

Ivan All this would make perfect sense if you only understood what we were talking about.

Penny I am coherent and oo! my mouth's come back.

Gerard If you were my nephew I could disown you; adopted stepmother I can't.

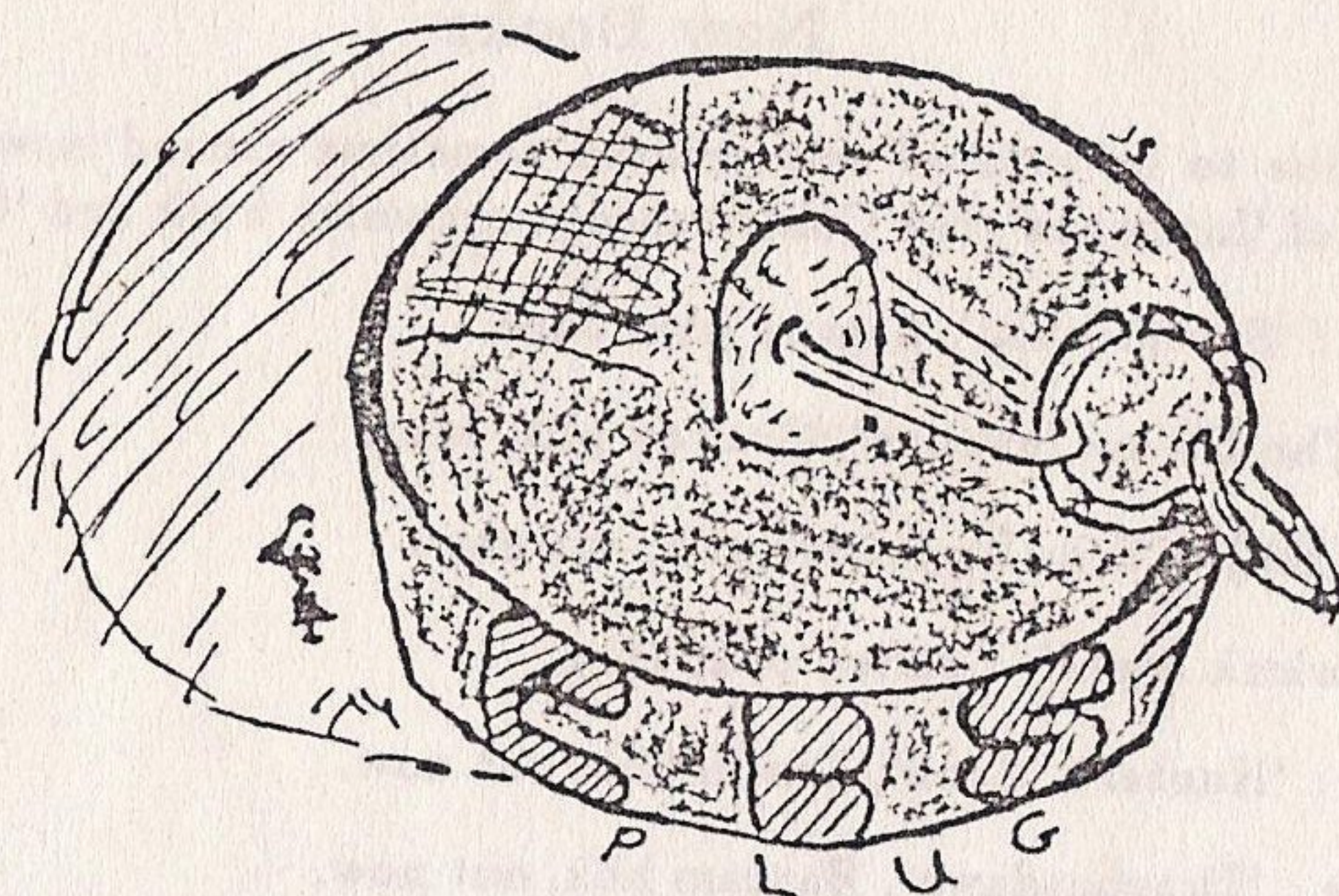
Colin I've got a special technique that's really disgusting.

Colin I like that way you strum your nipple.

Jason No matter how perverted you are, Penny still has to come out on top.

