

# BRUM GROUP NEWS

June 1995

Issue 285

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

GROUP CHAIRMAN - CAROL MORTON, SECRETARY - ANNE WOODFORD, NEWSLETTER EDITOR - MARTIN TUDOR,  
TREASURER - STEVE JONES, PUBLICITY OFFICER - SARAH FREAKLEY, ORDINARY MEMBER - ALAN WOODFORD,  
NOVACON 25 CHAIRMAN - TONY MORTON, NOVACON 26 CHAIRMAN - CAROL MORTON.

This month's speaker is  
**COLIN GREENLAND**  
ON FRIDAY 16 JUNE 1995,  
7-45 FOR 8-00

Admittance: Members £2.50 Visitors £3.75  
(half-price for 14-18 year olds  
on production of proof of age).



Born in Dover, 17 March 1954, COLIN GREENLAND wrote his first novel about a fire-engine that laid an egg five years later. Educated at St Lawrence College, Ramsgate, Kent, 1964-72; Pembroke College, Oxford, 1972-79, BA in English literature and language (honours) 1975; D.Phil. in English literature 1981; his doctorate study of 'New Wave' science fiction was published in 1983 as THE ENTROPY EXHIBITION. Fellow in creative writing at the Science Fiction Foundation, 1980-82, he was co-editor of INTERZONE, 1982-85; coordinator, Eaton Conference on Science Fiction, University of California, Riverside/North East London Polytechnic, 1983-84; part-time tutor, University of London Extra-Mural Department, 1985-90; chair of the SF Writer's Conference, Milford, 1986. Since 1989 he has been reviews editor of FOUNDATION. He received the J Lloyd Eaton award for criticism in 1985, and both the Arthur C Clarke and BSFA award in 1991 for the first volume in the 'Tabitha Jute' trilogy, TAKE BACK PLENTY. His other works include the novels DAYBREAK ON A DIFFERENT MOUNTAIN (1984), THE HOUR OF THE THIN OX (1986), OTHER VOICES (1988) and HARM'S WAY (1993). The second volume of the 'Tabitha Jute' trilogy, SEASONS OF PLENTY, appears this month from HarperCollins, price £15.99.

*[Thanks to 20TH CENTURY SCIENCE FICTION WRITERS, third edition, for much of the above information.]*

The BSFG meets at 7.45pm on the 3rd Friday of every month (unless otherwise notified) in the upstairs Function Room of the Australian Bar, corner of Hurst Street and Bromsgrove Street in Birmingham city centre. The annual subscription rates (which include twelve copies of this newsletter and reduced price entry to meetings) are £10.00 per person, or £13.50 for 2 members at the same address. Cheques etc. should be made payable to "the Birmingham Science Fiction Group" and sent to the Treasurer, Steve Jones, c/o 121 Cape Hill, Smethwick, Warley, West Mids., B66 4SH. Book reviews, review copies and other contributions and enquiries regarding the Brum Group News to: Martin Tudor, Newsletter Editor, 845 Alum Rock Road, Birmingham, B8 2AG.

## COLOPHON

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All text by Martin Tudor except where stated otherwise. This publication was printed on the CRITICAL WAVE photocopier. For details of WAVE's competitive prices contact:  
Martin Tudor, 845 Alum Rock Road,  
Ward End, Birmingham, B8 2AG.

Many thanks this issue to BERNIE EVANS for producing the address labels, MATRIX, STEVE GREEN, CRITICAL WAVE and WHAT'S ON for the news in the Jophan Report and Events listing, AL JOHNSTON for his Phannish Fizzicks and TONY BERRY for the use of his spare room.

## FORTHCOMING EVENTS

15-17 JUNE 1995: *THE RED BELLIED QUEEN* the premiere of Foursight Theatre's bizarre play which explores the life, times and battles of Boadicea and her two, hitherto obscured daughters. Her bones are buried beneath platform eight, Kings Cross Station. When her bones are shaken Boadicea, Queen of the Celts, red-blooded, brave and brutal, returns to life - and she means business. The Studio at Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry. Call 01203 524524 for details.

16 JUNE 1995: COLIN GREENLAND, author of TAKE BACK PLENTY and the sequel SEASONS OF PLENTY (HarperCollins, £15.99), will speak to the Brum Group in the upstairs room at the Australian Bar, Hurst Street/Bromsgrove Street, Birmingham, 7.45pm for 8.00pm.

16 JUNE 1995: *APPLESEED* directed by Kazuyoshi Katayama and based on the comic by cult writer Masumune Shirow will be showing from 11.15pm at Phoenix Arts, 11 Newarke Street,

Leicester, tickets £2.00 call 0116 255 4854. 17 JUNE 1995: COLIN GREENLAND, author of TAKE BACK PLENTY and the sequel SEASONS OF PLENTY (HarperCollins, £15.99), will be signing at Andromeda book shop from noon. Call 0121-643-1999 for further details of this and other signings.

