

BRUM GROUP

NEWS

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1990

Issue
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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 Chairman - Bernie Evans

THIS MONTH'S PROGRAMME

Friday 19 October at 7.45pm Admission: Members £1.25 Visitors £2.00

This month's guest speaker is:

TAD WILLIAMS



TAD WILLIAMS is an American, and lives in California. He is a John W. Campbell Award finalist, and has worked as a radio talkshow host, a journalist, a technical writer, a musician, and an illustrator and cartoonist (wonder what he does in his spare time?).

His first book, *Tailchaser's Song*, won critical acclaim, and Arrow Books paid a reported £260,000 for the UK rights to his *The Dragonbone Chair*, which is the first in a series - the second being *Stone of Farewell*. The former is now out in the UK in paperback, and the other has just been published as a hardcover.

With those credentials, how can this fail to be an entertaining evening? Don't miss it!

The BSFG meets on the third Friday of every month (unless otherwise notified) at **THE IVY BUSH**, Hagley Road/Monument Road, Birmingham at 7.45pm.

Subscription Rates: £6.00 per person, or £9.00 for two members at same address.

Cheques etc. payable to the BSFG, via the Treasurer, c/o the Reviews Editor (below).

Chairman: All calls via 021 777 1802, please.

Book Reviews (only) to **Mick Evans** at 121 Cape Hill, Smethwick, Warley B66 4SH, which is also the Novacon Chairman's address. (021 558 0997)

All other contributions and enquiries to Dave Hardy, 99 Southam Road, Hall Green, Birmingham B28 0AB (Telephone 021 777 1802, fax 021 777 2792)



BOB SHAW

Our Chairman, Chris Murphy, having been brought down with the Dreaded Lurgi, the meeting was chaired by yours truly. It's very difficult to take notes when an author reads from his own work, and that is what Bob (breaking tradition) did. He read two new short stories, both humorous: 'Lunch of Champions', which he has sold to *The Magazine of Fantasy & Science Fiction*, and 'Incident on a Summer Morning', to be published in a future issue

of *Interzone*.

The latter is a variation on the theme on 'all the world is a stage, and we are but players', or whatever. Are our actions directed from a Higher Power? (In this case as high as a control room in a helicopter).

The stories were much appreciated, and, following the new scheme of things, there was a short beer-break and then questions, after which the meeting broke up for an informal chat. A packed room with the arrival of some faces from the past, made for an excellent atmosphere, the bar was (intermittently) staffed, and a good time was had by all.

As a bonus, in response to a question, it transpired that Bob Shaw (if he gets round to registering) has agreed to give his Serious Scientific Talk (concerning Corn Circles - see last month's Worldconrep) at Novacon, for the dictation of the many members who missed it, for whatever reason. Which is most of us: yet another reason to attend.

WANTED: A MOTION!

This year it is the Brum Group's turn to provide the motion for discussion in our annual Debate with the Birmingham University Science Fiction and Fantasy Society. We also need volunteers to actually take part in the Debate (so if you think up the motion you have an advantage in preparing your act! Don't assume that the usual members will sit at the front to entertain you, because some of them aren't going to. . .)

As usual, what we need is something controversial, that will create some good arguments (not only amongst the panels, but in the audience too!) If you have a suggestion, or want to volunteer, please call me or tell any member of the Committee just as soon as possible.

New Member

This month we are joined by David (Dave) Green, who lives in Edgbaston, is 'over 18' and heard of the Brum Group from a friend.

Dave's favourite authors are James Blish, Alfred Bester and Douglas Adams, and he likes stories about Time Travel (sounds like he's been talking to Rog!) and clever plot twists.

Don't forget to spread the word and introduce new members if you can, will you?



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The Jophan Report

by Martin Tudor

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

BBC Radio has bought last month's speaker, Bob Shaw's, comic sf novel *WHO GOES HERE?* for production as a one-hour play. "I thanked the Beeb for its support," says Bob, "but said that I didn't see how a book which had as much incident as *HITCH-HIKER* could be compressed into one hour. I was assured that there would be no difficulty, so I am awaiting the outcome with great interest." Bob has also contracted with Gollancz to develop Warren Peace, the novel's central character, for a three-book spin-off series. "Thank God Tolstoy has been dead for ages and nobody can prosecute me for arseing about with one of his titles."

