

# BRUM GROUP

# NEWS

May  
1991

Issue  
No. 236

## The monthly Newsletter of the BIRMINGHAM SCIENCE FICTION GROUP

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

1991 Committee: Group Chairman – Chris Chivers Secretary – Helena Bowles  
Treasurer – Richard Standage Newsletter Editor – Martin Tudor Reviews Editor –  
Mick Evans Publicity Officer – Al Johnston Novacon 21 Chairman – Nick Mills

### THIS MONTH'S PROGRAMME

Friday 17th May at 7.45pm  
in the Ivy Bush, Hagley Road,

#### GRAHAM JOYCE

Graham Joyce is a young British author who lives in Leicester. His debut novel *DREAMSIDE* has just been published in paperback by Pan (price £4.50) under their fantasy imprint.

Lee, Ella, Honora and Brad, are four of the students who answer an intriguing notice on the campus bulletin board:

#### LUCID DREAMING

*Lucid dreamers are subjects who, while dreaming, are also capable of becoming aware that they are dreaming and in certain cases capable of controlling the direction of their dreams. Volunteers who have experienced this phenomenon are required to participate in practical research experiments under the supervision of the Department of Psychology.*

With the help of their professor they begin to experiment with "lucid dreaming" and gradually progress to a point where they can all have identical dreams, and meet up in the world of "dreamside". But the gap between real life and dreamside becomes increasingly blurred, and waking up is more and more difficult. Eventually they realize that they are no longer controlling their dreams, now their dreams are beginning to control them.

A review of *DREAMSIDE* appears on page 8 of this newsletter.

The BSFG meets on the third Friday of every month (unless otherwise notified) at **THE IVY BUSH**, Hagley Road/Monument Road, Birmingham at 7.45pm.

Subscription Rates: £6.00 per person, or £9.00 for two members at same address.

Cheques etc. payable to the BSFG, via the Treasurer, **Richard Standage**, at meetings, or by post c/o **Mick Evans** (address below).

Book Reviews to **Mick Evans** at 121 Cape Hill, Smethwick, Warley B66 4SH (021 558 0997)

All other contributions and enquiries to: **Martin Tudor**, 845 Alum Rock Road, Ward End, Birmingham B8 2AG

## CHAIRMAN'S BIT

by Chris Chivers

Several weeks ago I managed to get a hearing on a Radio WM phone-in show concerning our problems as a group trying to find a venue within the city centre. On the show was the General Manager from the LCC and one of the city councillors responsible for amenities within the city. The replies that I received from them made it obvious, that even though we are a group with 20 years standing, we could either cough up the current hire charges of £200 plus for an evening or piss off out of the city. Thank you Birmingham!

So once again the BSFG is on the move. In the ever continuing saga of trying to find a permanent home that fills all the requirements of the membership, we are moving our monthly meetings to the Australian Bar, Hurst Street, Birmingham.

Our May and June meetings will still be at the Ivy Bush. Our July meeting will be in the form of the Andromeda Party and Signing Session at Twentycon in the Holiday Inn. But from August 16th, 1991 our new home will be the Australian Bar, Hurst Street.

As this is a Davenports pub the beer is cheaper than the Ivy Bush, also there is a wider selection for the alcoholics amongst you, but I do not expect you to miss the meeting in favour of the bar downstairs. [As if I would Chris, really what do you take me for... MT] All the major bus stops and New Street station are within five to ten minutes walk from the pub, in addition there are bus stops just by the pub (details next month, along with a map) and there is reasonable street parking nearby. So make a note in your diary the first of our meetings at the new venue will be on August 16th, 1991, come along to our new home.

Currently doing the rounds is the Moon to Mars exhibition, which was launched at the Dudley Museum and Art Gallery two years ago, our own Dave Hardy provided the artwork for their promotional posters. The exhibition is currently at the Cosford Aerospace Museum and will be there until the middle of June. Also worth seeing is the Dudley Museums 30 years of manned space flight.

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## FORTHCOMING EVENTS

30-31 MAY & 1-2 JUNE - "Experience the 'Legends of Light' at Dudley Castle - a spectacular laser, light and sound extravaganza delving into the secrets of the past". Doors open 8.30pm, show starts after dark. Attractions for all of the family include chairlift, road train, illuminated pathway and band in the courtyard, licensed bar. Advance tickets £3.90 for adults, £2 for children (call 021 359 7422 or 0384 252401). On the door £4.50 or £2.50.

21 JUNE - PAUL McAULEY, author of the award winning *FOUR HUNDRED BILLION STARS* will be talking to the BSFG at the Ivy Bush, Hagley Road, Birmingham.

29 JUNE - Birmingham Comic Mart at the Carrs Lane Church Centre, just off High Street near Marks & Spencers in the city centre. Opens midday. Details: Golden Orbit, 18 Nelson Street, York, YO3 7NJ.

19-21 JULY - TWENTYCON, the 20th anniversary party of the BSFG at the Holiday Inn, Birmingham. We are happy to announce that one of our Honorary Presidents, Harry Harrison, will be attending as one of our Guests of Honour, the Brum Group's very own Anne Gay will be the other. Attending membership is £15.00, supporting is £6.00. Cheques and postal orders made payable to "Twentycon", should be sent (or handed to) CAROL MORTON, 14 Park St., Lye, Stourbridge, DY9 8SS.

23-26 AUGUST - MASQUERADE '91, the first major *BEAUTY AND THE BEAST* con, Grand Hotel, Birmingham. Attending £25.00. For details send a SAE to: Jacqui Clarke, 12 Jessop Close, Leasingham, Sleaford, Lincs., NG34 8LJ.

