

# BRUNN GROUP

## NEWS

September 1989 Issue No.216

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 Meeting is on:  
Friday 15 September at 7.45pm

**This Month's Programme**

Admission: Members £1.25  
Visitors £2.00

This month's Programme Item is:

## NEIL GAIMAN

Writer for comics (*Sandman* and cult comic *Black Orchid*), perpetrator of *Ghastly Beyond Belief*, co-author of an Eagle Award-winning graphic novel, currently co-author of a novel with Terry Pratchett, is there no end to this man's talents?! Neil will be talking to us about "Humour in SF and Comics". This is one meeting NOT to be missed, why?, a few quotes from other authors will tell you why. ".....witty, disturbing, unpredictable as a dream"..Ramsay Campbell. "Gaiman is sharp, weird, witty and just a little sick"..Stephen Gallagher. "Neil Gaiman is a star"..Clive Barker. Do come along and see for yourself, I guarantee you won't be disappointed!!

*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: £6.00 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

## Stephen Lawhead

In Dave's absence, our report on last month's meeting is by our secretary type, CHRIS MURPHY. Thanks a lot Chris, your help is much appreciated.

Stephen Lawhead started by answering the question "What's a Yank doing writing about our good King Arthur?", (asked in a radio interview), with "It seemed like a good idea at the time!". His 'idea' has grown into the *Pendragon Cycle* trilogy, which retells a version of the Arthurian Legends set in Atlantis and Celtic Britain.

He explained that his aim was to compromise between the two common approaches to writing about Arthur, which produce Historical or Fantasy novels. The trilogy has a historical background, but retains the mythic and magical elements of the legends. He believes that Arthur existed, and that western civilisation owes a great deal to the period in which the king lived.

Questions from the floor covered a wide range of topics, including other writers' views of Arthur, the continuing appeal of the legends and the man who recently claimed to have found the Round Table. Speaking on the last point, Stephen mentioned the theory that the Table was in fact a round building rather than a somewhat impractical piece of furniture.

The research for his own novels has given him an extensive knowledge of Celtic society, and he now intends to write a non-Arthurian story with the same setting. Readers of the *Pendragon Cycle* will know what to look forward to.

Asked about his own taste, he praised *Mythago Wood* and Orson Scott Card.

INTRODUCING!



Contents of this issue (c) 1989 The Birmingham Science Fiction Group, on behalf of the contributors, to whom all rights revert on publication. Personal opinions expressed in this Newsletter do not necessarily reflect those of the Committee or the Group. Thanks to Tim Groome for artwork (Page 2) to Martin for the Jophan Report, and to all book reviewers.

# GUEST EDITORIAL

BY BERNIE EVANS

In case you're wondering why your newsletter looks a little different this month, it's because our Editor type, Dave Hardy, has chosen to go to the good ole U S of A, instead of staying here and doing his duty. I can't think why, I'm sure he'd have more fun editing the newsletter than playing tourist!!.

Anyway, this month we have a massive joint effort. Chris Murphy did last month's report, Martin Tudor, newly returned from no less than THREE Scandinavian conventions, still managed to come across with a Jophan Report, Mick and I did the book review pages as usual, and yours truly has put the lot together. I've used headings and other bits that Dave gave me before he defected, and my own Desk Top Publisher for the rest. It isn't as good as the one Dave uses, so I hope you find the result satisfactory. If not, TOUGH, you can stand for the job of Newsletter Editor on next year's committee!!.

Speaking of next year's committee, it's a bit early yet, but we will be looking for willing volunteers to stand up and be counted. More on this in a future issue, but it's not too early to think about it, especially the posts of Newsletter Editor and Publicity Officer. Contact me if you want any information.

BATMAN. I asked Birmingham's best known Batfan, Dave Holmes, to write a review of the movie, but he declined, 'cos "you KNOW I don't write, just tell 'em it's ..... great, SEE IT". I've seen it, and although I DO sometimes write, I ain't got the time, so I'll just say I agree 100% with Dave, if it's still showing when you get the Newsletter, go and SEE IT!!.