Meanwhile, New York's First Avenue Films has optioned the movie rights to Bob's "slow glass" novel *OTHER DAYS, OTHER EYES*. Producer Leslie Kahan reportedly said the book offered so many dramatic possibilities that she expected it to result in "a fantastic piece of celluloid".

A memorial fund to assist first-time authors has been set up in memory of Ruth Hadden, who died in last August's Marchioness river boat tragedy. Hadden worked for the publishers Random House Century and Virago, and both companies have given money to the bursary.

The fund will be launched at January's British Book Awards and is intended to underwrite publicity for authors who might not otherwise have a sizeable promotion budget allocated to their first work. Both fiction and non-fiction will be eligible.

THE DARK SIDE, a collection of 31 "tales of terror and the supernatural" by Guy de Maupassant, will be released by Cardinal in December. "Be warned," counsels Ramsey Campbell's foreword, "the light of these tales may shine into your own dark."

Rog Peyton, of Andromeda and The Drunken Dragon Press, reports that the Spanish paperback edition of David Langford's *THE DRAGONHIKER'S GUIDE TO BATTLEFIELD COVENANT AT DUNE'S EDGE: ODYSSEY TWO*, which was released in Spain late last year, had sold 3500 copies of its 5000 copy print run by 31 December.

In his latest Andromeda catalogue Rog relates an interesting tale of woe concerning the recent publication of Guy Gavriel Kay's *TIGANA*. In January 1990 Andromeda phoned in their order for *TIGANA*, which, it had been announced in the Viking catalogue (December 1989), would be appearing in June 1990. In May a Penguin rep informed Andromeda that the hardcover had been cancelled and asked for their order for the trade paperback. As *TIGANA* was a big title, for which Viking had paid a lot of money, Andromeda thought this a bit strange and so called Viking to confirm. They were told that it had NOT been cancelled and that their order was on file on Viking's computer. A short time later Andromeda heard a rumour that W H Smith had approached Viking/Penguin asking them to cancel the hardcover and bring forward the trade paperback to August (it had originally been scheduled for publication early in 1991) and that if this was done, W H Smith would make *TIGANA* the lead title in their national fantasy promotion...

Then, early in June, Andromeda heard from a customer that he had received the hardcover of *TIGANA* in the Book Club edition! So Andromeda phoned Viking again and were told that the Viking hardcover edition was going to be in July. Again Viking confirmed that Andromeda's order was on file.

In early July Andromeda called Viking again, confirmed (again) that their order was on file and were told the hardcover would be out in late July. In late July Andromeda rang Viking yet again, this time someone told them that they would check to see when Andromeda could expect to receive their order. A few days later Andromeda received a postcard informing them that *TIGANA* was out of print and would not be reprinted!

Andromeda called Viking again, to ask what had happened to their order, which had been confirmed several times. Viking informed them that only 200 copies had been printed and those had been sold to the public libraries. They received no explanation as to why their order hadn't been filled.

To avoid disappointing their customers completely, Andromeda called the Book Club

to purchase a number of copies of their edition of the hardcover

Then came the World SF Convention in the Hague, where Andromeda spoke to Guy Gavriel Kay. It now appeared that 5000 copies were printed, 200 being kept in the UK, the remainder were shipped to Canada. In Canada they didn't like the dust-jacket and so they scrapped them all, replacing them with their own design.

In September Andromeda received a phone call from Titan offering to supply them with as many copies of the Viking hardcover as they want. Finally, (so far!) in the second week of September Andromeda received a small number of the Viking hardcovers... from Penguin, who had belatedly discovered some in a warehouse!

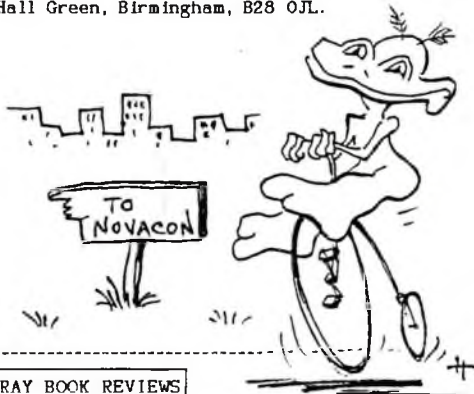
SKELETON CREW, the new nationally distributed horror magazine from Argus, recalled all copies of the initial print-run of its August dated second issue in July. Ostensibly this was due to a number of errors in the magazine, but when the corrected second issue appeared the "editorial" by Dave Hughes on page 4 had been replaced by an in-house advertisement.