1-3 NOVEMBER - NOVACON 21, the annual convention organized by the BSFG at the Excelsior Hotel, Coventry Road (by the Cargo Airport). GoH Colin Greenland. Attending £15.00, although membership is FREE to anyone who has attended ALL of the first 20 Novacons. Cheques made payable to "Novacon 21" should be sent to: BERNIE EVANS, 121 Cape Hill, Smethwick, Warley, W. Mids., B66 4SH.

All text by Martin Tudor unless otherwise stated. Produced on the CRITICAL WAVE photocopier. Thank you to all contributors, especially Dave Hardy for the DTP headings.

# The Jophan Report by Martin Tudor

The 41st Jophan Report  
by Martin Tudor.  
News, as usual, courtesy  
of CRITICAL WAVE

Andromeda Bookshop celebrates 20 years in business this year, to mark the occasion the shop is hosting a party on the Friday night of Twentycon (which in turn celebrates the 20th anniversary of the Brum Group). Proprietor of Andromeda, Rog Peyton (who was also a founding member of the Brum Group), informs me that he hopes to feature a mammoth signing session with the party and guarantees it will be an event no one will want to miss.

Twentycon, which will be held over the weekend 19-21 July 1991, is delighted to announce that both guests of honour have now been confirmed, they will be HARRY HARRISON and ANNE GAY.

Anne (who has just sold her third novel *DANCING ON A VOLCANO* to Macdonald), is the first member of the Brum Group to publish a novel, and Harry is, of course, one of our Honorary Presidents. Unfortunately Brian Aldiss, our other Honorary President is unable to make it to the party because of a prior commitment in the south of France.

Helena Bowles, chair of the Twentycon committee, has asked me to remind prospective attendees that hotel booking forms must be returned by 20 May. Full attending membership costs £15, supporting £6. Further information from Carol Morton, 14 Park Street, Lye, Stourbridge, West Midlands, DY9 8SS, (tel: 0384 897206, before 9pm).

Ursula K Le Guin's *TEHANU: THE LAST BOOK OF EARTHSEA* (Atheneum) has won the 1990 Nebula Award for Best Novel. The Award for Best Novella went to Joe Haldeman's "The Hemingway Hoax" (*IASFM, April 1990*), Best Novelette went to Ted Chiang for "Tower of Babylon" (*OMNI, November 1990*) and Terry Bisson's "Bear's Discover Fire" (*IASFM, August 1990*) picked up the Nebula for Best Short Story. The Nebula Awards are presented annually by the Science Fiction Writers of America (SFWA).

In addition to the above awards a Grand Master Award (the SFWA lifetime achievement award) was presented to Lester Del Rey, by

Isaac Asimov. Andy Porter commented that both Del Rey and Asimov appeared to have aged considerably since their last public appearance.

The awards were presented at the 1991 Nebula Banquet on 27 April in the Roosevelt Hotel, New York. The banquet was forced to switch to a new, "grottier" venue just nine days before the event due to difficulties with the Vista Hotel -- apparently the organizers did not have a contract with the original venue.

[ Thanks to *SCIENCE FICTION CHRONICLE's* Andy Porter for supplying me with the Nebula results and comments about the event. British subscriptions to *SFC* cost £25 for one year and are available from Algot Press, c/o Ethel Lindsay, 69 Barry Road, Carnoustie, Angus, DD7 7QQ, 1

Pat Murphy has won the Philip K Dick Award for best original sf paperback of 1990 with the collection *POINTS OF DEPARTURE* (Bantam Spectra). Murphy (who was joint runner-up for the Arthur C Clarke Award recently) did not attend the awards banquet at Norwescon 14 in March, so her scroll and cheque were accepted on her behalf by the convention's toastmaster Edward Bryant.

Runner-up for the 1991 Philip K Dick Award was Richard Harris for his novel *THE SCHIZOGENIC MAN* (Ace). Also nominated for the award were Elizabeth Hand's *WINTERLON* (Bantam Spectra), Gregory Feeley's *THE OXYGEN BARONS* (Ace) and *CLARKE COUNTY, SPACE* by Alan Steele (Ace).

The judges for this year's Philip K Dick Award were John Kessel, Walter Jon Williams and Peter Fitting. The award is presented annually at Norwescon and is administered by Algis Budrys and the Philadelphia SF Society.

Richard Waller, proprietor of the specialist bookshop The Book Inn, has been cleared by Bow Street magistrates court of obscenity charges.

Police confiscated copies of the ReSearch book on *MODERN PRIMITIVES* (which dealt with tattooing) from the shop on Charin

Cross Road, London, last year. Waller was awarded costs of £500 by the court, despite the fact that his actual costs were considerably higher. Fortunately a few of his suppliers have helped out by donating money or stock towards his expenses.

Stanislaw Lem has won the Kafka Prize for Literature (100,000 Austrian schillings).

Michael Paul Meltzer has won the first prize of \$1,000 in the latest quarter of L Ron Hubbard's Writers of the Future Contest, he is now also eligible for the annual Grand Prize of \$4,000.

For further information regarding the competition contact: L Ron Hubbard's Writers of the Future Contest, PO Box 1630, Los Angeles, CA 90078, USA.

*EAGLE*, the comic which was once the staple fare of all wholesome British boys, has slipped out of weekly publication yet again. A drop in sales has forced Fleetway publications (the magazine section of Maxwell's publishing empire) to suspend the 32-page comic. A monthly version will continue the sagas of "Charley's War", "the Thirteenth Floor" and "Dan Dare", but the long-term prospects are uncertain.