Proof now that someone actually reads the newsletter that Dave sweats blood over each month, a letter from the Commissioning Editor at Hodder & Stoughton, reproduced in full below. Thanks a lot Humphrey, now what about the rest of you readers, both members & publishers, sending us the odd word or two?!

Dear Bernie,

I notice in the August issue of BRUMGROUP NEWS that your 'feedback' column mentions David Barrett, editor of *Digital Dreams*, as 'bemoaning the fact that dynamic, go-ahead NEL has delayed the collection until late 1990'.

NOT TRUE! Publication has not been changed since it was initially set, despite a late delivery, and is still set for early summer next year, when it was always intended to be published. 'Dynamic go-ahead NEL' is still on track.

Best wishes  
Humphrey.

# 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) (Yes - YOU!)

## THE JOPHAN REPORT #30

The 1990 National British SF Convention, Eastcon, has recruited Nigel Kneale as a special guest and hopes to screen his BBC play "The Sex Olympics". As mentioned last issue Eastcon will be held at the Adelphi Hotel, Liverpool, at Easter next year rather than in Birmingham as previously announced.

J G Ballard, Russell Hoban and Iain Banks are among the writers invited by *The Observer* to contribute short fiction to its colour supplement during the summer.

Alex Stewart is producing a novel for GW Books under the pseudonym "Sandy Mitchell", entitled *SPEED KILLS*. While David Langford has been ditched from *NEW COMPUTER EXPRESS* as part of an economy exercise. "After writing just four columns and getting much good response from readers and editor Rob Ainsley," he told *CRITICAL WAVE*, "the omnipresent Langford was much irritated to hear from Ainsley that an economy drive by the accountants has led to all outside columnists being sacked; they have hired a new technical editor and now expect everything to be written in-house. Soddit."

Patrick Stewart is determined to have a say in the development of his character, Captain Picard, reported *The Guardian* in one of its weekend profiles: "I am not content just to receive the script, learn the lines, pick up my cheque and go home. Our show is about ideas and it has a philosophy. How we handle 20th-century problems in a 24th-century context is particularly significant... I can't keep my nose out of these things. They will be putting me in my coffin when that happens. I am told "Patrick, you would not get away with it on any other show!" I tell them it kind of goes with the territory -- they got me for good or ill, and they seem to be stuck with me."

Actress Amy Irving has apparently demanded \$58M from her estranged husband Steven Spielberg, plus custody of their son Max, in what is potentially the costliest Californian divorce action to date. According to newspaper reports, she claims the director maintained a relationship with actress Kate Capshaw (Harrison Ford's co-star in *TEMPLE OF DOOM*) throughout their three-and-a-half year marriage.

Sidgwick & Jackson and Pan Books have bought *THE BARZOOM PROJECT* by Larry Niven and Steven Barnes, plus an as-yet untitled sequel, for a "healthy" five-figure sum, reports Pan's Kathy Gale. The first book will be included in the companies' new sf, fantasy and horror list, to be launched early next year.

New from Titan Books: the first volume of *MAI THE PSYCHIC GIRL* by Kazuya Kudo and Ryoichi Ikegami. The duo's *LOWE WOLF AND CUB* is already a major hit outside their native Japan.

Nominations for the Libertarian Futurist Society's annual Prometheus Award are: L Neil Smith's *BRIGHTSUIT MACBEAR*, Marc Stegler's *DAVID'S SLING*, Lots McMaster Bujold's *FALLING FREE*, Brad Linaweaver's *MOON OF ICE*, Roger MacBride's *FARSIDE CANNON*, Shelly Reuben's *JULIAN SOLO*, William Gibson's *MONA LISA OVERDRIVE*, Robert Heinlein's *TO SAIL BEYOND THE SUNSET*, Walter Jon Williams' *VOICE OF THE WHIRLWIND* and Edward Abbey's *THE FOOL'S PROGRESS*, with a further 16 titles nominated for the organisation's hall of fame. The winning author will be presented with a troy ounce of gold at Noreascon 3.

