

BRUM GROUP NEWS

August 1992

Issue 251

The monthly newsletter of the Birmingham Science Fiction Group
(Honorary Presidents: Brian W Aldiss & Harry Harrison)

GROUP CHAIRMAN - TONY MORTON, SECRETARY - CAROL MORTON, NEWSLETTER EDITOR - MARTIN TUDOR,
TREASURER - RICHARD STANDAGE, REVIEWS EDITOR - BERNIE EVANS, PUBLICITY OFFICER - POSITION VACANT,
ORDINARY MEMBER - MICK EVANS, NOVACON 22 CHAIRMAN - HELENA BOWLES.

THIS MONTH'S SPEAKER IS **PAM WELLS**

Friday 21st August 1992, 7.45pm for 8.00pm
Admittance: Members 1.25 Visitors 2.25

Pam Wells first heard of science fiction fandom in 1981 and attended her first fannish event (the British Science Fiction Association's Christmas Party in London) towards the end of that year. She soon discovered a liking for people and events fannish; and, despite her lack of a science fictional past, became more involved in fandom. The first convention she attended was Channelcon in 1982.

Although she has worked on a number of conventions, such as Mexicon 2, Novacon 19 and Conspiracy, her main interest in fandom is the fanzine scene. She has produced seven issues of her own genzine, NUTZ, a one-off fanzine entitled STRUMPET, co-edited another one-shot called SIX SHOOTER (with Linda Krawecke and Jeanne Gomoll), produced one issue of another genzine, SISTERS, and contributed to a number of other fanzines. A founder member of THE WOMEN'S PERIODICAL apa, she has also been a member of FRANK'S APA, SLAPA and GET STUFFED.

As the winner of the Trans-Atlantic Fan Fund (TAFF), Pam travelled to the World SF Convention in Chicago last year, and was Fan Guest of Honour at this year's National SF Convention in Blackpool. She will be talking about her experiences both at the Eastercon (famous in Blackpool for a weekend) and in the US (almost-famous for a few weeks), and if people have brought along enough money she will be auctioning a variety of fanzines and other items for TAFF.

The BSFG meets at 7.45pm on the 3rd Friday of every month (unless other-wise notified) in the upstairs function room of the White Lion, corner of Thorp Street and Horsefair/Bristol Street in Birmingham city centre. The annual subscription rates (which include twelve copies of this newsletter and reduced price entry to meetings) are nine pounds per person, or twelve pounds for 2 members at the same address. Cheques etc. payable to "the Birmingham Science Fiction Group", via the treasurer Richard Standage at meetings or by post c/o Bernie Evans (address below). Book reviews and review copies should be sent to the reviews editor Bernie Evans, 121 Cape Hill, Smethwick, Warley, West Midlands, B66 4SH (tel: 021 558 0997). All other contributions and enquiries regarding the Brum Group News to: Martin Tudor, 845 Alum Rock Road, Birmingham, B8 2AG (tel: 021 327 3023).

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

17-24 AUG 1992: **TOLKIEN CENTENARY CONFERENCE**, Keble College, Oxford. GoHs John, Christopher and Priscilla Tolkien, Pauline Baynes and others. Attending £91.80 plus extra for meals or b&b, or full room and board. Limited to 300 members. Contact: Pat & Trevor Reynolds, "Caer Las", 16 Gibsons Green, Heeland, Milton Keynes, MK13 7NH.

21 AUG 1992: **PAM WELLS TAFF** winner and this year's Eastercon fan guest of honour will be speaking to the BSFG at the White Lion.

22 AUGUST 1992: **MICHAEL MOORCOCK** will be signing copies of the new Elric novel *REVENGE OF THE ROSE* for Andromeda Bookshop at the ATHENS RESTAURANT at noon (one door down from Snobs nightclub, top of New Street), food and drink available. Call (021) 643 1999 for further details of this and other signing sessions.

29 AUGUST 1992: **COMIC MART** at the Hotel Arcade, Ladywell Walk, Birmingham, B5 4ST. Doors open 11am, admission 50p. Further details from Mrs P Lennon, 15 Yew Tree Close, Batchley, Redditch, Worcs., B97 6SO.

5 SEPTEMBER 1992: **REMINISCON 40**: Celebrates Lionel Fanthorpe's 40th anniversary as a published author. Chapter Arts Centre, Cardiff, 9.30-5.30. Attending £10. With Brian Aldiss, Guy N Smith, Brian Stableford. Contact: 48 Claude Road, Cardiff, CF2 3QA.

5 SEPTEMBER 1992: **COMIC MART** in the Library Exhibition Hall, Paradise Street, Birmingham city centre, opens midday. Located next to Central Library; get a train to New Street Station, or any bus to the town centre, then take a five-minute walk up New Street. Full details from Golden Orbit, 9 Stratford Way, Huntington, York, YO3 9YW.

18 SEPTEMBER 1992: **SIMON GREEN**, author of the amusing fantasies *BLUE MOON RISING*, *BLOOD AND HONOUR*, the comic fantasy 'Hawk and Fisher' series which includes *NO HAVEN FOR THE GUILTY*, *DEVIL TAKE THE HINDMOST* and *THE GOD KILLER*, as well as the bestselling novelisation of the film *ROBIN HOOD, PRINCE OF THIEVES*, will be speaking to the BSFG at the White Lion.

18 SEPTEMBER 1992: **SHAUN HUTSON**, one of Britain's bestselling horror writers will be signing from 5.30pm-7pm at Magic Labyrinth, 34-36 Rutland Street, Leicester. Call (0533) 518178 for further details of this and other signing sessions.

