: I'm very tempted..... (Ty Hydref, 126 Marines Drive, Faringdon, Oxon. SN7 7UG)

Shep Kirkbride: 1/9/91

Dave Langford's 'Crimewatch' was extremely funny. I suspect it is a con. As far as I am concerned there is no such book. It is very much in Mr Langdorf's style of humour. In fact I would be very disappointed to find out that it wasn't a total fabrication by Dave! (42 Green Lane, Belle Vue, Carlisle, Cumbria.)

(You cute little sceptic , Shep!)

Brian Earl Brown: 22/8/91

The book Dave Langford reviews is something that, to be honest, we need more of. There are too many books and movies in this world to read or watch all of them, and many frankly don't sound all that interesting but have some plot device that piques one's interest. Like: how do they kill the unkillable liquid metal machine in **Terminator 2**? So it's nice to know there are books that give the answers to questions like that, if only in the limited area of the Locked Room Mystery... Entry no.146, where an armadillo was used to mutilate the face of a corpse so that it couldn't be identified is a Fredric Brown short titles "The Spherical Ghoul", and appears in the collections **Homicide Sanitorium**. It had an effective moody beginning but quickly became lame. One Locked Room solution note mentioned here was that to Anthony Boucher's "Rocket to the Morgue" – the victim faked an attack on himself by being able to stab himself in an 'impossible' location on his back by being double-jointed. Even though Boucher reportedly was double-jointed himself, and liked to demonstrate that he could position a knife anywhere so that suicide resembled murder, I still find this just too hard to believe.

Buck Coulson: 25/6/91

Getting killed by accidentally throwing a live cartridge into a live electric socket is a good trick. The cartridge might well explode – and well before the case "melted" – but a firearm works by leaving only one opening for the explosively expanded gases and the bullet in front of them. Without that containment, the explosion would be more or less spherical, and the cartridge case would travel a lot farther than the bullet, since it's lighter. The bullet might not travel much at all. I did like "The killer entered the house disguised as an elephant", though. Presumably a very large killer and and even larger entryway. Also enjoyed the villain immunizing himself against a radioactive isotope, and the victim strangling himself under any influence whatsoever. A lovely bunch of synopses.

Pamela Boal: 28/5/91

Dave Langford nearly cured me of my addiction to detective fiction for ever (a genre that almost, but not quite, rivals my love of SF) and presents a mystery greater than those found in such stories.

How could any sane person read 1,280 books or stories with such mind boggling solutions? Even if some of the solutions were more reasonable when in context, most tales with such solutions would surely indicate in early paragraphs that the only real mystery was, how they got published in the first place? Then I suppose any author knows that a publisher's choice of manuscripts for accepting or

rejecting is a profound mystery.

Dave in fact gives rise to another topic that interests me. The subject of coincidence. So often a zine will mention a subject that I have been discussing with family or non fannish friends. Well of course sometimes it is a topic being pursued by the media, so that's hardly puzzling but more often it is something like Dave and myself both choosing to use the electrifying Con as an illustration to our article. Often I will pick up a book and find that a sub plot or a character is involved with a subject I have just been discussing. A member of the family or a friend will phone or write about a topic just as I have decided he or she may be interested in or knowledgeable about that subject. While I happen to think that there is convincing evidence for the existence of telepathy I think the forgoing examples are coincidences and that there are a number of mechanisms that give rise to coincidences. A clear understanding of those mechanisms could be a powerful tool.

(Changing tack slightly, as the Bard of Toronto relates a little episode of streetlife.)

Mike Glicksohn:June 25, 1991

I'm a big fan of Robert B. Parker's too. When I picked up the hardcover of the latest Spenser novel last summer the clerk of the specialty mystery store I bought it at said it was the best Spenser novel in several years so I asked him what he hadn't liked about the recent ones. His reply was something alone the lines of "For some years now I've wanted to take Susan Silverman, tie her to a tree and gut shoot her." I thought that a little extreme but he certainly made his point!

(Cruel man – and here's me lusting after the woman! Before moving on, here's some response from the man himself.)

Dave Langford: 27/2/92

Your readers will be glad to hear that the revised and expanded edition of Robert Adey's **Locked Room Murders** appeared from Crossover Press (USA) in 1991. There are now 2019 hideous revelations.... This gives me a chance to tackle the subject again without falling into the dreadful sin of plagiarism, as pointed out by Michael Ashley [in **Matrix**]. For example, just about all the words I used in the article (and he in his review of **SB6**) were blatanty lifted from the Oxford English Dictionary. This will never do. My next submission will begin, 'Blwg fnik wipponey Michael Ashley spungg grobble ii fneep drobish **Locked Room Murders** fuckim...' (To be continued.)

(New edition, item 1579: 'The killer had learned that the victim had a great fear of spiders and arranged for one to be in an inkwell, thus giving him a heart attack.' I can think of several fans who would succumb to a variant of this technique, but the difficulty would be to get Greg Pickersgill into an inkwell.)

Oxford Blue

Andy Sawyer: 5/6/91

I enjoyed Dorothy Davies' article, but she didn't tell us what the film was about. What was the purpose of the four minutes in Oxford? Were these the only clean bits in the film? Four minutes into a blue movie and no naughtiness; what is the world coming to? I recently heard an interview with Michael Palin concerning his last film (also shot in Oxford) which suggested that the college authorities were getting very canny about people coming down with cameras and large quantities of unexposed film and were de-

manding large quantities of money for the privilege of being shown to the nation. Good job Dorothy & co didn't get copped – judging from the furore over the parking fee it was obviously a really high budget operation

K.V. Bailey: 23/5/91

Dorothy Davies's Oxford romp was good fun, and she made nice play with the popular college/university confusion. Sadly she remains overdiscreet about the film's content; but that leaves the imagination free. Think of **Zuleika Dobson** perverted into a blue movie, the Sheldonian Roman Emperors not simply forebodingly sweating, but performing as a libidinous chorus. Not a Gadarene *felo de se* but something sensationally priapic might then be initiated by the Duke of Dorset. Max Beerbohm's novel is an aesthetic essay on 'eros/thanatos', death oriented. The movie-maker would reorientate it erotically. Actually, Dorothy hits off perfectly contemporary Oxford's surface interplay of tattiness, tourism and tradition; but she skips over its near indestructible beauty. (Triffids, Val De Mer, Alderney, Channel Islands)

David Gillon: 4/6/91

Dorothy Davies' insight into the world of blue movies was illuminating and it had to have the most striking image of the whole of **SB6** the leading lady worried about being stared at. Weird! I can't help thinking that the poor girl might be in the wrong job.(2 Watts Avenue, Rochester, Kent, ME1 1RX)

Robodickery

Pavel Gregoric Jr: 14/9/91

From the very moment robots were introduced to the SF genre, as machines that could act in place of humans, they were shown as humanoid in design. Capek's robots in **R.U.R.** were humanoid, Fritz Lang's she-robot in **Metropolis** and Isaac Asimov's robots in his stories were humanoid as well. Well, I see nothing weird about it. I know perfectly well that today robots are just extensions of various machines, diverse platforms, surgical gadgets etc. And I believe that their forms won't change much for the next hundred or so years, for they are actually designed to serve certain purposes. And I doubt that a human-shaped robot would be much use for any sort of work today or in close future.