Fleetway say that *EAGLE*'s re-launch a year ago (the second attempt to revive the comic) had set targets which had not been reached, they have commissioned research on a replacement weekly, which may or may not retain the *EAGLE* name. *EAGLE*'s first incarnation was launched in 1950 by Rev Marcus Morris and was published until 1969. The first failed attempt to re-launch it occurred in 1982.

Corgi releases the 'A' format paperback of Mary Gentle's *RATS AND GARGOYLES* (joint runner-up for the Arthur C Clarke Award) in July. At the same time Bantam will release Gentle's new hardback *ARCHITECTS OF DESIRE*.

Bantam recently bought a new Dan Simmons novel entitled *THE HOLLOW MAN*, along with the reprint rights of his collection *PRAYERS FOR BROKEN STONES*.

Liz Coulhan will shortly be launching a new, fantasy orientated, magazine entitled *SCHEHERAZADE*. The first issue will feature stories by Sue Thomason and Hayden Middleton, along with a Jane Gaskell interview.

Aimed slightly more towards women than men, it will feature stories by at least two professional writers per issue and professional artists. Send £1.75 for a sample copy or £6 for a four issue subscription to:

St. Ives, Maypole Road, East Grinstead, West Sussex, RH19 1HL.

At the time of their first AGM (Novacon last year) Friends of Foundation had raised a total of over £4000. It was planned to spend the bulk of this money on much needed reference books. The committee, as elected at Novacon 20, is: Rob Meades (Coordinator), Bridget Wilkinson (Secretary), Roger Robinson (Treasurer), along with Judith Hanna, John Clute, Paul Kincaid, Bernie Peek and Mark Plummer.

A full subscription to the Friends of Foundation (including a subscription to the magazine *FOUNDATION* is £14.00pa (UK & Eire) or £19.00pa (overseas); if you already subscribe to the magazine a subscription to the "Friends" is £5.50pa (UK, Eire and overseas); or a subscription to the "Friends" without receiving the *FOUNDATION* is £6.50pa (UK, Eire and overseas). Cheques should be made payable to "Friends of Foundation" and sent to FoF Coordinator, Rob Meades, 75 Hecham Close, Walthamstow, London, E17 5QT.

M John Harrison will be Guest of Honour at X-asm, an sf convention to be held at the Hotel Metropole, Leeds, over the weekend of 29 November through 1 December.

The committee includes Steve and Jenny Glover, Phil Race, Kev McVeigh and Nick Atty. Attending membership is £10.00, supporting £5.00 (until Mexican). Contact 16 Aviary Place, Leeds, LS12 2NP, West Yorkshire for further details.

Constitution, the *STAR TREK* mini-con, which was originally to be held at the Donnington Manor Hotel, Dunton Green, then at the Royal Oak, will now be held at the Tollgate Motel, Watling Street, Gravesend on 5-7 July.

Registration forms are available from Colin and Mandie Taylor, 5 Seymour Walk, Swanscombe, Kent, DA10 0NF. Queries regarding the hotel should be addressed to Tina Hewett, 65 Park Road, Dartford, Kent, DA1 1ST.

Masque, the first British costume convention, will be held in Birmingham on 14-16 February, 1992, with Anne Page as guest of honour. Attending membership is £20.00, supporting £7.00 (conversion £15.00), payable to "The British Costume Convention" c/o Melusine, 5 Wentbridge Path, Borehamwood, Herts, WD6 4ET.

Eva Hauser, the Czech writer, editor and fan attended Speculation at Easter as a special

guest. Although the Glasgow based Eastercon met some of her expenses, most of them were covered by Fans Across the World with the help of a donation from last years National British SF Convention, Eastcon.

If you wish to donate money, books or tombola prizes to FATW contact Bridget Wilkinson, 17 Mimosa, 29 Avenue Road, Tottenham, London, N15 5LF.

Regular Andromeda customers might be interested in learning that Dave Holmes is now also *working* several evenings a week at the Australian Bar in Hurst Street. Yes, we do mean *working*! Several sightings have been confirmed of a harried Holmes chasing around behind the bar, serving bottled lagers to large crowds of trendies, with more than a drop or two of perspiration dripping from his brow...

Malcolm Reid and Alison Weston (daughter of one-time worldcon chairman and anthologist Peter Weston) announced their engagement at Speculation. They celebrated the event with a party for family and friends on 27 April. Congratulations to them both.

It has not been a good year so far for some members of the Brum Group. No sooner had Chairman, Chris Chivers, recovered from the burglary at his house, than veteran Novacon chairman Tony Berry returned from Speculation to discover that thieves had smashed their way into his van. They were apparently only thwarted by their own incompetence, setting off the car-horn whilst trying to start the vehicle and panicking.

A week later, slightly more adept thieves broke into the van, failing to trigger Mr Berry's nice new alarm -- despite making off with his radio. Finally, to top it all BSFG treasurer, Richard Standage, and BSFG secretary, Helena Bowles, returned home to discover that an opportunist thief had made off with the briefcase containing all the BSFG membership records and the petty cash tin. Not to worry though, thought Standage, Bernie Evans has got the information on disk -- the same evening Bernie called to borrow the hard copy of the files as her database had crashed! Fortunately the police have since recovered the briefcase (including contents), which had been dumped after the thief had failed to open it.

It would appear that incompetent thieves don't restrict their activities to the Midlands. London based fan and one-time Mexican supremo, Greg Pickersgill wandered into his kitchen a few weeks back and discovered a

total stranger standing there. After failing to get a reasonable explanation from the man, whom Greg described as being in his mid-thirties, fairly respectable, slightly confused, but not noticeably drunk. Greg told him not to move and went to call the police. Naturally the gentleman remained rooted to the spot.

