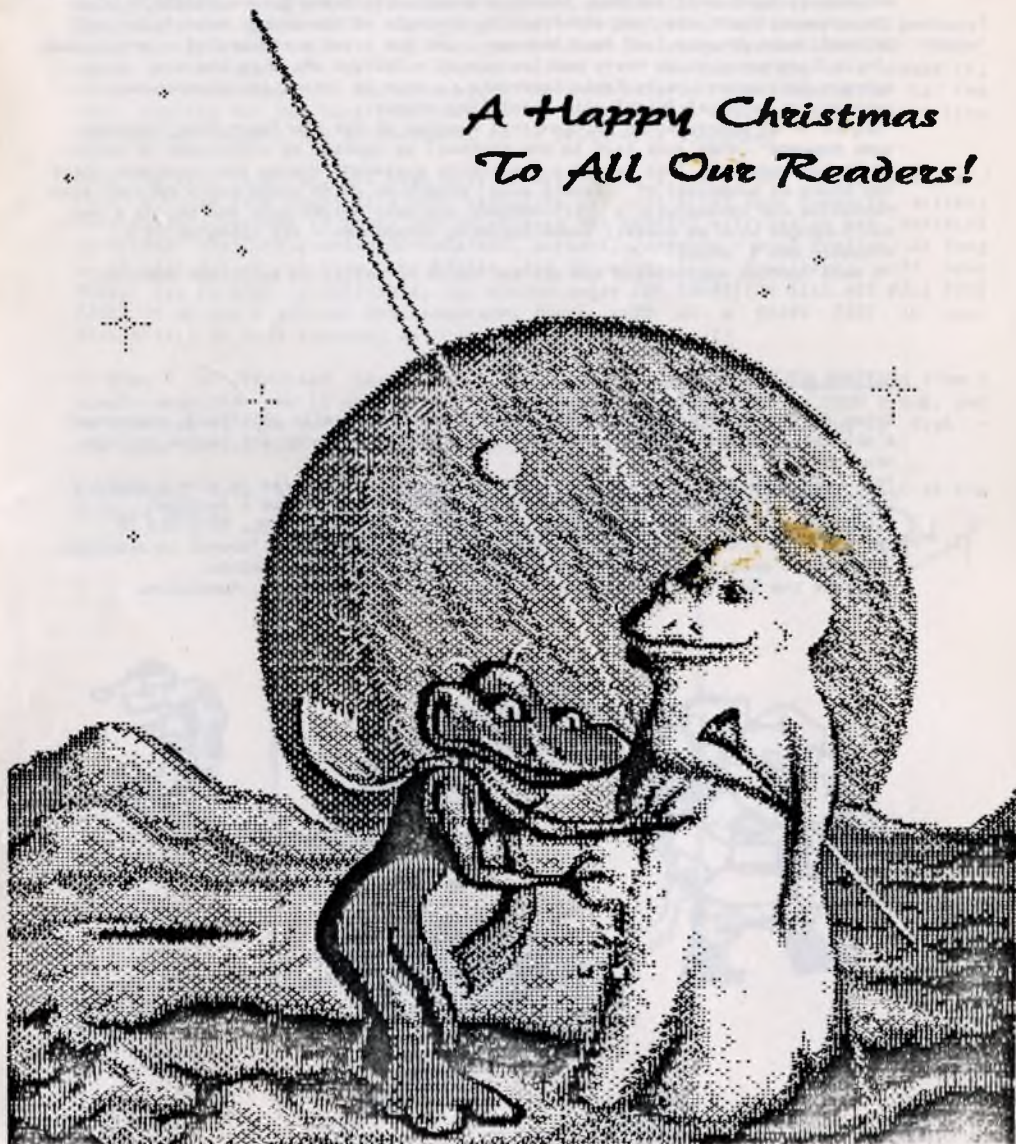


# BIRMINGHAM SCIENCE FICTION GROUP

NEWSLETTER 195

Honorary Presidents: Brian W. Aldiss and Harry Harrison

*A Happy Christmas  
To All Our Readers!*



#### LAST MONTH'S MEETING

November's meeting welcome! back old friend and joint honorary president Harry Harrison, who entertained us with a variety of anecdotes loosely related to events....

The first Sf convention held in Moscow at which he was a guest started off the evening. It transpired that Harry was invited over due to an earlier Con in Dublin which the Russians attended. He landed at Moscow airport, was given 'diplomatic' immunity and whisked through customs! The Con lasted for five days, and Harry had to be on stage throughout; this seemed too long- particularly as one speaker bored him "for ever". A good point was the food, of which there was plenty, although the service was found lacking - a meal lasting around three hours. Copacabana Beach, Harry told us, was a nice place to be. A Con with only writers attending. Our two illustrious honorary presidents, being good swimmers, 'dared the elements' but were 'put off' by the strength of the waves. Harry also told of the 'almost drowning' of Poul Anderson, who had tried surfboarding - to his cost.

On to Esperanto, which Harry had learned at a lecture while in the Army as a gunnery instructor. Harry feels Esperanto is easy to learn, is international cutting out national 'bias' with simplified vowels.

Within Sf he expressed an opinion that Russian Sf has the fault that 'nothing ever happens' (they just talk to one another) as opposed to US/British Sf which is 'action packed'. This led to a qualifying statement (using the Stainless Steel Rat books as examples) of 'classic pulp' tradition which opens every chapter with narrative and closes with a cliff-hanger; the next solves this and builds a new cliff-hanger with an overall theme building throughout - all tying up in a climatic end ! Phew.

A mass turnout appreciated the wit and verve of Harry, an excellent evening.

#### SCIENCE FICTION BLUES.

Brian Aldiss, ably assisted by Ken Campbell and Petronella Whitfield, presented a diverse selection from his works on stage at the Midlands Art Centre on 16th November.

The works were read individually or collectively by the three to give a grand display of Sf as a medium on stage. Particularly notable from a personal viewpoint was the interpretation of THE DAY THE EARTHSHIP CAME, HERESIES OF THE HUGE GOD and THE PLAIN, THE ENDLESS PLAIN, all read as a 'round' in episodes; JUNIPER and emotive performance and LAST ORDERS - wonderful pathos.

This was the Science Fiction Blues : this is my kind of music. Memorable.





