

BRUM GROUP NEWS

May 1993

Issue 260

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.

This month's speaker is

COLIN GREENLAND

Friday 21 May, 7.45pm for 8.00pm

Admittance: Members £2.50 Visitors £3.75

Born in Dover, 17 March 1954, COLIN GREENLAND was educated at St Lawrence College, Ramsgate, Kent, 1964-72; Pembroke College, Oxford, 1972-79, BA in English literature and language (honors) 1975; D.Phil. in English literature 1981. 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 the BSFA award in 1991 for his novel *TAKE BACK PLENTY*. His other works include the novels *DAYBREAK ON A DIFFERENT MOUNTAIN* (1984), *THE HOUR OF THE THIN OX* (1986), *OTHER VOICES* (1986) and *HARM'S WAY* (1993).

(Many thanks to *TWENTIETH-CENTURY SCIENCE FICTION WRITERS*, third edition, for 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 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

The contents of this issue are copyright 1993 the BSFG, on behalf of the contributors, to whom all rights revert on publication.

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

All text by Martin Tudor except where stated otherwise.

This publication was printed on the CRITICAL WAVE photocopier. Contact the editorial address for details of WAVE's competitive prices.

Many thanks this issue to BERNIE EVANS for typing the Book Reviews, all of our reviewers, STEVE GREEN and CRITICAL WAVE for the news in the Jophan Report, MIKE D SIDDALL for his Helicon report and TONY BERRY for the use of his spare room.

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

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.

21-23 MAY 1993: *BLADE RUNNER - THE DIRECTOR'S CUT* will be showing at the Triangle Cinema, Holt Street, Birmingham (behind Dillons bookstore in the Aston Triangle area of the Aston University campus). For further details call (021) 359 3979/4192.

21-27 MAY 1993: *BLADE RUNNER - THE DIRECTOR'S CUT* will be showing at the Arts Centre, University of Warwick, Coventry. Call (0203) 524524 for further details.

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 Ibis, Ladywell Walk, off Hurst Street, Birmingham. Doors open 11am, admission 50p. Contact: Peter Lennon, 15 Yew Tree Close, Batchley, Redditch, B97 6SO (0527 585036).

22 MAY 1993: BOOKFAIR opens at 10am, admission free, at the Midlands Art Centre, Cannon Hill Park, Edgbaston, call (021) 440 3838 for further details.

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.

25 MAY 1993: PETER JAMES author of the best-selling *POSSESSION* will be appearing at

Can YOU eat a
'Desperate Dan Pie' ?

Find out at the
BEER & SKITTLES
EVENING AT THE
(newly re-named)
LITTLE RIB ROOM

(Bradley Green, Hanbury to
Feckenham Road, B4090
out of Droitwich)

If you are interested
call HELENA BOWLES
on (021) 558 7591

Bloomsbury Library at 7pm, admission free. Call 359 3466 for further details.

28 MAY 1993: TERRY PRATCHETT will be speaking at the Midlands Art Centre, Cannon Hill Park, Edgbaston, from 7.30pm. Tickets £5.50 (concessionary £3.50), call (021) 440 3838 for further details.

28-31 MAY 1993: TERRY PRATCHETT (see above) opens 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.

28 MAY 1993: *GILGAMESH* "the oldest story ever written down" will be told by Ben Haggarty, accompanied by Britain's top kora player Tunde Jegede, from 9.15pm, tickets £5.50 (concessionary £3.50) at the Midlands Art Centre, Cannon Hill Park, Edgbaston, call (021) 440 3838 for further details.

28-31 MAY 1993: MEXICON V. "Straight" science fiction con. St Nicholas Hotel, Scarborough. Featured guests include Ian McDonald and Ken Campbell. Attending £25.00 on the door.

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.

29 MAY 1993: BOOKFAIR opens at 10am, admission free, at the Midlands Art Centre, Cannon Hill Park, Edgbaston, call (021) 440 3838 for further details.

?? 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. Doors open midday. Contact Golden Orbit, 9 Stratford Way, Huntington, York, YO3 9YW.

3-6 JUNE 1993: *CANDYMAN*, "a faithful and visually imaginative adaptation of Clive Barker's story 'The Forbidden'", will be showing at the Triangle Cinema, Holt Street, Birmingham (behind Dillons bookstore in the Aston Triangle area of the Aston University campus). For further details call (021) 359 3979/4192.

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.

SPECIAL MEETING

11 JUNE 1993:

HARRY HARRISON,

one of the BSFG's honorary presidents,
will be speaking to us at
a SPECIAL meeting in the White Lion,
7.45pm for 8pm.

18 JUNE 1993: LOUISE COOPER will be our June speaker, 7.45pm for 8pm at the White Lion.

18-20 JUNE 1993: *BRAM STOKER'S DRACULA* will be showing at the Triangle Cinema, Holt Street, Birmingham (behind Dillons bookstore in the Aston Triangle area of the Aston University campus). For further details call (021) 359 3979/4192.

23-27 JUNE 1993: *CANDYMAN*, "a faithful and visually imaginative adaptation of Clive Barker's story 'The Forbidden'", will be showing at the Arts Centre, University of Warwick, Coventry. Call (0203) 524524 for further details.

