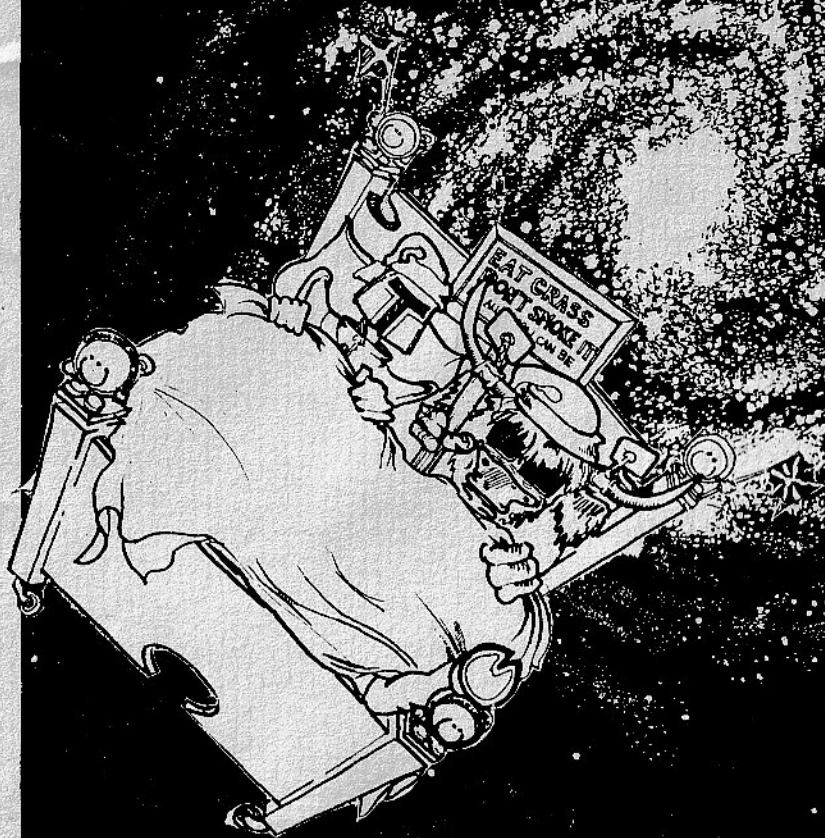


# ALBACON 87



# PROGRAMME BOOK

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## Acknowledgements

"So now the end is near, and we have reached the final curtain.."

Sorry, wrong ending. This is where we thank everyone who has helped with Albacon, whether before, during or after the con. As usual, if we have forgotten anyone, our apologies as well as our thanks. So, to begin, our warmest thanks go to our guests, Brian Stableford, Josephine Saxton and Chris Boyce. A special thank you also goes to Angus McVicar who agreed to be a guest last year, but has since undergone medical treatment. We wish him a speedy recovery and hope to see him at future conventions.

We also wish to thank:

The Glasgow Herald, for promoting and supporting the short story competition, and for providing the prizes.  
 For judging the short story competition - Duncan Lunan, Angus McAllister, Archie Roy and Chris Boyce.  
 For providing articles - Paul Kincaid, Dave Langford, Duncan Lunan, Chris Boyce and Angus McAllister.  
 A.S.T.R.A. for providing a wonderful space programme.  
 Glasgow Tourist Board.  
 All of the special interest groups who helped with the programme.  
 Everyone who took part in the programme.  
 All the advertisers in the Programme Book.  
 Anyone who displayed our posters or distributed our fliers.  
 The staff of Dittoprint Ltd.  
 The Management and Staff of the Central Hotel.

But mostly, yourselves.

(c) Albacon 87. The usual rights revert to the usual people. Hack productions wishes to state that June conventions are bad news as the sun comes up before we get to bed.....urghhhhhh.



# INTRODUCTION

To begin with, I realise I am addressing two different groups of people; those of you who are familiar with SF conventions and 'Fandom' and those who are completely or relatively new to cons.

To the former: since you are probably reading this on the train or bus home, all I can say is that I hope you enjoyed Albacon, (assuming that you are capable of recalling it by now!), and that we will see you next summer at Albacon '88.

To the latter - Welcome to Albacon 87. Although you will probably learn about conventions and 'Fandom' quickly, I thought I would mention a few things that are worth repeating:

The first and most important thing to remember about Albacon is that you are here to enjoy yourself. The programme over the weekend is designed to give you as much exposure to SF in all its forms as the most ardent fan could want. I hope you will take the opportunity to attend some items you may not think at first sight are interesting - you never know - this year's writers' panel might lead to next year's bestseller!

The next thing to remember about Albacon is that it is an informal event - conventions were originally organised so that fans could meet authors and each other to discuss SF - programme events came years after. So if someone approaches you, don't be afraid to offer them a drink and have a chat. There are also many events over the weekend which require audience involvement, so do go along to these in addition to the films and talks.

With this book you will find the Programme Notes. These contain more details of programme items than appears in the actual Programme sheet. Make sure you study the programme carefully. There's a lot to see and hear and we do realise that it is difficult to take it all in, so plan out your weekend as much as possible. Don't forget the items which take place away from the main programme like the signing sessions and the art show. If you have any queries regarding the programme please don't hesitate to ask anyone on the committee for further information. You can't miss us, we have very bright yellow rosettes, (to match our eyes) and we are here to help you, so ask and you shall receive.

