

BRUM GROUP NEWS

October 1992

Issue 253

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 IAN WATSON

Friday 16th October 1992, 7.45pm for 8.00pm

Admittance: Members £2.50 Visitors £3.75

Ian Watson was born in North Shields, Northumberland on 20th April 1943 and was educated at Tynemouth School and Balliol College, Oxford.

One-time features editor of, and frequent contributor to, *FOUNDATION*, he has since 1983 been the European Editor of *SCIENCE FICTION WRITERS OF AMERICA BULLETIN*. He has been a recipient of the Prix Apollo (in 1975), the Orbit Award (in 1976), the British SF Association Award (in 1978) and the Southern Arts Association bursary in 1978.

His first novel, *THE EMBEDDING*, was published in 1973, followed in 1975 by the critically acclaimed *THE JONAH KIT*. His other works include the Black Current trilogy - *THE BOOK OF THE RIVER*, *THE BOOK OF THE STARS* and *THE BOOK OF BEING* as well as *THE MARTIAN INCA*, *ALIEN EMBASSY*, *MIRACLE VISITORS*, *GOD'S WORLD*, *THE GARDENS OF DELIGHT*, *DEATHHUNTER*, *CHEKHOV'S JOURNEY*, *CONVERTS*, *THE POWER*, *THE FIREWORM*, *WHORES OF BABYLON*, *THE FLIES OF MEMORY*, *INQUISITOR* and *QUEENMAGIC*, *KINGMAGIC*.

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).

MANNERS MAKETH THE FAN

**The Birmingham
Science Fiction Group
does not pay
speakers, they speak
to us because they
WANT to. Therefore
if a member
of the group is rude
to a guest, not only
is it an unforgivable breach of
etiquette, it
might make other potential
speakers reluctant to address
the Group. They do not speak to
us for THEIR benefit.
The Committee will
have no hesitation in
barring ANY member who is
rude or offensive
to a guest speaker.**

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Personal opinions expressed in this publication do not necessarily reflect those of the committee or the membership of the Birmingham Science Fiction Group.

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FORTHCOMING EVENTS

6-10 OCTOBER 1992: **THE ROCKY HORROR SHOW** at the Grand Theatre, Lichfield Street, Wolverhampton. Call (0902) 29212 for further info.

9 OCTOBER 1992: **DAVID GEMMELL** will be signing copies of his new Drenai novel **WAYLANDER II: IN THE REALM OF THE WOLF** (trade paperback £8.99, hardcover £14.99), **STONES OF POWER: THE SIPSTRASSI OMNIBUS** (trade paperback £9.99, hardcover £15.99) and the paperback edition of **DARK PRINCE** (£5.99), from 5.30-7pm, at Magic Labyrinth, 34-36 Rutland Street, Leicester. Call (0533) 518178 for further details of this and other signing sessions and special events.

9 OCTOBER 1992: **DAVID GEMMELL** will be speaking to the Leicester SF Group from around 7pm, in the upstairs room of the Rainbow & Dove, Charles Street, Leicester. Call Steph Mortimer on (0533) 833133 for further details.

UNTIL 10 OCTOBER 1992: **STRIP SEARCH 2:** Exhibition of over 150 comics with original art from **2000AD**, **RAW**, **DEADLINE**, **BATMAN**, **HELLRAISER** and many more, backed up by a catalogue, workshops and events at Solihull Central Library Exhibition Hall, Homer Road, Solihull, B91 3RG. Open 9.30-5.30 Mondays to Wednesdays and Saturdays, 9.30-8.00 Thursdays and Fridays. Call (021) 704 6965 for details.

UNTIL 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.

UNTIL 5 DECEMBER 1992: **"FROM FANTASY TO REALITY the world of JRR Tolkien"**, on display on Floor 6 of the Central Library. Call (021) 235 4511 for further details.

9-11 OCTOBER 1992: **MUSE**. A folk based relaxacon ("filk" is music by sf/fantasy fans), Strathallan Hotel, Hagley Road, Birmingham. Attending £10, price includes transport and entry to the Razing Arizona gig on Saturday evening. Alchemy are also playing on Friday lunchtime at the Josiah Mason Hall, near Birmingham Repertory Theatre. Contact Gytha North, 35 Iverley Road, Halesowen, West Midlands, B63 3EP.

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 Society of Fantastic Films, 95 Meadowgate Road, Salford, Manchester, M6 8EN.

