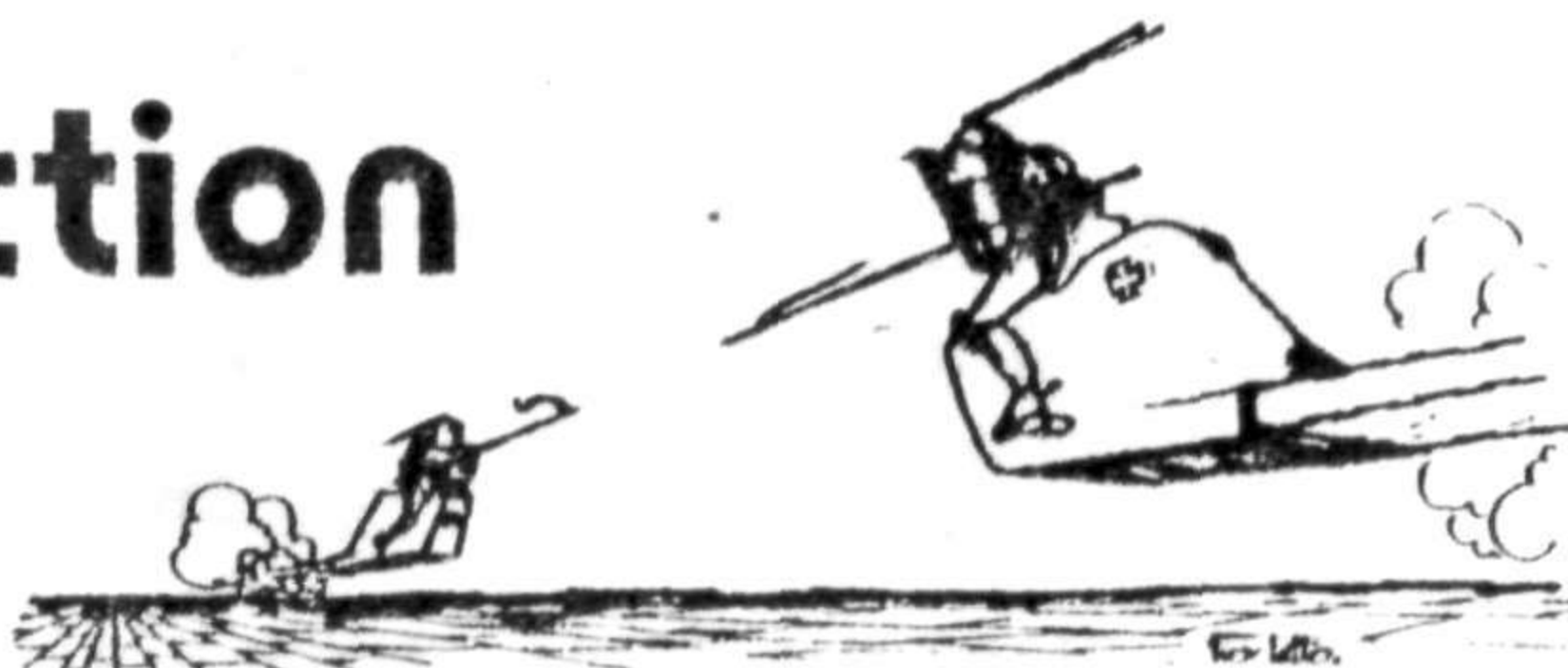


(Honorary Presidents: Brian W. Aldiss
and Harry Harrison)