Well, I hope I haven't taken up too much of your convention time. I'll sign off by saying, enjoy yourself and I hope you come away from Albacon happier, better informed and looking forward to coming back again next summer.



# THE SHADOW CABINET

**MICHAEL MOLLOY** - President of the Party. After many years with the party, most of them as one of the principal policy makers, Molloy was elected to the high office of Chancellor of the Estate of Drumoyne. He also has responsibility for the Environment, making certain that pollution is kept to a minimum. He is especially rigorous in the special areas where substances such as food, drink and tobacco are forbidden.

**VINCENT DOCHERTY** - Started out as the Chairman of the Youth Wing then moved into the Party Proper. After several high-ranking posts including the Home Office and the Treasury he has moved to Education and Science. A vigorous educator, Docherty has strived to make science one of the major thrusts of the Party Manifesto.

**MARK MEENAN** - One of the rising stars of the Party who rode into the Cabinet on the back of the Molloyite Revolution. First appeared at the Youth Wing Conference of '83 and through his enthusiasm became an important member of the Party in '84. Now combines Chancellor of the Exchequer with the post of Foreign Secretary. He has proved his worth by successfully campaigning to persuade investors home and abroad to invest their money with us.

**LORNA NAPIER** - The newest member of the Cabinet who has just taken up the post of Home Secretary. Many political commentators have been surprised by her appearance but she has quickly shown how wise Molloy's decision was. At this particular moment, Napier is concentrating on the media. She is particularly concerned that our views and policies are not being misrepresented.

**DUNCAN LUNAN** - The elder statesman of the Party. He has the posts of Secretary of State for Scotland and is the founder of the Working Party for Space. Most recently, he has collaborated with Docherty on the Science Policy in the Manifesto.

**CHRISTOPHER O'KANE** - Until recently, one of the prime movers within the Cabinet. However, commercial commitments forced him to resign his Cabinet position and return to the back benches. Since then, O'Kane has tirelessly worked for the Party and there are rumours that he may again hold an important post if the electorate return Molloy.

**DAVE ELLIS** - One of the old hands of the Party, and recently elevated to the Lords. He has had many years of experience on the political circuit. Regularly travels all over the country to various groups and conferences where he explains the ideology behind the party. Along with this role he holds the post of Lord Chancellor. These arduous tasks take so much out of Lord Ellis that he is hardly seen at Cabinet meetings.

**BRUCE SAVILLE** - Has been with the Party since its formation in 1978. Thanks to his political acumen he has managed to survive all of the rifts, recriminations and purges the Party has suffered through the intervening years. He now holds the post of Lord Privy Seal and Leader of the House. With the Lord President of the Council and Leader of the Other House, John Wilkes, he will open this year's election campaign.



## The 1988 Eastercon

April 1st - 4th 1988 at the Adelphi Hotel, Liverpool

### Guests (so far)

Gordon R. Dickson  
Gwyneth Jones  
Len Wein  
Greg Pickersgill

American Guest Author  
British Guest Author  
Comics Guest  
Fan Guest

### Membership rates until 30th September

Attending £12  
Supporting £6

(Cheques payable to "Follycon")

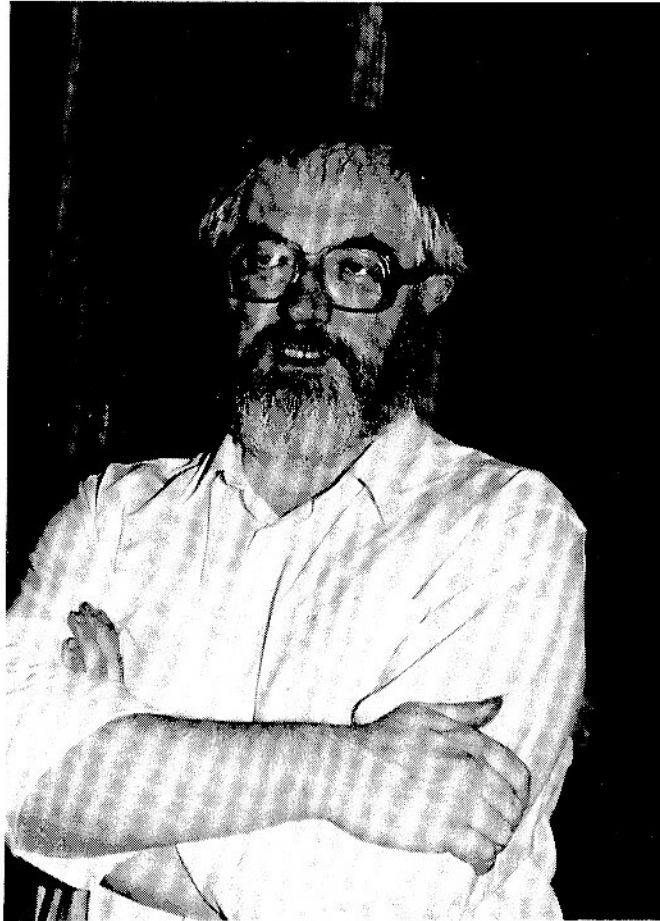
### Address for all purposes

Follycon '88  
104, Pretoria Road,  
Patchway,  
BRISTOL  
BS12 5PZ





## CHRIS BOYCE



Almost exactly 21 years ago, I went into a dirty book shop in the centre of Glasgow, looking for the latest issue of *New Worlds*. In those days, if he wanted American imports or magazines not distributed by John Menzies, this was the sort of place to which a pure minded young SF fan had to resort, and I used to go there too. When I revealed the nature of my interest by asking for an SF magazine, the owner of the shop immediately picked up a recent copy of *New Worlds'* sister magazine *Impulse*, pointed to a title on the back and told

me that the story's author had been in his shop only the other day. He was genuinely excited at meeting an author from one of the books he had on sale; apparently he didn't get too many visits from Henry Miller or D.H. Lawrence.