I'm not surprised about the fact that robots have, more or less, always been humanoid in size and shape down to the very beginnings of imaginative literature. The reason for that is very simple: whenever men wanted to endow certain *things* with life, with some senses, feelings, emotions, or even with an ability to anticipate the world – they attributed to the things certain human characteristics and features. Why else are most of gods and divine beings in all ancient civilizations revealed as anthropomorphic, i.e. human-shaped? Why else are most of children's toys rendered a human form? Favorite toys of many kids have been various robot-dolls (Transformers, or Ninja Turtles, for instance) and the like. Little ladies prefer Barbie dolls...

The reason is as simple as this – a child approaches a ball or a Matchbox car differently than a human-shaped toy; it is inevitable that kids will unconsciously bestow such toys with qualities like feelings, emotions and other specifically human characteristics, and then treat them as such. ...Whenever someone wants to make some *thing* more than *just* a thing – then one will give it a human form. This principle is particularly useful in literature, as we have seen. But it was employed in religion and mythology in the very dawn of human thought, as well as in recent art, like film, for instance. (Tuskanac 22,41000 Zagreb,Croatia)

Gene van Troyer: 23/7/91

Your comments regarding robots were apropos. As far as robotics in the real world is concerned, form follows function. I very much doubt we'll ever see robots constructed in human – or even vaguely anthropoidal – form, at least where domestic service or labor is concerned. It would on the one hand be dizzyingly complicated and prohibitively expensive, and on the other terribly limiting.

A robot that looked and operated like C3PO or Asimov's creations would, of necessity, have to possess onboard computers almost as com-

plex as the human brain to run the software to allow it to go through all of the motions a human is capable. Such pieces of hardware would cost billions and require an army of technicians to assemble, at least for the foreseeable future. One can argue that production-line techniques will bring costs down, but when you're talking about a piece of machinery a thousand times more complex than a Cray supercomputer, "cost" would still be in the millions, and this is assuming the use of production techniques that don't today exist (such as employing nanotechnology to actually "grow" the human-like robots).

Even successfully created, a human-like robot would still possess many of the limitations conferred, because of form, upon the physical characteristics of the model. Its structure would prevent it from operating effectively or efficiently under certain conditions. Why walk when rollers or treads are quicker and less energy consuming? Why straight ahead binocular vision in a head with at most a 180° pivot, when 360° vision is superior? As you mentioned tongue in-cheek, why not go for true versatility and build all-purpose robots that can change shape? Perhaps a robot constructed of billions of nanoids could do that, or split off parts that could assume the appopriate shapes – even a lamp or a vacuum cleaner.

However, what you overlooked in your article is the real motive behind such humanoid-seeming machines in *Robocop* or Asimov's robot stories. The point is and was never to actually prophesize such machines, but to use them as metaphors of human beings. In the case of *Robocop*, it's naked power fantasy,with the cop a kind of crude *ubermensch*, the remains of a man enhanced to the point of near invulnerability – a mechanically created superman that believes in Hard Justice and has the power to deal it out. Asimov's gentler creations are idealizations of the Compassionate Human – intelligent beyond measure and totally altruistic. I don't think I'm the only one who has observed that Asimov's robots seem to be more human than the so-called humans in his stories; they certainly seem to have more character. (Gifu Castle A-906, 663-5 Saba, Yanaizu-cho, Hashima-gun, Gifu-ken, 501-61 JAPAN)

Alan Sullivan: 27/5/91

Ignoring the criminal pun in the title, an interesting piece. The whole business of having humanoid robots (or not) really hinges upon what you are going to use them for. If they're going to have to work with humans, in a human environment, then it does make a certain amount of sense to make them human sized/shaped, rather than totally redesign said environment. Re your example of ED209 vs Robocop. If you want robots to be multi-

form/function... well, if you bear the limitations of the environment in mind, then why not ? Take the "Drones" in Iain Banks' Culture stories... None of 'em humanoid, all very versatile, functioning perfectly alongside human beings. Ok, so they depend upon things like antigravity, force-field and hyperspace technologies being very highly developed, but they're a perfect example of what you describe. They're easily disguisable, they can link into surveillance systems directly, they're great for espionage work... Hell, read **Use of Weapons** – you'll see what I mean.

As to the Mafia being forced to go legit... Hate to say this, but with the imagination shown by most governments, the Casa Nostra (or maybe the Japanese Yakuza) are more likely to come up with their own Robocrooks. First. Don't look now, but I think that briefcase is watching you...

K.V. Bailey:23/5/91

I've just finished reviewing for **Paperback Inferno** the fourth collection of Philip Dick's short stories – **The Days Of Perky Pat**. In that is a story, 'The Unreconstructed M', which uniquely complements your 'Robocop, Robodicks' piece. In it a robot doesn't actually follow up clues, but plants them to incriminate a human for its (the robot's) own act of murder – the well-known Dickian obsession with fakery. It does this while it has the appearance of a crackerbox-shaped machine. When investigators enter the room "[the machine's] rectangular outline flowed and wavered; pulling itself into an upright package it fused its shape into a conventional TV unit". Such activities (reversed in intent though they are) may be less in the vein of conventional whodunit intriguingly science-fictional. Commenting on another of his stories ('Service Call'), Dick wrote: "I never assumed that some huge clanking monster would stride down Fifth Avenue, devouring New York; I always feared that my own TV set or iron or toaster would, in the privacy of my own apartment, announce to me that they had taken over..."

Terry Broome: 14/5/91

Reading **50 Years of Isaac Asimov** recently means I can contradict your article on 'Robodicks...' Asimov has written at least one story of robots which aren't humanoid. 'Sally' (1953) is all about positronic cars – yes, robotic cars with minds of their own. It's a kind of Stephen King story for wimps. And of course Heinlein's 'Waldos' might be seen as robotic contraptions (certainly industrial robots tend to be automated waldos more than humanoid constructs) & P.K. Dick has done many stories mentioning non-humanoid robots. There are lots of examples, but I agree, it is the humanoid robot which offers the most appeal.

(Daleks levitate upstairs, by the way, on special force fields, or haven't you seen **Dr Who** recently? 'Robodicks' is a good alternative for 'Daleks' as well, being created by Terence DICKS, even though they are cyborgs rather than true robots.) (92 Ramshead Crescent, Seacroft, Leeds, LS14 1PH)

David Gillon: 4/6/91

I found your own piece on robotic detectives interesting, though no doubt it would have the clvil-rights lobby screaming given wider circulation. One disturbing note that came to my attention recently, apparently several of the US intelligence agencies, FBI and NSA I think, were trying to get congressional support for measures to ban encryption of data on public telecom networks. Apparently they are worried about maintaining their surveillance abilities, but what seems to have escaped our Luddite friends is that encryption is an essential part of transforming any analogue signal, such as voice, into a form capable of being sent down a digital network. No doubt the guilty parties yearn for the days when all you needed for a wiretap were two crocodile clips and your own phone and the minor technical details such as warrants could be ignored. Equally as disturbing was a comment in the same article that the Mafia were amongst the first to spot the possibilities of hacking the phone system and that several people they hired to build them the necessary black boxes were never seen again. I can just see it, the alternate arms race, Robocop and his partner Number Five pull a drugs raid and a bunch of ED209s hold them off while the suits leg it out of the back door. In the meantime R2D2 hacks the Mob's data haven and gets burned by the black ice around the Capo di tutti AIs – come back Morse, all is forgiven.