17 JUNE 1995: COMIC MART at Carrs Lane Church Centre, Birmingham. Opens noon. Contact: Golden Orbit, 9 Stratford Way, Huntington, York, YO3 9YW.

30 JUNE 1995: *ROUJIN Z* directed by Hiroyuki Kitabuko, based on a story by the creator of Akira, Otomo Katsuhiro, will be showing from 11.15pm at Phoenix Arts, 11 Newarke Street, Leicester, tickets £2.00 call 0116 255 4854.

1 JULY 1995: WOLVES OF FENRIG, *DR WHO* group meet at the Australian Bar, Hurst Street, Birmingham, 3pm-10.30pm. Contact: 161 Dangerfield Lane, Darlaston, Wednesbury, Staffs., WS10 7RU for further details.

8-9 JULY 1995: SPACESCAPES '95. "Extravaganza" at the NEC, Birmingham. NB: We have now heard rumours that this event has been cancelled. No further details available.

8 JULY - 5 AUGUST 1995: *V-TOPIA: VISIONS OF A VIRTUAL WORLD* an innovative exhibition of interactive art using video and computer technology which takes an imaginative and critical look at our increasingly-touted virtual future and the utopian thinking that informs it. Ikon Gallery, Birmingham. Admission free, Tuesday-Saturday 11am-6pm, Thursday 11am-8pm.

14-16 JULY 1995: DIMENSION JUMP '95 the official RED DWARF Fan Club convention, Stratford-Upon-Avon. Contact: Garden Cottage, Hall Farm, Scotton, Norwich, NR10 5DF.

21 JULY 1995: ANNE GAY author of MINDSAIL, THE BROOCH OF AZURE MIDNIGHT, DANCING ON THE VOLCANO and TO BATHE IN LIGHTNING will speak to the Brum Group in the upstairs room at the Australian Bar, Hurst Street/Bromsgrove Street, Birmingham, 7.45pm for 8.00pm.

21 JULY 1995: *SPACE ADVENTURE COBRA* directed by Osamu Dexaki, an old-fashioned Manga in a STAR WARS vein, with soundtrack by Yello, will be showing from 11.15pm at Phoenix Arts, 11 Newarke Street, Leicester, tickets £2.00 call 0116 255 4854.

28 JULY 1995: *WINGS OF HONNEAMISE* directed by Hiroyuki Yamaga, involved 300 animators and a soundtrack by Ryuichi Sakamoto, showing from 11.15pm at Phoenix Arts, 11 Newarke Street, Leicester, tickets £2.00 call 0116 255 4854.

3 AUGUST - 7 SEPTEMBER 1995: *LORD OF THE FLIES* the world premiere of Nigel Williams stage adaptation of William Golding's classic

tale, directed by Elijah Moshinsky. At The Other Place, Stratford-upon-Avon. Call: 01789 295623.

5 AUGUST 1995: WOLVES OF FENRIC, *DR WHO* group meet at the Australian Bar, Hurst Street, Birmingham, 3pm-10.30pm. Contact: 161 Dangerfield Lane, Darlaston, Wednesbury, Staffs., WS10 7RU for further details.

5 AUGUST 1995: RAIDERS OF THE LOST ARCHIVES '95 fantastic tv festival at Stourbridge Town Hall, 10.30am-10.30pm. Send a stamped, self-addressed envelope for further details to: Kaleidoscope, 93 Old Park Road, Dudley, West Midlands, DY1 3NE.

5 AUGUST 1995: COMIC MART at Carrs Lane Church Centre, Birmingham. Opens noon. Contact: Golden Orbit, 9 Stratford Way, Huntington, York, YO3 9YW.

18 AUGUST 1995: TOM HOLT, PATRICK TILLEY and HAYDEN YOUNG will speak to the Brum Group in the upstairs room at the Australian Bar, Hurst Street/Bromsgrove Street, Birmingham, 7.45pm for 8.00pm. (NB: TO BE CONFIRMED.)

18-20 AUGUST 1995: PRECURSOR small, informal convention at the Hertfordpark Hotel, Stevenage. Attending £15.00 made payable to "Rob Hansen". Room rates twin/double £20.50, single £23.50 per person per night. Contact: 144 Plashet Grove, East Ham, London, E6 1AB.

24-28 AUGUST 1995: INTERSECTION, 53rd world-con, Scottish Exhibition and Conference Centre, Glasgow. Guests of honour Samuel R Delany, Gerry Anderson, Vinç Clarke. Attending £90.00 until 22 July after which advance memberships close and it will cost £100.00 on the door). Contact: Admail 336, Glasgow, G2 1BR, Scotland.

2 SEPTEMBER 1995: WOLVES OF FENRIC, *DR WHO* group meet at the Australian Bar, Hurst Street, Birmingham, 3pm-10.30pm. Contact: 161 Dangerfield Lane, Darlaston, Wednesbury, Staffs., WS10 7RU for further details.