Harlan Ellison apparently volunteered to appear on no less than 20 panel discussions at Westercon 42 last month, allegedly an attempt to wind certain people up rather than a bid to enter the sf section of *THE GUINNESS BOOK OF RECORDS*.

Kerry Hennigan is shutting down the Lucas / Spielberg film fanzine *THE DRAGON'S HOARD* due to work commitments.

The jurors for the 1989 Arthur C Clarke Award are: Maureen Porter, David Barrett, A V S de Reuck, Mary Gentle and Professor A L MacKay, with Maxim Jakubowski in the chair. The winner will be announced next spring.

The Melbourne Science Fiction Group is selling off early fanzines in a bid to raise funds and clear space; contact PO Box 212, World Trade Centre, Melbourne, VIC 3005, for details.

PLEASE SEE

INSERTED LEAFLET

FOR THE HUGO RESULTS



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

THIS IS THE WAY THE WORLD ENDS by James Morrow; Legend; 319 pages; £3.50 paperback. Reviewed by Chris Morgan.

It's not easy to write a novel about nuclear war killing off almost everybody on Earth, while being original and entertaining at the same time - but James Morrow has done it. This is a very strange and wonderful combination of SF and fantasy, with some crazy *Alice in Wonderland*-type plot elements. Could you believe in the widespread sale of totally useless Self-Contained Post Attack Survival suits? Could you believe in the six survivors of nuclear war being put on trial by the legions of the unborn? And could you believe that Nostradamus predicted it all back in 1554? Okay, so this is an anti-nuclear novel, with some preaching and some fairly partial propaganda, and it's extremely sad, because Morrow is such a good writer he is well worth reading. The sparkling wit will astonish you.

BRIDE OF THE SPEAR by Kathleen Herbert; Corgi; 297 pages; £3.50 paperback. Reviewed by Pauline Morgan.

I cannot vouch for the historical accuracy of this book but it is a fast moving, enjoyable tale. It is not strictly fantasy but belongs to the ever-increasing group of novels set in post-Roman Britain during the period when Christianity was gradually supplanting the old Druidic religion. This story concerns Taniu, the daughter of Loth king of Lothian, and the bid of Owain, heir to Cumbria, to win her as his wife. In many ways this is an historical romance though many of the characters actually existed. It is not tainted with legend in the same way as Diane Paxon's *The White Raven*, which is a more powerful and magical story because of it.

THE SECRET LIFE OF HOUSES by Scott Bradfield; Unwin; 166 pages; £3.99 paperback. Reviewed by Al Johnston.

Rather pricey for a volume of such slim dimensions, this collection of short stories is nevertheless worthwhile reading. Tending to the offbeat edge of conventional fiction rather than SF as such, the stories do however skirt some SF and Fantasy themes such as lycanthropy, ghosts and out of body experiences. The common thread connecting it all is the setting, at the interface between dreams and madness in Southern California. Of particular note among the nine stories are:- *Ghost Guessed*, a well handled tale of the supernatural with a twist at the end of a battle of wills; *Dazzle*, a dog's history that manages to avoid the cloying anthropomorphism usually associated with such *Watership Down* style efforts; *Unmistakably the First*, charts the rise and fall of a "televangelist's" victim; while the title story is that of a girl's relationship with her house and her aunt, while her mother lies terminally ill. All in all a thought provoking collection well worth getting hold of.

MORLOCK NIGHT by K W Jeter; Grafton; 190 pages; £2.99 paperback. Reviewed by Steve Jones.