## THE CHAIRMAN'S (LAST) BIT

Well, I don't know about you, but I think that our first year at the Ladbroke has been a pretty good one. (We've had a few problems with the Bar closing at 10.30pm, but - hopefully - that is sorted out now!) We've had several (very) big-name authors, and some up-and-coming ones. We've had scientific talks, and even one on UFO's. The reason that we've had no in-Group discussions or quizzes is that you members asked for authors, so the Committee got them for you. (Next year there will probably be more variety; for one thing, authors come expensive...) Now, what have YOU done for the Group? Reviewed the odd (free) paperback, perhaps? We certainly need reviews - but have you noticed that page headed 'MEMBERS' FORUM' which first appeared in the February issue - ? You can hardly have missed it, since for most months it has been empty! We even offered free admission to the next meeting for the best item each month. Doesn't that make you feel just a tiny bit ashamed? Here's the announcement as it originally appeared:

*From the next issue on, one page will be devoted to a sort of 'Group Fanzine'. This will be YOUR page: it's your chance to get into print your comments, gripes, information, reviews of books you've enjoyed (or hated), articles on pet subjects (provided they are somehow SF-related), artwork, cartoons - even fiction, as long as it will fit on one page. The Editor, and if necessary, Committee, will have final say on what is published, but please note: THE COMMITTEE WILL NOT FILL THIS PAGE. If we don't get any contributions, there will be a BLANK PAGE in your Newsletter. If this happens, don't complain - help fill it!*

I shan't be Chairman next year, but whoever is Newsletter Editor (and I've a sneaky suspicion who it will be) will keep that page open. This is YOUR Group, and we want you to take an active part in it. The 1st of January is coming up fast - how about making that New Year Resolution?

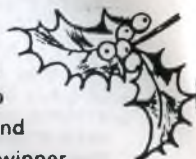
Meanwhile, have a really good Christmas - see you at the AGM (if not at the Chinese Meal).



*Rose H*

# CHRISTMAS QUIZ

From the words in the boxes below it is possible to obtain the titles of **twenty-nine SF works**, some are novels many are shorter. There is a small number of one word titles, the rest are built up by moving from square to square in any direction but **never diagonally**. Words are only used once and two words are not used at all. A prize of a £5 Andromeda voucher to the winner which will be drawn at the AGM. Good luck!



CORNERS	PUNG'S	OF	WIZARDS	THE	WIZARD	MEN
DREAM	THE	MASTER	OF	TIME	CONTACT	FIRST
IRON	ICE	PAST	FORFINGER	FLIES	LAST	AND
THE	PEOPLE	MOONLIGHT	STRETCHED	THE	ONE	ORDINARY
ARENA	MARS	BY	NOISE	ON	STRING	DAY
THE	TO	WELCOME	LEVEL	SEVEN	FRAYED	WITH
MONKEY	PLANET	SAVAGE	TO	STEPS	THE	BOX
HOUSE	OUT	RING	THE	THE	PLUS	SPIDER
WEST	OF	THE	SUN	INVISIBLE	MAN	GREEN
SUB-UNIVERSE	THE	PHOENIX	DOUBLE	FORCE	WHOLE	THE
ROSES	CITY	AND	HAVING	WRIT	THE	ERA
BLUE	OBSERVERS	THE	STARS	MY	DESTINATION	MOON
GATHER	FOR	MIRROR	A	RACE	MOTH	THE

# BSFG NEWS

## NOTIFICATION OF ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The AGM will be held on Friday 15 January 1988 in the Avon Room of the Ladbroke International Hotel. Anyone wishing to propose any amendments must do so before 7 January 1988 to allow for inclusion in the Agenda. All inquiries to :-

The Secretary, Geoff Williams, 6 Willow House, Mitton Road, Handsworth Wood, Birmingham B20 2JR.

## DECEMBER INFO....

### 1. The meal

#### THE CHINESE MEAL

At the November Meeting 20 people put their names down for this (which is fortunate as we had provisionally booked for 20!) If you gave your name, please do turn up. We shall meet at the FORBIDDEN CITY (not Planet!) Restaurant, which is at the top of Hurst Street, nearly opposite the Hippodrome, at the usual time, 8.00pm, and the night is of course the usual third Friday - 18th December. Because we are not having a set meal - it's everyone for him/herself - they probably wouldn't take kindly to giving separate bills; so what we suggest is that you take careful note of how much your meal(s) cost, and at the end we'll all put in the right amount plus something for a tip. (If it comes out short it's washing up for all of us...) Fair enough? If you weren't at the last meeting but would like to go to the Christmas Meal, there is still time, if you ring Dave Hardy on 777 1802 at once. It should be a good evening!

### 2. An Alternative

Conversely those NOT going to the meal, Bernie has informed us of an 'Alternative Event' for those who don't like Chinese/can't afford it.

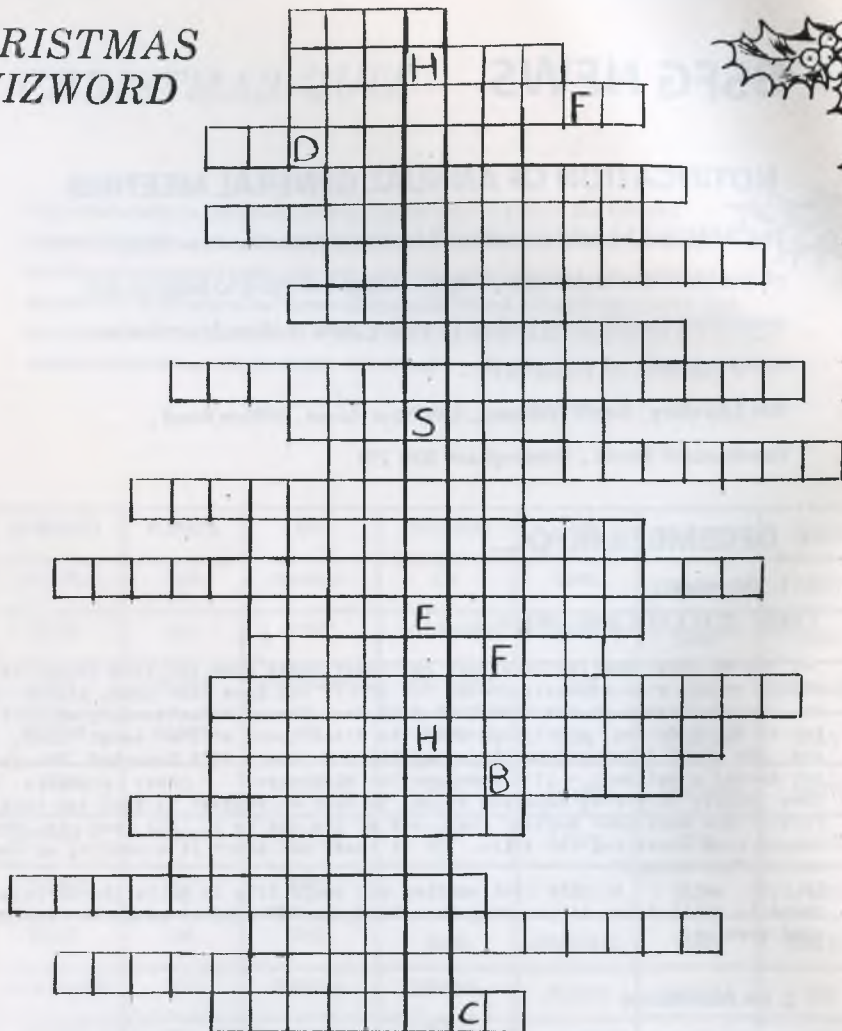
This will take place at the Sack Of Potatoes, Lister Street Gosta Green (behind Aston Uni.). All welcome.