Jason Just because I sit in the corner talking about submarines and cocktail sticks, everyone thinks I'm strange.

Ivan Yes, Penny's done it, but that was with her fingers and she didn't get all the way through



A Message From...

As you noticed above, or at least were meant to notice, what you are now reading is a *plug* for CBS, not the TV channel but the Comic-Book society which came into being in the middle of Michaelmas term, and truly started functioning in Hilary. The aim of the society is to 'encourage and enable the wider reading and appreciation of comic-books, graphic novels, and other forms of sequential art, and to provide an opportunity for people with such interests within the University to meet,' to quote the Constitution. What this means is that OUSFG members with their heads in the sand who haven't heard about CBS, or who haven't yet gotten around to coming to a CBS meeting should come 'round and sample our delights: the library, the discussions, the magazine, the newsletter, the people (... The aforesaid meetings take place in Mark Boyes' room — that is, Christchurch, Peck Quad, Staircase 6, Room 4, on Tuesdays (a specially chosen evening when there are minimal OUSFG and RPGSOC commitments) at 8:00. Check Daily Info on Tuesdays for any changes, especially later in term when Mark wants his room back for revision... At the meetings, we discuss such topics as: (last term) Stray Toasters, RedFox, Comic Strips, and The Dark Knight Returns. This term we will have an equally good line-up for you, if heads have to roll for it. Do struggle along to it, get knocked out by our wit and scintillating arguments, get converted and join up, preferably. Now I hope to see a massive influx of OUSFG people becoming CBS people: don't disappoint me! (You won't like me when I'm disappointed... (Believe it! She's dangerous! — Ad))

Credits

This newsletter was typed by Matt and Jen. Adrian did the TeXnical stuff. Give anything for the newsletter (reviews, dead vicar jokes, quotes ...) to Matt Bishop, or he'll sing to you.

VALIS knows who's going to deliver this...

J Bray
Exeter

Exciting New Orifice!

EARLY TRINITY 89

RIP Dead Dog — here comes the Exciting New Orifice! (Any ideas for a more tasteful title, anyone?)

OUSFG News

YOUR ILLUSTRIOUS NEW COMMITTEE ARE —

President Penny Heal (2nd year, Maths & Philosophy, Somerville)

Secretary Matt Bishop (2nd year, Maths, Jesus)

Treasurer Mark Adams (1st year, Maths & Computing, Lincoln)

Librarian Adrian Cox (2nd year, Eng. & Computing, St. John's)

Librarian (as of next October) Chris Williamson (1st year, Maths & Computing, Queens)

Dogsbody / Rag rep. Stuart Aston (Old as the hills, Acupuncture, generally Somerville)

Dogsbody / Video rep. Colin Johnson (1st year, Biochemistry, Queens)

Newsletter editors Adrian Cox & Matt Bishop

LIBRARY MEETINGS

Library meetings are still in Adrian's room (as indeed is the library — what a happy coincidence) which is 22 Museum Road Room 6. They are at 8:15 on Sundays, moving into the Prestwich room in St Johns after about 9:00. Advance warning: we will have to get all those books and shelves out of there at the end of this term; anybody who has either a car, or somewhere where we can put them, or both, should let one of the committee know about it. All offers of help gratefully received; we'll be pestering you again next newsletter. Thank you for your cooperation.

FUNDRAISING

Last term we raised sixty-nine pounds exactly from the sponsored assassination, with Simon Perkins, Marina MacDonald and Stuart Aston getting wet and/or sticky in the cause. This term, Jason has offered to have his head shaved for rag if he can get enough sponsorship. Other than that we have no rag events planned — does anybody have any ideas? (If so, please tell Stuart.)

PUNT PARTY

This annual ceremony of drunken debauchery on the Cherwell is scheduled to take place sometime this term, probably on Saturday of fourth week at around 2pm. Not surprisingly, this means we'll need punts, so if your college has some form of cheap (preferably free) punt hire from the Cherwell Boathouse, and you're likely to be coming, please let Matt know. The more punts the better; there are never enough punts for all the people who want to come.

MERCHANDISE

Anybody who ordered sweatshirts or T-shirts last time and hasn't collected them or paid for them yet should do so; see Mark Adams before he sees you. The OUSFG mug will shortly be returning with a new design, and Mark will be taking orders sometime soon — price around two pounds each. The threat of an OUSFG tie has not yet totally dwindled; watch this space.

