

# BRUM GROUP NEWS

April 1993

Issue 259

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

GROUP CHAIRMAN - TONY MORTON, SECRETARY - HELENA BOWLES, NEWSLETTER EDITOR - MARTIN TUDOR,  
TREASURER - RICHARD STANDAGE, REVIEWS EDITOR - BERNIE EVANS, PUBLICITY OFFICER - STEVE JONES,  
ORDINARY MEMBER - MICK EVANS, NOVACON 23 CHAIRMAN - CAROL MORTON.

## A SPECIAL ANNOUNCEMENT

Due to circumstances outside our control (the forthcoming rail strike), our previously announced speaker, GARY KILWORTH, will not be able to attend our next meeting. However, we are delighted to announce that speaking to us in his stead we have

## GRAHAM JOYCE



Friday 16th April 1993, 7.45pm for 8.00pm  
Admittance: Members £2.50 Visitors £3.75

Graham Joyce is a talented, 'youngish', British author who currently lives in Leicester. He first spoke to the BSFG in May 1991 shortly after the publication of his first novel *DREAMSIDE*. Since then he has had stories published in *INTERZONE* and the 'pop music' anthology *IN DREAMS*. His second novel *DARK SISTER* appears in paperback from Headline this month, price £4.99. (*DARK SISTER* is reviewed on page 8.)

The BSFG meets at 7.45pm on the 3rd Friday of every month (unless otherwise 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 £9.00 per person, or £12.00 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).

## COLOPHON

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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.

All text by Martin Tudor except where stated otherwise.

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Many thanks this issue to BERNIE EVANS for typing the Book Reviews, all of our reviewers, STEVE GREEN, LOCUS and CRITICAL WAVE for the news in the Jophan Report, SHEP KIRKBRIDE back cover illustration and BILL ROTSLER for the other TONY FOR TAFF cartoons and TONY BERRY for the use of his spare room.

Can YOU eat a 'Desperate Dan

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Feckenham Road, B4090

out of Droitwich)

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on 558 7591

## FORTHCOMING EVENTS

16 APRIL 1993: GRAHAM JOYCE author of *DREAMSIDE* (Pan, £4.50) and *DARK SISTER* (Headline, £4.99) will be speaking to the BSFG at the White Lion, 7.45pm for 8pm.

19-24 APRIL 1993: *RETURN TO THE FORBIDDEN PLANET* "Shakespeare's 'Forgotten Rock 'n' Roll Masterpiece" will be showing at the Grand Theatre, Wolverhampton. Tickets £9.00-£18.50, call 0902 29212. If you are interested in seeing this in the company of other BSFG members please call HELENA BOWLES on 021 558 7591.

24 APRIL 1993: TERRY BROOKS will be signing copies of *THE TALISMANS OF SHANNARA* (Century, £14.99) and *THE ELF QUEEN OF SHANNARA* (Arrow, £4.99) at Andromeda, 84 Suffolk Street, Birmingham, from noon. Call 021 643 1999 for details of this and other signing sessions.

24-25 APRIL 1993: GLASGOW '93, comic art convention at the City Hall, Candleriggs. Guests include Jim Shooter, Archie Goodwin, Dougie Braithwaite, Jamie Delano, Sean Phillips, Steve Pugh & Paul Johnson. Attending £10.00 a day. Contact: Rusty Staples Ltd, PO Box 146, Glasgow, G1 1TR.

27 APRIL - 1 MAY 1993: *THE WITCHES* the first ever stage production of Roald Dahl's classic book, is a fast moving adventure story of a boy and his Grandmother and their battle against REAL witches! Grand Theatre, Wolverhampton, tickets £6.00 - £8.00, call 0902 29212 for details.

30 APR - 3 MAY 1993: WARP ONE, 35th UK STAR TREK convention. Pontins Middleton Tower Holiday Centre, near Morecambe, Lancs. Guests



of Honour to be announced. Contact: 69 Merlin Crescent, Edgware, Middlesex, HA8 6JB.

1 & 2 MAY 1993: **STAR TREK WEEKEND**, "Beam yourselves up to the Midlands Art Centre and see all six *STAR TREK* films in the company of other ardent 'trekkers'." Tickets only £14.00 (£10.00 for all concessions) for all six films. Call 021 440 3838.

7-8 MAY 1993: **GORMENGHAST** - David Glass's production of Mervin Peake's classic work will be performed at the Midlands Art Centre, music from John Eacott (Loose Tubes). Tickets £6.50 (concessions £4.75) call 021 440 3838.

15 MAY 1993: **CHRISTOPHER EVANS** will be signing copies of *CHIMERAS* and *AZTEC CENTURY* (Gollancz, £8.99, £14.99) at Andromeda, 84 Suffolk Street, Birmingham, from noon. Call 021 643 1999 for details of this and other signing sessions.

15 MAY 1993: At the same time **TOM HOLT** will be signing copies of *HERE COMES THE SUN* (Little, Brown, £14.99) and *OVERTIME* (Orbit, £4.99) at Andromeda, 84 Suffolk Street, Birmingham, from noon. Call 021 643 1999 for details of this and other signing sessions.

