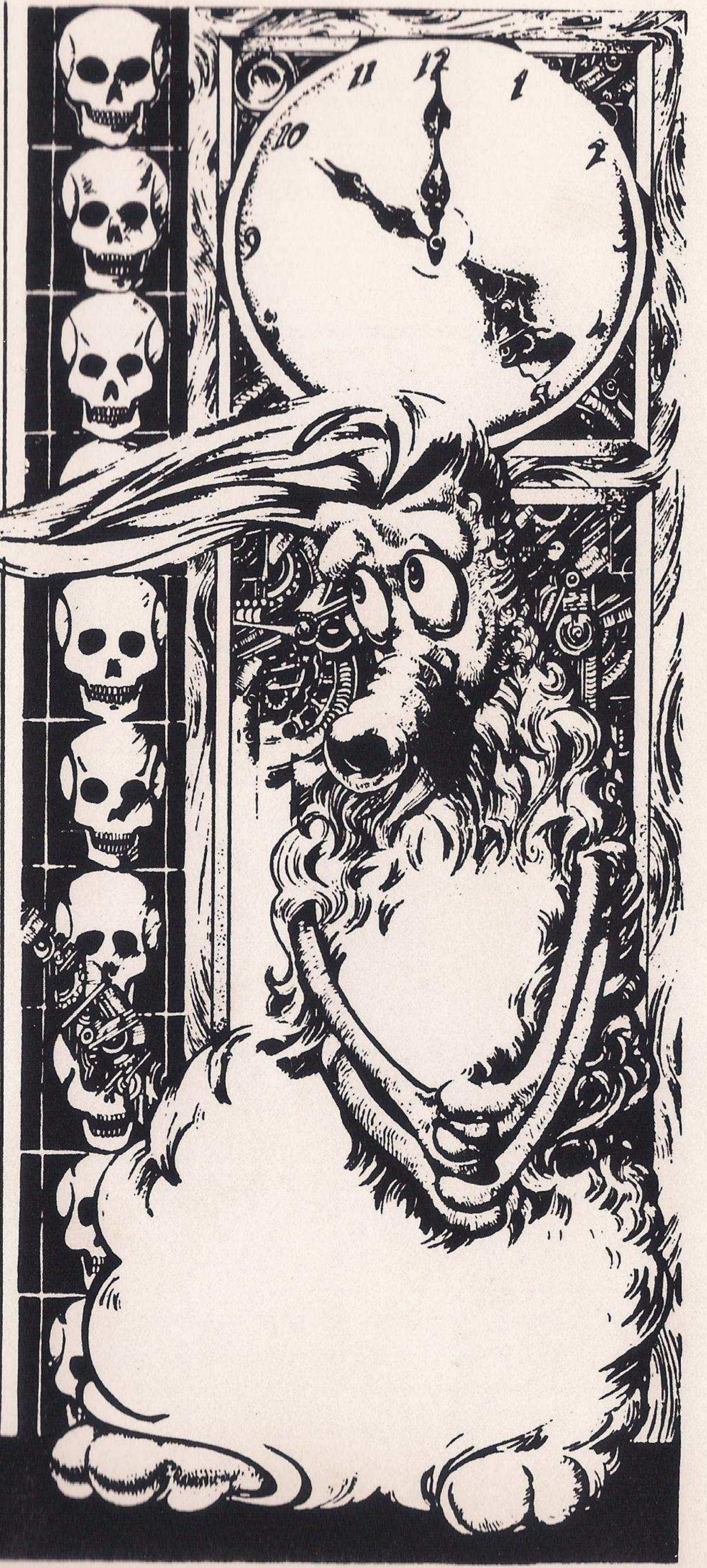


DECAID



Introduction

The reason that there are no contents in this publication is that the Editor, the ~~PSIFA~~, was not so inclined. So if you have any grievances may I suggest you take them up with him.

Now remember this is a charity con, so don't read any more of this now: go and spend lots of those credit things.

All speilling mistakes are by kind permishon of Dinsdale. No liability can be taken by PSIFA for any miss-speilled words within or without this publication.

Finally apologies to Gwyneth for missing her name off the end of 'That Strange Attraction'.

Conventions

Official Shoestrincon

<u>Name</u>	<u>Year</u>	<u>GOH</u>	<u>Chairbeing</u>
1) Polycon	'79	Ken Bulmer & Matt Irvin	John Watkinson
2) Polycon II	'80	Ian Watson & 2000 AD	Graham Connor
3) Psifacon	'81	Rob Holdstock	Mark Bunce
4) Economy	'82	Bob Shaw	Pete Randall
5) FTLcon	'83	Iain Nicholson	Dave Lermit
6) Ib Con	'84	Geoff Ryman	Keith White
7) Articon	'85	Bryan Talbot	Jaine Fennell
8) Kncccon	'86	Pete Milligan	Andy Hobson
9) Necroninecon	'87	Ramsey Campbell	Dave Lermit
10) Decaid	'88	Lorna Mitchell & Gwyneth Jones	Jez Hildred

PSIFA - Presidents

79-80	Steve Fosrd
80-81	Liz Barak
81-82	Mark Leach
82-83	Pete Randall
83-84	Mark Bunce
84-85	"Jesee" James
85-86	Jaine Fennell
86-87	Andy Hobson
87-88	Clive Rowland
88-89	Jez Hildred

Honary Members

Dave Lermit	-0
Graham Connor	-1
Anthony Heathcote	-2
John Watkinson	-3
Pete Gilligan	-4
Dave Patterson	-5
Mark Bunce	-6
Miles Harris	-7
Jaine Weddell	
(nee Fennell)	-8
Martin Stewart	-9
Chris the Fresher	-10

DECAID

LESS OF A CONVENTION

.. NOTE A STATE OF MIND !

So by now you're wondering what all the fuss is about and who can blame you? Conventions, to an outsider, can look like elitist parties for 'real fans only', whilst the insider might see this as just another small bash involving a group of friends, half a dozen videos and a large supply of intoxicants. I'd like to say DECAID isn't going to be like that, but there will always be a little of the above (especially the intoxicants!).

What I will say is that this year we've got quite a few 'names' coming, some big events and bucket-load of enthusiasm. This is not to say we want to lose the atmosphere of friendliness and conviviality that a small con has. We're trying to bring you the best of two worlds . . . on a budget!

Ten years may not seem a long time but, for a society as transient in nature and content as PSIFA, it is something rather special. Also Hatfield lacks the student-based atmosphere of the big university cities, no dreaming spires and punting here (the A1 can be a little rough on such small craft), but many an ex-member has left a little of their heart (and mind!) here. Changing back into nostalgia mode for a final flashback, what would the world have been like without PSIFA? Maybe it's better that we'll never know.

Finally a few words of advice; expect the unexpected, participate and, of course, enjoy yourself.