Hordes of police duly arrived and after questioning the would-be burglar, as unsuccessfully as Greg, took him away to be charged. Greg is currently awaiting further developments.

Forthcoming signing sessions at Birmingham's Andromeda Bookshop include: Terry Pratchett and Neil Gaiman signing copies of *GOOD OMENS* (1 June, 12 noon), and a possible appearance by Michael Moorcock on 8 June. Call Andromeda on 021 643 1999 before attending either of these to avoid possible disappointment.

Congregate II has been cancelled due to "major hassles" with the planned venue, Peterborough's Moot House Hotel. All members will be sent a letter shortly outlining the committee's reasons for calling the event off.

This latest cancellation follows hot on the heels of the cancellation of Mancon VI and the postponement (until next year) of Protoplasm. These disappearing cons, although advantageous to the Brum Group (leaving June and July clear for our 20th anniversary celebration at Twentycon), would appear to indicate that the increasingly crowded convention calendar has finally reached saturation point.

Pegasus Publishing is to complement *FANTAZIA* with two new titles, a role-playing magazine entitled *GAMESMAN* and a rock review, *SIREN*; the former will enable new editor Paul Birch to concentrate on on comics and movies in *FANTAZIA*.

Pan have cancelled publication of *CLYPSIS* by Jeffrey A Carver, the first volume of Roger Zelazny's "Alien Speedway" series.

In the third issue of his new "magazine of popular fiction", *MILLION*, David Pringle reveals that *INTERZONE* is to receive "some generous Arts Council 'incentive funding' for 1991-93", he added that this should enable *IZ* "to undertake large-scale publicity drives to boost the subscription base".

He added that he found it interesting "that the readership of *MILLION* is shaping up to be predominantly female, while that of *INTERZONE* is mainly male."

*SPECULATION,  
the 42nd Annual British  
SF Convention  
Glasgow, Easter 1991  
a report by Bernie Evans*

Speculation had all the ingredients for an outstandingly good Eastercon ; a very experienced committee, a good programme, an excellent hotel ; unfortunately it just didn't work.

It really should have worked, so why didn't it ? Lack of communication seems to be the main reason. Between the con committee and the hotel, between the different departments within the hotel, and between the committee and those doing various staff jobs.

Let it be said here that this conrep is written entirely subjectively, and isn't intended to be derogatory to the committee in any way. They all worked extremely hard, and any complaints were dealt with at once (only to crop up again and again, due to the aforementioned lack of communication). Let it also be said that I personally found the programme varied and interesting. I went to at least two items a day, better than my average for most conventions.

When we arrived late on Friday afternoon, tired and weary after a long drive, we found that the crèche (which our family was to sleep in at night when it wasn't in use as a crèche), hadn't been set up. We found that people had been looking for the crèche during Friday, despite the fact that we'd told the committee we wouldn't arrive until fairly late that day. We found that there wasn't enough room for Novacon 21 and Twentycon to share a table with *CRITICAL WAVE* next to the Illumination table (which scotched our plans to help each other out throughout the weekend). We found that Vicky (Evans), who was running the crèche for Speculation, wasn't on the membership list. We found that many of the programme packages weren't ready (either there was a badge and no programme book, vice versa or neither) and those that, miraculously, had all the convention's material hadn't been stuffed with the freebie copies of *CRITICAL WAVE #18* as had been agreed. So, while Martin Tudor started stuffing *WAVE #18* into the few remaining membership envelopes, we went into the bar, to await the sorting out of some of these problems, and found out about the bar prices, £2.00 a pint for Murphy's stout !

But, for our family, worse was to come. The hotel had set up the crèche in a couple of function rooms, rather than the usual adjoining bedrooms. At 6.00am on Saturday morning we were woken by bar staff walking in looking for glasses ! Being function rooms they didn't lock from the inside, and the house-keeping staff hadn't let the banqueting staff know that we would be in there. Although this information was quickly passed on, it didn't survive the various changes of duty staff, so every morning the bar staff would arrive, jump out of their skins and leave apologetically, followed by a member of the pin-stripe brigade demanding an explanation for our presence. Mark Meenan and John Fairey were *seen* to sort this problem out, I'm not blaming them, it was that old enemy -- lack of communication.

A similar thing happened with the publishers party. It was set up in the wrong room, it was to be followed by a film. To say there was chaos would be an understatement, to say the chaos would have been ten times as bad without every gopher at the con pitching in would be nothing less than the truth.

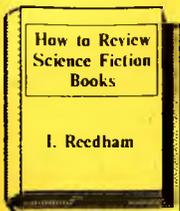
I'm sure the dining room problems will pass into convention legend, with con members being relegated to an inferior room, with an inferior selection of food -- and service to match, whilst the main room was left half empty to accomodate another group of people who didn't seem to be there anyway !

It was a good effort, but due to what seems to be an unbelievable lack of forward planning, together with a hotel that seemed good on the face of it, but which hadn't been "pinned down" as well as was thought, there were just too many holes to patch on the day.

I'm sorry, John Fairey and company, I *saw* how hard you all tried, as a con organiser myself I feel a deep sympathy for you, and a lot of admiration for all you tried to do over the week-end, but it was too late. A great con turned into a shambles, and yet, my final word has to be, I STILL ENJOYED IT, and thanks for a valiant effort.

□□□□

*The editor of the BRUM GROUP NEWS,  
Martin Tudor, would like to remind  
members that he is always interested  
in contributions, especially reports  
on meetings or conventions.*



# Book Reviews

All books reviewed here by members were provided by the publishers, who receive a copy of this Newsletter. Members may keep review copies (or may donate them as Raffle or Auction items...)