Edwin Hocker is a spectator (along with one H G Wells) at the original demonstration of the Time Machine. He is later contacted by the mysterious Dr Ambrosius, who tells him that the Morlocks have captured the Machine and are going to use it to invade Victorian England. Together with Tafe, a woman from the future, he must stop the menace from mankind's degenerate descendants. This book is plugged as "the original Steam Punk novel", which I can well believe as it also brings in a bizarre array of Atlantean technology, lost civilisations in the London sewers, and large portions of the Arthurian Mythos. Very readable and good fun.

ELF DEFENCE by Esther M. Friesner; Headline; 234 pages; £2.99 paperback. Reviewed by Carol Norton.

Don't be fooled by the quirky title, these Elves are not the cute type that have been written about of late, they are closer to the dark, vengeful Elves of Faerie. Amanda Taylor has fled Elfhane and together with her son, by a mortal man, and the Elf Prince Cassidoron, takes refuge in Godwin's Corners, a peaceful middle American town. King Kelerison of Elfhane Ultramar, none too pleased at losing his eldest son and one of his human "wives", vows to fetch them back, so he sends a reign of terror on the town. The folk of Godwin's Corners are undaunted by these attacks and join battle with mundane practical commonsense. This is excellent, the skirmishes between the legions of the Elves and the people in the town is the highlight of this very entertaining novel. Highly recommended.

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NIGHT FEARS by Dean R. Koontz, Edward Bryant & Robert McCammon; Headline; 308 pages; £5.99 lge paperback.  
Reviewed by Chris Morgan.

This is a horror anthology with a hundred pages of new stories each by Koontz, Bryant and McCammon. It also has an introduction by Clive Barker and illustrations by Kevin Davies. What more could the reader want? Well, better stories for a start. Koontz is just not a competent story writer, as his three cliched bits of nonsense demonstrate. Bryant is more talented, and his better stories, *The Baku* and *Haunted*, are sufficiently unusual to be worth reading, while his other three contributions are make-weight (rather nasty and very predictable). McCammon is in the Stephen King mould, with three readable stories. *The Deep End* is a competent revenge piece. *A Life in the Day Of* is a very well written dark fantasy about speed of life, not wholly original but still compelling. *Best Friends* is unputdownable, a startlingly gross piece of horror. The Clive Barker intro is clever without saying much. The illos are atmospheric black & whites. So you can see, it's rather a mixed bag.

INHERIT THE STARS by James P. Hogan; Grafton; 239 pages; £2.99 paperback. Reviewed by Robert Sneddon.

This book has suffered from 'trilogitis' - the affliction of having two more books added at a later date to the original solo effort. It is a scientific whodunnit - the body being fifty thousand years old, apparently human in all respects, and found wearing a space suit in a Lunar cave. The characters are agreeable cardboard and the only real drama is that of the scientific discoveries made as the evidence is pieced together. An unlikely series of Velikovskian celestial mechanics and Doc Smith planet-smashing is used to finally explain what happened and to wrap up the loose ends. This book is a moderate example of a hard SF story; characterisation and plot have been tossed overboard to make way for the long lectures on science and scientific method.

THE GENTLE GIANTS OF GANYMEDE by James P Hogan; Grafton; 269 pages; £2.99 paperback. Reviewed by Dave Hardy.

"Pure Science Fiction... Arthur Clarke move over! Isaac Asimov." says the quote on the cover. Actually Asimov wrote that for the first book, *Inherit the Stars*, which appeared in 1977. The sequel (the book under review) came out in 1978. Now - surprise! - it's a trilogy. The original novel which starts with the discovery of a 50,000 year-old spacesuited human on the Moon, is excellent SF in the Clarke tradition. It encompasses the formation of the asteroids, why Pluto is where it is, and the origin of modern Man. This second book is also very cleverly worked out, but much of it is concerned with the biochemistry of humans and Ganymeans (the 'Gentle Giants' of the title). Halfway through I realised what was missing; conflict. Despite amazing discoveries and revelations, everything goes along too smoothly. And what a coincidence that the Ganymean spacecraft should turn up just when it did... Even so, I look forward to reading the third book, *Giants' Star*.