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20 OCTOBER 1995: ROBERT RANKIN author of the humorous Brentford Triangle and Armageddon series will speak to the Brum Group in the upstairs room at the Australian Bar, Hurst Street/Bromsgrove Street, Birmingham, 7.45pm for 8.00pm. (NB: TO BE CONFIRMED.)

23-28 OCTOBER 1995: RETURN TO THE FORBIDDEN PLANET winner of the Laurence Olivier Award for Best Musical returns to the Birmingham Hippodrome. Call the box office on 0121-622-7486 for further details.

Wednesday 23rd October  
RETURN TO THE  
FORBIDDEN PLANET  
at the Birmingham  
Hippodrome, Hurst Street.  
ANN WOODFORD is organising  
a block-booking for this  
performance (curtains open  
7.30pm). Block-bookings  
receive a £3.00 reduction  
per ticket. Ann is taking  
deposits of £5.00 per  
person NOW! Either speak  
to her at this month's  
meeting or call her on  
0121-559-7761  
for further details.

28 OCTOBER 1995: COMIC MART at Carrs Lane Church Centre, Birmingham. Opens noon. Contact: Golden Orbit, 9 Stratford Way, Huntington, York, YO3 9YW.

3-5 NOVEMBER 1995: NOVACON 25 the Brum Group's own science fiction convention at a new venue - the Chamberlain Hotel, Alcester Street, Birmingham. Guests of Honour: Brian W Aldiss, Harry Harrison and Bob Shaw, with Special Guest Iain Banks. Attending membership is £25.00 until 1 October 1995. Supporting membership costs £8.50. Progress Report #2 and hotel booking forms are available, deadline for hotel bookings is 20th July 1995. Contact CAROL MORTON, 14 Park Street, Lye, Stourbridge, West Midlands, DY9 8SS, cheques should be made payable to "Novacon 25". Room rates are now only £17.50 per person per night in twin/double and £35.00 pppn in a single, prices include full English breakfast.

3-5 NOVEMBER 1995: ReContaniméTed 1995, anime convention at the Grand Hotel, Birmingham. Attending £21.00 until 30 September, £26.00 thereafter. Contact: Martin Pay, 29 Langton Avenue, Chelmsford, CM1 2BW.

4 NOVEMBER 1995: WOLVES OF FENRIC, *DR WHO* group meet at the Australian Bar, Hurst Street, Birmingham, 3pm-10.30pm. Contact: 161 Dangerfield Lane, Darlaston, Wednesbury.

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17 NOVEMBER 1995: UNIVERSITY CHALLENGE featuring the BSFG versus THE BIRMINGHAM UNIVERSITY FANTASY & SCIENCE FICTION SOCIETY. In the upstairs room at the Australian Bar, Hurst Street/Bromsgrove Street, Birmingham, 7.45pm for 8.00pm. (NB: TO BE CONFIRMED.)

BEER & SKITTLES

at the Samson & Lion,  
Wordsley on  
Friday 15 December.

CAROL MORTON is now taking bookings for this popular event. Deposit £5.00 per person. Food, transport, prizes and skittles will be included in the final price. (Last year it was £10.00 per person, we will announce the price for this year as soon as possible.) Book early as places are limited.

16 DECEMBER 1995: COMIC MART at Carrs Lane Church Centre, Birmingham. Opens noon. Contact: Golden Orbit, 9 Stratford Way, Huntington, York, YO3 9YW.

5-8 APRIL 1996: EVOLUTION 47th UK National Convention, the Radisson Edwardian Hotel at Heathrow. Guests of honour: Colin Greenland, Bryan Talbot, Jack Cohen. Attending £24.00, supporting £14.00. Contact: 13 Lindfield Gardens, Hampstead, London, NW3 6PX.

29 AUGUST - 2 SEPTEMBER 1996: LACON III 54th World SF Convention, Anaheim Convention Center, Anaheim Hilton and Towers and Anaheim Marriott, California, USA. Guests: James White, Roger Corman, Elsie Wollheim, Connie Willis (Toastmaster), Takumi and Sachiko Shibano (Fan Guests of Honour). Attending \$90.00 until 30 June 1995, then \$110.00. Supporting \$30.00, then \$35.00. Contact: c/o SCIFI, PO Box 8442, Van Nuys, CA 91409, USA.

28-31 MARCH 1997: INTERVENTION the 48th UK National SF Convention, Adelphi Hotel, Liverpool. Theme "communication". Guests Brian W Aldiss and David Langford, US Guest to be announced but it WILL NOT be Robert

Silverberg as previously announced. Attending £20.00, supporting £10.00, cheques payable to "Wincon" to 12 Crowsbury Close, Emsworth, Hants., PO10 7TS.

3-5 SEPTEMBER 1997: LONESTARCON 55th World SF Convention, San Antonio, Texas, USA. Attending was \$65.00. Contact: PO Box 27277, Austin, TX 78755-2277, USA.