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

10 OCTOBER 1992: **A TASTE OF TOLKIEN** from the Impact Promotional Theatre Company, "experience one of the greatest adventures ever recorded" join a "hour-long blindfold expedition to Middle Earth" in Central Library, Meeting Room 6, admission free, 10am, 1pm or 3pm.

10 OCTOBER 1992: **RAZING ARIZONA** are a 'filk' band, interested in sf with a wicked sense of humour and they will be in concert at the Library Theatre, near Central Library in Birmingham from 7.30pm-10.30pm. Tickets £5 (concessionary tickets £3) from Central Library and usual agencies, or call (021) 236 5622 for further details.

10 OCTOBER 1992: **COMIC MART** at the Hotel Arcade, Ladywell Walk, Birmingham. Doors open 11am, admission 50p. Call (0527) 585036 or send sae for details to Mrs P Lennon, 15 Yew Tree Close, Batchley, Redditch, Worcs., B97 6SO.

10 OCTOBER 1992: **DAVID GEMMELL** will be signing copies of his new Drenai novel *WAYLANDER II: IN THE REALM OF THE WOLF* (trade paperback £8.99, hardcover £14.99), *STONES OF POWER: THE SIPSTRASSI OMNIBUS* (trade paperback £9.99, hardcover £15.99) and the paperback edition of *DARK PRINCE* (£5.99), at Andromeda Bookshop from 12 (noon), call (021) 643 1999 for further details of this and other sessions.

11 OCTOBER 1992: **INTO THE NIGHT** is the title of a "Space Films All Nighter" film show which runs from 11.15pm to 6am at the Triangle Cinema, Holt Street near Aston University, tickets £6 (concessionary tickets £4). Featuring *TRIP TO THE MOON* (George Melies, 1902), *THE DAY THE EARTH STOOD STILL* (Robert Wise, 1951), *2001: A SPACE ODYSSEY* (Stanley Kubrick, 1968) and *THE RIGHT STUFF* (Phillip Kaufman, 1983). Call (021) 359 3979/4192 for further information or book on (021) 643 2514.

FROM 13 OCTOBER 1992: THE ART OF ANIMATION exhibition featuring the work of Chuck Jones, Friz Freleng, Walter Lantz and Don Bluth. Halycon Gallery, Birmingham Pallasades.

13 OCTOBER 1992: **A HISTORY OF DISASTERS WITH MARVELS** (Andrew Stones, 12 minutes) is a selected history of scientific rationalism

fractured by the occurrence of apocalyptic "marvels". The Ikon Gallery, 6-7.30pm, admission free.

15 OCTOBER 1992: **SADIE PLANT** author of *THE MOST RADICAL GESTURE, THE SITUATIONALIST INTERNATIONAL IN A POST MODERN WORLD*, "draws on teknomusic, video, photography and cyber-genetic fiction to argue that the technologies and women desired and constructed by men could combine to prove fatal to patriarchy. Ikon Gallery, 6.30-8pm, admission free.

15 OCTOBER 1992: **THE THIEF OF BAGHDAD** (Alexander Korda, 1940) will be showing at 8.30pm at the MGM Cinema, Arcadian Ladywell Walk. Call (021) 622 5551 for further details.

15 OCTOBER 1992: **TOTO THE HERO** (Jaco Van Dormael, 1991) will be screened at 3.30pm at the Midland Arts Centre, Cannon Hill Park. Call (021) 440 3838 for further details.

16 OCTOBER 1992
IAN WATSON
will be speaking to the BSGF
at the White Lion.

24 OCTOBER: **CHRIS MORGAN** will be talking about how to write fantasy, and conducting a workshop from 12.30-4.30pm (please bring pen and paper), as part of The Birmingham Centre for the Book's Tolkien celebrations. Call (021) 235 4511 for further details.

24 OCTOBER 1992: **THE SPIRIT OF THE HIVE** "Man and woman, a game of chess, *BILL AND BEN* playing on the television, a glass house and the disturbing humming of a swarm of bees, resonating with ever greater force. A surreal, evocative scene in a gloriously beautiful garden, but is it all that it seems? Does it reflect the sweetness of a honey laden paradise? Or the savage desolation of a nuclear landscape." The Midland Arts Centre, Cannon Hill Park, call (021) 440 3838 for further details.