THE GREENBRIAR QUEEN by Sheila Gilluly; Headline; 310 pages; £6.95 paperback. Reviewed by Carol Morton.

This novel has a fairly standard fantasy plotline. Bastard half-Brother, backed by an evil wizard, murders his Brother the Greenbriar King and usurps his throne. The wizard needs to make an elixir from the Greenbriar Rose, but the vine is dead and only the blood of the true heir will make it grow. A loyal band of the former King's guard are also looking for the heir with intention of restoring the Greenbriar monarchy. While I was reading this novel I felt as if I had read it before, there is nothing new in the story, but it is well written and quite entertaining none-the-less.

JANISSARIES: CLAN AND CROWN by Jerry Pournelle & Roland Green; Futura; 383 pp; £3.50 paperback.

JANISSARIES: STORMS OF VICTORY by Jerry Pournelle & Roland Green; Futura; 359 pp; £3.50 p/b. Rev by Steve Jones.

In the original *Janissaries* Rick Galloway and his platoon of soldiers were kidnapped from Earth by a flying saucer, and taken to Tran, a planet inhabited by humans taken from several periods in Earth history. With modern weapons they quickly carved out an empire among the medieval locals. In these next two books they hold this empire against all opposition. The large scale events of an alien confederation using human slaves are mentioned, but not really expanded. Not a lot else happens, and the story threatens to go on indefinitely. Only Pournelle is credited on the cover. The afterword reveals that Roland Green is responsible for most of the actual writing. The trend of novice writers taking over a series from the more famous writer who started it has reached new depths. I suggest we express our collective displeasure at these antics by not buying the books.

THE SPELLKEY by Ann Downer; Orbit; 240 pages; £2.99 paperback. Reviewed by Carol Morton.

A lightweight, unremarkable tale set in the middle ages tells of Catlin, accused of witchcraft, and Badger, an orphaned stable boy. Badger is assigned to take Catlin to an Abbey to be incarcerated for the rest of her life to atone for the sin of witchcraft. But on their journey they meet strange people and odd things happen to them. This story seems to have been stretched out to fill novel length, the journey only added to bulk out the plot. It would have been better served up as a short story or novelette.

This is a fascinating work in typical Dick style, in which he tells the story of the Second Coming. In this case Belial has erected a zone of evil around the Earth, so the Nativity must be re-enacted, with the crucial difference that Jehovah must handle this one Himself. So Yah sets events in motion from Herb Asher's dome on CY30-CY30B; events which culminate in His coming to terms with Himself as a brain-damaged ten-year-old, realising a new world which the Spirit of the Torah has envisioned, and overcoming His ancient enemy. In this novel Dick makes interesting use of OT mythology and theology, with a healthy input of Zoroastrianism for good measure. This all works very well, giving an exiting read with good depth. Highly recommended.

ANTARES DAWN by Michael McCollum; Grafton; 333 pages; £3.50 paperback.

Reviewed by Dave Hardy,

This has a standard Chris Foss cover that could have been painted in 1972; and for once, the cover says it all. This is a standard modern space-opera, without the excitement of 'Doc' Smith space-battles. There are 'foldpoints' near most stars, through which spacecraft can 'jump' to other systems in next to no time. But Antares has exploded into a supernova, cutting off some colonies. When a foldpoint near Valeria reopens, a huge space battleship comes through - derelict and full of bodies. There's a war going on somewhere... A crew from the planet Alta investigates. Tightened up by cutting up to a third this would be better.

DOOM OF THE DARKSWORD by Margaret Weis and Tracy Hickman; Bantam; 383 pages £3.50 p/b. Reviewed by Steve Jones.

This is the second book in the *Darksword* trilogy. Joran travels to the city of Merilon to claim his birthright, while trying to conceal the fact that he has no Magic. Unfortunately Bishop Vanya has other plans for him. The floating city of Merilon is very well done. The fop Simkin is so obviously putting on an act, in the third book he will undoubtedly turn out to be incredibly important. Fun but not deep.

