

Word Search

No prizes, don't send it back, and try and work out which novel this word search is based around (and if you get that, which volume they're talking about). Thanks to a well known local paper for the word search (well known if you live in Matlock)

~~GRACIOUS~~
~~TUG ONE~~
~~SPACE~~
~~CODE~~
~~NATURE~~
~~HISST~~
~~SPITEOS~~
~~PEACE~~
~~SECTION~~
~~ODUR~~
~~CODE~~
~~EMPIRE~~
~~ROKE~~
~~CAUCALSIA~~
~~SULTAN BEY~~
~~TAYL~~
~~CAUCALSIA~~

S C T D M G R A C I O U S L M S P
P E U R J I H I P J K T U V R P O
A N G H S P I T E O S M G C O D E
C C O D E G H H A V F E M P I R E
E B N N C F I E C L R O K E N S O
C G E E T F Y X E W S N J A P U R
O A D S I O D U R B A Z K P Q L D
D O S N O F Z J B H A O V H W T Q
E I F S N C A U C A L S I A U A S
H Y L Q R E L A Y E R C L T N H
K N A P C P O P E N O O R O S B A
Y A G T C A A B M W I D O W Z E K
U T R A L G U N S A L M O T A Y L
W U A A W W D C E F G R X Y O A U
Y R N L G H I R A Z Z A Z V W O Y
G E T O X O B J B L K H B O U L T
Y X I W H I Z K I D S T J T K Q P
T L I T C L E P E R T I G E M N R
F H A U X S E E N R F F A A R G T

~~GUNSALMO~~
~~TOO TOO~~
~~RAZZ~~
~~RAHT~~
~~WHIZKID~~
~~LEPERTIGE~~
~~WIDOW~~
~~KARAGOZ~~
~~HAKLUYT~~
~~FLAGRANT~~
~~SPACECODE~~
~~AALOWT~~
~~POP~~
~~BEY~~
~~CHANKPOP~~
~~RELAYER~~
~~CODE~~

Name that Book

"As for the little animals, the gerbils, white mice and hamsters, they had to die their muddy little ploppy deaths so that I could get to the Skull of Old Saul."

" 'Terribly Unfortunate,' he said, 'a diode blew in one of the life-support computers. When we tried to revive our cleaning staff we discovered they'd been dead for nearly thirty thousand years. Who's going to clear away the bodies, that's what I want to know.' "

'Mankind has ah only one mm-m-m science', the Count said ... 'And what science is that?' the Baron asked. 'It's the um-m-m-ah-h science of ah-h-h discontent,' the Count said.

You can train your dog
To jump through a hoop
But it's a lot more fun
In the Speculative Fiction Group!

O.U.S.F.G. – Trinity Term 1991

Here it is again, polluting pigeon holes and causing heart failure and general confusion throughout lodges all over Oxford; this terms' first newsletter.

Committee

For those of you who missed the A.G.M. at the end of last term, here's a complete run down of the new committee:

There's a new entry at number 10 from Tim Martin at Queens', with "I'm a video rep". Moving rapidly up the committee is "Publicity Officer" by Lucy Marsterson, St. Hilda's. There's no change at newsletter editor with "Chris Ewels" Keble, and this years fastest climber is "Treasurer", by Peter Wells. Another non-mover is "He's the secretary" by Chris Ewels, Keble, but for this years number one, it's none other than "Yes sir, Mr. President!" by Dan Smithers and the Peroxides!

Chris Ewels is still librarian for the rest of this term, but after that we're looking for volunteers... Contact any of the committee if you will be in a position to hold the library next year, it would be greatly appreciated by everyone, and is excellent C.V. points if you intend to become a librarian in later life.

As to the motions, it's fair to say that the sensible ones were voted in and the stupid ones weren't, so no surprises there.

Videos

The videos this term will still be in Queen's Lecture Room A on Monday's of even weeks. The first film will begin at 7.30, and the second film will start at 9.00 providing the first has finished (there's logic for you). Also, we'll try not to make any last minute changes...