*MERRY CHRISTMAS TO YOU ALL*





# CHRISTMAS QUIZWORD



Listed below are clues to the above puzzle, they are in no particular order. The centre column spells out a book and its author. The first correct answer gets an Andromeda voucher.

Klautu's sidekick (4)  
 Our 2 co-presidents (5,6 & 5,8)  
 Creator of Gargon (7)  
 Make Room! Make Room! (7,5)  
 The Russians in Brighton (10)  
 Paul or Gerry (8)  
 Xanth's creator (7)  
 Alice B. Sheldon? (5,3,2)  
 Writer of The Dunwich Horror (9)  
 The First SF author (4,6)  
 Number 6? (8)  
 ..... are so (12)  
 Frank or James (7)  
 A "yellow" British Publisher (8)

French Classic SF writer (5,5)  
 Creator of The Twilight Zone (3,7)  
 Antrali's Creator (7,6)  
 1926 SF film (10)  
 John Carter's Creator (5,4,4)  
 Patriotic The Artist (9)  
 British SF magazine (9)  
 American Publishing Company  
 circa 1920 (10)  
 "comfortable to ..... at his  
 best" (6)  
 Cthorri creator (5,7)  
 British SF author died 1970  
 (4,5,7)

# MEMBERS' FORUM

## WHAT DO YOU DO WHEN YOU'VE PUT YOUR CLOTHES ON?

"In Brighton, the boys came either thin or weedy, or with beer bellies ... The girls are absolutely gargantuan ... and don scanty native costumes which accentuate their girth."

When I first read this, taken from a report in Capital Commuter, I was irritated by the fact that yet again fandom was being grossly misrepresented. We've all seen the articles, we've all been angry with them, but we've all got used to being portrayed as gun-toting freaks squeezed into improbable garments, and have learned to cope with the mirth when we happen to mention what we do for a hobby, or worse still learned not to mention it at all.

I wrote to this reporter, because she had some basic facts wrong, and as they concerned the daily newsletter which I edited, I didn't think this should go unchallenged. While I was about it, I pointed out to her that the majority of fans are actually fairly ordinary people you wouldn't look twice at in the street, and that personally I was getting ever so slightly fed up with the whole business. This was her response.

"The fact that you and I were at the con looking perfectly normal isn't good copy (unless we're doing something interesting like editing PLOT."

I am still trying to think of a brilliant riposte to such stunning reasoning. Did she really imply that because I dress normally, I'm not really a proper fan, or what? Let's think about what this means.

We can, I think, accept that SF fans in themselves were once good copy, partly because they were so unusual, and because newspapers and magazines tended to rely more on the written word. Tastes have changed, and the flourishing trade in glossy Sunday magazines and downmarket papers using colour printing means that a picture is really worth a thousand words. But, and here's the crunch, what if those thousand words being illustrated are the wrong thousand words. The average SF fan is now trapped by the image of the overweight woman in a flimsy costume, and the livid white male body with a well-padded posing pouch. And I just don't believe it is truly representative.

I am not decrying those who want to dress up in interesting costumes, heck, I don't even mind if the body and the costume weren't really made for one another. Within reason I would defend to the death every fan's right to express his or her fannishness however they want. What I do object to is the fact that in no way do we seem able to spell it out to the media that there's more than one way to be a fan. They want a split-second, instant image, and us lot sloping round the bookroom or hanging around in bars isn't it, whereas bare breasts and large expanses of flesh are rapidly becoming synonymous with the public conception of SF and conventions, even when costuming isn't the sole, or even major activity at any con.

What can we do? A single complaint doesn't do any good, but equally I would be very chary of fandom doing a PR job on itself. I've seen it done in isolated circumstances, and one woman's fandom is definitely not the  
cont/...

same as another man's press release. But can we honestly continue to accept this gross misrepresentation, or do we simply act grateful for the fact that anyone can be bothered to mention us at all. I am no longer inclined to sit there and be tarred with the media brush and slotted away in the section marked 'SF - funny costumes' I want them to know about SF - intelligent people reading, writing, and discussing SF ~~and~~ about SF people who get together and enjoy one another's company for the sheer pleasure of company and conversation. And the only way to make sure they do find out is to tell them when they go wrong, or when they aren't fair. I don't want the costumers pushed out of the way, but I want more room in the photograph for Jophan in his jeans and sweatshirt, and still interesting even when s/he isn't editing PLOT. What do you want?

Once upon a time, the Birmingham Science Fiction Group voted at an AGM to ask members to refrain from smoking during the formal part of the meeting. This wasn't intended as a condemnation of those who indulged - individuals have the right to decide such things for themselves - but to help those members who are allergic to smoke and cannot move away while a speech is in progress without insulting the guest. Also the room at the Ladbrooke very quickly becomes filled with smoke. This courtesy seems to have gone by the board recently. Please for the sake of those who object to smoke - for whatever reason - could we reinstate this request.

P.E. Morgan  
Lynn M. Edwards.



# CHRISTMAS PUZZLE

Yet' another Adventure of Capt. Red Flame, a logical item

When Captain Red Flame regained consciousness he found himself in a gloomy dungeon lit only by a feeble luminosity which had its origin in the moisture coating the walls, a draught of unknown source occasionally brought foul odours to him and the whole place was exceedingly quiet, he deduced that his prison was deep below the surface of some dank and ghastly planet. Then he heard a sound muffled and from far away no doubt, more of a vibration through rock, like the report of a distant cannon. After a pause of some ten seconds it came again twice in quick succession and following another break, three times very rapidly then all was silent once more. Red now knew that he must be on Saadulyn because it was the only planet in the galaxy to possess a sonic geyser. But being aware of his location did not ease Red's mind, for like every Federation person he had learned in school of the Belou and the Aked, two strange warring peoples who inhabited Saadulyn, and how the Aked always spoke the truth but the Belou spoke nothing but lies. Obviously he was a prisoner of one of these peoples but which?, at this point his thoughts were interrupted by the sound of a great key turning in the lock, the door creaked open a few inches to admit a furtive little man clothed all in crimson, he approached Red and delivered a short mumbled speech not one word of which did Red catch, for although he could make out that the man was speaking P-calax, a language with which Red was well acquainted, the man's accent entirely defeated him. 'Are you a Belou or an Aked?' Red said when the fellow stopped for breath, he muttered something in answer and left Red a puzzled man. Some minutes after the crimson one had gone, the door opened again, this time a woman in green combat gear entered. She was tall and agile with the mannerisms of one well accustomed to looking after herself. Swiftly, she gave Red the details of an elaborate escape plan and would have been off if Red had not detained her 'Before you go', he said, 'Are you a Belou or an Aked? I asked the chap who came in earlier but could not understand his answer'. 'I gathered that', said his visitor, 'from where I was listening just down the tunnel. He did tell you he was an Aked, which he is and so am I', with that she too left.

