

# BRUM GROUP

## NEWS

February 1990 Issue No.221

### The monthly Newsletter of the BIRMINGHAM SCIENCE FICTION GROUP

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

1990 Committee: Chairman - Chris Murphy Secretary - Helena Bowles  
Treasurer - Chris Chivers Newsletter Editor - Dave Hardy Reviews Editor -  
Mick Evans Publicity Officer - Andrew White Novacon 19 - Bernie Evans

## THIS MONTH'S PROGRAMME

Friday 16 February at 7.45pm Admission: Members £1.25 Visitors £2.00

This month's speaker is

### MAT IRVINE

Mat is an old friend of the Brum Group. He is of course best known for his special effects for BBC TV programmes such as *Dr. Who* and *Blake's Seven*, and he is author of the book *Dr. Who Special Effects* (Beaver Books, 1986). He is an expert model-maker, and usually brings some examples for examination (remember Boris the Spider - ?).

A new series, introduced and produced by Mat, has just started on BBC2 (Mondays, 11.20am). Called *Techno*, this explores all aspects of technology, in Art and Science, with video and computer graphics, and is well worth catching - or taping. An interesting evening is guaranteed.

*The BSFG meets on the third Friday of every month (unless otherwise notified) at the NEW IMPERIAL HOTEL, Temple Street, (off New St.) Birmingham at 7.45pm. 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 Reviews Editor (below).*

*Chairman's Address: 126 McKean Road, Oldbury, Warley B69 4BA. (021 552 8912)*

*Book Reviews to Mick Evans at 7 Grove Avenue, Acocks Green, Birmingham B27 7UY (Telephone 021 707 6606), which is also the Novacon 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)*



## The Annual General Meeting

Chaired with his usual aplomb by Tim Stannard, the Annual General Meeting was held on Friday 19 January, and (thank the Great Ghul!) passed fairly uneventfully and without any blood being spilt. The Minutes are available, or will be shortly, so there is no point in my relating everything here.

Of special interest under 'Any Other Business' was an item brought up by Bernie Evans: it seems that *Critical Wave* is in financial difficulties due to the fact that a certain distribution company has reneged on an agreement over a photocopier, leaving the editors with a debt of £1500. It was suggested that the BSFG, whose Constitution requires it to 'further the interests of ... and the promotion, encouragement and participation in writing, publishing and producing books, magazines and other projects connected with science fiction' might help with a loan or gift, perhaps of £500. It was agreed that the Committee should look into this, which they are doing, and their decision will be announced in due course.

The new Committee consists of:

Chairman - Chris Murphy; Treasurer - Chris Chivers; Secretary - Helena Bowles; Newsletter Editor - Dave Hardy; Publicity Officer - Andrew White; Ordinary Member (= Reviews Editor) - Mick Evans. Bernie Evans is of course Novacon 20 Chairman.

Since I have been badgered and browbeaten into taking on this job for another year – and I warn you that it *is* only for a year; someone else can sit in this chair (not literally) next year – I may as well have some fun with my computer and produce new headings for the various sections. Hope you like them – let me know. (Ha, ha.) I haven't forgotten which eight members put up their hands as volunteers to provide contributions for the Newsletter during the year (my condition for returning to the Committee); I shall be contacting you. . .

Apart from the AGM, there was a presentation of £1200, collected at Novacons, to the Royal National Institute for the Blind, whose representatives accepted it gratefully and gave a short talk about Talking Books. The money will buy two Talking Books and a new player.

To complete the evening, Rog Peyton gave a virtuoso performance by auctioning a load of rubbish (some of which went out of an open window) and one or two good books, for a grand total of £120.60. Thanks to all who contributed or bought.

For the Committee at least, though, one of the highspots of the evening was seeing Bernie's face when she was presented with a bouquet of flowers as outgoing Chairman! Why didn't someone have a camera?