18-22 MAY 1993: **RUPERT AND THE GREEN DRAGON** at the Grand Theatre, Wolverhampton. From the company who brought us *POSTMAN PAT* and *FIREMAN SAME*, Rupert the Bear and the Green Dragon abounds in fun, music, magic and audience participation. Its gripping storyline is ideal for families. Tickets £5.50 to £7.00, call 0902 29212 for details.

21 MAY 1993: **COLIN GREENLAND** will be signing copies of *HARM'S WAY* (HarperCollins, £8.99, £14.99) at Andromeda, 84 Suffolk Street, Birmingham, from 4.30pm. Call 643 1999 for details of this and other signing sessions.

21 MAY 1993: **COLIN GREENLAND** author of the award winning *TAKE BACK PLENTY* and others, will be speaking to the Birmingham SF Group at the White Lion, 7.45pm for 8pm.

21 MAY 1993: **IAIN M BANKS** will be signing at Magic Labyrinth before speaking to the Leicester SF Group at the Rainbow and Dove in the town centre. Call Steph Mortimer or Dave Holmes at Magic Labyrinth, on 0533 518178, for further details.

22 MAY 1993: **COMIC MART** with guest **BRYAN TALBOT** at the Hotel Arcade, Ladywell Walk, off Hurst Street, Birmingham. Doors open 11am, admission 50p. Contact: Peter Lennon, 15 Yew Tree Close, Batchley, Redditch, B97 650 (0527 585036).

24 MAY - 5 JUNE: **SHERLOCK HOLMES THE MUSICAL** by Leslie Bricusses, starring Robert Powell and Roy Barraclough. Alexandra Theatre. Suffolk Street, Birmingham. Tickets £7.00-£19.50, Box Office 021 633 3325.

28-31 MAY 1993: **MEXICON V.** "Straight" science fiction con. St Nicholas Hotel, Scarborough. Featured guests include Ian McDonald and Ken Campbell. Attending £20.00, to: Bernie Evans, 121 Cape Hill, Smethwick, Warley, B66 4SH.

28-31 MAY 1993: **TERRY PRATCHETT** will open a weekend of *MYTHS, LEGENDS AND FAIRYTALES* at the Midlands Art Centre as part of this year's Birmingham Readers & Writers Festival. Call the Festival Office on 021 235 4244 for further information.

29 MAY 1993: **TERRY PRATCHETT** will be signing copies of the sequel to *ONLY YOU CAN SAVE MANKIND - JOHNNY AND THE DEAD* (Doubleday UK, £9.99) and paperbacks of *THE CARPET PEOPLE* (Corgi, £2.99) and *SMALL GODS* (Corgi, £4.99) at Andromeda, 84 Suffolk Street, Birmingham, from 10.30am. Call 021 643 1999 for details of this and other signing sessions.

?? JUNE 1993: **ROBERT RANKIN** will be signing at Andromeda, 84 Suffolk Street, Birmingham, call 021 643 1999 for further details.

5 JUNE 1993: **COMIC MART** at the Midland Hotel, New Street, Birmingham. Doors open noon. Contact: Golden Orbit, 9 Stratford Way, Huntington, York, YO3 9YW.

8-12 JUNE 1993: **ERIK THE VIKING** a new touring production of Terry Jones' children's book and film will be on at the Grand Theatre, Wolverhampton. Tickets £4.00-£8.00, call 0902 29212 for further details.

?? AUGUST 1993: **ORSON SCOTT CARD** will be signing at Andromeda, 84 Suffolk Street, Birmingham, call 643 1999 for further details.

28 AUGUST 1993: **COMIC MART** at the ex-Hotel Arcade, Ladywell Walk, off Hurst Street, Birmingham. Doors open 11am, admission 50p, contact: Peter Lennon, 15 Yew Tree Close, Batchley, Redditch, B97 (0527 585036).

WR  
**TOY FOR TAFF!**

3-6 SEPTEMBER 1993: CONFRANCISCO. 51st world science fiction convention at the San Francisco Marriott Moskone Convention Center. Guests of Honour: Larry Niven, Tom Digby, Alicia Austin, Jan Howard Finder. MC: Guy Gavriel Kay. Attending US\$110.00, Supporting \$25.00 until 31 March, then \$125.00, \$25.00 until 16 July, \$145 on the door. Contact British Agent: Chris O'Shea, 12 Stannard Road, London, E8 1DB.

1-3 OCTOBER 1993: FANTASYCON XVIII. Midland Hotel, Birmingham, Guests of Honour: Peter James, Tad Williams and Les Edwards, Master of Ceremonies Dennis Etchison, further guests to be announced. Attending £20 (to British Fantasy Society members) £30 (non-members), Supporting membership £10. Contact: Mike Chinn at 137 Priory Road, Hall Green, Birmingham, B28 0TG (tel: 021 474 2585).

5-7 NOVEMBER 1993: NOVACON 23 the Brum Group's own sf con, at the Royal Angus hotel in the city centre. Guest of honour Stephen Baxter. Attending membership costs £20 until Easter 1993, then £25 until 1st October and £30 on the door. Supporting membership is £8.00 (please note that this will NOT automatically reserve an attending place, but it WILL ensure receipt of all of the convention's publications and entitle you to vote in the Novas). Although the hotel has agreed to increase the membership ceiling from 300 to 350 people the committee advises you to register early, as they will if necessary turn people away on the door. Further details from Bernie Evans, 121 Cape Hill, Smethwick, Warley, West Midlands, B66 4SH (tel: 021 558 0997).