24 OCTOBER: **COMIC MART** at the Midland Hotel, New Street, 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.

30 OCTOBER 1992: **THE WORLDS OF TOLKIEN** "Barad-dur and Birmingham" a talk by Chris Upton, at the Library Theatre near Central

Library, Birmingham, 12-1pm, admission free.
31 OCTOBER 1992: THE UNION OF TRAIKEN "is a FRIENDLY, Birmingham based DR WHO group," who offer monthly meetings with free admission, video screenings (including a non-Who slot), quizzes, debates and regular social meetings. They meet at 6pm in the Harborne Ale House, Harborne High Street (just down the road from their old venue). For further details send a sae to: A J Preece, 13 The Circle, Harborne, Birmingham, B17 9EE.

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 16th October Details: Bernie Evans, 121 Cape Hill, Smethwick, Warley, B66 4SH.

7 NOVEMBER 1992: JONATHAN WYLIE: Mark & Julia Smith, who write as 'Jonathan Wylie', will be signing copies of their new fantasy novel *SHADOW MAZE* (paperback, £3.99) at Andromeda Bookshop, call (021) 643 1999 for further details of this and other signing sessions.

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.

15 NOVEMBER 1992: COMIC MART at the YMCA, Granby Street, Leicester, opens midday. Full details from Golden Orbit, 9 Stratford Way, Huntington, York, YO3 9YW.

20 NOVEMBER 1992: DEBATE against the Birmingham University SF & Fantasy Society, at the White Lion.

21 NOVEMBER 1992: TERRY PRATCHETT will be signing copies of the new Discworld hardcover *LORDS AND LADIES* (£14.99) and the paperback edition of *WITCHES ABROAD* (£3.99) at Andromeda Bookshop from 10.30am, call (021) 643 1999 for further details of this and other signing sessions.

27-29 NOVEMBER 1992: HILLCON III. Eighteenth Beneluxcon, Atlanta Hotel, Rotterdam. GoHs Tanith Lee, Terry Pratchett, Tad Williams, Peter Schaap. Fan GoHs Jo Thomas & Johan-Martijn Flaton. Attending Hfl.65. Contact Ruud van de Kruisweg, Bijltespad 52, 1018 KJ Amsterdam, Netherlands.

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12 DECEMBER 1992: COMIC MART at the Midland Hotel, New Street, 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.

18 DECEMBER 1992

BRUM GROUP

CHRISTMAS PARTY

at the White Lion.

Buffet, competitions,

prize raffle, party games

and tombolla!

Tickets on sale shortly.

(Please contact

Carol Morton on

0384 897206, before 7pm,

if you have any

prizes you wish

to donate

to the tombolla.)

23 JANUARY - 6 FEBRUARY 1993: *DRACULA IS UNDEAD AND WELL AND LIVING IN PURFLEET* by Charles McKeown, "Gothic humour, vampire bats, blood, beautiful young girls! Will Count Dracula triumph? Will the lovely Mina escape his clutches? Or is it already too late?" Crescent Theatre, Cumberland Street, Brindley Place, Birmingham. Call (021) 643 5858 for further details.

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 my knowledge, but I would advise readers to confirm with the organizers before travelling. Please mention the BRUM GROUP NEWS when contacting any of the above.

NOVACON 22

Guest of Honour

STORM CONSTANTINE

6th to 8th November 1992

at the

**Royal Angus Hotel
St Chads Queensway
Birmingham**

**The Brum Group's own
science fiction convention returns to
the centre of Birmingham!**

SPECIAL OFFER TO BRUM GROUP MEMBERS

**The deadline to join has been extended until the 16th of
October 1992! So until the end of the Ian Watson meeting
you will still be able to join at the 'old' rate of £20.00.**

See Bernie Evans for details.



We Won!

Guest of Honor
Samuel R Delany

INTERSECTION

Guest of Honour
Gerry Anderson

"The Scottish WorldCon"

Intersection will be the 1995 Worldcon. It will be held at the Scottish Exhibition and Conference Centre and the adjacent Moat House International Hotel, over the weekend of 24-28 August 1995.

Membership Rates for Glasgow in '95

These rates are valid until 31 Dec 1992. Glasgow pre-support and friend benefits will expire on 30 April 1993: after that date, presupporters will become non-members and Friends will become supporters.