- o **Week 2** – Greystoke, the legend of Tarzan, followed by Hardware.
- o **Week 4** – Star Trek IV, The Whales, then The Lost Boys.
- o **Week 6** – Lady Hawke, Silent Running.
- o **Week 8** – Max Headroom, the movie, then Revenge of the Killer Tomatoes.

Discussion Meetings

These are still to be held in Tim Martin's Room on Queen's Lane, every Wednesday night from about 8.15pm. The door code is still 39261, next to Queens' College. Anyone wanting to give a talk would be greatly appreciated; if anyone wants to talk but can't think of a topic then just ask around at any OUSFG meeting (It's a while since someones talked about Star Trek, if someone wants a hint!).

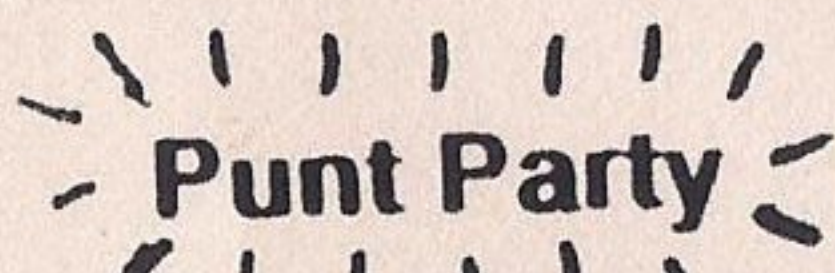
Meanwhile, discussion meetings are as follows:

- o Week 1. Chris Ewels on "Magic, style and form, hope or prediction?". There will also be a book auction of books we have in duplicate or triplicate, all funds raised will be raked into new books.
- o Week 2. Jason Stevens discusses "Theresa Gorman – she's hot stuff"
- o Week 3. Dan Smithers on a topic to be decided.
- o Week 4. Peter Wells on "Horticulture and the Three Field System".
- o Week 5. James Owen on "Tolkien and Quantum Theory, the Valiquanta (boom boom!)"
- o Week 6. Paul Sherliker, "Arthur Conan Doyle".
- o Week 7. Matt Bishop discusses "Prediction in SF" (Oh, do I?)
- o Week 8. Captain Preston on "Tinfoil, mind-control, and what happened to the ducks"

NB: Many of these are fairly changeable, especially towards the second half of the term, so check the next newsletter before turning up; also you may still get fitted in if you want to talk, I'm sure any of the above would gladly back out!

T-Shirts and Sweatshirts

They're here! Yes, actually **here!** (I use two points from the Mark Hirst school of DTP use for mixing two font sizes in the same line). Please turn up to any OUSFG meeting and collect your orders of both the old and new design, although those of you who still haven't paid will have to cough up before collection. Prices are £5.50 for a T-Shirt and £9.50 for a sweatshirt. People who ordered and haven't collected: N.Tringham, Splatch, Alex Kassimatis, J.Bray, Jack Harris, Captain Preston, P.Marrow, and Mr. McLeish. And mugs are always available (wait a bit longer and they'll be antiques).



This year's punt party will be held on Saturday 11th May, (that's the Saturday at the end of 3rd Week). This year, can everybody who can book punts from Cherwell boathouse, **book them please!** One virtual punt party is enough for anyone...

Library Books

Bring them back please, people who have had them over a term, especially impending finalists. And the library has yet more new books, so check it out...

Bill, The Galactic Hero on the Planet of the Robot Slaves – Harry Harrison.

Over twenty years ago, "Bill, The Galactic Hero" appeared and now Harrison has finally written a sequel to it, equally anti-war and equally funny. It is easy to forget that Harrison has written humorous SF for many years, particularly the Stainless Steel Rat series and his excellent parody of space opera, "Star Smashers of the Galaxy Rangers". This sequel is well up to his usual standard and continues the story of Bill, who is still fighting the alien Chingers. He is forced to volunteer for a mission to trace a metal dragon that destroys the base he is stationed at and in very few pages, the ship has crash-landed on the planet of the title. Once arrived, Harrison really lets go and we hear the story of the ship's engineer, MegaHertz Mate 2nd Class Cy Berpunk. This is a brilliant parody of Gibson et al, and it is a shame that it is so short. Needless to say, other writers are not safe and Burrough's is particularly lampooned in Harrison's lost land of Barthroom. The plot is never really that important in this kind of novel but there is plenty to follow if you really want to. Never taking itself seriously, I found this a great book to read while trying to wade through Wingrove's "Chung Kuo".