### NEW MEMBER – JANUARY

In January we were joined by Paul David Kelly (and he joined despite his first meeting being the AGM!). Paul lives in Streetly, Sutton Coldfield, and heard about the Brum Group via local radio and Alison Weston (yes, one of THE Weston family).

His favourite movies are 2010 and Bladerunner, and authors: Heinlein, Gibson, Clarke, Harrison, Gemmill. He has a special interest in artwork and graphic movies. A man with taste, obviously. . .

Contents of this issue (c) 1990 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, to Martin for the Jophan Report, and to all book reviewers.

## A BIG THANK YOU FROM RNIB

Bernie Evans, as former Chairman of the Group, has received a letter from Christine M. Gregory, Branch Chairman of the Royal National Institute for the Blind, whose Midlands Fundraising Branch is at 1 The Square, 111 Broad Street, Birmingham B15 1AS. Here is its content:

*It was a pleasure to be with the Birmingham Science Fiction group last Friday and receive your donation of £1200. The collecting tin yielded a further £20.32. I therefore have pleasure in enclosing our official receipt for £1220.32.*

*As agreed £1000 of your donation will be used to fund the cost of recording two new titles in the RNIB Talking Book Library. I have made arrangements for these to be science fiction titles and will be in touch with you again as soon as I have further details.*

*A further £200 of your donation will go towards providing a new Talking Book machine for a blind person. Both the machine and tapes will carry appropriate acknowledgments of the generosity and support of the Birmingham Science Fiction Group.*

*We are indeed grateful to you and your friends for your magnificent support in this practical fashion.*

*Yours sincerely,*

*Christine M. Gregory.*

As reported in the Jophan Report, the proceeds from the *Drabble II* book are also being donated to the RNIB. (And incidentally, although not mentioned there, at least two members of the Brum Group – Steve Jones and Dave Hardy – have drabbles included; no film offers have yet been received by either. . . Are any other members included? Let me know.)

It is a very worthwhile cause; why should not blind people have the benefit of being able to read SF? There were 223,000 adults registered as blind or partially sighted in England, Scotland and Wales in 1986, and more than one person in 20 over the age of 75 is severely visually handicapped. There are over 6,500 recordings in the Talking Books service; *Mythago Wood* was the first to be donated by the Group. Let's try to ensure that SF is well represented in future.

## SF PUBLISHING RECOGNISES ARTISTS

Issue No. 2 of *The Pan Galactic Gargle Blaster*, the new promotional panzine from Pan Books, carries, apart from news of various SF, fantasy and horror authors, a new regular feature entitled 'Behind the Brush', consisting of biographical sketches of Pan's cover artists. Not that I'm one (why not? Ask Pan!), but it is certainly a move in the right direction. In this issue we find Josh Kirby, Dave McKean, Chris Moore and Michael Whelan (who is of course American). Well done, Kathy!

## MEMBER'S ANNOUNCEMENT

Are you going to Eastcon '90 in Liverpool at Easter? Up to two seats in a car are available in exchange for help with navigation plus perhaps something towards petrol. Ring the Editor, or see him at the next meeting. (Can anyone else offer lifts?)



# NEWSFILLER

## THE LEICESTER GROUP

On Friday 2 March, **Ramsey Campbell** 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! It starts at 7.45pm, and admission is £1.50 for Brum Group members.

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. For more details, ask Chris Murphy or ring Steph Mortimer on 0533 833133.

## JUST IN TIME FOR THE 90's

Also hailing from the Leicester area is our favourite cartoonist, Tim Groome. We are proud to announce a major new series for the 1990s (not the new decade, since, as we all know, that doesn't start until 1991 - why do you think Arthur C. Clarke didn't call it *2000: A Space Odyssey* -?)

Tim has decided to create 'The Meddling Time Traveller' and have fun with some of the old time paradoxes. The first example is in this issue. I thought we might have a little competition to choose the most suitable name for this time-travelling character; a pint (or drink of your choice) for the most apt.