27 DEC 1999 - 2 JAN 2000: MILLENNIUM. Venue to be announced, but definitely in Northern Europe (probably a BeNeLux country or UK), £3.00 (£10.00) per year, to be deducted from eventual membership fee (to be announced before 1997). Contact: Malcolm Reid, 186 Casewick Road, West Norwood, London, SE27 0SZ.

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*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.*

*If you know of any events which you think may be of interest to members of the BSFG please send details to the Editor.*

*If you have attended any events or seen any films or videos that you would like to recommend to other members (or warn them of) please feel free to write a report/review and send it to the editorial address.*

FREE admission

to the BSFG meeting of  
your choice!

Simply introduce someone  
to the BSFG and when they  
join you will be issued a  
ticket for FREE ADMISSION  
to the meeting of your  
choice! See the

Treasurer, Steve Jones,  
for further details.

## JOPHAN REPORT #86

The 1994 Tiptree Award was jointly won by Ursula K LeGuin's novelette "The Matter of Seggri" (published in CRANK #3, spring 1994) and Nancy Springer's novel LARQUE ON THE WING. The winners each received \$500, in addition to a Lark mask (created in ceramic and feathers by artist Michaela Roessner) which was given to Springer and a typewriter and award plaque cast in pure milk chocolate awarded to Le Guin.

Other nominations in a lengthy shortlist were: "The Lovers", Eleanor Arnason (ASIMOV'S, July 1994); "Necronauts", Terry Bisson (PLAYBOY, July 1993); "Inspiration", Ben Bova (F&SF, April 1994); THE FURIES, Suzy McKee Charnas (Tor, 1994); CANNON'S ORB, L Warren Douglas (Del Rey, 1994); "Cocoon", Greg Egan (ASIMOV'S, May 1994); AMAZON STORY BONES, Ellen Fry (Spinsters Ink, 1994); "The Martian Child", David Gerrold (F&SF, September 1994); "None So Blind", Joe Haldeman (ASIMOV'S, November 1994); "The Skeleton Key", Nina Kiriki Hoffman (F&SF, August 1994); NORTH WIND, Gwyneth Jones (Gollancz, 1994); "Eat Reecebread", Graham Joyce and Peter F Hamilton (INTERZONE, August 1994); "The Singular Habit of Wasps", Geoffrey A Landis (ANALOG, April 1994); "Forgiveness Day", Ursula K Le Guin (ASIMOV'S, November 1994); A FISHERMAN OF THE INLAND SEA, Ursula K Le Guin (Harper, 1994); "Understanding Entropy", Barry Maltzberg (SF AGE, July 1994); "Nekropolis", Maureen McHugh (ASIMOV'S, April 1994); "Virtual Love", Maureen McHugh (F&SF, January 1994); TEMPORARY AGENCY, Rachel Pollack (St Martin's, 1994); UNCONQUERED COUNTRIES, Geoff Ryman (St Martin's, 1994); "Fan", Geoff Ryman (UNCONQUERED COUNTRIES, St Martin's/INTERZONE); TROUBLE AND HER FRIENDS, Melissa Scott (Tor, 1994); "Young Woman in a Garden", Delia Sherman (XANADU 2, Tor, 1994); "A Defence of the Social Contracts", Martha Soukup (SF AGE, September 1993); "Cold Iron", Michael Swanwick (ASIMOV'S, November 1994); GENETIC SOLDIER, George Turner (Morrow, 1994); "I Know What You're Thinking", Kate Wilhelm (ASIMOV'S, November 1994).

The latest issue of George R Reis' and Keith J Crocker's EXPLOITATION JOURNAL is a "Bloody British Special", featuring an extensive interview with expat producer Richard Gordon and an overview of the careers of directors Pete (HOUSE OF WHIPCORD) Walker and Norman (SATAN'S SLAVE) Warren. Copies

cost US\$5.00 from 40 South Brush Drive, Valley Stream, NY-11581, USA.

### BEER & SKITTLES

at the Samson & Lion, Wordsley on Friday 15 December. CAROL MORTON is now taking bookings for this popular event. Deposit £5.00 per person. Food, transport, prizes & skittles will be included in the final price. (Last year it cost £10.00 per person, we will announce the price for this year ASAP.) Book early!

Cult TV 2, scheduled for Great Yarmouth in October, has added X-FILES creator Chris Carter to its list of guests, subject to the usual work commitments. The series itself ended its BBC2 run on 16 March, although the second season is promised for the autumn.

Red Alerts, the Jersey Science Fiction Fan Association, meets on the first Wednesday of every month at the Royal Yacht Hotel, St Helier, from 8.00pm onwards. For further details, contact Gavin Booth on 7 Palace Close, St Saviour, Jersey, Channel Islands (01534-34793).