In the original edition of **SKELETON CREW**, Hughes, at the time the editor of the magazine, launched a blistering attack on what he referred to as "the biggest magazine retail chain in Britain". Accusing the "retail chain" of censorship, he claimed that **SKELETON CREW**

had to change several features and moderate its language to sell to the chain in question. In a subsequent development Dave Reeder replaced Dave Hughes as the editor of **SKELETON CREW**.

Arcadia is the alternative television society of the **DR WHO** fan group The Whonatics. They meet every three months in the Montmorency Suite of the Crest Hotel in Walsall, where they show a variety of programmes spanning 50 years of television. Details regarding the next meeting are available from Ian Riley, 36 Bude Road, Park Hall, Walsall, WS5 3EX (tel: 0922 38047).

Interested in "film, tv, music and literature"? Send for your free copy of **THE AIRSHIP** "cultzine" -- 74 Primrose Lane, Hall Green, Birmingham, B28 0JL.



AND HERE ARE A FEW STRAY BOOK REVIEWS

THE DARK DESCENT: THE COLOUR OF EVIL ed by David G Hartwell; Grafton; 292 pages; £7.99 if paperback; Reviewed by Chris Morgan.

Never mind the fact that the nineteen horror stories here are all reprints, because you probably won't have read many of them before. (I hadn't.) Never mind the highly academic but to my mind unconvincing way in which Hartwell has classified horror stories for this project (a huge anthology broken into three volumes for the UK market, which explains the long, naff title). Just go out and buy a copy, because the stories are very, very good (and varied, being supernatural and non-supernatural, graphic and non-graphic, present day and historical). And if I mention any names I'll risk offending the others for cause them to turn over in their graves, perhaps). It's about the best reprint horror anthology I've ever read.

FOUR HUNDRED BILLION STARS by Paul J McAuley; Orbit; 259 pages; £3.50 paperback. Reviewed by Tony Morton.

A story of telepath Dorthy Yoshida and her quest (via conscription) to "find out" about what is occurring on a little planet orbiting a red dwarf. As such star types appear to be favourite homes to "The Enemy" (Space) Navy has special interest, hence the expedition. Yoshida, by profession an astronomer, is asked to use her special telepathic powers to reveal if the locals are, in fact, "The Enemy". The story is lengthened by Yoshida along with Kilczar, another scientist, are cut off from the base while out exploring, having to travel several days and through adventures to return "home". Interwoven into this science clad expedition story is Dorthy Yoshida's personal story, of her early life and how it overlays the predicament she encounters. A wonderfully balanced story with cleverly used ideas and characterisation climaxing in a montage revelation.

SWORD AND SORCESS 5 ed Marion Zimmer Bradley; Headline; 284 pages; £3.99 paperback. Reviewed by Steve Jones.

This is the annual anthology of swords-and-sorcery featuring female protagonists. Marion Zimmer Bradley says that this year everyone was writing "dragon stories". Unfortunately most of them were Penn clones, so the rejection rate was high. Rest assured that the ones she selected are good, and owe nothing to Anna McCaffrey. "Drum Duel" by Gerald Perkins features the search for the secret of a weapon that can kill at a distance, leaving no mark on its victims. "Keys" by Mercedes Lackey is a detective story with her popular heroines Tarma and Kethry. "Stormbringer" is a high powered duel between sorcerers (I think the title has been used before though). There are more humorous stories than in previous collections, such as "One Night at the Inn" and "Revised Standard Virgin". A consistently good collection.

You Write...

Well, you didn't, actually, so I've given this page over to promotions and advertising of various sorts. If you don't like it - WRITE and tell me, and then I'll have something else to put in the Newsletter instead. I'll print almost anything - try me!



SMALL ADS

- Anyone can join in!



INTERESTING TIMES

Interesting Times, 160, Beaumont Road, Boumville, Birmingham. B30 1NY.

INTERESTING TIMES

WARST*R

Tactical Spaceship Combat Game.

Fleet Design - Helm Station - Weapon Station - Systems Orders - Engineering Actions - Shields - Cloaks - Teleport and Board - Jump Drives - Plasma Cannon - Wormholes - Bombs - Mines - I.F.F. - Scanners - Tactical Displays - E.C.M. - Vector Thrust - Turbo - Docking - Lasers - Tractor Beams - Claiming Worlds - Commissioning Starships - and more.

