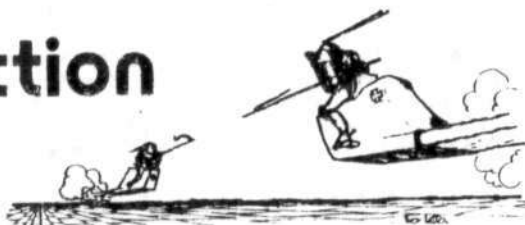


# Birmingham Science Fiction Group

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



## NEWSLETTER 124

DECEMBER 1981

The Birmingham Science Fiction Group has its formal meeting on the third Friday of each month in the upstairs room of THE IVY BUSH pub on the corner of Hagley Road and Monument Road, Edgbaston, Birmingham 16. There is also an informal meeting on the first Tuesday of each month at THE OLD ROYAL pub, on the corner of Church Street and Cornwall Street, Birmingham 3. (Church Street is off Colmore Row.) New members are always welcome. Our treasurer is Margaret Thorpe, 36 Twyford Road, Ward End, Birmingham 8. The 12-month subscription is £3.50.

## DECEMBER MEETING - Friday 18th December 1981 at 7.45 pm

It's CHRISTMAS PARTY time. If you've already bought a ticket you're in for a great evening of food and entertainment at The Ivy Bush. If you haven't already bought one you're too late, because final numbers need to be advised to The Ivy Bush at the same time as this newsletter is going out.

## NOVEMBER MEETING

Richard Evans, the SF editor of Arrow Books, gave us an insight into the difficult job of creating and maintaining a line of SF books which will appeal to all types of readers. If any of you want copies of the entry form and rules for the Arrow/BBC £5000 First Novel competition, please ask your newsletter editor.

## FORTHCOMING

\* January 1982 - Annual General Meeting, including election of committee members (see page 4 for details of the jobs). Also, there'll be an AUCTION of SF paperbacks, hardcovers, magazines, etc, conducted by Rog Peyton. NOW is the time to look through your collection for material to donate.

\* February 1982 - Brian Aldiss will be coming to talk to us.

\* Spring 1982 - Marion Zimmer Bradley has promised to visit us when she's in Britain, in March or April.

## INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

ANDROMEDA BOOKSHOP MOVES

MOORCOCK TO VISIT BIRMINGHAM

GUEST BOOK REVIEW BY BRUNNER

A VERY MERRY CHRISTMAS TO ALL OUR READERS

WORLD FANTASY AWARDS have just been announced at this year's World Fantasy Convention. Novel: The Shadow of the Torturer by Gene Wolfe; short fiction: Howard Waldrop; anthology: Dark Forces edited by achievement: C.L.Moore.

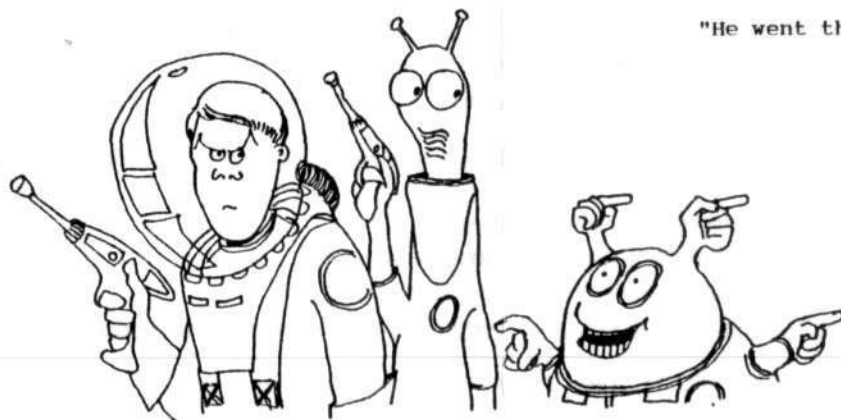
ANDROMEDA BOOKSHOP MOVES to new premises as from Saturday 19th December. They'll be at 84 Suffolk Street, Birmingham. All the information, including a map of how to get there is on the yellow sheet which you should find with this newsletter, except for their new phone number, which is: (021) 643-1999. To celebrate this momentous event...