VIDEOS

Videos are still on Mondays of even weeks. The venue is undecided (we'll let you know) and the first couple of videos will probably be (VALIS and the video shop permitting):—

- 2nd week — Mad Max of some variety, or possibly several varieties.
- 4th week — Barbarella...?

DISCUSSION MEETINGS

The first few discussions this term will be held in the airy and spacious surroundings of Penrose 14, Somerville, and will be:—

- 1st week — Communicating with aliens (John Bray)
- 2nd week — Russian sf (Colin Johnson)
- 3rd week — Iain Banks (Jason Stevens)
- 4th week — Comics (Jenni Scott)
- 5th week — Lucius Shepard (Chris Williamson)

After this, it gets vague. Anybody who wants to do a talk later on this term should see Matt. Ditto for anyone who'd like to volunteer their room as a venue for next year's discussions. (Thinks: Fat chance...)

SFINX

Yes, Sfinx is still around! Sfinx 5 is currently in the making, and anybody interested in contributing short stories or helping to type things in should contact Jane McCarthy, St Hilda's. There is a writers' (Thinks: careful with that apostrophe, or Jane'll kill you...) workshop on Saturday of 3rd week for all those interested; the venue is not yet decided.

Outside of Oxford

PUB MEETINGS

South-eastern SF fandom in general congregates in The Wellington, Waterloo Road, London on the first Thursday of each month, from about 7:00 onwards. This term, that means Thursday of 2nd and 6th weeks. OUSFG members past and present usually make an effort to get there, even out of term time.

CONVENTIONS

MEXICON III (26–29 May; i.e. Friday of 5th week to Monday of 6th week) Albany Hotel, Nottingham. Cost: fifteen pounds, payable to 'Mexicon III' c/o Greg Pickersgill, 7a Lawrence Road, South Ealing, London W5 4XJ. No official GoH, but lots of authors will be attending. Hotel costs twenty pounds per person per night, but that is assuming only one person per single room. There will definitely be an OUSFG contingent going, and there will probably be an OUSFG room where you can crash. Ask around to make sure. Certainly worth going to, even if exams do loom a bit large by then.

ICONOCLASM (16–18 June; i.e. Friday of 8th week to Sunday of 9th week) Griffin Hotel, Leeds. GoH Diane Duane, Peter Morwood. Cost: thirteen pounds to "Iconoclasm" c/o Jenny Glover, 16 Aviary Place, Armley, Leeds LS12 2NP. This is bang in the middle of exams for many people, and so the OUSFG contingent may be very small or even non-existent. Ask around if you're interested.

INTERCON 89 (4–6 August) University Of Oslo. GoH Samuel Delany & others; at least a third of the programme will be in English. Membership only ten pounds; accomodation highly cheap. Contact Ken McVeigh, 37 Firs Road, Milnthorpe, Cumbria. Ivan is going and may have more details if you're interested.

two weeks. Neither 'Heaven Cent' nor 'Robot Adept' is yet available here; I got them from an SF bookshop in Lincoln which is the best SF bookshop I've ever seen.

'Heaven Cent' is the eleventh 'Xanth' book and the second in the fourth 'Xanth' trilogy. (That does actually make mathematical sense.) It is more twee than any gone before (you may not believe this, but it's true) and is written from the point of view of a nine-year-old desperate to discover the facts of life. The quest is enthusiastically aided by every female he meets (he's a prince, you see), and he ends the book engaged to two of them.

'Robot Adept' is the fifth in the 'Split Infinity' trilogy (now renamed the 'Apprentice Adept' series...). This uses most of the same ideas as Heaven Cent, and they even have almost identical cover pictures. Those of you who thought it impossible to go downhill after 'Out of Phaze' are hereby proved wrong. 'Nuff said, I think.

Okay, so both these books were crap. But they made quite a change after Joyce's 'Ulysses', which is the book I read before them, so I did actually quite enjoy them.

Simon Mcleish

New Books

A selection of books due to be printed or reprinted sometime around now, gleaned (with one obvious exception) from the pages of 'Interzone', the Contrivance programme book and 'Critical Wave'.