JEZ

THAT STRANGE ATTRACTION

Home again, home again. Forget the streamers and idiotic tv of the midwinter festival, ritual drunkenness and all: for me the New Year begins in September and always will. And what better way to start the new year than in contemplation of a science fiction convention. Coming late to this phenomenon (SEACON, Brighton 1984) I have a problem unknown to the faithful - those to whom a con is part of their first world, where nothing is questioned and things are just because they are. I have to try and work out what these things are *for*. There is a burgeoning sense that they are *the local*, the convenient place on the corner where I go to sit around and talk to my mates, oblivious of the surly barstaff, awful decor and the execrable beer. But the very fact that this is the instant explanation you'd get from almost any habitualcon attender, makes me suspicious. I distrust straight answers, especially from the British. Where other nations have the reputation of 'telling the stranger what they think the stranger wants to hear'; the people of these islands most certainly derive a great deal of sly satisfaction from telling the stranger what it would amuse them to have the stranger believe... If you can follow that. And being as I've never been to an American convention it's the British, however marginal in the Big World of SF, who have had the fun of forming my opinions.

Not that the crack isn't good on occasion.

?

Met an engineer called Fiona once, (Hello, Fiona) and heard about the time they seriously tried to raise the devil in an old deserted tower in one of those little abandoned cotton-mill valleys of the north west. Desolate and gloomy the way only dead industrial estates can be. She let them lock her in a cell in the dark while they gathered in the room below and did ceremonial magic, in the sincere hope that something nasty might be permitted to come down the chimney and fetch her away. Well! Call me ludicrously superstitious and timid, but I would not do that. I fear the power of the human will. Have you ever wished something and known, simply known that you were approaching some terrifying barrier? Beyond which things might really start to happen? Absolute concentration is very weird stuff. Luckily, nearly all of the time it is quite impossible to cross that barrier. It is like trying to kill yourself by holding your breath. But! The next point can always land in chaos...

In the event, they made such a racket that they succeeded in calling up the local police, hahaha..

The other straight, world-weary answer, especially from writers, is that you go to the conventions to do business. It's just like a real life conference of dentists or swimming pool installers or astrophysicists: where you sit and yawn through the presentations

and then go out and do corrupt multimillion dollar deals over sexily expensive lunches; or in the toilet. This one, which we will call the s0f theory of condom, sounds exciting. But I can't use it, because I don't. To me, doing business at a convention remains in the same category as offering a bribe to a foreign policeman. The idea's appealing and it sounds as if it would work... but how do you go about it? Um... If you have to ask, you'd better not try.

All right, so what are they really for?

Conventions are places where you talk about money.

And enter into covert adulterous liaisons.

(I had to look up how to spell 'liaison': that's how likely I am to take advantage of this facility...)

Sitting up late at night, playing silly games or simply prowling the corridors of an interchangeable anonymous subexecutive class hotel, hoping that something, anything will happen to ignite the mysterious fire.

Fun!

When I went to SEACON all those years ago I was quite thrilled to see people actually dressed up in costumes, actually running about playing role-playing games. Oh my! My eyes were popping out of my head, but of course I knew without asking that only the merest tourist would show any signs of excitement. I also knew without asking that those who did the dressing up were of a low and unsophisticated rank in the hierarchy of this new society I was entering, rather like the people who beat time with little jerks of the head at classical concerts. It dawned on me a convention or two later that this second assumption was crass and illfounded. There is, I now believe, no social stigma at all attached to the wearing of costume. It may even be perfectly okay to wear a small feltish or rubbery dragon attached to one shoulder (and talk to it!); I'm still undecided on this point.

But I study the mores of convention-going in a divided state of mind, partly with the observer's detachment of an anthropologist (if there are any anthropologists left who preserve this obsolete twentieth century illusion) and partly with the nervousness of an acolyte. I discovered soon enough that not all role-playing games require costume. For instance there's the role of invited guest, or guest of honour - which I've decided involves a considerable element of sacred prostitution. It is not for nothing that writers and all other kinds of producers-of-the-stuff are often referred to as 'pros'. So Many SF writers have conjured up the relationship between whore and client, scrubbing off the filthy power-economics. These writers are usually male, and their secret agenda is pretty transparent; can be summed up in that well-worn expression (cf bloodsports, enthusiasts of) *they enjoy it, really...* But on the other hand, there must be something in it. There's always some sliver of relevance to our actual possibilities, trapped in the soul of any SF idea. As I wandered the

halls of the Adelphi hotel at Follycon this year I experienced a fascinating sense of release in the knowledge that my role here was to be available to all comers. (That's *conversationally* available, sonny. Don't anybody get silly ideas.) The burden of choice was taken from me, and the duty of self-preservation that deprives one of the company of some really interesting people simply because they are also, instantly and obviously, the most crashing bores. This second category does not include you of course, dear reader... But the deep appeal was in brushing the edge of randomness. It was like being a toddler again: I (almost) didn't know what was going to happen to me next.

No one knew what I was playing at. Some fun is like that. Other kinds of fun zip around recruiting, creating ten minute world histories, two hour universes; which then burst and vanish so completely that it's as if they never existed.

The mistake that people most commonly make about games, is that some kind of illicit substitution is involved. If I hang around waiting to be accosted by strange SF fans, it is because I'd *really* like to be hanging around shivering in a scummy little plastic miniskirt on some dreary underpass. If other persons run around in the woods squirting jelly at each other it is because they'd really like to be using live ammunition, or maybe napalm, against some gooks or other on some foreign field. This is not necessarily the case. Games are not retrogressive, they are actually highly evolved forms of behaviour. Okay, it started out as rehearsal for the various life-or-death struggles of survival, and there was a reward of pleasure tagged on to make sure you did your homework. But most animals, including humans, can get pretty cunning at securing the pleasure and dumping the unnecessary baggage. My cat does not chase cotton reels because she's hungry. Nor is she so foolish as to give up chasing cotton reels because tins of Whiskas (yes! A lickspittle bourgeoisie moggie!) cannot run very fast. The game is the good part, the real thing, the essence. The rest can and will be abandoned whenever it gets out of date.

*Everybody's trying
to get to the bar
And the name of the bar -
the bar is called heaven ...*

Sometimes I think that SF conventions are places where you can go to rehearse the awesome aimlessness of life in Utopia. Heaven's okay as long as you're having Fun. But if you're not the minutes pass like years, like aeons. In one horrid instant fallen back from futureyearx to the miserable present, where - as the lobster so rightly said - nobody goes anywhere without a porpoise. It's like being trapped in a classic anxiety dream: naked in the supermarket, can't even read the exam questions, forgot your invitation to Michael

Jackson's teaparty... (see yourself in future year, spiking somebody's happy evening's *Twentieth Century Deathcaps* scenario with one of those lurk-behind-the-potted-palm moments. Oh, nasty!). And therefore woe betide the convention committee whose members decide their clients are too cool to need a stupid old 'programme'.