Voted?	PreSupported?	beFriended?	Status	to Support	to Attend
no	no	no	None	£15	£40
		yes	Friend	*	£15
	yes	no	PreSupp	£10	£35
		yes	Friend	*	£10
yes	no	no	Support	£0	£25
		yes	Attend	£0	£0
	yes	no	Support	£0	£20
		yes	Attend	£0	£0
Bought Attending when voted			Attend	£0	£0

Memberships for children born after 24 August 1988 will be £5
Memberships for children born after 24 August 1980 will be £15

US Address: Theresa Renner, Box 15430 Washington DC 20003

UK Address: Bernie Evans, 121 Cape Hill, Smethwick, Warley, West Midlands B66 4SH

The Jophan Report by Martin Tudor

The 56th Jophan Report

This year's British Fantasy Awards were announced on Sunday 4th of October at Fantasycon XVII at the Midland Hotel in Birmingham. Unfortunately although the wooden bases of the awards were ready, the awards themselves were not...

The British Fantasy Society's Committee Award went to *SCIENCE FICTION CHRONICLE* editor Andrew Porter, who had, unfortunately, left the convention shortly before the award was presented. The Icarus Award for Best Newcomer went to Melanie Tem. Best Small Press Publication was *PEEPING TOM*.

The award for Best Short Fiction went to "The Dark Land" by Michael Marshall Smith and the award for Best Novel went to *OUTSIDE THE DOG MUSEUM* by Jonathan Carroll.

The most popular choices, judging from the audience's reaction, were for Best Artist - Jim Pitts and Best Collection - *DARKLANDS*, Nic Royle.

Fantasycon XVIII will be held over the weekend of 1-3 October 1993, again at the Midland Hotel in Birmingham. British Guest of Honour will be Peter James, Artist Guest of Honour will be Les Edwards, US Guest of Honour and Master of Ceremonies to be announced.

[Many thanks to Steve Green who telephoned me with the above results from the Midland, mere minutes after they were announced.]

Unconfirmed rumours have reached me that IFT Con, (9-12 Oct at the Holiday Inn in Leicester,) has ran into difficulties with all but one of the committee resigning. The contact address is 129 Westfield Road, Wellingborough, Northants, NN8 3HN.

Pam Wells, who spoke to the Group in August, would like to thank everyone who attended the meeting, with special thanks to those who bought items in the auction which raised £35.52 for TAFF, the Trans-Atlantic Fan Fund.

Long time BSFG member, twice NOVACON chairman and three times NOVACON committee member TONY BERRY is running for TAFF! Don't forget to vote, ballots will be available shortly. Rumoured to be running against Tony (the poor deluded fools!) are MICHAEL ASHLEY, ABIGAIL FROST and ASHLEY WATKINS.

All of the above are competing for the honour of representing British SF Fandom at ConFrancisco, the World SF Convention, in San Francisco next year.

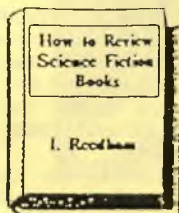
No sooner had it been confirmed that Marvel Comic's *THE BLACK PANTHER* will be adapted for the screen, than Universal announced that the long touted *THE GREEN HORNET* may finally reach the big screen - with Eddie Murphy in the lead! The mind boggles...

Rumours continue to fly about the next *BATMAN* movie. It would seem that the choice of Robin Williams to play the Riddler may not be final, as many sources at Warner Brothers are now claiming the studio wants Warren Beatty to play the role. Word is they've offered Jack Nicholson \$20 million or more to return as the Joker in a straight-ahead action picture for Christmas 1993 or Summer 1994. The studio have decided to blame the disappointing (!) returns on Tim Burton's grim vision of Gotham in the second movie and feel that a new director and direction will reverse the trend.

Mary Norton, creator of the Borrowers and author of the classic children's fantasy *BEDKNOB AND BROOMSTICK*, died in London on the 29th of August.

On the 5th of September the world of fantastic literature lost one of its greatest proponents, Fritz Leiber, aged 81. Who finally succumbed after suffering several strokes the previous week. Creator of the superb *Fafhrd and the Gray Mouser* series and author of such classics as *GATHER, DARKNESS!* [1950], the Hugo winning novels *THE WANDERER* [1964] and *THE BIG TIME* [1961], Leiber will be greatly missed.

Jo Fletcher and Stephen Jones in their column "The London Report" in the October issue of *SCIENCE FICTION CHRONICLE* reveal that "despite persistent rumours over the past couple of months that police are about to bring charges over the fire that gutted London's Book Inn/Fantasy Inn bookstore on April 5th this year, owner Richard Waller is adamant that the shop will re-open before the end of the year."