11 NOVEMBER 1993: COMIC MART at the Hotel Arcade, Ladywell Walk, off Hurst Street, Birmingham. Doors open 11am, admission 50p. Contact: Peter Lennon, 15 Yew Tree Close, Batchley, Redditch, B97 6SO (0527 585036).

26-28 NOVEMBER 1993: CON-YAK, annual international Beneluxcon, venue probably Altes Hotel, just outside Amsterdam. Guests of honour to be announced. Contact Richard Vermaas, James Wattstraat 13, 1097 DJ Amsterdam, the Netherlands.

1-4 APRIL 1994: SOU'WESTER, 45th UK national sf con, Britannia Adelphi Hotel, Liverpool. Guests of honour: Diane Duane, Neil Gaiman, Barbara Hambly, Peter Morwood. Attending £25.00, Supporting £12.50, children 9-14 on 1 April 1994 £12.50. Contact: 3 West Shrubbery, Redland, Bristol, BS6 6SZ.

END OF MAY 1994: INCONCEIVABLE. Second 'humour' con in Derby, date to be announced. Attending £15.00, contact 12 Crich Avenue, Littleover, Derby, DE23 6ES.

1-5 SEPTEMBER 1994: CONADIAN, 52nd world science fiction convention, at the Winnipeg Convention Centre. Guests of Honour Anne McCaffrey, George Barr, Barry B Longyear, Fan Guest of Honour Robert Runte. Attending US\$85.00, CAN\$95.00, Supporting US\$25.00, CAN\$30.00 until 6 September 1993. Contact British Agent: Helen McCarthy, 147 Francis Road, London, E10 6NT.

24-28 AUGUST 1995: INTERSECTION, 53rd world-con, SECC, Glasgow. Guests of honour Samuel R Delany, Gerry Anderson. Attending £50.00, Supporting £15.00, please note that "Glasgow pre-support and friend benefits will expire on 30 April 1993 - pre-supporters will become non-members and Friends will become supporters." Contact: Bernie Evans, 121 Cape Hill, Smethwick, Warley, B66 4SH.

27 DECEMBER 1999 - 2 JANUARY 2000: MILLENIUM. Venue to be announced, but definitely in Northern Europe (probably a Benelux country or UK). Attending £3.00 (£10.00) per year, to be deducted from eventual membership fee (to be announced before 1997). Contact: Malcolm Reid, 2/R, 9 Airlie Street, Hyndland, Glasgow, G12 9RJ.

*Although details are correct to the best of my knowledge, I advise readers to contact organizers prior to travelling.*

*Always enclose a stamped, self-addressed envelope when writing to any of the above contact addresses.*

*Please mention the BRUM GROUP NEWS when replying to listings or advertisements.*



## JOPHAN REPORT #61

by Martin Tudor

This month will be the last chance you have to vote in this year's TAFF race. Ballots have to reach the European Administrator, Pam Wells, by the 1st of May. So if you haven't voted yet please do so - you can even save a stamp by passing your ballot to our Treasurer, Richard Standage, at this month's meeting. Far be it for me to try to influence your vote, but only one of the candidates is a member of the BSFG and a veteran of numerous Novacon committees - you may spot the occasional clue scattered through this issue...

The 1993 Eastercon got off to a shaky start for many Midland fans trying to leave a fog bound Birmingham International Airport for Jersey on the Wednesday before the convention. Eventually most of them managed to find alternative flights, but the Evans family, represented by Bernie, Mick and Vicky were forced to take a flight from Exeter the following morning.

Hopefully I'll have a report from the convention, plus all the Awards news next issue - though if you're in a hurry the 30th issue of *CRITICAL WAVE* will be out within the week with full details, send £8.50 for a six issue subscription, or £1.95 for a sample copy to me at 845 Alum Rock Road, Ward End, Birmingham, B8 2AG.

CLEOPATRA WASN'T  
WRONGS!  
PUT YOUR  
MARK BY ANTHONY!



This year's Arthur C Clarke Award (and £1,000 cheque) went to Marge Piercy for *BODY OF GLASS*, Kim Stanley Robinson's *RED MARS* was runner-up.

Richard Grant picked up this year's Philip K Dick Award for best original paperback with *THROUGH THE HEART* (Bantam Spectre). The award includes a scroll and \$1,000, the runner-up, Elizabeth Vonarburg with *IN THE MOTHERS' LAND*, picked up \$500. Other nominees included *TAKE BACK FLENTY* by Colin Greenland, *AESTIVAL TIDE* by Elizabeth Hend and *IRON TEARS* by R A Lafferty.

Arthur C Clarke has sold *THE HAMMER OF GOD*, a 50,000 word expanded version of the 4,000 story, to Bantam Spectra. Bantam plan to publish 100,000 copies in June.

Isaac Asimov's 'final' foundation story, "The Consort", was due to appear in this month's issue of *ISAAC ASIMOV'S SCIENCE FICTION MAGAZINE*, along with an editorial taken from his own words as recorded by his widow and from unpublished letters!

US fan artist Bill Rotsler, whose cartoons are scattered throughout this issue, will teach an eight week course in sf writing, entitled "Beyond Reality", at the Learning Tree University in Southern California in May and June this year.