Please keep reviews to under 150 words unless instructed otherwise. Deadline for reviews: at least two weeks before next Group meeting.

**DREAMSIDE** by Graham Joyce  
Pan, 248 pp, £4.50 p/b

Reviewed by Martin Tudor

I imagine all of us have experienced, at one time or another, the disturbing phenomenon of waking up, getting ready and leaving for work or school only to wake up, again and discover you are still in bed (and usually half an hour late). Imagine doing this again, and again, and again... Joyce terms this type of dream a "repeater" and in an instantly gripping (and quite chilling) prologue it is how he opens this novel.

Lee, one of four students who had participated in a lucid dreaming experiment twelve years earlier, is being plagued by

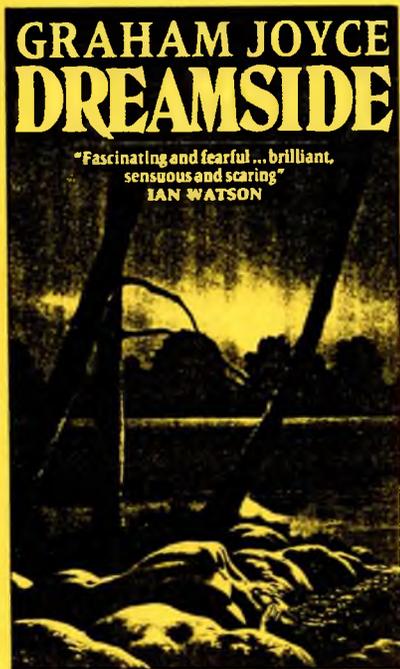
"repeater" dreams to the extent that he can no longer tell whether he is awake or dreaming. One morning while he is in this state of confusion he is contacted by one of the other students, his one-time lover, Ella. She reveals that he isn't the only one of the quartet to be suffering from such flashbacks to the experiment.

"Lucid dreamers are subjects who, while dreaming, are also capable of becoming aware that they are dreaming and in certain cases capable of controlling the direction of their dreams." Lee, Ella, Honora and Brad having established themselves as Professor Burns' star dreamers soon discover that not only can they control their own dreams, but they can also meet and interact with each other on "dreamside". At first Burns is delighted with their progress, but slowly he becomes concerned, both with the increasing number of "repeaters" and with other disturbing signs that the boundary between "dreamside" and the waking world is blurring. After suffering a heart attack the professor warns his students from his deathbed to abandon the experiment.

But being young, confident and glorying in the freedom of "dreamside" they continue, until a series of increasingly violent and frightening experiences, culminates in a shocking episode which leads to Honora leaving the group and university. The other three drift apart and the continue on their separate paths for twelve years. Which is where the story begins.

This is a quite stunning work, written with a verve and confidence seen all too rarely in a first novel. The four leading characters are believable (I for one identified with their youthful angst). The concept of "dreamside" is intriguing (I would be interested in learning how much truth there is in the descriptions of dream research and the results which have been obtained). The plot moves at breakneck speed and despite the fact that the story unfolds through a series of flashbacks the reader is never confused — an impressive feat in itself.

Obviously *DREAMSIDE* isn't perfect, on occasion the dialogue is stiff and stilted.



*DREAMSIDE* by Graham Joyce, Pan, £4.50

some elements of the relationships don't ring true and there is the occasional failed attempt at humour. But, nevertheless, this is a superb debut, Joyce is an excellent storyteller and I eagerly await his next book.

KILL THE DEAD by Tanith Lee  
Legend, 172 pp, £3.50 p/b

Reviewed by Al Johnston.

This is a nicely understated and ironic fantasy based on slaying that which is already dead. Parl Dro is a ghost-killer; by disrupting the link moulding them to this world, he banishes ghosts to the places where they belong. A task requiring psychic ability and iron will that he performs with excessive zeal. Myal Lemyal is a minstrel too talented for his own good. Master of an impossible instrument, he seeks the recognition that will never come while he lives. Ciddey Soban is a witch who suicides to revenge her banished ghost-sister on Dro. As the three protagonists head for Ghysle Mortua, the City of the Dead, much is revealed about their inter-relationships and the nature of the deadalive. A fascinating rather than spectacular fantasy, well thought out and intriguing.

STATE OF THE ART by Iain M Banks  
Orbit, 182 pp, £12.95 h/b

Reviewed by Mick Evans.

This collection of short stories from Iain Banks is a little patchy, not all of it being up to the standard we have come to expect from his novels. There are eight stories taken from magazines and anthologies, one of these, "Cleaning Up", was published by the Brum Group on the occasion of Novacon 17 where Iain was GoH. "Piece" first appeared in *THE OBSERVER MAGAZINE* in 1989 and is very informal rather like listening to him give a talk.

The best story in this collection though is, the previously unpublished in Britain, "State of the Art" another addition to Bank's growing body of "Culture" lore. A Culture Starship visits Earth circa 1977 unbeknown to the natives. The story is told by Diziet Sma (with embellishments from the drone Skaffen Amitskaw) a character from *USE OF WEAPONS* and her observances on Earth with its horrors and beauties make interesting reading.

The bringing together of the fictitious world of the Culture with the familiar world of Earth 1977 seemed quite a risk and I wondered beforehand how would he make this work? The answer is with a lot of humour and the dialogue between Diziet Sma and the artificial "Mind" of the ship and its drones is

really superb. This novella takes up just over half of the book and I would recommend it the anthology on that basis alone.

LION OF MACEDON by David Gemmell  
Legend, 416 pp, £6.99 'C' format p/b

Reviewed by Pauline Morgan.