25-27 JUNE 1993: *TWIN PEAKS - FIRE WALK WITH ME* will be showing at the Triangle Cinema, Holt Street, Birmingham (behind Dillons bookstore in the Aston Triangle area of the Aston University campus). For further details call (021) 359 3979/4192.

11 JULY 1993: COMIC MART at the YMCA, Granby Street, Leicester. Opens midday, contact Golden Orbit, 9 Stratford Way, Huntington, York, YO3 9YW.

16 JULY 1993: BRIAN W ALDISS one of our honorary presidents will be speaking to the Group, 7.45pm for 8pm, at the White Lion. (Subject to confirmation.)

31 JULY 1993: COMIC MART at the Midland Hotel, New Street. Doors open midday. Contact Golden Orbit, 9 Stratford Way, Huntington, York, YO3 9YW.

?? 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 Hotel Ibis, Ladywell Walk, off Hurst Street, Birmingham. Doors open 11am, admission 50p, contact: Peter Lennon, 15 Yew Tree Close, Batchley, Redditch, B97 6SU (0527 585036).

20 AUGUST 1993: ROBERT HOLDSTOCK author of *MYTHAGO WOOD* and many others will be

speaking to the Group, 7.45pm for 8pm, at the White Lion. (Subject to confirmation.)

3-6 SEPTEMBER 1993: CONFRANCISCO. 51st world science fiction convention at the San Francisco Marriott Moscone Convention Center. Guests of Honour: Larry Niven, Tom Digby, Alicia Austin, Jan Howard Finder. MC: Guy Gavriel Kay. Attending \$125.00, supporting \$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 Ibis, Ladywell Walk, off Hurst Street, Birmingham. Doors open 11am, admission 50p. Contact: Peter Lennon, 15 Yew Tree Close, Batchley, Redditch, B97 6SQ (0527 585036).

26-28 NOVEMBER 1993: CON-YAK, annual international Beneluxcon, venue probably Altea 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. Until November 1993: Attending £25.00 (£23.00 for paid-up pre-supporting), Supporting £12.50, children aged 9-14 (on 1 April 1994) £12.50, £1.00 for

"babies and beasts". Contact: 3 West Shrubbery, Redland, Bristol, BS6 6SZ.

30 APRIL - 1 MAY 1994: COME-BACK CON. The first Belgian BeNeLuxcon in a long time at the Rubenianum House, Antwerp, Belgium. Attending 650BF, Supporting 500BF until 31 Dec 1993, then Attending 750BF, Supporting 650BF until 31 March 1994, children up to age 6 free admission, age 6-12 50% of current price. Contact: Alfons J Maes, Zandkapelweg 18, B-2200 Noorderwijk, Belgium.

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.

14-17 APRIL 1995: CONFABULATION 46th UK National sf con at the Britannia International Hotel, London. GoHs Lois McMaster Bujold, Bob Shaw and Roger Robinson. Attending £15.00, Supporting £10.00, children born on or before 13 April 1981 pay the supporting rate and small children (born on or before 18 April 1987) pay nothing. Contact: Confabulation, 3 York Street, Altrincham, Cheshire, WA15 9QH.

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 #62

by Martin Tudor

Abigail Frost is this year's TransAtlantic Fan Fund winner beating the runner-up, Tony Berry, by 93 to 90. She will be travelling to ConFrancisco, this year's World SF Convention in San Francisco. For a full breakdown of the votes see *TAFFERVESCENT* #8, the final newsletter from out-going administrator Pam Wells, which you should find enclosed in this issue of the *BRUM GROUP NEWS*.

The nominations for the 1993 Hugo awards, for works which first appeared in 1992, are as follows:

Best Novel (40,000 or more words): *CHINA MOUNTAIN ZHANG*, Maureen F McHugh ; *RED MARS*, Kim Stanley Robinson ; *STEEL BEACH*, John Varley ; *A FIRE UPON THE DEEP*, Vernor Vinge ; *DOOMS-DAY BOOK*, Connie Willis.

Best Novella (17,500-40,000 words): "Uh-Oh City", Jonathan Carroll ; "The Territory", Bradley Denton ; "Protection", Maureen F McHugh ; "Stopping at Slowyear", Frederik Pohl ; "Barnacle Bill the Spacer", Lucius Shepard.

Best Novelette (7,500-17,500 words): "True Faces", Pat Cadigan ; "The Nutcracker Coup", Janet Kagan ; "In the Stone House", Barry N Malzberg ; "Danny Goes to Mars", Pamela Sargent ; "Suppose They Gave a Peace...", Susan Schwartz.

Best Short Story (under 7,500 words): "The Winterberry", Nicholas A DiChario ; "The Mountain to Mohammed", Nancy Kress ; "The Lotus and the Spear", Mike Resnick ; "Even the Queen", Connie Willis.

