

# Birmingham Science Fiction Group

Honorary Presidents : Brian W. Aldiss  
and Harry Harrison

## NEWSLETTER 189



THE BSFG MEETS ON THE  
THIRD FRIDAY OF EACH  
MONTH IN THE LABROCKE  
INTERNATIONAL HOTEL,  
NEW STREET, IN THE  
CENTRE OF BIRMINGHAM.  
DETAILS OF THIS MONTH'S  
MEETING ARE GIVEN  
OPPOSITE.

MEMBERSHIP OF THE  
GROUP COSTS A MERE £5.50  
PER YEAR FOR ONE PERSON  
£8.00 FOR TWO PEOPLE  
AT THE SAME ADDRESS.  
ALL CHEQUES AND POSTAL  
ORDERS PAYABLE TO BSFG  
AND SENT TO THE  
TREASURER CHRIS CHIVERS  
AT 51 BOUNDARY ROAD  
STREETLY SUTTON  
COLDFIELD WEST MID'S.

THIS MONTH'S MEETING: FRIDAY 19 JUNE

### WATCH THE SKIES!

"Oh, you read sci-fi - that's all little green men and stuff, isn't it? Have you seen any flying saucers lately?" How many of us have cringed at that sort of remark from a member of the mundane public! However, the fact remains that encounters with alien craft do feature not infrequently in SF. And interest in UFOs continues; the *Sunday Mirror* has just started a new series on 'The UFO Cover-up'. The Gerry Anderson real-live-puppet series *UFO* is being re-run on ITV... What is the truth about UFOs?

Our speaker this month is  
**PETER WARRINGTON, F.R.A.S.**  
author of *UFOs: A British Viewpoint*  
and *Science and the UFOs*.

Many members will remember when we had a speaker from the Aetherius Society - a meeting which turned out to be rather hilarious. Our speaker this time is NOT of that ilk, or a 'Believer', but a genuine researcher. It promises to be a most interesting and entertaining evening - be there!  
(P.T.O.)

19 June 1987 could hardly be a more propitious month for a speaker on UFOs. It was on 24 June, 1947 - almost exactly 40 years ago - that Kenneth Arnold, piloting his light 'plane over the Cascade Mountains in Washington State, saw a chain of circular craft moving "like a saucer would if you skipped it across water". Thus the term 'flying saucer' was coined. (For the full story, see the article by Chris Morgan and Dave Hardy in the May 1984 issue of *Space Voyager*.)

Since then - not to mention before, even in Biblical times! - there have been many classic encounters, the most recent being that of best-selling author Whitley Strieber, who received the ultimate accolade of appearing on *Wogan*! with Michael Bentine. He claims to have been abducted by little men - and lie detector tests appear to support his claim... Interestingly enough, it was after reading one of Peter Warrington's books that he 'realised' that he had had close encounters of the third kind. And new books have just been published by Lord Hill-Norton - *Above Top Secret* - and Jenny Randles - *The UFO Conspiracy*. No doubt Peter will have comments to make on these, but have your questions ready.

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### THE CHAIRMAN'S BIT

"Apathy Birthday To You!" Just over a year since we had the famous 'A.P.Athy' to speak to the Brum Group, and you've surpassed yourselves... For the first time in the history of the Group, the Committee has had to cancel the Summer Social Event due to lack of support.

I asked at the last meeting (were you there?) whether anyone wanted the Group to lose money. Nobody did. But only 20 people, by no means all members, and many of them Committee, were interested enough to shell out a fiver for what promised to be a very pleasant evening, including a coach trip to Kinver, a meal, and the bowling alley. If YOU were looking forward to it, or had left it until the last minute, I'm sorry, but we had to cancel now so as to lose only the deposit on the room and coach. Yes, we have lost money, but not as much as we should have done if we'd gone ahead with a few people. We may have to run an in-Group meeting in the near future, to help defray the loss.

As you know, we are not having a Christmas Party this year, due to the poor attendance at recent ones (though we do hope to have a special meeting in December). It looks as if that is the end of social events for the Group: if you have any comments, the Members' Forum is open, as always...



p.s Andromeda did try to find some more folks to join us but not enough came forward. Thanks for trying Rog and Dave.

Last Month's Meeting - Patrick Tilley.

"When asked 'what books do you write?' I reply I hope those people like to read --! If I said SF people's eyes glaze over..."

It seems everybody has an IDEA for a book, the problem is that can it grip you for 360 pages? Also, you must believe in what you do - a reader can spot a phony. You must never insult a reader's intelligence, once into a story there are strict rules that must be followed..."