Live Wire

Gene van Troyer: 23/7/91

Pamela Boal's ruminations on "electric" people was curious. Certainly, people being the fine conductors of electricity we are, I'm sure that we must cover a wide spectrum of conductance and resistance. Would those with higher resistance be less prone to static dis-

charges than those with lower resistance? Would someone with lower electrical resistance be more prone to being struck my lightning? Has anyone done any research into this phenomenon?

I've worked around computers for seven years now, and never once encountered the problem Pamela described, and I've never taken any precautions to avoid it. On the other hand, I've always sat in either a wooden chair, or had my feet on a wooden floor or resting against a wooden truss, so perhaps I was unwittingly preventing an accident.

Certainly a study would be interesting. Here's a suitably scientific title for the possible article that might be written: "Human Electrical Conductance and the Discharge of Static Electricity in Sensitive Working Environments." On the other hand, perhaps a search of the existing literature would turn up something that's already been done in other areas of industry where such discharges have proven to be disrupting or, possibly, fatal (perhaps in the petrochemical industry, where a discharge might set off a gas explosion?). Would an unlikely place to look be in journals concerned with the use of polygraphs and the physiological properties that they measure, especially galvanic response (changes in the electrical conductivity of the skin)?

One would think that with all the millions spent on occupational safety practices in the work place, as well as upon equipment maintenance, that something has already been done. In the meantime, if Pamela isn't using a wooden chair, perhaps she might want to consider it. That would guarantee that she'd have to "touch wood" before using her computer.

Ned Brooks: 29/6/91

It would certainly be interesting to know why some people, such as Pamela Boal, are more susceptible to static shocks than others. Is their conductivity higher or lower than average? Perhaps their nerves are just more sensitive to the same level of discharge. The voltage of a static discharge can be judged roughly from the length of the spark – the figure I remember is 10,000 volts/inch in dry air. A technique for abating the nuisance would be to wear lightning rods. The size is quite unimportant, but there would ideally be many of them, and they must be as sharp as possible. The principle involved is that static charge leaks off of a sharp point, and the sharper the point, the faster it leaks. This is easily proven by experiment in a dark room in cold weather – once your eyes are accustomed to the dark, let a charged object with a sharp point (such as yourself with a knife in your hand) approach a ground – such as a water-pipe – with the sharp point closest to ground. There will be no single spark with a shock; instead you will see the charge disperse from the sharp point over a second or so, in a form that looks something like a hose-nozzle on full throttle (as for misting plants). I have performed this experiment myself in the winter.

Thus if a person wore a tiara with many sharp points in the metal-work, or perhaps earrings with spikes, they should dissipate the static charge as fast as it accumulates. I bet those punk-rockers with the razor-blade earrings never had a problem!

Mat Coward: 31/8/91

I was very interested in Pamela Boal's static curse. As a result of what I suspect may be a related phenomenon, I couldn't wear a wrist watch as a child. It would work ok for a few days, or a couple of weeks, and then just stop, dead, never to go again (is that a song?). When I was 18 I got a cheap digital Timex which worked well for years, and now I have a batterypowered, ANC-logo'd one with hands, which has been going happily for many months. I'm still a bit dodgy around electrical machinery – that is to say, it goes wrong more often, and less explicably, for me than for others (especially the word processor).

Puberty is the time when these unwelcome powers are most common, I think. Round about the time of our first short and curlies, some friends and I used to make it rain at school when we didn't want to play rugby (which was always – we were weird, but we weren't mad). Just after lunch, on a crisp, cloudless day, we'd start rain-dancing our little socks off; and, at least according to my memory, it worked more often than not. I always feel that our absolute sincerity and desperation to succeed played a part.

I'd love to see some correlation done on people who are prone to insect bites. This is

pure, unsupported intuition, but I wonder if people who get bitten and react badly are the same ones who breach the black-out regulations every time they take their jumpers off.

As you probably know, the Association for the Scientific Study of Anomalous Phenomena is currently researching what it calls SLI – street lamp interference. Seems some folk can turn streetlights on and off just by looking at them. A nifty trick, no doubt, but it's not quite as obviously useful as, say, being able to see through clothing. In fact, can you think of a single occasion on which such a not-very-superpower might be worth its weight in wine gums? (57A Meadow Road, Pinner, Middlesex, HA5 1ED)

(A mugger might find the SLI trick very useful against his victims.)

Harry Warner, Jr: 7/7/91

Pamela Boal may be a forerunner in the next big evolutionary step for humankind, individuals who are capable of storing power from carpets and atmosphere to enable them to continue to enjoy electrical appliances after power supplies run out... (423 Summit Avenue, Hagerstown, Maryland, 21740, USA)

Nursing the World

Mark Nelson:1/10/91

To continue Cecil Nurse's theme; the best aid the West can provide to many Third World Goverments is to cancel their debts with the Banks and to leave them to sort out their own problems; even if this means that no direct aid is sent over for victims of natural disasters. Future monetary aid (let's forget the ridiculous idea of LOANS from the start) should be linked strictly to Human Right Records and decreasing military spending.

It has always seemed strange to me that people are always so eager to undergo emotional blackmail on the grounds that we should feel guilty because we come from a wealthy nation. Aid is not something that is given to Third World countries as a right, it is a carrot not a drug.

Mic Roger: 1/7/91

Cecil Nurse has written a very telling piece and I have been aware of the points he raises, for some time. The question is: what can be done about it? Who is going to be the first to say "Enough! Let each country feed itself *first* and then export any surplus"? It all comes back to profit-and-loss money, doesn't it? I fear it is all going to come crashing down on us in one huge catastrophe, because no one wants to make the first move. I've been horrified when I learned how tractors and suchlike were sold to relatively primitive people, which were totally unsuitable for their type of soil. You can't really blame the salesmen (can you?) they were "only doing what they were told". They should've been give directives to check on what conditions existed and sell what would benefit the locals. But that's not what shows a profit on the year's balance sheet.... Has anyone done any research into means of heating/cooking that *doesn't* require a lot of wood or dung? (Perhaps by magnifying glasses??) Then hillsides wouldn't be stripped of trees and left bare to erosion. If you burn animal dung you have nothing to feed the soil with.... It seems humans never learn from others' experiences, only from their own.

David Bell: 17/6/91

Cecil Nurse sums up the picture about world food supplies pretty well. Most of the notorious European surpluses are the result of imports from the Third World. The international grain trade is dominated by five companies, which trade a minute fraction of the total produced. The world price is set by subsidised American exports, while UK wheat prices have dropped by about 30% in the last ten years, allowing for inflation. I've known bread prices rise at the same time as wheat prices have fallen.

The European surpluses are really pretty small. The wheat mountain is enough to last for about four weeks, and the difference between harvest dates can be that much. Comparing last year with 1987 (I remember the Worldcon dates), in '87 we started after the Bank Holiday Monday. Last year we started harvesting on the 2nd August. The surplus sounds a lot, but it is the equivalent of a month's pay in the bank, when you get paid once a year, on an unpredictable date, with no

chance of an overdraft.

Don't blame monoculture for soil erosion. You can get it in the USA wheat belt with any sort of arable farming, even the traditional organic rotations pioneered in Norfolk by Coke. Harvest, cultivation, and sowing leaves bare, loosened, soil exposed for part of the autumn. With the severe winters, the new crop might not be sown until spring.