MICHAEL MOORCOCK will visit Birmingham on Saturday 19th December, to sign copies of his books at Andromeda's new shop (84 Suffolk Street). He'll be there between about noon and 2.00 pm. Moorcock has made very few public appearances in recent years, so don't miss this opportunity of getting his signature. And before we leave the subject of Andromeda Bookshop, don't forget that there'll be a...

GRAND CLEARANCE SALE of books, magazines, etc, at Andromeda's old shop (57 Summer Row) starting at 10.00 am on Monday 21st December. There'll be lots of good things on offer at ridiculously low prices. Don't miss it!

ANDROMEDA BOOKSHOP'S top ten best selling paperbacks for November were: 1.Scorpio Attack (Blake's 7) - Trevor Hoyle (BBC), 2.DragonDrums - Anne McCaffrey (Corgi), 3.The Island of Dr Death and Other Stories and Other Stories - Gene Wolfe (Arrow), 4.The Shadow of the Torturer - Gene Wolfe (Arrow), 5.Starworld - Harry Harrison (Granada), 5.The Dr Who Programme Guide volume 2 - Jean-Marc Lofficer (Target), 7.The Sword and the Stallion - Michael Moorcock (Granada), 8.The Dr Who Programme Guide volume 1 - Jean-Marc Lofficer (Target), 9.The Song of Phaid the Gambler - Mick Farren (NEL), 9.Pictures at an Exhibition edited by Ian Watson (Greystoke Mobray).

SOLIHULL MOVES: Just kidding. Actually it's only the Solihull SF Group (or Steve Green for short) which is moving to a different pub for its second-Friday-of-the-month meetings. As from January 8th they'll be at the Red House in Lode Lane (just past Solihull Hospital).

[illegible]

"He went thataway!"





# BOOK REVIEWS

THE SILVER ARM by Jim Fitzpatrick, Paper Tiger £5.25, 112 pages

Reviewed by John Farr.

Despite the considerable disadvantage of an introduction from the illiterate Pat Vincent, this is a strong contender for the best illustrated book of the year in the fantasy and science fiction field. Like its predecessor from 1978, The Book of Conquests, it is a vivid and bloody chapter of Irish mythology, beautifully told and illustrated by Jim Fitzpatrick. The events covered include Nuada's gaining of a silver arm to replace that lost at the first battle of Moy Tura, the appearance of Lugh and the worsening of relations between the Tuatha Dé Danann (a supposedly divine race which inhabited Ireland before the Celts) and the hosts of Fomor, culminating in the second battle of Moy Tura. Fitzpatrick's artwork has been considerably improved over the last three years. His use of traditional Irish designs on the borders and endpapers has been refined, and his figurework has lost its comic-book starkness, gaining in grace and detail. Roger Dean's influence is noticeable in the style, but this is no bad thing, and the overall effect is stunning.

THE ORPHAN by Robert Stallman, Granada £1.50, 251 pages

Reviewed by Chris Morgan.

Try not to think of this as a werewolf novel. All right, it is one, but it's much more than that, whereas its crude and tasteless cover illustration condemns it as just another third-rate horror story. Robert Stallman (now dead, alas) was an extremely powerful descriptive writer. This, his first novel, is set in the American mid-west almost fifty years ago. The "werewolf" is actually more like a giant bear---a strange animal, possibly of extraterrestrial origin. It is intelligent and possesses enormous physical strength but is ignorant. In order to learn it transforms itself into a small human child, ignoring the law of conservation of mass. But the monster and the child have different personalities, different viewpoints. The result, despite having no real beginning or ending, is as good as Ray Bradbury at his best. If you enjoy fantasy, try it.

DRAGONDRUMS by Anne McCaffrey, Corgi £1.25, 223 pages

Reviewed by Pauline E. Morgan.

At long last, here is the UK paperback edition. This is the third juvenile novel set on Pern, where fire-breathing dragons combat the relentless fall of Thread from the skies. Dragondrums chronicles the adventures of Piemur, who, after his voice breaks, is set to learn to read and send drum messages. Piemur seems to attract trouble and finds himself accidentally transported to the Southern Continent, where he has to depend on his own resources. The setting and characters overlap largely with Dragon song and Dragonsinger, Anne McCaffrey's other two juvenile Dragon books, and to some extent with The White Dragon. A pleasure to read.

THE WEB BETWEEN THE WORLDS by Charles Sheffield, Arrow £1.60, 274 pages

Reviewed by John Farr.

