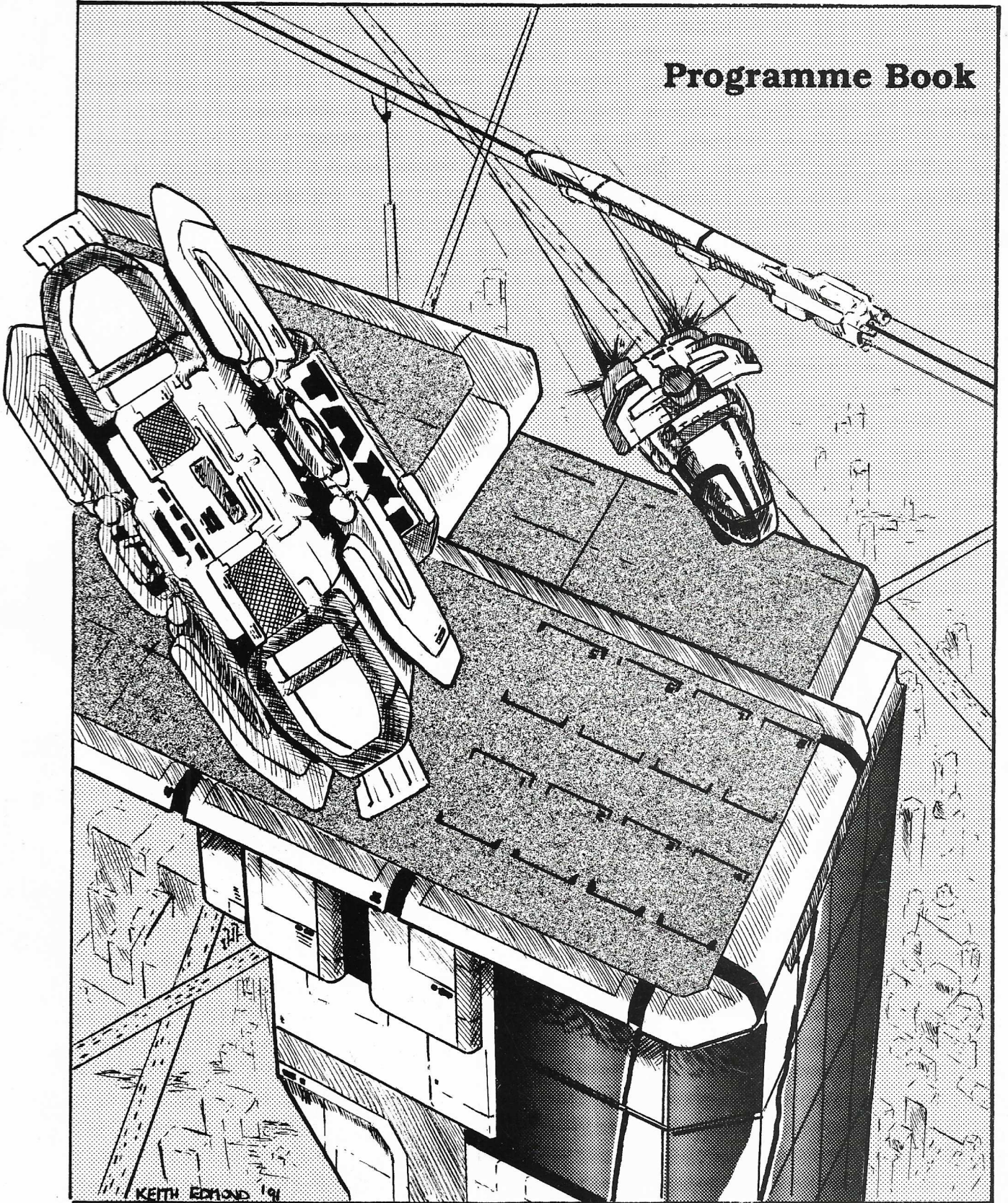
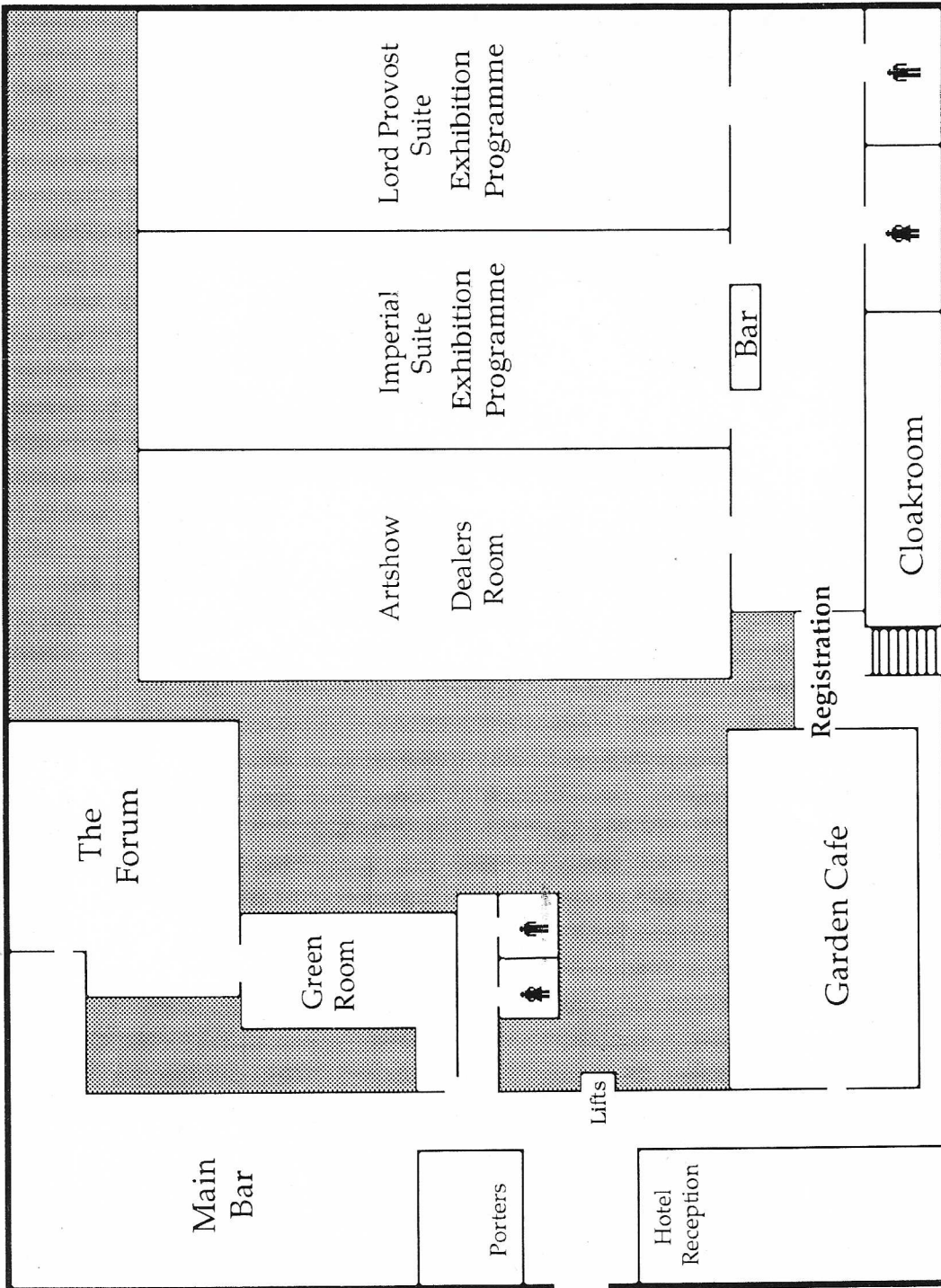


42nd Annual National Science Fiction Convention 1991

# SPECULATION

Programme Book

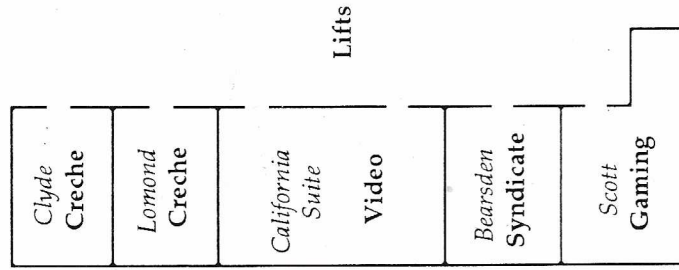




Renfrew St

## Ground Floor Layout

# The Hospitality Inn



8th Floor Layout



Welcome to Speculation, the 42nd Annual National Science Fiction Convention. It is traditional at this point to say a few words of appreciation of all the people without whom this would be impossible, then to close with a quick "hope you like the con", then get out of the way as quickly as possible.

Well, we do owe thanks to an awful lot of people, because no convention these days would be possible without the help and cooperation of people who put in a great deal of time just trying to get it right. They all know who they are, and we've said thank you elsewhere in this publication. But this time round I'd like to say a little more about the Programme Book. Oh, I know all of you hardened congoers will only be looking at this for the first time a week or so after the con, but if so I hope you end up feeling you've missed something. Because we've tried to make the Programme Book a coherent and important part of the programme.

As you look through the Speculation programme you'll see that we've produced linked strands of programming, or modules, which explore a selection of important themes and ideas more thoroughly than the usual one-off panel can manage. So, to complement that, you'll find a series of articles in this Programme Book which set up those themes and present a variety of views for and against the subject. We hope that these will stimulate your own ideas on the subjects so you'll get even more from the panels and talks on the programme.

I also want to thank Rob Holdstock for his contribution to the convention. He is an excellent Guest and very worthy of the Honour. I hope our members will enjoy his company.

And finally, thanks to all of you for coming to Speculation. Without you there wouldn't be a convention at all. I hope you enjoy it - I'm sure you will. I think we've managed to put together a great convention.

Now, on with the motley.



# The Committee

## **John Fairey, Chairman.**

A bearded pedagogue who drinks lager under medical instruction, John says he is a friendly, avuncular sort of guy. A decisive, dynamic inspirational leader who has held the committee together through three years of gruelling effort, he makes Margaret Thatcher seem positively wishy-washy. When John isn't wielding a whip over the committee he is in charge of the science faculty of a secondary school on the Isle of Wight. He is, of course, the henpecked husband of the lovely Anthea whom we thank for giving him permission to attend Speculation.

## **KIM Campbell, Membership Services.**

Membership Services is a front for the real power behind Speculation - the Treasurer. Forever ready to veto any spending plans not included in the latest budget (copies of which are, strangely, never available for inspection), KIM is nonetheless a terribly nice lady. Kind, generous, utterly ruthless, she likes nothing better than taking pity on a programme staff member and offering them the funding for an item dear to their little heart, only to hit them with a refusal to pay for the postage on the letters needed to get people together for the item in question.. The lady certainly has style! Although Canadian, KIM's heart is firmly set in the highlands and she will not, as is tradition with convention treasurers, be heading for the Bahamas with the profits but more likely heading for Benbecula.

## **Paul Oldroyd, Programme.**

Having been the mainstay of programme planning on umpty big conventions Paul reckoned he had done his bit for fandom and retired. After enjoying very nearly a year of inactivity he got twitchy, decided to move to Scotland, failed to sell his London house and opted for running a Scottish Eastercon as the next best thing. Now all he wants to do is stay sane long enough to hand in his resignation. So far there simply hasn't been sufficient time. A failed medical student turned social worker, Paul has almost no vices that can be mentioned in a family publication like this. His wife and daughter worship the ground he will be buried in and suffer regular invasions of their home by Speculation committee meetings with quiet dignity and ice-cream.

## **Mark Meenan, Logistics.**

The committee are only slightly worried by Mark's preference for crime novels over SF. They are much more worried by his insistence that everything that needs to be done to get the convention set up and running is progressing smoothly: no convention operations side ever runs smoothly. Either he is an organisational genius or a very convincing liar. In real life he works for the DHSS, so you should be able to make your own mind up on this issue. When not reading crime novels or lying to the committee, Mark spends his

evenings wargaming, sampling restaurant menus or visiting Dr Who, Star Trek, Prisoner and Viking groups in and around Glasgow. As minute secretary to the committee Mark wields extraordinary power over the rest of us, constantly adding items to our work list while removing them from his own. He will get his reward in heaven. But not soon enough.



## **Ian Sorensen, Publications.**

Well known in fandom for editing Conrunner, a fanzine devoted to discussing how a convention should be run, Ian has yet to demonstrate any ability to translate theory into practice. Although nominally in charge of convention publications he has only actually produced one Progress Report, a couple of flyers and a poster. Skilled at delegation, he regularly abuses his position of trust as a teacher in a Glasgow comprehensive and enlists a slave labour force of pupils to do the convention's dirty work: collating, stuffing, sticking and folding. Noted for his immense personal charm (the absence of it, at any rate) Ian also acts as Hotel Liaison for Speculation and should be sought out at conventions if there is even the slightest problem with the hotel. That should keep him busy enough to let the rest of us enjoy the convention.

## **Thank Yous**

Every convention depends on a lot more people than just the committee. When we started planning this event we got advice and encouragement from many sources, and many people volunteered to help who subsequently had to go on to other projects. Our thanks go to every one of them. Our Guest of Honour, Rob Holdstock, has also contributed a great deal to the programme and we thank him for that and for being a most gracious guest.

Immense amounts of thanks are also due to the following people who have done, are doing, or will do a power of good work for the convention:

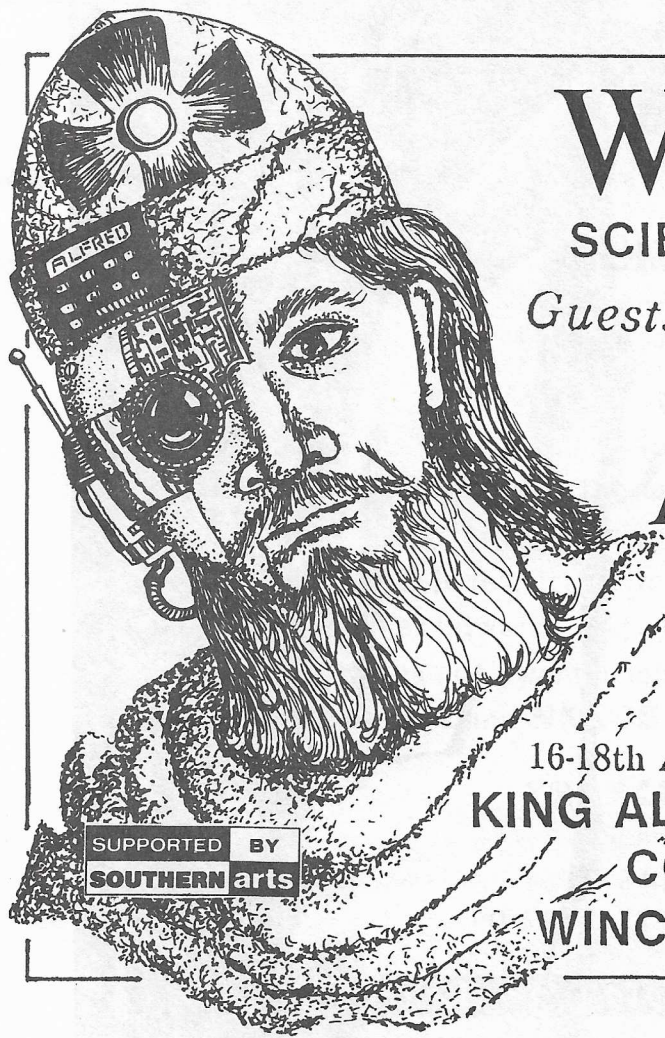
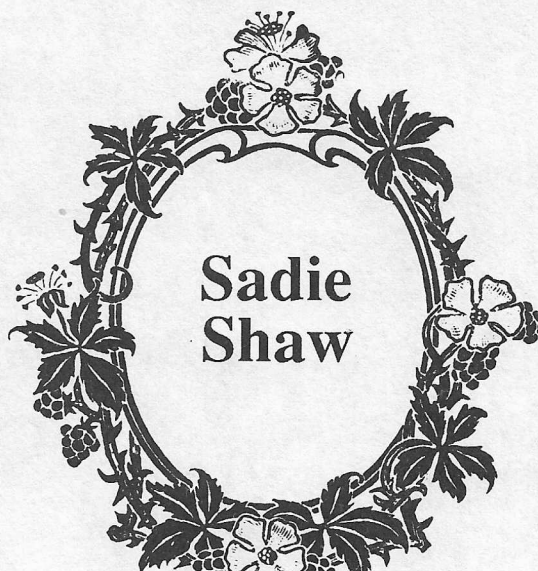
Kevin Anderson, Chris Atkinson, Henry Balen, Mike Dickinson, Vince Docherty, Chris Donaldson, Keith Edmond, Brian Ellis, Vicky Evans, Abi Frost, John Harold, Karen Heenan, Paul Kincaid, Linda Krawecka, Dave Lally, Peter McGarvey (YTS), Andy Morris, Caroline Mullan, Chris O'Shea, Helen Oldroyd, Roger Perkins, Rog Peyton, Simon Polley, Maureen Porter, Richard Rampant, John Richards, Alison Scott, John Stewart, Ivan Towlson, Peter Weston, Uncle Tom Cobbley and all.