AUGUST 1982

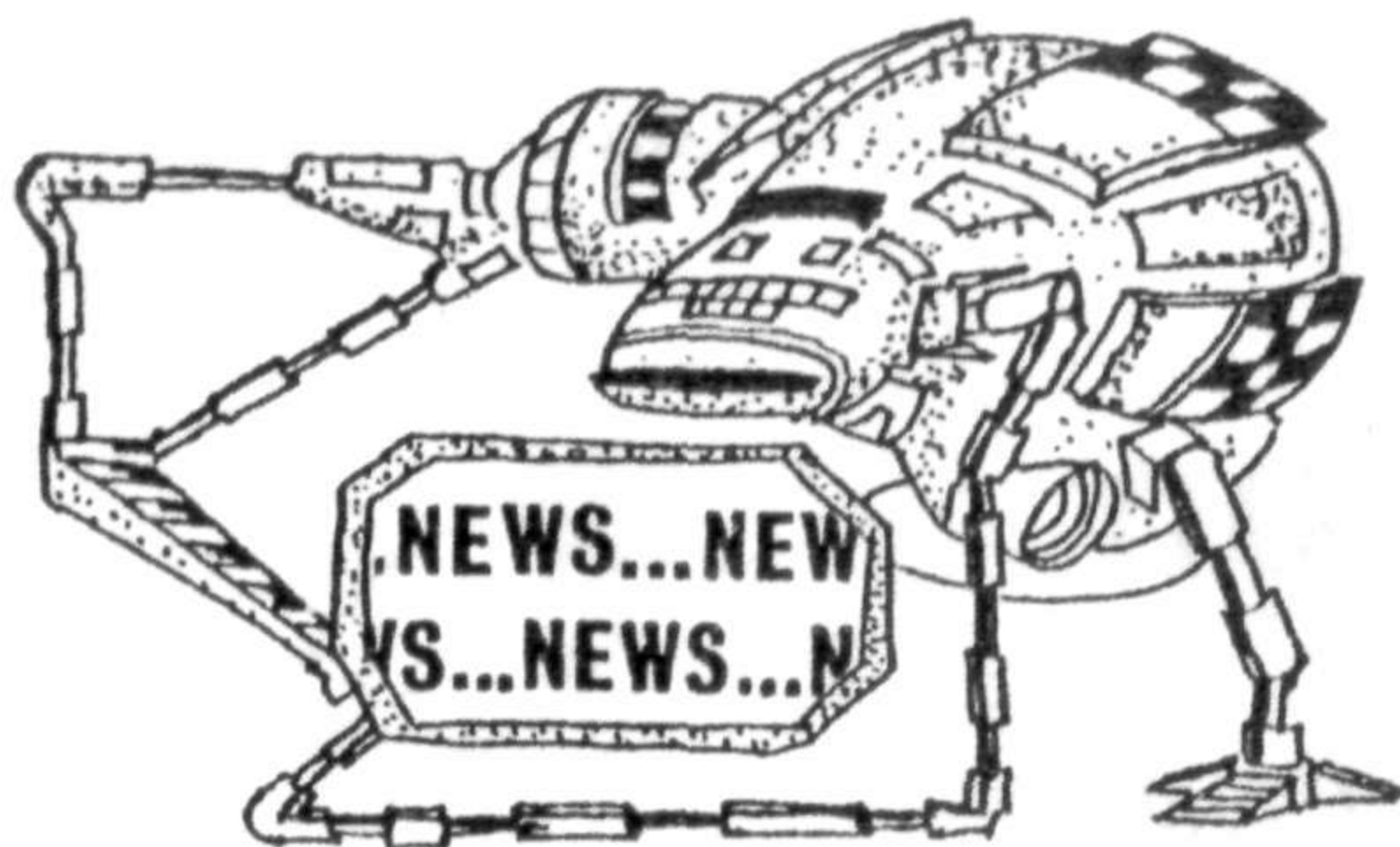
AUGUST MEETING - Friday 20th August at 7.45 pm

JULY MEETING

FORTHCOMING

- * September - either Eddie Jones, cover illustrator and space artist, or Kevin Davies from the special effects team of The Hitch Hiker's Guide to the Galaxy TV series.
- * October - the other one of the above or a debate "This House Believes That There Should be More Sex in Science Fiction."
- * November - SF Mastermind regional heat starring Alan Cash, Dave Holmes, Michael Jones, Roger Peyton and Peter Weston.
- * December - Xmas party.
- * January - A.G.M.

NOVACON 12 Nov 5-7th at Birmingham's Royal Angus Hotel. G-o-h Harry Harrison. Attending membership £6.00, Details from Phill Probert & Eunice Pearson, Novacon 12, Flat no.2, No.1 Broughton Road, Handsworth, Birmingham 20.



CONGRATULATIONS to Bernie Morton and Mick Evans who got married on Friday 6th August.