As for cartels, any one of the five biggest UK supermarket chains makes more profit than the entire UK agricultural industry.

Terry Jeeves: 21/5/91

Cecil Nurse must live in an alternate world if he hasn't seen the origins of a huge percentage of the food on a supermarket's shelves.... and no, the countries didn't send it to us free, we have to pay for it. Britain has long been unable to produce enough food at home to feed the population – we have to import huge quantities. Just how does Mr. Nurse think it gets here? The answer is 'huge bulk carrier' – and they are powered by fossil fuel. When that runs out, we either go nuclear or revert to wind-powered sailing ships – which is what I was referring to...

Alexander Slate: 30/1/92

To Cecil Nurse: I agree with a lot of the philosophical basis of your discussions in "Flogging a Dead Horse", but not your final conclusion. Something must be done about population control, worldwide. The rampant growth rate could well destroy humanity as a species, and almost certainly will destroy civilization as we know it. However, even in the short term (say the next few centuries) people don't have to be "crammed into cities". Remember the concept of the arcology, which if done properly will concentrate population ending sprawl and freeing up land for more productive uses. But we don't have to be crammed like rats in a set of lab cages. Don't think Asimov's **Caves of Steel**, think Niven and Pournelles' **Oath of Fealty**. Even beyond all this, nuclear power is worthwhile, because it is much less harmful to the environment (when done intelligently) than any fossil-fuel based power generation. Yes, solar and wind make more sense, but they are better for small scale, very localized uses than for large scale applications. I wouldn't want to base a net on them, though they are a good augmentation and supplement for a power-grid. As for solarbased power satellites; I think that the potential hazards they could pose may far overshadow the potential benefits. (10316 Flatland Trail, Converse, Texas, 78109, USA)

David Gillon: 4/6/91

For once I found myself in agreement with Cecil Nurse on something. HBFCs are a hopelessly romantic solution to world starvation, the repeated famines in Ethiopia show that

what is needed aren't techno fixes and short term patches, but long term solutions to the problems. The only solution that seems likely to work is cutting world population so that we can live within the resources available. There is some hope: a recent **New Scientist** reported that desired family size in the Third World is falling, but women in some nations still see the desired family size as six to seven children. Hopefully this trend will eventually bring the population explosion to a stop, if it doesn't then massive famine may well do it for us. Actually reducing world population is another problem: there is a reluctance amongst governments to consider anything that might

cut their influence and the French and Japanese are apparently taking active measures to promote population growth. The Japanese case seems particularly ridiculous as their country already has problems in finding available land and at the same time is the world leader in automation. It may be that famine is the only long term solution; it's a grim thought but what we know seems to say that Gaea is a self-balancing organism and if we don't clean up our act then she may do it for us.

Cartel Carps

Gene van Troyer: 23/7/91

Steve Palmer's piece; "Cartels," skimmed along the surface of matters involving the petroleum multinationals, but fell quite short of the mark. Cartelization these days is perhaps best located by looking into *interlocking directorates* – finding out who's who on the various boards of directors of all the companies, not just the names of individuals who may be sitting on the boards of two or three supposedly competing corporations, but also the holding companies and who's running those as well. Does anyone think that Big Daddy Warbucks who, say, sits on the boards of Axxon Oil and Golf Petroleum, and possibly Texmex, is going to go for real competition? If you do, then perhaps you also believe that bears in the woods use outhouses, and I have several shares of BCCI stock you'd be interested in acquiring – truly a sound investment.

What Big Daddy's going to do, along with his other buddies, is juggle prices around from company to company, shaving a few pennies here, then there, then over there, to keep the pumps pouring the gas and the profits flowing. Add to that the identifiable Cartel, OPEC (which includes more than just the Arab states), which still has some limited success in fixing world prices for crude, and you have a situation guaranteed to minimize competition. It isn't just a matter of "the childish old-boy rules of a few rich men," and I dare say there's nothing childish about it.

What needs to be done is to get away from gasoline (or petroleum) powered vehicles altogether, and if possible the internal combustion engine. A return to more rational motive power – electric motors or steam – would get one mostly from under the thumbs of the oil companies. Technological developments in both areas have reached the point that both are on the verge of feasibility. Of course, we're still faced with the obstruction of the automotive industry, whose companies also happen to have large blocks of stock in the petroleum industry, and vice versa.

David Gillon: 4/6/91

I thought a little about Steve Palmer's article about what would happen if the oil-cartels were broken up and I hate to say it but the cartels might actually be the better option. Think about it; the companies currently operate a non-competitive pricing structure so what would happen if that was abandoned – price-war margins cut, corners cut and more Torrey Canyons Amoco Cadizs and Exxon Valdezs. The picture isn't a pretty one.

Space Tourists

David Bell: 17/6/91

I'm getting pessimistic about the future of spaceflight. Back when they made the film, the engineering and routine spaceflight of **2001** looked quite plausible. NASA, and the Apollo programme, was a very efficient way of boosting the American economy and the whole American space programme, up to about 1975, cost less than one year's social security budget.

The trouble is that nobody could stand up and say that it actually made a profit. The benefits were so indirect, even though they are real, and every rocket that goes up looks like millions of wasted dollars.

Right now, we're facing the same sort of mess with the defence industry. Highly skilled people are losing their jobs because the companies can't afford to wait for decisions from the government. Instead of a few million pounds being spent on obvious, apparently profitless, subsidies which might, in a few years, show some return, the money gets added to the unemployment benefit and social security funding, and gets lost.

The money could get spent on HOTOL, or on wind generators, or on a Concorde replace-

ment. The people who make the oxygen system for a fighter aircraft could have a look at oxygen systems for hospitals.

But I think it would be better not to be too precise about the problem. Apollo had the object of putting a man on the moon, and the technology which was developed for that job ranges from a spray-can of WD-40 to the electronics in the telephone system.

What scares me a little is the feeling that if we don't start taking large-scale, industrial, advantage of the resources of the solar system, we will soon have missed the chance.

Alan Sullivan: 27/5/91

"Holiday of A Lifetime". Yeah, It'd take me that long to save up for it. Guess I'm the wrong generation to take such a flight, except as one of fancy. I can certainly believe it though, a space-going tourist industry. With all its attendant problems. It reminds me of a one off Alan Moore comic strip from **2000AD** I read once. It involved the discovery of freak "Magnetic Flux" points on the surface of the sun, which meant you could actually set up structures there. And the use this is put to? Holiday Camps on the solar surface. 'Nuff said?

Of course, if a space tourist industry does get started, and "First Contact" takes place there may be the question of how they feel about these Terran Tourists cluttering up the spaceways. I wonder why so many people assume that if there is life out there they want to get in contact. They could be hiding. Or lying in wait. Or just pretending to be out: "...It's those Terrans again... Keep it down, if we wait long enough they might go away...". In spite of all my mickey-taking though, I do approve of such programmes as SETI. Knowledge is almost always useful, and it is on the whole a much better way of spending vast sums of money than the arms race. Not as good as solving problems such as hunger and poverty, but an improvement on genocide. It may even turn out to have decent civilian applications.