Charles Sheffield will never be a good writer, but he is capable of putting across highly technological fiction quite entertainingly. Coincidentally, he and Arthur C. Clarke both produced novels about the building of a space elevator (a bridge-like structure linking the Earth's surface with a satellite in geostationary orbit) simultaneously. Clarke's was The Fountains of Paradise; Sheffield's is The Web Between the Worlds. What both discovered is that building a space elevator is an intrinsically boring subject, so that any plot excitement has to come from other sources. Sheffield's story is, despite some slow passages, an exciting one with a grand finale.



BRAVE OLD WORLD (Cette Chère Humanité) by Philippe Curval, Allison & Busby £6.95, 262 pages

Reviewed by John Brunner.

Curval presents us with a vision of a future Common Market (known as Marcom) sealed behind its frontiers, defended with nerve-weapons, and dedicated to nostalgia and the extension of private time by means of slow-time cabinets. Government has become anonymous and subtle, and dissidents are either tolerated in areas abandoned for other purposes, or condemned to zones where survival of the fittest is the only law. His protagonist, the first intruder for twenty years, crosses this weird continent-wide blend of utopia and sheer hell in search of his unknown son. I wish I could recommend the novel unqualifiedly. But it seems to be a characteristic of many European SF writers that they fear to lose the reader's attention if they don't pile marvel upon marvel right up to the final page. Into this mix he stirs people who can actualise the dreams of others, imitation humans evolved from minute insects, telepathic powers, an intersexual person like the fusion at the end of Moorcock's The Final Programme... Rather too much of many good things, I feel. But by all means buy the paperback. Some of the scenes are memorable, and the translation is quite good, although on p.30 two chapters are run together without a break, most confusingly.

THE ENTROPY TANGO by Michael Moorcock, NEL £5.95, 152 pages

Reviewed by Bob Vernon.

The anarchic revolutionaries are fading to grey, the temporal programmes are disintegrating into chaos, Jerry Cornelius has lost his verve and direction, and Una---poor Una---is looking for love in a chilly chilling world of sorrowing gallant Pierrots. The Law of Entropy has not been repealed and slow goes the mega-flow. If you have lived with Cornelius so far you will appreciate this little offering of prose, lyrics/poetry and flat images loosely gathered round Una's (last?) quest. Many of us consider this consistent, cynical and decrepit world to be Moorcock's finest achievement, but if you don't know it, don't start here. This is essentially a postlude in a minor key, precisely evoking many former themes, subtly revoking many previous achievements, sadly invoking many troubled ghosts from the Cornelius: past/present/future, so you need to go to previous volumes to fully appreciate this addition to a witty, frightening, original and literate genre.

SCIENCE FICTION SPECIAL 39: LEVIATHAN'S DEEP by Jayge Carr (213pp), HOW THE GODS WOVE IN KYRANNON by Ardath Mayhar (181pp) and THE RAVENS OF THE MOON by Charles L. Grant (184pp), Sidgwick & Jackson £8.95

Reviewed by Malcolm & Margaret Thorpe.

This is excellent value for money, with three novels of a consistently high standard and very varied in content. Only the presentation is poor, with no cover blurb to assist in deciding whether the contents would suit you, and with a drab cover which fails to catch the eye.

Leviathan's Deep is a remarkable first novel. It is a story of opposing cultures which can communicate but never understand what the other is saying. The Delyne are an old and graceful matriarchal society, unable to understand the humans (who lack all the feminine virtues of loyalty, bravery and honour). The Kimassue Lady is the only one who, having experienced the inhumanity of the humans' exploitation, can fully appreciate their danger to her planet. Brilliantly written and highly readable.

How the Gods Wove in Kyrannon is a beautiful novel, sensitively written. It tells of how the gods use the Sensitives living in harmony with the land, to defeat a despotic ruler. The narrator changes with each chapter to show the way of life of each of the protagonists, giving marvellous cameos of creatures living at one with their environment, united against a common enemy.

Only the trendy corruption of words, like asher for undertaker, and a future setting where life is split between affluent cities and lawless countryside, makes The Ravens of the Moon a science fiction book. The storyline is a simple one where an unlikely hero defeats an attempted coup, marred by an awkward narrative style by which each paragraph has a different viewpoint. Perseverance, though, yields a rewarding read.

Reviewed by Chris Morgan.

