

# BRUM GROUP NEWS

April  
1989

Issue  
No.211

The monthly Newsletter of the  
**BIRMINGHAM SCIENCE FICTION GROUP**  
(Honorary Presidents: Brian W. Aldiss and Harry Harrison)

1989 Committee: Chairman - Bernie Evans Secretary - Chris Murphy  
Treasurer - Chris Chivers Newsletter Editor - Dave Hardy Reviews Editor -  
Mick Evans Publicity Officer - Helena Bowles Novacon 19 - Martin Tudor

This Month's Meetings are on:  
Fridays 21 & 28 April at 7.45pm

## This Month's Programme

Admission: Members £1.50  
Visitors £2.00

Yes! - this month we have not one but TWO meetings:

**Dr Jack Cohen**

will be here on the regular Friday with a talk entitled 'A Science Fictional History of Man'. If you have never heard Jack Cohen speak, there is a treat in store for you. Jack's new book, *The Privileged Ape*, was published recently by Parthenon, and will no doubt be available on the evening. Jack's (SF) speciality is alien life, and he has acted as advisor for a number of famous SF authors, eg. Anne McCaffrey and Harry Harrison, to name only half a dozen.

**C.J. Cherryh**

The well known US author will be visiting us on 28th. Carolyn Janice Cherry, as she was born (1942) was one of the first authors to be successful when first published by Daw Books in the mid-70s. She is a prolific writer, and well known for her Chanur series and the Morgaine books - the latest of which, *Exile's Gate*, was chosen by Mandarin to launch their new SF line. Don't miss!

*The BSFG meets on the third Friday of every month (unless otherwise notified) at the PENGUIN (ex LADBROKE) HOTEL, New Street, Birmingham at 7.45 pm. Subscription rates: £6.50 per person (£9.00 for two members at same address)*

*Cheques etc. payable to the BSFG, via the Treasurer, c/o the Chairman (below). Book Reviews to Mick Evans at 7 Grove Avenue, Acocks Green, Birmingham B27 7UY (Telephone 021-707 6606), which is also the Chairman's address. Other contributions and enquiries to Dave Hardy, 99 Southam Road, Hall Green, Birmingham B28 0AB (telephone 021-777 1802, fax 021-777 2792)*

Last Month

The EGM / Chris Morgan

In the absence of Tim Stannard, Dave Cox bravely undertook to Chair the EGM, which, as announced by Bernie Evans, took 'only five minutes' and passed without incident. (Well, this is a science *fiction* group, isn't it - ?) The Accounts were accepted with the proviso that income from Novacon 17 should be included in *this* year's Accounts. It was also agreed that the Committee should be allowed to make decisions on necessary increases, as per the the Constitution, without reference to the Group as a whole (which is what it had tried to do at the AGM back in January...) Minutes are available. New members are reminded that this sort of business meeting does NOT normally precede Brum Group meetings (who said "pity"?).

The second, and main part of the evening was Chris Morgan's talk on 'Writing a science fiction story. He started by quoting the case of a certain Mr Herbert George Verne, who always managed to find some reason to put off writing the best-selling SF story (or novel - Chris explained the differences in approach) that he had in his brain. In a very informative and entertaining talk (unfortunately most of the audience seemed to have exhausted their creative faculties during the EGM, so there was not as much feedback as might have been hoped), Chris concluded that the only way to do it is to WRITE, WRITE, WRITE...

Only one person - Pauline Morgan - seems to have spotted our deliberate omission last month. The DATES for Novacon 19 are: November 17-19!

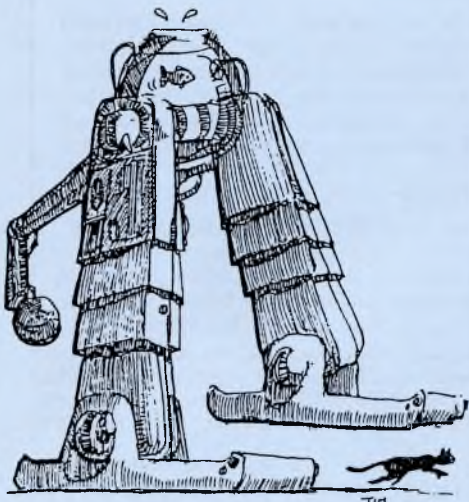
New Members —  
March

Last month our ranks were once again swelled by three new members:

Helen Ward is from Worcester, and likes Heinlein, Harrison and 'searching out new authors'. She came to the Group after seeing a leaflet in the Andromeda Bookshop.