Superficially, this is a historical novel, but don't be fooled. Granted, the action is set in Greece between 389 and 356 BC and many of the characters have historical credence, but all is not what it seems. The eponymous Lion of Macedon is not Philip of Macedonia but Parmenion, one of his generals. This is Parmenion's story, from his boyhood in Sparta to taking service with the young Philip. Many of the events are real and carefully researched but interwoven are some of the themes and ideas that Gemmell has explored in earlier novels. There is Tamis, an interfering seer who thinks she knows best and serves the Source, the godhead familiar from Gemmell's Drenai sagas. A sipstrassi stone makes a brief appearance, linking the novel to his Arthurian and Shannow novels. Some of the events seem very familiar -- perhaps a result of roaming Mary Renault territory -- but generally he has produced a competent tale.

THE NIGHT LAND by William Hope Hodgson  
Grafton, 509 pp, £4.99 p/b

Reviewed by Chris Chivers.

Earth in the far future is a world of eternal night. The sun has long since been extinguished and the remnants of the human race live in one giant redoubt, a fortress miles high that contains thousands of cities. Alone they are slowly stagnating on the long slow spiral into oblivion. The empathic contact with the natural forces of the Earth have been disrupted by a call from a long forgotten sister redoubt that brings new fire into the rest of the human race. The call is for help. *THE NIGHT LAND* is a peculiar fantasy made all the more remarkable in that it was written some eighty years ago, before the First World War. The archaic language that the story is told in only enhances the overall fantasy, and it is strange that this book has taken so long to reappear.

CHUNG QUO by David Wingrove  
NEL, 425 pp, £14.95 h/b

Reviewed by Carol Morton.

This second volume continues the story of the Earth in the future under Chinese rule, and their policy of stagnation -- meaning no R&D

in any fields. In the main the populace accept this, being either too drugged or too docile to rebel. But there are those who agitate for change, one such person is DeVore, a one-time major in the Tang's forces (a ruling council of seven overlords called Tangs have divided the world between themselves). At the end of volume one, DeVore's forces were badly mauled, so he allies himself with a terrorist group. There is death and murder amongst the Tangs and hence a shift in policy from their heirs to a more hardline stance.

This second volume is more politically biased than the first and so inevitably the pace falters at times, it is as absorbing, however, as the first volume but from a different angle. I should mention that all the Chinese names can be confusing, but if you persevere you'll find it is worth it.

CASTLEVIEW by Gene Wolfe  
NEL, 279 pages, £13.95 h/b

Reviewed by Chris Morgan.

Gene Wolfe is a clever and infuriating writer who is always trying to do something different. Here he's taken a small town in contemporary USA where, one evening in particular, lots of very odd things happen. People die. People disappear. Strange spectres are seen. Families are separated. People are attacked, threatened, shot at. Peculiar new characters arrive at regular intervals. Almost everybody needs to go to the local hospital. All written in very short chapters. Only gradually do events begin to form a pattern which suggests that the town of Castleview (you can sometimes see a castle there) is being menaced by creatures from myth. My advice is to read this at one sitting, otherwise you'll never keep up with the characters and the twists and turns of the plot.

POLYPHEMUS by Michael Shea  
Grafton, 288 pp, £3.50 p/b

Reviewed by Steve Jones.

This is a collection of seven novellas (novellae?) from an extremely versatile writer. "The Pearls of the Vampire Queen" is taken from his fantasy novel *NIFFT THE LEAN*, a must for fans of Jack Vance. The title story "Polyphemus" is a traditional sf story of explorers on an alien planet who meet a strange beastie with unusual senses. "The Extra" is a near future tale where the poor and desperate try to make money in remakes of sf B-movies by fighting to the death against killer robots. "The Angel of Death", "Uncle Tuggs" and "The Horror on the #33" are all

contemporary horror stories. "The Autopsy" is about an extremely nasty alien parasite, in an excellent story which needs a strong stomach (available from body shops everywhere). Overall, an excellent collection which should appeal to sf, fantasy and horror readers alike.

THE STAR DIARIES by Stanislaw Lem  
Mandarin, 275 pp, £4.99 p/b

Reviewed by Tony Morton.

Diaries concerning umpteen voyages of one Ijon Tichy, covering such diverse situations as time travel, Earth's entry into a galactic federation, and odd events on odd planets. While I found a couple of these events humorous and another, a semi-philosophical story, interesting, the majority, and in fact the writing style, became tedious after several stories. Maybe the stories lose something in translation, but I'm afraid overall I wasn't particularly impressed with this book and felt the style somewhat archaic.

SCHOLARS AND SOLDIERS by Mary Gentle  
Orbit, 192 pp, £3.50 p/b

Reviewed by Pauline Morgan.

The one thing that connects all these stories is the brilliance of the imagination behind them. They are not stories that all readers will have sympathy with as many of them explore complex themes and have undercurrents of arcane knowledge. Two of the stories, "Beggars in Satin" and "The Knot Garden" are precursors to Gentle's novel *RATS AND GARGOYLES*. They bring together the soldier-scholar Valentine and the Lord-Architect Casaubon in a world founded on hermetic magic. Two others ("Anukazi's Daughter" and "A Shadow Under the Sea") are set in the fantasy world that holds the Shabelit Archipelago. Both consider the actions and motivations of the characters and although the plots are excellently formed personalities are more important. Other stories are sf or in that hinterland of the unclassifiable. Generally, this collection is not light reading but it is worthwhile spending the time getting to grips with them.

SUGAR RAIN by Paul Park  
Grafton, 380 pp, £5.99 p/b

Reviewed by Carol Morton.