Terry Pratchett dominated the Waterstones sf bestsellers list for 1994, with SOUL MUSIC and THE DISCWORLD COMPANION (the latter co-written with Stephen Briggs) taking first and fifth place in the hardback section, whilst MEN AT ARMS and LORDS AND LADIES came second and fifth in the paperback section. The chain's top-selling sf paperback was Douglas Adams' latest "Hitch-Hiker's Guide" novel, MOSTLY HARMLESS.

Donna Heenan won the 1995 FFANZ race and will represent Australian fandom at the New Zealand convention Conquest over the Easter weekend; she received 21 votes, against one each for the other candidates, Marc Ortleib, Greg Hills and Fred X. Heenan was also elected president of the Australian SF Foundation at its annual general meeting on 22 January.

Troma fans can now order uncut copies of the studio's movies direct -- including such as "classics" as CLASS OF NUKE 'EM HIGH, TOXIC AVENGER and ZOMBIE ISLAND MASSACRE. Catalogues cost US\$3.00 from Tromabilia, Radio

City Station, PO Box 486, New York, NY-10101-0486.

Bargains on offer in the latest edition of the Postscript catalogue include HORROR: 100 BEST BOOKS, edited by Stephen Jones and Kim Newman, Michael Moorcock's novel CASABLANCA, the Issac Asimov collection ROBOT VISIONS, all at £2.99, plus John Atkins' biographical work GEORGE ORWELL at £4.99. To get on Postscript's mailing list, telephone 0181-682-0280.

The Black Lodge, Birmingham's informal gathering of horror and dark fantasy fans, which normally meets on the first Tuesday of each month will meet on the second Tuesday in June.

Meetings are at the Old Fox public house, Hurst Street, 8.30pm onwards. Copies of the group newsletter, THE REGISTER, are available for a reply-paid envelope from 33 Scott Road, Olton, Solihull, B92 7LQ.

O WRITE magazine, which proclaims itself "the high profile, high quality literary magazine for work by young people" is appealing for written work in any format on any subject. Work for inclusion is selected by a panel of Guest Editors - who have included John Mortimer, Iris Murdoch, Seamus Heaney, Roddy Doyle, A S Byatt and P D James. Entries must be original pieces and each must include the author's name, age and school. Private entries are welcome but must include the above information and the name and address of a contactable adult. For further details write to: The Administrative Editors, O WRITE Magazine, FCHS Pathways Publications, New Street, Frankley, Rednal, Birmingham, B45 0EU or call 0121-693-5995. Deadline 30th June 1995.

Wednesday 23rd October  
RETURN TO THE  
FORBIDDEN PLANET  
at the Birmingham Hippodrome,  
Hurst Street, ANN WOODFORD is  
organising a block-booking for  
this performance (curtains  
open 7.30pm). Block-bookings  
receive a £3.00 reduction per  
ticket. Ann is taking  
deposits of £5.00 per person  
NOW! Either speak to her at  
this month's meeting or call  
her on 0121-559-7761  
for further details.

## PHANNISH FIZZICKS

### The Case of God

by Al Johnston

In the outer reaches of the mundane world it has occurred to physicists that given the increasing surrealism of the information they purvey, they might as well go the whole hog and pontificate (Bullishly, one presumes, or maybe just *en cycle*) about theology. Stephen Hawking claims we may know the mind of God. Paul Davies announces that our ability to understand the Universe is proof that it was designed and created; a theory that is somewhat undermined by the inability of most of this planet's inhabitants to understand Paul Davies. Fizzicists often tend to the atheistical, but as this is not considered to be an insurmountable career obstacle in religion these days (except by the moretraditional Islamic sects) there is no real reason not to join in the fun.

A major religious movement of our times asserts that God had His one and only Son nailed to a tree about two thousand years ago; purportedly for our general benefit. This may explain quite a lot actually, but I'm not sure I really want to know. Some while later people were still attempting to make some sort of sense of this and came to the conclusion that He might want to repeat Himself, only clearer so the thickies could get it this time. The upcoming year with a lot of zeroes (okay three) in it seemed to be as good a time as any, so they went off up the nearest hill to get a good view and waited. It was probably as well that they took packed lunches as they were waiting quite a while. Probably still are.

Not long now from now there will be another year with a lot of zeroes in it. Most of us will treat this as an excuse (WHAT? You need an EXCUSE?! for a good ~~party~~ party or waste the entire year arguing that the third millennium really starts the next year. Sad or what? Some people, however, have convinced themselves that God is really and definitely putting in a repeat performance this time absolutely and for certain; only *this* time it's not *His* relatives that get nailed to any trees. As these tend to be the type of people who wave guns around and/or

put nasty chemical substances in subway systems this may be of some concern.

Some reassurance may be sought in my prediction that it won't happen. Why?

The rise and proliferation of Product Liability Law.