The management and staff of the Hospitality Inn have also contributed a lot to making the convention what it is and the committee would like to single out the General Manager, Tim Hunt, and Accommodation Manager, Lorraine MacCormack, for special thanks.

So, to all the above and to your good selves for supporting SPECULATION, thank you from the bottom of our sleep-deprived hearts.

The Speculation Programme Book was compiled by Paul Kincaid with the assistance of Maureen Porter. We wish to thank all the contributors, especially Chris Evans, Chris Amies, Chris Bell and Kev McVeigh. The photographs of Robert Holdstock are by Jerry Bauer and are reproduced by permission. Thanks also to Peter McGarvey and Andrew Seaman for their help in the production.

As this Programme Book was being prepared for publication we learned of the death of Sadie Shaw on Friday 8th March. Sadie and Bob Shaw were regular attendees at Scottish Conventions and we know they were looking forward to being at Speculation. The committee is sure that the entire convention will join in sending condolences to Bob Shaw.



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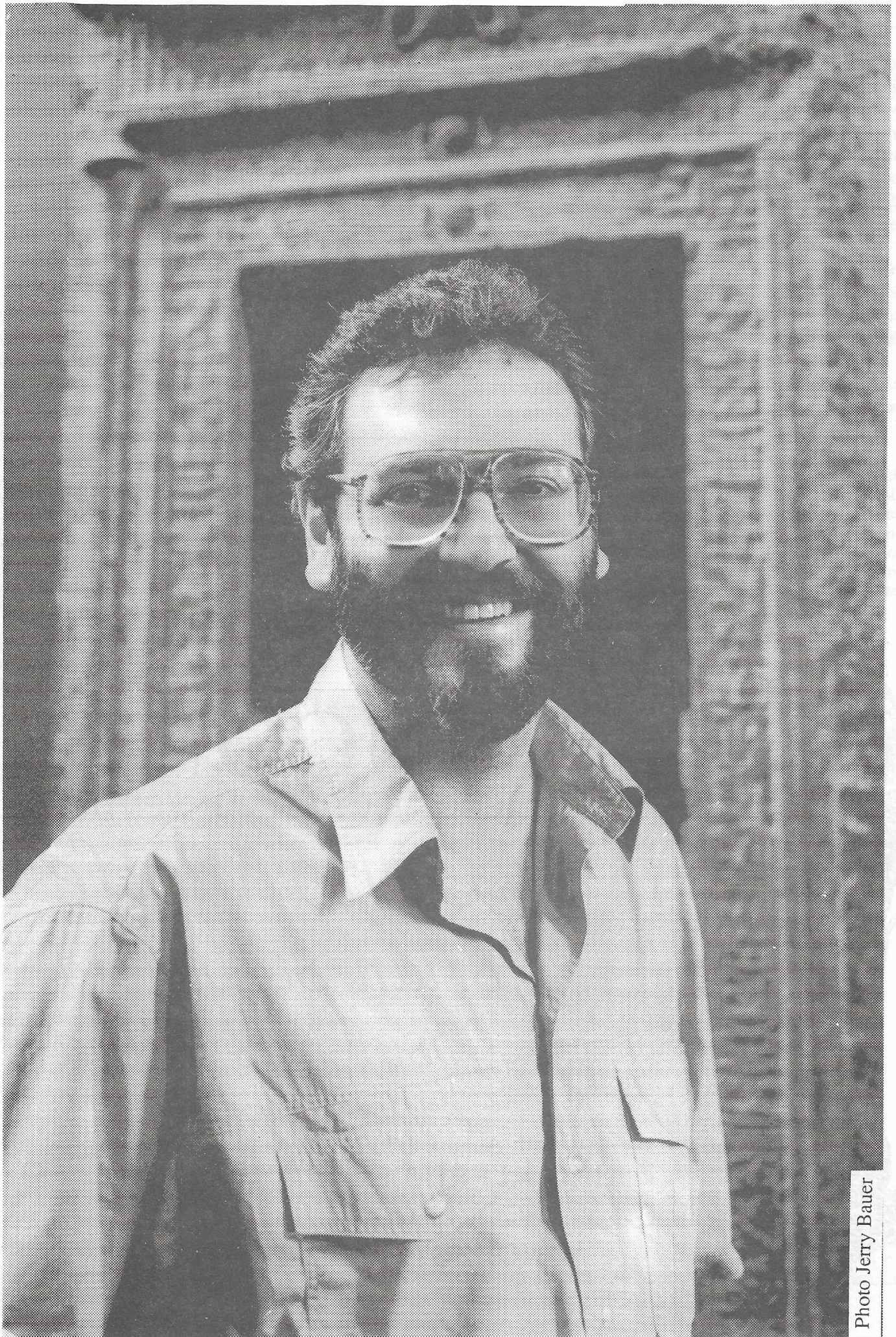


Photo Jerry Bauer

# TOUCHING THE EARTH

## An overview of the fiction of Robert Holdstock

"Unless God strikes me down, it will not be easy for anyone to kill me," Lleu reveals unwittingly to his adulterous wife Blodeuedd. "I cannot be killed indoors or out of doors, on horse or on foot" And so the Mabinogion goes on to reveal that Lleu is killed by Blodeuedd's lover, Goronwy, standing neither on dry land nor in water, but in the somewhat unlikely position of having one foot on the back of a goat and one on the rim of a bathtub.

If he has to go through such contortions to do so, Robert Holdstock is not about to lose his power as a writer. For he is like Lleu, drawing his strength from the earth, and from the rich fertile loam of Celtic mythology. His finest work, specifically *Mythago Wood* and *Lavondyss*, draw their inspiration directly from this source, from the same well-spring of British legend which inspired, for instance, Ralph Vaughan-Williams who takes an appropriate bow in *Lavondyss*. It is hard to know whether it was wilfulness or uncertainty about his own direction which made Holdstock begin his career so far from its sources, but even in his earliest, most science-fictional works it is easy to see these influences drawing him remorselessly back to the earth from which his fiction flows.

Robert Holdstock belongs to that curious generation of British science fiction writers (like Garry Kilworth, Ian Watson, Chris Evans) who emerged on the coat-tails of the rush of creative enthusiasm engendered in this country by *New Worlds*, before the abrupt death of new talent which lasted for most of the 70s and 80s. In consequence, he must have been classed as a "new writer" for about twice as long as most other people, a galling prospect. The benefits of such a view are, at best, ambiguous; it can draw a blanket across the weaker aspects of early novels, but it can draw the same blanket over the strengths. In this article I want to pull them all together and look at some, at least, of the themes which provide a consistent and coherent thread throughout the books. I think it is fair to say that Robert Holdstock did not begin with a flash of brilliance which has gradually faded since, rather his work has steadily improved as it has drawn together the disparate elements which characterised the beginnings of his career. The early books published under his own name were painstakingly crafted while at the same time he produced pseudonymous novels, such as the *Berserker* series as by "Chris Carlsen" and novelisations of films and TV programmes (*Legend of the Werewolf*, *The Professionals*), which have bequeathed a stronger sense of momentum and narrative purpose to his later books.

His first novel, *Eye Among the Blind* (1976), was as straight forwardly science fictional as anything he has written since. Robert Zeitman (zeit = time - which is interesting, time is one of those strange threads which range throughout Holdstock's work) arrives on Ree'hd world

to attempt a reconciliation with his ex-wife and also to warn that an incurable disease is sweeping through the rest of the known universe and has sent a horde of refugees in the direction of this planet. Since this is the home of the only intelligent race that has been discovered thus far, the refugees must be kept away. But now the Ree'hd are acting strangely, turning against the human colonists for the first time in 700 years. It is a potent brew, confused even more by the admixture of other elements, like the blind man who should have been dead for 700 years, and the ghostly appearance of semi-mythical figures from the Ree'hd's pre-history. The time-man has acted as a sort of catalyst around whom events with their origin deep in the past rise to their conclusion, though he himself is always an observer, never playing any active part in the events.

But against the background of this slightly over-blown science fiction epic there is a far more domestic and insightful narrative, the story of Zeitman's failure to be re-united with his ex-wife, Kristina, and her attempts to become integrated with the Ree'hd. And it is here that the strongest links with what will be the developing interests of his work are to be found. There is the central importance of understanding, both of individuals and of societies, and an understanding which has to go deep into history, into the forces which have shaped that which is being understood. Kristina is attempting that with the Ree'hd, Zeitman fails that with Kristina, therein lie the seeds of their future success or failure. The Ree'hd themselves are the best thing about the book, a vividly perceived yet never fully comprehensible society whose closeness to nature prefigures the place that the idea of roots, spiritual and physical, will play in his subsequent fiction. There is, for example, the moment in which a statue of a semi-mythical *Pianhmar* is unearthed in which abiding symbols of statues or stone and soil combine powerfully. And it is this, if anything which is the strongest link with his second novel, *Earthwind* (1977).

The novel has all the science fictional paraphernalia which cluttered the first book, but it also has the first overt showing of the obsessions with myth and ritual which have become the most significant factors shaping his work. The result is a complex novel which doesn't quite succeed perhaps, in retrospect, because it is the first attempt to bring all these ideas together. The book contains an acknowledgement to "The Office of Public Works in Dublin for allowing me to see unpublished photographs of certain discoveries from the Boyne valley excavations at the Knowth tumulus" and in an interview with Geoff Ripington he said that during the writing of *Earthwind* he "took six months off in the middle when I went to Ireland to research the 'Megalith Builders' culture, neolithic man in Ireland. They're the people who raised those immense tumuli, and pecked out the most complex and beautiful patterns on the stone walls of the tombs,

and on standing stones. I got so immersed in that culture, so fascinated by the art, that I took a sabbatical from the novel just to become a student again." It is clear that this was not the origin of Holdstock's obsession with the birth of Celtic and pre-Celtic culture, but we are surely seeing the first inklings that this is his subject, his root matter, the germ around which his fiction is to take mature form.

The symbolic power of these images is recognised immediately so we find that not only does Stone Age Ireland provide the template for Society on the planet Aeran, but representations of ritual and fate are also detailed in those who come to the planet. Elspeth Mueller has jewels implanted in her breasts, Peter Ashka leads all their lives by consultation with the I Ching, surface illustrations of the primitive state to which they are reduced as everything is stripped from around them.

This exploration of the cultural and ritualistic ingredients which go into shaping a man is fascinating but never more than superficial. As the ideas are absorbed more fully they become better integrated into his later stories and novels, especially in stories such as "Earth and Stone" which grew out of that same trip to Ireland and provides the best pointer into the fertile jungle of Mythago Wood, but here there is little sense that what shapes the society is actually a deep-rooted part of people. And its power is dissipated somewhat by butting it up against a science-fictional device, the "earthwind". If the science-fictional elements of Eye Among the Blind are somewhat conventional, this idea of time flowing not in the conventional straight line but like a wind, gusting and swirling, is exquisitely original. Another of his obsessions has found a fresh expression. But again it is under-developed, as if the concept has been placed in the novel before it was fully grown. It would be when he returned to this idea in a later novel, Where Time Winds Blow, that he was able to extract from it the resonances and symbolic strength missing from Earthwind.

This clash of subject matter seems to have had its effect, because in his next two books Holdstock seems to have neatly divided the twin obsessions of Earthwind in half and treated each at more considered length. At the heart of Necromancer (1978), therefore, are the stones and symbols which graced Earthwind without ever achieving the sharpness of focus they demanded. While Where Time Winds Blow (1981) provides his obsession with time and the concept of its progression being oscillatory with the flowering it demanded.

Necromancer is packaged as a straight-forward horror novel, and very good of its sort it is too. A gripping, well-paced narrative dripping with the usual effluvia of ancient priests and malevolent forces, blood and violence and gore. But he has brought this to the service of an idea which obviously ties in with the power of ritual and roots in Earthwind. Here the centre piece is an ancient standing stone carved with ritual images from a pre-Christian era which has, over the centuries, become the font of the Catholic church. Little is made of ritual catholicism, which is disappointing considering that it provided a counterpoint to the older rituals and so illuminates the sense of the continuance of what is fed by these ancient roots into modern awareness. But if he misses that one trick, he misses no other for

the book is a brash, confident work which for the first time shows signs that the pithy action-narratives of his pseudonymous work have fed his other writings.

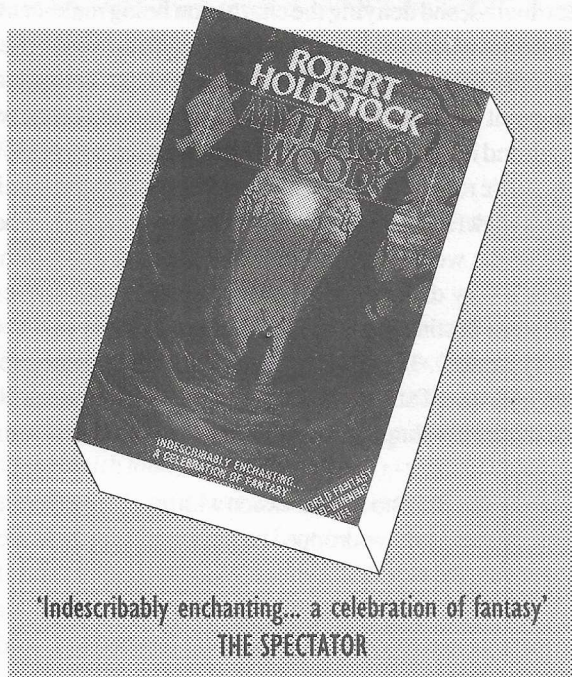
At this point one is obliged to ponder the significance of co-incidence. The central character of Necromancer is June Hunter, around this time Holdstock's pseudonymous work included the horror-series Night Hunter, as by "Robert Faulcon". The central character of Where Time Winds Blow is Leo Faulcon. All, I am sure, no more than coincidence.