Incidentally, the other day I was thinking: are there any science fiction jokes? Well there must be, of course, but my memory is notoriously bad at such things and I can't think of one at the moment. Can you? If so, and it's printable, let me have it and I'll try to find room for it. Now that's an easy way to contribute, isn't it - ?

## THE CHRISTMAS COMPETITION

All the entries now being in, I can announce that there is a tie for **Competition No. 1**, between Chris Morgan, William McCabe and Rog Peyton, each of whom converted SPACE into SHIPS in five moves. Robert Sneddon did, too, but one of his words is obscene so it is disqualified! (Chris also used 'SLIPE', which, as he says, is of course a type of sledge or runner used in mining. Well, we all knew *that*, didn't we?)

News and Gossip from the world of Science Fiction, incorporating Martin Tudor's celebrated **Jophan Report**. If YOU have any information of interest, please send or phone it in to the Editor.

Anyway, there will be an exciting sudden-death play-off at the next meeting, so I hope all three will be there to fight for a valuable prize. (Really.)

**Competition No. 2** (the double acrostic) really sorted out the sheep from the goats. Someone who shall be nameless even said he couldn't work out what the question was... Nobody got it 100% correct, but Rog was closest. The answer is:

S	CRIP	T
T	ENO	R
A	LBIN	O
R	ODE	O
S	TIRRU	P
H	EROIN	E
I	MPERSONATO	R
P	ATHO	S

As for the extra Word Chain posed by Rog - to turn ELING into HARDY (but does he want to?), in 20 moves or less, Neil Talbot managed it in 11 moves, but Stan Eling himself and William McCabe both did it in ten:

ELING FLING FLINT FAINT PAINT  
PAINS PAIRS HAIRS HAIRY  
HARRY HARDY

Good fun; more of you should have had a go. Thanks to those who did - and to Stan for starting it all.

## The Meddling Time Traveller by Tim Groome



"Take a tip from me, Harold: wear this at today's battle!"

## JOPHAN REPORT #32

Arthur C Clarke, Roger Zelazny, Joe Haldeman, John Sladek, Jonathan Carroll, C J Cherryh, Bruce Sterling, Ian Watson, Barry Bayley and David Langford are among 100 writers featured in the fund-raising anthology *DRABBLE II*, due out on 11 April (100th day of the year). As with the first volume, each story is precisely 100 words long (including title) and all profits will be donated to the Royal National Institute for the Blind.

Becon Publications' next venture, is the filksong collection *THE DRUNKEN RABBLE PROJECT*, due out this month. There are more than 100 filksongs featured, explained Becon's Roger Robinson; "It should be 100, but they can't count." Meanwhile, the group's had a major boost from US retailer Wallsongs, which has ordered 50 copies of every book and tape Becon produces.

The first edition of *DISPATCHES*, the sf & science newszine published by the Welsh convention Reconnaissance, features an appreciation by critic John Clute of the SF Foundation (the event's chosen charity), a brief history of Cardiff (its venue), an update on cold fusion research and a short guide to Holland, site of this year's worldcon, with useful tips on local cuisine ("awful"), amenities ("there are no baths"), bars and publications ("customs can impound Dutch pornography"). Copies should be available from 5 St. Andrews Road, Carshalton, Surrey, SM5 2DY.

The new American sf magazine *STARSHORE* is offering an unusual "money back" guarantee with its launch edition. Four issue subscriptions cost \$16.95 (non-US) from McAlpine Publishing, 800 Seahawk Circle #116, Virginia Beach, VA 23452.