Patrick Tilley began as a graphic designer before moving into writing for television, he became a scriptwriter on Crane. He however turned down the chance to write the last series as he felt the 'hero' had become 'unbelievable'. He next turned to story editor for the films 'Only when I Larf' and 'Oh! What a Lovely War', then teamed up with Michael Winner on a project 'but after working for six months we were getting nowhere', so he got out to write a book about 'something landing from out of space, which doesn't kill anybody but nobody knows what it is'. All in all FADE OUT took 3 years to write and it was finished only after Patrick had been persuaded to do the novelisation of the 'Likely Lads' film after which he realised he could finish a book! Five weeks later Hodder and Stoughton wanted to publish the book and Dino deLaurentis was showing interest in the film rights! However problems surrounded the film possibilities and Warner pulled out largely due to CE3K which was in post production by then - Patrick was advised to sue Spielberg (because of a somewhat similar storyline).

Patrick finally got to Hollywood with 'Legacy' (Universal) for which he wrote the screenplay, a major rewrite, however once the finance was obtained along with Katherine Ross and Sam Elliott the original script was used! There was very little to do with Patrick's (better) screenplay, with many characters there just to expand the plot. Hence Patrick's comment that 'movies are a work of attrition'.

This prompted Patrick to return home and move to North Wales (he chose sanity over Hollywood). Here after a frustrating interval MISSION was written and AMTRAK also took shape.

Patrick admitted that he has to know where the story is going and especially have characters named before he's happy with the plot. He then plans the story like a route map - although detours can happen for instance, Brickman was supposed to be the villain and Cadillac the hero in the AMTRAK series it hasn't worked out that way.

Also, he must know why a character is in the story : the character will suddenly make sense and fit; as in real life an action may not have a direct effect but will surface later linking events back to the character's appearance.

Between AMTRAK books Patrick has had XAN published by Grafton who have re-issued an updated FADE OUT (it's a 'political' SF novel so it had to be updated to Post Regan/Iranganate).

With the publication of AMTRAK III - THE IRON MASTER, Patrick promises a further three to complete the series. He keeps a notebook for ideas and lines **thought up** in odd places and hopefully further books will follow.

Thankyou Patrick for a very entertaining evening.

BECCON'87, the 38th Annual British Science Fiction Convention, was held over the Easter Bank Holiday weekend in the Birmingham Metropole Hotel at the NEC. It was alright really I suppose, there were no major disasters - other than the food. It was smaller than I had expected, much smaller than the Committee had anticipated. The programme was mildly interesting, though not as good as I've come to expect from 'the BECCON People'. I had a good time, but I always do at a con...

The worst part of the convention was Friday night, when shortly after my arrival I was informed of the death of Terry Carr. One of the 'good guys' of the SF world. Terry died on April 7th at the age of fifty. Renowned in the professional field for his Tears Best SF collections, his novel 'Cirque' and a few excellent stories. In the fanish world he will be remembered for the Carl Brandon hoax and the excellence of his other fanish works such as his fanzine 'Lighthouse'. Personally I'll always remember him as the witty, friendly guy who helped me feel very much at home at the Baltimore Worldcon in 1983. He will be missed.

Early Sunday morning POLLYCON won the right to hold next year's Eastercon in Liverpool, beating NORWESCON (the Manchester bid) quite conclusively. On Sunday afternoon CONTRIVANCE (aided by the withdrawal of the YORCON IV bid) beat 'holdover' to win the right to hold the 1989 Eastercon in Jersey. For further details see the convention listing.

On Sunday evening The Arthur C. Clarke Award and a £1000 cheque went to Margaret Atwood for "The Handmaid's Tale". The Doc Weir Award went to Brian Burgess, the Ken McKintyre Award failed to be awarded due to insufficient entries, although Mike Malloy did succeed in collecting the award he'd won last year. BECCON's Guest of Honour Keith Roberts won both the BSFA Award for Artwork and Short Story ("The Clocktower Girl" & "Kastl and the Hangman" respectively). ALIENS won the BSFA Award for Best Media Presentation and Bob Shaw won the BSFA Award for Best Novel with "The Ragged Astronauts".

A raffle held in aid of Fans Across The World - a scheme aimed at helping fans who find it difficult to bring money out of their countries, (or who have similar financial problems) to attend CONSPIRACY'87 - eventually raised more than £350. The Fans Across The World Scheme hopes to arrange transport within Britain (and possibly from continental channel ports), food and/or accomodation at the Convention and maybe hospitality before or afterwards. Already a group of 18 Poles have been sponsored by this scheme. If you wish to make a donation or find out more about the scheme write to Fans Across The World Scheme, c/o CONSPIRACY'87, P.O. Box 43, Cambridge, CB1 3JJ, UK.

By the way, the Steering Committee of Conspiracy have finally announced the "On the Door" attending membership rate, a mere £45.00! So if you intend to attend, better register fast - while it's still 'only' £38.00! It is currently estimated that (not counting possible walk-ins and day members) the convention will have around 4200 attendees. Registration tables will be operating on the Wednesday to try to reduce queues on the Thursday - when the convention actually starts. I doubt if it will work - but it's worth a try!

Still on the subject of CONSPIRACY'87 here's a brief, but important message from Bridget Wilkinson - "As you probably know, the Strugatsky brothers, Arkady and Boris, are among the GOR's at CONSPIRACY'87. They are the best known (in the West) and probably the most translated Russian science fiction writers.