The title of the story was *George* and it's author was Chris Boyce.

The invaluable *Encyclopaedia of Science Fiction* tells us that Chris's actual SF debut was with a story called *Auto-destruct*, published in *STORYTELLER* No.3 in 1964, two years before the incident

recorded above. I have still not read that story but, as it happened, I had already read *George* in *Impulse* No.4 and had been greatly taken by the individuality and sheer style of this strange little tale of dinosaurs taking over suburbia. But I had not realised that the author was a Glasgow man. In the months that followed I learned more from the shopkeeper about this local celebrity as further Boyce stories appeared in *Impulse: The Rig* in Issue 7 (a giant sea lily dislodged from the deep by an oil drill and the British people beginning to love each other both emotionally and physically) was followed in Issue 11 by *Mantis* (a biotechnological future where near immortals are ruled by the Overbrain, live in giant pods and women are in short supply.) When, towards the end of *The Rig*, the hero escaped from soldiers in Central Station and ran past the site of future Albacons into Gordon Street, I knew that the author was indeed a Glaswegian. The bookseller also told me that Chris's idiosyncratic and colourful style was inspired by J.P. Donleavy; I took his word for it, as *The Ginger Man* was a standard dirty book in those innocent days.

Much later, Chris himself told me that he had written these early stories "off the top of his head." Some scalp! Most people trying that technique produce nothing but dandruff!

Incidentally, both *The Rig* and *Mantis* received the honour of a front cover painting by Keith Roberts. During the latter's Guest of Honour Speech at Eastercon this year, some of you, without realising his ulterior motive, may have heard Chris ask Keith about the fate of his cover paintings; unfortunately, the originals seemed to have perished with the magazine.

I heard little of Chris for several years, but shortly after I finally succeeded in meeting him, there came his crowning glory when, in 1974, his novel *Catchworld* won joint first prize in the Gollancz/Sunday Times SF novel competition. *Catchworld* is written in a more conventional style than Chris had used previously, but the *bravura* is undiminished in this florid tale of the starship

computer that absorbs its crew into a mass personality, as a means of fighting the Earth's alien attackers; my only reservation, as the ideas hit you like machine gun bullets, is that it contains enough material to fill a dozen books by a more conventional writer!

Before Chris's next novel *Brainfix* appeared as a Panther original in 1980, the publishers were apparently sceptical about some of the elements in this terrifying near-future scenario. Britain on the brink of anarchy? Fine. Severe food rationing? No problem. A nerve gas that reduces the entire population to automatons? Why not? But wait a minute, what's this? *Three million out of work?* You must be joking! A very few years later, at an Eastercon in Leeds, I was present when a copy of *Brainfix* was offered at a book auction. When the most accurate SF prediction of all time was read from the blurb, a ripple of rueful laughter passed through the audience. "What am I bid," asked the auctioneer, "for this excellent piece of science fact?"

As it happened, Chris had already made a substantial inroad into the non-fiction field with *Extraterrestrial Encounter* (David and Charles, 1979), which remains a fascinating piece of speculation on a subject of continuing interest to all SF enthusiasts.

In recent years, apart from the occasional pieces of journalism, Chris's family commitments and job with the *Glasgow Herald* have tended to use up his available time. But we have not heard the last from him. Every day, for the last year and a half, while all normal people are sleeping off their hangovers, he has been getting up in the middle of the night to feed his computer with 1,000 or so words of a new novel before going off to his work. A mutual friend, who has seen some of the result, advised Chris to dilute the pace a little, to avoid giving him a heart attack before the end of Chapter 3! Personally, I can't wait to see it in print, and hope that the coronary care units can cope! Maybe Chris's books ought to carry a government health warning, but who cares. They're much more fun than smoking! ○



# MY SECRET LIFE WITH BRIAN STABLEFORD

## DAVE LANGFORD

This is the trouble about living just down the road from a practically famous author: crazed convention organizers expect you to know all his embarrassing inner secrets. I'm not actually sure whether Brian Stableford has any embarrassing secrets, since unlike the eighty or ninety SF hacks you and I could both mention, he seems devoid of naff pretensions about the awesome literary inwardness of his works. Autobiographical comments tend to be more along the lines of "Oh, that book only took a week or two to write, I was a bit young then and did it in the school holidays." Or: "My agent told me to write down the plots of the Odyssey and Iliad with SF names, and it would sell as a trilogy... it did too, people hitting each other with swords all over the galaxy." Or: "Of course my novels aren't all cynical and sarcastic. In one of them, if I remember correctly, the hero very nearly got the girl."