What certainly is not coincidence is the way Holdstock returns to his earlier, more overtly science-fictional style in this new novel. It is not just the central play of time, but the quest for understanding of oneself through understanding of an alien, or in this case "Man changed" human society, and the back-to-Nature simplicities of that society. And above all there is the way that the comforts and carapaces of humanity are stripped away by the natural forces of the world. In this sense Eye Among the blind, Earthwind and Where Time Winds Blow form a neat little trilogy of novels which detail the anguished loss of humanity upon alien planets, gripped by an alien past which has generated alien forces. To this extent they are richly detailed but grim fables which are excellent at creating a sense of the fully alien. But they never surrender themselves wholly to this one impulse, because the importance of roots and rootlessness also summon up a symbology of our own social and cultural origins. When one member of Faulcon's team is lost to the time winds it is custom for him to sacrifice himself to them also or he will bring bad luck: thus ritual and superstition are still a vital part of this supposedly advanced technological society. Holdstock's work always such manifestations of primitiveness. But the further away from earth he roams the more tenuous the links become, the roots are stretched too far, and one feels that the impulses and beliefs upon which his work feeds are more powerful the closer he is to home.

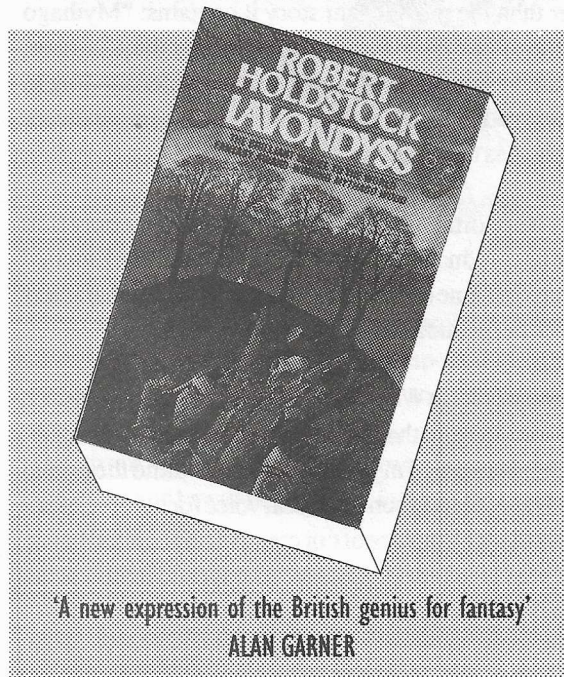
In "Earth and Stone", which takes its protagonist to Ireland in the third millennium BC and Holdstock directly into the milieu which most fruitfully feeds his imagination, the hero ends up literally fucking the earth. That is how close Holdstock needs to come to his well-spring to give his stories their genuine, primordial power. "Earth and Stone" itself comes from his first short story collection, In the Valley of Statues (1982), and though the stories range over the years 1974-1981, the same period during which he was writing the novels discussed above, they reflect perhaps more succinctly the way his imagination was taking him. The themes I have been exploring are, of course, there. Time, of course, is always there, either providing a gateway to the past wherein lies salvation and creativity, as in "Travellers" and "Earth and Stone", or as a gateway to the future, as in "The Graveyard Cross" where a space pilot returns to earth so changed that he must first be transformed into a cyborg before he can be allowed onto its surface, and even then finds an environment so antithetical that he is, as so many Holdstock characters are, stripped of his humanity by his alienation. It is easy to see the direction which Holdstock's imagination takes: as one character laments in the far-future setting of "A Small Event". "We've lost that very valuable sense of the primitive".



IT BEGAN WITH MYTHAGO WOOD



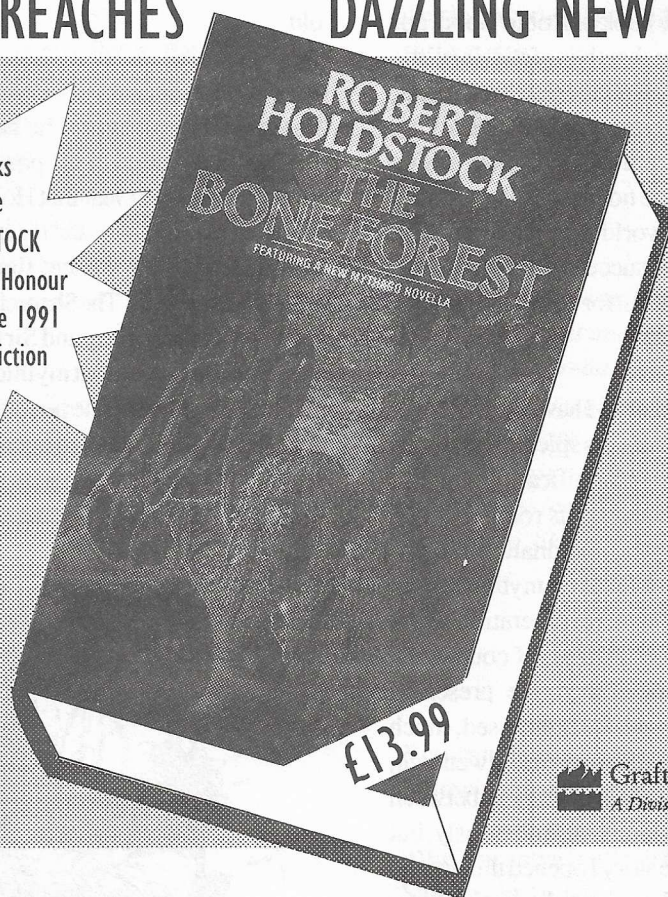
IT SOARED FURTHER WITH LAVONDYSS




NOW IT REACHES

DAZZLING NEW HEIGHTS...

Grafton Books  
congratulate  
**ROBERT HOLDSTOCK**  
on being Guest of Honour  
at Speculation, The 1991  
British Science Fiction  
Convention



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A major new novella and collection of stories from Britain's brightest new fantasy talent

Mythago Wood and Lavondyss available in Grafton Paperback

But if we are to seek direction in this collection then we have to look no further than the most recent story it contains: "Mythago Wood". Here the journey into the past, the quest for the primitive, the search for archetypes which give shape and understanding to who we are, all are made concrete in a story which lays the groundwork for everything he has done since.

Parenthetically it is worth remarking at this point that the only film novelisation he has produced under his own name was *The Emerald Forest* which has the same creative impetus, sending its characters back to discover the primordial within the forest.

And then there was *Mythago Wood* (1984). All of a sudden Holdstock had tapped the core, here, in the dank woodland where "mythagos" the strange personifications of mythic figures roam amid the primal squalor and violence, he had found the ideal voice for his obsessions with the dank and dark birthplace of our creative and cultural being. That this book was labelled "A fantasy" as opposed to his earlier science fiction is no more than a consequence of the vagaries of the publishing business. This book is straight in the line of development which lead from *Eye Among the Blind*, it is just as that the line did not lead forward to some glitzy high-tech future but backwards to some sort of un-imagination which prefigures our dreams and our history. This, to point the way, is not the book of Robin Hood, nor of his precursor *Hern the Hunter*, but of the shambling fetid ritualistic beast-man who predates even that myth. Mankind created our myths, when mankind was but a simple thing living within the terrifying belly of nature. Myths were our shield and our endeavour in that time, and the mythagos they created were not the heroic sanitised Arthur and Tristan but creatures as the world which gave birth to them. It is the genius of this book, and its successors, to delve into that wild primevalism of the mind and present it for what it is. *Mythago Wood* is no clean and cheerful heroic saga.

In all honesty this act of primitive creation would have been enough, a journey into the heart of the forest to reveal its splendours and its horrors would have sufficed to make this a significant book. But Holdstock has by now fucked the earth and let its roots entangle him. This genuine exploration of the mystic imagination, not just a simple story about it. So the story itself takes on mythic echoes and aspects. There are, if you look for them, reverberations from all the key British myths within this tale. Arthur, of course, but also *Hern* and *Lleu* and others, but none of them are presented straightforwardly, rather they are essences, half-glimpsed, much like the mythagos themselves. There is the woman *Guiwenneth*, for instance, who plays the role of the faithless woman between Steven and his brother *Christian*, she is *Guinevere* obviously, but also an analog of *Blodeuedd* with whose story I opened this article. And there is the shape of the story, and particularly the third part of the novel which follows Steven's journey into the heart of the wood: a quest, of course, that most representative of all fantasy forms, but one archetypal as *Cuchulainn's* cattle raid.

And we are, of course, talking about archetype, and creativity, a link made the more explicit by the sequel, *Lavondyss* (1988). Here

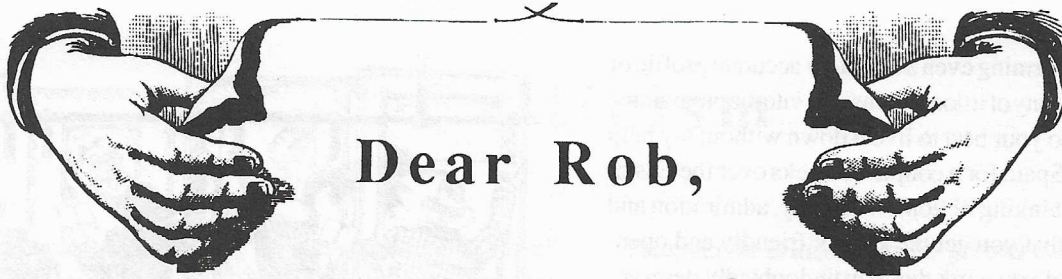
the central character is *Tallis* (another of Holdstock's strong female protagonists like *Kristina* in *Eye Among the Blind* and *Elspeth* in *Earthwind*, and denying the charges on being male-centred which might have been laid against *Mythago Wood*); but in her name we not only get echoes of the ancient tale-teller *Taliesin* but also of the point Holdstock is emphasising, about the creative nature of myth and its inspirational role in the creative process long after its ritualistic role is forgotten, becomes clear. It is also significant that in this work Holdstock has clarified his own vision both of the mythagos and of the world they inhabit; *Tallis's* own quest into the forest takes a very different route from Steven's, and arrives at a very different destination (the landscape of myth is vast and contains many worlds). The wintery land of *Lavondyss* is the sire of *Avalon* and *Lyoness*, *Tallis* takes on the role of *Guinevere* or *Blodeuedd*, the myths are shapes into which we must fit ourselves.

There is also Holdstock's obsession with time to be taken into account. It might seem to have dropped by the wayside in these recent books, but not so, the world of *Ryhope Wood* is timeless and all time. He takes us backwards through the development of mythic archetypes so that successive incarnations become less defined. And time itself gusts and eddies about the shape of the books. Steven post-dates *Tallis*, while in the latest incarnation of this vast mystic structure, the novella "The Bone Forest", Steven appears as an eight-year-old.

This novella appears in Holdstock's latest collection, *The Bone Forest* (1991), yet even if he had not returned again to the possibly endless exploration of the possibilities generated by the mythago wood, it would be clear that Holdstock has now identified the well-spring of his creativity and is supping deep from its waters. "Thorn" is built around the ancient figure carved into the stonework of a medieval church, in "The Shapechanger" there is a mystical communion between a modern boy and *Sir Gawin*, "The Boy Who Jumped the Rapids" opens with that mythic figure, a horn-helmeted man. And so it goes, the further he penetrates back into the primitive fancies and beliefs which shaped our modern understanding of the world, the more he gets in touch with the earth, the more powerful Robert Holdstock's writing becomes.

## Paul Kincaid





Dear Rob,

Listen, mate, I'm in a bit of a quandary. Speculation have asked me to write an appreciation of you. The trouble is, I've done this a couple of times in the past and I've used up most of my best lines. What more can I say? With a bit of effort I could probably rustle up a few intimate or disgusting anecdotes from recent years, but I have a feeling that this isn't exactly what you want in your esteemed capacity as guest of honour.

A few days ago, the latest copy of *Interzone* arrived, complete with wrap-around illustration from one of your books, your name writ large on the cover, 26,000 words of "The Bone Forest" plus an interview which I have to admit I found informative. I was going to write about this. I was going to say that "The overall effect is that of a special Rob Holdstock issue, a measure of Rob's emergence in the past several years as a significant writer of imaginative fiction." In fact, I will write that, since it's true.

Here's what else I was going to say:

"'The Bone Forest' represents the latest bulletin on Mythago Wood, the source of all stories. With the novel of that name (1984), Rob stepped into the front rank of contemporary fantasy writers, finding the perfect metaphor for his central concerns in fiction. With *Lavondyss* (1988), a more difficult and challenging novel, he consolidated his reputation, and now 'The Bone Forest' takes us once more into the margins of the wood, this time showing us the effects of its wonders on a not-so-ordinary family."

I have to admit that, re-reading the story, I remain impressed. I was going to tell everybody about "settling back happily as the images and incidents begin to flow seamlessly across the mind's eye." That's the sort of stuff they pay you for in programme books - or rather *don't* pay you for. "Throughout it all," I intended to write, "one has the sense of being in the hands of a talented writer in full command of his powers who will carry you along to your destination with a minimum of fuss and a maximum of pleasures both visceral and cerebral." Impressive, eh? Then I was going to say that it all seems so controlled and effortless but, knowing you as I do, I know it's nothing of the sort.

I hope you believe me when I say you deserve your growing reputation, but at the same time I know you're not always comfortable with it. In my opinion, all writers who are really worth their salt are also neurotic about their work, and you're certainly no exception. I'm envious of your bursts of creativity in which you can knock out thousands of words of really good stuff in a single day; at the same time I sympathise wholeheartedly with your bouts of creative constipation, your hot sweats and palpitations, and, above all, the late-night or early-morning panics about the work in hand which to me is one of the hallmarks of the truly obsessive writer.

You can see the problem I'm faced with. I'm not sure whether I should be telling them about the hot sweats and the palpitations and the like. It seems a bit... well, *personal*, even though it's something that everyone with any soul goes through from time to time. I was going to mention it because I reckon that in this country we tend to have a snooty and begrudging attitude towards any kind of success. Whereas the Americans seem in general to love achievers - they're rather too *uncritical*, in my view - we Brits are suspicious and disdainful. The argument seems to run like this: *He's* doing well for himself these days, so I expect he's getting full of himself, thinks he's God's gift, well he's no better than he ever was and I'm ready to show him I'm not impressed. Or, in the words of another of your friends: If you become some kind of icon, you're going to attract iconoclasts.

Now I know this sort of attitude makes you nervous, and I suspect it's also made you a little more guarded in recent years. Conventions in particular seem fraught with danger in this respect since it's always possible to give offence to people without actually saying or doing anything - often without actually being aware of the presence of the people you're supposed to have offended (no doubt *that's* the insult). I think you're generally happiest and most relaxed in informal situations where nothing special is required of you except yourself: so I'd guess that your status of GoH at Speculation will be a source of pride and anxiety in equal measure.

Another problem for writers with respect to their readership is that what is new and fascinating to readers is usually, for the writer, past history. Often, the more positively readers respond to a book, the more difficulties that creates for the writer. When you seem nervous of compliments or positively twitchy when faced with admiration, I know it's not because you don't appreciate either but immediately begin worrying whether the book or story you're currently struggling to write will be as good. So praise can be a burden, and readership enthusiasm can generate expectations which you cannot, or do not want to fulfil. Like all the best writers, you have a healthy insecurity about your work and status. This should stand you in good stead to resist the more dangerous blandishments of success.

I was going to say all this, until I realised that it made you sound fearfully earnest and sensitive. Which isn't a true picture of you at all. But then again, neither is the fannish legend of the hail-fellow-well-met-let's-get-ratted-and-do-something-gross-or-embarrassing.