- CARD, Orson Scott : 'Seventh Son', Legend pbk, June.
- DICK, Philip K. : 'The Divine Invasion', Grafton pbk, May.
- GARNETT, David (Ed.) : 'Zenith', Sphere pbk, out now.
- JETER, K.W. : 'Morlock Night', Grafton pbk, May.
- KILWORTH, Garry : 'Hunter's Moon', Unwin hbk, out now.
- McCAFFREY, Anne : 'Dragonsdawn', Bantam hbk, out now.
- PRATCHETT, Terry : 'Pyramids', Gollancz hbk, June.
- SHEPARD, Lucius : 'Life During Wartime', Paladin pbk, April.
- SLADEK, John : 'Bugs', Macmillan hbk, April.
- STURGEON, Theodore : 'Venus Plus X', Sphere pbk, out now.
- SWANWICK, Michael : 'Vacuum Flowers', Legend pbk, out now.
- TEPPER, Sheri S. : 'The Awakeners', Corgi pbk., May
- ZOOL, M.H. : 'The Bloomsbury Good Reading Guide To SF And Fantasy', Bloomsbury pbk, July.

Context

Marina It's the way he looks so unbearably smug while he's being tortured that gets to me.

Jason I've done it with Simon and it's not worth it.

Ivan I think that the basic problem is that you're confusing acupuncture with crucifixion.

Matt I've had her for two nights — it's your turn now.

Adrian It's lucky you didn't arrive a few minutes earlier — I was stuck to the desk with superglue.

M. John Harrison (*Genuine Author Quote!!*) Ivan's trying to solo his way into oblivion.

Adrian I'm fed up with being bitten... and all this furniture — no, I'd better not. Simon's used this chair.

Reviews

MOONTRAP

Let's face it, the omens for this film were not good. The preview that was shown at Hatfield Poly last October made the film look like a substandard version of 'Alien', and when it was announced that the European premiere would be at Contrivance, nobody seemed terribly enthusiastic. The Contrivance cinema was, however, packed to capacity with sf fans, all of whom were just waiting to loathe every minute of it. It started well. In the first twenty minutes, it became obvious that the director was not going to take the film seriously, and the characters were consciously parodying 'Star Trek' and similar sf classics. Then our heroes, who had obviously not seen 'Alien', spotted an alien spacecraft out of the window of their shuttle. Going over to it, one of them finds something that looks remarkably like either an egg or a seed. So he puts it in the hold, and they take it back to Earth. (Smart move, eh?) At this point the film started to take itself seriously, and promptly fell apart. 'Alien' had minor plot holes ('I'm just going off into this dark hold, all by myself, for a while...'), but you could easily ignore them. 'Moontrap' had inconsistencies that reached out, grabbed you by the throat and screamed 'Look at me! Aren't I ludicrous?' Were we really expected to believe in an alien civilisation that is intelligent enough to build enormous spaceships, but have been delaying their invasion for twenty thousand years because they haven't been able to get the last part for their ship ('...it'll be in next Thursday, guv'nor...')? Furthermore, the last part they need turns out to be the landing craft from an Apollo rocket. Yes, seriously. Even then, they don't notice the nuclear bomb cunningly concealed in the aforesaid lander.

The film is, in case you hadn't already guessed, dreadful. By the time we got to the sad bit, where one of the heroes dies, the audience were rolling about with laughter. Mind you, the death didn't seem to affect his best friend, who (despite now being stranded on the surface of the moon with only a startlingly good-looking 20,000 year-old female and a psychotic alien death machine for company) immediately wandered off for a gratuitous sex scene. I could go on with more idiocies from the plot, but I genuinely can't be bothered — they're the sort of things any ten year-old would notice. Science fiction films outgrew this kind of rubbish decades ago; I entirely agree with whoever it was who walked round the convention changing the posters from 'Moontrap' to 'Mooncrap'. This film is an insult to the intelligence; avoid it at all costs.