THE CATS OF SEROSTER by Robert Vestall; Piper; 278 pages; £2.25 paperback.

Reviewed by Marika Charalambous,

*The Cats of Seroster*, set in medieval England and France, is the story of a young English vagabond, Carl, to whom a dying blacksmith passes on the legacy of a sword. With the help of this sword, which turns Carl into a mad berserker when used, and a group of highly intelligent cats, Carl must defeat the depraved leader of the usurpers, Little Paul. Although the story is quite enjoyable, the book is written in a style for a young age group so I wouldn't recommend it!.

OTHER VOICES by Colin Greenland; Unwin; 182 pages; £3.99 paperback.

Reviewed by Pauline Morgan.

A sequel to *The Hour of the Thin Ox*, this book is quiet and stylish, and a little thin on plot. Luscan has been over-run by the Eschalan empire, leaving Princess Nette as a puppet ruler. Serin Guille is the daughter of a taxidermist searching for the secret of immortality. Of different social backgrounds, Serin's and Nette's lives cross only after the death of an Eschalan herald and the subsequent persecution of gypsies sparks a riot. Although there are characters in common to both books, this one stands on its own. The lives of the people are minutely observed and they have presence. It is the kind of book that cannot be rushed as it unfolds at a leisurely pace. For readers of literature.

SISTER LIGHT, SISTER DARK by Jane Yolen; Futura; 246 pages; £3.50 paperback.

Reviewed by Steve Jones.

I don't know which is worse; fantasy series which announce it proudly on the front cover, or those which don't. This is one of the latter. Any book with eight pages of music and songs at the back makes me want to go out and howl at the moon. This is one of those. It is also very good. The main plot "The Story" is about Jenna who, after her mother dies in childbirth, is brought up by the warrior women of Selden Hame. It is interspersed by sections in different styles: "The Myth", about tales of the goddess Great Alta, "The Legend" is folklore, "The History" is modern day interpretation, "The Song" (yaroouuhhh!), and so on. It shows convincingly how real events are turned into legends, and then get dissected and analysed to death by scholars. The only magic in the book is the warrior women. Each has a 'dark sister', a double who exists only in the light of the moon or the special tallow candles in the Hame. This is seamlessly woven into the plot. Recommended, but find out how many books there are going to be first.

MASQUES TWO edited by J N Williamson; Futura; 221 pages; £3.50 paperback.

Reviewed by Chris Morgan.

Here are 25 new horror stories, averaging about 2,000 words each. That's only six or seven pages, which is, in my opinion, rather too short to achieve much atmosphere or originality. In fact, the best of the stories are worth reading, with particularly good ones from Stephen King, William F. Nolan and Ramsey Campbell. Some of the others are noticeably unoriginal or unfinished or unconvincing. The editor's introduction is so American that I couldn't understand it, but the anthology is worth trying if you enjoy horror.

CHUNG KUO: THE MIDDLE KINGDOM by David Wingrove; N.E.L.; 501 pages; £7.95 lge p/back. Reviewed by Carol Morton.

Set at the end of the 22nd and beginning of the 23rd centuries when China has annexed the world and now rules peacefully after an initial internal and violent schism. There are no wars or famine, and for the majority of the world's 36 billion population, no disease. Even so there are those that agitate for change, they come mainly from the rich Euro-American stock and the novel deals with the authorities attempts to bring to book the leader of these Dispersionists, De Vore. The words epic, magnificent and superb come to mind but they fall short of the true grandeur of this saga. The author obviously has a great love of the Chinese and their lifestyle and has transplanted it into an all too possible future with consummate artistry. This should win all the prizes and awards going, buy this, it'll be the best £7.95 you've ever spent.

LAST SWORD OF POWER by David Gemmell; Legend; 314 pages; £3.50 paperback.

Reviewed by Pauline Morgan.