The Conspiracy committee had obtained their agreement to come to the Con. For several months things appeared to be OK, but recently nothing has been heard from the USSR Writers Union about their visit, despite many letters. They appear to be slightly out of favour. This could be the preliminary to their 'not appearing' at Brighton, and a *show of interest* on the part of British fans, particularly if sent to "further up" parts of the system might get things moving.



In the first instance we do NOT envisage press exposure (except fanzines), a fairly low key naif/pseudo-naif letter writing campaign may be quite adequate. More than that might damage their position in the USSR and will be resorted to later, if at all.

If you could write a letter to one of the USSR Embassy (18 Kensington Palace Gardens, London, W8); Pravda (because letters to the press are one of the ways of getting things done in the Soviet Union, and Pravda is well known and now has an English edition) or to Mr Mikhail Gorbachov, it would be very helpful.

Letters to either of the latter sent c/o the Embassy would probably be passed on. The points to be got across would be:

1) You are a science fiction fan.

2) You have heard (rumours?) that the Strugatsky brothers may not be able to come to the convention. *Do not mention "Conspiracy" it is the 45th World Science Fiction Convention for these purposes.*

3) You are sorry about this as; they are among the most important SF writers in the world/ have a large Western following/ you have read their books and would like to meet them.

Mentioning "International Friendship" or the fact that they are fellow Europeans might not come amiss.

*Mentioning the fact that you consider the Soviet Union to be a tyranny, politics of any sort, or that you don't like Raisa Gorbachov's taste in clothes is likely to be counter-productive. If you feel you have to express yourself in a letter in this manner, do us a favour. Don't post it.*

Please be amiable, and please do write. Thanks."

Bridget also mentions that - "Books best mentioned include; Monday begins on Saturday, Hard to be a God, Roadside Picnic and The Final Circle of Paradise. *Avoid 'The Ugly Swans', to my knowledge it has never had a USSR publication.*" For further information contact Bridget at 15 Manor Drive, Southgate, London, N14 5JH.

Still on the subject of CONSPIRACY, reliable rumour has it that the Steering Committee have decided to ban smoking *completely* in *all* function rooms. A courageous (but *stupid*) move. So far this rumour has already cost me (as Fan Programme organiser) four essential programme participants - resulting in SIX cancelled items. I can see similar problems facing the other programme stream organisers, if we are told to enforce a no-smoking ban on our programme participants.

Although I can understand the concern of the Steering Committee about 'secondary smoking' I cannot sanction such high handed and extreme measures. Smokers - like everyone else - have paid their money on the understanding that CONSPIRACY will be much the same as any other British convention, a place to relax and enjoy yourself, whether in the programme or in the bar, with like minded people. It is becoming increasingly common for cons to have smoking and non-smoking areas, this being a perfectly acceptable solution for the problem of 'secondary smoking' in any large hall. As far as I am aware almost every function room to be used at CONSPIRACY will be considerably larger than those used at most cons so I fail to see how 'secondary smoking' can become a problem under such circumstances.

As a smoker I feel that a total ban on smoking in function rooms will be an unpardonable attack on my personal liberty. One of the most attractive features of 'fandom' has always been, it's much touted tolerance, - so where is it now? Has 'fandom' decided to jump on the bandwagon of oppressing the 'new minority' of the eighties -

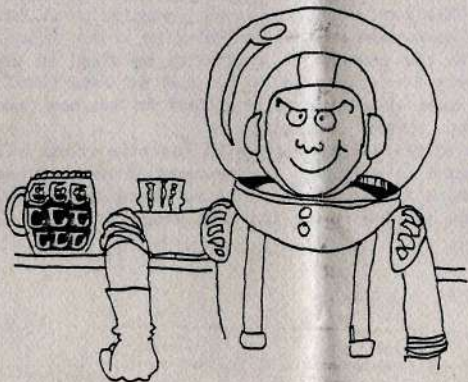
smokers? What objection have the Steering Committee got against the customary solution of dividing function rooms into smoking and non-smoking areas?

But moving onto slightly more cheerful news. Those Brum Group members who were concerned about the possible clash next year of NOVACON 18 and MEXICON 3 need fear no longer! The latest proposed date for the third MEXICON is May 1989, the most likely venue would still appear to be the Royal Wootton Bassett Hotel in Nottingham.

The results are now in on both of the major fan funds. Attending Conspiracy from the fabled land of Oz (that's Australia, you twerp) will be Irwin Hirsh (GUFF winner), whilst rushing headlong, into she doesn't know what, from the West Coast (of the USA, ya moron) will be Jeanne Gomoll (TAFK winner). As yet there isn't much news about who intends to stand for TAFK next year, although it is rumoured that Pam Wells (renowned for fanzines such as *Strumpet* and *Nutz* and various ever popular Pop Quizzes) will stand as long as there is strong opposition. As for GUFF no word at all - any chance of sending Dave Holmes... I'm sure he'd appreciate the delights of the land of lager...