Book Reviews

THE WHITE ROSE by Glen Cook
ROC, 317 pp, £4.99, p/b

Reviewed by Pauline Morgan.

This is the third chronicle of the Black Company and is much closer in style to the first volume, entitled *THE BLACK COMPANY*, than the second one was. Again, most of the narrative is told as Croaker, the Company's physician and Annalist, writes it in his journal. Only one small thread is outside this format, the part dealing with the sojourn of one Corbie in the Barrowland where the Dominator is incarcerated - a mistake, as this section gives away part of the plot.

After having deserted the employ of the Lady, a sorceress who rules over most of the continent, the Black Company forms the nucleus of rebellion against her in the centre of the Plain of Fear. With the Company is Darling, thought by the rebels to be the reincarnation of the White Rose, the general who defeated the Lady and the Dominator some centuries ago. Darling's power is that she is the centre of an area within which magic does not work. While Darling and the Lady square up for a final confrontation, the forces of nature are at work eroding the defences that keep the Dominator imprisoned. By the time both antagonists realise what is happening it is almost too late.

There is a good mix here of standard and unusual fantasy elements which, taken together form an exciting climax to the trilogy. Good, light reading.

THE BRENTFORD TRIANGLE by Robert Rankin
Corgi, 237 pp, £3.99, p/b

Reviewed by Sally-Ann Melia.

I'm back in Brentford again! A double timewarp, in March I read *THE ANTIPOPE*, the first novel in this series, for the Brumgroup, and I spent many a Saturday afternoon of my distant childhood walking with my mother in Brentford shopping centre. If the Flying Swan, the pub at the centre of *THE BRENTFORD TRIANGLE*, existed or exists it certainly was not pointed out to me when I was still wearing

short socks. For once such complacency on the part of my parents has been remedied, by this double dose of Robert Rankin's prose. I am now as intimate with the Flying Swan and its regulars as I am with many of you in the Brumgroup.

In *THE BRENTFORD TRIANGLE* the action resumes some years after the previous encounter with the devil in *THE ANTIPOPE*. The author does make reference to an exact timescale (five years, I think), but the book can very much be read on its own.

The plot is fun, sort of "Encounters of the Third Kind in Brentford". Only these are not friendlies, and the question remains, can any of the locals be drawn away from the nail-biting excitement of the Flying Swan's darts competition to do anything about it? The story starts with a desert camel found wandering across the allotments and ends with.... Ah well, you'll have to read it for yourself.

If you're a beer-drinker who hates juke boxes, or a fanatic for bar computer games, if you like crazy golf with a difference, or enjoy a game of darts, this is the book for you. *THE BRENTFORD TRIANGLE* by Robert Rankin is a comic fantasy with all your favourite ingredients. Read and enjoy!

MOTHER EARTH. FATHER SKY by Sue Harrison
Bantam, 381 pp, £3.99, p/b

Reviewed by Carol Morton.

This is a tale set in prehistoric times and on the frozen northern tundra. It tells of Chagak, a young woman whose village is massacred by another tribe called The Short Ones. She and her baby brother are the only survivors. Chagak leaves the desolated village and travels by sea until she reaches an island inhabited only by the old man Shuganan, who is something of a hermit and a superb carver of ivory. Her brother dies, but she and Shuganan manage to live an harmonious existence until the island is found by Man-who-kills, one of the tribe who massacred her village. He boasts of his killing and of his tribe's plans to attack the Whale Hunters, who are Chagak's grandfather's tribe. Man-who-kills forces Chagak to become his wife, but between them Chagak and Shuganan manage to kill him. She discovers she his pregnant, but her grandfather must still be warned. To top it all the island is discovered by another Small displaced from another tribe. Will they help, or will they kill?

I am at a bit of a loss as to why this book was sent to an sf group. There are no sf or fantasy elements in the tale apart from

Chagak speaking to the spirits of the otters. I suppose comparison with Jean Auel's *CLAN OF THE CAVE BEAR* is inevitable, and unfortunately, as this novel is not really good enough to compete. The weak plot seems to be filled out with mundane day-to-day housewifely tasks, and after a while this can get boring. I suppose there is a niche for this type of tale somewhere, but not, I think, amongst an sf readership.