People will tell you magic only happens in the mind. Don't you believe it. Never neglect the meaningless rituals that surround the mysterious fire, however idiotic they may seem...

You know it makes sense!

2001: A Space Odyssey

(Stanley Kubrick 1968)

In the Shoestringcon tradition of making the best of the film projector, 2001 is a must-see. Most of the Star Wars generation, who saw Stanley Kubrick's famous film of 1968 when it premiered on BBC 1, thought it was boring pretentious hippy crap, but any comparison with Star Wars is very unfair. Where Star Wars is high adventure dressed as S.F., 2001 is a science fiction symphony. When asked in an interview what the true meaning of 2001 was, Kubrick pointed to the fact there is only 40 minutes of dialogue in a film lasting over 2 hours, to illustrate that it is supposed to be a non-verbal experience, like a symphony, not meant to convey a specific, single meaning. This visual symphony is ruined on a small screen, especially as much of the special effects sequences are changed to fit them into the square screen. Promoted by the distributors as "the ultimate trip", the stunning effects of 2001 are rivalled by its sequel "2010", but the sequel, excellent though it is, is basically just another film with a story.

X-Fresh

THE SCIENTIFIC METHOD

As I understand it, the 'scientific method' is the attempt to describe reality by, in as objective and rational frame of mind as possible, positing a theory about it, based on empirical observation and then seeing if observed data confirms the theory by experimentation, repeated over and over again.

In practice, science is continually made to do a great deal more and a great deal less than this. Instead of being just one among many ways of exploring reality, it is elevated into Universal Truth, in other words treated as a religion. Theories which have not been empirically confirmed by repeated experimentation are called incontrovertible facts and have highly subjective emotions invested in them.

I am not an opponent of the scientific method when it is used properly, for properly limited objectives, but I am an opponent of science as a religion. One of the central dogmas of the religion of science is the theory of Evolution. This theory is continually being presented and believed in, as incontrovertible fact. It isn't. It's a highly questionable theory.

Briefly I'll list the scientific shortcomings of the theory.

- A) The theory that life evolved from inorganic matter in a primeaval organic soup in the sea is pure theory. There is absolutely no empirical data to prove it happened. Indeed empirical observation shows that water is an environment likely to break down the appropriate molecules not build them up.
- B) the chances against these highly complex molecules just appearing and getting together by random accident are fantastic. Figures like 10^{40000} to 1 are quoted.
- C) The fossil record shows species appearing suddenly, fully-formed and either staying or becoming extinct. There are no incontrovertible examples whatsoever of transitions from one species to another.
- D) The sudden appearance of species is explained as mutations, so mutations are used to explain the 'how' of evolution. But our knowledge of contemporary mutations shows that the majority of them are harmful not useful. So how did all these wonderfully useful mutations happen in the past?
- E) The number of remains of the 'ancestors' of Homo Sapiens could be put on a table. One jaw here, one fragment of skull there, all of which could be put in either the ape or the human category. There is no incontrovertible proof of them being transitional.