At the April Meeting you may remember that Greg Pickersgill spent some time recommending that everybody rushed out and joined the British Science Fiction Association. If you would care for more information, in the form of a sample mailing perhaps, write to Maureen Porter (MATRIX Editor) and Paul Kincaid (BSFA Co-ordinator) at 114 Childhall Street, Folkestone, Kent, CT20 1ES. Currently membership is, I believe, £10.00 a year.

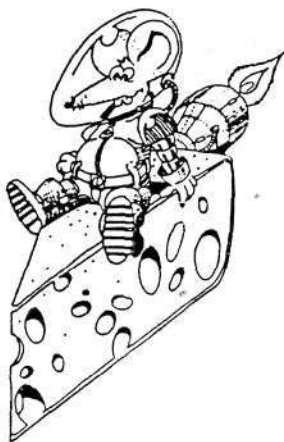
Finally a few bits and pieces about future bids. CONTRAVENTION have already launched their bid for the 1990 Eastercon further information available from 35 Buller Road, London, N17. (Pre-supporting membership of £1.00 to the same address.) For the 1990 Worldcon there are two bids (voting to take place in Brighton at Conspiracy) *Holland* or *Los Angeles*. Of course as a totally unbiased reporter of facts I wouldn't dare to even attempt to influence your vote either way on this matter, but it must be said that the facts do tend to support the Dutch. Firstly, if you're reading this you most likely live a damn sight closer to Holland than Los Angeles and so unless you're name is Pete Weston or Tim Stannard you're unlikely to be able to afford an LA Worldcon. Secondly, the Dutch don't go throwing immense amounts of ill-gotten gains into their campaign. Thirdly, their beer is better. Fourthly, they supply Stroh at their parties. Fifthly, they're not American. Sixthly, but need I go on? By now I'm sure you've made your own mind up. So send your £4.00 pre-supporting membership to the Holland in 1990 UK Agent Colin Fine, 205 Coldhams Lane, Cambridge, CB1 3HY... You know it makes sense!



"World Science Fiction Convention" and "Worldcon" are service marks of the World Science Fiction Society, an unincorporated literary society.

*A bid for the 1990 Worldcon*

# Go Dutch - our way!



That means we will look after the program and you will have the time of your life. We've come all the way from Holland to entertain you with Old World hospitality and a New World of possibilities for the 48th World Science Fiction Convention.

Interested? (Of course you are!). Look for the fans with those Big Mouse buttons and T-shirts, or treat yourself to a real Dutch room party: we'll come up with the drinks and you'll leave with a pre-supporting membership. Look out for our posters for the time and place.

By the way, if you haven't received your buttons and wooden shoes as a pre-supporter, come and visit us at Brighton and get your goodies!

***The 1990 Worldcon in Holland? Sounds great!***

**Pre-supporting  
membership £ 4.00**

KLM Dutch Airlines has been appointed official carrier for the 48th Worldcon in the Hague.

Worldcon 1990, P.O. Box 95370, 2509 CJ The Hague, Holland.

**AGENTS' CORNER**

Colin Fine  
205 Coldhams Lane  
Cambridge CB1 3JY  
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Ian Sorensen  
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# MEMBERS' FORUM

In this month's Forum and in response to Chris Morgan's complaint last month, Tina Hewett responds:

Everyone is entitled to their own opinion, if everyone liked the same books then there would be a lot of hungry writers.

Just as Chris Morgan is entitled to say what he likes about me and my reviews, then he must allow my opinions to stand also.

From the way Chris's opinions were stated, it sounded as if he was quoting someone else's opinions, and not his own, on the book. If this is the case then surely he should have read the book first himself and formulated his own opinions which could then have opposed my own. If Chris has read the book then surely it would have been more effective for him to submit his own review to offset my own if he was worried about the publishers.

I will not write a review that is opposite to the opinions I have just because of public opinion, and nor would I hope anyone expect me to. To do this would totally destroy the point of having reviews and would no doubt deter the publishers from courting our opinions if they did not expect honest reviews.

I had never found a book that I could not read until I tried to read this one, regardless of other opinions, I stated my views and stand by them.

I have returned the book and would gladly read other reviews of it regardless of whether they agree with my own or not.

My own opinions are exactly that, they are mine, and no-one else's, and in this type of review it is obvious that they do not reflect upon the B.S.F.G., the Editor or anyone else.

The Editor's duty is to publish reviews, whether for or against a book, and whether they agree with his own views, providing that the reviews are unbiased, and when I attempted to read the book it was with a completely open mind.

Perhaps one day I will try again, and perhaps my opinions will change. But I have stated my views as they are now, and they were made with an open mind.

Yours Sincerely

Tina Hewett.

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## PERSONAL AD

Dave Hardy has seats in his car for up to two members going to Brighton for Conspiracy '87 (leaving on Thursday 27 August, returning on Tuesday 1 September), to act as navigators and possibly share in petrol costs. See Dave at a meeting, or ring (021) 777 1802.