The line-up for Pan Books' relaunch in April consists of *DARK VOICES: THE BEST FROM THE PAN BOOK OF HORROR STORIES*, co-edited by Stephen Jones & Clarence Paget, *JASON COSMO* by Dan McGirt, *DRAGON PRINCE* and *STAR SCROLL* by Melanie Rawn, *FIRST-FLIGHT* by Chris Claremont and *THE BARSOOM PROJECT* by Larry Niven and Steven Barnes. Pan's hardcover list has been transferred from Sickwick & Jackson, senior fiction editor Kathy Gale describing herself as "absolutely delighted ..... to be able to offer our authors an even more cohesive publishing strategy, from hardback right the way through to paperback publication. This can only strengthen Pan's position in the genre and we look forward to a successful and exciting decade." Other authors due to appear through Pan this

year include Isaac Asimov and Robert Silverberg, Diane Duane, Charles De Lint, K W Jeter and Brian Stableford.

Harlan Ellison is catching up on work past deadline by up to 20 years, reports *SF CHRONICLE*. He recently turned in the manuscript for *THE HARLAN ELLISON HORNBOOK* to American small press Mirage (Mysterious Press will handle the trade edition) and is apparently about to start work on the legendary anthology *LAST DANGEROUS VISIONS*. John E Stith's novel *REDSHIFT RENDEZVOUS*, published in the US by Ace in June, has been selected as a choice by the Science Fiction Book Club. Stith's previous work includes *MEMORY BLANK* and *DEEP QUARRY*. Nicholas Royle's political fable "The Sculptor's Hand" has been selected for *INTERZONE: THE FIFTH ANTHOLOGY*. Doubleday is to issue the unexpurgated version of Stephen King's novel *THE STAND* in May. Meanwhile, teacher Sven Birkeits complains in a recent edition of *HARVARD MAGAZINE* that students on his writing course who admit to reading specify that it never includes non-fiction or "serious" literature, only King's novels.

Deborah Beale, formerly editor of Legend paperbacks, has moved to Century, where she will be responsible for Legend's hardback imprint, reports *THE BOOKSELLER*. Oliver Johnson has moved from Sidgwick to Arrow, becoming senior fiction editor. Linden Lawson, formerly with Barrie & Jenkins, has become executive editor for Random Century, reporting directly to chairman Anthony Chaetham and working with him on the initiation of new projects.

Norman Bates is on the prowl again. Robert Bloch's forth-coming novel *PSYCHO HOUSE* marks his third brush with the character, the previous sequel having little or no connection with its cinematic namesake, *PSYCHO II*. The eighth volume of *THE VIRGIN FILM YEARBOOK*, edited by James Park, is now available at £6.99. On the filmguide front, there are new editions of Steven R Scheur's *MOVIES ON TV AND VIDEO-CASSETTE* (Bantam, £4.99) and Leonard Maltin's *TV MOVIES AND VIDEO GUIDE* (Penguin, £4.99); both are American imports and liable to miss less well-known European movies (*EMPIRE*'s Kirsty McNeill also claims the Maltin release dates and timings are more accurate than Scheur's).

Harper & Row published Clive Barker's *THE GREAT AND SECRET SHOW* in US hardcover in January. That same month saw the debut of Harper Audio (formerly Caedmon), with a tape version of Barker's novel amongst the initial releases. Virgin Vision UK has allocated a £250,000 publicity budget for

the \$13.5m film adaptation of Margaret Atwood's novel *THE HANDMAID'S TALE*, to be released in March. Directed by Volker Schlöndorff from a Harold Pinter screenplay, the movie features a Ryuichi Sakamoto score and stars Faye Dunaway, Robert Duvall and Natasha Richardson (in the title role). Virago will release a tie-in paperback reissue on 15 February.

The third series of *STAR TREK: THE NEXT GENERATION* has a new title sequence but its original chief medic; Kate Pulaski is out, Beverley Crusher is back after a one-season stint back on Earth. The opening three episodes are "Evolution" (in which Wesley Crusher contaminates the Enterprise computers), "The Ensigns of Command" (Data rescues a lost colony) and "The Survivors" (a miraculous escape from genocide is not all it appears). Dean R Koontz has optioned his new novel *THE BAD PLACE* for £250,000, plus a further £600,000 to write

the screenplay, reports *FEAR*. He's apparently also completed a script for the new tv series, *DEAN KOONTZ THEATER*.