David Cumner hails from Coventry (they are coming from far afield, aren't they - have we really exhausted the Birmingham area - ?). His favourites are Wolfe, the Strugatsky Brothers, LeGuin and Priest, and also heard of us via Andromeda.

Sarah Freakley is from Edgbaston (ah, there are a few left), heard of us from a friend and a poster in W.H.Smith, and likes reading any authors as she wants to broaden her mind - even to reading fantasy and D&D...



# Conrep

by Bernie Evans

Who said "What con"? This is the true story of Yuppiescon, held over Easter weekend in Jersey.

I didn't actually see a lot of the Con, spending a lot of the time flying a desk for Novacon AND Mexican AND *Critical Wave*, and some more time doing my stint as Green Room Manager, but what I did see I enjoyed.

Highlight for me was John Clute interviewing M. John Harrison. This was meant to be one of the 'sercon' bits, but Mike Harrison in person is much more jovial than Mike Harrison on paper. Watching John Clute trying to drag him back to serious questions was a real treat. Mick saw Mike doing an Author's reading earlier, and he *did* take that very seriously, spellbinding his audience (including Mick, who was Green Room Gopher at the time, and had only gone to get his drink order! It took him 45 minutes - he said it was just impossible to interrupt him...)

Jack Cohen's talk was as well attended as ever, and we weren't let down in our expectations of an interesting, amusing, educational and erudite talk. If any of you haven't yet heard Jack, please do as soon as you have the opportunity, he's absolutely brilliant (and he's at the Brum Group this month, plug, plug).

There weren't any actual low spo ts for me, but the most frightening bit was the 'Any Questions' panel I was on, because my co-panellists were Mike Harrison, Anne McCaffrey and Don Lawrence, the Guests of Honour. Mike did his best to make me feel comfortable, but I'm sure the audience heard my knees knocking as I went on stage! [Probably thought it was Death Datch Beetle - Ed.] Once we got going it was OK.

The social side of the Con was pretty good, but spoilt a bit by the fact that the programme rooms, were at either end of the hotel. This was offset by the fan programme room being opposite the main bar, and the fan bar right next to the fan programme, so any fragmentation that could have occurred was only occasional. Despite this, I did hear several people say "The only problem with this Con is that it has no heart".

From an organisational point of view the Con was excellent. It had all been very well planned - so well planned that gophers were *looking* for jobs to do. This, of course, made problem-solving a lot easier than usual, I was very happy to note, and there weren't many problems to solve in any case!

The hotel had a swimming pool just off the main corridor, and 'Viz' comic were taking photos for a 'photo-story', involving Iain Banks

and Dave Holmes. The sight of these two, clad in swimming trunks only, stalking the hotel for prospective victims, was enough to chill the heart of the most hardened Con Attendee. They *said* they only wanted a few guys for one of the shots, but Mick didn't trust the (can't think why!). In fact, those who were led away by the intrepid duo actually remained *out* of the pool and *in* their clothes, much to our (and their) surprise.

## FOOTNOTE: SPECULATION

Which Day Does *Your* Plane Fly? Rumour has it that Pete Weston and family were so keen to get away from the Con that they left for the Airport a day *before* they were due to fly home...

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## THE ANDROMEDA TOP TEN

The ten best-selling paperbacks last month at our well-known SF Bookshop were:

1. *Dr Who: Dragonfire*, Target.
2. *Doom of the Dark Sword* - Weiss & Hickman, Bantam.
3. *Cabal* - Clive Barker, Fontana.
4. *Victims of the Nova* - John Brunner, Venture.
5. *A Man Rides Through* - S. Donaldson, Fonata.
6. *Proteus Unbound* - Charles Sheffield, NEL.
7. *Desolation Road* - Ian McDonald, Bantam.
8. *Into the Out Of* - Alan Dean Foster, NEL.
9. *Endgame Enigma* - James P. Hogan, Legend.
10. *In Alien Flesh* - Gregory Benford, Gollancz.

## TOP THREE HARDCOVERS:

1. *Ancient Images* - R. Campbell, Legend.
2. *Rediscovery of Man* - Cordwainer Smith, Gollancz.
3. *Dark Night in Toyland* - Bob Shaw, Gollancz.