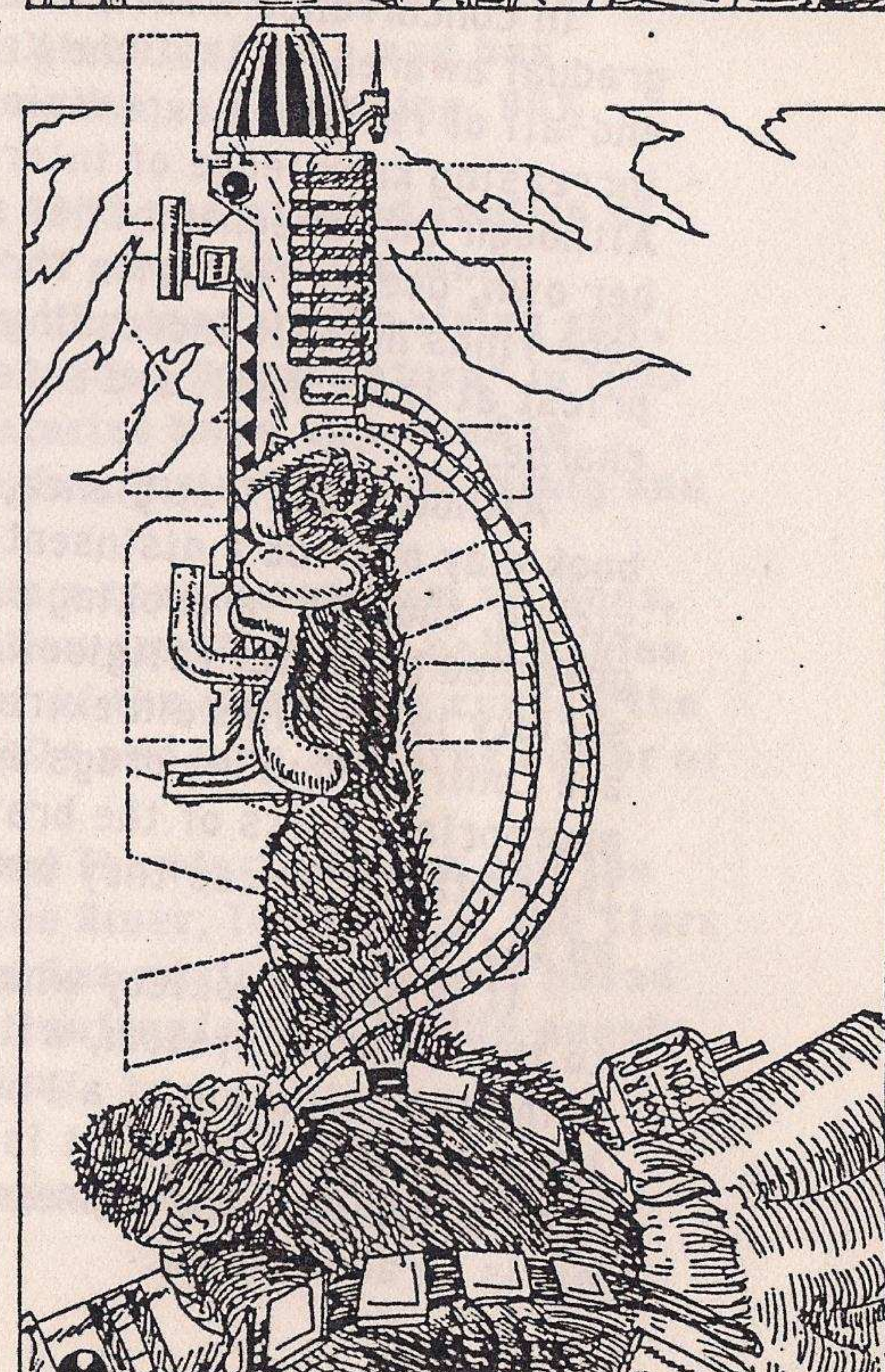
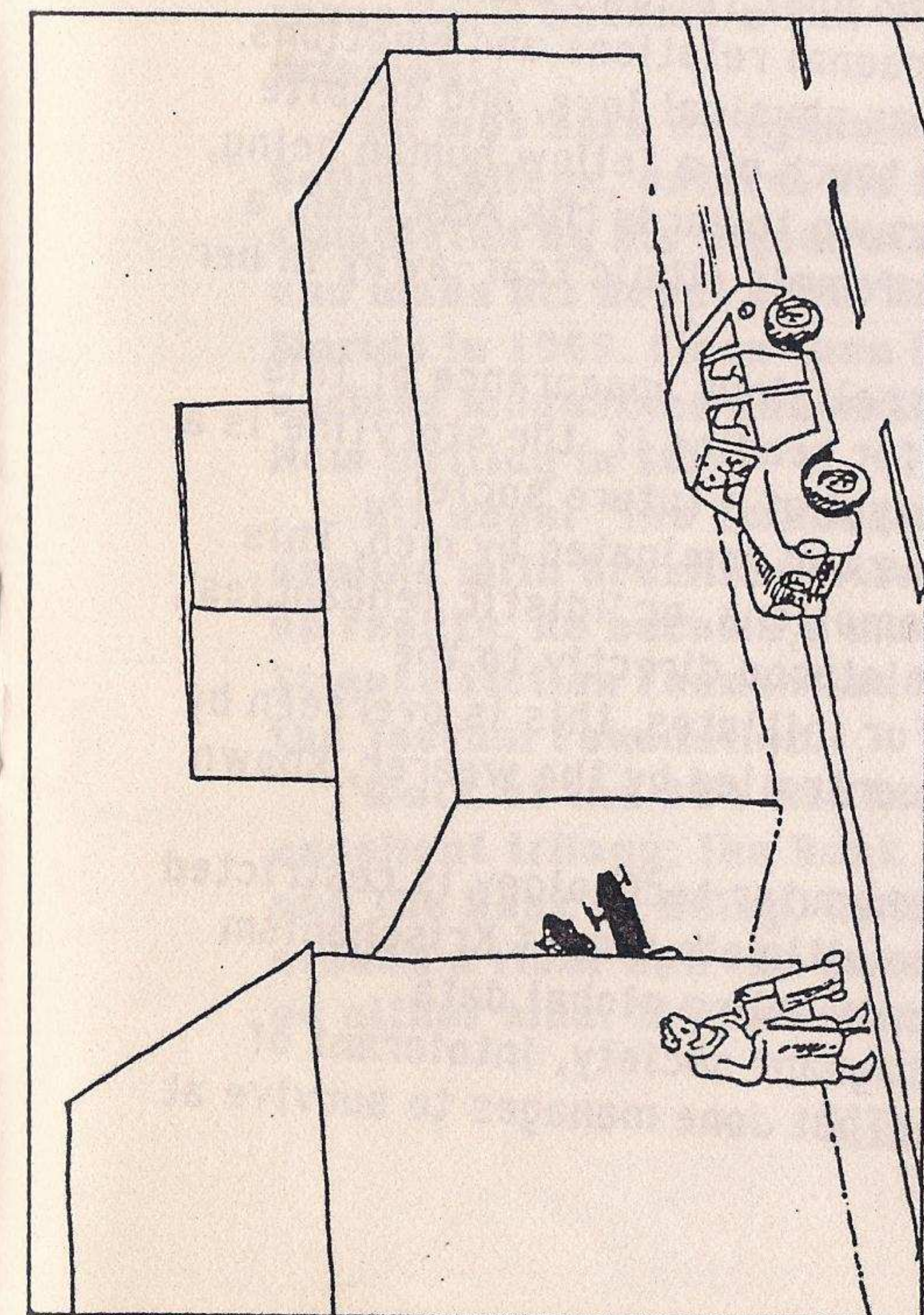
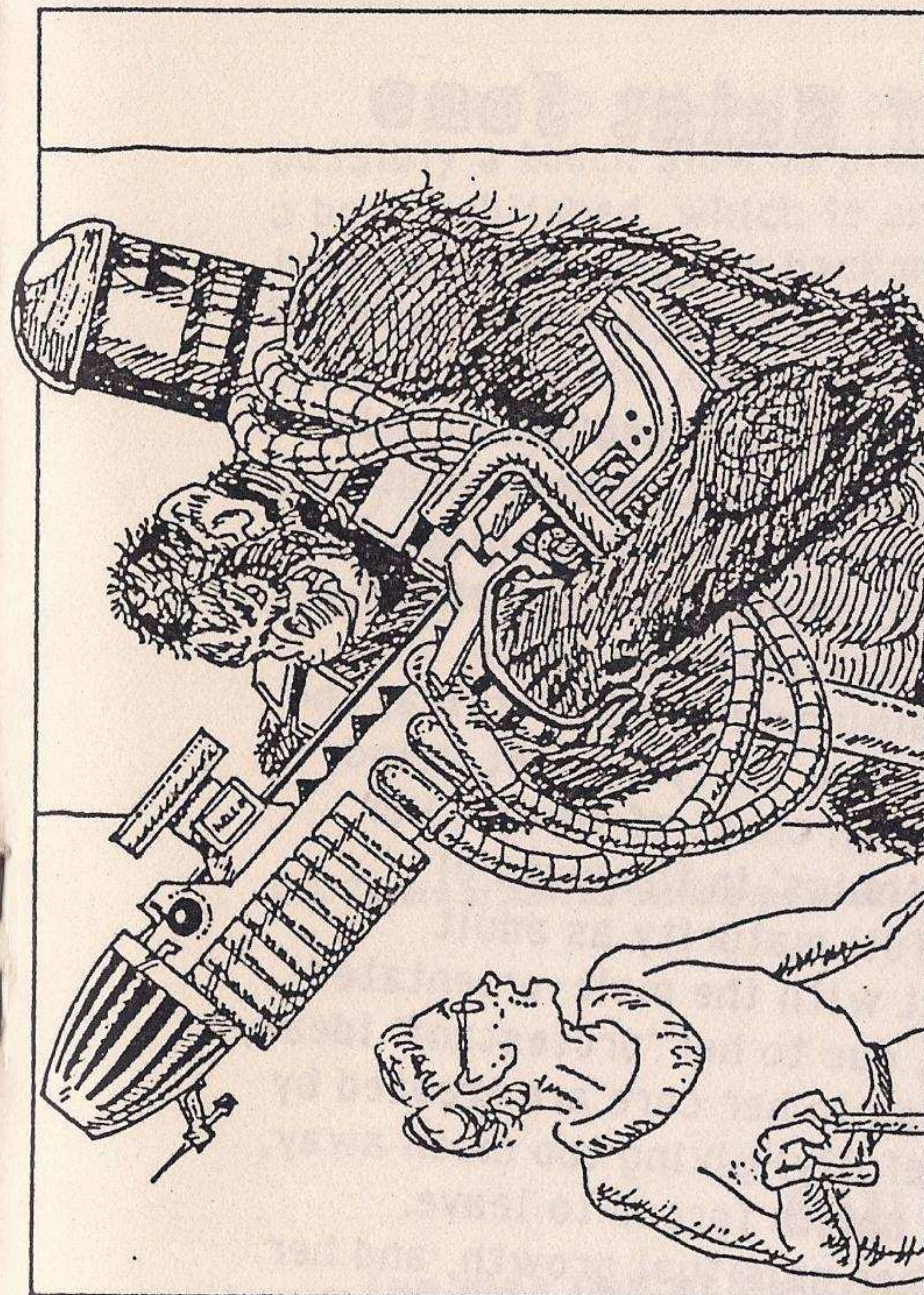
If the theory is so flimsy, why are so many scientists and materialists so passionately attached to it? Why do you hear people like Richard Dawkins getting in a state over the fundamentalists in the States who want the creationist view taught in schools as well. The