23 SEPTEMBER - 3 NOVEMBER 1992: **DRAGONS OF THE MIND**. "Tolkien and Science Fantasy" -

The Birmingham Centre for the Book celebrates the centenary of JRR Tolkien's birth by using his works as a centrepiece to explore the history of Science Fantasy and how it has developed into one of the most popular genres read today. The fantasy worlds of British and American writers will be used to illustrate the range of the genre. The Birmingham Centre for the Book, Central Library, Floor 1, Chamberlain Square, Birmingham, B3 3HQ. Call (021) 235 4511 for further details.

25 SEPTEMBER 1992: **KIM STANLEY ROBINSON** will be signing at Andromeda Bookshop, call (021) 643 1999 for details of this and other signing sessions.

25 SEPTEMBER 1992: **KIM STANLEY ROBINSON** will be speaking to the BSFG in an extra meeting at the White Lion public house. Watch this space for further details.

2-4 OCTOBER 1992: **CONTANIME T** Japanese animation convention at the New Cobden Hotel, Birmingham. Attending £16, Supporting £5, £20 on the door. Contact: Denzil Brown, 20 Field Ridge, Shaw, Newbury, Berks.

2-4 OCTOBER 1992: **FANTASYCON XVII**, Midland Hotel, Birmingham. GoH Lisa Tuttle. Attending £20. Contact 15 Stanley Road, Morden, Surrey, SM4 5DE.

2-4 OCTOBER 1992: **MIDCON. STAR TREK**, Holiday Inn, Leicester. Attending £35. Contact 8 Ennerdale Close, Oadby, Leicester, LE2 4TN.

9-11 OCTOBER 1992: **FESTIVAL OF FANTASTIC FILMS**. "A celebration of nine decades of amazing movies", the Charterhouse Hotel, Manchester. GoHs include Peter Walker, David McGillivray, Robert Fuest, Caroline Munro, Tony Tenser and Norman J Warren will be judging an amateur sf/horror film competition. Attending £30, contact The Society of Fantastic Films, 95 Meadowgate Road, Salford, Manchester, M6 8EN.

9-12 OCTOBER 1992: **IFT CON. STAR TREK**, Holiday Inn, Leicester. Send sœ for further details to: 129 Westfield Road, Wellingborough, Northants, NN8 3HN.

16 OCTOBER 1992: **IAN WATSON** will be speaking to the BSFG at the White Lion.

24 OCTOBER: **COMIC MART** at the Midland Hotel, New Street (NB: change of venue), opens midday. Train to New Street Station, or any bus to the city centre. Full details from Golden Orbit, 9 Stratford Way, Huntington, York, YO3 9YW.

30 OCT - 1 NOV 1992: **WHO'S SEVEN CON**. Combined *BLAKE'S 7* / *DR WHO* con at the Telford Moat House Hotel, Telford, Shropshire. Will include "guests, discussion panels, games, banquet, parties, discos," etc. Attending £25. Contact: 137 High Street, Plaistow Broadway, London, E13 9HH.

6-8 NOVEMBER 1992: **NOVACON 22** the Brum Group's own sf con returns to the Royal Angus hotel in the city centre. GoH Storm Constantine. Attending membership costs £20 until one month before con after which only on the door memberships available at £25. Details: Bernie Evans, 121 Cape Hill, Smethwick, Warley, West Midlands, B66 4SH.

13-15 NOVEMBER 1992: **T'KON. STAR TREK**, Arcade Hotel, Birmingham. GoH John Carrigan. On the door: Friday £5, Saturday £6, Sunday £3 or £12 all three days, no contact address.

20 NOVEMBER 1992: **DEBATE** against the Birmingham Uni-versity SF & Fantasy Society, at White Lion.

12 DECEMBER 1992: **COMIC MART** at the Midland Hotel, New Street (NB: change of venue), opens midday. Train to New Street Station, or any bus to the city centre. Full details from Golden Orbit, 9 Stratford Way, Huntington, York, YO3 9YW.

8-12 APRIL 1993: **HELICON '93**. 44th British national sf con, Hotel de France, St. Helier, Jersey. Guests of honour George RR Martin & John Brunner. Attending £20. Supporting / Family Membership / Children 8-14 are all £10 each. Details: 63 Drake Road, Chessington, Surrey, KT9 1LQ.

28-31 MAY 1993: **MEXICON V**. "Straight" sf con, venue to be announced. Attending £18 until Novacon 22. Details from: Bernie Evans, 121 Cape Hill, Smethwick, Warley, West Midlands, B66 4SH (tel: 558 0997).

The above details are correct to the best of our knowledge, but we would advise readers to confirm with the organizers before travelling. Please mention the BRUM GROUP NEWS when contacting any of the above.

Thanks for the news this time goes for the most part to STEVE GREEN and to CRITICAL WAVE. WAVE #26, featuring interviews with DAN SIMMONS and JOHN JARROLD (both recent guests of the Brum Group), is now available for £1.95, or a six issue subscription costs only £8.50, cheques payable to 'Critical Wave Publications' should be sent to Martin Tudor, 845 Alum Rock Road, Birmingham, B8 2AG.

The contents of this issue are copyright 1992 the BSFG, on behalf of the contributors, to whom all rights revert on publication. Personal opinions expressed in this publication do not necessarily reflect those of the committee or the BSFG.

All text by Martin Tudor except where stated otherwise. This publication was printed on the WAVE photocopier. Many thanks this issue to BERNIE EVANS, ROG PEYTON, DAVE HARDY, STEVE GREEN, DAVE HOLMES & TONY BERRY.