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Thanks to Tim Groome for artwork (Page 2), to Martin for his Jophan Report, Bernie for her Conrep, and to all book reviewers.

# NEWSFILE

News and Gossip from the world of SF, including Martin Tudor's celebrated JOPHAN REPORT.

If you have any information, don't keep it to yourself - send it in. (This does mean YOU!)

## THE JOPHAN REPORT #25

Rachel Pollack has picked up the £1,000 prize for the Arthur C. Clarke Award to the best SF novel of 1988, for *Unquenchable Fire*.

The 1989 Nebula Award shortlist is as follows: - Novels: *Deserted Cities of the Heart* by Lewis Shiner, *Mona Lisa Overdrive* by William Gibson, *Great Sky River* by Gregory Benford, *The Urth Of The New Sun* by Gene Wolfe, *Falling Free* by Lois McMaster Bujold, *Drawing Towers* by George Turner, *Red Prophet* by Orson Scott Card. Short Stories: 'The Colour Winter' by Steven Popkes, 'Dead Men on TV' by Pat Murphy, 'Voices of the Kill' by Thomas M Dirsch, 'The Fort Moxie Branch' by Jack McDewitt, 'Bible Stories for Adults, No. 17: The Deluge' by James Morrow, 'Mrs Shummel Exits a Winner' by John Kessel. Novelettes: 'Do Ya, Do Ya Wanna Dance' by Howard Waldrop, 'Ginny Sweethips' Flying Circus' by Neal Barrett Jr., 'The Hob' by Judith Moffett, 'Kirinyaga' by Mike Resnick, 'Unfinished Portrait of the King of Pain by Van Gogh' by Ian MacDonald, 'Schrodinger's Kitten' by George Alec Effinger, 'Peaches for Mad Molly' by Steven Gould. Novellas: 'Journals of the Plague Years' by Norman Spinrad, 'Surfacing' by Walter Jon Williams, 'The Scalehunter's Beautiful Daughter' by Lucius Shepard, 'The Calvin Coolidge Home for Dead Comedians' by Bradley Denton, 'The Devil's Arithmetic' by Jane Yolen, 'The Last of the Winnebagos' by Connie Willis.

Robinson is to publish Richard Matheson's novel *Earthbound* in its original form on the 25th May. The American publisher who commissioned the book so altered its text that Matheson used a pseudonym for that edition. Also out that day is *The Coachman Rat* by British writer David Henry Wilson, which is already a major success in its German edition.

The Gollancz launch of Terry Pratchett's latest 'Discworld' novel, *Pyramids*, has been moved back from May to June. James Morrow's excellent satirical novel *This is the Way the World Ends* appears in a second Legend edition on the 15th June, along with Mercedes Lackey's opening novel in the 'Arrows' trilogy, *Arrow's Flight*, and the softback edition of Orson Scott Card's acclaimed fantasy *Seventh Son*. Gollancz has purchased Michael Moorcock's new Elric novel, *Fortress of the Pearl*, and his new collection, *Casablanca*. The juvenile imprint Beaver publishes the first two books in Joe Dever's 'Lone Wolf' fantasy series, *Eclipse of the Kai* and *The Dark Door Opens*, on 1st June. The role-playing series has already sold over 650,000 copies in the UK alone.

John Jarrold, newly promoted to Commissioning Editor at Futura in February, tells me that Future will be publishing Craig Shaw Gardner's novelisation of *Batman: The Movie* in July. Other recent Futura acquisitions include four novels by Robert Charles Wilson; *A Hidden Place*, *Memory Wire*, *Gypsies* and *The Divide*. As well as *Angel Station* by Walter Jon Williams and *Dreams of Gods and Men* and *Yesterday's Pawn* by W.T.Quick.

Craig Sheffer, Anne Bobby and *Dead Ringers* director David Cronenberg are to star in *Nightbreed*, Clive Barker's movie of his short novel *Cabal*. Barker will direct from his own script, with the *Hellraiser* duo of Geoff Portass and Bob Keen handling the make-up effects. Sheffer plays Boone, a man convinced he is a murdered on the run from psychiatrist Decker (Cronenberg in his movie debut); Bobby portrays his girlfriend Lori, *Hill Street Blues* star Charles Haid obsessed cop Egenman, and rock singer Suzi Quatro plays Lori's travelling companion, Sheryl (Marc Almond is rumoured to have been cast as one of the 100 or so monsters featured).