ANDROMEDA BOOKSHOP'S top ten best selling paperbacks for July were: 1. Star Trek The Wrath of Khan - Vonda N. McIntyre (Futura), 2. The Golden Torc - Julian May (Pan), 3. Dr Who and the Leisure Hive - David Fisher (Target), 4. The Shadow of the Torturer - Gene Wolfe (Arrow), 5. The Space Eater - David Langford (Arrow), 6. The Many-Col-

ored Land - Julian May (Pan), 7. The Quillian Sector (Dumarest 19) - E.C. Tubb (Arrow), 7. Dr Who and the Keeper of Traken - Terrance Dicks (Target), 9. The Wizard in Waiting - Robert Don Hughes (Ballantine Dist. Futura), 9. King Kobold - Christopher Stasheff (Granada).

SOLIHULL SF GROUP's next meeting will be on Sunday, 22nd August at the Red House, Hermitage Road (off Lode Lane) from 7.00 onwards.

Star Trek The Wrath of Khan

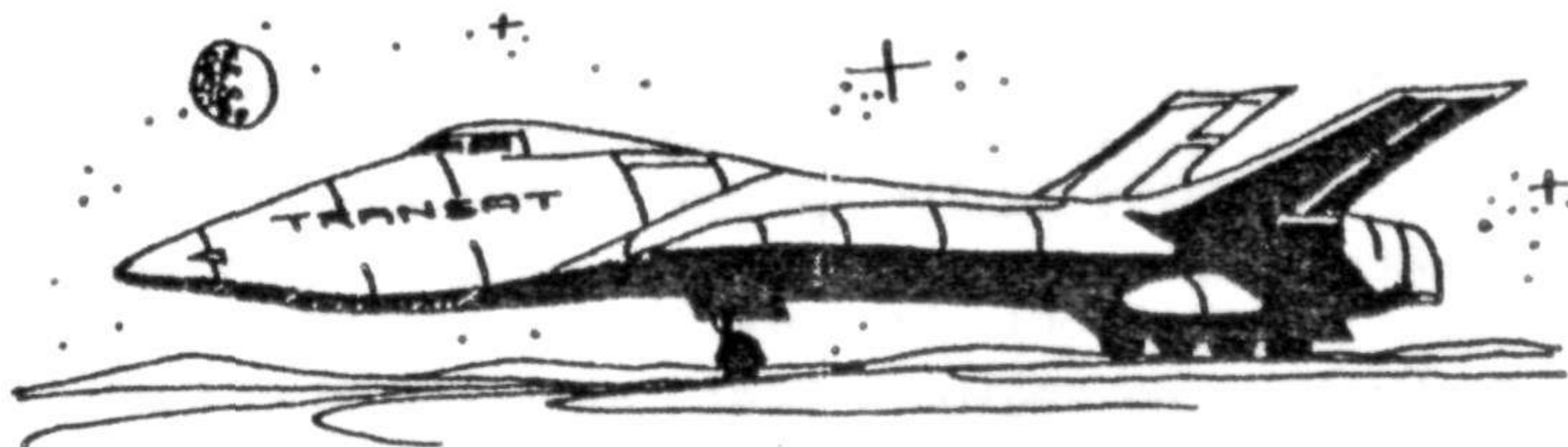
A Paramount Picture directed by Nicholas Meyer

Novelisation by Vonda N. McIntyre, Futura £1.25, 223 pages

Reviewed by Pauline E. Morgan.

This is a film tailor-made for the fans. Outsiders will appreciate it less, and children will be bored by it. The action centres around Khan, a genetically-engineered super-man from two centuries earlier, who was marooned by Kirk fifteen years before during the TV episode "Space Seed". When the opportunity for revenge occurs Khan takes it. Although the Enterprise is crewed by cadets the familiar bridge crew are all there, albeit somewhat older, with the addition of Saavik, a beautiful half-Vulcan. Also involved is the Genesis Project, which Khan steals, and which is headed by one of Kirk's former girlfriends. Some of the special effects are very good, particularly the alien creature, the young of which Khan inserts into Chekov's ear to enforce obedience. Other effects are merely pretty, like the nebula near the end, which has no scientific rationale.

The novelisation, by Vonda McIntyre, fills in much of the background not explained in the film, such as that Saavik is a Vulcan-Romulan hybrid (which explains why she is not as totally emotionless as Spock). McIntyre also brings in references to her other Star Trek novel The Entropy Effect. The novel elaborates some of the scenes to give a much wider perspective. It is a pity that in both the book and the film-script more careful research was not done on the scientific aspects of the plot and the details of the original TV script.