The Jophan Report by Martin Tudor

The 54th Jophan Report

Congratulations to Brum Group member Sally Ann Melia who's short story, "Mezzatorra", is to be published in the small press magazine ORION - this will be her first published story. In addition an article she wrote for the British SF Association on Angela Carter will shortly be translated into French for publication in THE YELLOW SUBMARINE.

Pat Cadigan was awarded this is Arthur C Clarke Award at the Minehead Space Age Festival for her 'cyber-punkish' novel *SYNERS*.

Legend editor John Jarrold has informed us that since he spoke to the Group he has bought "a new novel, *MOONBLOOD*, by Philip G Williamson, whose first epic fantasy, *DINBIG OF KHIMMER*, is published by HarperCollins", and acquired "two fantasy novels by CJ Cherryh, *THE GOBLIN MIRROR* and *FAERY IN SHADOW*."

He adds that he has also "just acquired three novels by a new British fantasy author, Maggie Furey. The first in the series, *AURIAN*, is one of the best epic fantasies I've read for many a long day."

MOONBLOOD will be published in May 1993, the two CJ Cherryh novels in Autumn 1993 and *AURIAN* in Spring 1994. Terry Brooks, who joined Legend in July with *THE ELF QUEEN OF SHANNARA*, will visit Britain next spring.

Orion Books launches its new science fiction and fantasy imprint Millenium on 17 September with simultaneous hardback and trade paperback releases of Vernor Vinge's *A FIRE UPON THE DEEP*, Kristine Kathryn Rusch's *THE WHITE MISTS OF POWER* and *THE FOREVER KING* by Molly Cochran and Warren Murphy (which Murphy is currently adapting into a screenplay).

In November, Millenium begins reissuing Michael Moorcock's novels in hardback and trade paperback; each omnibus edition contains a revised text and a new introduction. The first four volumes are *VON BEK*, *THE ETERNAL CHAMPION*, *HAWKMOON* and *CORUM*.

THE UNCONVENTIONAL CON COMMITTEE INVITES YOU TO JOIN CONDOM

At last! The con that is all things to all fans!

We all know that many fans see cons as a good excuse for going out and finding the best restaurant in the vicinity, and for eating and drinking generally. So here's the con just for those fans:

THE FIRST GASTROCON!

But this con doesn't have just one name – you choose your own preference, from:

- Condemented – for those who are mad about food, but must have their S&P.
- Chilli Con Carne – for those who like hot stuff.
- Contour – this is held in a travelling restaurant car, leased from BR (but not the food).
- Converge – have a picnic on the grass
- Condominium – for the self-caterers amongst us.
- Cognac – never mind the food, where's the decanter?
- Conception – well, not *everyone* wants to eat, or even drink; but you may prefer
- Contraception

Then, of course, for those who over-indulge there are (depending upon your personal metabolism):

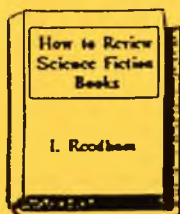
- InContinent
- Constipation
- followed by*
- Constrain
- Convenience
- and*
- Connoisseur – 'nuff said.

REGISTER NOW!! Cheques (any size)
in a plain sealed envelope. . . Contributions welcome.

(Who said this is all a big con?)

Thought up (in a drunken haze) in the best Chinese restaurant in Blackpool (and possibly anywhere else) by Chris and Pauline Morgan, Rog and Arline Peyton, and Dave Hardy (but not necessarily in that order), Easter 1992. Polished and printed by DAH, May 1992.





Book Reviews

JACK THE BODILESS by Julian May
HarperCollins, 421 pp, £14.99, h/b

Reviewed by Steve Jones.

The position of this book in Julian May's work is difficult to describe if you have not been reading them all along. For those beginners, this is the first book in the *GALACTIC MILIEU* trilogy. It is a sequel to the stand alone *INTERVENTION*, and a prequel to the *SAGA OF THE EXILES* (which mostly takes place six million years in the past). Time travel leads to this sort of confusion.

In the mid 21st century humanity is apparently at the beginning of a Golden Age, with the colonisation of dozens of planets and a rising number of people with metapsychic abilities. The fly-in-the-ointment is the benevolent despotism of the Exotics of the Galactic Milieu. Many humans believe humanity should be free to develop in its own way outside the Milieu.

The Remillards are at the centre of all this as many of humanity's best metapsychics come from this illustrious family. Victor Remillard was the villain of the last book, but following his demise there is a murder mystery plot about the "Hydra", which is killing off metapsychics in a particularly gruesome fashion. Behind the Hydra is the even more mysterious "Fury", whose identity is not revealed in this book (but my money is on Felice or Matthieu). The birth of the title character is just a subplot in all the high-powered political wrangling, in which the seeds of the Metapsychic Rebellion are born. *JACK THE BODILESS* is far more about the early life of Marc Remillard, who is going to grow up to displace Adolf Hitler as "Most Evil Person in Human History".

There are some facets of this future world that irritate me no end. Mankind being guided towards salvation by paternalistic aliens is part of it, and Northern Europeans having the greatest metapsychic abilities seems racist. Now I don't expect any future to be a perfect Utopia, but none of the characters appear to notice anything wrong, probably because the Milieu favours them.

The "Silmarillion Syndrome" is at work here. The Milieu formed a rich background for the *SAGA OF THE EXILES*, and helped give it depth and realism. After that the *MILIEU* trilogy can hardly help but be a disappointment. The Fury subplot appears to have been added to counter the fact that the trilogy was summarised in the Saga, and the Remillard family are such a smug bunch of bastards it is difficult to feel sympathy for any of them.