£3.50 startup, £1.50 per turn/ £20 for full 20-turn game (including startup).

GRIDIRON LEAGUE

The Game of American Football Management.

28 team Leagues - Players - Cheerleaders - Gameplan - Strategy - Finance - Inter-managerial Deals - Training - Dirty Tricks - Big Plays - End Around Runs - Player Stamina Insurance - Stadium Upkeep - Marketing - Trainers - Injuries - Physiotherapy - Astro turf - Waivers - Free Agents - Draft - Scouting - Ageing - Fan Followings - Seasonal Stats - etc.

£4.50 startup, £1.75 per match or £30 for full 22-match season (including startup).



HALLOW'OT?



NOVACON 20 will be held from Friday 9th November to Sunday 11th November at the

**Excelsior Hotel
on the Coventry Road
(old Birmingham Airport)
Overflow: Wheatsheaf Hotel.**

Guest of Honour: Dr. Jack Cohen

**Membership rate: £15.00 per person
Room Rates (you don't have to stay, but it helps!): Single - £27.00 per night
Double/Twin - £22 per person per night.
Enquiries to Bernie Evans**

(021 558 0997)

**Book/Dealers' Room Art Show Auctions
Programme Items Films Panels Quizzes
Bars Authors Artists People...**

signing ANDROMEDA sessions

Friday 19 October at 4.00pm: **Tad Williams** (see front page).

Wednesday 31 October: **'Grant Naylor'** to sign Red Dwarf II: *Better Than Life*. This will be at 6.30, as part of a special Hallowe'en event.

Also early in November: **Patrick Tilley**. *

Don't forget the Andromeda Party at Novacon on Friday night. Authors signing their books will include: **Gill Alderman, David Gemmill, Terry Pratchett, Freda Warrington**. Artists: **Jim Burns, Chris Foss, David A. Hardy, Mark Harrison** and (possibly) **Rodney Matthews**. Drunken Dragon authors: **Ian McDonald** to sign *Desolation Road*, **Eric Brown** to sign *Time-tapped Man*.

*NB. It is always advisable to check with Andromeda (021 643 1999) to ensure that no last-minute changes have been made.

The Drabbles 100 Page

As mentioned last time we had a Drabbles page, these are the last two drabbles that were awaiting publication in the BGN. And they will really be the last unless YOU come up with some more.

Do have a go, it doesn't take long, and you could enjoy it. All you have to do is write a short story of exactly 100 words, excluding the title. If you want inspiration, get the two excellent Drabbles books edited by David Wake and Rob Meades.

The Daunting Calculation

by Stan Eling

"I tell you the Universe is shrinking," said Professor McCalaster. "It's all here in my figures."

We sat around his study regarding him sceptically. Eventually, Dixon said: "The universe is expanding, man; that's been known for a thousand years."

"I agree the galaxies are moving apart," McCalaster replied, "But the space through which they move is shrinking."

Jones fell off his stool at this. "Shrinking space!" he scoffed. "Let's see those equations."

Hours later he pushed the papers to one side and yawned. "You're wrong," he said. "It's *time* that's *decreasing*; soon everything will be static in one frozen NOW..."

Horror-Drabble-Poem

by Lynn M. Cochrane

Cold.

Pat shivered, opened eyes, got up.

Sun on snow bit eyes.

Why awake?

Nothing to see but sun-glare.

Nothing to hear but wind.

Snow-brights, anti-shadows, powder-snow devils

dancing on the edge of vision

confusing eyes, teasing brain.

Freezing feet

hands, nose - too much.

Snow devils dancing inside her bones.

Travel.

Pat moves, reaches out, stretch arms.

Finger on heart steals life.

Stealing bright.

Liking the cold of frost-kill.

Liking the freeze of fear.