No comment

Geoff Kemp, editor of Quartz, reports that his [manual] typewriter blew up while he was typing a review of Dave Langford's The Space Eater.

THE NOVELS OF 1981

A look at the Hugo and Nebula nominees by Pauline E. Morgan.

Amongst all the awards given annually for fiction it is probable that the results of the Hugo are most eagerly awaited, and that the nominations for the Nebula cause most controversy. The difference is that the one is voted for by the readers and the other by fellow writers---the members of the SFWA. Yet readers and writers have similar tastes as three of the novels appear on both nomination forms.

The Many-Colored Land by Julian May is a first novel, and the first volume of a series, so is incomplete in itself. It is set in a Pliocene Europe over-run by aliens, to which people from the future can choose to be exiled. It is a well researched epic but has an over-large cast of main characters who are brought together too early in the book to be entirely manageable. As a result half of them are shed part way through the book, to be dealt with in a later volume.

Also with a large number of important characters is Little, Big by John Crowley, but here they are handled much more delicately and do not have to compete with a cast of thousands in order to maintain their prominence. Little, Big is a fantasy with an old-world flavour although set in America. In The Many-Colored Land the aliens represent an explanation for tales of little people and fairies appearing in European folk myth, but in Little, Big fairies are real. The focal point is Edgewood, a many-fronted house, and the plot deals with the folk who live in and around it. Little, Big is beautifully written and well deserves its nomination.

The third novel to be nominated for both Hugo and Nebula is The Claw of the Conciliator by Gene Wolfe. Unusually, this is the second volume in a series and is not easy to read in isolation. As the sequel to The Shadow of the Torturer it continues the adventures of Severian, a member of the Guild of Torturers, presumably on a far future Earth. The language and style take it out of the realm of science fiction and give it a timelessness that can best be described as fantasy. Other writers have acknowledged Gene Wolfe's skills of word usage and image making by voting The Claw of the Conciliator this year's Nebula winner.

Three other novels were nominated for the Nebula only. The Vampire Tapestry by Suzy McKee Charnas also looks to folk myth for its theme. In five interlinked episodes about Dr Edward Lewis Weyland, her vampire, she explores the predator/prey relationship in a present day setting. The viewpoint changes gradually through the sequence from totally human to that of the vampire as our sympathy for his plight increases. It is a thoroughly enjoyable book to read which is more than can be said for Riddley Walker by Russell Hoban. This is a post-disaster novel set in S.E. England and written totally in the phonetic vernacular of the protagonist. Riddley is a 12-year-old, just come to manhood, who is led away from the safety of the compound where he lives, by dogs (who normally eat people), and the book is an account of his adventures. It is riddled with symbolism, but strip away the veneer of language and you are left with a very thin plot.

Also set on a post-disaster Earth is the outsider for the Nebula, Radix by A.A. Attanasio, which at present is unobtainable in this country. However copies do appear to have been sent to members of the SFWA by the US publishers, a reason for much of the controversy surrounding the Nebula in recent years. Radix is a pretentious first novel. During the novel it transpires that the fat slob who is transformed into a muscle-man is in reality the alter-ego of the godmind which controls what is left of the Earth. The first part is promising but the rest of the book is overlong and tedious, undeserving of its nomination.