Both these stereotypes are two of the many facets of your character, but, like all real people, on any given day you might show some, none or all of them. Generally I'd say that you are always courteous, candid when circumstances permit, and that you have a genuine lack of pomp and circumstance. You are also absolutely committed to writing the best kind of fiction that your talents permit.

Is any of this useful in forming even a remotely accurate profile of you? I'm not sure. But if any of it does find its way into the programme book, you'll have to do your best to live it down without my help because I'm going to Spain for a couple of weeks over the Easter holidays. But I'll be thinking of you - with envy, admiration and respect - and hoping that you get the kind of friendly and open-hearted appreciation of your work that you undoubtedly deserve.

With apologies in advance,

Yours, as ever,

*Chris Evans*

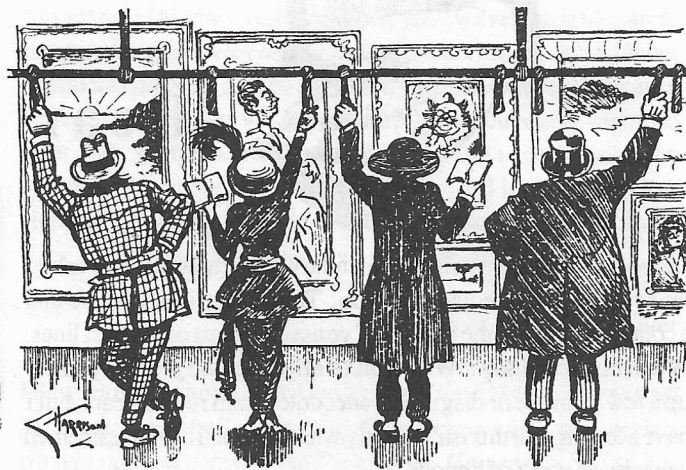


The problem with making science fiction films as good as books, is that, for the most part, SF is not a particularly visual genre. Yes there are moments; the spindizzies pulling cities into space, 'Doc' Smith's mighty intergalactic fleets hurtling into battle; but for the most part the underlying themes of the best written SF are not readily turned into pictures. What pictures we do get tend to be highly personal reactions to ideas rather than descriptions, very vivid and not easily displaced by the views of others.

Even in Space Opera, the most descriptively visual and least intellectually rigorous sub-genre of them all, we have the problem that those aspects that lend themselves best to cinematic treatment are the bits that least stand up to serious investigation. The problem is that movies have to show people what is happening in a way that will enable the audience to make sense of it all. SF deals with unfamiliar situations and these have to be translated into familiar terms. Hence we have scenes in *Star Wars* where an object the size of a small moon is attacked by ships manoeuvring like a World War II fighter aircraft. Taken at face value this does not make any sense at all. However, if we are to convey the feeling of excitement and tension required by the producers we must show something that the audience can understand without being swamped in explanations beforehand.

This should not be taken to imply that cinema audiences are inherently more stupid than readers. In many cases the factor that dictates the need for simplicity is the speed at which we are asking the audience to assimilate information and when we are dealing with a large audience we have no opportunity to go back and look at what actually did happen three scenes before.

The factor that does tend to make the large scale special effects extravaganzas unsatisfactory is the expense. It costs a lot of money to put Luke Skywalker on a land-speeder and the studios that put up the money, not unnaturally, are reluctant to do anything that will make it difficult to make that money back. This means ironing out the wrinkles to produce a smooth - slightly bland - product from which the eccentricities that make any art form interesting have been removed.



This leads to the following unhappy proposition:

better special effects => bigger budget => less artistic flair.

This combines with the fact that films making money tend to stay longer and getting bigger billing at cinemas and we see Gresholm's law rearing its ugly head as the bad movies push out the good.

It can be argued that the most striking examples of cinematic technique occur in horror films. Here we are dealing with a genre where surrealist imagery can really go to town and every possible means by which the sensitivity of the audience can be increased has been tried at one time or another. The scripts rarely stand up as examples of deathless prose; but then it may be a mistake to expect them to. People who study the libretto of operas such as *Rigoletto* or *La Boheme* are rarely struck by the deathless beauty of the words or the tightness of the plot. Both operas are adapted from novels but the idea of suggesting the opera is better than the book or vice versa seems faintly ludicrous.

How can we compare Alfred Bester's telepathic conversational patterns with Stanley Kubrick's long, point of view shots of the Overlook hotel or Russell Mulcahey's rapid fire changes of camera angle? Is Philip K. Dick's *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* more evocative than Ridley Scott's *Blade Runner*? The answer would seem to come down to how well does it sustain your interest and once we are at the subjective level the possibilities for rational argument become limited. In the end all we can do is borrow a quotation from *Robocop* - one of my favourite examples of the struggle to overcome disadvantage and rise above programming - and shout out loud "I like it". Isn't that what we all do anyway?



*J.F. Richards*

# Pan is proud to welcome its authors to Eastercon '91

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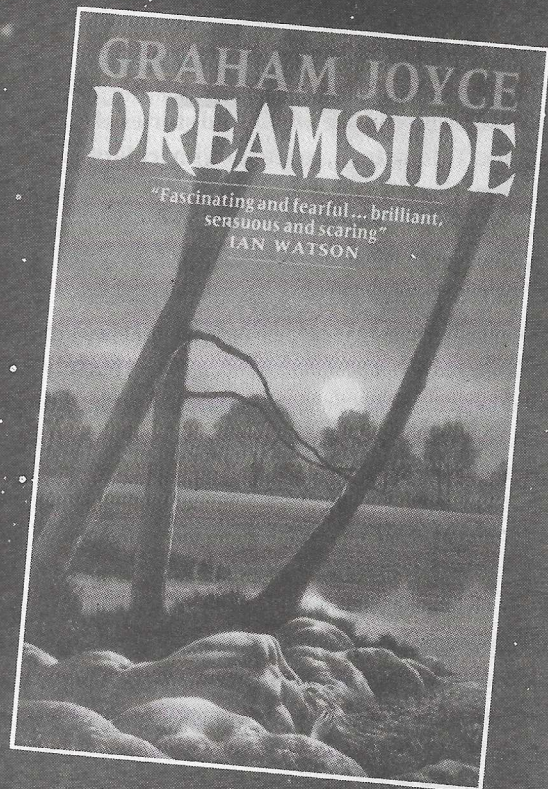
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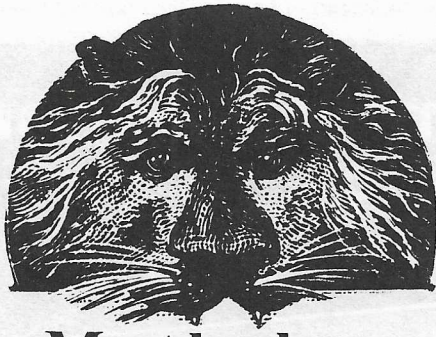
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## Mythology

All you have to do is read the novels and stories of our Guest of Honour, Robert Holdstock, to see the vital role of myth in our creative imaginations. But how much does modern science fiction and fantasy draw upon the mythic? Should we be more aware, or less? And what is the mythic anyway?

Depend upon it, there is mythology now as there was in the time of Homer, only we do not perceive it, because we ourselves live in the very shadow of it, and because we all shrink from the full meridian light of truth... Mythology, in the highest sense, is the power exercised by language on thought in every possible sphere of mental activity.

Max Muller  
*Introduction to the Science of Religion*

*I still remember the two general theories we were taught on the reservation which purported to explain the movement of history. The first we named the Great Man Theory. Its thesis was that critical decisions in human development were made by individuals, special people gifted in personality and circumstance. The second we named the Wave Theory. It argued that only the masses could effectively determine the course of history. Those very visible individuals who appeared as leaders of the great movements were, in fact, only those who happened to articulate the direction which had already been chosen. They were as much victims of the process as any other single individual. Flotsam Running Dog and I used to be able to debate this issue for hours.*

*It is true that this particular question has ceased to interest me much. But a correlative question has come to interest me more. I spent most of my fortieth birthday sitting by myself, listening to Pachelbel's Canon, over and over, and I'm asking myself: are some people special? Are some people more special than others? Have I spent my whole life backing the wrong horse?*

Karen Joy Fowler  
"The Faithful Companion at Forty"

Science fiction, like the old folktales, is escapist literature, relieved drabness, boredom, or a sense of powerlessness with visions of human triumph. To this common element of folktale, the new SF writers (some of them) add the dimension of myth, precisely the dimension that is needed, in our view, for SF to make a significant contribution to the refurbishing of art, the quest of meaning.

Lois & Stephen Rose  
*The Shattered Ring*

The romantic mode is centered around the process of wish fulfillment or utopian fantasy that aims at a *displacement* and *transfiguration* of the given historical world in such a way as to revive the conditions of the lost paradise or to anticipate a future kingdom in which suffering and limitations have been effaced.

Tom Moylan  
*Demand the Impossible*

*"This was my dream" he said. "That I was the grain and earth and creeping things upon it. And mist and sky, the stones the Giants placed between the hills. I was the land, Miri, and the land was me. In the dream I found a woman, who was also the land; and we made children who would... know the land, and live out golden times."*

Keith Roberts  
*The Chalk Giants*

It was simple really, *jekvasteskero*, Gypsy-simple. It is the gadjo, the non-Gypsies of the world, who give complicated answers to simple things. "They came and took our country away from us," the Gypsies had always said, and that is what happened.

R A Lafferty  
*"Land of the Great Horses"*

*Not all ideas evoke wonder, nor all crazy ideas - but both can and will when set within a well-told story.*

David Hartwell  
*Age of Wonders*

The Tor groaned and opened. Horns resounded. Out above the earth rode huge shadows, and troll-hounds clamored. "There goest the true Wild Hunter, Gwyn ap Nudd, leading the heathen dead from Annwn forth," said Will's throat. "Theirs be the land's unrest and deepest peace."

That which came after brought Rupert's question wavering: "But what is the magnificence behind, a troop of riders bannered by the Cross, whose mail and lances burn as cold as moonlight?"

"King Arthur and his knights from Avalon."

Poul Anderson  
*A Midsummer Tempest*

*For the Iliad the world, though terrible, remains a place in which heroism is possible. The situations round which the poem is built are scenes which embody attitudes to the fundamental questions of acceptance of death, patriotism, heroic anger, heroic shame. The characters, too, are defined by their relation to these questions.*

Jasper Griffin  
*Homer on Life and Death*

*Modern fantasy employs structures, motifs and marvellous elements derived from its predecessors in myth, legend, fable, folktale and romance. Yet it cannot employ such elements in the same way as these predecessors did.*

Ann Swinfen  
In Defence of Fantasy

You already know the end - the immense drama of the Lord Jestocost, seventh of his line, and how the cat-girl C'mell initiated the vast conspiracy. But you do not know the beginning, how the first Lord Jestocost got his name, because of the terror and inspiration which his mother, Lady Goroke, obtained from the famous real-life drama of the dog-girl D'Joan. It is even less likely that you know the other story - the one behind D'Joan. This story is sometimes mentioned as the matter of the "nameless witch", which is absurd, because she really had a name. The name was "Elaine", an ancient and forbidden one.

Cordwainer Smith  
"The Dead Lady of Clown Town"

*As a literature of "unreality", fantasy has altered in character over the years in accordance with changing notions of what exactly constitutes "reality". Modern fantasy is rooted in ancient myth, mysticism, folklore, fairy tale and romance... From about 1800 onwards, those fantasies produced within a capitalist economy express some of the debilitating psychological effects of inhabiting a materialistic culture. They are peculiarly violent and horrific.*

Rosemary Jackson  
Fantasy: The Literature of Subversion

Cosmic terror appears as an ingredient of the earliest folklore of all races, and is crystallised in the most archaic ballads, chronicles and sacred writing. It was, indeed, a prominent feature of the elaborate ceremonial magic, with its rituals for the evocation of daemons and spectres, which flourished from prehistoric times.

HP Lovecraft  
Supernatural Horror in Literature

*Grendel, Grendel! You make the world by whispers, second by second. Are you blind to that? Whether you make it a grave or a garden of roses is not the point. Feel the wall: is it not hard? He smashes me against it, breaks open my forehead. Hard, yes! Observe the hardness, write it down in careful runes. Now sing of walls! Sing! I howl  
Sing!  
"I'm singing!"  
Sing words! Sing raving hymns.*

John Gardner  
Grendel

Those who, despising all modern imitations, set out in search of the Real Original Story; the real Arthur, the real Gilgamesh, the Ultimate Myth that lies at the heart of things. But this search for the ultimate is a cul-de-sac itself, in so far as it leads the writer back into the depths of historical time not into any other notional simplification of the landscape. The cult of Osiris is not ancient. It seems to have sprung up, fully formed, about two thousand years ago. And why not? That's probably when the brilliant story teller who invented the whole thing lived and worked. Like all the operative myths that we so admire, this is the purity of a sophisticated distillation process; if you try to dig down further, to uncover the real story, all you get is a handful of mud .... The more I learn of myth the more certain I'm that there was never any story looking for someone to tell it, it was always the other way around.

Gwyneth Jones  
"The Mind of the Maker"

*You see, the King wanted there to be somebody left, who would remember their famous idea. He wanted badly that Tom should go back to Newbold Revell, where he can grow into a man and live his life in Warwickshire peace - and he wanted to tell everybody who would listen about this ancient idea, which both of them had once thought good... Don't get the legendary people muddled up. It is I who tell you about my idea.*

TH White  
The Once and Future King

Writing about the desire for Heaven as part and parcel of the desire for God, Lewis once said "The proper rewards are not simply tacked on to the activity for which they are given, but are the activity itself in consummation." The old Narnia, as we have observed, flowed into the "real Narnia". In the penultimate chapter of "The Last Battle", Jewel the unicorn, arriving on the other side of the Stable door, expressed the feelings of all the others. He stamped his hoof, neighed, and cried, "I have come at last! This is my real country! I belong here. This is the land I have been looking for all my life, though I never knew it till now."

Walter Hooper  
Past Watchful Dragons

**The module on mythology contains the following elements:**  
"Myth Treatment" - Saturday - 12:00 - Forum  
"Robert Holdstock Guest of Honour" - Saturday 14:00 Exhibition  
"Robert Holdstock" - Sunday - 14:00 - Syndicate

# Environment

Is science fiction, as J.G. Ballard has claimed, the best way of writing about today? If so, shouldn't it be addressing today's major problems - like the hole in the ozone layer, the greenhouse effect, acid rain, and all the other ways we seem to be trying to foul our own nest? Well, for 30 years or more science fiction has been doing just that. But how effectively? How much more should it, or could it, do? How much is the environment the proper concern of science fiction, and how much should we expect of science fiction as ecological fiction?

*Even this far from the shore, the night stank. The sea moved lazily, its embryo waves aborted before cresting by the layer of oily residues surrounding the hull, impermeable as sheet plastic; a mixture of detergents, sewage, industrial chemicals and the microscopic cellulose fibres due to toilet paper and newsprint. There was no sound of fish breaking the surface. There were no fish.*

John Brunner  
The Sheep Look Up

Although the worst forecasts of 1970's SF failed to materialise, it would be risky indeed to accuse Brunner, Wylie, and all the others of crying wolf - even in the old story, the wolf did come eventually. There is still an underlying assumption in some science fiction, from Richard A. Lupoff's Fool's Hill (1976) to Ridley Scott's Blade Runner (1982), that (even barring atomic war and nuclear winter) the environment doesn't have much of a future.