Matt Bishop

J.G. BALLARD — RUNNING WILD

On the morning of June 25th, 1988, all 32 adults in Pangbourne Village, an exclusive housing development in Berkshire, are murdered, and their 13 children vanish. The motives and perpetrators behind the massacre are explored in this novella (an overgrown short story that couldn't find a collection) The narrator, Dr Richard Greville, is Deputy Psychiatric Advisor to the Metropolitan Police, and he is called in after two months investigation produces no result. Sure enough, he discovers the truth behind the killings (and painfully obvious it is too — there are more clues than page numbers in this book), and equally sure enough, the Home Office refuse to listen to him. Ballard is back on his home ground of inner space here. I'm not sure that this book does 'challenge our most cherished assumptions about the relationship between parents and their children' as the blurb claims — it seems Ballard would rather have Ian Brady and Marietta Higgs as babysitters than Dr Benjamin Spock — but it does put forward the idea that too much tender loving care can really screw you up. Pangbourne Village is a totally planned enterprise, almost a living experiment in family relations — a totally sane society. And 'in a totally sane society, madness is the only freedom'. The strange atmosphere of Pangbourne which is conjured up by Ballard (like the Reverend Jim Jones presenting 'Playschool') is heightened by the bizarre, stylised, almost perspectiveless illustrations by Janet Woolley. Normally I don't like illustrations in books (unless they've got speech balloons), but here it does work quite well. Overall, then, a very nicely produced work, stylishly written, and well recommended.

Jason Stevens

K.W. JETER — THE GLASS HAMMER

After reading 'Dr Adder', I was curious to see what on earth Jeter could find to write about next; he seemed to have produced something about as revolting as anybody could reasonably expect — could he get worse? Fortunately, the answer appears to be no. 'The Glass Hammer', which has now been in paperback for some considerable time has very little sex or violence, and is the better for it. Jeter never says which parts of the plot, if any, are intended to happen in 'reality' — nor whether there is any such thing as reality in the context of this novel. The book seems to be the script of a videotape, in which people are concerned largely with making videotapes of 'sprints' — car races across the American desert, dodging missiles en route — in which the participants are seen watching videos, and so on.

Schuyler, the hero, is a sprinter who is believed by millions of people to be the Father of God. He doesn't believe it, but then he is told he is under divine protection from the missiles — which appears to be true... All of this is mixed in with, of all things, a post-structuralist analysis of the wreckage of a stained glass window. Philip Dick's influence on Jeter is quite obvious from the content of the book, but Jeter is not merely an imitator; he has his own ideas and is a good enough writer to be able to express them clearly and concisely. If you were put off Jeter's novels by the stomach-turning contents of 'Dr Adder', then you've missed something; this book is well worth reading.

Matt Bishop

GARRY KILWORTH — THE SONGBIRDS OF PAIN

I loved this book. I thought it was cute and cuddly (yes, and callipygian), and I wanted to take it away and do immoral things with it. However, Adrian stopped me doing anything with the library copy, so I had to buy my own. Still, it was a good deal — thirteen short stories for less than the price of a Kylie Minogue album, and the book's better to listen to as well. Analysing a collection is never easy, but recurrent themes do appear. Obsession is one — Kilworth's characters tend to be fixated on something, whether it's the discovery of the fourth primary, collecting bridges or seeing what death is like. Exotic locations is another — only one of the stories is set entirely in Britain, and that has enough of the sinister about it to make it totally foreign. The mood of the stories is invoked particularly well, and this for me is what makes them. For pure atmosphere 'Blind Windows' and 'Almost Heaven' are hard to better, but choosing the 'best story' by this criterion is very difficult as they're all so good.

Kilworth can also produce believable characters with a few quick sentences, and develop them more in twenty pages than some authors can in entire fantasy trilogies. Few of the stories have twist endings, but when they do come they're like being beaten up by your granny. I don't particularly want to single out individual stories for praise, but I think I will anyway, so there. 'Let's Go To Golgotha!' gives a new slant on the crucifixion, 'The Man Who Collected Bridges' shows how to really screw up someone's holiday, and 'The Dissemblers' is a beautifully sado-masochistic piece of obsession. Pride of place, though, goes to the title story, 'The Songbirds Of Pain'. I still can't decide whether it's sensual and poetic or sick and pornographic. All the stories belong in here, and you couldn't improve the collection by removing one. I think this book is wonderful (see my 'Top Ten Books' for proof of that) — hard to fault for anything. Read and be awed.