Director Lindsay Anderson and screenwriter David Sherwin are to collaborate on *If 2: Reunion*, "not the usual kind of sequel," says Sherwin, "but a view of the original characters of *If*, 25 years on, to be played by the same actors." The previous instalments of the somewhat surrealistic series were *If*, *O Lucky Man* (inspired by the real-life experiences of its star, Malcolm McDowell), and *Britannia Hospital*, should be intriguing, especially as McDowell's character was last seen rebuilt as a patchwork Frankenstein's Monster on the operating table of the mad scientist he encountered in the second movie.

Sherwin, meanwhile, is currently engaged in a legal battle with the DHSS, attempting to claim dole in those periods when he is actually earning no money. Back in December, a mere seven months after he signed on, he was promised a cheque for up to £600 (minus £151 apparently overpaid in '86); then, two days before Christmas payment was stopped because the Government alleged he'd spoken to the press (Sherwin denies this).

Renny Harlin, fresh from the director's chair on the fourth *Elm Street* flick, will tackle the third *Aliens* movie from a Bill Gibson screenplay; his previous work includes the atmospheric *Prison*. Little is known of the latest instalment, once intended to re-enlist Ridley Scott.

## THE LEICESTER GROUP

On 5 May, Barrington Bayley will be giving a talk at the Leicester Science Fiction Group. Affiliated with the Brum Group (and with a few members in common), this is only a small group, so they are anxious to swell their numbers for this night, at least!

If you'd like to go along, the meeting is held at the Rainbow & Dove public house (yes, really!), which is opposite the Charles Street Police Station. However, the easiest way to obtain more details, including how to get there, is to contact Dave Cox.

This column is reserved for contributions from non-Committee Members. Don't forget that this is YOUR Newsletter, and needs YOUR input - on any topic (as long as it is related to SF or the Group)



My local video library has a blackboard on which they write the names of new releases. A few weeks ago this included 'WAR OF THE WORLDS'. "What's that?" I asked, with visions of a new version, genuinely based on H.G.Wells' story (couldn't that be great?). "Oh, it's the Resurrection", came the reply. Intrigued, I had to watch it, of course. It's an extraordinary concept. We are in the same 'alternat(iv)e world' that, in 1953, saw the invasion of Earth by Martians in hovering Fighting Machines, with Heat Rays and green blobs that turn everything in their path white hot.

For some reason, the Martians, after they were attacked by our bacteria, were not destroyed, but sealed in canisters. And in 1988 they somehow escape and reorganise, taking over humans in *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* fashion...

It must be admitted that much of the film is rather dire, but there is a certain fascination in seeing George Pal's creations faithfully re-created and hovering, if only briefly, over modern American cities.

## CHANNEL FOUR'S SF SEASON

You may have noticed that Channel 4 has so far shown *1984* and *The Day the Earth Stood Still* in their 'major season of SF movies'. In case you are interested, the rather motley choice for the remainder, taking us up to June, is:

*2010* (first showing on TV?).

*Fahrenheit 451*.

*Static* (a 1985 film which brings live images from Heaven onto TV).

*IT Came from Outer Space*.

*Brother from Another Planet*.

*Failsafe*.

*Sex Mission*.

*Dune*.

No further comment.



*All books reviewed in these pages by members have been provided by the publishers, who will receive a copy of this Newsletter. Members may keep books reviewed by them (or may donate them as Raffle Prizes, or Auction Items, if feeling generous...)*  
*Please keep reviews to under 150 words, unless instructed otherwise. Deadline for reviews: at least 2 weeks before next meeting*

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KAIROIS by Gwyneth Jones; Unwin Hyman; 260 pages; £12.95 hardback.

Reviewed by Mick Evans.

This novel is set in the first decade of the new century, mainly in Brighton and the West Midlands. The main characters are two women, Sandy and Otto, who run an alternative bookshop (they're lovers slowly drifting apart), Otto's son Candide, and their friends James and Luci. A rather preposterous neo fascist sect called Breakthru has gained hold of the drug Kairos which causes mass hallucinations. Sandy innocently comes into possession of the drug and Breakthru's attempts to retrieve it include kidnapping Candide's pet dog, which is taken to the animal testing labs in Birmingham. Sandy and Candide set out to rescue the dog causing mass hallucinations on the way. The subtle complexities of this book make it one you would need to read for yourself and each person may put his own interpretation on the effects of the drug. Although it evokes quite a depressing atmosphere there are passages that are quite moving, I ultimately found it worth the effort.