By Andrew Walley

Orson Scott Card – Tales of Alvin Maker Trilogy, 'Prentice Alvin'.

Having now read the third book, here's a brief sequel to the review of the first two books printed last issue. I was warned that the third book wasn't as good as the previous two, however I don't agree. It branched off slightly into the plight of black imported slaves during the expansion of frontier America, leaving the previous tales of Indians completely. However, the story, and indeed seperate tales within the main plot, are still wonderful tales, and he finally reveals a lot more of the nature of the 'UnMaker', the unseen enemy throughout the first two books. This is the first of the books where he uses ideas from previously printed short stories, and it is fairly easy to identify these.

One of my pet hates with large multi-book epics is that as the story develops and events become more and more world shaking, the characters often get lost in the flow of events and become unimportant and irrelevant. Luckily, all the best ones seem to avoid this (notably Tolkien and the Thomas Covenant stories), and *The Tales of Alvin Maker* also keeps the characters central to the story.

However, is this the final book? If he finishes the series here then it's a very unsatisfactory ending with nothing particularly resolved. However, if he just keeps writing and writing he'll be in danger of overflogging a good idea and losing his audience (Twin Peaks take note!) I suppose only time will tell.

Chris Ewels

Film Review Column

HIGHLANDER II, THE QUICKENING – Reviewed by Chris and James.

Don't go and watch Highlander II expecting a good sequel to Highlander. There are no nice shots of Scotland, no artistic scene cuts, and no deep questions about immortality. Indeed, if you enjoyed Highlander in any way, and don't wish that enjoyment ruined, don't go and watch it. If, however, you want a good two hours of brain-pickelling entertainment, some zappy special effects, and a script that appears to have been written by six thousand monkeys with typewriters, then this is the film for you (apparently it was actually co-written by Brian Clemens, who also wrote the New Avengers; not relevant, but then, who is?) The evil guy looks just like The Joker (without the flair of the Highlander I bad guy), the jokes are so weak and so frequent that on reaching the only emotionally touching scene in the film all the audience laughs, there's no Queen music except for one blatant plug, and lots of visual references to other films. The atmosphere is Blade Runneresque without being convincing, and basically this is one silly film.

I don't think that we've lost our sense of humour, I laughed a lot, but it was at the film rather than with the film (most of the while). It's just a shame that such a shabby waste of time and money has to be connected with the first film, which I thought was excellent. My theory is that the film company produced Highlander II in order to see how much money the advertising men could make with a complete lack of material. They press-ganged Sean Connery, a beautiful blonde and Christopher Lambert, and it's so successful they're working on Highlander III. Ho hum.

HARDWARE – Reviewed by Alan Blair.

QuikPlot... an ex-spacemarine buys a junk helmet off a "Zone Tripper" (guy who wonders around war zones picking up valuable junk), gives it to his girl for her birthday. Helmet turns out to be from a MK13 war machine, with self-repairing and general handiness facilities. The woman sticks it in her latest sculpture, goes to sleep, meanwhile the MK13 builds itself a body out of the various junk in the apartment. Suddenly, then, it's a girly-being-hunted-in-heavy-security-room-while-boyfriend-tries-to-get-back film.

"Blatant rip-off" seems to have been used a lot to slag it off, and it certainly is that; take one part BladeRunner, a little Mad Max, a tiny smidgen of Alien, mix well with parts of RoboCop (and possibly others), spread with a plotline lifted from 2000ad (originally uncredited and cause of a bit of legal hassle) and SPLAT, here's Hardware.