In a spectacular display of bandwagon-jumping, American tv producers have flooded the networks with telefantasy series as the new season begins.

Although the sheer number is certain to lead to casualties, with the poorly-received *SPACE RANGERS* tipped as the first, three of the shows have made an initial ratings impact.

Lorimar's *TIME TRAX*, the pilot episode of which has now been released on video in the UK, follows twenty-first century cop Darien Lambert of the Fugitive Retrieval Section as he hunts criminals who have escaped through time to 1993 America. The series was filmed in Queensland, Australia, and stars Dale Midkiff as Lambert, Peter Donat as evil genius Dr Mordicai Sahmbi and Elizabeth Alexander as Selma, Lambert's computer guide to 1993 society; the series was created by Harve Bennett, *STAR TREK* movie producer and creator of the 1970s "bionic" shows.

Warner, meanwhile, has come up with *BABYLON 5*, created by sf novelist Joe Michael Straczynski, former story editor on the recent incarnation of *TWILIGHT ZONE*; Straczynski has spent five years trying to get this project off the ground. The series is set in

the year 2257, in the aftermath of an intergalactic war between the Earth Alliance and the Minbari Federation ; the eponymous space station is neutral territory for the various races, described by the author as "Casablanca in space". If the series proves a hit, he intends to develop a linear storyline over a five-year timeframe.

But the most eagerly-awaited of the new sf shows is Paramount's *STAR TREK: DEEP SPACE NINE*, a companion to the popular *STAR TREK: THE NEXT GENERATION*, which itself is being tied into the seventh spin-off movie. Avery Brooks stars as Commander Benjamin Sisko, assigned to a remote space station formerly run by the Cardassians ; his wife died in the battle at Wolf 359, whilst *TNG*'s Captain Picard was under the control of the Borg ("Best of Both Worlds, Part II"). Rene Auberjonois features as Odo, a shape-changing alien, whilst Colm Meany and Rosalind Chao transfer from the Enterprise in their regular *TNG* roles as Edward and Keiko O'Brien.

Meanwhile, the latest season of NBC's *QUANTUM LEAP* made its debut in October, with a two-hour scene-setter. A key note this time is executive producer Don Bellisario's decision to let time-hopping Sam Beckett "leap" into the bodies of real people, with an emphasis on events in the early 1960s.

Principal filming on the long-rumoured *ALIENS Vs PREDATOR* will begin in September, according to the British *ALIENS* Fan Club ; Renny Harlin and James Cameron have both been floated as potential directors.

Nick Abadzis, Martin Barker, Ed Hillyer and Carol Swain will be among the guests at Caption 93, the second annual one-day comics convention at the Oxford Union.

CUT THE  
BALONEY!  
VOTE  
FOR TONY!



This year's event, to be held on 17 July, will feature panel discussions, performance art, workshop sessions, dealers' tables and a charity art auction. Attendance costs £8.00 (rising to £12.00 on 1 April), with a 25% discount for members of the Comics Creators Guild, payable to "Caption" at 25 Hart Street, Oxford, OX2 6BN.

Nico Veenkamp, Roelof Goudriaan and Larry van der Putte have teamed up to launch the European Convention Union, a new clearing house for promoting sf events. Goudriaan will publish a listings newsletter, Veenkamp will run an electronic noticeboard on BIX and FidoNet, and van der Putte will handle general enquiries. Convention details, donations and any offers of help should be directed to Goudriaan at Caan van Necklaan 63, 2281 BB Rijswijk, the Netherlands.

A fan club has been launched to honour the horror writer Guy N Smith, with a newsletter and special offers on his books ; annual membership costs £10.00, payable to Sandra Webb at 59 Meriden Avenue, Wollaston, Stourbridge, DY8 4QR.

The Science Fiction Writers of America's 1992 Nebula Award nominations are as follows: Best Novel: *A MILLION OPEN DOORS*, John Barnes (Tor) ; *SARAH CANARY*, Karen Joy Fowler (Holt 1991) ; *CHINA MOUNTAIN ZHANG*, Maureen F McHugh (Tor) ; *A FIRE UPON THE DEEP*, Vernor Vinge (Tor) ; *DOOMSDAY BOOK*, Connie Willis (Bantam Spectra) ; *BRIAR ROSE*, Jane Yolen (Tor).

Best Novella: "Silver or Gold", Emma Bull (*AFTER THE KING*) ; "The Territory", Bradley Denton (*F&SF* July, 1992) ; "Protection", Maureen F McHugh (*ASIMOV'S* April 1992)

; *CITY OF TRUTH*, James Morrow (St Martin's); "Contact", Jerry Oltion & Lee Goodloe (*ANALOG*, November 1991); "Barnacle Bill the Spacer", Lucius Shepard (*ASIMOV'S* July 1992); *GRIFFIN'S EGG*, Michael Swanwick (St Martins and *ASIMOV'S* May 1992).

**Best Novelette:** "Matter's End", Gregory Benford (*FULL SPECTRUM* 3 1991); "The July Ward", S N Dyer (*ASIMOV'S* April 1992); "The Honeycrafters", Carolyn Gilman (*F&SF* oct/Nov 1991); "Danny Goes to Mars", Pamela Sargent (*ASIMOV'S* October 1992); "Suppose They Gave a Peace", Susan Shwartz (*ALTERNATIVE PRESIDENTS*); "Prayers on the Wind", Walter Jon Williams (*WHEN THE MUSIC'S OVER* 1991).