K.V. Bailey: 23/5/91

Andy Sawyer's extrapolations towards an orbital tourism could only materialise when and if the technologies of vehicle design were matched by those of cheap and non-polluting energy production (but see Cecil Nurse, Steve Palmer et al in **SB 6**). Meanwhile it's more likely to be armchair or funfair space, attained via developed electronic virtuosity, virtual reality, etc. The crudest, yet vastly entertaining, current simulations are such as the Disney World interplanetary rides, though these do not rival the experience of over twenty years ago (now, alas, unavailable) provided by the original cinerama projection of **2001: A Space Odyssey**. The uneconomic cinerama technique only survived that film through a quick and feeble decline into sensation-seeking gimmickry; which is a pity because it had potential for yet more imaginative sf movies. I enjoy visualizing what Kim Stanley Robinson's **Icehenge** or the Benford/Brin **Heart Of The Comet** might have been like treated that way. Maybe, however, this kind of visualizing – which may even infiltrate dreaming – is as good an experiential mode as any. Cer-

tainly it is likely to be reinforced by cyberspatial developments, of which state-of-the-art tv graphics and transmissions of, for example, NASA's computerized Mars-mappings are significant tokens.

(And now, the credit where credit is due department...)

Artstuff

Andy Sawyer: 5/6/91

I enjoyed the artwork throughout, especially Shep's wereduck (Eat your heart out, Howard!) and Harry Turner's picture on p. 40 which shows how atmospheric black-and-white illustration can be. (Both Harry's pictures show witty use of geometric patterns.)

I *didn't* like Shep's illo to the 'pigmy' quote in Dave Langfords article which I thought was demeaning: for one thing, as far as I, know the pygmy peoples of central Africa aren't known to be cannibals (the cauldron), and for another they don't look like that, Your racial stereotypes are showing, Shep! You're far too good an artist for this kind of thing.

Shep Kirkbride: 1/9/91

...Alan Hunter: Alan amazes me; every time I open a magazine, amateur or professional, there he is, churning out oodles of lovely line drawings. I have always been a great admirer of his work, especially some of his pieces for the British Fantasy mob. His robot detective piece in this issue is really something isn't it? Look at the detail there... The illo on page 21 is like a cross between an Atom and a Jeeves. While the robot head on page 27 is as different again...

John Miller: His use of black is very effective and the illo on page 23 certainly seemed to fit the piece. Was that planned or just coincidence?

Peggy Ranson: A new name to me, but Peggy's illustrations were much in the mood of the art noveau stuff in the early part of this century. Very beautiful. My personal favourite was the angel on page 37.

Teddy Harvia: Always comes up with funny little cartoons and equally funny sayings in them. Much the same way as Brad Foster. Not enough of these light little snacks though John. A few more scattered through the letter column would have been nice...

Mic Rogers: 1/7/91

...Harry Turner's M.C. ESCHER-style of thing on p5... is fascinating and certainly gives the feeling of workmen in space. I admire, too, his other illo on p40 though I find the faces a bit less than satisfactory and somewhat irrelevant. Useful, though, for the composition. I do so respect the mind that can work out such a construction and carry it through successfully.

As before, Shep's illos are a joy. I envy him being able to create-to-order so effectively...

David Bell: 17/6/91

If it wasn't for the ears, I would have thought that your cover was the long-lost photo of I.K. Baggins, engineer of the Great Westmarch Railway, which was one of those slightly silly ideas floating around my early fannish life. But he is wearing shoes, and the waistcoat is nothing like fancy enough. Incredible as it may seem, one of the railway modelling magazines once included an article on a model of the Shire Railway, some time in the late seventies.

Harry Turner: 16/5/91

Liked Harry's inspired portrait of Isambard Kingdom Owen, and admired your restraint in not topping it with a title that it rendered redundant... a cheery intro to your bumper issue. (10 Carlton Avenue, Romiley, Cheshire SK6 4EG)

Mike Glicksohn: 25/6/91

Despite reading and largely enjoying **SB6** I was on the verge of filing it away unresponded to when I recalled the delight I'd had when I first glimpsed Harry's cover and my instant resolution to write to you and thank you for publishing it and Harry for drawing it. I'm a big fan of IKB and was delighted to note that I'm not alone in my enthusiasm. Recognizing another enthusiast made me feel...well...great!

*(Yet more on the cover to **SB5**, or at least Terry Broome's reaction to it last ish.)*

Ian Covell:22/5/91

Terry Broome would be absolutely correct except I happen to know that on the woman's world, there is an animal whose skin tans down to immensely strong but flexible and heat-retaining leather which moulds to the skin to resist the wind.

Loccolised Events

Maureen Speller: 18/9/91

...I think I go with a definition of post-literacy as not wanting to read. I admit, this mystifies me but I'm biased in favour of read-

ing. All my life I've been criticised by my family for reading too much even though my parents set great store by the concept of literacy, as indeed do most people, I'm sure. There is a difference too, or so it seems to me, between functional use of reading – ie to gain information in order to get through life, reading forms, timetables, instructions, things like that – and reading for pleasure. I was wondering recently about the place of literature in the classless society proposed by John Major, remembering the glee with which people settled down to read the bookshelf behind him in that famous picture. Looking at them myself I had the sense that he saw books as useful repositories of information, as tools rather than as providers of hours of pleasure. As yet there seems to be no stemming the torrent of books pouring from the publishers. If we read less, where on earth do all these books go, apart from to remainder shops six months later?

Harry Warner, Jr: 7/7/91

I have a brilliant idea as a result of reading all the locs on the literacy problem. I think I'll invent silent television. Even though silent movies came before sound films, I see no reason why it shouldn't happen in the opposite manner for television. Just think of all the wonderful things that will happen if the television industry removes loudspeakers and audio circuitry from all the sets it manufactures in the future. There will be no more neighborhood fusses over loud playing of television late at night. Parents and their teenage children will be reconciled because the parents will no longer need to scold the kids for watching MTV instead of doing their homework. The public will be forced to gain skill in reading to be able to understand the subtitles that will be superimposed on the screens during sitcoms, police dramas and movies on the telly. Softsell will be literally utilized for commercials. And some people will miss the old style of sound television so much they'll abandon the new silent sets and start reading books and magazines instead.

Matthew Freestone: 11/8/91

Terry Broome's remarks in the Post-Literacy section of the loccol are interesting until the last fifteen lines or so, when they suddenly sprout into metaphysical gobbledegook. The main reason for this is that he's confused two distinct ideas of chaos. Moorcock's 'order and chaos' are related to ideas of entropy and rondomness. Thus in this sense the worldis becoming more ordered in that the rise of humanity from the primeval sludge represents a tremendous drop in entropy (but only for the Earth; the total entropy of the Earth-Sun system has gone up).

Modern, trendy 'chaos theory' is part of the study of dynamical systems. In this sense, the world is now more chaotic because it is less predictable – back in the Cambrian one millenium was pretty much like the next. Finally, the Taoist stuff seemed out of place, and only served to cloud Mr Broome's comments further.

The other things I want to say on chaos are purely factual. On the back page in "The Chaos of Equilibrium" you state that Le Guin's comments predated scientists' ideas of

'chaos theory' by about ten years – this isn't true. Lorenz had at least an inkling of what was wrong with his weather model back in the 1960s and as long ago as 1900 Poincare turned back from the brink of chaotic systems, mainly for the lack of a high speed digital computer! (Grosvenor Lodge, Scothern Lane, Sudbrooke, Lincoln, LN2 2QJ)

Steve Jeffery : 7/6/91

You may not be quite right about the Ursula LeGuin's quote pre-dating Chaos theory by a decade of more. Before it became fashionable, yes, but I think that Lorenz was discovering a chaotic strange attractor for his weather model in the late 60's, and Feigenbaum was working on chaotic period doubliny around 1974, although this still leaves LeGuin with a certain amount of prescience, since none of this would become very well known till the 80's. (44 White Way, Kidlington, Oxon., OX5 2XA)

(Ken Lake's Tribalism article is still causing many a ripple...)