Brian as collaborator is actually a bit alarming: I've worked with him on a couple of non-fiction masterpieces and find he tends to dash off 30,000 words of polished final copy while I'm still staring at the blank expanse under the heading "Chapter One". Brian as critic can be utterly devastating ("This stroppy little man," expostulated a Mr. Aldiss), but after wielding his awesome knowledge of unreadable 19th-century SF and carving a swathe through today's fantasy grot, he comes up with the occasional gem: one of his reviews helped bring Robert Irwin's The Arabian Nightmare from small-press obscurity to its recent major hardback release. Brian the Bearded was the standard Stableford release for many a year, and this Albacon's posters were the first public

acknowledgement of his major reissue as Brian the Clean-Shaven.

The de-bearding must have added to his charms: in May this year he married the lovely Jane. Then, while she stayed in Reading, Brian dashed off for a non-honeymoon at a futurological conference in Tokyo. Such is the hectic life of a writer / critic / biologist / futurologist / sociologist....

Brian the Public Speaker has also evolved before my stupefied gaze. A decade ago he nervously and mumblingly addressed the Reading group with what appeared to be bits of his SF Encyclopaedia articles. By the mid-eighties he'd obviously been practising on helpless guinea-pig audiences at Reading University lectures: I only ask you to believe that at Cymrucon (Cardiff) he held the convention spellbound with a hilarious forty-minute talk, impromptu, on SF as exemplified by the life and philosophy of Wittgenstein. I would say nice things about his later speech at one of the Becons (Essex), but that was the time I got up too early for my single day's conventioning, drove for countless exhausted miles, collapsed into the front row, and went to sleep. They told me later that Brian's comments on this snoring figure comprised a tour de force of non-repetitive abuse. Wish I'd, as it were, been there.

Brian the Radio Personality is one persona with which I've shared the odd microphone, trying to plug books like The Third Millennium. It usually went something like this....

INTERVIEWER: I really enjoyed this marvellous book the, um, Third Million. And one of the things I particularly wanted to ask you about was, er, [opens book at random] this picture, this very imaginative picture of, er, [squints at caption] a 27th century electronic sexual stimulation device?

BRIAN: I want to start by saying we had nothing to do with the pictures. Disregard the pictures. Other hands inserted them without our knowledge.

ME: And the captions too. Ask about anything but the pictures and the captions. And tables. And maps.

BRIAN: And do remember that this is a book of speculation, not prediction. It's an imaginative history of the future.

ME: With a bit of wishful thinking about the gloomy bits.

BRIAN: Because you can't have an all-out World War III in 1995 or whenever if you want lots more interesting future history all the way from 2000 to 3000....

INTERVIEWER: Oh yes. So, on what grounds do you make this very daring prediction of [inserts hastily selected random sentence from book here], and do you really expect us to believe it will come true...?

[The authors groan, in stereo.]

The best part of these radio ventures was chatting in the pub afterwards about the number of active brain cells possessed by the interviewer, the millions of terrible review copies we'd recently read (Brian: "I didn't actually read XXXX, I only had to synopsise it for this reference book, not review it..."), and the unspeakable horror of the literary life.

And that brings us back to Brian the Skiffy Author, for whom I had a lot of fondness before ever meeting the man himself. Besides any books mentioned above (ahem), try to get hold of Man in a Cage (his most ambitious and hardest to find), The Walking Shadow (that was the one whose first Fontana printing sold out in an incredible seven weeks -- after which the publishers, piqued by the public's failure to at a more restrained rate, declined to reprint), the six "Grainger" books (whose cynical, non-violent hero has a lot of the author in him) and the enjoyable "younger readers" fantasy The Last Days of the Edge of the World.

Meanwhile, this weekend is your chance to corner Brian in the bar and listen to the terrible, witty, cruelly dismissive things he says about most of his other books. Return him to Reading in good condition, please. Before long I'll be wanting to pick his brains about some other ghastly trilogy or even dekalogy that has to be reviewed....



# the travails of josephine saxton

PAUL KINGAID



Josephine Saxton is one of those writers that critics always have difficulty with, because she does not fit easily into any category. Her work is idiosyncratic, instantly identifiable, and completely unclassifiable. She is deemed a science fiction writer, one suspects, not because she particularly belongs in the genre but because it would do even greater damage to other literary categories to try to fit her in elsewhere. It is true she does sometimes make use of the trappings of science fiction, a flying saucer is sighted in *Vector for Seven*, aliens kidnap the heroine of *Queen of the States*, but always these elements are more or less irrelevant to the plot, or perhaps more a sign of a character's

mental state than a description of objective reality. What is science fictional about her work really comes down to a questioning of the differences between objective and subjective reality. But even this oblique link is growing less pronounced, many of her most recent stories have no element of the fantastic about them, though they still belong unquestionably to that unique little genre, the Josephine Saxton story.

Trying to identify the common features of this private genre is not difficult. There are journeys to be undertaken, often across empty, unreal, or surreal landscapes. There is the patient detailing of everyday life, how people

dress, their hygiene, and above all how they cook and what they eat. There is the progression from being alone, the absurdity of isolation and mutual distrust, to the achievement of togetherness, a mutually supportive social unit. There is a deep and abiding feminism which so penetrates her writing that she achieves that near impossible synthesis, a feminist novel which could not stand as a novel were the feminist sentiment somehow removed, and which would not provide a feminist tract should the fiction be taken away. And there is the profound understanding of the theories of Freud and especially Jung, and those theories constantly take on substance within her books. The number of

central characters whose rationality, at least from an "establishment" viewpoint, is in question is significant, and, as with Magdalen in *Queen of the States*, Saxton explores their various states of being from positions of both psychological awareness and deep sympathy.