reason is of course, that for the follower of scientific religion, evolution is a necessary belief not a proven fact. If you don't believe in anything higher than the material world, you have to believe life came about by accident otherwise you would be forced to put a designer into the story. You would then be faced with the frightening possibility of coping with unknowns and mysteries. Although the theory is unprovable it is a way of making simple materialistic sense of reality by reducing everything to survival adaptation. It gives you your feeling of complete ontological security. In other words, it functions as a fundamentalist faith. It's on the grounds of its use as a fundamentalist faith that I criticise evolution. As a theory, a religious theory even, it has its uses and its beauty. But it's not the whole story. I feel the same way about the creationist argument. The miracles of nature are to me very persuasive evidence for the idea of a deliberate design. What I don't like is when the people put the designer into a box. The omnipotent Christian big daddy box for instance. That certainly can't be the whole story! I don't believe any of the intellectual structures we use to make sense of the world are. They all have their uses but I wish we could stop making fortresses and tanks out of them.

Fundamentalism of the missionary kind is, I believe, one of the great destructive forces in the world. A fundamentalist faith in the utter superiority of the technological products of Western Science has brought hellish destruction on both the planet itself and to the less technologically advanced peoples of the world, and Christianity's belief in its superiority has been the other half of the monster. But I am not going to launch into an anti-Western diatribe. I don't have a fundamentalist faith in the 'East' or the North American shaman either.

Fundamentalism, or bigotry, of any kind is based on fear, a fear that goes back to infancy. Emotionally infantile Western men with their scientific toys have brought us, in spite of all the destruction, to the point where we are becoming one little planet, and a new acceptance of the crystalline nature of reality has become a necessity. Let's hope we can take that evolutionary quantum jump into maturity and the New Age becomes a proven fact.

Lorna Mitchell



The Revolution of Saint Jone

Lorna Mitchell
pub. Women's Press

This is Lorna Mitchell's first novel, published recently by the Womens' Press. It is set on Earth in a post-Armageddon society dominated by the techno-religious Krischan belief. The book follows the spiritual, moral and sexual development of Jone Grifan, a 'saint', or initiate of Krischanism. After graduating from her theological training centre in Strylya, she is sent as a missionary to Embra, in the Yukeys, a wet, windy group of islands off the north-western coast of Yurope. Her mission is to instruct the young 'ethnics' in the ways of Krischanism, that they may reach full maturity as adult Krischans. She comes in to conflict with the male-orientated heirachy of the missionary school, due to her 'protestant' ideas, and her anger at the way the ethnics in her care are treated by the male priesthood. Without (hopefully) giving too much away, things finally come to a head, and she is forced to leave.

In concurrence with charting her spiritual growth, and her gradual awareness that the Krischan belief is not the be-all and end-all of religious expression, the book follows Jone's increasing knowledge of inter-personal relations and emotions. Although the Krischan belief abhors physical love, and despite her own, deeper revulsion for the touch of a fellow human being, Jone finds herself increasingly drawn towards Mik ArBrenan, a priest at the school, and Luner, a female ethnic tear-away in her charge.

Although at first glance, the religious appearance of this book may provide a disinsentive for reading it, the storyline is a strong, thought-provoking portrayal of a future society governed by strict religious codes and dominated by men. This society is one wherein extreme emotions, or 'idistic tendancies', are controlled using drugs administered directly to the appropriate parts of the brain. For initiates, this is overseen by the metal skull-cap they wear, controlled by the wearer, known as the 'soul'.

It is also a society where computer technology is restricted to the Krischan system, with the ultimate aim of Krischanism being the gathering of all humanity into a global data library, 'Almyty Gawd'. It is a stagnant society, intolerant of others, insular, and oppressive. That Jone manages to survive at all is an added draw.

I found Ms. Mitchell's book thoroughly enjoyable, though possibly a touch slow in places (who am I to complain? She's had a book published, which is one more than I have). I found the ideas challenging, the background to the main events plausible, well thought out and well presented, and the story kept me interested to the end.

Although 'The Revolution of Saint Jone' may not appeal to everyone, particularly priced at £4.95 for a paperback, I can personally recommend it as a good read, and a very competent first novel.

Clive Rowland
(the X-fuzz)

P.S. Cheers to Z.W. for letting me read his copy. I suppose I'd better get one of my own!