As the generation-long winter subsides into spring, the populace of the city-state of Charn rebel against the ruling Starbridge families. A revolution overthrows them and most are executed, flee to the neighbouring Caladon or go into hiding. Charity Starbridge

is one such unfortunate who goes into hiding, is captured, rescued by a strange subterranean cult before finally escaping to Galadan.

The development of this revolution closely mirrors the French Revolution down to the infighting, overthrow of leaders and finally war with neighbouring countries. Nothing particularly original in this novel, though Park does seem to have a talent for characterization, as one does feel sympathy for some of the protagonists, such as Charity.

GOOD NEWS FROM OUTER SPACE by John Kessel  
Grafton, 430 pp, £5.99 p/b

Reviewed by Chris Morgan.

This is a novel set in 1999. In its paranoia over conspiracies and its treatment of characters it is reminiscent of Philip K. Dick's work, yet it is more of a satire with occasional sf elements than an sf novel.

The story is slightly comic and rather over-long dealing with a cult of the millenium headed by a charismatic preacher who may or may not be receiving messages from aliens. Either aliens are impersonating various characters, or else most of the characters are off their heads. For its originality and clever writing (and for being a lot of fun) this is worth reading.

THE NIGHT MAN by K W Jeter  
Pan, 238 pp, £3.99 p/b

Reviewed by Michael Jones.

A certain amount of mayhem and gore, carefully described in graphic detail, does not make a good horror novel. Good horror maybe, but not a good novel, and this is neither. It tells of poor little Steven who is always getting pushed around until The Night Man comes out of the darkness to help and protect him. However, he comes to realise he is better off without that kind of help. Unfortunately, there are several incidents during the development of the plot where the distinction between dream and reality is so blurred as to interrupt the logical build-up of the plot.

I accept that horror stories do not have to conform to everyday reality as we know it, but even the most extreme fantasy must have some sort of underlying logical rationale which governs everything that happens in the narrative and leaves the reader with some sort of understanding of what has taken place. Without that, what we are left with here is just a string of gratuitous incidents of violence and sadism. I would not even recommend it to horror fans.

TALTOS THE ASSASSIN by Stephen Brust  
Pan, 650 pp, £6.99 p/b

Reviewed by Colin Mee.

This is a collection of Stephen Brust's first novels about Vlad Taltos, a Mafia boss who bears more resemblance to Michael Corleone than your average fantasy heavy. There are three stories in this collection: *JHEREG*, in which Vlad has to kill a master criminal who has been given sanctuary by his best friend; *YENDL*, which describes a vicious gang war, and *TECKLA*, in which the peasant classes revolt.

These stories are cleverly plotted and gloriously cliché free. Brust maintains tension throughout the novels and manages to produce surprises right up to the last page. He writes in a style reminiscent of Glen Cook which may or may not be a good thing depending on your point of view. When you consider what you could pay for a paperback these days £6.99 for three excellent novels has to be a contender for book bargain of the year.

WHEN GRAVITY FAILS by George Alec Effinger  
Bantam, 276 pp, £3.50 p/b

Reviewed by Al Johnston.

"Another Cyberpunk crime story" would adequately summarise this book; however it does have elements that provoke interest and a tight, gripping plot.

The wrinkle that stands out from the formulaic brainwiring, personality "moddies" and memory/information "daddies" is the Islamic cultural background. The action is set in the Budayan, the low-life ghetto of an unnamed Arab city. The Communist and Western democratic blocs have splintered and Islam is the major remaining force. Someone is gruesomely killing Assassins and criminals and Mr Big wants it sorted out.

Although much of a muchness with other cyberpunk, which personally I can take or leave, the book does make some good use of some of the elements and is one of the better works of the "sub-genre".

ALICE'S ADVENTURES IN WONDERLAND by Lewis Carroll, Dragon's World, 96 pp, £9.95 h/b

Reviewed by Carol Morton.

This is the classic tale, not the sanitized Disney version, but the even more bizarre original. The story first published in 1865 has lost none of its charm over 125 years and Malcolm Ashman's illustrations infuse this tale with a beauty of their own. The Cheshire Cat, Mock Turtle, Baby (or is it a pig?) et al enhance their own story elements adding to

the whole. This book will delight all ages -- definitely one for your permanent collection.

DIGGERS by Terry Pratchett  
Corgi, 173 pp. £2.99 p/b

Reviewed by Pauline Morgan.

No, this is not the latest handbook for JCB operators, it is the sequel to *TRUCKERS*, Pratchett's successful foray into children's literature. The nomes, the six-inch high people who vacated a department store so spectacularly in a lorry, have made their home in an abandoned quarry. Unfortunately some of the store nomes are less than content with their new home and humans decide to reopen the diggings. Once again Pratchett has produced a book which is a delight for readers of all ages. Everyone from eight to eighty will understand the bickerings and misunderstandings between the characters and the world they inhabit. The book will be enjoyed by all those who like to see the underdog triumphant, and impossible problems solved. Yes, there will be some JCB drivers who will quibble about the technical bits -- but it's not written for them. Buy it, have a few hours fun.

MICROWORLDS by Stanislaw Lem  
Mandarin, 285 pp. £5.99 p/b

Reviewed by Chris Ridd.

Not a novel but a collection of essays written by Lem for various foreign journals and magazines, and translated from the original German and Polish into English (just as well). A short autobiography kicks the book off, including some potted criticisms of a few of his own works, but the rest of the essays analyse styles, themes, methods, the occasional author ("Philip K Dick: A Visionary Amongst Charlatans" is one chapter) and a dissection of the Strugatskys' *ROADSIDE PICNIC*. It is quite refreshing to read well written critiques of sf themes; the essay on time travel is particularly well written.