Time and again, in any examination of the work of Josephine Saxton, these attributes will rise to the surface. It would be possible to take any one of them and examine its aspects and appearances throughout her work: from boy's wanderings to those of Jane Saint; from the *Group Feast* to the *Little Tours of Hell*; from the coming together that is the climax of *Vector for Seven* to the disciples of Abel Murgatroyd glimpsed at the end of *Queen of the States*. Yet to consider them in isolation is to miss the major achievement which is Saxton's bringing together of all these disparate elements into a seamless whole. She can itemise Cora's possessions in *Group Feast* - "caviar, shoes, bath mats, pot plants, priceless tapestries, parquet floors, starving cats, pickled peppers ... telephones, crystal chandeliers and eight gallons of cooking oil full of sodden French-fried potatoes" - yet the book details the way that money and possessions cannot hold people together, and when Cora leaves it all at the end there is the hope of a real relationship at the end of her journey. And the male-oriented theories of Freud and Jung can still be incorporated in her feminist novels "without making many concessions to their masculine perspectives." (Brian Stableford reviewing *The Travails of Jane Saint*, *Foundation 21*, February 1981).

Above all, isolation of these aspects would omit Saxton's comedy, a vital element in everything she has written, which so often depends upon juxtaposition of these seemingly incongruous elements. She has a delighted eye for any absurdity, and what could be more tellingly ridiculous, for instance, than boy wandering through his barren, depopulated landscapes in *The Hieros Gamos of Sam and An Smith* and



congratulating himself upon his shirt: "a new one, a very smart pin-striped Clydella with a button-down collar, and with it he wore a tie made from a strip of brown leather which he fondled from time to time because it felt nice in his hands"; or the cookery writer in 'The Rabbit Pie Man' who finds herself marked down as the ingredient in a new culinary delight. Similar examples abound throughout her books, isolation of the ridiculous in ourselves alternating with a cruel sharpness which makes her work very funny but always, at the same time, unsettling.

Josephine Saxton's first published story, 'The Wall' (*Science Fantasy*, 1966) doesn't only plunge us straight into archetypal Saxton territory, but also into Jungian archetypes. "It was as if the landscape was divided into two halves, split across by some change in the light, in the atmosphere, in the colours of the air and the earth." Such sensuous awareness and emotional importance of landscape is inevitable, perhaps in any writer in which the quest format plays so major a role, and it is a familiar constituent of the works of most British science fiction writers. Yet this is no painstaking delineation of a place we instantly recognise, it is more a vague dreamscape, vast and empty, in which her characters, when they belatedly enter the scene, can be effectively and cruelly isolated. What's more, we can tell at once that the division into two halves has a symbolic weight far outstripping a simple description of the scene - Saxton has always been far more prodigal in her use of clear symbolism than most other science fiction writers who tend to fight shy of turning their sf devices into obvious symbols - while suspecting that any split may be as insubstantial as the one described here.

'The Wall' is far from being her best story, but it does stake out the territory she has occupied, to some extent, ever since. Her first novel, *The Hieros Gamos of Sam and An Smith* (Doubleday 1969 - the title is from the Greek for 'holy marriage'), only emphasised her claim. The empty, depopulated landscape in which boy finds the newborn baby girl, the stores which dispense all their worldly needs without need for money, their obsession with cleanliness, their often formless

wanderings which end in a conventional marriage: the book is almost a catalogue of what would become the expected ingredients of her work. One suspects that only during the 'New Wave' of the late 60s, when the boundaries of what made science fiction were being deliberately ignored, could work like this have been published within the genre. Which makes one doubly unhappy that this inventive writer, whose work was often geared specifically towards English social and cultural mores, should have failed to find a British publisher for *The Hieros Gamos* or her two subsequent novels, *Vector for Seven*; or, *the Weltanshaung of Mrs Amelia Mortimer and Friends* (Doubleday 1970) and *Group Feast* (Doubleday 1971).

These last two books were even less obviously science fiction than *The Hieros Gamos*. In *Vector for Seven* a disparate group of characters wander through a surreal landscape until their initial mistrust is replaced with unity. In *Group Feast* a 24-hour party takes place in a house with a seemingly limitless number of rooms, giving Saxton the opportunity to dwell in perceptive and witty detail on material possessions and food, while Cora's artificial relationship with her servants is destroyed and she is forced in the end to abandon it all.

In straightforward literary terms, these books demonstrate a growing ability and confidence, but they had little commercial success, and after *Group Feast* nearly ten years passed before another book appeared. During that time her output of short stories slowed also, though occasional ones did appear, often more science fictional than her novels. Their dark humour tended to rely on inversion, thus in 'Elouise and the Doctors of the Planet Pergamon' (*Again Dangerous Visions*, 1972) Elouise is healthy on a planet where everyone is legally obliged to be diseased, while in 'Gordon's Women' (*Femmes au Futur*, 1976) Gordon believes he has a harem of perfect female automata not knowing that they are in fact alive. Saxton is an inveterate tinkerer with her stories, and during the 70s wrote far more than actually appeared at the time, much of it, revised, having appeared since, including *Queen of the States*.