For some time after she had gone Red sat on the floor pondering the plan she had told him of and wondering if he dare regard it as the truth for if she was a Belou and therefore lying then to follow the plan would surely mean his death. In the middle of this quandary Red was interrupted by yet another native, this one male dressed in a grey uniform which was exceedingly grubby and carrying a cwer. He stayed but a few seconds, in that time he also gave Red a plan of escape, which though different to the woman's would prove just as deadly if he was a lying Belou. In answer to Red's question he said he was an Aked and when Red described his earlier visitors he declared that they were both Belou, then left Red alone with his dilemma. What was Red to do? Well, the fact that he is still alive and reunited with his kith and kin on Bulimia where they are at this moment eating their Christmas dinner (it's a week early on Bulimia) means that he worked out who was speaking the truth. Which escape plan did he use and why? First person to give the correct answer to Stan Eling gets a pint.

## THE SCOTTISH REPORT MARTIN TUDD

Alfred Bester, author of *The Damned Men*, *The Stars My Destination* (*Tiger! Tiger!*), *Extra, Golem!* and *The Deceivers*, died of heart failure on the 30th of September 1981. Bester was the Guest of Honour at this year's World Science Fiction Convention in Brighton but was unable to attend due to ill health.

Graiton have bought the British rights of David Eddings' new proposed trilogy, *The Elenium*, for a record sum of \$1.25 million.

J G Ballard will have a non-speaking part in the film of his novel *Empire of the Sun*, to be directed by Steven Spielberg.

Bantam have bought *Antwounding Days: A Science Fictional Autobiography* from Arthur C Clarke. The book will be an appreciation of *Antwounding* from 1930 to 1945 "interwoven with Arthur's memoir of growing to maturity during that period, as a man and as a science fiction writer".

Tor have bought a trilogy, *The Alternative Detective*, from Robert Shekaley, the first book will be *The Draconian Alternative*.

Toby Roxburgh, a frequent speaker at both BSFG meetings and Novacon, has resigned as editor from Macdonald/Futura.

Harlan Ellison will write a two-hour TV pilot for Roger Corman and NBC TV. *Cutter's World* will feature characters from *Night and Enemy*, an SF graphic novel by Ellison with artwork by Ken Steacy.

Kate Wilhelm is suing Orion Pictures. She claims that *Desperately Seeking Susan*, a recent Madonna vehicle, plagiarised her 1982 novel *Oh! Susannah!*

*LOCUS*, Charlie Brown's Californian based SF newzine (which we have to thank for the above news) continues to accuse the *Conspiracy '87* Worldcon committee of bias towards the Dutch Worldcon bid throughout the convention saying that - "The committee's blatant support (and help) of the Holland bid over the Los Angeles bid annoyed and surprised most North American fans". However as yet *LOCUS* has failed to mention in what way the committee supported the Dutch, other than continually harping on about the unfortunate delays in the mailing of overseas copies of PR #4 and the site selection ballots. It is now rumoured that the LA bid committee are refusing to pay their extensive advertising bill for PR #4, claiming that the delay rendered their adverts useless and cost them the bid. What a good idea eh? If you lose your bid why pay your bills when you can blame your failure on someone else and save some money! (*LOCUS* is available from *Andromeda Bookshop* for £1.95 or by subscription through *Fantast (Medway) Ltd.*, PO Box 23, Upwell, Wisbech, Cambs., PE14 9BU at \$27 for twelve issues.)

Still on the topic of Worldcons and bids, the Scots - in the form of Vince Docherty and Mike Mennan - may bid for the Worldcon in the early 1990s. 1993 and 1995 are two dates that have so far been mentioned. This two man working party is preparing a feasibility study, with the Scottish Exhibition & Conference Centre as the likely venue. A financial outline, incorporating figures from the 1987 worldcon in Brighton, should be available next year. Further information is available from Vince and Mike at 'Burnawn', Stirling Road, Dumbarton, Scotland, G82 2PJ.

James Herbert will be Guest of Honour at Britain's first World Fantasy Convention next year. The event will be held at the Ramada Inn London. Membership of the 1988 World Fantasy Convention will cost £45, although supporting membership (including hardcover programme book) is only £15. Supporting members can convert at any time, even after the 750 limit is reached. Full details from 130 Park View, Wembley, Middx., HA9 6JU.

Paramount have announced plans to film the cult graphic novel *WATCHMEN*, with Arnold Schwarzenegger slated to play the omnipotent Doctor Manhattan. Alan Moore has approved the first-draft screenplay by Sam Hamm.

Other news in this column is courtesy of *CRITICAL WAVE* a new British bi-monthly newzine produced by Steve Green and myself, and available for £2 (for 6 issues) from 33 Scott Road, Olton, Solihull, B92 7LQ. Hopefully, you will find a courtesy issue of the second issue with this newsletter.

AMERICAN'S TOP TEN FOR OCTOBER

PAPERBACKS

1. Darkness at Sethanon  
by Raymond E. Feist
2. Time of the Transference  
by Alan Dean Foster
3. DR WHO - Ambassadors of Death  
b
4. Nerilka's Story/ The Coelura  
by Anne McCaffrey
5. It  
by Stephen King
6. How much for just the planet  
Star Trek by John M. Ford
7. Cobra  
by Timothy Zahn
8. Blood of Amber  
by Roger Zelazny
9. K9 and Co Dr Who Companion
10. Strangers From The Sky  
Star Trek

HARDBACKS

1. Weaveworld  
by Clive Barker
2. Walking on Glass  
by Iain Banks
3. Espedair Street  
by Iain Banks
4. Mission Earth Vol. 6  
by L. Ron Hubbard.
5. Dark Feasts  
by Ramsay Campbell

AMERICAN'S TOP TEN FOR NOVEMBER

PAPERBACKS

1. Equal Rites  
by Terry Pratchett
2. DR WHO - Massacre.
3. Colour of Magic  
by Terry Pratchett
4. Bones of the Moon  
by Adrian Cole.
5. Relics  
by Shaun Hutson
6. Star Healer  
by James White
7. Light Fantastic  
by Terry Pratchett
8. Throne of Fools  
by Adrian Cole
9. Time of the Transference  
by Alan Dean Foster
10. How much for just the Planet?  
Star Trek

HARDBACKS

- 1 Weaveworld  
by Clive Barker
2. Mort  
by Terry Pratchett
3. Day of Creation  
by J. G. Ballard.
4. Bones of the Moon  
by Adrian Cole.
5. Fantastic Voyage II -  
Destination Brain  
by Isaac Asimov.