John J. Pierce  
"Environment"  
The New Encyclopedia of Science Fiction  
edited by James Gunn

*Like all predecessors in Ballards' sfiction, Traven's role is to accept the disaster and acclimatise to the new environment.*

Colin Greenland  
The Entropy Exhibition

Timelessly the sand swept toward him, its shifting contours, approximating more closely than any other landscape he had found the complete psychic zero, enveloping his past failures and uncertainties masking them in its enigmatic canopy.

J.G. Ballard  
"The Cage of Sand"  
The Ruins of Earth  
edited by Thomas M. Disch

*Not every wall and spire of the Old City lay below the bay. The melting of the Antarctic ice cap had been checked as the polluted atmosphere re-balanced its elements and the blanket of global heat dissipated; the fullest rise of the ocean level had been forestalled though not soon enough to avert disaster to the coastal cities of the planet.*

George Turner  
The Sea and Summer



*The area was wild. No human settlements existed for miles; the entire region had been seared flat, cauterised by repeated H-bomb blasts. Somewhere in the murky darkness, a sluggish trickle of water made its way among slag and weeds, dripping thickly into what had once been an elaborate labyrinth of sewer mains. The pipes lay cracked and broken jutting up into the night darkness, overgrown with creeping vegetation. The wind raised clouds of black ash that swirled and danced among the weeds. Once an enormous mutant wren stirred sleepily, pulled its crude protective night coat of rags around it and dozed off.*

Philip K. Dick  
"Autofac"  
The Ruins of Earth  
edited by Thomas M. Disch

These two writers... have played a significant part in the very urgent business of saving the world, not just because they have illuminated in their stories here and there, central aspects of the crisis now upon us, but because for two decades, whilst most of us listened enraptured, to the siren-songs of technology, they have never ceased to warn of the reefs awaiting us on the other side of the song.

Thomas M. Disch  
introduction to *The Ruins of Earth*

*Gren may have matured, and his awareness broadened, but his free choice of the jungle at the end, much as it may be an act of integration with his larger self, is also a refusal of evolution and further change: from this view, however "choosing", he still ends at animal level, in stasis.*

C.N. Manlove  
"Brian Aldiss, Hothouse"  
Science Fiction: Ten Explorations



Along with this recent intensification of ecological awareness there has arisen a much greater subtlety and sophistication in certain patterns within the disaster novel. Although lurid and spectacular accounts of the end of the world still abound, there is also a new subspecies dealing with a rather more delicate aesthetics of destruction, founded upon the physiological and psychological relationships between man and environment.

Brian Stableford  
"Ecology"

*The Encyclopedia of Science Fiction*  
edited by Peter Nicholls

*Everything was still: the branches of the trees against the moon were bare but for white clumps of sand that occasionally shook loose; and standing knee-deep he saw nothing move. He watched the sand trees for some minutes until one shuddered from something unknown, a breeze he didn't feel or the weight of the sand on a high branch. It was only then, from far away, he heard it; as he listened he realised it was bells in the night. Churches and homes are ringing their bells now that the storm is over, he said to himself; but in fact, in the black lightless city it sounded at first like the voices of children. The landscape shuddered again, the stripped white forms of the sand trees drooping over the curbs in the moonlight.*

Steve Erickson  
Days Between Stations

It is, in fact, quite possible to read *Dune* as crucially concerned with advancing an ecological message concerning the need to adopt a holistic viewpoint on the environment, by regarding it on a planetary scale and from an ecological perspective.

R.J. Ellis  
"Frank Herbert's *Dune* and the  
Discourse of Apocalyptic Ecologism  
in the United States"  
*Science Fiction Roots and Branches*  
edited by Rhys Garrett & R.J. Ellis

*Then, as Kav Daven danced, the hot wind stilled and died. A heated deadly calm settled against the cliff face. The crowd held a collective breath. Just as the tension became unbearable, a touch of chill brushed past, a cooling current of dampness from the direction of the plain. The white fog coalesced into a low-slung cloud cover that gathered about the cliff tops, and finally it began to rain, no violent torrent, no slashing downpour, but a soft warm spring like rain that tasted sweet on the tongue. It settled the ochre dust and brought a shine to the wagon canopies and the yellow leaves in the fields. The wall of light glistened like a million rainbows through the gentle shower, and then the hot wind sprang up again in one sudden shuddering gust. The light wall broke up into a rain of sparkles. The sun brightened. The white fog thinned and vanished. The towering front was gone. The sky above the wide Dop Arek was empty, restored to its singing turquoise clarity.*

Marjorie Bradley Kellogg  
with William B. Rossow  
The Wave and the Flame

Unable to expand outwards, Manhattan has writhed upward, feeding on its own flesh as it tears down the old buildings to replace them with the new, rising higher and still higher - yet never high enough, for there seems to be no limit to the people crowded here.

Harry Harrison  
*Make Room! Make Room!*



**The Environment Module takes place as follows:**

**"Jack Cohen"**  
Saturday 4pm in Exhibition

**"Environment"**  
Saturday at 7pm in Syndicate

**"The Future Will be Green"**  
Sunday 3pm in Exhibition

## Speculation Programme SUNDAY

TIME	FORUM	EXHIBITION	SYNDICATE
11:00	BSFA Annual General Meeting	New Dinosaurs & Other Creatures	MODULE: Comics Comics Artist: Colin McNeil
12:00	Connoisseur's SF: Trivia QUIZ	Damn Fine Programme Item or The Owls Are Not What They Seem	MODULE: continued
13:00	Fantasy Written in an SF Mode	1993 Bidding Session	MODULE: continued
14:00	Author Reading	Bidding Session continued	MODULE: Mythology Rob Holdstock
15:00	MODULE: Reviewing SF Critics Kill Creativity	MODULE: Environment The Future Will Be Green: A 'Buberian' Discussion	MODULE: continued
16:00	MODULE: State of the Art? Historical Perspective	MODULE: continued	MODULE: continued
17:00	Future Conventions	Art Auction	MODULE: Biospherics Irving Rappaport Question & Answer Session
18:00		Headlong Into Science	MODULE: Biospherics Nick Latter
19:00	Delphic Poll Results analysed	Module: First Contact The Face on Mars: A Dangerous Vision?	MODULE: continued
20:00	Author Reading	MODULE continued	MODULE: continued
21:00		Awards ceremony/party BSFA Awards:	
22:00	If I Ran the Zoo Con..	Awards Ceremony/Party	
23:00	Zoo Con.. continued	MODULE: First Contact Film: Alien	Canadian Worldcon Bid Party
24:00	Midnight Horror Readings		

## Speculation Programme MONDAY

TIME	FORUM	EXHIBITION	SYNDICATE
11:00		Psychical Research: Fact, Fantasy or Fiction?	MODULE: Fandom What Are These Things Called Fandom? Colin Fine
12:00		MODULE: Reviewing SF We Told You So!	MODULE: First Contact: Investigating Cydonia: Engineer a mission to Mars
13:00	Book Auction II	MODULE: continued	MODULE: continued
14:00	Book Auction II continued	Pacific Bomb	MODULE: continued
15:00	The Sign-Poster's Guide to Charades	MODULE: State of the Art Looking Forward	
16:00		MODULE: continued	
17:00		No More Speculation It Went Thataway! Committee: Farewell and Gripe Session	

### The Video Programme

The Video Programme is displayed on boards outside the Video Room (California Suite), at the Registration Desk and in the main foyer of the hotel.

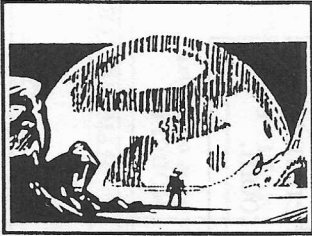
After the programme ends on Monday there may be some repeats and requests in the video room.

## Speculation Programme FRIDAY

TIME	FORUM	EXHIBITION	SYNDICATE
11:00	Details of most items are contained in the Programme Notes. Author readings and any changes to this programme will be displayed at the Registration Desk and in the main foyer. Please note that Exhibition programme items alternate between halls.		
12:00		MODULE: Fandom The Changing Face of Europe	
13:00		Film Quiz	MODULE: Fandom Roleplaying* An Art With a State
14:00		No Longer Speculation - Here It Is! Rob Holdstock & Committee	Roleplaying: continued
15:00	MODULE: Fandom Fan Reading:	MODULE: Comics Bring Out Your Dredd	MODULE: SF Reviewers Workshop Colin Greenland
16:00	MODULE: First Contact Hands Across the Cosmos	MODULE: continued	MODULE: continued
17:00	MODULE: State of the Art What Is SF?	When the Kissing Has To Stop How has AIDS affected the world?	MODULE: continued
18:00	Author Reading	Book Auction 1	MODULE: Comics Comics Writing
19:00	Rob Holdstock In Conversation Rob Holdstock	Book Auction continued	MODULE: continued
20:00	MODULE: Fandom Voices from Fandom	MODULE: State of the Art Where Is SF Now?	MODULE: continued
21:00	So You Want to Be a Writer? Mike Abbott	MODULE: continued	
22:00	Author Reading	MODULE: Fandom A Very Cross Section of Fandom	
23:00	Filking	MODULE: First Contact Film: Forbidden Planet	<b>Hawaii Bid Party</b>
24:00			

## Speculation Programme SATURDAY

TIME	FORUM	EXHIBITION	SYNDICATE
11:00		Blood Music & Beyond: The Use and Abuse of Bio-technology	MODULE: State of the Art
12:00	MODULE: Mythology Myth Treatment	Negative Future Fiction	MODULE: continued
13:00	MODULE: Biospherics We Can Solve it All With Technology	Jim Burns Slide Show	MODULE: continued
14:00		MODULE: Mythology Rob Holdstock GoH	
15:00		MODULE: Rob Holdstock GoH continued	
16:00	HangFan	MODULE: Environment Jack Cohen	MODULE: Reviewing SF Reviewers Workshop Colin Greenland
17:00	Illumination PR	Thirty Pieces of Silver	MODULE: continued
18:00	MODULE: Fandom The Death of the Fanzine Is Greatly Exaggerated	MODULE: Biospherics Artificial Environments	MODULE: continued
19:00	Author Reading	MODULE: continued	MODULE: Environment Jem Taylor
20:00	Inconceivable Business Meeting	MODULE: Fandom The Masquerade	MODULE: continued
21:00	Who Wants to Run a Worldcon?	Disco (when masquerade is over)	MODULE: continued
22:00	Conventivity: A Theory of Fandom	Disco continued	
23:00	Midnight Laugh-in Author Readings	Disco continued	<b>Helicon Bid Party</b>
24:00	Filking	MODULE: First Contact (when Disco is over) Film: 2001	Practical Time Travel Workshop at 2am. Put clock forward 1 hr.



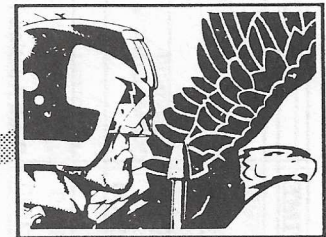
science fiction

fantasy



horror

comics



# CRITICAL WAVE

THE EUROPEAN SCIENCE FICTION AND FANTASY REVIEW

news - reviews - interviews

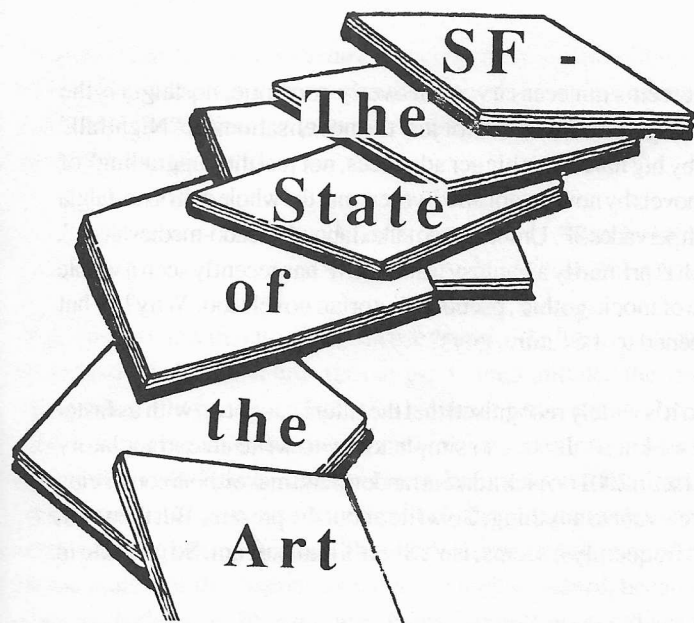
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Hackneyed old questions: we've asked them countless times, every one of us. What is Science Fiction? Where does it come from? Where is it going? But though we ask, how often do we receive an answer? Is it the literature of the technophile or the technophobe? Is it the true shape of the future of simply another way of writing about today? Will it fade into the mainstream, or will the mainstream drift into science fiction? It is a literature of the fantastic, of the imagination, at its best it can stretch us into new ways of looking at the world, at its worst it rehashes an old conservatism which has found new ways of wrapping up things which are far from new. This is the needless argument within our genre, we all know what we are talking about but none of us know how to define it. Perhaps when we do finally lock SF into a straitjacket of a formal definition, drawing its boundary lines with dreadful finality, that is when the genre will die. But in the meantime, it's fun trying.

Only in an epoch when a power source more reliable than ocean currents or the wind, faster than the horse, has been developed, can we expect to find a literature that will concern itself with problems of power, either literal or metaphorical. Such problems lie at the heart of SF, the fiction of a technological age.

Nowadays, everyone knows of SF and thinks he or she knows what it is. Not everyone reads, not everyone approves. But every age gets the art it deserves.

Good SF does not necessarily traffic in reality; but it makes reality clearer to us.

Brian Aldiss with David Wingrove  
*Trillion Year Spree*

*They don't realise that the field of the fantastic does not necessarily include the Ewoks or the Enterprise. It does include Fredric Brown, Stanley G Weinbaum, and H P Lovecraft - a long and rich history of fabulous literature being handed down through generations while other books - non-science fiction - flare in the limelight and then die.*

Sharon Jarvis  
Inside Outer Space

Interzone is a magazine of radical science fiction and fantasy - interpret that adjective as widely as you want. Of course it doesn't mean Interzone stories have to be deadly serious: we aim to entertain an intelligent readership. We want to publish fiction which has something original to say, stories which will move you, delight you, horrify you, in expansive ways.

Dave Pringle and Colin Greenland

"Editorial"

*Interzone 7*

*Now we are very nearly at the end of the twentieth century, and modern SF is showing its age. From its beginnings in the American pulp magazines of the 1920s and 1930s, it has spread out into books, comics, films, television, music, video games and advertising. Its basic iconography - spaceships, alien-monsters, robots and super weapons, Triffids and Daleks and E. T. - sometimes seems as quaint and hackneyed as the brooding castles, haunted suits of armour and white-clad maidens of the traditional Gothic novel. Yet those brooding castles and the like are still with us after more than 200 years, and there is no reason to believe that the imagery and obsessions of science fiction writers will not last just as long.*

David Pringle

The Ultimate Guide to Science Fiction

But for the moment I want to move on and take a look at regular or non-cyberpunk science fiction.

Any sign of the Cutting Edge there? Sure hope not, because if it is, I don't want to touch it. After a glance around the field, I've got to tell you I am terminally depressed by the self-aggrandizing pomposity, reactionary politics, retrograde Seventies feminism, petty bickering, back-biting brown-nosing, and just plain old fashioned grunt-it-out ignorance that prevails. I am at present looking at a pile of genre publications - fiction magazines, novels, fanzines, trade journals, review zines - and in most of them I have been unable to find word one of wisdom.