MY SISTER THE MOON by Sue Harrison

Doubleday, 449 pp, £14.99, h/b

Reviewed by Sally-Ann Melia.

May I compare a book to McDonald's? Or more precisely those semi-warm, semi-sweet, moist burgers you gulp down before carrying on with the serious business of shopping, bebopping or whatever else you may get up to in town? There's little satisfaction in such food, it shifts cold and uneasy at the pit of your belly as you walk and is soon forgotten. Why did I eat that stuff? (at that price too), you ask yourself as you leave the gleaming restaurant.

I had read *MY SISTER THE MOON* by Saturday lunchtime, some twelve hours after I had first set eyes on the book, and yes, I did get some six hours sleep as well. It was definitely moreish, the characters and the situations titillated and intrigued to the point where I could not put it down, but was it a good book?

First let's put this book in context. Sue Harrison's first novel, *MOTHER EARTH, FATHER SKY*, was a highly acclaimed best seller. *MY SISTER THE MOON* itself looks good, broad high black print on whiter than white paper, nice spacing and a great cover, physically this book jumps off the shelf into your hands. And the title, well, it's intriguing, what is this *MY SISTER THE MOON*? Ten out of ten for presentation, but was it a good book?

Sue Harrison has been compared to Jean Auel of *CLAN OF THE CAVE BEAR* fame. I read *CLAN OF THE CAVE BEAR*, a tale of a primitive clan where the males dominate the females by force and rape, despite this a beautiful indomitable female makes good and becomes the leader. In short, *MY SISTER THE MOON* is the same story. Kinn, the heroine, gets knocked about rather a lot, raped too, and when she isn't raped she hasn't got a hell of a lot of choice.... Sue Harrison stirs in further ingredients of slavery, arranged marriages and an alcoholic father, whilst holding just out of reach the talismans of love and a caring mother-sister. Kinn means "why?", so I'm not sure where the title comes from either.

I don't know, I read the book too fast,

too compulsively. Worse, I felt no urge to dip back into its pages or re-savour the prose. You can't really fault the story. The plot hung together, if a little predictably, it had all the conventional elements of female romantic fiction, and yet.... There was a harsh edge to the violence that left a bitter bile in the pit of my belly. As I closed the tome and saw how the hours had passed I wondered, why had I bothered? Dare I compare a book to McDonald's?

I've heard McDonald's is due to open on Intercities. *MY SISTER THE MOON* is probably good for the train, and you'll probably find it up there with Jeffrey Archer in the railway station too! Read it and weep!

THE THREE STIGMATA OF PALMER ELDRITCH by Philip K Dick
Grafton, 204 pp, £4.99, p/b

A MAZE OF DEATH by Philip K Dick
Grafton, 191 pp, £4.99, p/b

Reviewed by Tony Morton.

Two reissues from the Philip K Dick canon. Although separated by eight years, they both deal with death, or aspects of it. *THE THREE STIGMATA OF PALMER ELDRITCH* shows one man's dominance over others, even in drug enhanced illusion. *A MAZE OF DEATH* similarly has escapism, though not drugs in this case, with murderous outcome.

THE THREE STIGMATA OF PALMER ELDRITCH deals with the colonisation of Mars by deportees, where the colonists don't want to be there, and obtain drugs to escape. A superb market economy is envisioned here, with the same company giving miniature sets of Earth (as reminders), and selling the drugs which create the illusory effects within which the sets are used. The set-up is spoiled when Eldritch arrives back from the Prox system with a better drug, claimed to give "everlasting" life. The interaction between three of the main characters, Bulero, Mayerson and Eldritch himself, forms the central pivot to the plot, which twists and takes unexpected turns as it gathers pace. Unusual in that the "end" is about two-thirds of the way through, and yet it still builds up to an unexpected twist.

Conversely *A MAZE OF DEATH* deals with the story of individuals picked to exist on an uncharted planet. It all goes wrong as a murderer begins to do away with the colonists. Again this is ultimately a story about illusion, nothing turns out to be what you think. A well documented and thought-out theology within the story cites "belief" as the cause (?) of death. Similarly to *ELDRITCH*, this revolves around the "Supreme Being" being

active within the lives of the colonists. The contrast is that the fictitious theology proves believable in *MAZE*, whilst the image IS *ELDRITCH*, and hence the Stigmata of the title.

Two differing angles on a theme providing good stories and, though probably well known, never-the-less typical Dick analogies.