SIGHT OF PROTEUS by Charles Sheffield; N.E.L.; 246 pages; £2.99 paperback.

Reviewed by Dave Hardy.

Firstly, a complaint to the publishers. The title page clearly states: "First published in Great Britain in 1989 by N.E.L. paperbacks". What they really mean is that N.E.L.'s first publication of it here was in 1989 - it was first published here by Sidgwick & Jackson in 1980, and by Arrow books in 1981! Parts of it also appeared in Galaxy magazine in 1977. Charles Sheffield's first novel is worth re-publishing, though. You know how some animals such as lizards can regenerate a lost limb? Imagine if humans could do not only that, but by using computer bio-feedback could change their form completely (for medical or cosmetic reasons). Add to that an overcrowded, energy starved world, an outer space which is inhabited by 'form-changed' humans', tiny black holes which are harnessed for power, and you have the background for our hero Beyrooz Wolf, investigating agent in the Office of Form Control when an experiment goes out of control. It's fascinating stuff.

PROTEUS UNBOUND by Charles Sheffield; N.E.L.; 267 pages; £2.99 paperback.

Reviewed by Dave Hardy.

The sequel to the above book, although in quite a different setting. It does help if you read *Sight of Proteus* first, so that you understand what form control is all about. Here, Beyrooz Wolf is rejuvenated after falling into a depression (and losing his job) after an unhappy love affair, and spirited away into the outer Solar System, where form changed humans behave very differently and are suspicious, to say the least, of anyone from the Inner System. He is needed in the Cloudlands, to discover why the form change tanks, amongst other things, are going wrong; at the same time he needs their help to rid himself of an hallucination (or is it?) the Dancing Man which threatens his sanity. Charles Sheffield's science is impeccable and imaginative, and he keeps the story moving at a brisk pace, with a sprinkling of dry wit. Real science fiction!

MILLENNIUM by Ben Bova; Methuen; 296 pages; £11.95 Hardback.

Reviewed by Michael Jones.

This book continues the story begun in *Kinsman*. It is a more highly plotted novel, taking place entirely during the month of December 1999, so that the title derives from the ushering in of the new millenium with a message of peace and hope for a world on the brink of nuclear war. Chet Kinsman, now the Commander of the American side of Moonbase, sees how to achieve this by making the Moon an independent nation and *Millennium* tells the gripping and dramatic story of how he does it, allowing nothing to stand in his way. This is one of Bova's best, perhaps only surpassed by his magnum opus *Colony* to which it is an essential introduction. Definitely recommended.

THE 29th PAN BOOK OF HORROR STORIES Ed by Clarence Paget; Pan; 238 pages; £2.50 paperback.

Reviewed by Chris Morgan.

This year's anthology is an improvement. As usual the best story is the only reprint, Stephen King's 'The Ledge' from his *Nightshift* collection. Also as usual, the other stories are graphic (often in bad taste) and largely non-supernatural. There's the inevitable bit of cannibalism and an attack by giant invertebrates, though a few stories show sparks of originality. 'The Joonka Junka' by Murray Pickles works not due to any writing skills but because of its Indian Raj setting. Alan Temperley's 'Angel and Teacake' is a clever piece, spoilt by an unimaginative ending.

As the title says, this is an illustrated guide to the Antrak books providing visual interpretations from the first trilogy. Also included is an A to Z of people, places and events which aids better understanding of the story. The book has text by Tilley expanding on the background and other aspects of the books, and (good) illustrations by Fernandez showing what Tilley explains. The illustrations in general add to the knowledge of the books particularly the scenery, the Federation weaponry and the Ne-Issan domain 'breakdown'. The encyclopaedic section is a definite bonus, expanding parts of the story better (in the books this would detract from the storyline) and explaining personnel and backgrounds. All in all a good read, though a little pricey.

THE BEWITCHMENTS OF LOVE AND HATE by Stora Constantine; Orbit; 411 pp; £4.50 paperback.

Reviewed by Steve Jones.