Lucius Shepherd

"Waiting for the Barbarians"

*Journal Wired, Winter 1989*

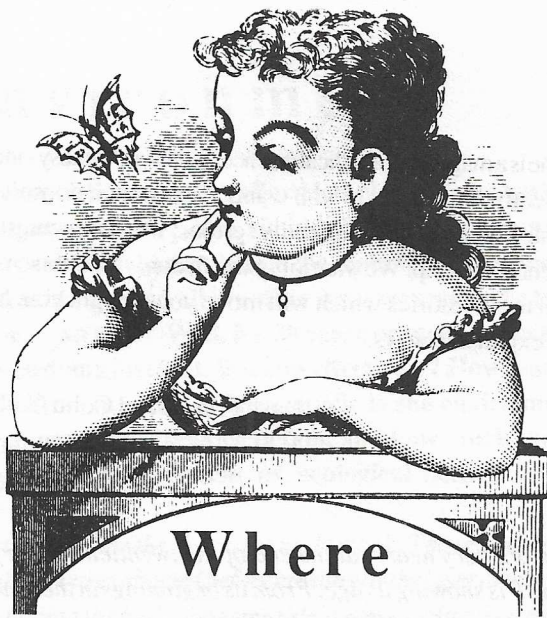
**We could argue this forever, and probably will, but if you want to get your teeth into the debate try these programme items:**

"What is SF" - Friday - 17:00 - Forum

"State of the Art" - Friday - 20:00 - Exhibition

"What is SF" - Saturday - 11:00 - Syndicate

"Looking Forward" - Monday - 15:00 - Exhibition



## Where Are You Tonight My Prince?

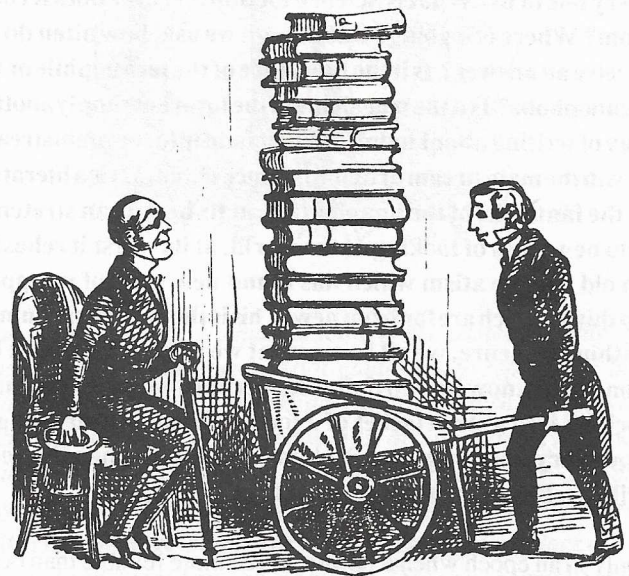
Opinions on the condition of SF are many and varied. It is all washed up, dead or dying, according to some. Others point to record advances and to big sales and the sheer volume of titles published and say "That can't be dead!" Still more seek to redefine SF in order to fit their view - living or dying. Which is most accurate, and which most relevant?

Genre Science Fiction is a purely twentieth century literary phenomenon. Whether its roots are considered to be Shelley or Poe or Gilgamesh or whoever, it became the genre we know with the early pulp magazines. So it can be said to be around 70 years old. Three Score Years and Ten is the biblical span of man, from which a rough and necessarily vague life structure can be fitted to Science Fiction. If we attribute its birth to, for the current argument, the announcement of "Scientifiction" by Hugo Gernsback in 1924, then it can readily be seen that the genre reached puberty in 1938 when John W Campbell took on the editorship of *Amazing*. Adulthood came slowly, but after the war writers such as Heinlein, Bester, Clarke, Moore and Asimov produced some of the earliest mature works, only to be rejected a decade or so later by the Angry Young Men and Women of the New Wave(s) who can be considered their literary offspring. A generation later, of course, the same thing happened to them, as will always be the case.

Following this argument further suggests that SF might be seen to be nearing death or senility. This is not necessarily so, but much contemporary SF is exhibiting symptoms often associated with the elderly - nostalgia, for instance. Talk of Golden Ages is as pointless as talk of New Waves - every new and original writer is a new wave, every writer past their peak had a golden age - and whilst there are large numbers of "classic" SF stories which deserve to remain in print, there are at least as many which should be quietly put to rest having had their day and, perhaps, served well. This much seems to me to be a simple statement of the obvious, as is its caveat: everybody has different favourite classics they wish to keep in print, and they can't all be kept.

What seems unnecessary, even overly-romantic, nostalgia is the rewriting of old stories. Not just the novelisations of "Nightfall" etc., by big names for bigger advances, not just the "upgrading" of first novels by now-established writers, but the whole cult of nostalgia which pervades SF. Umberto Eco talked about "pseudo-medievalism", which is primarily a Fantasy trait; but SF has recently seen a whole spate of mock-gothic, pseudo-Victorian novels too. Why? What happened to the future, guys?

Ok so it's widely recognised that the future caught up with us faster than we knew. It isn't so simple today to write an extrapolatory novel set in 2001 (to pick a date at random) and make it both convincing and relevant to anything. So write about the present. But then that, quite frequently it seems, isn't SF: it's mainstream. So go write in



the mainstream, where it isn't all humping in Hampstead any more than SF is all Star Trek. In fact several of the best SF/Fantasy novels of the last couple of years came out as general fiction titles (Jeannette Winterson's *Sexing The Cherry*, Steve Erickson's *Leap Year*, to name just two). Now we have a problem or two - crossover fiction doesn't sell. Why not? Because publishers can't sell it, the reps don't recognise it and it won't fit in a neat little box. Readers have this problem too, but they can be more flexible than publishers.

So we come back to the genre, where it can be safe and warm if you want. It is an understandable instinct, and in the economic chaos of the 90s, why not indeed?

This is a simple analysis, and that was bad news. Commercial SF is not dead. Commercial SF is largely asleep, dreaming of Summer long ago, of Blockbusters and golden spires. We don't need this. We don't need another quest trilogy to defeat the dark lord, another hero who metamorphoses into a reincarnated Arthur, another computer hacker kid breaking into an AI and finding trouble, another Nazis won the war novel. We get them because people read them, and want more of the same. Fair enough, publishers are a business, despite outward appearances.

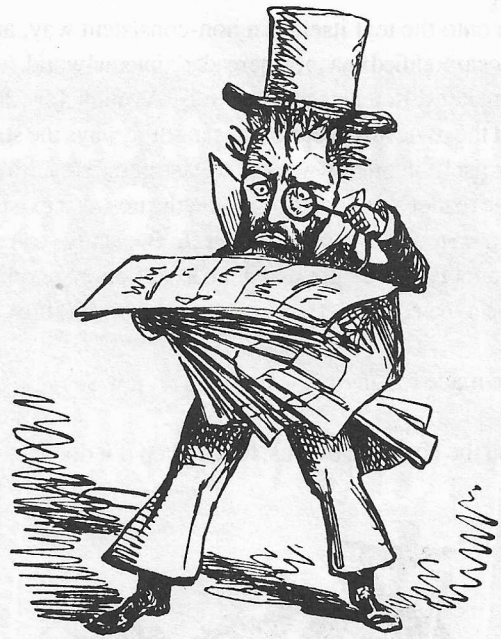
It would be fairer still, if more of the profits were used on real imagination. This is the good news: there is a lot of it around, and sooner or later the publishers are going to pick up on it - or SF really will die. There are enough successful small press magazines out there for genuine optimism, and even though the established magazines might sneer at the more public failures, they are facing increasing competition from the likes of *BBR*, *New Pathways* and others. These magazines, and a handful of high-quality original anthologies, are publishing writers who have both the literary ability and the imaginative scope to take SF into new hearts and new minds. Of course, even here the lethargy of commercialism is a threat. David Garnett, for instance, will need to ensure that re-opening *New Worlds* is not a retrograde step, (dare I say fall from his *Zenith*?) It should work. *Zenith* was a great anthology, and the *New Worlds* name might boost sales, but the trap is there. Fortunately Garnett is one of the best editors we have.

Short fiction is, and always has been, the hothouse for young talent, but it is novels which sell. And it is in novels that most of the faults of modern SF lie - I've mentioned the expansion of work which lay more happily as classic short story; the tendency to serial novels with no real structural need for multiple volumes; the pseudohistorical clichés. A few writers break out of this mould, of course, and perhaps one of them will be the one to make a real impact and shake the whole genre up in 1991, or 1992, or .....

You see, SF is alive, and will continue to live for some time to come, without need of a life-support machine. It has its lapses, but it isn't senile yet. No, SF is just sleeping; and someday, someday soon, I hope, someday our prince (or princess) will come.



*Kev McVeigh*



## Reviewing

The reviewer's task is often a pretty thankless one. Good reviews aren't praised, bad ones are reviled. You could quite easily say, either I'm going to read this book or I'm not, and why should what X or Y has to say about it make any difference?

Starting with text. You take yourself off to confront 400 pages or so of something you either like the look of, hate to bits, or have never heard of. And to distill your ideas about that in 400 words (or 200 or a thousand); that's the trick. My usual attitude is "I can't do this!" which then leads into phase II, delay, phase III, the first tentative notes, and then, paying lots of attention, phase IV, actually writing something which I hope will do the text the justice that could be done it.

The business - or art - of the book reviewing tends to fall into two categories, which may merge with one another (nothing is ever as simple as all that). They could be defined by the target readership: first you have reviews for those people who have not yet read the book reviewed, who are thereby given some idea of what kind of a tale it is and whether they are going to like it. And would you have heard about the book if you hadn't seen the review? Imagine the service we provide!

The second, more intensive form, is not aimed at attracting readers; it may even help if the reader of the review has also read the book. This is the analytical form, designed to tease out meaning, point out anomalies, suggest readings of the text; the kind of review that gets letters written about it. Far more subjective, more subversive, and quite capable of being an art in itself.

This is where the reviewer's art comes in. The moment you get past the 'This is what happens' bit you open yourself to subjectivity. How can reviewing be an entirely objective art? There is a difference between saying 'I don't like this book' and saying 'This book is a load of \*\*\*\*.' I may not like it, but who am I to say that the fault is with the book, if fault it is at all? The author may have pressed one of my buttons, accessed some of my obsessions, and I love or hate the book for precisely those reasons. Given that my reading of the

book maps onto the text itself in a non-consistent way, and that fiction creates a modified image of the reader's internal world, someone else might make a different reading entirely. As might I at a different time. What the review is describing is in some ways the structure of the book itself, in other ways the metastructure resulting from mapping the reader's expectations upon the text as it exists. The art is to step up to the line but not over it. Basically, you can get away with a lot if you are good at it ..... as in fiction, or other arts, the rules are to be (i) learnt (ii) obeyed, and then (iii) broken.

Points to be made for anyone wanting to review SF:

Firstly, read the book. (Obvious, huh? Even if it does seem to be



unreadable...) Read it not once but preferably twice, and make notes. Don't forget, this is the bit you are supposed to be enjoying! Second, get your facts right. Historical details are not to be trifled with. It is not your editor's job to stop you being a twit. And of course if you get your facts right it stops your opinions being read as accusations.

Third, if your readers are going to disagree with you then they should have to disagree with you cogently. If they just say "But NO!" then you aren't doing it right. Any statement should be backed with convincing reasons for its existence. Being plain incorrect, or making assertions with nothing to back them up, has to be The Wrong Way. It is, as T S Eliot put it, having the experience and missing meaning.

While working for Vector, as a reviewer and later as Reviews Editor, I've nudged both kinds of review, but not being intellectual I have a lamentable tendency to the descriptive. Inference comes later, and I feel it is the result of two intellectual requirements: of the book and of the reader. It is no use trying to inform the text of a hack fantasy potboiler with highly-charged underlying structure; good soil grows good crops and if we are to be interested by a text it has to stimulate that interest. This all brings up the question of literary merit: of quality, and Does It Exist? Anyone who's read Robert M Pirsig's *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance* will recognise both the question and the answer (which isn't "42"; fundamentally it's "yes, but don't expect anyone to tell you.") Basically, is there such a thing as a good novel, story, whatever? And if so, what constitutes it?



So why do it at all? Then, why do anything? Commenting on somebody else's writing, though it may seem like vampirism of the worst kind, is as valid as you make it. The idea that everything must be totally original can be overplayed. Japanese poets will ask of one another, "Who do you imitate?"; there is a cannon of existing styles and to be influenced by one or another of the great poets is no shame. That reviewers could affect a writer's success is no call for them to stop reviewing, merely to be responsible. Besides, it's a big 'could'. Any review is really a tag after the event of the book itself, something existing in the world of those who read reviews and the handful who actually object to what the reviews say about them. Books sell or otherwise without the bits in inverted commas on the back cover.

Is this true? Well, yes and no ... I believe there is more to it than that, and it comes from the same impulse as writing itself. Besides, it's fun.

*Chris Amies*

# ALBA CON

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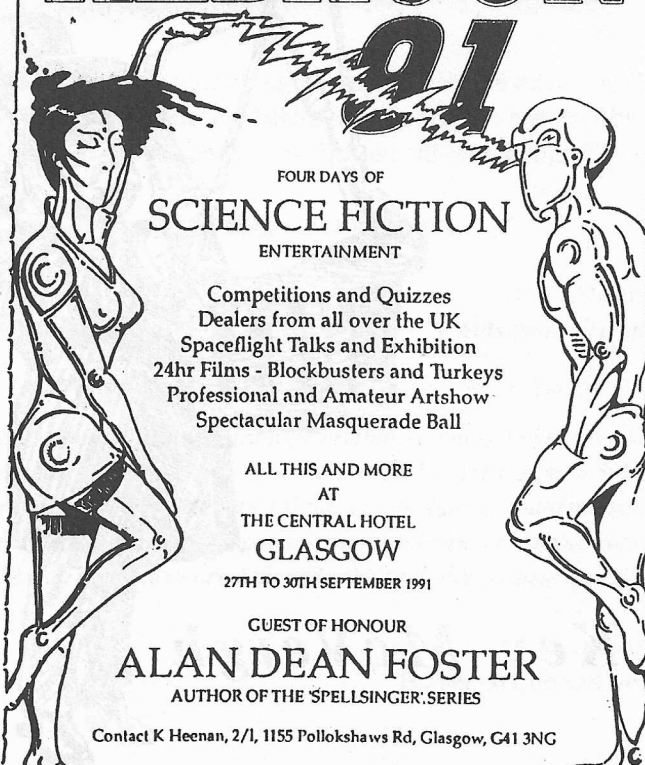
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# Criticism

Is criticism necessarily destructive? To hear words like "criticise" bandied around you'd think criticism was a synonym for "tearing to shreds". There are certainly enough people who think that criticism has no place in science fiction, that the genre should get back to the gutter where it belongs, that criticism equates with pretentiousness, that if they like Perry Rhodan the critics who decry the books are necessarily wrong. Equally, there are people who think that criticism is vital to the future of science fiction, that criticism has a part to play in any improvement in quality. It's time to make your own mind up - of course that's part of criticism also.

*If science fiction is really growing up (a proposition that could use some defining), however, it is going to need a lot more criticism than it's been getting. The nature of the criticism will be determined by just how far science fiction readers would like to see the idiom grow.*

William Atheling, Jr (James Blish)  
The Issue at Hand

One cause of this introversion or denial stems from the failure of the critics, both of the popular press and academe, to afford sf even the small recognition given to the western story and the detective novel as forms of popular literature.