SLEEPWALK by John Saul
Bantam, 452pp, £4.99, p.b

Reviewed by Bernie Evans.

Not quite the usual John Saul, this one has a dissatisfied adult instead of the usual displaced child, although a lot of the actual is still based around the adolescents amongst the inhabitants of a small American town.

Teacher Judith Sheffield realises one day that the previously intractable young people have become model citizens, doing *exactly* as they are told, nothing less, but nothing more either. She also wonders why people suddenly start to die from strokes, quite young people in some cases, and what does it all have to do with the refinery on which the town's now declining wealth was originally based? Can the native Indian grandfather of one of her pupils help? What does he see that the white people cannot? And just what goes on in the nursing home up in the woods?, where those who have had strokes which have not proved fatal are taken.

For a non-sf writer who usually has a mystical or horrific (or both) answer to this type of question, Saul's answer this time is soundly based in science. I don't know just how sound the science is, but it's internally consistent, and the story hangs together well. If this had been presented as a straight sf novel it would have been a disappointment, as the mystic element does intrude into the parts based on science. What science? I'm not saying, it would give too much of the plot away. What I will say is, don't be put off by the way this novel is marketed. It's not quite sf, but it's close. It's also his most recent novel in this country, and I'm looking forward to seeing in what direction his future work goes.

THE RAINBOW ABYSS by Barbara Hambly
Grafton, 295 pp, £4.99, p/b

Reviewed by Pauline Morgan.

Barbara Hambly always tells a good story and this is no exception. Rhion and Jaldis are wizards. In their world, wizards are non-persons. They cannot marry or become involved in politics for who knows how they are influencing others with their spells.

Some religious cults think they should be exterminated altogether. Jaldis opens a Dark Well between worlds and hears others calling for help from a world where magic has been destroyed on the night that Rhion sells a love potion to the wrong person and they have to flee for their lives. Years pass before Jaldis is able to contact the other world again and he feels it is imperative to go there as the forces against wizards are strengthening and what happened in one place could easily happen here.

This is volume one of a series and has some of the hallmarks of two of Hambly's other series. Like the *DARWATH* trilogy and *THE SILICON MAGE* and its sequel we have a world where magic works. Wizards are able, albeit with varying degrees of difficulty, to travel from one world to another. In the afore mentioned novels this other world has been contemporary Earth. We will have to wait until volume two to find out more about the place Rhion and Jaldis have made contact with. Again, like the other books, *THE RAINBOW ABYSS* is a romance with a wizard - here it is Rhion - being one of the lovers. Enjoyable.

DOMES OF FIRE by David Eddings
Harper Collins, 470 pp, £14.99, h/b

Reviewed by Carol Morton.

This is a follow on from *THE ELENIUM* and, after that disaster, I approached this with some trepidation, but more of that later.

Sparhawk and Ehlana are now happily married with a young daughter, who is in reality the reincarnation of the Goddess Aprhail. For six years there has been peace, but rumours of unrest in the Tamul Empire reach Sparhawk and Ehlana. Subsequent investigations reveal that long dead heroes are literally coming to life, along with their armies, and are threatening the Emperor. When this begins to happen in other kingdoms Sparhawk and Ehlana, along with a hundred Pandion Knights, travel to the Tamul Empire to investigate, after an appeal from the Tamuls.

They travel overland via the Styric city of Saros, where it appears that someone on the ruling council of the Styrics is cahoots with their god (each council member is a high priest or priestess of one of the gods, and there are a thousand of them) to overthrow the monarchies and rule the world. The Troll Gods that were captured and banished by the maker of the Bheiliom are also out for revenge. The only way to stop them is to retrieve the Bheiliom and use that against all of them. The only problem is that Aprhail put Sparhawk

and Ehlana into a trance before they threw the Bhelliom into the deepest part of the sea.

Once again Eddings has his protagonists traipsing halfway across the world to right wrongs, but this time the story is a little more convincing. There are plenty of side-and sub-plots that are pleasing to read, especially the protracted courtship between Ehlana's "slave" Mirtai and Kring. Eddings is an exasperating writer. He gave us the excellent *BELGARIAD*, followed by the mediocre *MALLOREAN*. Then came the dire *ELENUIM*, and now this. After that downward progression I was expecting something truly awful, but I was pleasantly surprised. Whilst not as good as the *BELGARIAD*, this is much, much better than the rest. Welcome back Mr Eddings!