# BOOK REVIEWS

**A DARKNESS AT SETHANON** by Raymond E. Feist. Grafton. 527pp. £3.50.  
Reviewed by Chris Smith.

This is the final volume in the Riftwar saga, and the plot follows the quest theme, like the previous two books. Again, the authors' skill does not match up to his imagination, producing some terrible "link-ins" with the previous books. Characterisation is not up to the standard of the first book, as this volume is a novel, not a fantasy game write-up. Apart from this, the central theme of the series is ended in a conclusive and ingenious fashion, with enough surprises to keep you guessing up to the very end. Good enough for a train journey, but that's about all.

**THE PROTEUS OPERATION** by James P. Hogan, Arrow, £3.50, 496 pages  
reviewed by Steve Jones.

A complicated tale of time travel and alternate worlds in which several futures fight to determine the outcome of the Second World War. Thankfully the details of the "Many Worlds" Interpretation of Quantum Mechanics are left to the appendix, leaving a gripping story of politics, spies and commando action. The historical characters are very well done, including Churchill, Roosevelt and the obligatory SF in-joke where Einstein works out why their time machine is not working while reading a story by a 19 year old chemistry student called Isaac Asimov!

**THE DREAM WALL** by Graham Dunstan Martin, Unwin, £2.95, 231 pages  
reviewed by Bethan Davies.

This is quite an interesting book. It is set in post-revolution Britain, in a kind of scenario which closely resembles Huxley's *BRAVE NEW WORLD* or Orwell's 1984. A young couple, the Mathiesons, live in constant fear of the Peoples Friends, and their respite is dreaming of a duplicate couple who were living prior to the revolution. These dreams are mutual, that is, the couple who lived earlier are also dreaming of them. The 'dream wall' of the title refers to the wish of the post-revolution politicians to destroy dreams, because they are still personal. This scares the contemporary couple, who do not wish to lose their dreams; this fear and hatred of their society is passed to the earlier couple through their dreams, making them want to prevent the oncoming revolution. The novel is reasonably well-written, well-paced, and with its tongue-in-cheek references to modern day events, such as the miner's strike, it is well worth a read.

**POOLS RUN** by Patricia McKillip, Orbit, £2.50, 252 pages, reviewed by Tina Hewett.

Quite an enjoyable book, with an interesting theme. Although well-written the plot becomes a bit weak in places, and the ending was a bit of a let down. The plot line was a bit simple and sometimes a bit bare. Overall though, the book is quite a good fantasy book, in which physics, hunches and nursery rhymes play a part.

THE TWO BOOKS OF THE TRUTH (1946 & 1947), THE TWILIGHT OF THE SERPENT (1940 pages) both by Peter Valentine Timlett, Futura, £2.50 each.

Revised by Pauline Morgan.

It can only have been some kind of mental aberration that caused the publisher to dig up and reprint these eleven-year old books. They are the second and third volumes of a fantasy trilogy and are an insult to the trees used to make the paper. Volume one (The Seedbearers) dealt with the fall of Atlantis. Those Atlanteans have become the Druids of The Power of the Serpent and are busy fighting the indiginous religious group, who have turned to evil, in and around Stonehenge. Two Thousand years later, in The Twilight of the Serpent, The Romans wipe out the Druids, but already their successors have arrived---Christians.

In fantasy you can do almost anything but the author must be able to convince the reader of his Truth. Timlett doesn't do this. Nothing written here will convince me that survivors from Atlantis settled near Glastonbury, that the Druids had a huge university there or that Jesus visited it several times. He does not have the skill. Not even his historical facts, when presented in this way, are believable. There are many other authors who have used Bronze Age and Roman Britain's settings (Cecilia Holland, Moyra Caldicott, Rosemary Sutcliffe, Patricia Finney to name but a few) and the worst of these is far superior to the rubbish in these volumes. Don't waste your money.

SECTOR GENERAL by James White, Orbit, £2.59, 196 pages, Reviewed by Carol Morton.

I was introduced to the delights of these SECTOR GENERAL novels at novacon 15 and they have been a source of pleasure ever since. The first story "Accident" had me a little puzzled at first as we are re-introduced to the two characters from the short story "Tableau". But it makes sense as "Accident" tells of how the hospital came to be built. The other three stories deal with Senior Physician Conway's virtual single-handed discovery, diagnosis and cure of strange new species. If you haven't read these novels - do so. It is good to see them back in print.

THE HUB by Chris Beebe, Macdonald, £1.95 (hardcover), 249 pages, reviewed by Tony Horton.

A future where unemployment and disease have 'disappeared' (to be replaced by something much worse) and a run-of-the-mill story in which something of importance is stolen - here it's a 'Nordell's Conjecture probe' - and the subsequent search to recover it. There are several sub-plots: Turner's problems, the social structure of the world, and upcoming 'President Chair Person' (PCP) election and CENTERCOM (the 'state'). The Hub of the title is a space station where a 'mystery' is occurring - and where all characters end up in the 'climax'. Overall I'm not sure if this book is meant as a 'funny' book, a serious look or a send-up; it could be any. Slightly confusing as the author throws in a local dialect (cyberpunk?), insertions of 'cata' to 'explain' at random. I finished the book feeling something was missing.

NEW YORK BY NIGHT by Esther Friesner, Headline, £2.95, 252 pages reviewed by Anne Gay.

A dragon in New York? No hum.

But wait! It's not at all the pedestrian feeble fantasy I expected. Ms. Friesner carries her story well, and it's a good story, with a very different dragon and an excellent supporting cast. NEW YORK BY NIGHT accessible: good fun and tense by turns. A great read, original and most enjoyable.



STALKING THE UNICORN by Mike Resnick, Arrow £2.95, 314 pages  
Reviewed by Chris Morgan.

Fantasy novels don't come more peculiar than this. It is (at least, on the surface) a quest for a stolen unicorn in an alternate Manhattan which is peopled by mythical creatures and odd humans. There's an elf called Mürgenstürm, a cat-woman, a big-game hunter (Colonel Winifred Carruthers) and a very small talking horse---all of them essential to the plot. The book is also a satire on private eye stories; it's very funny. As usual, Resnick employs a lot of brief dialogue to maintain a fast pace. Despite a slow opening and some plot problems it's a very good read.

STEVEN SPIELBERG'S AMAZING STORIES by Steven Bauer, Future, 234 pages, £2.50, reviewed by Steve Jones.

Do you remember watching AMAZING STORIES the TV series which cost 3 million dollars per episode to produce? Well now you can read the novelisation..... You missed it? This is because neither the BBC or ITV could afford it and it was never shown in this country. The book contains eleven stories; all on a contemporary supernatural theme (if you count World WarII as contemporary). Think of THE OUTER LIMITS or THE TWILIGHT ZONE, except with no SF plots. Some of the stories are humorous (the killer wig struck me as a potential STAR TREK idea considering the number on the set!), some are war stories, one is set in a high school and all are exceedingly sentimental (and yes there is one about Santa Claus). I didn't hate it half as much as I thought I would, which you may take as a sort of recommendation if you wish.