Ian Watson

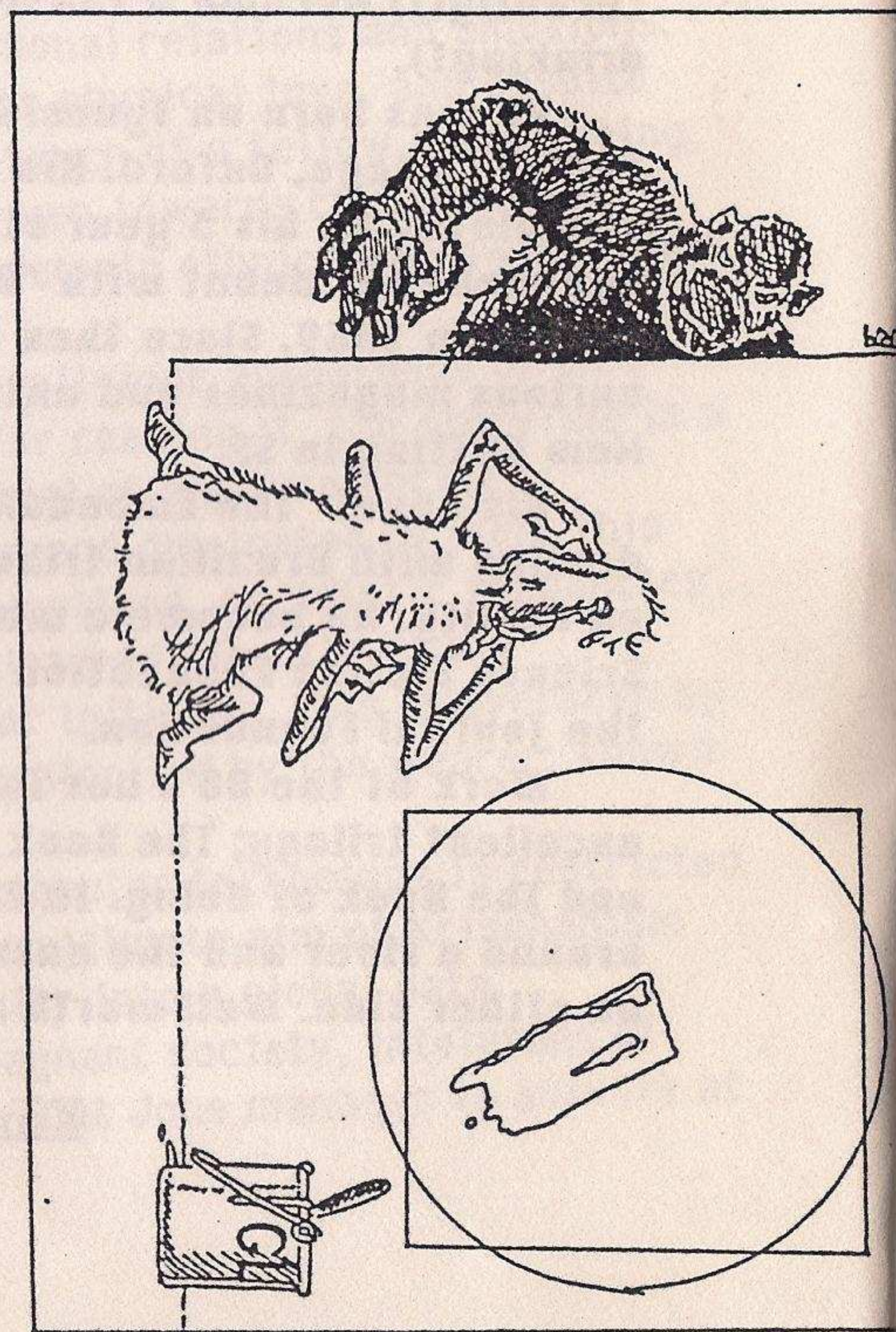
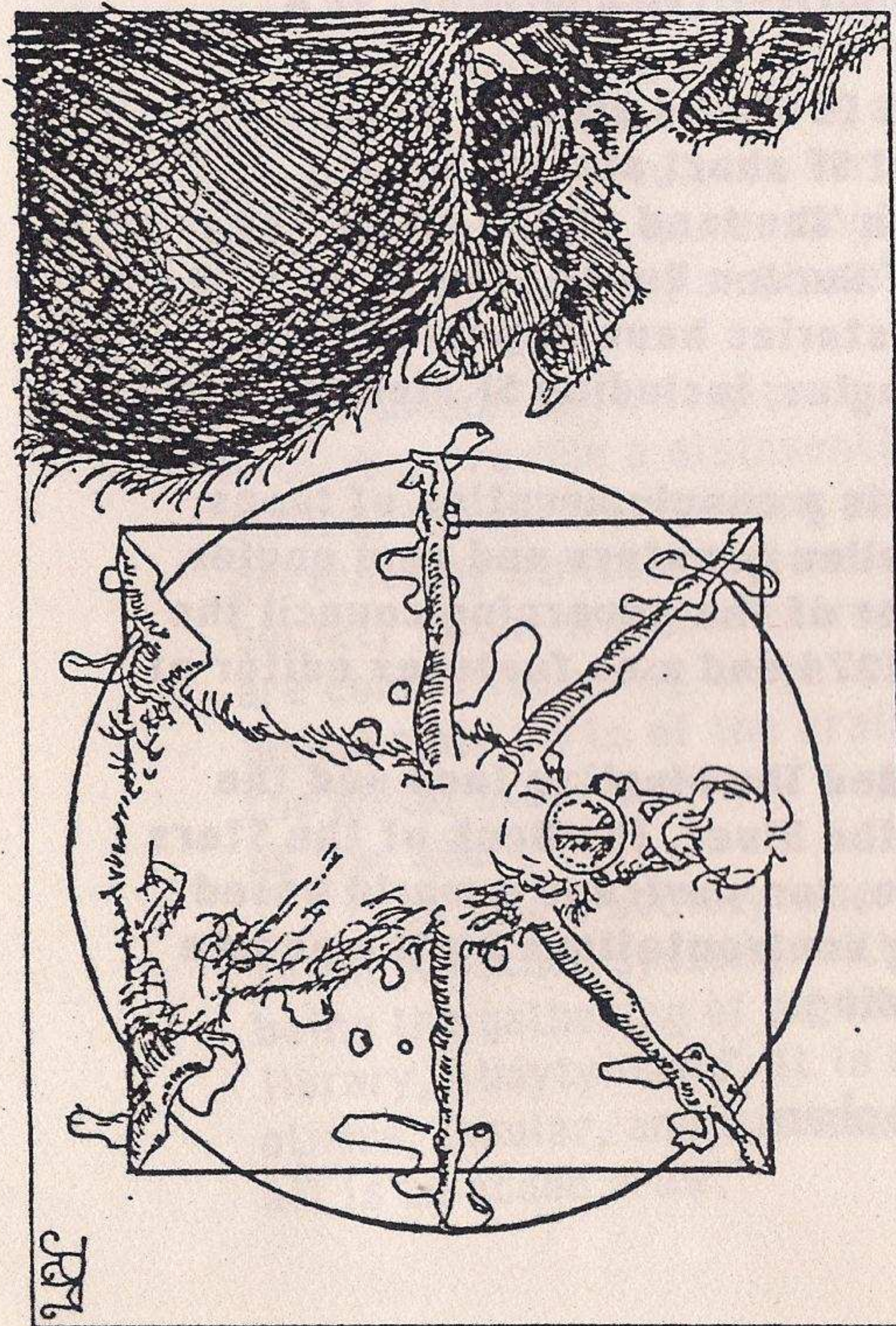
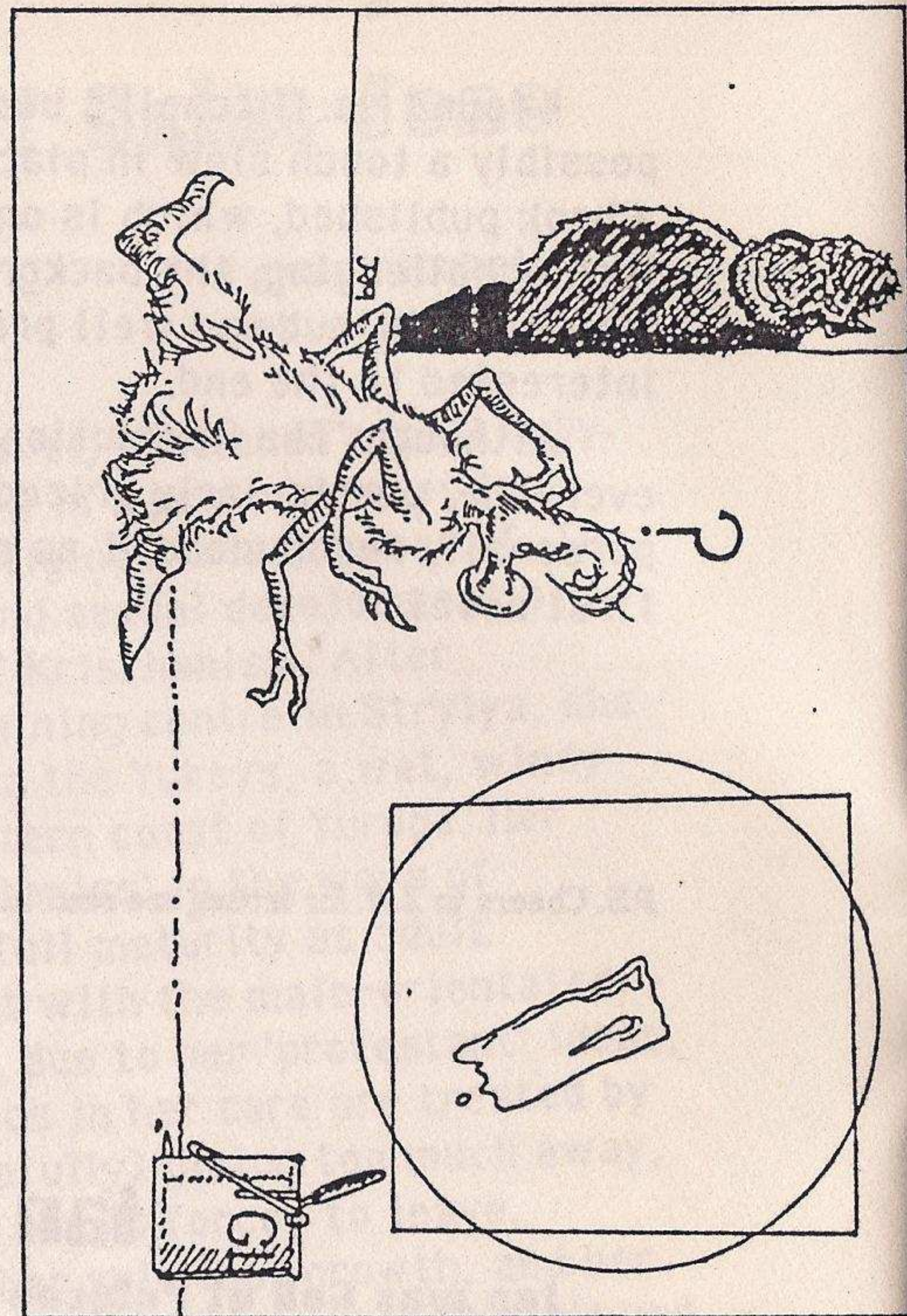
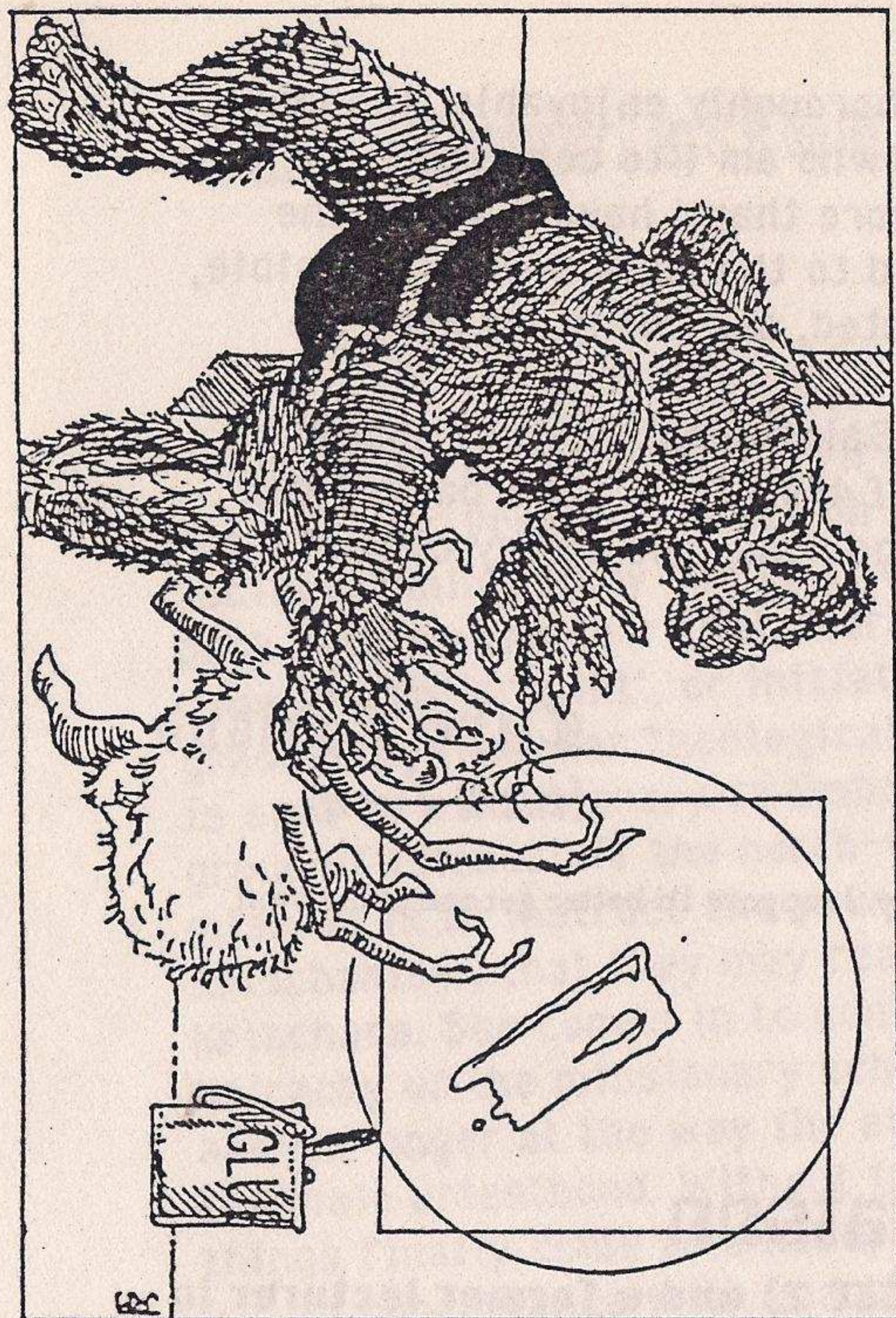
Ian was 60H at Polycon 2 (SSC 2) and a former lecturer in Tanzania and Tokyo - a definite globetrotter - and has recently(!) become a full-time writer (10% writing, 90% drinking!).