David Gillon: 4/6/91

Obviously I missed Ken Lake's initial article on tribalism, but the hornet's nest he stirred up begs comment. Any tribe is going to develop power structures (unless, it's a tribe of rigourous nihilists), the members of those structures then develop their own personal agendas, like as not with feathering their own nests as one of the prime aims. Once these are in place maintaining loyalty and position start to become more important than the welfare of individual members of the tribe and outside threats, real or not, have always been good for generating loyalty to the state in being – consider the Falklands where the phenomenon initially operated for both sides. The result of all this is conflict, war, conquest and accretion, meaning that tribes become city states, city states become nation-states and eventually we have the UN all over again. I'm not saying that this is a bad thing, Europe now appears to be in a position to form the first meta-state and I'm one of those people who would say that if we can have union tomorrow then why not today, but let's face it, the intervening steps have been pretty messy. Tribalism isn't going to disappear, my feeling is that it's an artefact from our hominid ancestors and bred into us on a deep level, but in no way do I think that a return to it is an appropriate step for mankind to take...

Mark Nelson: 1/10/91

Reading through the locs on Ken Lake's article reveals an essential difference in perspective between two opposed school of thought. Using mathematical terminology Ken would rather go for the LCD and split people into smaller and smaller units. On the other hand the antagonists (who appear to be most of the readership) would rather go for the HCF, concentrating on similiarities and points of agreement.

Ned Brooks: 29/6/91

I rather agree with Bruno Ogorolec – neither Ken Lake's Tribalism nor Jim England's Global Man is practical in the long run. We are left with the long, slow construction of a civilization. The problem with the American Indian culture was not that the tribes fought among themselves – the level of conflict was probably something like Northern Ireland, far fewer deaths per capita than Atlanta Georgia – but that to the European invader, riding the tide of relatively widespread literacy and the early Industrial Revolution, their culture seemed static. In our minds, the notion of a culture where everyone does essentially the same thing as their ancestors for uncounted generations back is almost inconcievable, a dark and dreadful fantasy of pointless repetition. Whether our own culture, where each generation practically has to learn a new language to cope with the technical and social changes, can survive remains to be seen...

Lawrence Watt-Evans : 19/6/91

Martin Helsdon asks, "What remained of the Aztecs, the Maya, and the Incas after the fading away of Spanish power?"

Well, when I was in Quintana Roo last year, the Maya looked to be doing just fine, thanks. They were occupied by the Spanish for a couple of centuries, true, but they didn't

have anything worth stealing, so they weren't particularly mistreated. They had already mostly abandoned their cities before the Spanish got there – weird but true. They still have their language and much of the culture they had when the Spanish arrived – which was, and is, a subsistence-level existence in the jungles, using slash-and-burn agriculture. They now have the option of leaving the jungle and joining civilization; our tour guides and most of the hotel staff had done just that. (And I am not sure they made a wise choice, nor do I consider waiting tables any great step forward, I merely point out that it is an option.)

The Aztecs are gone – but the Mechica are still there, and are probably the majority of the population of Mexico, according to official government information. The Spanish colonial population was never very large, and they intermarried to the point that they became indistinguishable from the people they conquered. The Mechicas' culture was destroyed, but they weren't wiped out or anywhere near it. (The Aztecs were the ruling class; it's not the name of the entire nation.)

Same goes for the Inca – Quechua, the old imperial language, is still the second-most-common tongue in Peru.

Compare this with the Massapoag, the Mohegans, and the various other tribes that occupied the eastern coast of British North America. Some tribes, like the Mohawk, survive in tiny enclaves; most are gone completely.

I grew up in Massachusetts, spent eighteen years there, and never heard a word of any of the native American languages, never met any descendant of any of the aboriginal peoples of New England.

I spent four days in Quintana Roo, and heard Maya spoken constantly, along with Spanish and English; at least three-fourths of the people I saw, excluding other tourists, were all or part Maya. (They're a fairly distinctive people – medium-short, round faces, large flat noses, skin a particular shade of brown.)

"If the United Kingdom is so soaked in blood, why do so many descendants of our Empire's unwilling subjects want to come here?" That question is a non sequitur. If someone comes and steals everything you own, and you can't do anything about it except that later you're offered the choice of living in the ruins he left behind or moving into the dead thief's house alongside his children, which would you do?

And none of this is really meant to argue with his basic point. If I had a choice of seeing my homeland conquered by 16th-century Spain or 19th-century Britain, I'd take Britain, thanks. I just don't think Mr. Helsdon chose his arguments well.

Bruno Ogorolec says, "Correct me if I'm wrong, but the American Indians waged an almost perpetual warfare among their tribes..."

Well, he's right, more or less, but it isn't as simple as that sounds. All those hundreds of tribes were different – treating "American Indians" as a single culture is like treating "medieval Eurasians" from Ireland to Japan as a single culture. Many tribes did *not* wage war. Of those that did, the nature of war varied radically. For some, war was a ritual matter, almost a game, where a battle was considered something of a disaster if people actually got killed, rather than just knocked down; these tribes did very poorly at first when they encountered Europeans who didn't play by the rules.

And for some tribes, of course, war meant wiping the enemy off the face of the Earth.

I should probably mention that I didn't respond to Ken Lake's original article because the whole thing was such a farrago of nonsense I didn't know where to begin. (5 Solitaire Court,Gaithersburg, Maryland 20878-4119,USA)

David Gillon: 4/6/91

Going on to Martin Helsdon's comments about our Empire being better than other peoples, the Australian Aboriginals might

well have a few comments to make on that point: their culture is suffering to this day from the effects of our colonization. As for using native power structures that simply shows a better grasp of power politics than the often religion directed attempts of the Spanish and Portugese. Using existing structures let us play one prince against the other and prevented the masses from uniting and in all likelihood massacring us – no doubt the directors of the East India Company considered it remarkably cost effective. Yes, two wrongs don't make a right but we must judge historical events by today's values otherwise we have learnt nothing...

Ian Covell: 27/5/91

Many of the locs, especially England's, make complete sense – the term is meaningless because it isn't discrete. In a way it reminds me of a recent argument on the concept of male-maleness/female-femaleness. My opponent says that certain traits are female, others male, and of course all the negative ones belong to the male. However, she admits that everybody is a mixture of these traits, men have female aspects, etc. I thought, and suddenly realised that this means no male ever can be *completely* male, but if there never has been a man possessing all and *only* male characteristics, who decided they were 'male' characteristics? Who decided that aggression is a male trait, and nurturing is female? I also am unhappy with the idea of instincts, at least as explained by current theories. If memory is not encoded in the genes (so learned behaviour can't be transmitted by feeding ground-up worms to other worms), how does the memory of fear, or the urge to take action, enter the genes and propel 'instinctual' behaviour! That paradox has bothered me for twenty years, and nothing pinned down its error...

(In the same vein, Steve Palmer strikes off in a slightly different direction.)