I would like to read the other books in the series, but personally I will be rooting for the Metapsychic Rebellion. Possibly Julian May is cleverly setting it all up to make the Rebellion the Hero.

THE SAPPHIRE ROSE by David Eddings
Grafton, 525 pp, £8.99, "C" format

Reviewed by Steve Jones.

In the third and final book of *THE ELENJUM* trilogy, the Pandion Knight Sparhawk and his companions find the ultimate magic item, Bheiliom the Sapphire Rose, and return to Elenia to cure Queen Ehlana of darestim poisoning. The villain Annias is trying to be elected Archprelate, but the heroes' attempts to stop him are frustrated by a seige. Unlike Tolkien, in Eddings the good guys leave the outer city and its inhabitants to the mercy of the enemy!

With these minor problems out of the way, it is off to the land of Zemoch to confront the evil God Azash with the power of Bheiliom. The precise nature of Bheiliom, and why a simple Troll-made jewel scares even the Gods so much, come as something of a surprise.

As with the rest of Eddings' work, a simple summery sounds incredibly clichéd, but it is a good read. The enemy are so gloriously incompetent that no-one can be in any doubt that the Pandion Knights will succeed in their quest, but the interplay between the characters makes it fun anyway. Maybe Eddings should stick to trilogies, as the pace of the five-volume *MALLOREAN* was grindingly slow. This series, however, is highly recommended.

SHADE by Emily Devenport
The Women's Press, 246pp, £5.99, p/b

BLOOD MOON by Melanie Tem
The Women's Press, 170 pp, £5.95, p/b

CORRESPONDENCE by Sue Thomas
The Women's Press 153 pp, £5.99, p/b

Reviewed by Pauline Morgan.

This is a batch of three novels published recently by The Women's Press. Each shows a vastly different face of current SF and none of them could really be labelled feminist.

They are all books written by women, about women, and that is really all they have in common. The first of the trio is *SHADE* by Emily Devenport. This is closest to the traditional form of the genre. Shade is an adolescent girl who has been stranded on the planet Z'taruh. She has a psychic talent that is less than telepathic but more than empathic. It comes very useful for winning wagers and keeping out of trouble. Z'taruh is a crossroads and a backwater. All the important races are represented here and play some part in Shade's story but unless you have money you are trapped. Most people are trapped. Emily Devenport has sketched out quite a believable social structure, many of her characters are delightfully drawn, yet I was left with a feeling that I had been there before. It is not sufficient to have a good background unless there is a strong plot to carry it.

The second is Melanie Tem's *BLOOD MOON*. This is a remarkably powerful piece of writing which hovers on the fringes of sf and general fiction. It is set in the present day and involves the developing relationship between Breanne Novak and her newly adopted son, Greg. Greg is eleven and has been passed from foster-home to foster-home. He is an angry child but Breanne sees something of herself in him which is why she is prepared to take him on. Like Devenport's *Shade*, Greg has a psychic talent. His however is not passive, it is potentially destructive. He has the power to make things happen - tyres to deflate, toys to break, handles to fall off buckets, crockery to fall. The plot revolves round Breanne's struggle to reach Greg as a person, and Greg's coming to accept that some people care about him and that not all adults lie. Both mature as they come to understand themselves and each other.

Sue Thomas's book *CORRESPONDENCE* can only be described as *avant garde* SF. The central story is about Shirley and Rosa and how their lives drift slowly apart. On its own, this has the hallmarks of an extremely thin, uninteresting short story. However this is wrapped around with the SF theme of computer generated dreams. Through modern, plug-in technology, the reader is invited to live Rosa's life. Twisted in with this is the metamorphosis of the creator of this particular dream. This is Sue Thomas's first novel and was shortlisted for the Heinemann Fiction Award. For a debut the structure of this book has a certain amount of daring but it is not really strong enough for her to become noticed for it in the SF world. Perhaps the next one will be.

There is a tendency for some, particularly male readers, to dismiss The Women's Press as having nothing to offer them. If nothing else, try the Melanie Tem. It might make you change your mind.

SHADOWS LINGER by Glen Cook
ROC, 319 pp, £4.99, p/b

Reviewed by Pauline Morgan.

This is the second chronicle of the Black Company, the first being related in the book of that title. Despite a massive defeat the Rebel has not been crushed. In a way, this shadowy enemy represents the non-conformist part of all societies - it is always there and finds ways to express itself. Here it is as defiance against the Lady, the sorceress who employs the Black Company. In this volume, the Company is sent to the far side of the Lady's empire to investigate a black castle that has grown outside the remote town of Juniper. The Dominator, the Lady's former husband, plans to use it as a way back into this world from the grave where he is trapped. Also in Juniper is Raven, a deserter from the Black Company, and Darling, the deaf-mute girl who is the reincarnation of the White Rose and who will become the focus of Rebel activity once her nature is declared. This volume does not have quite the same seductiveness as the first, perhaps because it is related in a more conventional way. There are two narrative strands, one following a despicable little man called Marron Shed. He happens to be the owner of the inn where Raven is staying. The other is the more familiar one from *THE BLACK COMPANY*, the history according to Croaker, the Company's field surgeon and Analyst. Although this approach is justified - Croaker has written it down as Shed told it to him - it turns interesting into ordinary, partly because we see the events from the position of hindsight and so they lose their ring of authenticity. Some of the ideas, however, are interesting and once more understated leaving plenty for the imagination to work on for, as real life, those in power do not spend time debating their philosophies with Croaker.

A TIME OF EXILE by Katharine Kerr
Grafton, 476 pp, £4.99, p/b

Reviewed by Carol Morton.