SHADOW MAZE by Jonathan Wylie

Corgi, 384 pp, £3.99, p/b

Reviewed by Carol Morton.

Varo and Brostek are two youths who have just undergone the transition from boyhood to manhood, and are returning to their village with trophies as proof of their skill in hunting. Expecting a celebration, they are staggered to discover their village destroyed and the people slaughtered by the Knifemen of Bari. Some of the bodies have been drained of their blood. The two young men manage to gather together other like-minded survivors from other similarly devastated villages, with a view to destroying the Knifemen. Varo and Brostek's group always arrive too late to help at villages that fall to the Knifemen, until the eclipses begin and they meet up with Lisle, an idiot-savant, and his cousin Slaton in the village of Trevine. The group periodically visit their friend Magara in Trevine. The eclipses that seem to precede the Knifemen attacks have not been seen in Trevine. Slaton tells Magara that Lisle's mother abandoned him and fled to Nevern, a beautiful garden that has since vanished in an impenetrable fog and is reputed to be the centre of the magic of light.

Magara has a tapestry that she believes shows the garden at Nevern in all four seasons. When she unrolls the tapestry she sees that the sun in one quadrant of it seems to be eclipsing. So, are the Knifemen, Nevern and the tapestry connected? The group then leaves Trevine, taking Lisle and Slaton with them. There is an eclipse, and Lisle manages to the band the location of the next Knifeman attack. They arrive and manage to kill a Knifeman wearing green robes, but as they do all the blood fountains out of his body and vanishes. Obviously another Knifeman is

pulling in the released power. Back in Trevine green has vanished from the rainbow in the tapestry, and the garden is beginning to show some signs of decay. The band must find the Knifeman who is gaining power, and restore Nevern before it totally decays and before the most powerful Knifeman can use its power to corrupt the rest of the lands.

Wylie has produced an excellent, if a little complex, novel. There is a very powerful storyline that holds the reader, and I for one found it very hard to put down. The characterisation is excellent, I must say it is very refreshing to find a strong female character in a novel these days, it makes a change. Go on, treat yourself to a novel of adventure, magic and escapism - this one.

ENDER'S GAME by Orson Scott Card

Legend, 357pp, £4.99, p/b

SPEAKER FOR THE DEAD by Orson Scott Card

Legend, 415 pp, £4.95 p/b

XENOCIDE by Orson Scott Card

Legend, 562pp, £4.99 p/b

Reviewed by Bernie Evans.

First UK paperback of *XENOCIDE*, and reissues of the other two at the same time. As with any well-written series, any one of these novels will stand alone, but they are better read as a whole, and in sequence.

ENDER'S GAME is hard sf, set mostly in a military school, and similar in some respects to Heinlein's *STARSHIP TROOPERS*, although the trainees are small children who have special aptitudes. We follow the story of one such child, Ender Wiggin, and to a lesser degree his older brother and sister, Peter and Valentine. By the end of the book Ender is a young man, re-united with Valentine, and they both live mostly on a star ship, travelling between planets.

In *SPEAKER FOR THE DEAD* relativity has extended their life-times by three thousand years, compared to planet-bound people, and the name Ender has passed into legend, but as the worst mass-murderer in history. Apart from Valentine, no-one knows that he is really the Speaker for the Dead, attempting to atone for his almost inadvertent xenocide by Speaking at funerals wherever he is requested. Then he goes to Lusitania, a small colony planet on which another intelligent race exists, and where he precipitates revolution.

XENOCIDE sees Ender trying to prevent the wiping-out of two, and possibly three, intelligent races, but the SF element has almost been submerged in the religion and mysticism which Scott Card is now employing. A fascinating read, un-put-downable, get them.

CHUCK BERRY

ACROSS THE POND

VOTE TONY FOR TAFF!

Tony Berry has been an active member of the Birmingham Science Fiction Group for over ten years. In addition to publishing many issues of his fanzine **EYEBALLS IN THE SKY**, he was a founder member of **FRANK'S APA**, chaired Novacon 16 and Novacon 18, served on the committee of Novacon 15 and Novacon 19, and is currently acting as Guest of Honour liaison and running operations for Novacon 22.

Few, if any, fans deserve a trip to the States more than Tony, and **NONE** will make a better representative of British SF fandom at ConFrancisco, the World SF Convention, in San Francisco next year.