A few years back there was a spate of accidents in the good ol' US of A whereby the occasional motorist would get his/her feet mixed up on the pedals and press the accelerator instead of the brake. Noticing an increase in speed the driver would press harder on what they still thought was the brake. The resultant feedback loop would end with said motorist looking sad and confused sitting at the controls of a complete wreck embedded in the nearest building, wall, other motorist, pedestrian or whatever. Product Liability Law and a few good lawyers later several carmakers were edged nearer bankruptcy to the general enrichment of the dumber portion of the driving population and, of course, the legal profession. All this despite the demonstrable mechanical independence of the braking and propulsion systems on any land vehicle more advanced than the average roller skate.

Lawyers have had more practice since then and will amass more in the next five years. No God who knows anything, or even Everything, is going to risk being taken to the cleaners by showing up and admitting to being the Ultimate Creator of a Universe containing quite so many mad, sad, embittered, inadequate, dispossed, disadvantaged or just plain dead human beings. The happy ones don't know enough lawyers; this may be a causal relationship.

He may not exist; this doesn't mean He's stupid.

### CLASSIFIED ADVERT

GESTETNER 360 DUPLICATOR:

Free to the first person who can arrange to collect it from a Birmingham address.

Call William McCabe on 0121-440-5430.

### BOOK REVIEWS

*AXIOMATIC* by Greg Egan  
Millennium, £15.99, 289pp, h/b  
Reviewed by Tony Morton.

A new name for me - though on reading I realised I had caught one of the stories, 'The Cutie', in *INTERZONE* and quite liked it. However this didn't prepare me for the shock of the writing. This is it. Hard-hitting, cutting-edge sf, where the ideas roll off the page and grab you.

The first couple of stories ('The Infinite Assassin', a parallel universe, drug abuse, detective yarn and 'The Hundred-Light-Year-Diary' concerning, as the title suggests, the possibility of writing your diary and *sending it back into the past* for you to read earlier) are of such staggering eloquence, passion and so brilliantly written, I was awestruck and thought "Surely they can't all be of this quality..." but I wasn't disappointed.

The initial impact wore off as I read, the remaining stories are all good (but those first two are so exceptional). The topics alone in this book are of such diversity that they would keep other authors in work for years. In 'Eugene' choosing a genius child before conception has a wonderful twist; 'Blood Sisters' deals with identical twins - one dies from a virus while the other doesn't and wants to know why; 'Safe-Deposit Box' deals with an entity without a body waking each morning as someone else; 'The Kidnapping' touches on that sensitive topic from an unusual angle (superbly); 'The Moral Virologist' opens up a real can of worms on evangelism and morality.

I could go on to name all the other stories, but honestly each story has its own individual merit and style. I began to wonder whether 'Greg Egan' was in fact a conglomerate of authors, such is the diversity of these stories. He is certainly an author I shall seek out in future.

*GRAILS: QUESTS OF THE DAWN* edited by Richard Gillian, Martin H Greenberg, Edward E Kramer  
Roc, £6.99, 387pp, trade p/b  
Reviewed by Adrian Middleton.

An anthology of peaks and troughs which perhaps suggests that it has about as many high points as the Pacific Ocean. True, the contributor list is impressive enough -

Mercedes Lackey, Andre Norton, Marion Zimmer Bradley, Gene Wolfe, Alan Dean Foster... the list is endless (well, 26 in all). The cover is equally impressive, if somewhat misleading, as the book is not really about knights in shining armour questing for the fabled Holy Grail. It is instead a mis-matched mish mash of poetry and prose, comedy and commentary, all joined together by a rather tenuous link - the Holy Grail.

Stories span from ancient Atlantis via Egypt, up to the Wild West and the War to End All Wars; through the contemporary era and into fictional universes.

Of the stories themselves, I was most surprised by the appearance of Marion Zimmer Bradley's Lythande, Adept of the Blue Star, in one of the better pieces in the collection. Also of note - one of the high points of the book - is Orson Scott Card's piece, doubtless aided by its length. Likewise, Neil Gaiman's contribution (the only British one?) works well because of its brevity (good jokes are always short) - so the book is not all bad.

Of the low points, I'll name no names, but some of the most famous writers in science fantasy have off-loaded their turkeys in this one. Reprinted for the mass market, *GRAILS* started life as a limited edition. It should have stayed that way.

*LEFT TO HIS OWN DEVICES* by Mary Gentle  
Orbit, £5.99, 378pp, p/b

Reviewed by Sam Bennett.

This was my first Mary Gentle book - a selection of four stories, one long and three short. Only the fact that I know Mary from a con and have seen her give a live free fight performance prepared me for her book.

The first story (the title story) features the characters from her 'White Crow' novels. If you have read them you will have no trouble jumping into a near-future, greenhouse-effected London with sword and computer fencing, lots of social and political problems and a live play weaving all the way through the story. Not having read her previous books left me at a loss at first, but I kept reading and discovered that the plot thickens nicely and with a certain twisting of viewpoint understanding of the story came. A good story for the truly adventurous and twisted of thought, but not a beginners book as it continues a storyline with only some very basic background to establish the characters.