Snow-brights, anti-shadows, powder-snow devils

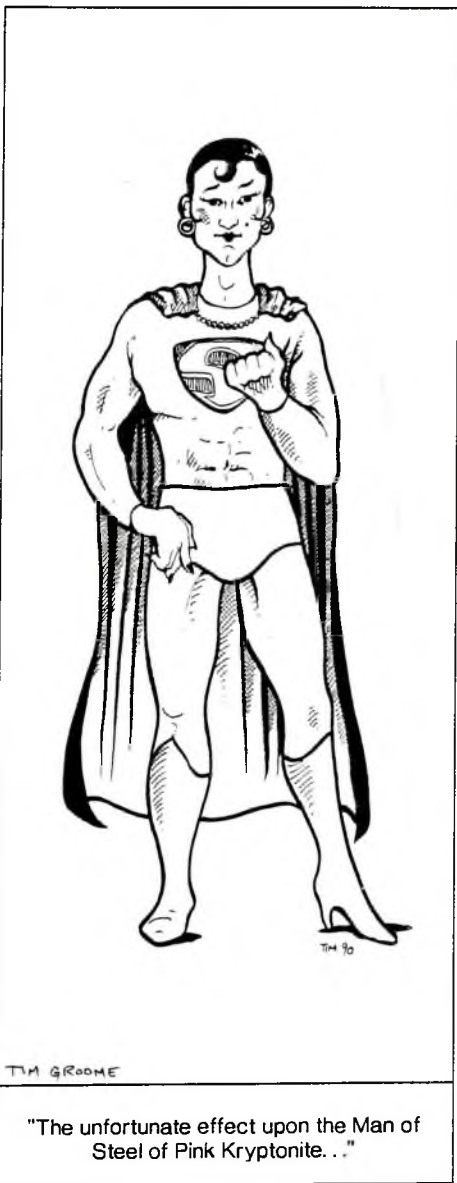
dancing on your edge of vision

confusing eyes, teasing brain.

Freezing heart

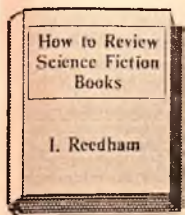
and mind - too much.

6 Snow devils dancing inside your bones.



TIM GROOME

"The unfortunate effect upon the Man of Steel of Pink Kryptonite..."



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.

ZENITH 2: The Best in New British Science Fiction ed David S Garnett; Orbit; 220 pp; £3.99 p/b. Reviewed by Pauline Morgan.

Like many anthologies this is a curate's egg - good in parts. Most of the stories contain at least one very original element and the standard of writing is high. There is the occasional, extremely pretentious story in this volume as well as some that are very readable. Lisa Tuttle's "Dead Television" is one of the best and wanders into horror as she explores the consequences of allowing the dead to communicate with us. The longest story, "The Cairene Pursue" by Michael Moorcock, comes closest to picturing a standard bleak projection of the near future but includes a tantalising mystery and leaves the reader wondering. Some stories also include touches of wry humour, such as Brian Stableford's "The Furniture of Life's Ambition" - imagine sitting on chairs grown from a group of cells. You may not enjoy every story but there is something for all tastes here.

BROTHERS MAJERE by Kevin Stein; Penguin/TSR; 349 pages; £3.99 paperback. Reviewed by Steve Jones.

This book, subtitled *The Dragonlance Preludes Volume Three*, is about the twins Caramon and Raistlin and a stray kender five years before the War of the Lance. All the cats in the city of Meraklar are disappearing, which concerns the citizens enough to hire the heroes as cats are sacred to them. There is also a prophecy that someday the cats will save the city from some terrible disaster. The chief flaws of the books are the presence of the "prophecy" which drags the heroes around by the nose, and the plot becomes so confusing that Raistlin needs to explain it to Caramon (and the reader) at the end. The kender, Sarwig Lockpicker, comes across exactly like Tasslehoff Burrfoot. Surely even kender have individual personalities. Overall a disappointment.

PYRAMIDS by Terry Pratchett; Corgi; 285 pages; £3.50 paperback. Reviewed by Carol Morton.

Teppic is heir to the throne of (wait for it) Djelibaybi (!!), his father decides Teppic's horizons need broadening and sends him to Ankh-Morpork to be trained by the Assassins Guild. When Teppic's father dies (whilst trying to fly) Teppic inherits the throne and has to see to the burial of his father. This is the start of Teppic's problems. Teppic's people bury their dead in pyramids, but pyramids twist and warp time causing stresses which have to be flared off, the larger the pyramid the more stress. Teppic's father's pyramid is to be the largest ever built and its stresses cause the whole of Djelibaybi to rotate through ninety degrees to reality and it vanishes. Teppic (who was trying to escape back to Ankh-Morpork at the time) has to retrieve his lost kingdom. The one-liners are outrageous, the plot bizarre, the characters OTT, all-in-all more of what we have come to expect (and want) from Pratchett. Highly recommended.