This is a direct sequel to *Ghost King* and is set about 20 years later. The boy Thuro has become the ageing High King, Uther. There is peace in Britain only because the tribes are afraid of his retribution. So far he has won all his battles but there is a growing feeling amongst those who know him well that next time he may not. In this volume the principal player is Cormac. Found in a cave as a baby beside the body of a dog, he has grown up a despised outcast. Finally forced to flee from the village he lives by, he is befriended by a stranger calling himself Revelation, who helps him discover his talents and becomes his teacher. There are too many separate plot strands running through this novel and as a result there is insufficient depth to the characterisation. It is the kind of fast moving fantasy novel that is easy to read but does not bear too close a scrutiny after you have finished it.

DARK FANTASIES edited by Chris Morgan; Legend; 319 pages; £5.95 lge paperback.

Reviewed by Carol Morton.

With the popularity of the stalk-and-slash exploitation movies, writers tend to reflect that popularity in their stories. Such blood and gore sickened me, so I gave up reading horror. That is why I welcome this anthology, the stories are psychological and supernatural horror, and make a refreshing change. The list of writers in this anthology is impressive, and so are the stories, but the ones that particularly stand out are: *Usurper* by Gary Kilworth, a man loses his shadow and then becomes a shadow, *Lifeline* by Stephen Gallagher, about a particularly sinister chat-line, *Don't Get Lost* by Tanith Lee, I never did like spiders, *Interesting Times* by Chris Morgan, a man wishes for excitement in his life and gets just that, and *Three Degrees Over* by Brian Aldiss, which could be a soft porn story, a horror story about a nightmare, or just an excuse for an awful pun. A wonderfully chilling anthology this, Chris is to be congratulated, Highly recommended.

DARK FANTASIES edited by Chris Morgan; Legend; 319 pages; £5.95 lge paperback.

Reviewed by Lynn M Edwards.

As someone who dislikes reading anything labelled as "horror", I picked up *Dark Fantasies* wondering wether I dared to open the cover. On the whole, I was pleasantly surprised. It is an anthology of sixteen brand new short stories based in the present day. While the book is sold as "horror" there are no detailed descriptions of bloodletting or other atrocities. Instead, there is the nasty feeling that you are a sitting target, waiting for each of these stories to happen to you. The list of the contributors reads like a "Who's Who" of your favourite authors and includes Brian Aldiss, Freda Varrington, Ramsey Campbell, Lisa Tuttle, Garry Kilworth and Tanith Lee. Not exactly bed-time reading for the nervous but definitely highly recommended reading for anyone who likes a good yarn.

THE CHANTRY GUILD by Gordon R Dickson; Sphere; 428 pages; £2.99 paperback.

Reviewed by Michael Jones.

This is the eighth book in the *Dorsai* series and will probably not be the last. It is impossible to summarize the story without reference to the whole series. The book contains many references to people and incidents in the earlier volumes. Consequently, a reader unfamiliar with the series will find it difficult to follow as well as being over-long for what it actually contains. On the other hand, a reader who has followed the series will want to read it, regardless of criticism, and will probably enjoy it because it is quite a good book, well written if rather slow moving. It is in fact virtually a continuation of *The Final Encyclopedia* and takes the conflict begun there to within sight of a final resolution. One for *Dorsai* fans but not, perhaps, many others.

DARKSPELL by Katherine Kerr; Grafton; 476 pages; £3.99 paperback.

Reviewed by Marika Charalambous.

*Darkspell*, volume two of the *Deverry* series, continues the story of Nevyn, Jill and Rhodry, as well as adding on some previous incarnations, as to how they all got into their present situation. In the present Nevyn is chasing after a jewel which he thinks is held by a sexually depraved dark dreamer, who in turn has kidnapped the master of the King's bath with the intention of making him steal this jewel from the King. If you haven't read *Daggerspell*, dont even attempt this one, but if you read and enjoyed it, then *Darkspell* is even better.