The three short stories were excellent in their own right and if there are any

novels based on them I will certainly buy them. My favourite was 'The Road to Jerusalem' which featured the Knight Templars as modern day soldiers dedicated to God.

Mary Gentle produces a varied and compelling assortment of stories suited to all tastes. From socio-political computer hacking near-future to humorous and rats, changeling weerdes in renaissance Europe and Knights Templars as present day soldiers still protecting the pilgrim roads. Great fun, a must for all Gentle readers.

*THE GOLD COAST* by Kim Stanley Robinson  
HarperCollins, £4.99, 389pp, 'C' format p/b  
Reviewed by Robert P Jones.

Since the 1960s, it has been by no means unusual for 'mainstream' writers such as Burroughs, Pynchon, Angela Carter and Martin Amis to produce books that come very close to being sf, without being marketed as such. This book is by contrast a work published as sf and by a writer thoroughly identified with that genre, that actually has hardly any science-fictional content at all.

Of course I am being slightly unfair, since *THE GOLD COAST* is part of a highly praised trilogy presenting three alternative visions of near future life in Orange County, California. Whereas the other volumes describe a post-holocaust scenario on the one hand, and ecological utopia on the other, this central panel assumes the ongoing triumph of a corrupt free-market capitalism - in other words, something pretty much like what we've got now.

Jim McPherson, the novel's central character, is a 27 year-old would-be writer, disillusioned with the values of his well-off middle-class parents but lacking any serious sense of personal or political direction. Like many intelligent young people, he despises the capitalist system whilst guiltily enjoying its comforts. His life of rather sad parties, hollow sexual relationships, and occasional drug taking is disrupted when he gets drawn into an amateurish series of terrorist actions against the aerospace firm for which his own father designs advanced weapons systems.

The narrative is leisurely, well characterised and complex, tackling urgent contemporary dilemmas in a subtle, often moving, way and not offering easy solutions. Robinson's present-tense style may take a little getting used to, but he employs it to good effect. California's land and seascapes are beautifully evoked and there is real truthfulness behind many scenes and moments.



But is it sf? And if it isn't, does it matter?

I am not an sf chauvinist by any means and quite capable of enjoying other kinds of worthwhile writing. The problem I have with *THE GOLD COAST* is not that it isn't sf, but that its strange lack of traditional sf ideas and concepts actually weaken Robinson's achievement. Not only does the technology of 21st century Orange County seem hardly more advanced than that of the present day, but there appear to have been no significant innovations in such fluid areas as fashion, slang, social behaviour and the arts. The author clearly wants this world to look familiar, but it is so familiar as to be slightly unconvincing, bearing in mind the rapidity of 20th century change.

That said it is good to encounter sf that doesn't rely exclusively upon action/suspense models to advance its plot. Robinson's is an important talent and this book, though flawed, is good to have back in print.

*BLOODSTONE* by David Gemmell  
Legend, £4.99, 298pp, p/b  
Reviewed by Tony Morton.

The cover says it all: "The New Jon Shannow Novel". In Shannow, Gemmell has created the ultimate character and the perfect foil for his plots. This time Shannow, after years of living peacefully as a preacher, once again takes up his pistols in retribution. His quiet life is ended by the murder of some of his congregation, but the vengeance he seeks goes way beyond even his intentions. Suffering amnesia after hunting down the murderers Shannow, unaware of his past, travels aimlessly righting wrongs until the Jerusalem Man emerges and the evil doers quake. Here it is not only those recognisably evil that prove troublesome; the Deacon has gained power in the communities after his "deliverance from the time of evil", passing through time to the God-fearing future of Shannow's world. But all is not as it appears.

Furthering the plot Amaziga reappears to ask Shannow's help in a quest to "save" her husband's life and a group of Wanderers also provide a strong subplot that adds to the whole. Invincible, Shannow overcomes all the odds - but not unscathed. Terrible times bring terrible dangers and in this Wild West type lifestyle the morality of the God fearing brings real "eye for eye" retribution. And it is *that* kind of world, as we have found in

the previous Shannow novels.

Gemmell's artistry and the strong character of Shannow alone could carry the story, proving again an exhilarating mixture that provides all you could hope for - and have it delivered. The addition of the numerous subplots and character interplay only add to the whole to give a masterly novel.

#### *THE WHITE GRYPHON*

by Mercedes Lackey and Larry Dixon  
Millennium, £15.99, 305pp, h/b

Reviewed by Sam Bennett

*THE WHITE GRYPHON* is the second book in a series of three dealing with the Mage Wars. The first, *THE BLACK GRYPHON*, introduced us to a final conflict between Urtho the Mage of Silence, creator of the Gryphons, and the evil Mage Maar. In this giant battle ground the Gryphons play a major role with the Black Gryphon, Skandranon Rashkae, (black because of camouflage paint) dealing the final killing blow to Maar. The end causes all magic to go insane, the only escape being magical gates to distant places.