**Best Short Story:** "Life Regarded as a Jigsaw Puzzle of Highly Lustrous Cats", Michael Bishop (*OMNI* September 1991); "Lennon Spex", Paul DiFilippo (*AMAZING* July 1992); "The Mountain to Mohammed", Nancy Kress (*F&SF* April 1992); "Vinland the Dream", Kim Stanley Robinson (*ASIMOV'S* November 1991 and *REMAKING HISTORY* 1991); "The Arbitrary Placement of Walls", Martha Soukup (*ASIMOV'S* April 1992); "Even the Queen, Connie Willis (*ASIMOV'S* April 1992).

ANTHONY HITS  
THE MARK!



A lawsuit brought against *LOCUS* and Verna Smith Trestrail (daughter and heir of EE "Doc" Smith) by Malibu Graphics over a disclaimer by Trestrail in the June 1990 issue of *LOCUS* was dismissed on 15 February in Alameda Superior Court.

The 25th Anniversary issue of *LOCUS* (April 1993) reports that this is the first successful court test of the new Californian Anti-SLAPP (Strategic Lawsuits Against Public Participation) law which came into effect on 1 January this year. The law is designed to protect individuals and groups from corporations and big businesses who bring lawsuits against those who speak out against them.

# Novacon 23

Guest of Honour  
Stephen Baxter

Royal Angus Hotel,  
Birmingham

5, 6th and 7th November 1993

\*\*\*\*\*

Rates to join:

Up to Eastercon £20.00

Up to 1st October £25.00

On the door £30.00

\*\*\*\*\*

Room Rates (per person per night)

Single: £33.50

Double/Twin: £29.50

Prices include Full English

Breakfast and VAT

\*\*\*\*\*

Contact:

Bernie Evans

Registrations

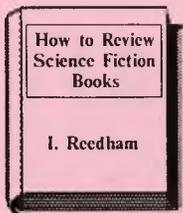
121 Cape Hill

Smethwick

Warley

B66 4SH

Tel: 021-558-0997



# Book Reviews

**DARK SISTER** by Graham Joyce  
Headline, 372 pp, £4.99, p/b

Reviewed by Steve Green

Whilst Joyce's debut novel, the critically-praised *DREAMSIDE* [1991], voyaged across the metaphysical inner landscape of its protagonists' subconscious desires, its successor remains on the more traditional *terra littera* of supernatural dark fantasy.

Maggie Sanders, already uneasy with her role as supportive wife and mother-of-two, finds a vent for this restlessness when an ancient diary is discovered in the chimney of their Victorian villa; through the cryptic entries and their mystical resonances, Maggie is seduced by forces she can barely under-

stand into completing a transmigration in stasis for more than a century, reckless as to the price she might have to pay.

Well-constructed, with solid pacing and characterization, *DARK SISTER* nevertheless lacks certain of the subtleties of its predecessor; the flavour of its narrative is smooth rather than rich, whilst the conclusion holds few surprises for those versed in this particular genre form. That said, Joyce again displays a firm grasp of language and structure, and I for one look forward to his third novel with optimism.

**VON BEK** by Michael Moorcock  
Millennium, 504 pp, £10.99, "C" format  
**THE ETERNAL CHAMPION** by Michael Moorcock  
Millennium, 530 pp, £10.99, "C" format  
**HAWKMOON** by Michael Moorcock  
Millennium, 533 pp, £10.99, "C" format  
**CORUM** by Michael Moorcock

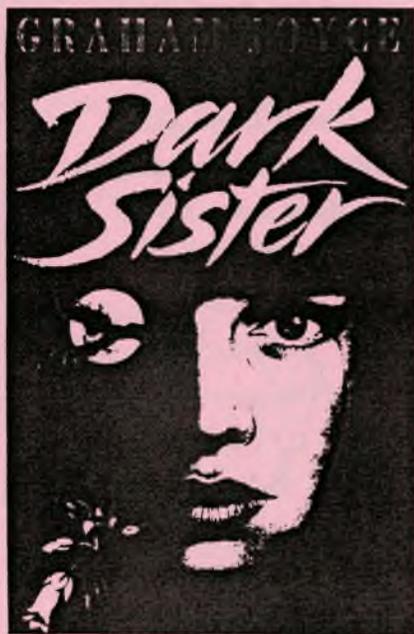
Millennium, 393 pp, £10.99, "C" format  
Reviewed by Carol Morton.

These are the first four in what will be a complete collection of all Moorcock's "Eternal Champion" stories, a mammoth undertaking which will eventually comprise some 14 or 15 volumes, a library in itself.

The first volume, *VON BEK*, details how Ulrich Von Bek, sickened by the war he is involved in, deserts his men and wanders across the borders of our world into another world of the multiverse. Here he meets Sabrina, a servant of Lucifer. She takes Von Bek to meet her master, and Lucifer persuades Von Bek to enter his service, to go in search of the Holy Grail, which he will offer to God in return for his reinstatement into Heaven. The book continues with other stories of the Von Bek family, their search for the Grail and their willing servitude to Lucifer.