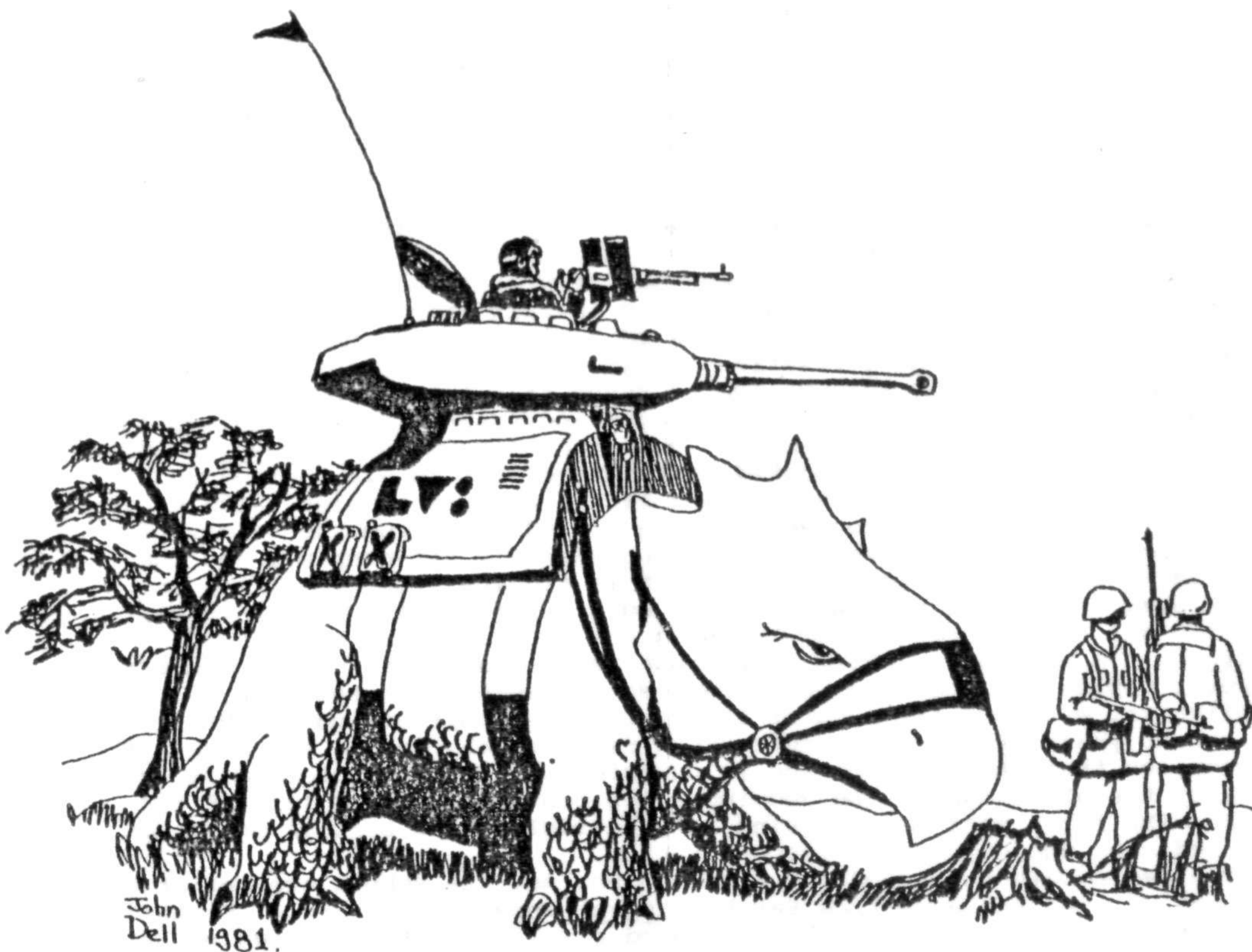
The two novels nominated for the Hugo but not the Nebula are both traditional SF, and set away from Earth. Project Pope by Clifford D. Simak is set a thousand years after robots, denied a religion of their own on Earth, have settled on a planet at the edge of our galaxy. The project, which is a data-gathering program aimed at discovering faith through knowledge, runs into trouble when one of the sensitives who gather the information claims to have discovered Heaven. It is enjoyable to read, does not force opinions on the reader, but gently asks questions. Even the intrigue has a soft

edge when compared to that in Downbelow Station by C.J.Cherryh. This is powerful, political and in places nasty. Pell Station is an orbiting city partially dependent on the planet below for materials. It is the last station between Earth and the rebel Union which controls everything further out. What happens to Pell Station will determine the relationships between Earth, Union, the merchanters and the Fleet. Cherryh's writing has improved since her early days and she handles a complex situation very competently. None of her principals acts out of character although there are too many of them, and the fleshing out of some of them suffers slightly.

Personally I would give Downbelow Station my vote for the Hugo. It is not so artistically written as The Claw of the Conciliator, which stands a good chance of winning the Hugo as well as the Nebula, but has more action. It shows more style and tightness of plotting than The Many-Colored Land, which might be the popular choice.