Here is the present-day town of Shepperton, Surrey, cut off from the rest of the world by tropical vegetation, with a banyan tree blocking the high street, with most of the population becoming tropical birds, or fish, or deer, and presided over by a dead man who wants to mate with everybody and scatters his semen widely to demonstrate his earnestness. Ballard has produced a strange, visionary fantasy novel about the strength of imagination, writing in his marvellously clinical descriptive style. The protagonist, a young man named Blake, has stolen a light aircraft from London Airport, and crashes it into the river at Shepperton. He drowns. When his body is brought onto the bank he miraculously revives, and the strange events begin. It sounds crazy, but Ballard actually lives in Shepperton; perhaps he knows something we don't.

VANEGLORY by George Turner, Faber £6.95, 320 pages

Reviewed by Bob Vernon.

Imagine Stevenson's Kidnapped rewritten by Deighton and Blish and set in the 21st century. Dilute the plot and the moral complexity and behold--Vaneglor. This sequel to Beloved Son involves the precipitous collapse of industrialised society and the emergence of a new order supposedly committed to Peace, Law and the Ethic. Into this world of ruthless peace-makers and ethical enforcers comes knowledge of the Children of Time, a rare and subtle human mutation whose very existence threatens sanity and order, and whose discovery triggers a complex and bloody power play amongst the new masters. Add a romantic mystery with a Scots accent and a down-beat denouement and you have a competent, if dispassionate, novel that funks or flunks most of the ethical questions it raises. There will obviously be a third volume in this series. I might read it; on the other hand...

THE ISLAND OF DOCTOR DEATH AND OTHER STORIES AND OTHER STORIES by Gene Wolfe, Arrow £1.95, 410 pages

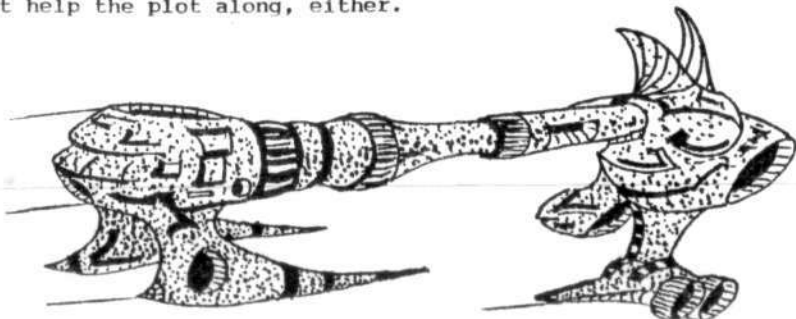
Reviewed by Chris Morgan.

Following the unquestionable brilliance of Wolfe's The Shadow of the Torturer and its sequels, it would be easy to accept him as a Writer Who Can Do No Wrong, and to lavishly praise all his work. Unfortunately, this collection is, annoyingly, only half good. It contains enough good quality stories---a few very good indeed---to fill a normal length book. At the risk of appearing too conformist, I must single out the title story as the best item, though its titular companion pieces ("The Death of Dr Island" and the Doctor of Death Island") and "Tracking Song" (illustrated on the cover by Bruce Pennington) run it close. But interspersed with these are anecdotes, incomplete and faulted stories. Some, like "The Hero As Werewolf", have marvelous openings but poor, tacked-on endings. Others, like "Feather Tigers", seem pointless. On the whole it's worth buying.

REVOLT OF THE MICRONAUTS by Gordon Williams, NEL £1.50, 192 pages

Reviewed by Vernon Brown.

Basically, the mixture as before. Miniaturised people, living in an abandoned country house while the society outside is breaking down, have their own political problems. A breakaway group, hunted by the totalitarian main colony, finds further troubles in the shape of a full-sized human who has blundered into the grounds. The impossibility of the basic premise doesn't help the plot along, either.



PICTURES AT AN EXHIBITION edited by Ian Watson, with illustrations by Pete Lyon, Greystoke Mobray £1.25, 166 pages Reviewed by Anne Gay.