The tale opens with Lord Rhodry on the throne of Aberwyn. Whilst his family and friends age and die he stays looking young due to his half elven blood. Jill, his former lover, returns and tells him it is time to leave

Aberwyn and go into the Westlands, where the true elven live, and are coming under pressure from the humans who covet their lands. Rhodry fakes his own death and goes with Jill to the Westlands. Here he meets up with Aderyn, a human sorcerer who has lives with the elves for 200 years.

The narrative now leaves Rhodry, and tells of Aderyn and how he came to be accepted by the elves. He was a student of the sorcerer Nevyn when, during the final rite of his training, his Wyrd (or geas) tells him to travel to the Westlands and to make restitution, but for what is not revealed. He joins up with the elven Wise One, Nananna, and her apprentice, Dallashandra. He learns the elven ways of magic from Nananna before she dies. He falls in love with, and eventually marries, Dallashandra, who discovers a race called the Guardians. These are souls who for one reason or another have never been born. They are gradually fading away and need to be born before the race dies out. Dallashandra visits the Guardians but, as with Faerie, time passes at a different rate and what seems a few days is, in fact, 100 years in the Westlands. Aderyn and the elves are threatened when civil war breaks out in human lands. The elves only become involved when their sacred burial grounds are threatened.

This is a long and complex story, but non-the-less absorbing and well written. It is Kerr's fifth foray into the lands of Deverry, and the second series she has written, but it stands up well on its own without your having to read the previous novels.

THE WITCHING HOUR by Anne Rice

Penguin, 1207 pp, £5.99, p/b

Reviewed by Pauline Morgan.

Page for page this book must be considered value for money - if you have the strength to lift it. There is no doubt that Anne Rice is a fine, imaginative writer but this book is too unwieldy for its own good. It should have been divided into at least two volumes and the content reduced by fifty percent. The story involves a family known to Talamasca as the Mayfair witches. Talamasca is an organisation that some may remember from Rice's vampire trilogy. It has existed for centuries and members collect information about psychically talented people and supernatural phenomena. The family have been watched since 1664 when the first Mayfair witch was burned at the stake in Scotland. In the present day, the latest of the witches is Rowan. She is a brilliant neurosurgeon but has been brought up with no knowledge at all

of her family. All she has been told is that she was born in New Orleans and that she was adopted at birth by Ellie Mayfair (all family members keep the name regardless of whom they marry). She has also promised that she will never try to find out about her background or to return to New Orleans. The other principal character is Michael Curry. He grew up in New Orleans but moved to California after his father's death. He meets Rowan when she drags his drowned body from the sea and breathes life back into it. His death and revival have left him with the power to read images from objects by touching them. He is frightened and confused by this, especially as he remembers meeting some people while he was dead and agreeing to return to life in order to carry out some task, but he has forgotten what this is. Because of his power, Aaron Lightner, the Talamasca member who knows most about the Mayfair witches, tries to contact Curry with a view to helping him understand and control his power. Then Rowan's mother dies and both Curry and Rowan find themselves back in New Orleans with a demon to face.

This has so far taken over three hundred pages, a complete novel for most people but here it is almost only scene setting. The life histories of Curry and Rowan are gone into in minute detail. Then there is a long break of another three hundred or so pages while Curry reads the full account of the Mayfair witches from 1664 to the present day. Although this is all fascinating reading, and helps sort out the complexities of the living members of the vast Mayfair family, it stops the plot dead in its tracks. While some of the information is necessary most should have been used to produce a series of smaller, historically based novels perhaps culminating in Rowan's story. I don't regret having read the book but many people will be daunted by its sheer size and be frustrated by the construction.

A TIME OF OMENS by Katharine Kerr

HarperCollins, 355 pp, £8.99, "C" format

(also available in h/b at £14.99)

Reviewed by Carol Morton.

At the end of volume one, *A TIME OF EXILE*, Jill is determined to uncover the mystery of Rhodry's talisman ring and the lost southern elves that made it. In this volume she visits the temple and library at Wmm to discover what, if any, history has been written of those elves. Whilst searching she discovers a history written some 250 years previously, detailing the adventures of the late master

Nevyn in the wars that saw the restoration of the true king Maryn to the throne of Cerrmor. Jill also finds evidence that the elves sailed south from the Bardek Islands. She journeys there, where she meets up again with Salamander, who is looking for the reborn soul of his lost love. They both fall in with a troupe of acrobats and travel the islands, with Jill looking for more evidence of the elves' embarkation point.

Civil war once again breaks out in the human lands and Rhodry becomes involved as a Silver Dagger, a mercenary soldier. The war threatens to spread into the elven Westlands when a Prince of the elves secretly marries a human woman. Rhodry has to save her, and her unborn child, from the warring humans who are threatening to hold them for ransom. This child is going to be the first of the Guardians to be born, that race of unborn souls discovered in *A TIME OF EXILE*. One of the Guardians considers herself "mother" to this soul, and attempts to prevent the birth by trying to kill both Rhodry and the woman, Carra.

This is very much a fragmented book, with several strands of storyline that only come together a few pages from the end, which has been very confusing. I have never been a fan of the flashback and subplot method of narration, but Kerr does this in a workman-like fashion and has produced a fine story.

CAVES OF FURY by Stephen Thraves
Hodder and Stoughton, £4.99, p/b

Reviewed by William McCabe.