THE SCIONS OF SHANNARA by Terry Brooks; Orbit; 399 pages; £12.95 hardback. Reviewed by Carol Morton.

This is a follow up to the first Shannara trilogy and is set 300 years later. The elves are now in control of the four lands, the elves have vanished, and the dwarves suppressed and enslaved. Par Ohmsford, his uncle Walker Roh and his cousin Wren are summoned by the spirit of Allanon and given tasks: - to find the now lost sword of Shannara and to restore the Druids and find the vanished elves in order to defeat the federation and destroy the Shadowen, who live off the force of mortal creatures eventually inhabiting their bodies. An interesting extension to the original trilogy that could be read without reading those first stories. I wonder if Brooks has fallen into the trap of many writers (notably Piers Anthony) who arbitrarily extend seemingly complete tales? None the less a good yarn. Brooks' fans will welcome this.

CHASE THE MORNING by Mike Scott Rohan; Orbit; 334 pages; £4.99 pb paperback. Reviewed by Tony Horton.

A fantasy tale telling how time is linked through place - in this case sea ports - and how people slip into "other worlds" interacting to promote good or evil. Here, Steve (the hero) is drawn into a mysterious world of voodoo further complicated when the not-quite-human Wolves invade the "Core" (our reality) to stop his meddling, but "only" manage to kidnap his secretary, Clara. Steve's "quest" to rescue her is aided by Jvo (the Pilot), the enigmatic "Mall" (succub swordswoman and more besides) and a willing crew. They set sail encountering the enemy in a sea battle before the final confrontation takes place on Haiti. The twist herein based on human emotions provides a powerful climax and a reminder for modern day "go getters". While I found the beginning a trifle slow, the novel soon generates a compelling storyline and a captivating story. Highly recommended.

STARFIRE by Paul Preuss; Orbit; 306 pages; £3.50 paperback. Reviewed by Dave Handy.

This is probably the best straight "hard" science fiction novel I have read for a long time. Basically it is a standard get-your-characters-in-a-life-threatening-situation-and-try-to-get-them-out-again plot, but it is almost totally believable and the author (who is new to me) has really done his research, and made use of it. There are no battles in space, except for psychological ones between some of the characters. Starfire is a new spacecraft, and aging astronaut-hero Travis Hill wants to get on the crew and use it to explore an unusual, newly-discovered asteroid which is due to pass close to the Earth and then the Sun. Things go wrong, . . . I was not surprised to read in the Afterword that this book started life as an idea for a documentary-style film using modern technology and SF; I wish someone would make it.

TALES FROM PLANET EARTH by Arthur C. Clarke: Legend; 313 pages; £3.99 paperback. Reviewed by Tony Morton.

The latest collection from Clarke containing sixteen stories covering forty years of writing. All are surely familiar with Clarke's style and will slip into this book like a pair of comfortable slippers. That is not to say the stories lack power or entertainment, in particular "Hate" (an ex-patriot's misplaced blame), "The Deep Range" (the problems encountered in sea farming), "If I Forget Thee Oh Earth" (an anti-nuclear story to deter), and "The Cruel Sky" (where the inventor of an anti-gravity module "climbs" Everest) show the diverse and thoughtful elements within his work. Overall, the book provides a good set of stories with not a bad one there, and the addition of Clarke's own comments on the background to the stories makes this well worth reading.

LORD OF THE CROOKED PATHS by Patrick Adkins: Orbit; 216 pages; £3.50 paperback. Reviewed by Steve Jones.

In Greek mythology, before Zeus became king of the gods, his father Kronos, Lord of the Crooked Paths, ruled the world. This is the first set in a series set in that mythical time, in a similar style to Thomas Burnett Swan. Kronos is becoming ever more insecure and paranoid, due mainly to the prophecy that he will be overthrown by his own son, but not helped by Thanatos the vivisectionist who is researching into ways to kill a god. Only Proteus the shapechanger is brave enough to challenge his authority. The story starts slowly and, and features more "court intrigue" than battles among the gods. The characters sometimes seem too modern in outlook, especially Thanatos. One to read when the rest of the series is available.

TIME AND AGAIN by Jack Finney: Legend; 399 pages; £7.99 lf paperback. Reviewed by Mike Jones.