This is the second in the *Wraeththu* trilogy. *Wraeththu* are the race who inherit the Earth after mankind has destroyed itself. They combine male and female in each person, and hence live in balance with their environment in ways impossible to humans. This book is about the childhood and growing up of Swift, the offspring of the Varr warlord Terzian. Following the conquest of the last remnants of humanity, the greatest threat to the *Wraeththu* is their own kind. Which culture will dominate, the warlike Varrs or the peaceful Gelamings? These books are more Fantasy than Science Fiction, as the *Wraeththu* can wield actual magic. The appendices, which reveal the unlikely details of *Wraeththu* biology, are a mistake. Very good writing, and a very strange plot.

KINDRED by Octavia Butler; Womens Press; 264 pages; £4.95 paperback.

Reviewed by Tony Morton.

*Kindred* tells the story of a modern young black woman living in 1976, being transported to the 1820's Southern States to "save" an ancestor in danger. Said ancestor turns out to be white, son of the plantation owner, product of his time (slavery) and hence - trouble. Dana, the woman, is forced to help Rufus, whenever he gets into deadly peril, which is often. She endures (semi) slavery of the time to help her ancestors survive, while he has to be careful due to her "saving" him - tenuous idea. He grows up while while she returns throughout his life to save him over what is to her only a period of weeks. Really a slave story of the Southern (pre-USA) States and how badly they treated slaves, and a modern reaction to this. The SF content (time travel) while it seems to work in the context of the story, seems only there to promote the wrongness of the period, and, however correct, and whilst it's a good historical story, is this SF?

THE ORBIT SF YEARBOOK Edited by David S Garnett; Orbit; 336 pages; £4.99 paperback.

Reviewed by Mick Evans.

David Garnett's choice of stories here pretty well reflect my own taste in S.F. There's no dragons or spaceships, but plenty of thoughtful writing with a variety of themes. Included is Pat Murphy's deservedly award winning 'Rachel in Love', Lucius Shepard's 'The Sun Spider', Kate Wilhelm's 'Forever Yours' and there's interesting technology in Felix C. Gotschalk's 'Menage A Super Trois'. I'd probably have bought this for two writers who have impressed me greatly in the last couple of years (although probably not S.F) Johnathon Carroll and Dan Simmons, who had a brilliant first novel recently. Carroll's contribution is 'Friends Best Man', which I believe has just won a World Fantasy award, and Simmons gives us 'E Ticket to Namland'. There's also an interesting article by Brian Aldiss and a fairly incomprehensible one by John Clute!. Recommended.

CARMEN DOG by Carol Enshwiller; The Womens Press; 148 pages; £4.95 paperback.

Reviewed by Pauline Morgan.

This is a strange, almost surrealist novel. The prenis, based on no known scientific fact and without adequate explanation, is that women are turning into animals and vice versa. Pooch, the heroine of this little tale, used to be a setter and from pet has become unpaid slave as her abilities have increased. When her mistress, who is becoming a snapping turtle, bites the baby, Pooch runs away with it as she expects to be blaned. Pooch also has ambitions of being an opera singer. On one level this is an amusing and silly romp but Enshwiller obviously has much more serious intentions. It is noticeable that these changes only happen to females and it is always the men who are the villains, giving the book an extremely feminist message.

PHILLIP K DICK IS DEAD ALAS by Michael Bishop; Grafton; 411 pages; £3.99 paperback.

Reviewed by Mick Evans.

I must admit I approached this book with some anticipation, having liked Michael Bishop's past work and being a P.K.D fan, I wasn't disappointed. Bishop uses Dick's character which is actually a ghost (Kai) in an alternate universe where Watergate never happens and Nixon is in his fourth term of office. Dick's mainstream work is well thought of but his S.F work has not seen the light of day until Valis, and Pete Seeger and Bob Dylan and any other agitators have disappeared. The main characters in the story are Kai an amnesiac, his therapist Lia, her husband Cal (a Dick fan depressed about his hero's death) and Tricky Dicky Nixon. Bishop uses some Dick themes and multiple viewpoint, but still manages to retain his own style. Although a knowledge of P.K.D would certainly help your appreciation of this book it probably isn't essential. I enjoyed this a lot.

ARABESQUES Edited by Susan Shwartz; Pan; 324 pages; £3.99 paperback.

Reviewed by Steve Jones.