BRONWYN'S BANE by Elizabeth Scarborough, Bantam, £2.95, 286 pages, reviewed by Carol Morton.

This story tells of the Crown Princess Bronwyn of Argonia who is cursed at birth by a spell that makes her unable to speak the truth. War breaks out and she gets sent to safety to her cousin Carole, who is a whistling witch, and they decide to try and remove the curse on Bronwyn. This is the third in the series of stories telling of the Brown family of witches and unfortunately is the weakest of the trilogy, it is mildly entertaining but I would only bother if you have read the other two.

NIGHT VISIONS edited by George R.R.Martin, Century £11.95, 298 pages  
Reviewed by Chris Morgan.

This is an original horror anthology containing 100 pages each from Clive Barker, Lisa Tuttle and Ramsey Campbell. There are seven Campbell stories, three from Tuttle and just one short novel from Barker. The Barker piece is fierce and graphic---well written "nasty" horror involving a small wooden box that enables people to experience new heights of pleasure and pain. Lisa Tuttle's stories are brilliant, with wonderful believable female protagonists. By comparison Campbell's seven stories are quiet and restrained. They are mood pieces, beautifully crafted yet just a little disappointing. On the whole it's a very good book.

Drowntide, by Sydney J. Van Scyoc, Orbit, 220 pp., £2.50.  
Reviewed by Anne Gay.

Keiris is a failure and a coward. He has no inner voice nor inner ear for the communion his people need with the beings of the hostile sea. And his gifted sister dies. Without her, his island race will die too.

Sent on a hopeless quest for help, Keiris rises above fear to new dimensions of humanity - in an alien guise.

Ms. Van Scyoc has created another triumph with her outworld tapestries of inter-dependent life. Her imaginations are all but tangible, and compelling in their tale. A must.



In the year 2013 war has been abolished and international disputes are settled by evaluating the performance of soldiers of the present in conflicts of the past. Now one of the referees who performs such evaluations has gone rogue and intends to take the place of Richard the Lionheart on the throne of England, from where he will be able to change the course of history. Lucas Priest and Bobby Johnson of the United States Army Temporal Corps ("Today's Army has time for you") are sent to substitute themselves for Wilfred of Ivanhoe and Robin Hood and stop him, without the locals finding out. There is nothing very original about this basic plot, although the author has tried to add some new ideas of his own. The only real novelty is that instead of using a genuine historical setting he has superimposed his own story on Sir Walter Scott's classic tale, borrowing characters and incidents as required. The result is a mixture of fast-paced action and slow, boring and totally unconvincing discussions of the paradoxes of time travel and alternate history. It has been done much better before and this book, while entertaining enough in a superficial way, adds nothing new to the time travel genre. Further volumes in this series will need to be a lot better if it is to succeed.

THE GOLDEN HORN by Judith Tarr, Corgi £2.75, 269 pages

Reviewed by Pauline Morgan.

Many middle volumes of series lack something. This, as volume two of The Hound and the Falcon fantasy trilogy, is no exception. In The Isle of Glass (which precedes this) we are introduced to Alfred. He has been brought up in a monastery and lived sixty years as a monk. He is also elven and looks sixteen. In The Golden Horn, he and his companion, Thea, arrive in Constantinople at the time of the fourth crusade and are in the city when the sack begins.

Tarr's elven-folk are derivative of Katherine Kurtz's Deryni, having similar powers and facing similar persecution. The volume is also self-indulgent as, despite developing the relationships between the main characters, it is isolated from the rest of the real story. That can only take place in Britain. Tarr is an excellent story teller but here the plot is made up of incidents, not quite welded together strongly enough, and insufficient use is made of the conflict between the characters who will appear only in this volume.

Slow Birds, by Ian Watson, Grafton, 224 pp., £2.50.

Reviewed by Anne Gay.

The Slow Birds are mechanisms that create a whole society - accidentally - while being prepared by another for a very different purpose. Since I don't want to give the game away, I'll say only that Ian Watson thinks short stories are hothouse exotic. His are fireworks. Not all of the other stories in this collection are of the same high standard, but a lot of them are. New readers want to ask authors, "Where did you get your ideas from?" With Ian Watson, I still want to do just that.

BLOOD OF AMBER by Roger Zelazny, Sphere, £2.75, 215 pages, reviewed by Steve Jones

This is the second book in the second AMBER series. There are an infinite number of Shadows (worlds) between the twin poles of Chaos and Order. The few beings who can walk through Shadow engage in machiavellian struggles. The hero Merlin (the son of Corwin from the first series) is the target of increasingly determined attempts to kill him for reasons he cannot understand. The trouble is mystery is piled on enigma with hardly anything explained in this book, and Zelazny has the cheek to give it a cliff-hanger ending. There are so many loose plot devices lying around (such as the world's first magic-using computer) that he could produce anything he likes out of a hat. There is no indication of how many books there are going to be in the series. I suspect Zelazny will just spin it out as long as it sells. I can't say I'll lose any sleep waiting for the next one.

CHALLENGE OF THE CLANS by Kenneth C. Flint, Bantam, £2.95, 320 pages, reviewed by Carol Morton.

This is a pretty much run-of-the-mill formula fantasy supposedly continuing the SIDHE LEGENDS but in reality only a very slightly connected novel. The plot is very predictable - evil druid corrupts weak-willed King who orders the murder of powerful chieftain whose wife is pregnant whose son avenges his father's death. Save your money.

DRAGON by Nigel Frith, Unwin £2.95, 305 pages

Reviewed by Pauline Morgan.

Nigel Frith specialises in the retelling and embellishment of ancient legends, previous volumes being taken from Norse (Asgard) and Indian (Krishna) mythologies. In Dragon it is the turn of the Chinese. When the Weaver-girl elopes with the Cowherd, her father, the Jade Emperor and chief of the Chinese pantheon, persuades the Celestial Dragon to go to earth in search of them. This is despite the Dragon's warning that, because of his nature, chaos will inevitably result. Intertwined is the story of the feckless poet, Nai, and his wooing of the sleeve-dancer, Xiang. To complicate matters, the philosophers Confucious and Lao zi, now gods in their own right, have taken an interest in the poet.

Once the reader becomes used to the slightly archaic style designed to give a flavour of ancient chinese writing, this is a good, complex story. It has humour, in the continuous bickering between the philosophers, romance, deception and magic. In fact, it has all the ingredients, nicely packaged, of an interesting fantasy tale.

WRACK AND ROLL by Bradley Denton, Headline, £3.50, 406 pages, reviewed by Tony Morton.