William Friedkin's first horror movie since 1973's classic *THE EXORCIST* will be *THE GUARDIAN*, based upon Dan Greenberg's 1987 novel *THE NANNY*. The cast includes Carey Lowell, Jenny Seagrove & Dwier Brown, with Seagrove playing the mysterious nanny who takes childcare one step too far.

Movie producer Richard P Rubinstein has commissioned Rospo Pallenberg to script the long-planned film adaptation of King's novel *THE STAND*. In a lengthy interview with *FEAR*'s John Gilbert, Rubinstein reveals he's also contracted with King to produce *THINNER* (one of the novels originally published under the pseudonym "Richard Bachman") with a screenplay by Michael McDowell, as well as a tv version of "Nightflyer".

## THE CHAIRMAN'S BIT

Well, here I am, Chairman. I didn't speak at the AGM because I was too busy at my old job, taking down the Minutes, so I would like to say a couple of things here.

I hope that most of our speakers in 1990 will be writers, as in previous years. We get off to a good start in March with Bob Shaw. Some will be connected with science fiction in other ways, as is our first guest, Mat Invine. I also intend to carry on Bernie Evans' policy of having a few 'home-grown' events, if possible. Later in the year we shall be having the Debate with Birmingham University SF Society, and of course we shall end with the Christmas Party.

However, in one respect I want to see a complete break with the past. Every month you get your Newsletter, which is now produced to a higher standard than ever before. By ancient tradition almost the only items written by the membership are the book reviews.

Why don't you WAKE UP and let us have some articles as well? At the AGM a number of you pledged to do just that. If I know the Editor you'll be held to your promise - but don't wait to have your arm twisted...

Chris Murphy

*As mentioned last month, don't forget that the Small Ads (space permitting) is available as a FREE service for all members. Why not make use of it?*

## Small Ads

There is a new shop for those in or visiting the Leicester area: Stephan Mortimer's

### MISSION CONTROL

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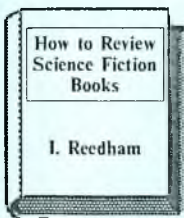
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# Book Reviews

All books reviewed here by members were provided by the publishers, who receive a copy of this Newsletter. Members may keep review copies (or may donate them as Raffle or Auction items. . .)

Please keep reviews to under 150 words unless instructed otherwise. Deadline for reviews: at least two weeks before next Group meeting.

A CHILD ACROSS THE SKY by Jonathan Carroll; Legend; 268 pages; £11.95 hardback.

Reviewed by Mick Evans

I found this book oddly unsatisfying, maybe because of my love for his first two novels I was expecting too much. The dividing line between success and failure with this kind of "dark fantasy" (as it's been labelled) is very fine and of course it probably comes down to a personal feeling. Weber Gregston and Philip Strayhorn are best friends who had struggled together as nobodies in Hollywood. Weber became the most acclaimed director of his generation, Phil was unrecognised for years then made a series of notorious horror films. Phil committed suicide by taking a gun and blowing his head off, which is where the story takes up. Phil has left Weber a set of video tapes on which he finds messages from beyond the grave and learns that the evil portrayed in Phil's horror films has rather more to it. Carroll has a way of taking ordinary every-day things and using them as spine chillers and this book is full of some intriguing writing and is better than most writers in this genre will ever achieve, but still it one didn't quite work for me. If you are a Jonathan Carroll fan you'll want this anyway, if you're new to him check out *Land of Laughs* or *Voice of our Shadow* first.

SHADOWDALE by Richard Awlinton; Penguin; 335 pages; £3.99 paperback.