Ars longa, vita brevis. (No, it's not rude.) As someone said in Latin, art is eternal, life is short. That theme is illustrated on many levels in this anthology of eight brand new stories. Each story is unique, based on a picture by Dali, Dürer or Frank Frazetta amongst others. Yet this anthology is different: the stories are set in a link devised by Ian Watson and Roger Campbell. The link itself is beautiful, intriguing; the stories range from science fiction to fantasy, from surrealist to downright funny. All are clever; some are brilliant. Authors include Brian Stableford, Michael Bishop, the Fanthorpes, Dave Langford and Chris Morgan the Famous, whose contribution combines intelligence with humour most palatably (I'll have that fiver now...) If you like sensuality or philosophy, rush out and buy this (nudge nudge). If you read SF for enjoyment, rush out and buy it anyway. A book to read and savour with great pleasure.

THE FIFTH SALLY by Daniel Keyes, Robert Hale £6.75, 278 pages

Reviewed by Anne Gay.

Not so much a whodunnit as a whosisit. Sally, a drab, unintelligent divorcee, is frightened. Whose are the blowzy clothes in her wardrobe? Why do women's lib books keep appearing in her locked apartment? What happens when she blacks out and wakes hours or days later in alarming situations? A psychiatrist discovers her multiples---the very real schizophrenic characters who share her body. Nola the artist, Berry the happy heart of Cinderella, Bella the sex-bomb, Jinx the vicious psychopath, don't want to die. Their struggles with one another and Sally are fascinating. Multiplicity is on the increase---a frightening statistical fact. This is an enthralling fictional account by a psychologist. Apart from a couple of pages, this is not SF, but it is still a book to make time for. It is a believable psychodrama with disturbing implications. Only Sybil is more horrifying---because that was true.

ISAAC ASIMOV'S MARVELS OF SCIENCE FICTION edited by George Scithers, Hale £6.95, 287 pages Reviewed by Pauline E. Morgan.

This contains the best from Isaac Asimov's Science Fiction Magazine during 1978-9, and is well worth dipping into. A number of the pieces are the first story sales for their authors; all stories are accompanied by the artwork that originally appeared with them. All tend to be upbeat stories although there's a considerable variety of settings and styles. Several have the protagonist surmounting great odds; prejudice in "In the Country of the Blind, No One Can See" by Melisa Michaels, loneliness in "Against a Crooked Stile" by Nancy Kress, poverty and tyranny in "A Bait of Dreams" by Jo Clayton. The final story, "The Napoli Express" by Randall Garrett, owes a lot to Agatha Christie and features Lord Darcy. And for the budding author Asimov's editorial offers "Hints"---if you can't write you can always be a brain surgeon.

ALL THE SOUNDS OF FEAR, THE TIME OF THE EYE both by Harlan Ellison, Granada £1.25 each, 158 pages and 156 pages Reviewed by John Farr.

Harlan Ellison writes good, highly emotive short stories. These are two reprinted collections of his earlier pieces, from the 1950s and 1960s. Some are SF, some fantasy, most are horrific to some degree, but they're all well written---gripping, even. Included are a couple of Hugo winners, "I Have No Mouth, and I Must Scream" and "'Repent, Harlequin!' Said the Ticktock Man" (both in All the Sounds of Fear). If you haven't read these collections, go out and buy them.

## Editorial Notes

Frequently I feel like using this space to make some vital, meaningful comment on SF---but there's never enough room! Many thanks to Ansible (it was almost too late; you'll have to do better than this, D.Langford) and to all contributors, especially Pauline for her typing. Artists are Ivor Latto (p.1), John Dell (pp.2 & 4) and Phill Probert (p.7). Produced and edited for the BSFG by Chris Morgan, 39 Hollybrow, Selly Oak, B'ham 29.