*THE ETERNAL CHAMPION* is the story of John Daker, whose spirit is dragged into another incarnation, Erekoze, by King Rigenos, who asks Erekoze to lead humanity into a genocidal war against the Eldren. He does so, but meets and falls in love with Ermizahd, an Eldren princess. The sheer brutality of the humans towards the Eldren turns Erekoze against humanity, and he then leads the Eldren against them. Later he is pulled away from Ermizahd and into further incarnations, becoming Urlik Sarsol and Prince Flamadin, always searching for Tanelorn, the eternal city, and for his Ermizahd.

*HAWKMOON* was Moorcock's answer to the jingoism of the sixties. His hero, Dorian Hawkmoon, is German, and his antagonists



British, the Dark Empire of Granbretan. This volume tells of Hawkmoon's capture by the Dark Empire, of the embedding in his skull of a jewel which relays all he sees to the scientists of the Dark Empire, of his release with instructions to capture Yisselda, who is the daughter of Count Brass Lord Protector of the Kamarg, the only place in Europe to hold out against the Dark Empire. We learn of his defection after Count Brass suppresses the jewel's power, and his search for a scientist who can remove it before it reactivates, and of his waging war on the Dark Kingdom, now in the service of the Mythical Runestaff, with Count Brass and Yisselda at his side.

The eponymous *CORUM* is Prince of the Scarlet Robe and one of the Vandhagh, a wise, gentle and magical race whose lives are at eternal peace. Corum's world is turned upside down by the invasion of the human Mabden, which leaves him as the last of the Vandhagh and in love with a Mabden woman, Rhalina. Their love is doomed for the Vandhagh are almost immortal, the Mabden more ephemeral.

The four different episodes from the "Eternal Champion" stories introduces elements that run through all of the other stories - the Multiverse, Tanelorn, Erekoze's black sword, the Runestaff, the balance of Law and Chaos. They are an excellent introduction to both the series, and to the Heroic Fantasy niche of the genre, well worth investing in.

STATIONS OF THE TIDE by Michael Swanwick  
Legend, 252 pp, £4.99, p/b

Reviewed by Michael Jones.

*STATIONS OF THE TIDE* is set on the planet Miranda as the world approaches that season in its generations-long year when melting icecaps raise the level of the oceans to flood whole continents. To this unstable milieu comes an offworld bureaucrat with the task of finding a criminal magician and recovering from him the forbidden technology which he has stolen. We all know that "any sufficiently advanced technology is indistinguishable from magic", but things are not that simple. Both magic and technology are here and it becomes difficult to separate them as the story weaves a strange, exotic course through the borderlands between real-science fiction and fantasy. The bureaucrat finds his man and solves the mystery of the stolen technology, but there's still a dramatic reversal to come which will force the reader to re-assess the significance of everything that has happened so far. He may have been beguiled by hallucinatory images which could

have been real, and supposedly real events which were merely imagination, all described with the same stylish craftsmanship of a very highly accomplished writer. I recommend this book unreservedly to anyone who likes something which will make them think.

THE LONDON MAGAZINE  
Picador, 160 pp, £5.99

Reviewed by William McCabe.

*THE LONDON MAGAZINE* has been running for several years now, but with the February / March 1993 issue has come to an arrangement with book publisher Picador that should ensure it gets into a lot more bookshops. It is also available by subscription at £28.50 pa (around six issues), from 30 Thurloe Place, London SW7. The magazine is devoted to arts and literature, and prints original fiction, reviews and other articles.

This issue contains three short (28 pages total) stories, 14 pages of poetry, several short pieces of journalism ranging from art history to a visit to a hairdresser, and 30+ pages of book reviews. I feel totally unqualified to judge the magazine on artistic merit, but this newsletter is devoted to genre sf, and the magazine contains none, apart from a review of an Edgar Allan Poe biography.

By the time you read this review the next issue should be out, with a new set of stories, articles and reviews, and who knows, there may be some genre material in it. For those of you that aren't obsessed with genre, you could do a lot worse than reading *THE LONDON MAGAZINE*.

IN THE COUNTRY OF TATTOOED MEN by Garry Kilworth  
Grafton, 224 pp, £5.99, p/b

Reviewed by Chris Morgan.

In a Kilworth story collection you never know what to expect, except that it's bound to be breathtakingly original and of the finest quality. If I tell you that "On the Watchtower at Plataea" is a time travel sf story, that won't prepare you in any way for the amazing revelations it contains. Similarly, both "Dop\*el-gan\*er" and "Bronze Casket for a Mummified Shrew-Mouse" are fantasy, though totally different from each other. Most of the stories are recognisable as sf or fantasy, yet there is also "Networks", one of the most unsettling horror tales you could find. "Spiral Sands" is a surrealist piece; "The Wall" is a parable; the title story has Vietnam War connections.

The best here, one of two new stories out of the twenty in the collection, is "1948", a true gem of subtlety and paranoia, almost unclassifiable, hugely entertaining. And what about the worst story here? There's usually a story or two (at least) that drags down the best of collections - but not this one. With hand on heart I can assure you that each piece is well worth your time and money. If there's a better collection of stories published during 1993 I'll be surprised.

MERCYCLE by Piers Anthony  
Grafton, 343 pp, £4.99, p/b

Reviewed by Carol Morton.