It's a cheap British production, made by a group of more-or-less first time film-makers, and you may not be expecting that much from it. Saying all that, though, is a complete red herring 'cos I thought it was pretty damn good considering. Nicely filmed, fun, plenty of blood, script and acting better than you'd expect; what more could you sensibly ask for? It's basically Max Headroom for the cinema, and it's just as enjoyable.

Matt's PicoCon Review

By the standards of previous PicoCons, this was pretty feeble. The programme was comparable to Shoestringcon (although the organisers did manage to compress it into one day rather than spreading it over a weekend). So, in lieu of a programme, we went staggering drunkenly round Kensington with Tom Yates, singing "God save our gracious queen – with the extra leg, diddle iddle iddle um". Then we went back to the college and drank large amounts of Bulgarian red wine and Scotch whisky. I borrowed, and regretted, "Tides Of Lust", Samuel Delany's best-forgotten paedophilic masterpiece. Paul Cray's encyclopaedic knowledge of sf trivia won us first place in the quiz. Other than that, very little happened. It looks as though PicoCons have finally run out of steam; nobody seemed to want to run this one, and rumour has it that next year's may not happen at all. Unless somebody with some real enthusiasm turns up, this may not be a great loss.

Matt Bishop

Return to the Forbidden Planet

DANGER! Do not reverse polarity!

What happens if you cross the 50's B-movie, "The Forbidden Planet", with a sprinkling of Shakespeare and a hefty dollop of groovy rock and roll music? Well, the answer is the musical "Return to the Forbidden Planet", (very) loosely based on Shakespeare's "The Tempest", and full of such splendid 2-dimensional characters as Captain Tempest, a Dan Dare stereotype right down to the shipsuit, pipe and manly jaw, a roller-skating robot (seeing a stoned robot on roller skates is something else), the mad scientist Prospero whose Elvis Presley knees seem to have a life of their own, a Greek chorus in the person of Patrick Moore (well, not actually in person – aren't video screens a wonderful thing?) – not to mention the Monster from the Id.

The plot is largely irrelevant, being there to provide excuses for the music, which is excellent. How many musicals have a 10 minute serious guitar solo played with all the obligatory posturing and grimacing – and with the teeth at one point? Or, for that matter, ever seen a spaceship lift off with "Wipeout"?