# ***NEW SHOP...***

***as from Saturday 19th December 1981***

# **ANDROMEDA** **BOOKSHOP**

***will be trading from a new, bigger and  
better shop at:-***

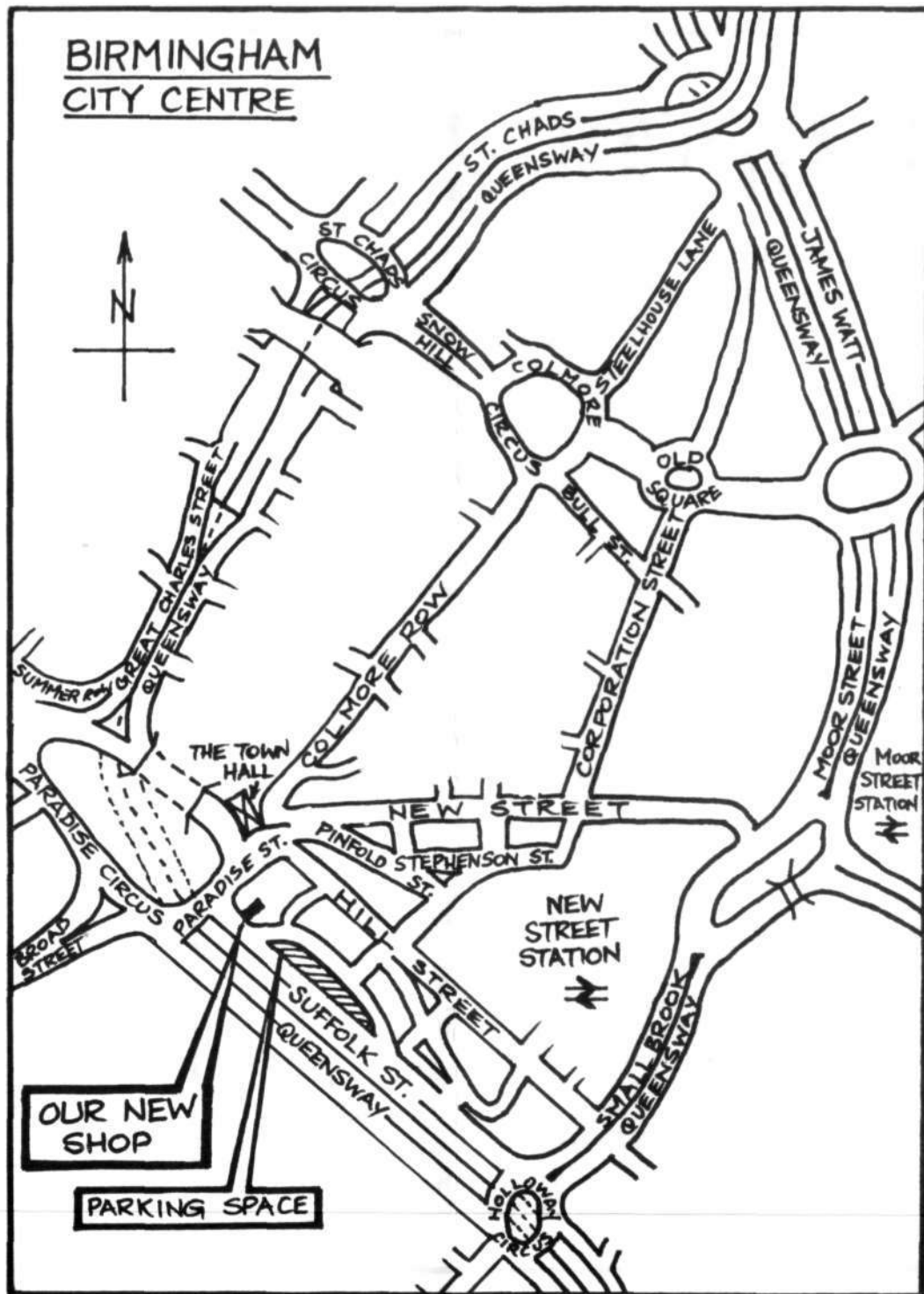
**84 SUFFOLK STREET,  
BIRMINGHAM, B1 1TA**

OFFICIAL OPENING AT NOON BY MICHAEL MOORCOCK - SEE DETAILS INSIDE.

OUR OLD PREMISES AT 55/57 SUMMER ROW WILL REMAIN OPEN UNTIL THURSDAY, 24TH DECEMBER. THERE WILL BE A SALE IN OUR OLD PREMISES COMMENCING ON MONDAY, 21ST DECEMBER - COME ALONG AND PICK UP SOME BARGAINS (HARDCOVERS, PAPERBACKS, MAGAZINES, ART BOOKS, ETC.)

OUR NEW SHOP IS EASY TO FIND, EASIER TO GET TO AND WILL BE ABLE TO STOCK EVEN MORE THAN THE 3000 TITLES ALREADY STOCKED IN OUR OLD PREMISES. JUST ROUND THE CORNER FROM THE TOWN HALL, OPPOSITE THE HOLIDAY INN AND THE ATV CENTRE. PLENTY OF PARKING SPACE JUST PAST THE SHOP.

# BIRMINGHAM CITY CENTRE



ON SATURDAY, 19TH DECEMBER, ANDROMEDA BOOKSHOP WILL BE HAVING A SIGNING SESSION WITH....