This is an anthology of short stories set in the tradition of the Arabian Nights. There are excellent tales by Larry Niven, Gene Wolfe, Tanith Lee, Andre Norton and many others just as good but not as famous. My personal favourite was 'The Banner of Kaviyan' by Harry Turtledove, which is about faded glories in Persia during the Arab conquest. Truly exquisite. And here's me just picked it up because it has a naked woman on the cover.

SWORD AND SORCERESS 3 Edited by Marion Zimmer Bradley; Headline; 285 pages; £2.99 paperback.

Reviewed by Steve Jones.

What can I say about volume three that I have not already said about the first two?. These are Sword and Sorcery stories with female protagonists. Some are good, some bad and some indifferent. I especially liked the stories set in Eskimo and African mythologies, rather than the hackneyed European. The theme this time is to assume a strong and independent heroine from the start, and go from there. Stories where the heroine starts off repressed and discovers her own true identity are becoming a cliché. If you liked the first two, you will like this as well.

FANG THE GNOME by Michael Coney; Futura; 345 pages; £3.99 paperback.

Reviewed by Al Johnston.

Third in the *Song of the Earth* trilogy, this interesting work stands up well by itself. Science Fiction in Fantasy garb, the main theme is parallel worlds and their interaction. In this case the happentracks of the greataway that branch and merge through the ifalong according to choices made by the conscious minds which inhabit them. The eponymous Fang at first seems peripheral, not appearing until chapter 3. However his importance grows as the plot unwinds, involving a somewhat aangled combination of the Arthurian and Tristan & Isolde myths. This may be the secondhand car salesman approach to world building, but it is no less enjoyable for that.

THE HIDDEN ONES by Gwyneth Jones; Livewire; 151 pages; £3.50 paperback.

Reviewed by Ann Gay.

Adele, a punk from a broken home, is also an unconscious poltergeist. Yet another reason for people to hate her, another cause of her alienation. In despair, her mother sends her back to live with her father in Adele's cosy, rustic first home. But her beloved refuge in the woods is under threat. Knowingly or unwittingly, what will this dangerous girl do? This novel for early teenage readers is for the most part enthralling. It is also richly textured and fast moving. The end however seems rather rushed. Otherwise, a good buy for young girls.

WISEWOMAN by R.A Forde; N.E.L; 352 pages; £12.95 Hardback.

Reviewed by Carol Morton.

I fail to understand why this book was sent to an SF Group. An historical novel, probably it was sent in error because of the Fantasy-like cover. However I'm glad it was because it's an interesting novel. Set during the initial crumbling of the Roman Empire and rising of the Christian faith, and tells of the persecution of the Pagan faiths by the Christians. Keri is a young child living in Britain in her uncle's house, marauding Saxons break into the house and rape her mother. Keri and her mother then move to Armorica (present day Brittany) where they take refuge with a kinsman, King Gradlon of Kemper. Keri becomes the confidante and companion of Gradlon's daughter Dahut. But as they grow up the conflicts between their religions strain their relationship and they grow apart. The story is well written and the characters sympathetically treated. Excellent.

SPIRAL WINDS by Garry Kilworth; Grafton; 238 pages; £2.99 paperback.

Reviewed by Chris Morgan.

In order to write a successful novel one needs to feel very strongly about at least some of one's subject matter. Garry Kilworth obviously feels strongly about the desert of South Western Arabia, which is his setting for most of this novel. He describes the desert with such power that it becomes a physical entity - his hero, if you like. The story is a strange one, of how a boyhood incident affects the later lives of two friends when they do, eventually, travel to Arabia at the time of the British withdrawal from Aden in 1967. It's not SF, though there is a fantasy element here, within a framework of general fiction. Believable characters and a wonderful sense of place make this perhaps Kilworth's best novel so far.

YOUNG RISSA by F M Busby; Orbit; 178 pages; £2.99 paperback.

Reviewed by Carol Morton.

Certain elements of this story will not be new to those who read Busby's previous saga concerning Bran Tregare. This tells the tale of Rissa Kerguelen who became his wife. Rissa and her brother are orphaned at an early age and taken into welfare by the ruling U.E.T. The sexes are kept strictly segregated, the girls being forcibly sterilized and used for mundane, degrading jobs. Rissa wins a massive fortune in a lottery and manages despite U.E.T.'s best efforts to escape with the majority of her prize. This is a pedestrian story with large passages seemingly repeated from Busby's previous stories. It is a fairly slim volume with an even slimmer storyline. Probably only worth reading if you have read Busby's other works.