Interesting idea on parallel Earth where The Music and its musicians hold power over the Wrackers. However the 'powers that be' try to con the 'straights' into accepting their policies. The story revolves around the band Blunt Instrument and their leader 'The Bastard Child' and their influence on events. Interesting.

THE ALTERNATE ASIMOVs by Isaac Asimov, Panther, £3.50, 349 pages, reviewed by Tony Morton.

Should be called 'the Asimov Flops' because that's what you get. The 'original' versions of stories rejected by publishers because they weren't good enough - and that's still the case. Avoid.

DELIRIUM'S MISTRESS by Tanith Lee, Arrow, £3.50, 416 pages, reviewed by Dave Packwood.

DELIRIUM'S MISTRESS is the fourth volume of the "Flat Earth" series, but while the earth may be flat, the prose and characterisation are not. The novel is divided into three books - in toto concerning the adventures of Sovaz (Mistress of Madness) ill-starred daughter of Ashrarn the immortal demin and the mortal Dunizel; and her affair with Prince Chuz who rescues Sovaz from the bondage of the Underworld assuming the guise of Oloru, the master magician. Sovaz for her tenacity in escaping the torments of Ashrarn is made a goddess of a city with seven moons, voyages around the world in search of her exiled lover, Chuz and finally discovers him when she is reduced to a mere mortal.

DELIRIUM'S MISTRESS can be read independent of the other 'histories'. Lee peoples the book with shape-changers, magicians and demons - not the airy-fairy characters of most fantasy; and her prose flows along like untroubled water, pellucid and refreshing.



THE TROLL'S GRINDSTONE by Elizabeth Boyer, Corgi, £2.95, 393 pages  
Reviewed by Carol Morton.

A petty criminal-cum-viking narrowly escapes his captors by agreeing to impersonate a highly resented warrior and gets whisked off to the land of Alfarr. His task is to purify the pentacle, retrieve the troll's grindstone and destroy the evil wizard Sorkvir. The fact that 40 years earlier this warrior, Fridmarr Fridmundsson helped Sorkvir to despoil the pentacle and steal the grindstone provides an interesting twist to the plot. This is a light un-taxing read and possibly only for the fans of Ms. Boyer's other Alfarr novels.

OTHER EDENS edited by Christopher Evans and Robert Holdstock, Unwin, £2.95, 237 pages, reviewed by Tony Morton.

Magnificent BRITISH SF stories in a collection Edited by Chris Evans and Rob Holdstock. Four of these are absolutely brilliant, the rest only very good. I'm not saying which are which, everyone will have their own favourite. Contributions from the likes of Tanith Lee, M. John Harrison, Ian Watson, Michael Moorcock, Brian Aldiss, Keith Roberts and many more (sorry if I missed your favourite author - no room). BUY THIS, highly recommended.

PILLAR OF THE SKY by Cecilia Molland, Arrow £3.50, 633 pages

Reviewed by Pauline Morgan

Before what date can a book be called fantasy? Recently a number of historical novels have been promoted under the fantasy label, this among them. It is set in England around the site where Stonehenge now stands and at the time when the Stone Age is giving way to the Bronze Age. Moloquin, the Unwanted One, survives in the forest but hangs around the village his mother once lived in, despite his being stoned on sight. The boy, however, has a vision. He determines to build a house of stone for the spirits of the dead on the site known as the Pillar of the Sky. In a society of almost zero technology, the unusual is regarded as a source of power. After Moloquin returns from having been sold into slavery, bearing a bronze axe he is regarded with wariness. The novel goes on to describe how he becomes the leader of the village that once scorned him and his attempts to fulfil his dream.

This is a well written book, although a little slow in places, which gives insight into a different way of life and the changes that an advance in technology can bring. It is also about human failings for the characters have the same drives that people have now. If you like long books, give it a try.

VOTAN by John James. Bantam Books. 240pp, £2.75.

This novel is written as the memoirs of a Greek physician, who flees from a Roman garrison into Germany, where he gradually builds up his standing until he becomes a German chief himself. He is a tough, practical politician, gambler, trader and thief, which is reflected in the book, which should be subtitled "Or how to build your own trading empire". It is highly imaginative, original and exciting. Definitely to be recommended.

Islands out of Time, by William Irwin Thompson, Grafton, 270 pp., £2.95.

Reviewed by Anne Gay.

Subtitled A Metafiction of Atlantis, prefaced by an essay of pretentious erudition, and begun by a load of tedious description, Islands out of Time doesn't seem to have a lot going for it. All the psychological symbolism (most of which appears to be cribbed from Pseudo's Corner) made me unsure for quite a while whether I belonged to some moronic subspecies of simian, or whether it was all a gigantic con put about by Thompson to get recruits for his contemplative community.

On the other hand, I eventually waded ashore on some remarkably powerful scenes, including some amazing dirty bits. (This seemed at times the most appropriate linguistic register. But they were, as any topless actress knows, essential to the plot.)

So I still don't know whether I'm just a simian or Thompson is King Con.



STAR RIDER by Doris Eislerchia, "Women's press, £5.95, reviewed by Donald Thompson.

In a future universe mankind has split into three semi-autonomous groupings. The jaks are hedonists: with their power of 'jinking' they can travel anywhere in the universe on the back of their mounts with no mechanical aids necessary and as a consequence spend their lives wandering the stars looking for the legendary Doubleblack planet; scrounging through the galaxies and never stopping around when bored or annoyed with anything or anyone. The Gaihs have their own 'perfect' planet where 'jinking' is not allowed even though they have the power to do it. Instead they wait for the Jaks to die out of boredom and despair, leaving them to inherit the stars. Meanwhile their society is based on a samaritan principle which sees the intellectually and physically able work themselves into an early grave supporting those too stupid or too clever to follow their example. Their law enforcement they leave to the 'dreens' a hereditary grouping considered perfect police officials (ie. a bit thick but conscientious and willing). Unfortunately appearances can be deceiving and the dreens also have the capacity to hold grudges against their superiors. Onto the scene comes Jade, a typical adolescent jak, except that she possesses the ability to 'jink' across other galaxies. As a result she seems to be on everyone's hit list. The consequences and ramifications for all branches of humanity and the mysterious alien warks form a delightful and entertaining tale with a strong but not obtrusive philosophical underpinning. On the basis of this work I would recommend finding her other written material and purchasing that as well. . . .

WOLF IN SHADOW by David Gemmell, Century Hutchinson, £5.95, 326 pages reviewed by Tony Morton.

Set in the future after a (natural) catastrophe has left Earth's populace in a new dark age and the rebirth of magic, WOLF IN SHADOW tells the story of Jon Shannow, his quest (in this case for Jerusalem) and how his 'religious belief' bring him into conflict with the rising 'Hellborn' army - who believe Armageddon has arrived. Here there's a nice twist to the story, but I'm not telling what you will have to read it and see! Something of a Western feel to the book - possibly due to the pistols, settlers and horses involved - but something more. I enjoyed this book immensely and recommend it for a good read.