In this long but tightly packed book Jack Finney brings to a climax the ideas he had been exploring for a few years previously in a number of short stories. The basic idea is to dress a man in ninety-year old clothes, fill his head with ninety-year old thoughts and put him in a ninety-year old building from which he will be able to step out into the New York of ninety years ago. From this beginning the story branches out into three or four intertwined sub-plots with sufficient unexpected twists to keep the reader guessing until the last possible minute - the ending is inevitable (especially in relation to the previous stories already mentioned) but it remains in doubt even until the last chapter. If there were nothing more to it than that it would still be a good book, but to dismiss it in this way is to overlook the meticulous research and sincere enthusiasm with which the author writes of that bygone age, conveying an irresistible impression of a far better time in which to live and belong. It is a pity that the illustrations, which are important to the story, have not been reproduced better, but that is only a minor fault which cannot spoil a wonderfully satisfying read. An excellent book by a sadly under-rated author.

WOLF'S BROTHER by Megan Lindholm: Unwin; 236 pages; £3.50 paperback. Reviewed by Peter Day.

The conclusion of the story begun in *The Reindeer People*. Carp, the horrible old shaman, has finally caught up with Tillu the healer and reclaimed her son Karlaw as his apprentice. Meanwhile trouble is getting worse between Heckram, the hunter in the tribe who has befriended her, and Joboan, whom he suspects of having killed his wife Elsa. And Joboan has the ear of the herdlord and is throwing his weight around more and more. Then the time comes for the tribe to begin its annual migration to its summer grounds. During the journey the various tensions grow and move toward their inevitable climax. We get a vivid picture of the life-style of these folk of the frozen tundra who follow the reindeer herds on their migrations and are dependent on them for their livelihood. This is an excellent story. One odd thing, though. The first book, *The Reindeer People*, reads like the middle book of the three, and is structured accordingly, even though there is clearly no previous volume. The lopsidedness, with its gaping hole in place of this written first book, detracted from my reading pleasure, leaving me with a strange, nagging impression that I'd somehow come in half way through. Apart from this one complaint, however, I enjoyed it.

BARD III: THE WILD SEA by Keith Taylor: Headline; 202 pages; £3.50 paperback. Reviewed by Peter Day.

The third book in the adventures of Falimid mac Fal, bard of Erin, and, to my mind, by far the best of the three. Lots of gory battles, plenty of magic and some treachery, and the discovery of Lir, an invisible, sea-girt realm. Falimid, together with the woman of his heart, Gudrun Blackhair the pirate captain, and their crew, contend with evil wreckers, sea demons, and the eldritch, shapeshifting children of Lir, and the whole adventure culminates in a gratifying cataclysmic climax. The surprising thing about this series is that with each succeeding book it gets better, not worse as is the general rule. Good, rollicking formula fiction, this and recommended to all good, rollicking formula readers.

THE NEXUS by Mike McQay: Headline; 474 pages; £4.50 paperback. Reviewed by Tony Morton.

McQay again comes up with the goods and as with *Memories* we have an excellent gripping story. Here Danny Stilller a hardened news reporter, is given a low key filler item on a faith healer working from the rear of a bar in downtown Houston. It transpires Tawny Kyle (said faith healer) really has power and Stilller ends up quitting his job to promote her, only to discover it's Tawny's autistic daughter Amy who has the real power. Through several live broadcasts Amy, with Stilller now as her Powers focus, causes disruption, firstly to Texas and then the rest of the world, as extraordinary occurrences take place. With the populace split into differing opinions - Amy/Stilller are God, or they are evil/The Anti-Christ - the world goes crazy, not only to get themselves helped/cured but because of this action, to find Amy/Stilller and entourage, who have had to go into hiding. Thought provoking story of man's inhumanity to man, man's self-esteem and our interpretation of what religion and God are. Not specifically pro- or anti- religion, but inviting thought about concepts of religion and more importantly, our views on self and others. This novel provides a powerful tale not only to entertain but, as mentioned, to provoke thought. Buy this.

THE HOMEWARD BOUNDERS by Diane Wynne Jones: Mandarin; 224 pages; £2.99 paperback. Reviewed by Helena Bowles.

They excited Jamie to the Sounds when he caught them playing their cruel game. Cursed to search for his homeworld, he wanders many other worlds making allies and enemies as he learns more about their game. One day, he is intent, he will return home. I don't know why it is that most of the juveniles I read are (a) better written and (b) more intelligent than most of the adult SF. This is an excellent novel, even among the best of the juvenile market, that everyone would enjoy. Heartily recommended.