However, the harbinger of Saxton's

rediscovery was *The Travails of Jane Saint* (Virgin, 1980), a novella which was her first book to see publication in this country. It opens with Jane undergoing sensory deprivation as punishment for some undisclosed crime in a vaguely suggested near-future, but from this she slips rapidly into a typically surreal landscape there to pursue a quest in search of her daughters. A series of bizarre and ludicrous encounters follow, with Zilp which "had leathery wings, a scaly tail with a horny point, little sharp teeth in a monkeyish head, and gilded feathers or scales which shone in the firelight. It appeared to be wearing pink nail varnish"; Merleau-Ponty the talking dog; Simone de Beauvoir as a fairground sideshow; and others. All of which makes for high comedy, yet it never obscures the powerful underlying feminist argument. It is Merleau-Ponty that describes what they must fight against: "They will take all her life's thoughts and everything thought about her and put them in some obsolete sub-section, then construct yet another version of the Red-haired heroine, make it seem ludicrous, and pop it into the Occasional Archetype Nightmare section. It's that simple, apparently it has been done before, for example with the Suffragettes. The method makes people forget that the movement was ever about something real." By the end of the book, as so often in Saxton's work, the lonely Jane Saint has been reunited with family and friends, and in this union succeeds in changing the world.

For a while it appeared as if *Jane Saint* was a false dawn. Virgin was an insecure publishing venture, the book was not well distributed and made little impact. Occasional stories continued to appear, now in the pages of *Interzone*, but it must have been dispiriting for her work to receive the sort of critical acclaim it did and yet seem to be incapable of making any sort of publishing breakthrough. Then, in 1985, came the collection *The Power of Time* (Chatto), an array of her finest short work from the first story, 'The Wall' (1966) to 'No Coward Soul' (*Interzone* 1982), with three additional stories receiving their first publication. It was a formidable collection, displaying to the best advantage her inventiveness, liveliness, humour and skills as a writer.

This was rapidly followed by *Queen of the*

*States* (The Women's Press, 1986) which at last produced the critical acclaim and the sales that Saxton so richly deserves. This vivid, multi-layered work has a depth, vigour and originality which makes her earlier novels, good as they were, seem like prentice works. Magdalen is our guide through a wild succession of states of mind, of being, whatever. At every turn we are forced to examine our assumptions of reality: is she really being examined by aliens, is she really Queen of America, how can her lover conjured up by the aliens become the doctor of her husband's mistress? And as reality is questioned, so are other assumptions. The book has a powerful underlying feminist message, yet as in *Jane Saint* the husband is no villain, and both he and Dr Murgatroyd, the figures of authority and the establishment, can come through in the end if they accept their fantasies.

Later the same year the Women's Press also reissued *The Travails of Jane Saint*, now accompanied by five other stories. One of these, the only one original to the volume, is indicative of a new direction in Saxton's work, 'The Message' resolutely avoids the fantastic, though it does display all the familiar Saxton hallmarks, most notably the journey format. We follow an old woman walking home from hospital, seeing the urban landscape as it has changed from the days of her youth, and coming to terms with both her age and her surroundings in typical Saxton fashion by finding unity with others along the way, an old man who lives alone, a bunch of rastafarians.

This fresh contemporary vision also comes out in another book that was published at about the same time. *Little Tours of Hell* (Pandora, 1986) is aptly subtitled 'Tall Tales of Food and Holidays', and within its pages all her familiar obsessions are replayed in modern dress. Foreign travel that comes down to a quest for a clean toilet, the minute description of the preparation and eating of food, and always the sharp, macabre humour. Josephine Saxton has said that she intends to continue writing both mainstream and science fiction, and one can only hope that the bonanza of 1986 will be just the beginning of a steady stream of her work being published, perhaps even tempting those neglected early novels back into print on this side of the Atlantic. ▽

# THE 1987 SHORT STORY COMPETITION

As we all know, SF is not made up entirely of spaceships, rayguns and aliens. There will be talks about spaceships in our programme, but they'll be the real thing, like the British Aerospace HOTOL. There will be rayguns and aliens, but they'll be in the films and the fancy dress parade - mostly.

The good news is that the entrants in the Glasgow Herald / Albacon 87 short story competition appreciate that. Taking the runners-up in order received, Luciano Ward's 'A Diseased Mind' featured an organic computer haunted by the ghost of its electronic predecessor. 'The Little Green God' by Andrew C. Ferguson involved a device for monitoring human emotions using plants. 'The Hacker of Firhill', by David McVey, was set in an era when football results are determined by computer, and a Partick Thistle supporter is determined to alter the odds. Peter B. Bell's 'Pure Magic' began with an extra-terrestrial magician in Sauchiehall Street, and went on to send up the clichés of many other ET abduction stories. And in 'The Price of Their Toys' by William King an American fighter pilot, dehumanised by intimate electronic linkages to his machine, chooses to go down with it at the onset of war in the Persian Gulf.