GHOST IN THE SUNLIGHT by Kathleen Herbert, Corgi £2.95, 323 pages

Reviewed by Pauline Morgan

Ghost in the Sunlight is really an historical novel as the elements that would transform it into fantasy are very few. There is the occasional vision which may or may not be of supernatural origin, and there is a magician. The magician is such a minor character that his presence has no real bearing on the plot. The book is the sequel to Queen of the Lightning and is set in 7th century, post-Roman Britain. Relations between Oswy, king of Bernicia, and Penda, king of Mercia, are strained - every year Penda invades Bernicia and every year Oswy barely holds him off. To buy time, Oswy arranges a marriage between his son, Alchfrid, and Penda's daughter. When Alchfrid goes to claim his bride, his sister goes with him.

Ghost in the Sunlight's qualification to be fantasy may be slight, but it is well written, well researched and a good read.

MIRAGE by Louise Cooper, Unwin, £2.95, 343 pages, reviewed by Carol Morton.

In a vain hope to save her dying city of Haven the Sorceress Simorh calls back from the past a former ruler of Haven, Kyre, who saved Haven when it was divided in civil war. As an outcome of that war, a portion of the population fled Haven to live in undersea caves. The descendants of those rebels are now attacking Haven and will destroy it unless Kyre helps them. This is a well-crafted plot and the characterisation is well done - particularly the character of the malevolent Calthar. This is an excellent novel. Highly recommended.

THE DOCTOR by Margaret Alphonstone, The Woman's Press £3.95, 229 pages  
Reviewed by Pauline Morgan.

In this, her first novel, Margaret Alphonstone has shown that she is extremely competent and as a feminist writer this is an excellent debut. As science fiction it is less successful. The setting is "after the change". Exactly what caused this change is never explained or speculated upon but its effects appear to include a total abolition of technology as well as a change in the relationship between men and women. The plot is also extremely slight. A wandering musician, Naomi, comes to the village of Clachanpluck and stays the winter. The strengths of this book are the changing relationships between the characters. Some of these centre around Naomi herself; for others it seems as though she is a catalyst. The women in this female orientated society that live in the village are the keepers of a secret. Unfortunately, they still hold the secret at the end of the book---at least from this reader. The appeal of this book will be mostly to women and definitely to feminists.

CHAINS OF GOLD by Nancy Springer, MacDonald, £10.95 (hardcover),  
230 pages, reviewed by Carol Mortm.

I had only read one of Ms. Springer's previous novels - and didn't care for it much - so I approached this with some caution and was pleasantly surprised.

The story tells of the Lady Cerilla who is destined to become the Bride of the Winterking, to lie with him for one night to conceive a son, and then take part in a ceremony the next night when he will be sacrificed to the Islands' Goddess. But the Winterking, Arlen, and Cerilla meet and fall in love at first sight and plan to escape. It was good, but I wouldn't buy the hardback - wait for the paperback and then buy it.

DELUSION'S MASTER by Tanith Lee, Arrow, £2.50, 206 pages, reviewed by Anne Gay

In a game played by the Master of Madness, children of Earth are the pawns, and the gods watch, unhelping. A strange complex sequence of actions and reactions mirror each other so that Ms. Lee's novel, which often seems episodic, turns out to have been brilliantly structured. Similarly, synasthetic language of a mystifying, mystical quality brings about a powerful transference of this strange reading experience in anyone who goes through this book. Objectively, I have to say it is a beautiful novel. Subjectively, I found it confusing; there was no unifying human character to identify with, so it was hard going, and whatever the message was, I didn't get it. As it was copyrighted in 1981 and this is a new paperback I assume that DELUSION'S MASTER has impressed a lot of people. I'm not one of them. I think it's too clever by half.

BLOODSHOW by Guy N. Smith, Arrow, £2.50 207 pages, reviewed by Chris Chivers.

In the highlands of Scotland stand many ruined castles, but none have the hidden secret that the Laird of Banahoe's former home hides. A tourist company has turned the castle into a haven for ghoulish visitors, with dungeons stuffed with fake horrors of torture and execution. The film company that uses the castle for a realistic set starts to have problems with an actor who takes his role too seriously. From that point on the undead Laird of Banahoe starts to take his dreadful revenge on all in his domain.

Guy N. Smith's BLOODSHOW is his ninth book dealing with horror in all its aspects. The 207 pages of this book are adequately written and the pace of the novel is well set. But for all that it's still a general middle-of-the-road story that is definately a light read.



The first volume of this projected eight part fantasy epic (Shapechangers), was predictable to the point of boredom. In volume two, (The Song of Homana), Carillon, heir designate to the throne of Homana, returns from exile to raise an army and depose the Solandish king who rules by right of conquest. With him come the Cheysuli, a magical race of shapechangers. Unlike volume one, the book has a first person narrator, Carillon, around whom the events happen. This is a mistake as although there is plenty of inter-character conflict, he is not always involved and consequently opportunities for development cannot be exploited. The Song of Homana is better written than Shapechangers and is more complex but it is still fairly predictable.

TEA WITH THE BLACK DRAGON by R.A. McAvory, Bantam, £1.95, 166 pages, Reviewed by Carol Morton.

TWISTING THE ROPE by R. A. McAvory, Bantam, £2.50, 242 pages reviewed by Carol Morton.

Most people by now will know of the excellent TEA WITH THE BLACK DRAGON, the story of Martha Macanamara who meets a strange oriental called Mayland Long. He turns out to have lived as an Imperial Dragon and has just assumed human form. It is a truly wonderful story and so I looked forward to the sequel. Oh dear! how different a sequel is. TWISTING THE ROPE is dull, pedestrian and very boring, however the worst thing was sadling poor Mayland with a permanent cold. It removed any mystique about him and removed all compassion for his situation. The story - such as it is - has Martha and a band of motley celtic musicians (yes they are known as Macnamara's Band) on tour when one of them is "mysteriously" killed by being hanged by a twisted grass rope. There is nothing mysterious or fantastical about this novel. I wish I had left my illusions about Mayland as they were and not bothered with this - I advise you to do the same.

TAMING THE FOREST KING by Claudia J. Edwards, Headline £2.50, 215 pages

Reviewed by Pauline Morgan.

This is a romance masquerading as fantasy. Colonel Tevra (female) is sent to sort out the northern Forest Province. Her troops hunt down a few bandits, slay a number of supernatural demons and put down a rebellion. The real plot is the rivalry for her as a woman between Dard, the deposed forest King, and Hetwith, her (male) second in command. Work out the rest for yourself.

Personally, I don't think a mixed-sex regiment is a viable unit--- unless you put something in their tea---but then neither is this book. It will not appeal to male readers and only to those women to whom fantasy is an extension of Mills & Boon.

Thankyou this month go to

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and Chris Chivers.

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Deadline for next month is 2nd January 1988