Jason Stevens

T.H. WHITE — THE ONCE & FUTURE KING

'The Once And Future King' is not just another re-telling of 'Malory', it gives a more readable slant to the narrative and gives the same story a different perspective. The tale is divided into four books, each of which I thought of as a season. In the first book, 'The Sword In The Stone', we are shown the spring of Arthur's life: its joys and the future promise of the Round Table are told with a humorous air. The second is 'The Queen Of Air And Darkness' which is summer, the forming of the Round Table, a book of brave deeds and noble futures. 'The Ill-Made Knight' is the autumn, where life begins to slow down and we get the harvest, with the quest for the Holy Grail. Finally there is 'The Candle In The Wind', the winter of the story, when the Round Table is split, about to shatter completely, and Arthur is about to die. The story gets darker as you read it, until right at the end you are shown the faintest glimpse of spring again. I loved this book — read it.

Stuart Aston

NICOLAI TOLSTOY — THE COMING OF THE KING — THE FIRST BOOK OF MERLIN

This is probably just about the strangest Arthur retelling I have ever read (barring of course 'Camelot 3000'). Arthur does not actually appear in the book, which is written as a sort of Merlin autobiography, told by his ghost to a Welsh king. It is not set at any particular time. (From internal evidence it appears to be about one hundred years both before and after Arthur's reign. (I don't understand this, either (though Jen does).)) It is basically in a very Celtic idiom, based on eg [sic] Gildas; every character seems to have a five syllable name with about twelve w's in it. The plot is fairly sketchy: Merlin is born, thrown into the sea as an evil omen, becomes a herring for forty years, is caught in a fish trap and turns into a man again (a very, very weird bath and then becomes principal advisor to the local king. It is interesting; the detail is convincing (though not accurate) and I would probably rank it as my second favorite Arthur retelling after T.H. White. But then, the competition is not exactly brilliant...

Also, can someone explain why it is good to be 'like a leek in battle'?

Simon Mcleish

EDWIN ABBOT, WRITING AS A. SQUARE — FLATLAND

'Flatland' is over one hundred years old. Its mathematics have become almost commonplace; its social satire is losing its edge. The style is dated (reminiscent of, say, Verne or Wells, with chapter titles like 'How The Stranger Vainly Endeavoured to Reveal to Me in Words the Mysteries of Spaceland'). It is nevertheless worth reading. At just 91 pages, it is an object lesson in succinct writing. The satire will not dull until 'class' and sexism — especially the latter — have lost their meaning. The mathematics of life in a two-dimensional universe is easily understandable but presented in an original way. A. Square lives in a 2D universe, pursuing his flat, middle class life which he describes in commonplace detail, the mathematics interweaving with comedy and parody. This existence is ended by the intervention of a sphere from Spaceland, proclaiming 'The Gospel Of Three Dimensions', who flips A. Square out of Flatland altogether. The remainder of the book shows the poor square, rejected by the sphere for suggesting the existence of a fourth dimension, vainly trying to explain to the disbelieving Flatlanders his ebbing memories of Space. He is, as the sphere predicts, incarcerated by the totalitarian Flatland society.

Flatland itself is weird. The women, or straight lines, are viewed as irrational, emotional and fragile (Square's wife displays none of these qualities). Being straight lines, they are invisible from end on, and possess a deadly sharp point. The men are polygons ranging from isosceles triangles (workers, police and criminals) through the upper middle class polygons with, say, twenty sides to the near circular rulers. The techniques by which they recognise each other form a major theme because, in this perspectiveless universe, this is the knowledge the upper classes guard jealously to maintain their status. The women are not even taught abstract language for similar reasons. Abbot also takes passing swings at Oxbridge (the 'great' university of Wentbridge exists primarily to teach a skill useful solely in maintaining the status of the rulers, roughly like B.A. Etiquette) and religion as the basis of state control. However, he reserves his greatest venom for people who are unwilling to think for themselves and blindly follow a 'party line' of any kind. Scene after scene, in Linelane, Flatland, Spaceland and Pointland shows A. Square vainly trying to make arrogant listeners acknowledge something beyond themselves. I liked 'Flatland'. My copy is available to be borrowed. Meanwhile, I sign myself:

A. Pentagon

(One brief quotation: *Mr Smith, permit me to feel Mr Jones*)