Steve Palmer: 19/5/91

With regard to responses to the Lake Theory of Tribalism, the one thing that struck me about these letters all written by men was that not one of them, possibly excepting Peter Tennant's, mentioned the overiding factor of tribal/political squabbling; that it takes place in patriarchal society.

It is *men* who are Chiefs, Prime Ministers, Presidents, Leaders. In rare female cases the woman is no different to a man, or is related to a man, or to a deceased man. We can't argue about political solutions, institutions, and the nature of imperfect humanity without an expansive mention for why it is that, to take some examples, 99.9% of all violent crimes are committed by men, women get raped by men, only men artists and composers seem to have been remembered by history, men created nuclear weapons, and so on.

In patriarchal society (I am speaking generally), men do not know they have an identity; their selves reside infantile inside a fictitious category called masculinity. Their identity is forced upon them by external tenets: these tenets are devised by men. It is the contradictory and inhumane quality of masculinity that is in my opinion responsible for the insanity and inhumanity of tribes and nations from 3,000 BC onward. All these squabbles, conflicts, these larger groups dominating smaller groups, that are mentioned by Lake's men respondents, all these would be performed by men, or at least directed by men. They would be enacted under the auspices of masculinity.

What Ken Lake ought to do now is re-write his article from the specific point of view of men suffering under patriarchal society, and then submit it to **SB**. Needless to say, it would be completely different.

(Changing tack, comment on Mary Gentle's world creation piece still reverberates.)

Mic Rogers: 1/7/91

I found the responses to Mary Gentle's article absolutely engrossing. When my elder sister and I were young we created a "world" where all sorts of adventures took place – all purely mental, not so much as a chair involved. So I wonder if world-building is an instinctive thing that we all do to a lesser or greater extent? It's just that written worlds have to have a more clearly defined construction to suit particular characters and plots.

David Bell: 17/6/91

Re. Mary Gentle: Another angle on world creation is Tolkien, *On Fairy Stories*. As a devout Catholic, he is also trying to justify his creation of Middle Earth to himself. It ties in Jane Yolen's LoC, and I think it rather punctures Terry Jeeves' remarks on the relative importance of the fictional background.

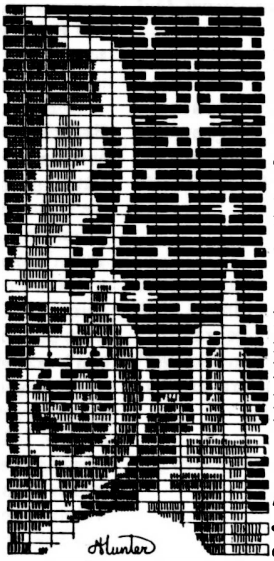
As for the authentic language question, the whole point of a book is to communicate with the reader. **Riddley Walker**, I suggest, ultimately fails as communication because the language becomes too intrusive. Maybe I would have less of a problem with the book if I had been brought up in Kent, and had some familiarity with the local dialect and accent. The essence of the problem with that book is that it is written in the language of the characters, but if we are supposed to see the world from their point of view, we should be able to understand what they say and write. Their language is as clear to them as good modern English is to us.

That doesn't mean that everybody has to speak in a bang-up-to-date style, but there is a wide variety of language use which can be clearly understood. Shakespeare, and the King James Bible, might be said to sit on the borders of what is acceptable. Personally, I would be prepared to have a go at chunks of Chaucerian English, with a glossary and a few footnotes. There are enough intermediate signposts that I can manage. I've never read **A Clockwork Orange**, but I think that **Riddley Walker** takes too big a leap into the unknown.

That is the difference between trying to depict past speech patterns and trying to invent plausible new dialects. Chaucer can be very tricky, but anyone likely to be faced with that has probably read some Shakespeare. We don't distinguish between "you" and "thou" any more, and I wouldn't want to be quoted on the exact distinction, but an educated reader will know that "thou" has been replaced by "you" in modern English, which is enough to follow what is happening. Where are the intermediate stages for an invented future language?

Mark Nelson: 1/10/91

I wish that somebody would write a trilogy or a series, featuring a battle between good and evil. In this trilogy the hero would set out on a quest against what seems to be insurmountable odds. The bad guy sends everything he has to kill the hero, but through poor planning and blind luck always fails as the hero once again escapes certain death; naturally this is always at the last moment. Finally the hero confronts the bad guy, and is just about to cast the proverbial ring into the proverbial fire when the Evil Guy lucks it out.



Evil wins. The hero is killed. The world is left to eons of death and despair and the author rides into the sunset with ne'er a sequel planned.

It would make a change.

Doubtless, the author would be made to either rewrite the final scene or, (oh no!) horror of horrors, produce a sequel explaining how the hero got out of that one...

(In the spirit of free speech, right of reply and all that, here's James Parker again... plus a couple of other connected comments.)

James Parker:4/7/91

Many thanks for the latest issue... I see that the Rushdie debate lingers on. 'Pounding Parker,' eh? Don't know about that. Matt Coward's missive (missile?) was a somewhat over-emotional response; it would almost be amusing if Matt hadn't so clearly revealed his own unhealthy obsessions....

To Richard Brandt: yes, laws should be invoked to prevent the denigration and persecution of minority groups. True, we cannot legislate against the prejudices of some individuals' minds, but laws made against a background of enlightened education and liberal thought should increasingly isolate and expose the bigots in our midst.

Martin Helsdon. Yes, racism isn't unique to this nation by any means. However, racism is institutionalised here in a way that it isn't in any other country. We have an establishment that is anti-black, anti-Asian, anti-Catholic, anti-women, anti-intellectual,and one could go on...

I regard Martin's last sentence, 'If the UK is so soaked in blood, why do so many of the descendants of our empire's unwilling subjects want to come here?' as being a rather dubious and vaquely sinister piece of rhetoric... (18 King William Street, Old Town, Swindon)

Ian Covell: 27/5/91

Like Mat Coward, I think religious belief is a mental disturbance, possibly an imbalance or neurosis, even (if I understood the terms). Which is why I think our society can't be truly healthy.

ken cheslin: 20/5/91

Chuckled at Mat Cowards remark about "religious belief is a mental illness, and therefore it's sufferers should be confined in mental hospitals until they can be cured" I'm inclined to agree, but there are too many of them, mores the pity.

(Now here's a new subject for you to get your typers into...)

Maureen Speller: 18/9/91

Reading short stories... tends to make one think in terms of authors rather than titles. I'm currently interested in people like Judith Moffett, Nancy Kress (who has written a wonderful story called 'Beggars in Spain'), Lisa Goldstein, Kathe Koja and Kristine Kathryn Rusch, not forgetting Paul's favourite, Karen Joy Fowler. It's just a coincidence that they are all female; I didn't consciously seek out women writers, I look for what's best, but currently there is a large group of good women writers appearing in places like **Asimov's** and **Fantasy and Science Fiction**. Alas, I'm probably more aware of what's going on in America at the moment than over here, as I've not been keeping up with **Interzone** recently (I'm working on this at the moment).

In fact, it's strange that I cite so many women among my favourite writers when many people are arguing that there are fewer female sf writers around, Certainly, I've got a feeling that there are fewer women writing what might be best characterised as 'hard' sf and far too many women writing schlock romantic fantasy. The gender/subject relationship is very close, I'm not sure why. Perhaps it's just that too many commentators are not disposed to notice women writing sf or more likely that the group of writers I've just mentioned, plus people like Connie Willis and the Pats, Murphy and Cadigan, are writing something which isn't quite so easily classif iable, and a good thing too.