# BOOK REVIEWS

GALAPAGOS, Kurt Vonegut, Grafton, 269 pages, £2.95, reviewed by Tony Morton.

Lovely! Enjoyed every page. The story of evolution as only Kilgore Trout's son (Leon if you're interested) could describe. Leon is however a ghost in the story (why and how I'm not saying) explaining man's evolution over the next million years from a 1986 crisis. The story revolves around the lives of people who become the founders for the human race. Who they are, how they get to Guayaquil and the problems faced is all told by Leon in wonderful satirical fashion. Tremendous. Recommended.

THE PEACE MACHINE, Bob Shaw, Panther, £2.50, reviewed by Chris Chivers.

In his reworking of GROUND ZERO MAN Bob Shaw has maintained his high standard of storytelling. His Hero Lucas Hutchman is a quiet mild mannered mathematician who makes a breakthrough in theoretical physics so enabling him to destroy all the nuclear warheads in the world.

In the following 187 pages Lucas Hutchman has to come to terms with the enormity of the responsibility that his actions will have upon the world. He has to cope with the vested interests of world politics and a neurotic wife.

THE PEACE MACHINE is a well written story with Bob Shaw's wry humour making it an excellent read.

PRIVATEERS, Ben Bova, Methuen, £2.50, 383 pages, Reviewed by Carol Morton.

It is early in the 21st Century and space exploration has been carried on a step further with mining on the moon and space stations used to manufacture Low-gee and zero-gee pharmaceuticals and alloys. But - and this is a big but - the Americans have been forced out of space by the Russians who now control the whole of space between the Moon's orbit and Earth, and hence have a strangle-hold on the Earth. The only other countries allowed to operate in space are the Third World countries. It is to one of these countries - Venezuela - that Dan Randolph - a former astronaut - has turned, and is in charge of their space programme. He decides to try to break the Russians' hold on space and in the process gets branded a Pirate. This is a tale of high adventure and daring written as Bova knows how. It is entertaining without being too trite or intellectual, it plots a middle course.

I, VAMPIRE, Jody Scott, The Women's Press, £2.50, reviewed by Donald Thompson.

This is a continuation of the story began in PASSING FOR HUMAN although it can be read separately. Written in a more serious tone than the first book, it focuses upon the attempts of the junior-most anthropologist, Benaroya to 'save' Sterling O'Bliasion (the 700 year old vampire of the title), and at the same time convince her superiors that Homo Sapiens aren't a total loss and that they deserve a chance to be pushed, prodded and generally forced into taking the steps that will allow them to fulfil their 'Godlike' potential. Along the way this leads to the setting up of a door-to-door campaign to persuade women to buy Famous Men's Sperm Kit, giving them the chance to have the baby of a famous athlete, rock star, genius, whoever. Its main purpose is simply to galvanise a socio-economic-religious system; any overall improvement in the race being incidental. The main concern of this book is however love. Is humanity so in love with shifting the blame to others that it will refuse to accept change? Given the choice why does it always, or nearly always, choose confrontation over individuality, especially in choosing who we love? Above all the question is posed as to whether 'true' love (whatever that is) can transcend all barriers of gender and species as well as outlook and background. The tentative answer given by the author is yes; readers are encouraged and required to supply their own.

THE CONTINENT OF LIES, James Morrow, Arrow, £2.50, 274 pages.

THIS IS THE WAY THE WORLD ENDS, James Morrow, Gollancz, £10.95 319 pages reviewed by Chris Morgan.

James Morrow is one of the most talented of the newer US writers of SF. He can tell a highly original story entertainingly, but above all he's a writer's writer---an impeccable stylist who brings elements of satire and fantasy to his work.

THE CONTINENT OF LIES is an extremely clever tale about a new kind of dream video that acts like a drug: you eat it and it gives you nightmares and drives you to the edge of madness. One man (actually a literary reviewer) leads a crusading expedition to destroy this dangerous commodity at source. Some of the novel is wonderfully dream-like, and one scene is set at a thinly-disguised SF convention. It is a rich and complex novel, well worth trying.

THIS IS THE WAY THE WORLD ENDS is a final nominee for this year's Nebula Awards. It is a nuclear war novel with a difference. It's also a satire and, in places, a black comedy. After most of the world is destroyed, six representative Americans are put on trial for their "war crimes", which include not standing up strongly enough for nuclear disarmament. But this must not be thought of as just CND propaganda. It does debate the nuclear issue (entertainingly) but it is also a wonderfully moving account of people doing the best they can under dreadfully tragic circumstances. This is one of the best books of the year.

THE PASTEL CITY, M. John Harrison, Unwin, £2.50, 142 pages, reviewed by Bethan Davies.

Pedestrianly written mediocre fantasy. I haven't read any of the others in this series (and I won't be either), so I can't comment whether it is of the same ilk. The only highlight for me was spotting a quotation from T. S. Eliot, apart from that, the book is at best meagre - and not only in its length.