*THE WHITE GRYPHON* begins ten years later with a small group of survivors cut off from all of the others, slowly building a new life and city on the edge of a sea. The first few chapters introduce all the old faces and some new ones with an evil empath thrown in to cause future trouble.

If you have not read the first novel there are a lot of references to it but the book can stand on its own merits. Not as meaty or exciting as the first, but then the first dealt with a war of mages and this is a detective thriller with the added interest of a new people that our survivors have to open diplomatic relations with. This is not helped by several gruesome murders which point to Skandranon - now white plumed, without war paint - causing some strain on relations with the Empire of the Black Kings.

During all these ups and downs we are given a detailed view of Skandranon's feelings about being a leader, how it has changed him and how he regains his true self, the Black Gryphon, again.

A very nice book which shows Mercedes Lackey has a talent for collaborating with authors other than her husband Larry Dixon. See Ru Emerson.

In the front of her books there is a 'tree' of a timeline for all her books. She has written a huge story with various people, countries, wars and battles usually in series.

of three. These can be read separately or altogether forming a rich, panoramic, world view. I highly recommend her books if you enjoy sword and sorcery novels.

*IRONHAND'S DAUGHTER* by David Gemmell  
Legend, £15.99, 283pp, h/b  
Reviewed by Tony Morton.

This introductory volume to Gemmell's new 'Hawk Queen' series, *IRONHAND'S DAUGHTER*, catalogues the background of Sigarni and the oppressed people she will rise to rule.

Initially we meet the main characters in their daily routine: Sigarni herself as a huntress with hound and hawk; Ballister the dwarf as a tinker; Toni the baker; Asmidir a sorcerous advisor; and many, many more.

The "enemy" who conquered the Highlands are also introduced and shown to be typical of an occupying army with antipathy for the locals and a Baron who wants more after his "heroic battles" than he is given. Indeed, Baron Ranulph Gottason has a craving for real power and hopes to move back to the capital in glory.

This is the background for this initial tale. The Baron decides to clear the Highlands of the "rebels" and make his mark. He is not put off by the fact that there are no rebels, through a series of minor plots and intrigues he creates the illusion that the Clans are rebelling and set out to slaughter them. The Highlanders - brave, but undisciplined, fighters, resist.

It falls upon the clans to find a leader to unite them and, indeed, there is a prophecy which states one such will come. From the book's title (and the title of the series) it is obvious that that one is Sigarni. Her rise comes about after she is raped by the Baron's men - thus showing their contempt for the locals, and in return her anger at their act. She becomes obsessed with killing all of these invaders and sets out to destroy them, beginning with the perpetrators of her ordeal.

Convincing the clans that she is the "chosen" leader takes time and is well covered by Gemmell - particularly the reluctance of the fighting men to have a woman in charge. Against all the odds Sigarni wins through, though at a cost. The battle scenes reiterate the clans' shortcomings and the Baron's greed and, of course, Gemmell's expert handling. It is all well constructed and develops at a good pace. Gemmell produces twists in the plot that enhance the story and characters that (as usual) convince. My only query is

why it has taken him so long to write a novel with a woman as his lead character?

□□□□□

## A REMINDER TO REVIEWERS

*Please remember that reviews of books should reach MARTIN TUDOR at 845 Alum Rock Road, Birmingham, B8 2AG, within ONE month of your taking the book. A number of reviews are currently overdue please ensure that these (and any others that are due) are passed to MARTIN TUDOR at this month's meeting.*

The following reviews are outstanding:

Lynn Edwards: *DIAMOND MASK* by Julian May (March); *THE WESTERN WIZARD* by Mickey Zucker Reichert (March).

Bernie Evans: *THE DEUS MACHINE* by Pierre Ouellette (February); *NIMBUS* by Alexander Jablovkov (March); *TO BUILD JERUSALEM* by John Whitbourn (March).

Robert P Jones: *FEAR STREET: THE CHEATER* by R L Stine (April).

Steve Jones/B'ham Uni: *DRAGONCHARM* by Graham Edwards (January); *TALISMAN* by Sam Lewis (January); *WARHAMMER: RED THIRST* ed. David Pringle (March); *WARHAMMER: WOLF RIDERS* ed. David Pringle (March).

Chris Morgan: *ASSASSIN'S APPRENTICE* by Robin Hobb (April); *EVERVILLE* by Clive Barker.

Pauline Morgan: *NORTH WIND* by Gwyneth Jones (April).

Carol Morton: *THE DRAGONS OF HEOROT* by Niven, Pournelle & Barnes (April).

Chris Ridd: *THE WILD SHORE* by Kim Stanley Robinson (January); *ARE WE ALONE?* by Paul Davies (March).

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