And yet, in something like Chris Reed's **Back Brain Recluse** there is a serious dearth of female writers, both as contributors and as letterhacks. This puzzled me as I know Chris isn't the sort of person to discriminate and when I asked him, he confirmed that he just doesn't seem to get submissions from women writers. I can see a whole slew of arguments being put forward about women having less time etc, the usual range of arguments, but I can't accept that they hold water. Is there something different about the air in America? Is the structure of their society really that different? I doubt it somehow, in which case, what is the reason? Perhaps there is a conscious emphasis over here on the hi-tech sf which women feel unable, for one reason or another, to compete with? I don't even like that idea much, if only because it seems to imply that women have no guts and stamina to pursue whatever ideas they choose. No, I'm still working on that one and I don't think I going to find any easy solutions.

*(Meanwhile, Lloyd Penney's ulterior motives for loccing **SB6** are showing...)*

Lloyd Penney: 17/7/91

Ah, a letter from Jane Yolen...Jane, say hello to Shirley Maiewcki for me, and scare her a bit...Shirley never knows where I'll show up next, and being in a British sf fanzine may shake her just a trifle.

(Mic Rogers is worried again, about the machines that are taking over our brains...)

Mic Rogers: 1/7/91

Terry Broome made a good point about our dependence on machinery. I hate to think of the number of times, when I've used a calculator, I've thought "That CAN'T be right" because I had worked out roughly what the answer should be or could give a reasonable guestimate of it. I couldn't do that if I hadn't been taught good basic arithmetic at school – and I wasn't good at it. Indeed all but the simplest fractions and percentages are completely beyond my ken to this day. There is NO ONE who doesn't press the wrong key at some time. So if the user has no idea of the approximate answer they have no way of picking up on this...

(Mat Coward made a spirited defense of offensiveness last ish: somebody else picks up the gauntlet...)

Steve Jeffery : 7/6/91

To Mat Coward: Ask Rushdie about no-one ever getting hurt by giving offense, or ask Chris Priest about threats against him from a well known American sf author. Are you being deliberately contentious, or are you trying to make a virtue out of an apparent lack of social skills. Straight talking is one thing, being deliberately offensive, and proud of it, sucks of being a pose.

(On a sadder note, here's Harry T. on Bert Warnes.)

Harry Turner: 16/5/91

Sad to hear of Bert Warnes' death. It reminds me of a mystery created by fading memory cells. During early wartime exchanges with Doug Webster, in response to requests for a photo, I codged up a "photobiography", collecting all available snapshots of fannish acquaintances and mounting them,together with snaps of Marion and me on a hiking holiday, in a flimsy book, plus a running commentary, with identifications. There were a couple of snaps of groups taken at the Leeds SFA club house,of Eric Needham, George Ellis and self mingling with the Mayer group. Two of the Leeds fan faces I had been unable to identify were confidently labelled "Warnes" and "Airey" by Doug when he returned the book. I took his word for it.

That collection of fading prints survived the years, miraculously being missed during several clearouts of fannish ephemerae, and finished up in a large carton of wartime letters. I started to investigate the contents of the letters during the 70s when I ventured on an occasional column "Midnight shakes the memory" for Harry Bell's occasional fanzines. (Harry seemed to change the title with each issue!). When the CONception was planned to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the first con, I became involved in the production of the conzine, which reprinted most of the material from Harry's zine and also prints of some of the snaps from the "photobiography".

When I turned up at the con, I was introduced to Bert Warnes and George Airey and there was a certain confusion as to whether we had actually met before, since they both denied being the faces that Doug had identified years before. After much mind searching the mystery fans remained unnamed.

(A final parting shot from Julie Vaux, just to give you a new track to run on.)

Julie Vaux:1/11/91

How about this as a suggestion for a theme: The Crime Of The Century! What do your readers think it is? Ecological, sociological, political, etc? (14 Zara Road, Willoughby, NSW 2068, Australia)

WAHFs: Fiona Anderson, Harry Andruschak, Boris Basmadjiev, David Bateman, Julian Bills, Sheryl Birkhead, Syd Bounds, Richard Brandt, Iain Byers, Vinç Clarke, Chuck Connor, Pete Crump, Chester Cuthbert, Gary Deindorfer, Chris Elliott, Paul Di Filippo, Thomas Fülöpp Jr, John F. Haines, Margaret Hall, David Haugh, Martin Helsdon, Graig Hilton, Adrian Hodges, Alan Hunter, Lesley Hurst, Ethel Lindsay, Mary Long, Mark Manning, Rada Mileva, John Miller, Dave Mooring, John M. Peters, Peter Presford, Peggy Ranson, Kevin Rattan, Victor Raymond, David Redd, Jason Smith, Steve Sneyd, Martyn Taylor, David Thayer, Sue Thomason, Alexander V. Vasilkovsky, Roger Waddington, Sue Walker, Arild Waerness, Jane Yolen

Apologies to anyone not mentioned: my filing system has gone to pot this year. I promise to try and do better, honest.

RASTUS MUSES

Progress: the Weatherwax view
"Don't talk to me about progress. Progress just means bad things happen faster..."
Granny Weatherwax in Terry Pratchett's ***Witches Abroad***

A plea for modern heroes
"I have this dread that afflicts me in the dead of night: it is that somehow, we have lost the power to generate new mythologies for a technological age. We are withdrawing into another age's mythotypes, an age when the issues were so much simpler, clearly defined, and could be solved with one stroke of a sword called Durththane. We have created a comfortable, sanitised pseudofeudal world of trolls and orcs and mages and swords and sorcery, big-breasted women in scanty armour and dungeonmasters; a world where evil is a host of angry goblins threatening to take over Hobbitland and not starvation in the Horn of Africa, child slavery in Filipino sweatshops, Columbian drug squirarchs, unbridled free market forces, secret police, the destruction of the ozone layer, child pornography, snuff videos, the death of the whales, and the desecration of the rain forests.

Where is the mythic archetype who will save us from the ecological catastrophe, or credit card debt? Where are the Sagas and Eddas of the Great Cities? Where are our Cuchulains and Rolands and Arthurs? Why do we turn back to these simplistic heroes of simplistic days, when black was black and white biological washing-powder white?

Where are the Translators who can shape our dreams and dreads, our hopes and fears, into the heroes and villains of the Oil Age?"
Dr Hannibal Rooke in Ian McDonald's ***King of Morning, Queen of Day***

Comic strip vs Big Art
"...The influence of the comic strip in film, advertising and the iconography of everyday life has been vastly greater than that of any Arts Council favourite collecting his cheque from the Prince of Wales."
J.G.Ballard, ***The Guardian*** *21/3/91*

Credits

On the writers' side:
John D. Owen, pp 2-5
K.V. Bailey, pp 7-11
Steve Palmer, pp 13-15
Bruno Ogorolec, pp 16-19

On the artists' side:
Shep Kirkbride, cover
Peggy Ranson, pp3-5, 14, 21-23, 29-31
Harry Turner, p 6
Steven Fox, p 11
Alan Hunter, pp 12, 35, 37
Bruno Ogorolec, pp 17, 19
Brad Foster, p 25
Pete Crump, p 33

That's all folks, until the next issue. No promises, but quicker than this'un!