Paul Sherliker

PIERS XANTHONY — HEAVEN SENT AND ROBOT ADEPT

Well, Piers Anthony has now become the second most prolific author of all time (behind no, not Asimov, but Enid Blyton); and the way he has done this is through books like these. Those of you who have read Anthony's books will probably not be surprised to learn that over his entire career he has written a novel on average every

UNICON X (11-13 August) Queens University, Belfast. GoH Terry Pratchett (aargh!) and Harry Harrison. Cost: six pounds attending, two pounds supporting to U-NICON, 106 Somerton Road, Belfast BT15 4DG. NiCons are, I'm told, lots of fun; the accomodation is extremely cheap (at least, it was last year) and lots of OUSFG people will be going. We'll be bidding for Unicon 11 (Spawn Of Conine) during this convention.

EASTCON '90 (13-16 April 1990) Cobden Hotel, Birmingham. GoH Iain Banks, Ken Campbell. Cost: continually changing; ask someone who's going. Write to EASTCON 90, Unit 28, Metropolitan Works, Enfield Road, London N1 5AZ. This is next year's Eastercon; it looks to be quite good, there are bound to be lots of OUSFG and ex-OUSFG people there and finding somewhere to sleep should be no problem. The Cobden, incidentally, is a cute and fluffy hotel that has hosted sf conventions before and is offering very good rates to Eastcon members.

These are the major conventions that look like attracting OUSFG members in any numbers; details of media conventions (i.e. Dr Who, Star Trek, etc...) and other goings-on can be had from the newsletter editors, who get it all from Chris O'Shea's excellent Con-Notations. Copies of Con-Notations can be found at the 'Ton or by writing to The Magician, 12 Stannard Road, Dalston, London E8 1DB.

Contrivance Report

Under pressure, I've been forced to write up a report on What I Did On My Easter Holidays, for the benefit of all those of you who are still undecided about the benefits of con-going. Unfortunately, I can't remember anything much, other than five days of enjoying myself and trying to keep a safe distance between me and Jen. So, let's start from the basics. Contrivance was the 1989 British Easter SF Convention, and it was held in St Helier, which is a damn silly place for a convention. Those of us with the time, money and inclination to go there (and there were lots of us — the con passed membership number 1000 on the second day, and most of those people were attending) were forced to admit that it was also a very good convention — solidly programmed (which made a change after Novacon and Decaid), with good cheap food, drink and accomodation. The guests of honour were Anne McCaffrey, M. John Harrison, Don Lawrence, Avedon Carol Many important lessons can be learnt from Contrivance. Perhaps the most important of these is that sleeping in the same room as Jen McGowan is a very bad idea (not that the hotel objected to four people sharing a room). Another lesson to be learnt is that endlessly hyping a film to the point where it cannot possibly be good enough to satisfy expectations is silly (q.v. the review of 'Moontrap' elsewhere in this newsletter). Yet another is that M. John Harrison and Iain Banks, if put on a panel together, will take over the entire discussion and play silly buggers for an hour (this generally livens things up a bit, so I'm not objecting). A few moments from the weekend have stuck in my mind; the cooperative games that went walkies (in a manner of speaking) down the corridors, the panel on 'Unimaginitive Sex — The Works Of John Norman' where a still small voice from the audience piped up and said 'By the way, I'm his agent in this country' (she turned out to be a very nice woman who had been trying to dump Norman's books for years and had just succeeded; her anecdotes about him were... er... revealing), the filk concert where OUSFG made fools of themselves (except for those of us who backed out, of course), Hugh Mascetti discussing the potential uses of music as a weapon, Sod's Law intervening in Jack Cohen's talk, Ivan presenting a convention bid for a con to be held eleven years in the past (the bid to hold it in Viriconium having fallen through)... the list goes on.

Incidentally, the Eastercon in 1991 will be Speculation, in Glasgow. Despite being the only bid (not counting the spoof 'Inconceivable', which actually polled a quarter of the votes) they still almost managed to lose; their room rates were so astronomical and their attitude so indifferent that people started voting for 'Hold Over Funds' and it took a recount before they won, narrowly. I can't convey the atmosphere of a con in words; an account of five days of socialising makes for very tedious reading. So you'll just have to take my word for it that Contrivance was lots of fun (possibly the best convention I've been to). Next year's Eastercon is in Birmingham, so with a bit of luck there'll be more new con-goers and more students next time.

Matt Bishop