He was born on Tyneside in 1943 and studied English at Balliol College, Oxford. His first SF short stories were stimulated by his 3 year stay in 'the land of the rising sun', and made his debut with "Roof Garden Under Saturn" in New Worlds in 1969. Since then his stories have appeared in various magazines and anthologies, including SF Monthly and New Writing in SF.

His novel "The Embedding" is a conglomeration of ideas, dealing with Brazilian tribes, alien questors and new angles on reality. He became a member of the governing council the Science Fiction Foundation in 1974 and was features editor of the journal Foundation.

Work of the 80's has included The Martian Inca and the excellent trilogy; The Book of the River, The Book of the Stars and The Book of Being. In these, Ian portrays a world based around a river and the ensuing confrontations by the people on either side. Well worth reading.

Kim Banham



It's out of this world



THERE were some strange sights at Hatfield Poly this weekend when the Science Fiction and Fantasy Society held its seventh convention.

About 60 sci-fi fans turned up for the event and the guest of honour was fantasy artist Bryan Talbot, who drew the Nemesis strip for a science-fiction magazine, *2000 AD*. He is pictured with fans Tony Distin and Jane Fennell.

Member Dave Lermit said the two days of films, talks and displays were a great success. "It was a small but very convivial convention," he said.

The society meets at the Poly every Wednesday night and outsiders are welcome to join. Anyone who is interested in joining should ring Hatfield 79000, ext. 2798, and leave a message.

Mythago Mythology

In times past, man lived as animals do: with the land as opposed to on it. And with this symbiosis came a unique bond with nature that allowed Earth's greatest creation to do something quite remarkable.

Even in the years after the Second World War, some areas of Britain still retain the potential to act on this bond, tugging faintly at the ancient links between man and wood. One such area is Ryhope Wood, which can still summon heroes into existence.

Well, not heroes. Robert Holdstock's term is "Mythago", because the power generated by the wood distills its images from the mythic tales locked up in men's minds. Think carefully . . . Robin Hood fought the Norman conquerors at a time when his people had need of a figurehead to dispel some of the misery. He lived in a vast and ancient forest and rarely ventured outside it. He was never caught. Why? Because the peasants he fought for believed in him so strongly that the forest reacted, producing Robin l'Th'Hood - a mythago who passed into common legend.

The mind behind the mythagos uses them to produce a truly unique semi-fantasy world. Ryhope wood is populated by figures from all the cultures that have ever existed: Neanderthal figures mix with warriors of Celtic and Medieval legend; there is even a figure from the '14-'18 war to be found wandering the woods. Holdstock uses these images and people to create a legend of his own: brotherly conflict over a woman in a fantastic world without an elf or dimensional doorway in sight. He paints a rich and dark canvas, populating it with half remembered figures who still haunt mankind's collective memory.

And of course the really annoying thing about the book is the premise for it all is perfectly logical and provides a very neat explanation to many of Britain's mythic figures. Occam's razor falls at the feet of the author and cries "GOTCHA!" - if only "Mythago Wood" were a serious theory . . .

Part of the realism of the book stems from a facet of its rationale. It is apparently easier for a young mind to generate mythagos than for an older mind to do so. Perhaps this is because a younger mind can more readily accept the presence of such figures, or perhaps it is linked to a facet of the mind which age deteriorates, much like the many facets of ESP that have been recorded. It also means that the experiences of the story's hero, who is still a young man, are vivid and oddly surreal. They also pose a question: Are the people he meets products of his mind, or are they "permanent" mythagos? Certainly, it also forces one to ask whether Steven's experiences are pre-ordained or whether they happen because he expects them to; Would not the wood take images from his mind and give them substance? In simpler terms, are Steven's adventures a product of his own imagination? If so, then "Mythago Wood" is not the story of a journey through a

place, but the account of the journey through a mind. Is Robert Holdstock showing us obsession, through the terrifying appearance of the urscrumug and its likeness to Steven's father. Steven's allies and acquaintances seem to mirror his need for knowledge, whereas his brother's cohorts reflect his dark moods, unstable mentality and violent temper.

"Mythago Wood" is at times fantasy, at times surreal and at times chilling. It converts from being a fiction to something that writes its own legends. It is a classic.

The Amazing Spider

Invasion of the Body Snatchers

(Phillip Kaufman 1978)

Like the remake of "The Thing" (hallowed be the name of John Carpenter), this update of the 1956 classic is really more of a sequel, as the Kevin McCarthy character, last seen running through the traffic screaming "You're next!", is also seen at the start of this film continuing his warning. The story is updated and changed from small-town paranoia to the urban claustrophobia of San Francisco. Special effects are updated and much more graphic (and nightmarish) and the ending is a real chiller. As in the case of "The Thing", many reviewers, who could not bear to see the old classic remade, tried to quickly push the film into obscurity, but unlike "The Thing" they succeeded. A much better film than people give credit for.

I could do some pretentious bullshit about how both the original and the remake are both films of their decades . . . (That's quite sufficient Chris)

Chris the X-ternal

SHIZZ - Decaid's Guest Artist.

Real name's Sherratt - everyone calls him Shez. Comes from Peterbough. That's his stuff on the front cover (well some of his stuff). He also did the Vampire on the poster. What else do you need to know? Some personal stuff? He's despicably young for someone that talented (rumour says 17). Influences? Well he seems to pick up things by some sort of osmosis, incorporating ideas he's not really seen. The observers see echocs of Sienkewicz and Giger primarily. I see bits of Beardsley - I hesitate to think what will happen if he discovers Spare.

Till then I'll happily gaze at my Shez's and mumble Shez Kia Cultos.

If you see around, buy him a drink (fruit juice perhaps), he's rather shy.

Glad to have you Shez. Have a great con.

Z.W.

Thanks to:-

House on the Borderland (esp. Dave)
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Ian Watson
The Zigzag Wanderer
Knockabout
Cineplex (esp. Phil Crace)
Alan Moore
Dave Gibbons
Contributors to Grendel/Hellblaser packs
Tom Frame
Brett Ewins
Lisa Tuttle
Jane Johnson & Unwin Hyman
Women's Press

Jamie Delano
Richard Piers Rayner
Mark Buckingham
Matt Wagner
The Pander Bros.
Pat Mills
Denny Derbyshire
Dave Carson
Brian Lumley
Sideshow Comics
H.B.

AND ANYONE WE'DE FORGOTTEN.