THE SUBATOMIC MONSTER, Isaac Asimov, Grafton, £2.95, 288 pages, reviewed by Donald Thompson.

This is a collection of Essays originally published in the magazine Fantasy and Science Fiction between June 1983 and October 1984. He tackles such diverse subjects as the nature of non-human intelligence and how it might be recognised (More Thinking About Thinking); why Betelgeuse is and always has been unlikely to have a terrestroid companion (The World Of The Red Sun); and even the possibilities of someone soon proving they have detected a magnetic monopole (The Subatomic Monster). All are presented clearly and concisely and make worthwhile and interesting reading. The introductory remarks are slightly too self-congratulatory but can easily be skimmed through. As a reference book it makes an excellent introductory text stimulating the interest of the general reader to follow-up the subjects in other periodicals. As a cheap portable New Scientist -type compendium highly recommended; for those who only wish to browse, the local library should stock it, along with many of his earlier non-fiction collections.

CUCKOO'S EGG, C. J. Cherryh, Methuen, £2.50, 319 pages, reviewed by Pauline Morgan.

When it comes to creating alien societies few can match C. J. Cherryh. This volume is seen entirely from inside one of these. The child Thorn, is brought up by Duun, a member of the untouchable warrior elite. Thorn has to learn, not only to become hatani like Duun, but also to cope with his differences. As he gradually realises, no one else like him exists. Thorn's growing up and development shows a skillful interplay of character but as Thorn and Duun are initially isolated from the rest of the world, the reader as well as Thorn, remains ignorant of the delicate caste structure and the political situation that lies behind the dams and bursts out at the end.

CUCKOO'S EGG does not have the intensity or depth shown by Cherryh's Hugo winning novel, DOWN BELOW STATION. It has more potential than is overtly apparent and is a good book from an imaginative writer.

TALES OF DUNGEONS AND DRAGONS, edited by Peter Haining, introduced by Ray Bradbury, Century Fantasy and Science Fiction, £11.95 (Hardcover), 406 pages, reviewed by Bethan Davies.

This collection of 30 stories has been divided into three sections: horror, the Supernatural and fantasy, which brings up the old problem of trying to classify certain stories - but that's a technical quibble. From what the blurb says, the anthology included relatively unknown stories from famous authors of the past 100 years; being rather knowledgeable in this field I won't comment, but there certainly are a lot of authors I've never heard of, and the horror section goes from Bram Stoker to Stephen King. I did enjoy most of the book, the continual change of author was refreshing, although not being a horror fan I was not so enthusiastic about that section. All in all, an ideal book for the bedside table.

THE LIVES AND TIMES OF JERRY CORNELIUS, Michael Moorcock, Grafton, £2.50 185 pages, reviewed by Tony Morton.

What more can be said of Cornelius? The ultimate anti-hero, the Anti-Christ, he moves through the stories with a force his own. I've always liked the idea/character portrayed by Cornelius and the way he relates to his situation/world. This book is a chronological 'biography' of Cornelius as written by Moorcock (as opposed to Harrison) and is firmly fixed in the late 60's it portrays. Immensely entertaining to read a must for you bookshelves. Highly recommended.

STARCLIPPER AND THE GALACTIC FINAL, Brian Earnshaw, Methuen, £5.95 (hardcover), 127 pages, reviewed by Anne Gay.

Another juveniles' hardback in the STARCLIPPER series. Following their adventures on the Snowstone, the Star Jam pop-group are to take part in the Galactic Final. Their rivals try some sneaky tactics, first forcing them to hide on a Green Planet, then hi-jacking their ship, the starclipper. At last, they reach the souped up galactavision song contest. But the rivals still have some tricks up their exhaust vent...

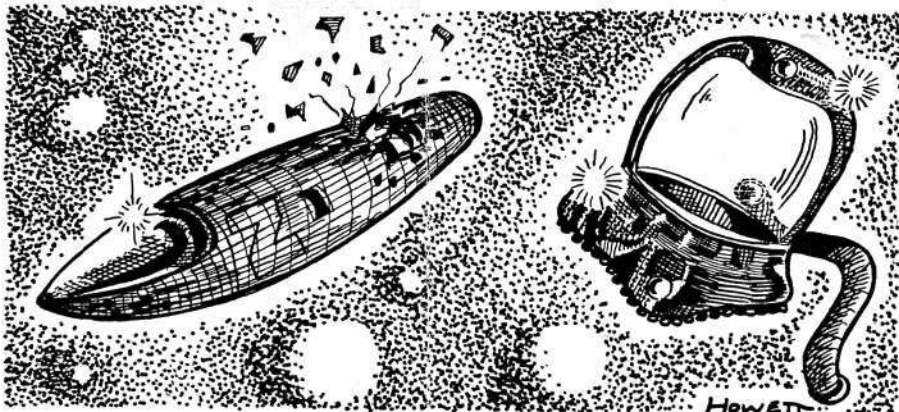
In this volume, less imagination goes into the plot than the scenery. Here and there, Mr Earnshaw pops in some stunningly original set decoration, but characterisation is kept to a minimum, with the result that I scarcely cared what happened or was going to happen to our heroes. I'd still read the next volume for the sheer novelty of Brian Earnshaw's ideas. But then I'm not 10.