This being, according to the back cover, a "game kit" means that the pages (about 200) aren't numbered, and you get a few other bits thrown into the packet, two each of dice, plastic covers, cards and counters

How this works is simple (I'd never done this sort of thing before, either) - you read a passage and at the end of it you get a direction to another, or a choice of several others. All the passages are numbered in sequence, but you don't usually just go onto the next one. There is a plot of sorts, but it seems terribly bland. You start at location one, collect things for a while if you're lucky, then go through a cycle of fighting monsters (rolling dice), and, if you win, counting up "treasures", or if you lose, losing strength points. There is no intelligence involved, very little skill (it helps if you can roll a die straight), and very little in the way of variation.

I know this thing is supposed to be for children, but even so I would have thought they could have got something more out of the

rigid format. A sense of humour might have helped; a few more objectives might have been better - if you get to the finish the only register of success is one of the counters; multiple exits would have been wonderful.

On the whole, not worth the bother.

THE DRAGON AND THE GEORGE by Gordon R Dickson
Grafton, 279 pp, £4.50, p/b

Reviewed by Carol Morton.

Jim Eckert is a Medieval History expert. He and his girlfriend Angie are planning to marry so, in order to supplement their finances, Angie has an extra job as a part-time lab assistant helping to research astral projection. During an experiment Angie vanishes, and the only clue Jim is given is that she was thinking of dragons before she vanished. He must follow her, but there isn't enough power to transport his body. When he is transported he finds himself not only in the body of the young dragon Gorbash, but also back in the middle ages. Angie has been kidnapped by another dragon and taken to Loathly Tower, where the "Dark Ones" have been immured for centuries. They are now stirring, and will use Angie to break out. Jim/Gorbash must free her, stop the Dark Ones and return to the dragons' cave before Jim's body back at the university deteriorates. Jim has not only to complete his quest, but also to learn how to control the dragon's body and its vast thirst (for alcohol) and appetite.

The scenes where Jim has to fight Gorbash for control of their mutual body are very amusing, and the whole novel is written in a wry tongue-in-cheek style that is both refreshing and original. This is a worthy winner of the British Fantasy Award and I look forward to the rest of the series.

YE GODS! by Tom Holt
Orbit, 296 pp, £13.99, h/b

Reviewed by Carol Morton.

Jason Derry is a bona fide *hero* - his father is Jupiter the Supreme Being, and his mother is a suburban housewife. Jason is sent off each day by his father on various quests, killing monsters, capturing unicorns etc. One such quest takes him into the mountains above Kabul, when he is transported to what appears to be another area of the mountains, where he is guided by an eagle to Prometheus. Now, Prometheus was stripped of his divinity and banished to Earth where he was chained to a rock for all eternity, to have his liver ripped out each morning by an eagle - even eagles can

tire of a diet of raw liver after a few millennia. This happened because he stole fire from Olympus and gave it to Man. Well, that's the cover story, he was in fact banished for passing on humour to Man, and humour is the only weapon that could overcome the Gods.

Gelos is the God of Humour and has been in hiding from the Gods of Olympus, because they want to regain control of Earth, and the only way to do that is to get rid of humour altogether, by doing away with Gelos. He uses Prometheus as a go-between to enlist Jason's help to intercede with Jupiter. The vanity of the Supreme Being is such that no compromise is allowable, so battle is joined.

This is most definitely a different angle on the Gods of Olympus. With their vanities, petty jealousies, foibles and infighting they seem more human than we do. And Jason is just a pawn in their game until he eventually stands up to them.

This yarn is written in Holt's inimitable style, with a panache that had me at times in stitches (that can be embarrassing on a crowded bus). The plot is good and the characterisation is wonderful, especially that of the world-weary Jason. This is an amusing and vastly entertaining read. Tom Holt is definitely an author to look out for.

BEAUTY by Sheri S Tepper
Harper Collins, 362 pp, £14.99, h/b
also available in "C" format at £8.99

Reviewed by Al Johnston.

I loved this book. I was very impressed by Ms Tepper's last work, *RAISING THE STONES*, but I really loved this one. A bald description would do this fantasy little justice, and investigation does not, at first, offer much hope either, for the book is highly derivative in nature. But somehow it all works, the borrowings are of the very best. The future, reminiscent of T J Bass' *HIVE*, is bleak and closer with Fidipur's farms as a sick joke, the imagined worlds show what Heinlein could have done with *THE NUMBER OF THE BEAST*, and the fairy stories that form the core of the novel have shed the treeness of the nursery while avoiding the ravages of the revisionists. They retain their charm and innocence.

The story is a saga of innocence lost, despair triumphant and ultimately hope rekindled, structured as the diary of the eponymous heroine, who carries the beauty of the world implanted within her for safe-keeping. Beauty (she of soanorant fame) avoids her curse only to be kidnapped to the future by a documentary crew. Using gifts from her fairy mother she travels between

times and worlds, playing a pivotal role in the breaking of the Covenant and the death of Faery. Along the way she sows the seeds of a number of fairy tales, from *CINDERELLA* to *THE FROG PRINCE*. Finally she returns home to lay the foundations of global rebirth.

This works very well as an adventure and fully reflects the environmental concerns of the times (I would say zeitgeist but let's not get too pretentious). On another level *BEAUTY* is a polemic against Ugliness, and its attendant, Horror. Ms Tepper does not appear to like horror writers: they are not only damned to Hell here, they also helped to create it. The dark minions must be driven out before the revelation can come that Beauty and Soul are one and the same. To add injury to insult Ms Tepper shows she can casually surpass a lot of the genre she despises.

I have gone on a bit I know. I could say more. What I cannot do is praise this book too highly.

SAM GUNN, UNLIMITED by Ben Bova
Methuen, 342 pp, £15.99, h/b

Reviewed by Tony Morton.