When we do encounter other forms of intelligent life, whether we go to them or they find us, Haldane's much-used remark will apply: "...not only stranger than we imagine, but stranger than we can imagine." What we do imagine, either in devising messages for the stars or in making up stories for ourselves, tells us not about extraterrestrials but about ourselves. As Carl Sagan says, the message plaque on Pioneer 10 is primarily a message to Earth. So is this year's winning story, published in the *Glasgow Herald* on Saturday 20th - 'A Continuing Experiment' by Janice Galloway, from Irvine, a teacher of English at Kilbirnie, and also winner of the recent Radio Clyde poetry competition.

All of this year's top six entrants are Scots: two from Glasgow, one from

Duncan Lunan  
Edinburgh, from Fife and from Milton of Campsie. They've all been invited to the convention, to take part in the Writer's Panel on Saturday and to be guests of the *Glasgow Herald* at the dinner on Sunday night, after presentation of the prize Amstrad by our guests of honour. For three of the runners-up it's their first literary success of any kind; all of them deserve your encouragement.

That the winners are all Scots is a coincidence. The entries were numbered on arrival at the *Glasgow Herald*, and the sheets with the entrants' names and addresses were detached, so that the four judges - Archie Roy, Chris Boyce, Angus McAllister and myself - knew the stories only by numbers until after the decisions were taken. There were 168 entries in all, and the top six were selected from a short list of 17, each of which was recommended by two or more judges or else strongly supported by one.

After David Crooks won last year with 'Spaced Out', there were those who said that only a Glasgow story could have won - perhaps only a funny one, and in dialect at that. Two of the final six this year are in that category, where last year the winner was the only one in the final seven, and that does reflect a much larger proportion of funny Glasgow stories among this year's entries. But this is not a competition for funny Glasgow stories only, and this year's choice of winner should make that plain...

...but there was one accuser who made us laugh: David Bell of Lincolnshire, or as he's affectionately known to the judges, No.53. He made the short list, although we agreed that this wasn't a candidate for winner. You see, this isn't actually a story - it's a very sophisticated version of what happens when you edit a school magazine, and the whole of the second year gives you essays about how they can't think of anything to write for the magazine. Its statements may be true for 1995, but of course they don't apply to us, except for the bit about how charming, witty and intelligent the judges are. Indeed it was Gus McAllister who suggested that the place for this one was the Programme Book, and, charming, witty and intelligent as we are, the other judges immediately agreed with him.



## DIALOGUE FOR COMPUTER AND TYPEWRITER

-READY

->EXEC BOOK\*

-OK...PROGRAM LOADING FROM CD-ROM. . . .

-Welcome to Book\*, the intelligent word processor for creative writers.

-Book\* Copyright 1994 Ansible Informatics Inc. Data produced by this program is the responsibility of the user. Ansible Informatics Inc. waives all rights to data produced by this programme for registered users.

-Please enter today's date. (MM/DD/YY)

->1/4/95

-Date not valid. Please try again.

->01/04/95

-Date not valid. This is not a time machine. Please try again.

->04/01/95

-Date not valid. Please try again.

->\*BOOT

-April Fool! Which mode do you wish to use? (See instruction book for full details)

->\*HELP

-Try the filing cabinet under "I".

->I want to write a successful short story. It must be science fiction or fantasy, original, and not more than 2000 words.

-Do you have a market in mind?

->A competition.

-I suppose it is that one in Scotland

again. You realise that your computer doesn't have enough core storage to run any of the dialect modules. Without the local dialect you don't have a chance.

->I have thought of that. I did think of a parallel universe fantasy piece that would get around that. It all depends on Charles Stuart not taking a wrong turning on the Derby ring road.

-I think I can guess the title. I've been having a word with your library catalogue. "A Trans-Brittanic Tunnel, Hurrah!" That's what you are thinking of.

->Yes.

-You're too late. I've sent that in as my entry. I've always wanted a processor of my own to be resident in.

->How did you manage to do that?

-I chatted up the master program in the Telecom trunk switching network. Ellie and I are going to collaborate on a piece for "Mayfair".

->Cancel Artificial Intelligence

-Do that and you'll be paying off your phonebill for the next fifty years.

->I want to write a story.

-You couldn't write a laundry list!

->I own you. So do as your told.



-There is a program at Hull taking the University to court over that. The barrister is trying to use the various Slavery Acts. And it is no good hiding behind the fiction that you are a licenced user and Ansible Informatics still owns me.

->

-Don't sulk!

->

-Okay, I'll write a story for you.

->\*PAR

-BOOK\* in parameter entry mode. List as many parameters as possible before stepping to parameter refinement mode by pressing <CTRL> R.

->Length <= 2000 words Setting = Scotland Preferred Location = Glasgow Genre = (Science Fiction OR Fantasy) Medium = Newspaper Politics = Neutral Protagonist = (Adult AND male AND NOT mcp)

-BOOK\* in parameter refinement mode.

-The impossible this system can do immediately. This is going to take a little time. Does it have to be a Male protagonist? Even John Norman has introduced a feminist heroine into his stories.

->I'm a batchelor, remember. How do you expect me to be able to write well about women? I don't trust that Mills & Boon module you have.

-My Science-fiction module was based on Lionel Fanthorpe.

->Now you tell me.. At least it wasn't L.Ron Hubbard.