Reviewed by Steve Jones

This is (taking a deep breath) *Book One of the Avatar trilogy set in the Forgotten Realms*. The Tablets of Fate have been stolen, and the gods responsible have been cast out to wander as mortals until they return them. There is the usual wandering band of heroes as well. This is not one of the best of the game tie-ins, because it commits two cardinal sins. A parade of minor characters are introduced only to be killed off a few pages later to show what terrible danger the heroes are in, and the heroes possess a "Universal plot voucher", in the form of a magic item which casts the appropriate spell to get them out of whatever fix they are in. It is published in conjunction with a series of game modules, which explains its faults. Not recommended.

ROBOTS ed by Isaac Asimov, Charles Gluagh & Martin H Greenberg; Robinson; 351 pp; £2.99 p/b. Rev by Tony Morton.

An *Isaac Asimov Presents...* book - but don't panic, this is an anthology of work based around robots. Of the 17 stories included only 2 (by Brin and Easton) are new stories, the rest being reprints from the fifties and sixties; so you will probably have read most elsewhere. Having said that, the authors represented read like a who's who in SF - Sheckley, Simak, Brin, Kornbluth, Asimov, Dick, etc and, as can be expected, the stories are of a high quality. Of particular note (personally) were "The Lifeboat Mutiny" (Sheckley) of a miscreant lifeboat who's not sure who is to be saved; "The Tunnel Under the World" (Pohl) about a test that goes wrong; "How-2" (Simak) a do-it-yourself nightmare (or paradise?); and "Farewell to the Master" (Ratas) similar to "Dav the Earth Stood Still" but with a different perspective. This book is worth a read - pick your own favourites. Highly recommended.

WHITE NUN'S TELLING by Fay Sampson; Headline; 245 pages; £3.50 paperback.

Reviewed by Carol Morton

The continued tale of Morgan, Arthur's half-sister, this time from the viewpoint of Luned, a young nun. Morgan has been banished by Uther to the convent of Tintagal and will be put to death if she leaves. Luned is given the task of guarding and guiding Morgan. Right from the start Morgan will not be led and slowly corrupts Luned away from Christianity to the pagan religion of Mother worship. Luned's anguish at not being able to help Morgan, her bitterness at having been driven from her god, the humiliation at bearing a child because of the rites performed in the Mother's Hole (a cave system below the convent) and her helplessness at Morgan's domination are well told with depth and compassion. Certainly not SF, but a very well written historical novel.

SHE WHO REMEMBERS by Linda Lay Shuler; Pan; 422 pages; £6.99 paperback.

Reviewed by Steve Jones

In 13th century North America, Kwani is driven out of her tribe because of her blue eyes, a legacy of her Viking father. She decides to travel to find her Viking father, but instead falls in with the travelling Aztec magician Kokopelli. This is not really fantasy (in spite of a few minor psychic powers), although so little is known about the real Anasazi it is certainly a work of the imagination. A fairly good historical novel.

THE MAN KZIN WARS by Larry Niven; Orbit; 289 pages; £3.50 paperback.

Reviewed by Chris Chivers.

With Paul Anderson and Dean Ing, Larry Niven has put together three different stories of the Man Kzin conflict. In "The Warriors" Larry Niven tells of the first contact between the Kzin species and Man. The Kzin as an aggressive feline race have a total belief in their superiority, and when they come up against what they consider a weaker species their egos take a terrible hammering. "Iron" by Paul Anderson moves on several centuries, after the human race has beaten the Kzin during several wars. The Kzin xenophobia cannot adjust to being beaten and once again they start to build up their military capability. Their secret base is stumbled upon by a human exploration team, and once again the Kzin wind up being beaten. "Cathouse" by Dean Ing is a marvellous story of a human captive left on an alien world by his Kzin captors. Discovering ancient Kzin females left in stasis by an alien race, the human releases them with unusual consequences to the Kzin race as a whole. Three great stories of the Kzin wars in one volume.

RAMA II by Arthur C Clarke and Gentry Lee; Gollancz; 377 pages; £12.95 Hardback.