This is written as a sort of biography of one Jane Avril Inconnu (Jade), habitant of the moon and impromptu journalist-investigator. Intrigued by Gunn's statue on the moon, Jade hears an ex-pal's outrageous tale of one of his exploits, which further motivates her to discover "the truth behind the man". Uncovering a few newsworthy tit-bits persuades her network news boss to let her start the story, and she begins the long search for Gunn's allies and enemies.

The tales interwoven throughout the novel prove its inspiration: Gunn the astronaut building space stations, illicit rendezvous: as space explorer: as entrepreneur, becoming rich with his schemes but blowing it all to finance the next venture. His acquaintances tell the tales with relish, fond memories, jealousy or scorn, yet all have ended up indebted to Sam and his schemes, while he went on to something new.

Wonderfully paced and told, the novel bounds along on its own (or Sam's?) energy. I could almost believe the guy exists and could come back to restart his manipulative games! Bova provides several yarns of Sam's exploits, and all entertain and give insight into the man behind the title - and potentially into what space work might entail. Jade discovers herself and her past, counterbalancing the extrovert Gunn scenarios. A somewhat pat and goody-goody ending, but I loved every bit. Do yourself a favour and read this.

CYBER WAY by Alan Dean Foster

Orbit, 306 pp, £4.50, p/b

Reviewed by Tony Morton.

An sf-detective story from Foster that follows the exploits of Moody, a Tampa cop, on the trail of a mysterious killer. The basic plot revolves around Red Indian sandpaintings, the story taking several devious and well thought out turns leading to an even more mysterious situation.

Moody follows leads to end up in Arizona and assisted by Indian cop Ooljee. They chase around searching for both the killer and for logical answers to the inexplicable occurrences that beleaguer them. They uncover the "truth" within sandpaintings, that they "interlace" with some unknown database system - but how did the Navaho learn this?

Somewhat unusual for a detective story, but along similar and current sf lines (*GOD INC* by Chalker, *POLAR CITY BLUES* by Kerr), while approaching it from a different angle. By mixing ancient culture with modern computer nets Foster shows how knowledge can be (mis)used. The novel is quite convincing in its analogy and entertaining in its unfolding. Foster's depth of research provides good background, the characters work and interact well, there is a good basic plot and storyline. Overall, likeable.

AGAINST THE FALL OF NIGHT by Arthur C Clarke

BEYOND THE FALL OF NIGHT by Gregory Benford

Orbit, 326 pp, £4.99, p/b

Reviewed by David A Hardy.

(Editor's note - This is not, as may appear from the heading, two separate books, but is two short novels bound into one volume, although not back-to-back as in the Ace Doubles.)

THE CITY AND THE STARS (1956) was always a favourite Clarke novel of mine, and it was of course developed from "Against the Fall of Night" (which was written between 1936 and 1946). I still find the original story worth reading, as it has that "sense of wonder" for which Clarke was always famous, but by today's standards it is slow-moving and rather ponderous.

What a contrast Greg Benford's sequel makes! He is described on the cover as "His (Clarke's) natural successor", and certainly Benford's science is impeccable. But this is not the sequel Clarke would have written. I can imagine him taking Alvin out to the stars, and discovering strange new civilisations. Benford stays on Earth, and shifts the point-of-view to a forest woman, Cley. She is the last of her species, the rest having been

wiped out by the Mad Mind, which has now escaped from the Black Sun (now claimed by Clarke as a prediction of a Black Hole). She is accompanied by an intelligent, talking raccoon-like creature called Seeker, which is more than it seems. Alvin plays a relatively minor role.

In their attempts to evade the Mad Mind, which is searching out Cley, they travel further and further out into the solar system, which has changed greatly in the millions of years since our time. First to an orbiting biomass called Leviathan, then to the moon (presumably not *the* moon, which was destroyed by Shalmirane as it fell toward the Earth in the original story) and finally out as far as Jupiter, or the Jove system. There has been planetary as well as genetic engineering, on a grand scale.

Benford scales great heights of scientific imagination and succeeds in writing an exciting sequel. I recommend it highly to all readers of real science fiction.

THE ARCHITECTURE OF DESIRE by Mary Gentle

Gorgi, 252 pp, £3.99, p/b

Reviewed by Hywel Phillips.

THE ARCHITECTURE OF DESIRE is a sequel to *RATS AND GARGOYLES*, following the fortunes of two of the major characters from the earlier book. After the mystical goings-on of *RATS AND GARGOYLES*, Valentine (the White Crow) and Casaubon (the Lord Architect) have settled down on Valentine's home estates somewhere in rural England to raise a family. Their peace is disturbed when a group of gentlemen-mercenaries arrives at their gates, followed by a young girl suffering from serious exposure. Events lead Casaubon and Valentine to journey to the capital. Gentle's portrait of London, split by power struggles, beset by magical problems, is as effortlessly evocative as her earlier settings.

Mary Gentle is an oddity. She writes books that I should hate: slow, subtle, long-winded and with none of the qualities of the mental candy-floss that normally appeals to me. However, this is outweighed by the fact that she is a damned good writer. She has managed to come up with a reasonable degree of variation on the earlier book by moving the action geographically. A more direct sequel to the earlier book would have been a dismal failure. *THE ARCHITECTURE OF DESIRE* almost makes it. Almost, but not quite.

I have two main quibbles with the book. First, the simple fact that it is a sequel detracts from its originality and invites comparison with the labyrinthine complexities

of RATS AND GARGOYLES. It does not do too well in the comparison: it is too simple, too straightforward. The mental jumps which were required to figure out what the hell was going on in the earlier book are almost completely absent. This leads to my second complaint, the book is too short. The action is hurried and the narrative feels a bit forced. An extra few pages might have allowed more character development and a bit more satisfaction for the reader.