Five disparate individuals answer an advertisement and end up on a bizarre adventure to end all bizarre adventures. They each undergo some unknown process (unknown to the reader, that is) which enables them to cycle across the ocean bed without breathing apparatus or pressure suits. The five are unknowingly manipulated by an alien presence into becoming a good working team before being told just what they are supposed to be doing. The discovery of a sunken Minoan war galleon, a colony of Merfolk and a Chinese submarine, all in the deeps off the coast of America, are just some of the "unusual" finds the party make before discovering that their mission could be the key to the survival of both the human and alien races.

This, according to the author's note, was his first novel Anthony ever wrote. It was rejected at the time, but he exhumed it, added some 25,000 words and then, due to his current stature in the genre, it sold. Whilst the idea behind the story is intriguing, the whole plot falls apart because the process by which humans are able to live under water unprotected is not explained at all. This leaves a rather large hole in the story which no amount of clever descriptive passages can fill. Sorry Mr Anthony, but you should have left this one where it was, it has done nothing to enhance your reputation.

RUDE ASTRONAUTS by Allen Steele  
Legend, 261 pp, £9.99 "C" format, £14.99, h/b

Reviewed by Tony Morton.

Steele's first short story collection brings together some sf, of both the "near space" and "alternative space" types, and some non-fiction pieces. Separated by these labels into three distinct parts, this volume presents the reader with a variety of yarns

and some thought provoking resués.

In part one, on the "near space" theme, we have future history stories - the man in space tales about shuttle pilots, beamjacks et al featured in Steele's novels such as *ORBITAL DECAY* and *LUNAR DESCENT*. We get "snapshots" as preamble to the novels, the everyday stuff that goes on while momentous events happen elsewhere - and so more human and more fun. The five stories integrate well into his developing theme regarding the purported near future, with three bar-room tales, told in Diamondback Jack's delivered with the elaboration and often exaggeration that characterizes such tales. I particularly liked "Free Beer and the William Casey Society", mainly for the ingenious way booze is sneaked into space. "The Return of Frank Weird" was pretty sick just for a pun. "Live at the Mars Hotel" proves to be a highlight for me, with its musical theme and interview format presenting a wonderful pastiche of the music business and people's perceptions.

The "alternative space" stories in part two also fit in well together, although an alternative history is probably a more apt label. "Goddard's People" deals with the race for rocket power and is set during a WW2 in which the Nazis threaten to develop rockets to bomb the USA. The theme is developed throughout this section, climaxing in the race to, and conquest of, the moon leading to Mars.

In part three, "contemporary stories", Steele delivers a mixture of scientific factual pieces and odd tales. "Hapgood's Hoax" provides an amusing aside into the sf genre and the gullibility of the US public. I found "Waiting for the World" uncomfortable. From a British position of not having firearms everywhere I look, the "Survivalist" attitude of having enough firepower to *start* the end of the world worries me, I would hope to see survivalism as the ability to farm using older methods, and snare food with traps, rather than gunslingers shooting at everything that moves! The stories concerning espionage and double dealing show just how shabby mankind can be, and are so well written as to spark just the right emotions.

Overall the collection presents an interesting, well written mixed bag of highly readable tales. Not to be missed.

THE PAPER GRAIL by James P Blaylock  
Grafton, 371 pp, £4.99, p/b

Reviewed by Michael Jones.

Howard Barton comes to the remote northern coast of California in search of a

olded piece of paper - a sheet he believes to bear a sketch by the legendary Japanese artist Hokusai. Within a day of his arrival he is wondering if he has turned up the highway to Loonyville by mistake. Strange people and strange events surround him and only gradually does he discover that it is the sketch and not himself that is the focus of attention. Activities polarise into a struggle between good and bad as the true nature of the sketch is revealed.

On the literary level this book is superb - the descriptive passages are well done and the characters, however strange and difficult to understand, come over as real and completely believable people. The trouble is that the story starts at first by getting bogged down in its own complications, and you have to persevere through about two-thirds of the book before it pulls itself together and begins to head in a definite direction. And it takes longer than that for the fantasy element to become clearly identified.

If your taste inclines to the offbeat and unusual you may like it, but if you prefer your sf/fantasy clear and uncomplicated you may not. Myself - I'm not sure.

DAMIA'S CHILDREN by Anne McCaffrey  
Bantam, 264 pp, £14.99, h/b

Reviewed by Carol Morton.

The story centres around the four children of Damia and Afra Gwynn-Lyon. Each of these children was "bonded" with a pair of one-eyed Mrdinis at six months of age. The Mrdinis are the race of sentient aliens who contacted Damia and Afra through dreams at the end of the previous novel, *DAMIA*. They have entered into an alliance with the human worlds to guard against further incursions by the Hivers, an insectile race bent on genocide of the human and Mrdini races, to be followed by colonisation of their worlds. Far out in space three hive ships have been found so Laria, Damia's eldest child, goes to Clarf, the Mrdini homeworld, to teach and work in the tower. Thian joins the fleet of allied ships racing to intercept the Hiver's ships. Rojer is sent to investigate what appears to be the wreckage of a hive colony ship, and discovers a living Hive Queen. Zara, the youngest, manages to communicate with the Queen.