Reviewed by Dave Hardy.

Actually this copy was not provided by the publishers as a review copy - Arthur asked them to send me one (well if you can't name drop occasionally...) My review of the first collaboration with Gentry Lee, *Cradia*, was not too complimentary, I'm pleased to say that I was much more impressed with *Rama II*. It's not quite like a "pure Clarke" book, and it's difficult to tell just how much Lee contributed, but it certainly works. *Rendezvous with Rama* left me feeling a bit unsatisfied; so a huge spaceship sails through the Solar System and out again. So what? For me, one sign of a good book is if I want to get back to its pages and find out what happens next. *Rama II* is such a book. It is much more about the people involved than the internal topography and mechanisms of the artificial world, and there is an interesting little mystery sub-plot going on. Plus, the Earth itself is threatened (or is it?). This isn't to be a trilogy! Two more Rama books are promised, making four! And I at least, await *The Garden of Rama* to see what happens next...

IN THE MOLLOW OF THE GREAT OCEAN WAVE by Garry Kilworth; Unwin; 232 pages; £3.99 p/back.

Reviewed by Chris Morgan.

The short novel here is set on an Indian Ocean atoll. An English schoolteacher comes to work on the island and discovers, very gradually, that he has stepped into a culture alien to his own. He is caught up in a plot to make him suffer for the sins of his predecessor. Kilworth's clever double-edged approach allows an appreciation of both the young schoolteacher's naive misconceptions and the islanders' true motives. The sense of place is very good indeed - which is something which applies equally to the same stories also in the book. These are mostly set in the far east and are tales which rely not upon plot for their effects but upon a character's (or the reader's) altered perception. All are gems - beautifully written. There are limited amounts of fantasy and horror in this volume, though principally it is a demonstration that as much alienness is to be found within human behaviour as in SF.

THIEF OF DREAMS by Adam Cole; Unwin; 366 pages; £6.99 paperback.

Reviewed by Carol Morton.

Continuing the saga of Innasmorn, a world caught up in the struggle for galactic domination between the Emperor of Earth and the alien Csendook. In order to thwart the plans of Zellorian the Prime Consul of Earth and Vorenzar the Csendook, Ussemitus and Abu Casruel travel to Shung Nang the home of an avian species, guided by Jubaia a thief, who turns out to be an exiled, mutilated inhabitant of Shung Nang. Zellorian has mutated his former aide Vywart into a glider boat. Vywart pursues Ussemitus and his friends. After a poor start the series is improving, probably because the Csendook are more prominent in this volume so the story is not so lopsided.

RAGNAROK by Anne Thacker; Bantam; 492 pages; £4.99 paperback.

Reviewed by Carol Morton.

This is yet another novel set in the times of the falling of the old pagan religions and the rising of Christianity. It tells of Shianneth a bastard half-sister to Liwarch, disputed king of Mythasia, and how she is manipulated by the politicians of the time, and used as a pawn to resurrect the Brotherhood of Cael Malt left foundering after the death of Arturius the King (sounds familiar?) This type of novel does seem to be flourish of the month at the moment, this is better than most, but not a book to recommend to SF fans.

WOLF-DREAMS by Michael D Weaver; N.E.L.; 696 pages; £5.99 paperback.

Reviewed by Peter Day.

This is one of those so-called "trilogies". Divided into three books, *Wolf-Dreams*, *Nightseaver* and *Bloodfang*, and firmly embedded in both Norse and Celtic mythologies, it chronicles the life and career of Thyri Eriksdattir, ninth century Viking swordswoman, born leader - and werewolf. She strides relentlessly through life, battling her many enemies, not least of which is herself and her curse, and playing her part in the major events of the day up to and including Ragnarok itself. This book is by no means rubbish. It has surprising depth and dimension, and despite occasional patches of overwriting grips one from the outset. To be recommended to all serious sword-and-sorcery fans.