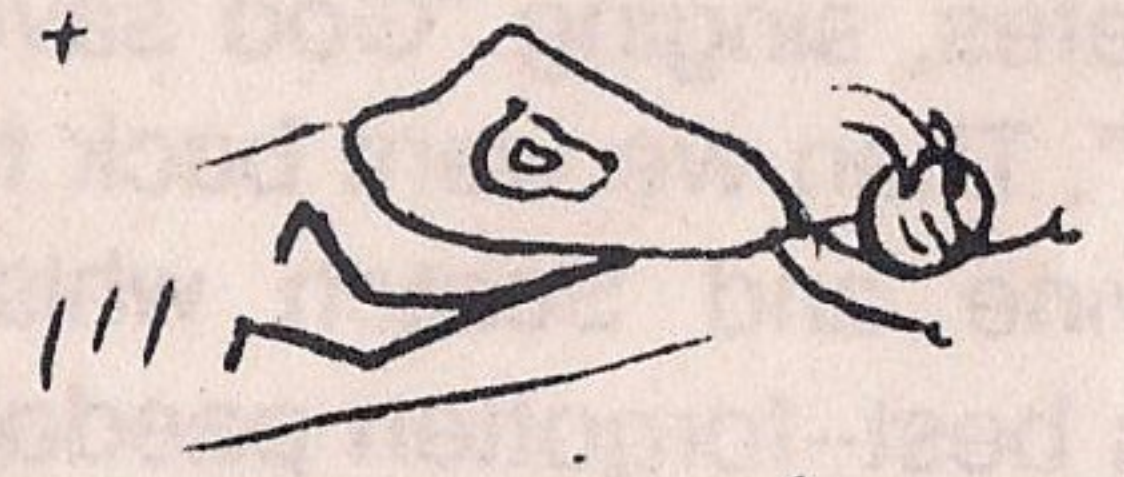


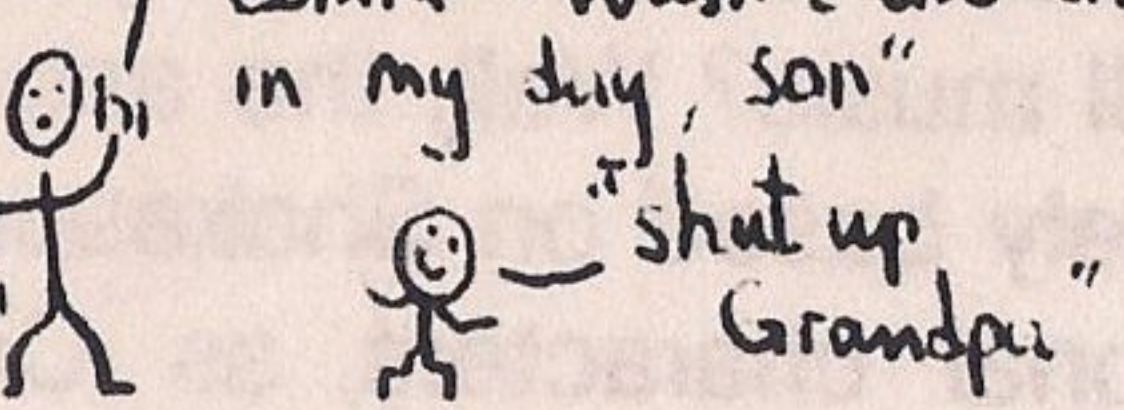


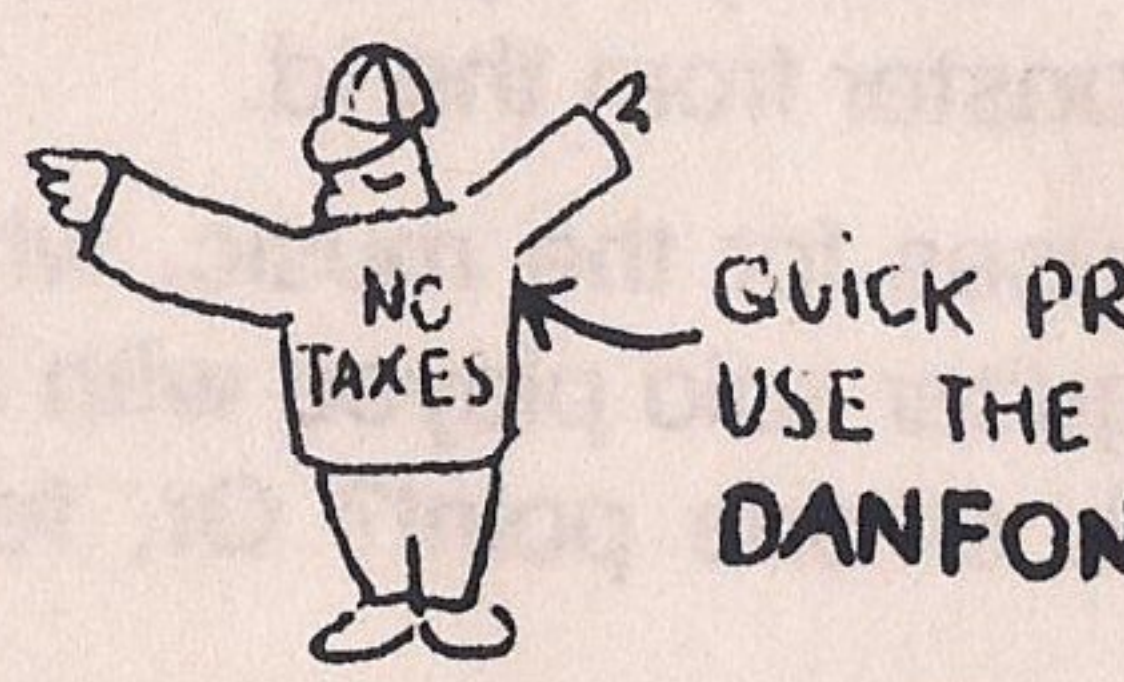


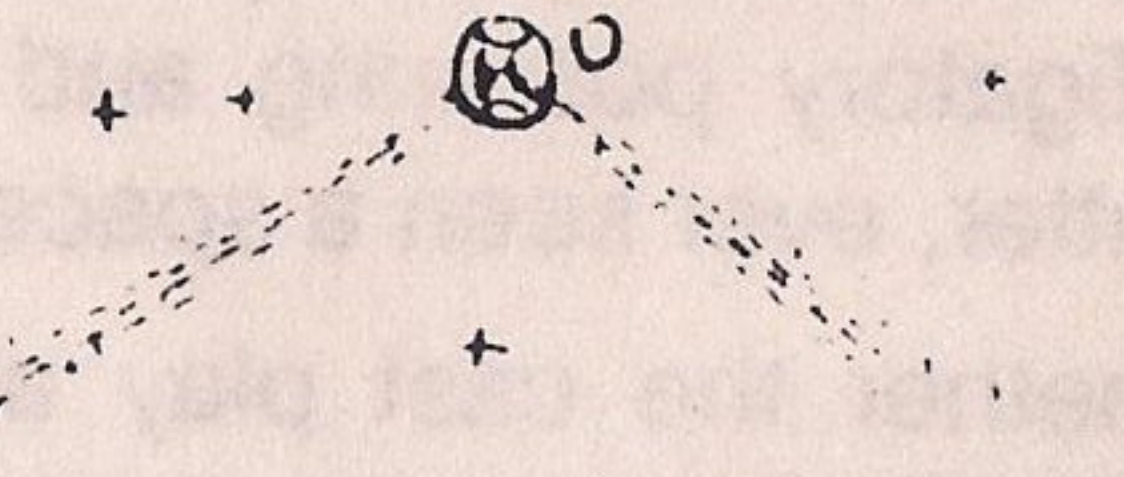


Whether the cast play all the instruments is debatable – but if they're miming it's skillfully done, and when the ray guns (unashamedly spray painted hair dryers) prove inadequate, guitars and trumpets double as weapons (this has to be seen!).

So, if you want to know how the klystron generator, the X-factor (with echo and reverb) and monsters from the Id, fit in with Captain Tempest and Miranda falling in love, go see this musical. If you liked the Rocky Horror Show, and love classic rock and roll (Johnny B Goode, She's not there, Good Vibrations, Gloria.... the list is endless [Oh no it isn't!, Rich]), you'll love this.

NB: If you don't know any Shakespeare, you'll wonder why people are laughing at completely innocent lines. but that'll be your problem.

Lucy Marsterson

MORE CUTTING SATIRE FROM OUSFG:

| | | |
|--|---|--|
| <p>"UNCLE DAN"</p>  <p>OUSFG'S PLANET-SAVING MAN</p> | <p>THE STORY SO FAR - EVIL ALIENS FROM THE DOG-STAR SIRIUS...</p>  <p>Hee hee, evil chuckle!</p> | <p>ARE ATTEMPTING TO TAKE OVER THE WORLD WITH THEIR "EVIL RAYS."</p>  <p>ZAP!</p> |
| <p>THE MAJOR RAY WAS FOCUSED ON JAPAN WHERE THEY TURN RAINFORESTS INTO CHIPWOOD, KILL WHALES AND LEAK CFCs...</p> <p>"green propaganda in comic - wasn't like that in my day, son"</p> <p>"shut up Grandpa"</p>  | <p>MINOR RAYS CAUSED RAPID PRODUCTION OF LYCRA FACTORIES, PURVEYOR OF BLACK LEGGINGS A STRONG SOURCE OF BAD VIBES...</p>  | <p>SURELY THE PLANET WAS DOOMED - EVEN THE WORLD'S ONLY TRUE CAPED CRUSADER DAVID IKE, WAS POWERLESS</p> <p>"I'm sorry, David's in Brazil unblocking leg lines right now but if you'd like to leave your address after the ton"</p>  |
| <p>LUCKILY, PRESIDENT BUSH'S 'AZURE T-SHIRT SAVED THE DAY...</p>  <p>(the DANphone)</p>  | <p>"But what can I do? In a feeble attempt to imitate CBS I've been reduced to a stick-figure! And besides I've got tonsilitis..."</p>  <p>DESPITE THIS...</p> | <p>... HE SETS TO WORK DROPPING OFF ESTHER RANTZEN IN JAPAN WHERE HER "HEARTS OF GOLD" GOOD VIBES REFLECT THE EVIL RAY BACK TO SIRIUS</p>  |
| <p>THEN HE LEAPS FROM CONTINENT TO CONTINENT DEFLECTING THE LYCRA BEAM WITH A COPY OF DAVID ICKE'S SOON-TO-BE BESTSELER - "GOOD VIBRATIONS"</p>  | <p>BUT THE ALIENS HAVE AN ACE UP THEIR SLEEVE...</p> <p>Sigh - Well have to send our two stupid assassins with the big swords and stupid laughs</p> <p>Agh HaHaHa! Squawk</p>  | <p>WILL UNCLE DAN BE ABLE TO PULL OFF ANY SMART TRICKS WITH BITS OF CABLE? WILL "HEARTS OF GOLD" RUN FOR ANOTHER SERIES AND SAVE THE PLANET?</p> <p>TUNE IN TO THE NEXT ISSUE AND FIND OUT!</p> |

AND THERE'LL BE MORE OF THIS DREARY CRAP IF YOU

Banquet Photos - See Dan, as he's the one with the camera.

David Icke - Free promotion for one of the most forward thinking men this century... His book comes out at the start of May, unfortunately none of the OUSFG sweatshirts were printed in purple (or is that Turquoise, or Azure?), but we could always send in a second order if there is massive demand; how about an emergency motion to make him Honourary president of OUSFG?

Of the Fall, By Paul J. McAuley

Paul McAuley is an Oxford biologist, and this is his second novel. His first, *Four Hundred Billion Stars*, involved some interesting biological problems on a world recently colonised from Earth. Elysium, a planet of Tau Ceti, is the setting for *OTF*. It seems an ideal place for humans, despite the presence of the mysterious alien aborigines. The early part of the book is taken up with an expedition to investigate the aborigines, which go into a trance in the presence of humans. I hoped that this would lead into a narrative dealing with the problems of First Contact, however the biological aspects are rapidly overshadowed by the worsening political situation amongst the human colonists.

The earliest settlers in the capital city distrust the new arrivals who have settled away in the hinterland. Disputes over trade lead, somewhat implausibly, to a full-scale war. This rapidly monopolises the central part of the narrative. As the conflict progresses, it becomes clear that the capital cannot maintain its ascendancy, but that its fall will mean the decline and eventual end of the civilization, as Elysium is now cut off from Earth. In a last ditch effort to preserve knowledge in a time capsule, it is discovered that the city's controlling artificial intelligence is manipulating the war for its own ends. Humanity's only hope is to destroy it...

Of course we couldn't really have an ending where the humans lose, especially since in this book the aborigines don't seem to be a viable third force. At the end of the book we don't know much more about them than when we started. Although competently written, and staying well clear of the right-wing ideology that permeates much description of war in SF (technology and militarism don't always lead to glorious victory), *Of the Fall* still fails to convince entirely. The reasons for the war are not articulated clearly enough: why, considering the advanced level of technology, does it not 'go nuclear'? The computer's megalomania is not adequately explained - surely it can very easily paralyse the civilisation of the planet rather than working behind the scenes? The aliens could have taken a more important part.

Still, you could do much worse, looking at current bookshop stocks (this isn't out in a UK edition yet, by the way - I have a US import). But I preferred *Four Hundred Billion Stars*.

Paul Marrow

Thanks once again to Chris for preparing the newsletter, Mo for printing it, all the contributors for their time writing articles and reviews, and a reminder that this is printed on Recycled Paper.