The results of the Hugos will be announced at the Worldcon in Chicago over the first weekend in September, and we hope to have them in time for the next newsletter, so watch this space.

[Thanks to Anne Gay, Brian Stableford and Margaret Thorpe for the loan of nominated novels.]



FIRST SOLDIER: "Do you think we've got enough fire power to do the job?"
SECOND SOLDIER: "Dunno. They can be pretty dangerous, these Hugo winners."

BOOK REVIEWS

THE SWORD OF THE LICTOR by Gene Wolfe, Sidgwick & Jackson £7.95, 301 pages
Reviewed by Chris Morgan.

Severian's odyssey through life continues in this third volume of Wolfe's immensely powerful masterwork. The narrative is more straightforward than previously, briefly showing Severian as executioner in the city of Thrax before he betrays his guild again and wanders off through mountainous regions. For part of the time he is accompanied by a young orphan also named Severian, and some old acquaintances from previous books reappear in new roles. A little more is explained concerning the history and geography of the setting, but Severian seems to approach no closer to his eventual position as autarch, despite a brief meeting with a strange two-headed man who claims to have been a former ruler of the planet. Wolfe's style and word use are as beautifully archaic as before. Highly recommended.

THE COURTS OF CHAOS by Roger Zelazny, Sphere £1.50. 142 pages
Reviewed by Chris Morgan.

If you're a Zelazny fan you'll probably know that this is the fifth and final Amber novel, in British paperback for the first time. I've always had a soft spot for Zelazny's poetic but idiosyncratic brand of fantasy, even though he's never fulfilled the promise of his earliest work. The complex and treacherous interweavings of the princes (there were nine, but some have killed others during the previous four volumes) and princesses of Amber provide plenty of action, and this book features the final confrontation between Amber and the anarchistic Courts of Chaos, leaving scope for a sequel...

THIS TIME OF DARKNESS by H.M. Hoover, Methuen £5.50, 167 pages
Reviewed by Beth Vernon (aged 14).

A juvenile SF novel about a private rebellion against 'conditioned' life in a 21st century subterranean city. Access to the apparently dangerously polluted surface is forbidden. Amy meets Axel who claims to be from the surface, and the two eleven-year-olds set off to reach freedom and test the authorities' claims. Successfully puts over the life-style where all accept the authorities' word and independence is rejected; seems to reflect the way our Government governs today, which adds to the interest. Uses simple language and limited gadgetry to convincingly describe life underground, Amy's reactions to it and her developing relationship with Axel. Believable right through its neat ending. Seems aimed at the 10-14 year old market; older readers may be bored by the simple language. Recommended.

THE MAN WHO ATE THE WORLD by Frederik Pohl, Granada £1.25, 160 pages
Reviewed by Peter Day.

Frederik Pohl is a long-established big name in science fiction, and this re-issue of his collection of satirical, near-future stories dating from the fifties gives some indication why. Despite some heavy-handedness he knew how to put a story over, and his work wears well. These tales are no less readable, and no less meaningful, today than they were a quarter of a century ago. The majority of them are still worth reading.

THE BOOK OF DREAMS by Jack Vance, Coronet £1.25 234 pages
Reviewed by Chris Morgan.

And so another series comes to an end, with Vance's heroic (and rich) Kirth Gersen tracing and trapping the last of the five "Demon Princes"---the space pirates who killed/enslaved his family when he was a boy. This last adversary is Howard Alan Treesong, and Gersen pursues him with his normal high degree of intelligence and trickery. The details---of both plot and background---are always admirable in Vance's novels, and The Book of Dreams is no exception in this, with exciting action sequences and amazingly eccentric customs on different planets. It's a formula novel, but a successful formula.

THE GOLDEN TORC by Julian May, Pan £1.75, 377 pages

Reviewed by Pauline E. Morgan.

This continues the romp in the Pliocene by exiles from the future begun in The Many-Colored Land. It takes up the story of the four members of the party who were sent south and largely forgotten in the latter half of volume one. The action leads up to and climaxes on the last day of the Grand Combat, an annual ritual war between the Tanu and Firvulag factions of the dimorphic race that controls this era of Earth. This is a grand epic tale, action-packed and fast paced but the tidal-wave effect produced tends to wash-out the personalities of the main characters in the same way as the one at the end of this volume does for the majority of the alien population.