CONTACT Carl Sagan, Arrow, £3.50, 429 pages, reviewed by Tony Morton.

What is this? An amalgamation of Hubbard's Scientology and the Anthropic principle? I'm not altogether sure what Sagan is trying to prove here. An overlong book about Ellie Arroway and her 'development' into overssr at a SETI observatory interwoven with human's initial contact with aliens. Several other books seem to be in here as well so not really original. I found the basic idea alright but Sagan's explanation of every concept unnecessary - a sort of him saying "I'm the great teacher - this is what I mean" for every scientific step. Why does he feel he must write down to his public? Maybe he thinks he's the first to do this kind of book? If you have any SF background, not for you. Tedious.

THE PRINCESS OF FLAMES, Ru Emerson, Unwin, £2.95, 327 pages, reviewed by Pauline Morgan.

An excellent fantasy that carries the reader along at a good pace. The title, THE PRINCESS OF FLAMES, refers to a tarot card as well as the main protagonist Elfrid. Elfrid is the illegitimate daughter of King Alster. When he is deposed by his eldest son she goes into exile with him. The rest of the novel relates how the usurper is eventually dethroned. This is a novel that contains a little of everything---magic, politics, war, deception, romance---all blended together. And running through it, threads of other stories that I hope Ru Emerson will some day tell. Highly recommended.





## FORTHCOMING CONVENTIONS

1987

CONGREGATE - 10-12th June 1987 (or 1988? - Who knows? Who cares?).

Peterborough. General SF con. £11 attending to CONGREGATE. 67 Ayres Drive, Stanground, Peterborough.

ALBACON '87 - 19th to 22nd June 1987.

The venue will be the popular Central Hotel Glasgow. GoHs (Guests of Honour) Brian Stableford and Josephine Saxton. Membership £10 attending (until 18th May - £12 thereafter) to ALBACON '87, c/o Mike Keenan, "Burnawn", Stirling Rd., Dumbarton, G82 2PJ.

CONNOTES (Unicon 8) - 3rd to 5th July 1987.

A science fiction convention, venue New Hall, Cambridge. GoH Geraldine Harris (Seven Citadel series & White Crane's Castle). Attending membership £9.00 from CONNOTES Trinity College, Cambridge, CB2 1TQ.

KOANCON '87 - 31st July to 2nd August.

Venue Coventry Polytechnic. A 'fannish games con'. GoH Paul "Warhammer" Cockburn. £22 residential, £7 non-residential, to - Top Flat, 19 Rusholme Road, Loncon, SW15 3JJ.

INTERCON '87 - 18th to 23rd August 1987.

"The International Science Fiction and Fantasy Saloon". Convention, festival, meeting and exhibition. Further details from Andrew Szatkowski, ul. Dubois 12 m. 45 00-188 Warsaw, Poland. Organised by the PSNF (Polskie Stowarzyszenie Miłośników Fantastyki).

CONSPIRACY '87 - 27th August to 2nd September 1987.

This, the 45th World Science Fiction Convention, will be held in Brighton. Venues include The Metropole & the Conference Centre. GoHs - Doris Lessing; Alfred Bester and Arkady and Boris Strugatsky. Film GoH Ray Harryhausen. Artist GoH Jim Burns. Toastmaster Brian Aldiss. Fan GoHs Joyce & Ken Slater. Special Fan Guest Dave Langford. Membership £38.00 until the 31st of July - no postal bookings after that day. Day membership £10.00 a day (if paid in advance) or £15.00+ per day (on the door). Details from (and money to) CONSPIRACY '87, P.O. Box 43, Cambridge, CB1 3JJ. (24 hour answerphone 0223 460323.)

FANTASYCON XII - 4th to 6th September 1987.

At the Midland Hotel, New Street, Birmingham. GoH J.K. Potter. £3.00 supporting, £10.00 attending to 15 Stanley Road, Morden, Surrey.

NICON II - Late October 1987.

GoH Katherine Kurtz ("80% positive"), Robert Anton Wilson, Jim Fitzpatrick. £2.00 supporting, £6 attending, to 60 Melrose Street, Belfast, BT9

EUROCON '87 - 29th October to 1st November 1987.

Venue somewhere in Montpellier, France. More details from 112 de Toulouse, F-34000 Montpellier, France.

NOVACON 17 - 30th October - 1st November 1987.

Venue The Royal Angus Hotel, Birmingham. GoH Iain Banks. Membership limited to 350. Registration £10 to NOVACON 17 c/o Mick Evans, 7 Grove Avenue, Acocks Green, Birmingham, B27 7UY. Do YOU wanna tell Bernie you haven't registered yet - or shall I.....?