# MICHAEL MOORCOCK

THE SESSION WILL TAKE PLACE AT OUR NEW PREMISES AT NOON TILL 2pm APPROXIMATELY. THE SIGNING SESSION IS PRIMARILY FOR MIKE'S NEW BOOK 'THE STEEL TSAR' (Published December 18th) BUT THE FOLLOWING BOOKS WILL ALSO BE AVAILABLE FOR SIGNING (PLEASE STATE ALTERNATIVES JUST IN CASE WE RUN OUT OF A PARTICULAR TITLE):-

## HARDCOVERS

BYZANTIUM ENDURES (4)6.95  
THE DANCERS AT THE END OF TIME (AN  
ALIEN HEAT, THE HOLLOW LANDS and  
THE END OF ALL SONGS) (5)7.95  
THE ENTROPY TANGO (3)5.95

## PAPERBACKS

### Oswald Bastable series:

1 THE WARLORD OF THE AIR 95p  
2 THE LAND LEVIATHAN 1.25

3 THE STEEL TSAR - First World  
publication - due out on 18th  
December - order your signed  
copy now. 1.25

### Jerry Cornelius series:

1 THE FINAL PROGRAMME out of print  
2 A CURE FOR CANCER 1.00  
3 THE ENGLISH ASSASSIN 1.00  
4 THE CONDITION OF MUZAK 1.25  
- THE ADVENTURES OF UNA PERSSON &  
CATHERINE CORNELIUS IN THE  
TWENTIETH CENTURY 1.25  
- THE DISTANT SUNS 75p

### Corum series:

1 THE KNIGHT OF THE SWORDS 95p  
2 THE QUEEN OF THE SWORDS 95p  
3 THE KING OF THE SWORDS 95p

4 THE BULL AND THE SPEAR 85p  
5 THE OAK AND THE RAM 95p  
6 THE SWORD AND THE STALLION - due  
late November 1.25

### Dancers at the End of Time series:

1 AN ALIEN HEAT 95p  
2 THE HOLLOW LANDS 1.25  
3 THE END OF ALL SONGS 1.25  
- LEGENDS FROM THE END OF TIME 95p  
- THE TRANSFORMATION OF MISS MAVIS  
MING 95p

### Elric series:

1 ELRIC OF MELNIBONE 80p  
2 SAILOR ON THE SEAS OF FATE 95p  
3 THE STEALER OF SOULS 1.25  
4 THE SINGING CITADEL 95p  
6 STORMBRINGER 1.25

### Eternal Champion series:

1 THE ETHERNAL CHAMPION 95p  
2 PHOENIX IN OBSIDIAN 1.25  
3 CHAMPION OF GARATHORN 95p  
4 THE QUEST FOR TANELORN 95p

### Karl Glogauer series:

1 BEHOLD THE MAN 1.00  
2 BREAKFAST IN THE RUINS 90p

### Martian series:

1 CITY OF THE BEAST 80p  
2 LORD OF THE SPIDERS 80p  
3 MASTERS OF THE PIT 75p

### The Runestaff series:

1 THE JEWEL IN THE SKULL 95p  
2 THE MAD GOD'S AMULET 95p  
3 THE SWORD OF THE DAWN 95p  
4 THE RUNESTAFF 95p

### Castle Brass series (sequel to The Runestaff series linking up with the Eternal Champion series):

1 COUNT BRASS 1.25  
2 THE CHAMPION OF GARATHORN 95p  
3 THE QUEST FOR TANELORN 95p

### Unconnected titles:

THE BLACK CORRIDOR 95p  
THE BLOOD RED GAME (aka THE  
SUNDERED WORLDS) 60p  
THE CHINESE AGENT 85p  
GLORIANA 1.25  
THE GOLDEN BARGE 1.25  
THE GREAT ROCK'N'ROLL SWINDLE 1.50  
MOORCOCK'S BOOK OF MARTYRS 1.25  
MY EXPERIENCES IN THE THIRD WORLD  
WAR 1.50  
THE SHORES OF DEATH (aka THE  
TWILIGHT MAN) 50p  
SOJAN 80p  
THE WINDS OF LIMBO (aka THE  
FIRECLOWN) 95p

### Edited by Michael Moorcock:

THE TRAPS OF TIME 85p