THE QUILLIAN SECTOR by E.C. Tubb, Arrow £1.25, 158 pages

Reviewed by Vernon Brown.

The 19th novel about Earl Dumarest, a man favoured by chance as he moves across the Galaxy, one jump ahead of the Cyclan, this time pursued by a mercenary big-game hunter. Smoothly written, much better than the earlier books in the series, the storyline is the mixture as, more or less, usual, with the mandatory attractive woman and suave villain thrown together with the hero when they crashland and fight their way across country to safety. Enjoyable as a piece of light timepassing reading.

BEYOND THE GALACTIC RIM by A. Bertram Chandler, Allison Busby £6.50, 118 pages

Reviewed by Vernon Brown.

To my mind few short stories make entertaining reading as they are not long enough to develop in depth and tend to rely on a "twist" ending, with the result that they read like a chapter of a novel---rather flat in isolation. Chandler usually gets round this by using the Rim World framework of his novels as background for his shorts but even this does not redeem the four reprinted here. One is a 2D story of finding (quote) "a paradise in a world of hell", one is about fresh cavepaintings on an uninhabited planet, while the third is about trans/inter/intra dimensional flight (I think). "The Man Who Could Not Stop" is the best, being about an incorrigible thief who ends up by helping society in a rather unforeseen manner. Not Chandler's best.

QUEST FOR THE WELL OF SOULS by Jack L. Chalker, Penguin £1.75, 302 pages

Reviewed by Margaret Thorpe.

Twenty-two years have passed since Exiles at the Well of Souls. Mavra Chang is resigned to her fate as a mutant, until her old enemies Trelig and Yulin reappear, trying to find a way to use the computer Obie to gain control of the entire Well-World. Her various body changes and adventures, while sometimes seeming a little padded, in order to make the story into two full-length novels, are just as exciting as ever. Many of the exotic characters from the previous book turn up, like old friends and, as a bonus, there is a neat tie-in with Midnight at the Well of Souls. Two other novels in this highly entertaining series are available in America, but have not yet been published in this country. Is it too much to hope that Penguin will get hold of them?

DIRECT DESCENT by Frank Herbert, NEL £2.25, 188 pages

Reviewed by Dave Hardy.

First of all, an artist's gripe---the usual one, but even more justified this time, as this is "an illustrated story". There is indeed quite a nice black-and-white illo every two or three pages, but to find the artist's name you must delve into the small type on the copyright page. It is, in fact, "Garcia"---whether male or female I cannot say. The drawings are mainly of people, one of whom looks ridiculously like Paul Newman. As to the text, it is actually two stories, part of which appeared in Astounding in 1954 as "Pack Rat Planet". The setting is Earth in the far future, now become one vast library. The typeface in this book is large---only 29 lines per page---giving the impression that it is for children or persons with poor eyesight. It isn't (I assume), but the stories are pretty lightweight anyway, and not particularly credible.

LIFE, THE UNIVERSE AND EVERYTHING by Douglas Adams, Pan £1.50, 162 pages
Reviewed by Alan Cash.

Like it or like it not this meringue with a touch of steel has nothing to do with the second radio series, though sooner or later Wowbagger the Infinitely Prolonged is out to insult you. Ford and Arthur (the wearer of the galaxy's most hardwearing dressing gown) return to the present day by pursuing a sofa across a prehistoric field and meet up again with Slartibartfast piloting a ship even more improbable than the "Heart of Gold". They embark upon making a hash of attempting to save the Universe from the re-unleashing of the Krikkit Wars. What has Marvin to do with all this? More than you could possibly imagine.



CONDITIONALLY HUMAN by Walter M. Miller, Jr., Corgi £1.50, 228 pages

Reviewed by Margaret Thorpe.

In some way, each of the six stories in this reprinted collection explores the courage of an individual when faced with a situation beyond his experience---as in the title story, where the mutated pet animals become more than child substitutes, or in "Blood Bank", where a spaceship commander is forced to destroy a vessel carrying medical supplies. Quality not quantity is Walter Miller's motto, and all of these stories, from the early fifties, reveal a depth of characterisation which is unusual in SF short stories. It is obvious from these why Miller's work is so highly regarded. Well worth a place on anyone's bookshelf.