Thomas D. Claerson  
*SF: The Other Side of Realism*

*Whether the readers really demanded it or not, whether or not it ever attracted advertising, I wanted a book review column. But I wanted one that the readers could also read with pleasure, if such a thing were at all possible. This meant that the person who did the column should be both a good a good writer and a perceptive critic - able to feel excitement, in delight or fury and to communicate it.*

Frederick Phol  
"On The Budrys Columns"  
Benchmarks Algis Budrys

The art of writing criticism...is the art of reconstitution, but also of closure; for in the critic..there is a rage for order. Both the rage for chaos and the rage for order, though one may be higher than the other and more profound, are impulses of the creative spirit; and it is in this sense that I feel, when I am acting as a critic, that I am acting as a kind of creator. Accusations that the critic is inherently parasitical have always seemed fatuously self-serving to me.

John Clute  
"Forward"  
Strokes

*I suspect the critics are in far greater danger of corruption than we are: I have run across a fair number of "corrupt" critics - that is critics who praise worthless writers for nonexistent reasons. The amount of wordage writers of science fiction (or poetry) spend praising any kind of critic is negligible.*

Samuel R. Delany  
"Letter to a Critic"  
The Jewel-Hinged Jaw

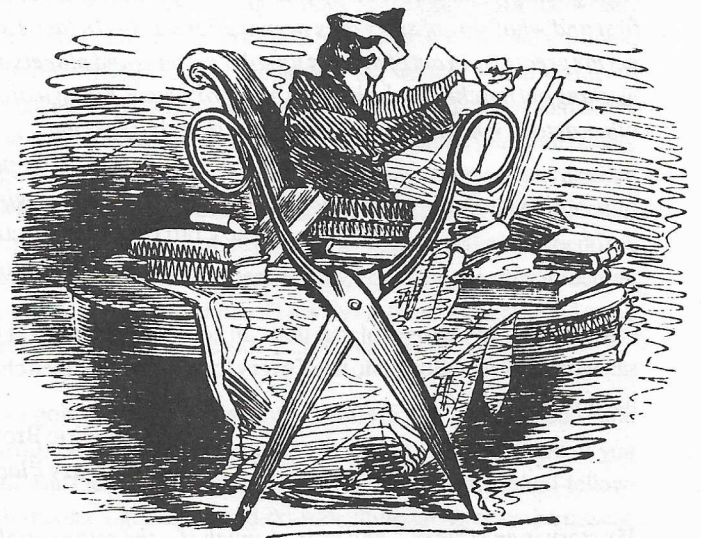
Criticism is another theme running through the convention. You can take a critical look at:

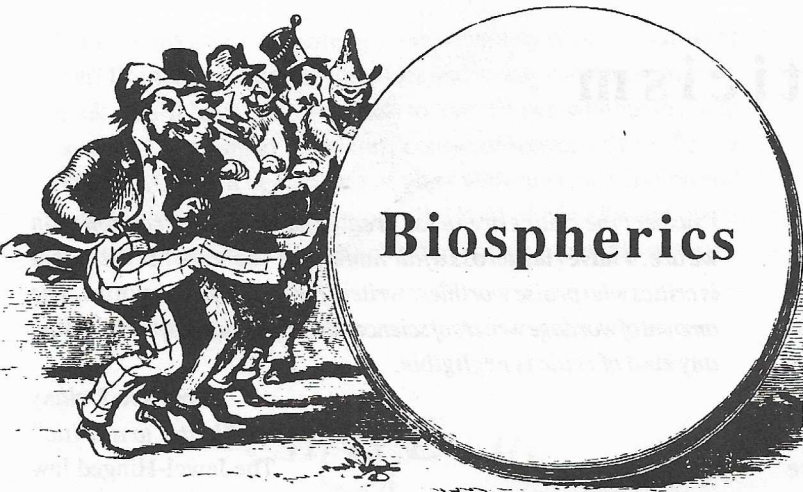
"Reviewers Workshop"  
Friday at 3pm in Syndicate

"Reviewers Workshop"  
Saturday at 4pm in Syndicate

"Critics Kill Creativity"  
Sunday at 1pm in Forum

"Criticism and Reviewing"  
Monday at 12 noon in Exhibition





## Biospherics

Take a look at science fiction. We do everything which other forms of fiction do - we create characters, plot, so on - and we do one thing else, we create worlds. It may be Mars or somewhere lost in deepest space, it may be the far future or the distant past. Even if it is what passes for our everyday world today then there must be something "other" about it to make it science fiction. And part of the job of the science fiction writer is to create that world, let us in on its secrets, paint its vistas and define its inhabitants. But how important is this world-building? What balance must be struck between the world and the story? How scientifically accurate must the author be? Should teams of scientists be called in to get it all right? Are authors too slapdash, making do with creations which any half-way decent scientist could pick holes in in a moment? And could the world be depicted in a word or pages of dense text?

*Buck Rogers walked around in his shirtsleeves on Mars and Jupiter, regardless of the actual conditions there; I worry about the conditions first and what sort of story they permit afterwards. In fact, I still get my greatest fun out of making up solar systems and planets and working out the chemical, physical, meteorological, biological and other details which may later provide a story background.*

Hal Clement  
 "Hard Sciences and Tough Technologies"  
 The Craft of Science Fiction  
 edited by R. Bretnor

Placet is the only known planet that can eclipse itself twice at the same time, run headlong into itself every forty hours, and then chase itself out of sight.

Fredric Brown  
 "Placet is a Crazy Place"

*My story is an sf story... and as in so much sf... the setting itself is the antagonist - and therefore quite as important as the protagonist, who is a character. My protagonist's quarrel is not with his family only, but with a whole world in which he is a genuine, biological misfit. So that, in part, his embroilment with the setting in itself describes the setting - which is very economical.*

Joanna Russ  
 "On Setting"  
 Those Who Can  
 edited by Robin Scott Wilson

As a planet of a binary system, Helliconia revolved about its parent sun, Batalix, once every 480 days. But Batalix itself revolved about a common axis with a much larger sun, Freyr, the major component of the system. Batalix was now carrying Helliconia on its extended orbit away from the greater star. Over the last two centuries, the autumn - that long decline from summer - had intensified. Now Helliconia was poised on the brink of the winter of another Great Year. Darkness, cold, silence, waited in the centuries ahead.

Brian Aldiss  
 Helliconia Winter

*I have minor quibbles about the length of time it takes Niven to get his characters to the Ringworld, and then there are a few meaningless travelogue episodes on the Ringworld. (In general, Niven has not done much better at solving some of the problems inherent in this kind of story than Jack Vance did in Big Planet. When you write an action story laid on such a huge geographical canvas, you're handicapped by having to describe what happened during the tens of thousands of miles your characters had to cross to get from one scene of action to the next.)*

Algis Budrys  
 Benchmarks

Yamoto went back to work, but the curious thing was that even after a full week of concentrated activity he knew little more about the sphere than had been gleaned in his first hurried scan. He confirmed that it had a diameter of some 320,000,000 kilometres, or just over two astronomical units; he confirmed that its surface was smooth to beyond the limits of resolution, certainly the equivalent of finely machined steel; he confirmed that the sphere emitted no radiation other than on the gravitic spectrum, and that analysis of this proved it to be hollow. In that week the only new data he produced was that the object's sphericity was perfect to within the possible margin of error, and that it rotated. On the question of whether it was a natural or artificial object he would venture no professional opinion.

Bob Shaw  
 Orbitville

*...we never do find out who built Orbitville, but the mere fact of its existence allows us, thanks to the insight of the author, to deduce its purpose, and also justifies a conclusive and comprehensive reassessment of human destiny.*

Brian Stableford  
 "Algebraic Fantasies:  
 The Science Fiction of Bob Shaw"



And now, about a mile away, where the streets reached the crest of a wide shallow hill, each was silhouetted against a pearly paleness. Most of the sky was still black for the paleness did not reach above the tenement roofs, so it seemed that two little days were staring, one at the end of each street. Rima said again, "Look at what?" "Can't you see it? Can't you see that...what's the word? There was once a special word for it..."

Rima looked in the direction of his forefinger and said coldly, "Are you talking about the light in the sky?"

"Dawn. That's what it was called. Dawn."

"Isn't that a rather sentimental word? It's fading already."

Alasdair Gray  
Lanark

*Logic and consistency are important to science fiction; many of the best SF stories ever done have been meticulously worked out and are utterly realistic. Even purely speculative stories must generally have some limits to speculation, some internal consistency, some correspondence with today's realities. A story in which anything goes is generally dull. What possible conflict can develop if anything is possible? We want to surprise and amaze the reader, but not by simply throwing in new ideas at random. Even fantasy has logic, and some of the best fantasy employs much the same techniques as are needed to write about "realistic" futures.*

Jerry Pournelle  
"Building Future Worlds"  
Writing and Selling Science Fiction

For, as the world tumbles lazily, it is revealed as the Discworld - flat, circular, and carried through space on the back of four elephants who stand on the back of Great A'tuin, the only turtle ever to feature on the Hertzsprung-Russel Diagram, a turtle ten thousand miles long, dusted with the frost of dead comets, meteor-pocked, albedo-eyed. No-one knows the reason for all this, but it is probably quantum. Much that is weird could happen on the back of a turtle like that.

Terry Prachett  
Pyramids

*Alien planets themselves provide near endless scope for the enterprising writer; they can be fashioned in almost any image.*

Christopher Evans  
Writing Science Fiction



First came a super nova, dazzling the universe in brief, spendthrift glory before ebbing into twisty, multispectral clouds of new-forged atoms. Swirling eddies spiralled until one of them ignited - a newborn star.

The virgin sun wore whirling skirts of dust and electricity. Gas and rocks and bits of this and that fell into these pleats gathering in dim lumps...planets...

One tiny worldlett circled at a middle distance. It had a modest set of properties:

mass - barely enough to draw in a passing asteroid or two;  
moons - one, the remnant of a savage collision, but big enough to tug deep tides;  
spin - to set winds churning through a fuming atmosphere;  
density - a brew that mixed and separated, producing an unpromising surface slag;  
temperature - heat was the planets only voice, a weak one, swamped by the blaring sun. Anyway, what can a planet tell the universe in a reedy cry of infrared?

David Brin  
Earth

*During the long gestation of Earth, Brin has consulted many people about its content and structure (even I was sent a copy of a late draft on disk to read critically), and he has taken on board a wealth of advice and criticism. It is hard to imagine a more thoroughly researched book.*

*The seemingly inevitable adjunct to this approach is that there is usually some loss of inspiration, a tendency for the product to come out looking, like the camel, as if part of it had been assembled by a committee.*

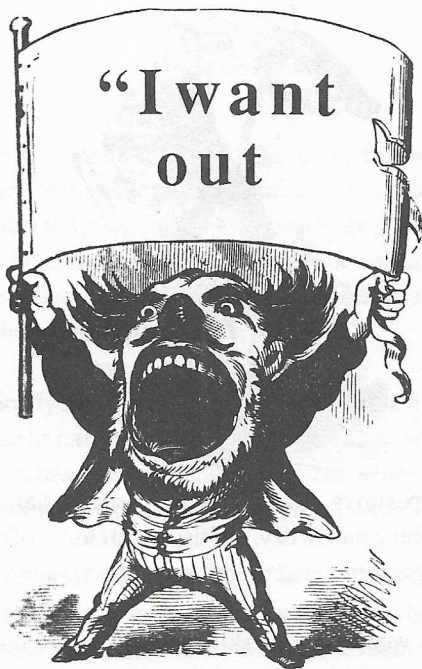
John Gribbin  
review of Earth  
Vector 157

**You can follow up the arguments on world building at the following programme items:**

**"We can solve it all with Technology"**  
Saturday at 1pm in Forum

**"Artificial Environments"**  
Saturday at 6pm in Exhibition

**"Biospherics"**  
Sunday at 5pm and 7pm in Syndicate



## of the comics ghetto!”

I feel but poorly qualified to write with authority about comics, as I explained when I was asked to do so for *Speculation*. The fact that I published, more or less single-handed, the two most successful British black and white independent comics to date (*Redfox*, which I wrote as well as published, and *The Adventures of Luther Arkwright*) which had between them the longest print run ever, nominations for sixteen eagle awards in two successive years, and five eagles, boast boast, does not mean that I know much about other comics: I don't. My comfort is that at least I know more than any writer for any of the daily papers, with the exception of members of the Society of Strip Illustration, the comics' person's professional body - they are occasionally allowed to get it right. At the SSI we have a collection of cuttings about comics; the pride of place goes to a piece from the *Independent*, which in nine column inches contains nineteen factual errors, ranging from salaries of comics writers (wildly exaggerated), to country of origin, publisher, correct title, names of artists... anyone would think that they'd got it from a press release written by a letters columnist at *British Knave*! This can hardly be as bad as that.

I assume that you who are reading this know not-a-lot about comics too, though perhaps a little more than the Arts editors of what used to be *Fleet Street*, so I will run some basic information past you. Very basic. My level of knowledge of the subject is basic.

Comics come in several varieties:

There are the super-heroes, generally American; Batman, Superman, Spiderman, Green Lantern and such. If you haven't at least heard of these I can't think why you should be reading this piece. Mostly you can understand these comics issue by issue; they're fairly straight forward as a rule. Good Guy (with pants over tights or other obvious costume) meets Bad Guy (ditto) and they bash each other for a few pages. Then either Good Guy wins or the finale is held over to the next issue.

There is a subsection of supercomic, the X-comic, which has X in the title, is usually written by Chris Claremont, and is a wide ranging soap opera: if you buy one title, you will have to read the other seventeen, and back issues for three years, in order to work out what is going on, and who is doing what to whom and why. I can't recommend these for any but those seriously prepared to be addicted, though they are fun if you have a friend who has them or a lot of money to spend on buying all you'll need.

What about horror? I don't want to have my spine chilled personally, because there are always Amnesty International reports if you wish to wallow in nastiness; but, every so often a comic which is technically "horror" has a plot, characters, good art, and a sense of humour. I guess *Swamp Thing* was in this category to start with, before Alan Moore got his mitts on it and turned it into something worth having; and Neil Gaiman is doing lovely things in *The Sandman*. Sometimes the drift is the other way; *Batman* is a super-hero title, but *Dark Knight* is a horror comic.

Next are the Japanese comics. These are cult stuff. Beautifully drawn, unless they are translated for the American/British market they are somewhat opaque to the occidental mind; you start reading at the back and move forwards, and there are no words, so it can be a touch hard to work out what's going on. They're porno stuff, on the other hand, it is readily understood whether you read it forwards, backwards or inside out; hard to obtain in this country, but will spoil your palate for *British Knave* for ever after. Except of course that you won't understand the letters column, if any.

European comics too often don't have much in the way of words, probably because their authors have sensibly worked out that they would have to be translated into about nine languages to catch the whole market; since they are designed to be that way they are more comprehensible than Japanese adventure stuff which has words which you can't read.

There are British independents and small house publications. These are often ill-drawn, in order to avoid accusations of elitism, and hard to follow; with a few honourable exceptions they have nothing much to say, and say it fairly badly. They are meant to be socially aware and so-on-and-so-forth, but the result is frequently either preaching, which is like a new socialist tract, or *Cathy-Come-Home*, but without the novelty, or simply two lads go to the pub, bewail their lack of girlfriends, get drunk and spew up on the way home, which is dull.