BENELUXCON 14/ CONSTERNATION - 6th to 8th November 1987.

At the Carlton Beach Hotel in Scheveningen, the Hague, the Netherlands. Chairman of the con is Paul Harland, attending membership is £10.00. Full details from Paul at Laan van Meerdervoort 160A, 2517 BG The Hague, The Netherlands.

## 1988

FOLLYCON - 1st to 4th April 1988.

The 39th Annual British Science Fiction Convention will be held in the Adelphi Hotel in Liverpool. American GoH Gordon Dickson. British GoH Gwyneth Jones. Fan GoH Greg Pickersgill and Comics GoH Len Wein - with yet more guests to be announced! Membership rates are £12.00 attending and £6.00 supporting send to FOLLYCON, 104 Pretoria Road, Patchway, Bristol, BS12 5PZ.

EUROCON XIII/HUNGAROCON IX - 10th to 14th August 1988.

Hopefully to be held in Budapest. Further details from - Hungarian SF Society, Eurocon Committee, Budapest 5, PF.514, H-1374, Hungary.

NOLACON II - 1st to 5th September 1988.

The 46th World SF Convention in New Orleans. British agent Linda Pickersgill, 7a Lawrence Road, South Ealing, London W5 4XJ.

## 1989

CONTRIVANCE - 24th to 27th March 1989.

The 40th Annual British Science Fiction Convention will be held in the Hotel de France, St Helier, Jersey, Channel Islands. GoHs M John Harrison and Anne McCaffrey. Membership £12 attending £6 supporting - CONTRIVANCE, 63 Drake Road, Chessington, Surrey, KT9 1LQ.

MEXICON 3 - May 1989.

The Royal Moat House Hotel in Nottingham. Further details, real soon now.

SOMETHINGROTHERCON - 1988 or 1989.

Somewhere in South Wales. I'll quote the only known information directly from the February ANSIBLE - "We, the Swansea group, are thinking of putting on a con," writes, if that's the word for what he does to hapless postcards, D.M. Sherwood: "It (there's no name yet) may or may not be at the Grand, Port Talbot (a place with all the refined charm of the Central, Cardiff, provided the carpets haven't been stripped out yet). It may include items for fantasy games computer buffs, folk/folk singers and anything else on the cheap. SAE for info to my address pretty please," PO Box 23, Port Talbot, SA13 1DA," D.M. FOR TAFF!

ANDROMEDA'S TOP TEN FOR MAY

Paperbacks

1. The Quest For Saint Camber  
by Katherine Kurtz.
2. Dr. Who - The Faceless Ones
3. Amtrak Wars III - Iron Master  
by Patrick Tilley.
4. The Master  
by Louise Cooper.
5. Earthdoom  
by Dave Langford.
6. Star Trek 4 - Voyage Home  
by Rhonda McIntyre.
7. War of the Twins  
by Janet Weiss and Brad Majors.
8. The Magician's Lore  
by Michael Scott.
- 9= Wandering Fire  
by Guy Gavriel Kay.
- 9= All Judgment Fled  
by James White.
- 9= Star Trek Enterprise The First Adventure  
by Rhonda McIntyre.

Hardcovers

1. Consider Phlebas  
by Iain Banks.
2. Legacy of Heorot  
by Niven and Pournelle
3. Guardians of the West  
by David Eddings.
4. Eyes of the Dragon  
by Stephen King.
5. Gabriel  
by Lisa Tuttle.

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"Sci-Fi" Movies on Central

- 7th June (well I didn't see it advertised) Quatermass Experiment.  
14th June Quatermass II  
21st June Bladerunner  
28th June The Lost Continent.

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STOP PRESS Next Month's Meeting

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We will have as our Guest Storm Constantine.

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Thankyous this month go to

Martin Tudor for his Jophan Report and Con update.

Dave Hardy for his piece on Peter Warrington and the Chairman's Bit.

Tina Hewett for the Members' forum.

Chris Chivers, Carol Morton, Donald Thompson, Chris Morgan, Bethan Davies  
Pauline Morgan and Anne Gay for their reviews.

Tim Stannard for letting me use his photocopier to print this

Deadline for next month is 3rd July. This newsletter was produced by Tony  
Morton, 45, Grosvenor Way, Quarry Bank, Brierley Hill, West Mids, DY5 2LJ.

30 October - 1 November 1987

The ROYAL ANGUS HOTEL, Birmingham

# NOVACON 120

The Annual Convention of the Birmingham Science Fiction Group

GUEST OF HONOUR IAIN BANKS



A SCENE FROM "WALKING ON GLASS"

## IMPORTANT NOTICE

MEMBERSHIPS WILL BE LIMITED TO 350

JOIN EARLY TO AVOID DISAPPOINTMENT

Membership is £10

For registration contact:

Mick Evans

7, Grove Avenue,  
Acocks Green, Birmingham  
B27 7UY