FRANKENSTEIN UNBOUND by Brian Aldiss, Granada £1.25, 157 pages

Reviewed by Alan Cash.

Future nuclear war creates "timeslips" tipping Joe Bodenland from 21st century America to 19th century Geneva where he meets the authoress of Frankenstein and her creations, who also exist in this bizarre world. Will her characters behave as they do in her novel or will his intrusion alter the pattern? Quite an entertaining read though at times too full of slabs of the author's personal philosophy of life.

MOREAU'S OTHER ISLAND by Brian Aldiss, Granada £1.25, 176 pages

Reviewed by Chris Morgan.

I've always liked and admired the way in which Brian Aldiss has tried to do something different in each of his novels. This one, here in its first British paperback edition, is a kind of homage to H.G. Wells's The Island of Dr Moreau, being in part an updated version of that theme. It is an enjoyable novel full of action, menace and eccentricity set amongst mad scientists and beast-men on a small island somewhere in the Pacific Ocean. Not great but worth reading.

GEMINI GOD by Garry Kilworth, Penguin £1.75, 240 pages

Reviewed by Pauline E. Morgan.

In unknown situations, humans become paranoid. Afraid of an alien attack on the inhabitants of the mobile city on New Carthage, an inhabitable planet found beyond the confines of Earth, a unique warning system is devised. The intention is to exploit the mental link between identical twins so that when the one on New Carthage is threatened by the natives the one left on Earth will react. However nothing ever happens as predicted. Credible aliens are a strength of Garry Kilworth's work, and those here are thoughtfully portrayed. A well paced tale, worth reading.

These stories are concerned with alienated humans---human aliens, estranged by internal anxiety, confusion and guilt, imprisoned, deranged and/or destroyed by mysterious authoritarian bureaucratic menaces to freedom, identity and life. Kafkaesque; with no room for warmth or character, the reader too is alienated---skillfully, inventively, disturbingly---but Sladek lacks the intent artistic genius of Kafka, the intellectual vivacity and zest of Disch and the moral driving force, originality and humane humour of Kurt Vonnegut. Not serious enough to be truly comic, nor human enough to be tragic, but providing a safe, slight glance at a landscape you would not want to be outstared by.

• The Proud Enemy just escapes the "with one bound he was free" school of writing. In Vol.1, Cage a Man, Barton was enslaved by the Demu Master-Race. The only man ever to escape, he warned Earth. Now, in Vol 2, Barton leads a fleet against the enemy, enlisting the support of other species---in between copious copulating... This idea is none too original, but it's well thought out, with a surprise ending. Busby's aliens are reasonably alien, and the logistics of arming a mixed space flotilla are credible and interesting. Even Barton doesn't pretend to be the Bionic Man. Although Busby fails to make the best of his material, The Proud Enemy is fairly entertaining.

This is the first small format edition of King's enthusiastic personal view history of horror fiction---in novels, stories, films and TV over the last thirty years. It's both a well-reasoned and well-informed treatise on its subject and, like everything King has written, fun to read. It comes complete with chunks of autobiography and lists of recommended books and films. A must for horror fans.

It may not be possible to map the fringes of human knowledge, but this book comes close to achieving that. Contained in it are brief articles on almost every subject about which uncertainty exists. Myths, the occult, unexplained events, extraordinary phenomena and the frontiers of many scientific disciplines are all covered. In case you hadn't realised, these subjects are what all SF and fantasy are based upon. It's a useful reference book.

This is worth looking at, not for the quality of its contents---it has a long, long way to go before it reaches the standard of Extro--- but for what it represents. Geoff Kemp is one of the few members of the BSFG who is prepared to get himself off his backside and do something. There are stories, articles, poems, reviews and letters in this issue from a variety of people. Why don't YOU send Geoff a contribution? After all, a fanzine like this is only as good as its contributors.

Thanks to Steve Green for the news items. With holiday time upon us very little seems to be happening in the SF world. Art credits this time: Ivor Latto (page 1), Phill Probert (page 2) and John Dell (pages 2,4 and 6)---thank you all. I hope everyone remembered the Douglas Adams signing session at Andromeda Bookshop on 13th August. This August issue has been produced and edited for the Birmingham Science Fiction Group by Pauline E.Morgan, 39 Hollybrow, Selly Oak, Birmingham B29 4LX.