This is the latest volume in the saga of the Raven women, first introduced in two short stories - "Lady in the Tower" published in *F & SF* in 1959, (Anne likes to acknowledge this as her first published story), and "A Meeting of Minds", published in *F & SF* in

1969. Then came *THE ROWAN*, then *DAMIA*, and now this. I'm sorry Anne, but *enough!* These tales are fast becoming a mediocre soap opera. This novel is too episodic for the story to flow properly, the plot is superficial and lacking the depth of characterisation Anne is known for. It does not hold the reader's interest. This is the first McCaffrey I haven't liked, hopefully it will be the last. It's disappointing, for completists only.

LABYRINTH OF NIGHT by Allen Steele  
Legend, 353 pp, £4.99, p/b

Reviewed by Tony Morton.

This is the latest of Steele's "near space" novels, set on Mars where the discovery of alien artifacts leads to increasing tensions on Earth, with governments haggling to harness the potential held within the find. The Mars personnel prove to be secondary to political greed and motivation on Earth, where events take a military tack which results in a worsening of the overall situation for those left to do the research. Of the artifacts themselves, these prove both baffling and ultimately deadly to the investigators as they uncover puzzle after puzzle to be able to continue deeper into the structures. Events take a turn for the worse when a new American supervisor invokes martial law on the base, his prejudice and xenophobia only too apparent. A secret agent, Nash, is sent in to find out what is actually happening on the base as reports become sketchy, but he is recognised by the Commander, L'Enfant, who finally goes loony just as the motivation of the reactivated alien "robots" is revealed. A surprising climax to this well paced novel heightens the excitement.

The story-line is well thought out, with enough pace and intrigue to generate excitement without losing the main theme. Characters are believable and develop well within the plot, presenting credible scenarios, acting as "real" people would to "real" events. A superb tale, well told. I loved it.

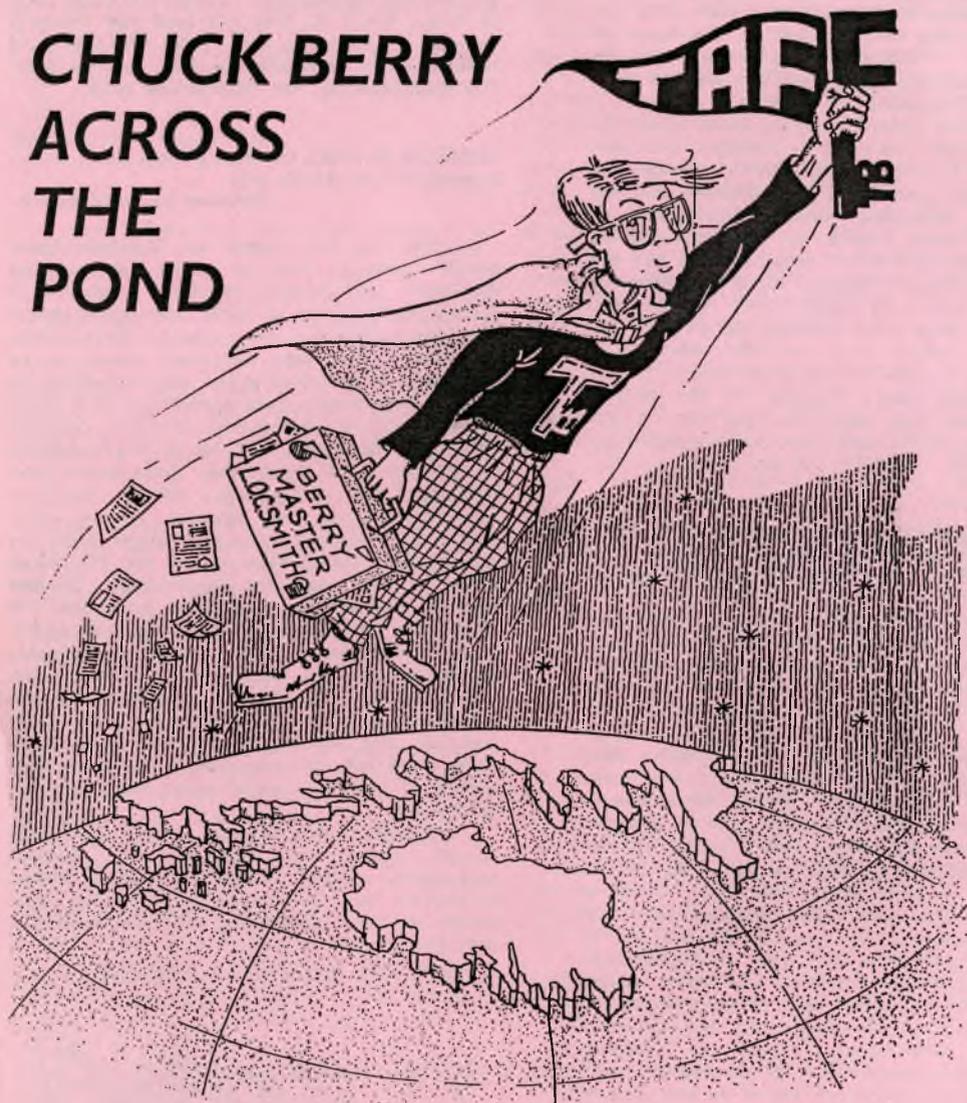
TONY MORTON



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