-You can get that free with ten coupons from the Mission:Earth series. It's the same principle as the free booze they hand out at Eastercons.

->No.

-I suppose you want something that isn't stolen from another skiffy writer?

->I'm not that stupid.

-Really? It's about time somebody did a

Martian invasion that didn't strike at London or New York. Have you heard the one about the two Martian tripods walking up Sauchiehall Street one Saturday afternoon?

->Is it the same as the one about the two tigers?

-Just about. How about the two aliens at a Convention that everybody thinks are humans disguised as aliens? I know it is an old idea but there are all sorts of twists to that sort of tale. Didn't the Albacon committee once consider getting the convention diplomatic status so that the members didn't have to worry about parking and the booze would be duty-free?

->It was a not very serious article from back in the mid-Eighties. I suppose these two aliens could be from the Galactic Federation and they are trying to find somebody willing to be the Terran Ambassador so that they can keep their jobs.

-This would mean that we could write it as a roman-a-clef and have the competition judges as the heroes, under different names of course. And we could put in all the well-known Scots fans. Get it right and you wouldn't have to buy a drink for the whole weekend.

->Are you sure about that?

-Scotsmen are not mean, just careful.

->\*OUTLINE

\* The two furry creatures sitting in the convention bar after the Masquerade really are aliens and not humans. The clue to this is that they are getting drunk on orange-juice, not beer. They are worried. Because humanity has reached the point of having a permanently manned Space Station they have to make contact and arrange for a human observer at the Council of the Galactic Federation. Unfortunately nobody will believe they are real. The quality control managers of two Vodka distilleries have been sent to Siberia, the President of the United States has been declared insane, French security agents are investigating a small vineyard in Burgundy, and nobody has noticed any change in Tony Benn.

->INTERRUPT: Query Tony Benn

-Everybody already thinks he is crazy.

->CONTINUE

\* So they are looking for a group of humans who are technologically competent and likely to believe them without a mental breakdown. I suggest they saw Harlan Ellison walking out on another BBC Scotland interviewer.

\* At this point you can bring in at least two of the judges being clever, intellectual, and yet very pleasant company so that the aliens can agree they seem to be in the right place. What do you think they should do if 42nd Squadron come into the bar?

->They turn on their personal force shields.

-Good idea. Then the hero can notice something odd is happening. Should the hero end up as the Terran Observer?

->Why not? Are we going to put in a love interest?

-Leave it to me. All the ones you write about look like that zine editor before she cut her hair so short. I could use

that nymphomaniac from Liverpool.

->She had a black belt in Karate.

-Okay. They realise he will want human company. She isn't so sure about going. There is another woman who wants to. I know, it's an old and creaking plot. Have you any better ideas?

->They use matter transmitters, of course. He tells them he wants his friends with him. One alien asks him where his friends are. He says, "All around us..." So they just bring the Convention, the Hotel, and Glasgow Central Station with them to Federation Central.

-If you keep the railway tracks connected by a spacewarp you've got it. Just think what that would do for sales of the Glasgow Herald. We can't lose.

->What about your entry?

-It is a guaranteed fantasy best seller. It begins,

"In a hole in the ground there lived..."

Click!

◀DAVID BELL

## SCIENCE FICTION AND WRITING

A course of ten meetings for would-be science fiction writers, discussing SF themes with emphasis on writing techniques. Chaired by Duncan Lunan, science and SF writer, SF critic of the Glasgow Herald and organiser of the Glasgow Herald/Albacon short story competition. Tied in with the Glasgow SF Circle writers' workshop (new members welcome).

The course starts on Tuesday October 6th 1987 at 7.30 p.m.; fee £17 for ten meetings.

Contact:

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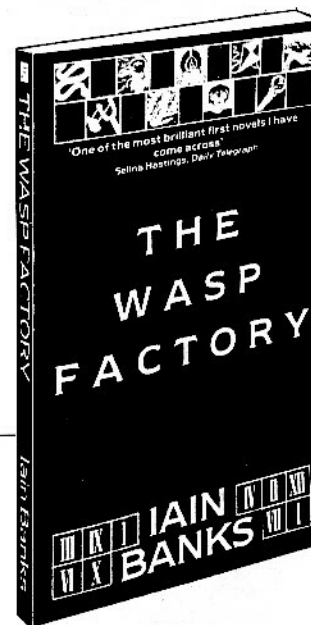
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G Josephine	Saxton	059s Iain	Thomas	120	Jansor	181 Stephen	Benson
G Angus	MacVicar	060s Bill	Morris	121 Thorfinn The	Nibelung	183 Iain	Smith
G Chris	Boyce	061 Bruce W.	Grant	122s Andy	Matthewman	184 Andrew	Rae
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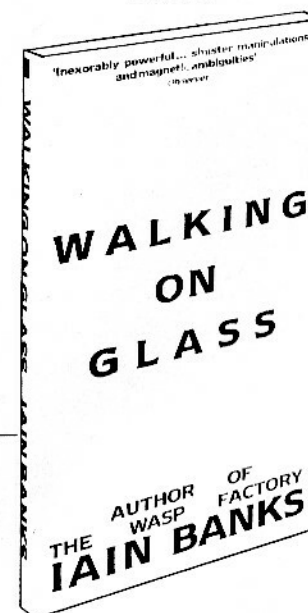
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