By now you will have gathered that I don't think much of most comics. There are a few which I would recommend to anyone who wants a story as well as pictures, and a bit of intellectual stimulus. *The Sandman* I've already mentioned. I have a complete collection of Paul Chadwick's *Concrete*, because I have found it thought-provoking, touching, funny and altogether highly entertaining. That's one which many people who aren't comics buffs might enjoy (but it seems to have stopped happening now, or at least, I haven't seen a new issue for quite a while). There was *Mazing Man*, about an ordinary little guy who thought he was a super-hero; that was fun (and of course it's folded). How about stuff about a village of thinking centaurs? (Well, yes, that seems to have disappeared too...)

In fact my liking a comic seems to be the kiss of death now I look at it. *Elfquest* was great fun for the first twenty issues, when the Pinis were doing it all themselves, but after they farmed it out and went to a major publisher with it I found it less and less enjoyable and more and more to-a-formula, and stopped bothering to get it. I don't think I'm going to make any more suggestions for your reading. If I do, they'll probably go down the tubes. And let's hope that *The Sandman* turns out to be the exception to prove the rule.

Future conrunners please note:

I don't have a telly, so if you want a piece on Star Trek I'm the obvious choice to write it... And if you've decided to run the obligatory panel on Women in Comics, I'm not interested.

**Chris Bell**



Comics, graphic novels, *bandes dessinées*, call them what you will they certainly seem to be the literary form of the future. Or at least, so some people would have us believe. Or are they just child's play, a literary game, a refuge of the post-literate generation? Does the combination of words and pictures allow us to get more from a story than words alone could ever tell, or are we just looking at pretty pictures because we're losing the ability to derive so much from the words? Is this a bold new venture, or degeneration?

When the publishers of DC Comics launched Superman and Batman, they had no idea those guys would become the all-time most popular continuing characters in the history of American fiction.

Mike Gold "The Joker's Dozen"  
Batman v The Joker:  
*The Greatest Joker Stories Ever Told.*

"The genre gives you an avenue to do experimental work," he says, "whether you are an artist or a writer. Within the genre you can go from fantasy to extreme reality, you can explore the reaction of the psychotic mind to something horrific happening because of a chance meeting or an accident." Having been forced into a transition between no-holds-barred EC horror books and the highly constrained DC mystery books, Joe (Orlando) confesses, "The driving force that kept me coming to work everyday was to find ways of annoying the Code."

Jenette Kahn  
"Publishorial"  
The Sandman, No 3

I'd always wanted to write comics, but by the time I was 17 there was nothing around I even wanted to read, let alone write, and I figured books were my destiny. I went off and wrote books, and short stories, and worked as a journalist. Then I saw what Alan Moore was doing, and I realised you could write comics with the depth and subtlety of a mainstream novel.

Neil Gaiman  
"Quite Seriously Weird" an interview by Alex Stewart  
*Vector 150*

*Watchmen* is the first comic to take the material of the superheros, the fantasies that have built up around them, and make them a part of legitimate fictional discourse about America. It's the first time a novel - and make no mistake, *Watchmen* is a legitimate novel - has been written which assimilates those grotesque childhood fantasies into an adult model of the state of the US and its future.

John Clute  
*American Fantasy, Summer 87*

*Watchmen* isn't quite the *Citizen Kane* of comics. At times its cynicism is a bit facile, and its super-science-filled second half fails to sustain the gritty believability of the opening chapters. But it is a remarkable experiment with a new, sophisticated language that seems uniquely suited to our visual, pre-apocalyptic age. Like Alan Parker's 1982 film *The Wall*, *Watchman* uses fully the potential of its medium to tell a story that challenges its audience in ways inaccessible to mere prose.

Michael A Morrison "The Year in Horror 1987"  
*Science Fiction & Fantasy Book Review Annual 1988*  
Robert A Collins & Robert Latham, eds.

**You can follow up on comics at the following programme items:**

**"Bring Out Your Dredd!"**  
Friday 3pm in Exhibition

**"Comics Writing"**  
Friday 6pm in Syndicate

**"Comics Art"**  
Sunday 11am in Syndicate

# The Face on Mars: A Dangerous Vision?



In 1976 the NASA Viking Orbiter 1 took a series of photographs of the surface of Mars over a region in the Northern hemisphere called Cydonia. The intention was to find a safe landing site for the Viking 2 Lander.

On one of these photo frames a mission scientist noticed a peculiar mesa about 1 mile wide which resembled a front view of a human face. The photo was publicised at the time and then buried in the photo files where it lay for 3 years.

In 1979 two researchers at Goddard spaceflight Centre came across the photo and decided to clean up the image with computer processing techniques. The computer research results generated from this investigation were published by the researchers in 1982.

The results illustrated that the face was not a "trick of light and shadow" as NASA had said. The area was photographed several times at different scales of resolution and Sun angles. Other objects were noted which lie a few miles from the face, massive pyramids approximately 1 mile wide.

In 1984 the two researchers presented their findings to a small audience at the Case for Mars Conference in Boulder, Colorado. This attracted the interest of other researchers which initiated an in depth analysis of all imagery relating to Cydonia and a few other sites on Mars. Meanwhile, NASA continued to state that the face is "...a trick of light and shadow..." and refused to reinvestigate.

A group of experienced and well qualified scientists from the imaging and computer sciences gathered from all over the United States and formed a research group called The Mars Project and based themselves in the University of Berkeley, California.

The results of their work have now been published in refereed science journals both in the U.S. and in Britain. The results of this research are not widely known and NASA continued to state "...a trick of light and shadow...".

The objects discovered are large (on the order of 1 mile across), highly symmetrical with unusual markings and features and have been found to be "highly non-fractal" in shape. Each published paper concludes that "...there may be artificial objects on the surface of Mars...".

In October 1989 one of the researchers held a meeting with Congressman Robert Roe and two NASA representatives. Congressman Roe oversees the Committee on Science and Technology which controls NASA funding. Although NASA insisted that they would not photograph Cydonia with The Mars Observer mission, which is due to be launched next year, Congressman Roe requested that they do.

NASA grudgingly agreed.

So it now seems that research has been conducted, refereed science papers have been published and a U.S. Government request has been issued to photograph in high resolution, objects on the surface of Mars which orthodox science considers "...may not be natural...".

This is an historic moment without precedence. We **MAY** have found evidence that we are not unique in the universe. So where was the SF community when all this was going on? Despite requests for advice and support, SF writers and editors refuse to have any involvement with the issue (with the exception of one editor who remains an open supporter of the research).

I have heard one Hugo winner say "...I wouldn't want to risk my career...", another did not want to discuss the issue and one handed back copies of the published papers (without looking at them) saying "...I'd rather not have them...". Almost every time I have confronted a writer with this issue each one has run away (with the exception of a very few).

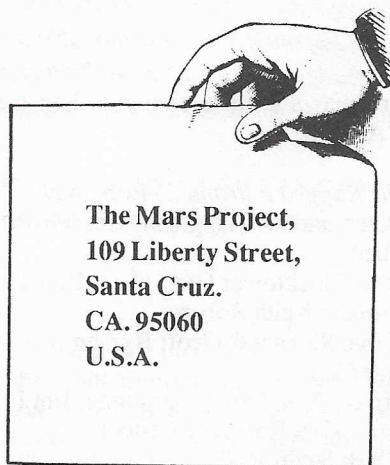
The Administrator of the Mars Project has said "...the SF community is not a community, they are camp followers of scientists...". If the objects in Cydonia are artificial, then SF is running away from evidence of extraterrestrial life. If the objects are just "...a pile of rocks..." as NASA has said, then SF is running away from a pile of rocks. This is not the reaction one expects from a group who claim to be responsible people.

Everyone on this planet has a responsibility. The SF writer has a responsibility, if not to the readers, at least to his craft. SF writers, editors and publishers should be paying attention to this issue, it is sure to have implications for SF if we find evidence of E.T.s. If we cannot find the courage to read three science papers and study a few digital images, what chance have we of solving the problems of war, famine and pollution? Perhaps the biggest threat to our existence may be our own vanity.

So! Attention all writers, editors, publishers, artists et al. Come and see, come and hear the evidence for "non-natural objects" on the surface of Mars. Copies of the science papers will be available to writers, editors, academics and others, though there is only a limited number of copies.

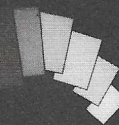
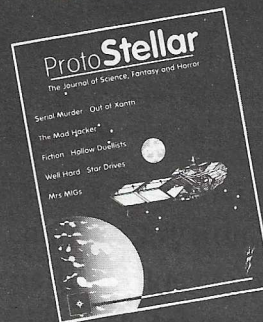
The illustrated talk is presented by Chris O'Kane with the permission of The Mars Project.

Further information can be obtained from:



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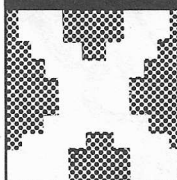
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## BSFA Award

The British Science Fiction Association Awards are Britain's longest-established science fiction awards. They are voted on by members of the BSFA, and members of the annual Easter convention.

The earliest awards were to an author, the winners were John Brunner in 1966 and Philip K. Dick in 1968.

From 1970 the award was for a novel. The winners were:

- 1970 *Stand on Zanzibar* John Brunner
- 1971 *The Jagged Orbit* John Brunner
- 1972 *The Moment of Eclipse* Brian Aldiss
- 1973 No Award
- 1974 *Rendezvous with Rama* Arthur C. Clarke  
*Billion Year Spress* Brian Aldiss (Special Award)
- 1975 *Inverted World* Christopher Priest
- 1976 *Orbitsville* Bob Shaw
- 1977 *Brontomek!* Michael Coney  
*A Pictorial History of SF* David Kyle (Special Award)
- 1978 *The Jonah Kit* Ian Watson

At this point the awards were restructured.

- 1980 Novel *The Unlimited Dream Company* J.G. Ballard
- Short "Palely Loitering" Christopher Priest
- Media Hitchhikers Guide - record
- Artist Jim Burns
- 1981 Novel *Timescape* Gregory Benford
- Short "The Brave Little Toaster" Thomas M. Disch
- Media Hitchhikers Guide, 2nd series
- Artist Peter Jones
- 1982 Novel *The Shadow of the Torturer* Gene Wolfe
- Short "Mythago Wood" Robert Holdstock
- Media Time Bandits
- Artist Bruce Pennington
- 1983 Novel *Helliconia Spring* Brian Aldiss
- Short "Kitemaster" Keith Roberts
- Media Bladerunner
- Artist Tim White
- 1984 Novel *Tik-Tok* John Sladek
- Short "After Images" Malcolm Edwards
- Media Android
- Artist Bruce Pennington
- 1985 Novel *Mythago Wood* Robert Holdstock
- Short "The Unconquered Country" Geoff Ryman
- Media Company of Wolves
- Artist Jim Burns
- 1986 Novel *Helliconia Winter* Brian Aldiss
- Short "Cube Root" David Langford
- Media Brazil
- Artist Jim Burns

At this point there was a further change when the "Artist" category became "Artwork":

- 1987 Novel *The Ragged Astronauts* Bob Shaw
- Short "Kaeti and the Hangman" Keith Roberts
- Media Alien
- Artwork "The Clocktower Girl" Keith Roberts
- 1988 Novel *Gráinne* Keith Roberts
- Short "Love Sickness" Geoff Ryman
- Media Star Cop
- Artwork Cover, Worldcon Programme, Jim Burns
- 1989 Novel *Lavondyss* Robert Holdstock
- Short "Dark Night in Toyland" Bob Shaw
- Media Who Framed Roger Rabbit?
- Artwork Cover, *Lavondyss* Alan Lee
- 1990 Novel *Pyramids* Terry Pratchett
- Short "In Translation" Lisa Tuttle
- Media Red Dwarf
- Artwork Cover, *Other Edens III* Jim Burns

Nominations for this year's awards are as follows:

### Best Novel

- The Use of Weapons* Iain M. Banks
- Rats and Gargoyles* Mary Gentle
- The Difference Engine* William Gibson & Bruce Sterling
- Take Back Plenty* Colin Greenland
- Hyperion* Dan Simmons

### Best Short Fiction

- "The Death of Cassandra Quebec" Eric Brown
- "The Phargean Effect" Eric Brown
- "Axiomatic" Greg Egan
- "Learning to be Me" Greg Egan
- "Winning" Ian McDonald
- "The Original Dr Shade" Kim Newman

### Best Dramatic Presentation

- Total Recall
- Star Trek: The Next Generation
- Twin Peaks
- Flatliners

### Best Artwork

- Cover, *The Difference Engine* Ian Miller
- Cover, *The Night Mayor* Dave McKean
- Interior Illustration, "The Phargean Effect" Iain Byers

Votes at the convention should be placed in the ballot box provided by 3.00pm on Saturday. The Awards Ceremony is on Sunday night.



### The Doc Weir Award

This is a "big heart" award which goes to a person who has done good deeds in fandom for a considerable amount of time. Anyone can be nominated and anyone can vote. The winner receives a cup on which are engraved the names of past winners which they hold for a year. The Doc Weir Award is named after a famous fan of the fifties who, sadly, died all too soon. Since its inception the award has been a fandom way of saying "good on yer" to people who have helped make fandom a better place to dwell. Ballot boxes will be scattered throughout the convention.

### The Ken MacIntyre Award

The Ken MacIntyre Award goes to the person who does the best artwork to appear in a fanzine or convention publication in the preceding year. To be eligible the original artwork and the publication it appeared in must be handed in to the art show organisers by noon on the Saturday of the convention. The winner is judged by a committee consisting of a Knight of St. Fantony, the award administrator and the artshow organiser. The actual award is a bowl engraved with the names of former winners.



## Mornington Crescent Tournament

As has become conventional, we are publishing the special rules which apply to Mornington Crescent as it will be played at the Eastercon. New players please take note.

As usual, Bank Holiday Blue Saver Rules will be in operation, L.N.E.R.; this excepts Rule 23. The optional selection of rule 42 has provided too cumbersome and will not be used, but Limited Durham 14c is still open.

We may play the Geneva Triplet if anyone insists.

Strict lenten observance of rule 17 will cease at midnight on March 31st. Pascal Rules are in force until midnight on April 1st, after which Low Rules will take their place.

The attempt at the Fitz Alan-Cumberland Variant suggested by Garnet for Eastcon will not be repeated this year, for reasons which some players will remember all too clearly. In any event the success of Tourmaline at Novacon in their bid for the Herbert Gambit would render it void.

Any attempt to play Queen Mother Rules will be treated as it deserves.

PMB version players: The Fox and Neil Gaiman Variant (Alan Moore) continues. Talis Kimberley has now played E.M. Forster.

In the event of a dispute, the Chairman's verdict is inevitably open to debate.

As always all rules, and sections of rules above, may be found in the Official Handbook 3rd edition (1989), which is on sale in the Dealer's Room subject to availability.

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Russell	Aitken	409
Iain	Alexander	247
Kay	Allan	35
Phillip	Allcock	562
Brian	Ameringen	425
Fiona	Anderson	197
Graham	Anderson	223
Stu	Andrews	236
Linda	Apperley	362
Roy	Apperley	363
Erik	Arthur	528
Julie	Atkin	569
Chris	Atkinson	9
Margaret	Austin	59
Chris	Ayres	544
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Chris	Bond	552
Lucy	Bond	551
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Kjell	Borgstrom	181
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Richard	Brandshaft	227
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Ian	Brooks	129
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Saul	Bura	205
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Bill	Burns	50
Jim	Burns	502
Mary	Burns	78
Stephen	Burridge	311
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Jim	Campbell	582
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Iain



# IAIN M. BANKS



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