Having got all that off my chest, I can honestly say that I enjoyed the book a lot. It is much easier to read than Gentle's previous works, and would be a good place to start if you have been put off by the weight of some of her earlier works. Incidentally, reading this before RATS AND GARGOYLES won't detract much from the first book. If this were not a sequel I would herald it as having a superb background, good writing style, fast pace and interesting characters. It's just that it sits in the shadow of RATS AND GARGOYLES, and it doesn't quite live up to it.

CAT-A-LYST by Alan Dean Foster
Orbit, 325 pp, £4.40, p/b

Reviewed by Tony Marton.

This is a highly unlikely story that tries to explain an odd mixture of items. Firstly the "missing" Inca gold, secondly the "lines" at Nasca and thirdly some of Lewis Carroll's more fantastic writings - read it to find out exactly what! Otherwise this is an easy going tale of attempted world domination (through television-based hypnosis), Hollywood film sets and impenetrable jungle.

Something of a romp, Foster pits an actor, Jason Carter, and his cynical sidekick, Ashwood, against several foes, each more unlikely than the last. This is all happening whilst Carter and Ashwood are exploring for treasure in deepest Peru. We have humour, aliens, human greed and numerous subplots, and all of this to put over the basic (and more than well known) premise that cats are intelligent, and are in fact more than "mere" domestic animals. The revelation of just what they are and what they do is up to you to discover, but to whet your appetite I will say one word - Monitor.

Beyond that it is a fairly straightforward sf/humour novel, based for a change in the South American jungle. There is some good descriptive narrative, some humorous aliens and, of course, the cats.

The cat analogy makes one look at our feline house buddies and wonder - just who is boss? Not outstanding, but fun.

ALIEN 3 by Alan Dean Foster
Warner Books, 218 pp, £4.50, p/b

Reviewed by Chris Ridd.

The number three in the title is written in superscript, so the title should read "Alien Cubed". Actually the book is less-cubes, more balls. An early indication of quality is the presence of five names on the front cover. A book by committee? Surely not! In case you weren't aware of it, this is the book of the film which is bound to earn mega-bucks in the cinemas this summer.

The plot is pretty straightforward, although derivative of the second film. The hero from the other two films is en-route to Earth in the ship when there is an emergency. The ship sticks Ripley and co in an escape pod, which lands on a conveniently nearby prison planet. The prisoners start getting killed (stop me if you've heard this plot before) and, of course, no-one believes Ripley about the aliens. Eventually the marauding alien is killed, but Ripley's involvement is finally ended because (to quote the book's cover) "This time it's hiding in the most terrifying place of all".

Although it's all good clean fun for all the family, and well-written enough within the obvious constraints, there is an obvious problem - why bother buying the book when seeing the film is a pound or so cheaper?

THE GOOD FAIRIES OF NEW YORK by Martin Millar
4th Estate, £5.99, p/b

Reviewed by William McCabe.

After the success of the current wave of comic fantasy/sf begun by Asprin and Adams it seems unusual to find a book that is definitely comic and fantasy, but not of that genre. This is Millar's fourth novel, and the closest to outright fantasy he has reached to date.

"Fairy vomit is no doubt sweet-smelling to humans". Heather and Morag are two punk fairies on the run from Scotland having taken too much whisky combined with "magic mushrooms". They have just arrived in New York without any idea of how they got there. Dinnie, who was on the receiving end of the aforementioned puke, is an awful fiddle player whose tv is permanently tuned to the porn channel. Along with these are a fair cast of fairies and humans and half a dozen more plot-lines, including Cornish fairies suffering in their industrial revolution!

Be warned - this is not something to be given to young children or, to use a cliché, people who are likely to be offended, and probably a few who don't think they will be.

ANDROMEDA
BOOKSHOP

meet
MICHAEL MOORCOCK

(bestselling author of the Runestaff series, etc)
who will be signing copies of the New **ELRIC** novel

"REVENGE OF THE ROSE" (Paperback)
on Saturday, 22nd August (noon)

ANDROMEDA BOOKSHOP, 84 Suffolk St., Birmingham B1 1TA. Tel: 021-643 1999 Fax: 643 2001
CREDIT CARD ORDERS WELCOME

ANDROMEDA
BOOKSHOP

21st BIRTHDAY CELEBRATION

ANDROMEDA BOOKSHOP

invites you to a SIGNING SESSION with

MICHAEL MOORCOCK

the first of our new style signings at
ATHENS RESTAURANT where you can get your books signed,
chat to friends over a drink and maybe some food

The following food will be available at £1.50 each

Taramosalata (Fish roe pate)
Fetta Cheese dip (Greek cheese dip)
Houmous (Crushed chick peas & garlic dip)
Tzatziki (Yoghurt & Cucumber dip)
Tahini (crushed sesame seeds dip)

Saturday, 22nd August 1992 (noon)

ANDROMEDA
BOOKSHOP

meet
MICHAEL MOORCOCK

(bestselling author of the Runestaff series, etc)
who will be signing copies of the New **ELRIC** novel

"REVENGE OF THE ROSE" (Paperback)
on Saturday, 22nd August (noon)

ANDROMEDA BOOKSHOP, 84 Suffolk St., Birmingham B1 1TA. Tel: 021-643 1999 Fax: 643 2001
CREDIT CARD ORDERS WELCOME

ANDROMEDA
BOOKSHOP