It's hard to recommend this book to a general reader though; it is not exactly riveting reading. For writers of sf, however, it may prove a useful guide away from the messes some authors have been known to step in.

THE DARK TOWER Vol 2:  
THE DRAWING OF THE THREE by Stephen King  
Sphere, 400 pp. £3.99 p/b

Reviewed by Chris Morgan.

This volume is a great improvement on the first one in the series which was too slow.

Here King has introduced more characters and more excitement. His hero, Roland, the last gunslinger, is still in some other world, hunting for the Dark Tower, but he has massive problems to overcome. Right at the start he has two fingers and a toe nipped off by a giant lobster, and his ammunition gets wet (and thus no longer reliable). With an infected arm and untrustworthy pistols, he moves on up the never-ending beach, gaining companions from other worlds as he goes.

To a certain extent this is standard King stuff, full of over-the-top emotional reaction, but it's entertaining reading and a few scenes are very good indeed. Only another four or five books to go in the series!

HYPERION by Dan Simmons  
Headline, 502 pp. £4.99 p/b

Reviewed by Tony Morton.

I try to make a point of reading the award winning stories. This is mainly to see what's considered "top of the pile" and to decide if I agree. We all have our favourite hates that have won awards here, however, is the novel of a craftsman, a worthy winner of the 1990 Hugo. Simmons has produced a powerful and compulsive book, with sublime subplots and fantastic futuristic settings.

Set in the distant future where "the Hegemony" controls myriad planets, and where new worlds entering the Hegemony are swamped by Hegemony ideas and ideals, swiftly becoming like the rest. All except Hyperion which retains its mystery partly due to the enigmatic Time Tombs and partly due to the Shrike (a terrible being that transcends space and time).

The main plot is concerned with the problems revolving around Hyperion. The planet appears to be either a pawn or the prize in a fast approaching interstellar war between the Hegemony and "the Ousters" (a race of, originally human, space-dwellers). This plot unfolds through the tales of seven "chosen" pilgrims, à la *THE CANTERBURY TALES*. This format provides brilliant characterization, as well as some fascinating subplots.

SCARE CARE Edited by Graham Masterton  
Grafton, 496 pp. £4.99 p/b

Reviewed by Pauline Morgan.

If you care about children, whatever you think about the morality or otherwise of horror, you should consider buying this book. All of the authors have donated their work, and all proceeds will go to the Scare Care Trust. This provides funds for needy children.

Inside, should you choose to open the book, you will find thirty eight stories of varying degrees of competence. Some of the authors are well known (eg. Harlan Ellison, James Herbert, Ruth Rendell, Ramsey Campbell), others have donated their first published story. As you might expect, the longer stories are the ones which, in general, work best. A few are reprints, a few are noteworthy. It would be unfair to single out particular stories for any reason as the motivation behind the selection can only be guessed, however, the volume does show clearly that the established writers still have a greater degree of accomplishment. It is unfortunate but it seems to be a fact of life.

THE DIVIDE by Robert Charles Wilson  
Doubt, 249 pp, £6.99 p/b

Reviewed by Al Johnston.

A tense sf psychological thriller, *THE DIVIDE* makes compelling reading. Set in present day Canada, it concerns the search for the real John Shaw. John was created as part of a CIA project -- his intelligence enhanced in utero. When he is five funding is withdrawn and he is put out for adoption. To survive this he creates a "normal" persona, Benjamin, creating a rattle for control. Add to this, the fact that the enhancement seems to have a limited shelf-life and his mind is starting to break down... All in all this makes well handled drama and an interesting evaluation of humanity. Well worth reading.

SOLDIER OF ARETE by Gene Wolfe  
Doubt, 354 pp, £13.95 h/b

Reviewed by Steve Jones.

If you haven't read *SOLDIER OF THE MIST*, run out and buy it at once, otherwise *SOLDIER OF ARETE* will make no sense at all. Even with it this book is not easy reading.

The hero Latro is a Roman in Greece at the time of the Persian invasions. He has suffered a wound to his head which has a strange effect on him. He forgets everything that happens more than twelve hours ago, but he has gained the ability to see the gods, ghosts and other invisible creatures that inhabit ancient Greece. The book is written as Latro's diary, so the reader is usually as confused about what is going on as Latro.

The only problem is that the book ends on a cliffhanger, and there is still no indication of how many volumes there will be. Highly recommended, but it would be a good idea to wait for the whole series to arrive before reading.

## DRABBLES

As mentioned last time we ran a Drabbles page, all you have to do is write a short story EXACTLY 100 words long, excluding the title. I look forward to receiving your efforts shortly.

## HOLLOW

by Helen Conner

Hollow. Not a ghost, a hollow. The word made a kind of mournful sense. She remembered how she'd reached to touch him, and started as her hand had penetrated the appearance of him.

Not from the past he had said. From elsewhere, where his flesh still existed. He couldn't bring his flesh here, only send the hollow of himself. Pity, he had been good to look upon: he'd have been better to touch.

She shook herself free of the memory of him, and turned back to her work: planting a real tree in the solid earth, with her hands, joyfully.

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## U. F. D ! !

by Stephen Billings

"This is flight BA527 to Shanwick Control. Do you have any traffic at our eleven o'clock position?"

"BA 527, negative ... hold on ... what's that? Affirmative ... we show an Unknown at your eleven o'clock ... range twenty miles."

"Do you have its speed and heading? Over."

"Speed twenty knots ... heading ... 278 degrees. You should be able to get a visual ... about now."

"We have a visual ... where did it go? Do you still show any traffic in our vicinity?"

"Negative ... we show no other traffic."

.....

"Do you think they would believe us if we told them what we saw?"

"No, ... dragons don't exist!"