Best Non-Fiction Book (a non-fiction work whose subject is the field of sf, fantasy, or fandom): *ENTERPRISING WOMEN: TV FANDOM AND THE CREATION OF POPULAR MYTH*, Camille Bacon-Smith ; *THE COSTUME MAKER'S ART* ed. Thom Boswell ; *VIRGIL FINLAY'S WOMEN OF THE AGES* ; *MONAD #2* ed. Damon Knight ; *LET'S HEAR IT FOR THE DEAF MAN*, Dave Langford ed. Ben Yelow ; *A WEALTH OF FABLE: an informal history of sf fandom in the 50s*, Harry Warner Jr.

Best Translator was an additional award created by the ConFrancisco committee for translators whose work, from any language to any language, in the professional fields of sf or fantasy which was dropped through lack of interest.

Best Original Artwork: *ARISTOI* (cover), Jim Burns ; *DINOTOPIA*, James Gurney ; *FANTASY & SCIENCE FICTION* Oct/Nov (cover), Ron Waiotsky ; *ILLUSION* (cover), Michael Whelan ;

ISAAC ASIMOV'S SCIENCE FICTION MAGAZINE Nov (cover), Michael Whelan. Boris Vallejo declined his nomination in this category.

Best Dramatic Presentation (a production, in any medium, of dramatized sf or fantasy that was publicly presented in its present dramatic form for the first time in 1992. Individual episodes or programs in a series were eligible, but the series as a whole was not ; however, a sequence of installments constituting a single dramatic unit may be considered as a single program): *ALADDIN* *ALIEN 3* . *BATMAN RETURNS* *BRAM STOKER'S DRACULA* "The Inner Light" from *STAR TREK: THE NEXT GENERATION*.

Best Professional Editor (the editor of a publication devoted to sf or fantasy with an average press run of at least 10,000 copies per issue): Ellen Datlow, Gardner Dozois, Beth Meacham, Kristine Kathryn Rusch, Stanley Schmidt.

Best Professional Artist: Thomas Canty, David A Cherry, Bob Eggleton, James Gurney, Don Maitz. Michael Whelan declined his nomination in this category.

Best Semiprozine (a generally available non-professional publication (average print run of fewer than 10,000 copies per issue) devoted to sf or fantasy which had published four or more issues, at least one of them in 1992, and met at least two of the following criteria in 1992 - [a] had an average press run of at least 1,000 copies per issue, [b] paid its contributors or staff in other than copies of the publication, [c] provided at least half the income of any one person, [d] had at least 15% of its total space occupied by advertising, or [e] announced itself to be a "semiprozine"): *INTERZONE*, *LOCUS*, *NEW YORK REVIEW OF SF*, *PULPHOUSE*, *SCIENCE FICTION CHRONICLE*.

Best Fanzine (a generally available non-professional publication devoted to sf, fantasy, or related subjects which published four or more issues, at least one of which appeared in 1992, and which does not qualify as a semiprozine): *FILE 770*, *FOSFAX*, *LAN'S LANTERN*, *MIMOSA*, *STET*.

Best Fan Writer (a person whose writing has appeared in semiprozines, fanzines, or generally available electronic media): Mike Glyer, Andy Hooper, Dave Langford, Evelyn C Leeper, Harry Warner Jr.

Best Fan Artist (an artist or cartoonist whose work appeared in semiprozines, fanzines, or was publically displayed in 1992): Teddy Harvia, Merle Insinga, Linda Michaels, Peggy Ranson, Stu Shiffman, Diane Harlan Stein.

John W Campbell Award (not a Hugo) for Best New Writer, sponsored by Dell Magazines,

whose first professionally published work of sf or fantasy first appeared during 1991 or 1992. A work is considered professionally published if it had a press run of at least 10,000 copies: Barbara Delaplace, Nicholas A Di Chario, Holly Lisle, Laura Resnick, Carrie Richerson, Michelle Sagara.

This year there were 397 ballots cast to produce the above nominations. The 1993 Hugo awards will be presented at ConFrancisco, the 51st world sf convention, over the weekend of 2-6 September in San Francisco, having first been voted on by members and supporting members of ConFrancisco ; supporting membership is \$25.00 contact ConFrancisco, 712 Bancroft Road, Suite 1993, Walnut Creek, CA-94596, USA or Chris O'Shea, 12 Stannard Road, London, E8 1DB.

A new series of *DR WHO* is on the way announced BBC Enterprises chief, Tony Greenwood, at the show's 30th birthday celebrations. He added that new scripts had been written and money was being raised to launch the show which was axed four years ago. Greenwood went on to say that the BBC "want to do it properly this time - much more money will be spent. BBC's Controller Alan Yentob is a big fan of *DR WHO* and he has always said the door's not closed on it. Everybody wants it to come back. After all, it has made £10 million for the BBC in video sales and profits from other merchandising." It is rumoured that the show will return late next year.

Anne Bilson and Iain Banks are among the writers included in the second Best of Young British Novelists promotion ; the first, held in the early 1980s, featured Christopher Priest. Banks, however, refused to attend the launch party in early May.

In a letter to the organisers quoted in *PRIVATE EYE'S* Books & Bookmen column he declared "What dingbat proposed using the Saatchi gallery for the launch party? Hell's teeth ; why not go the whole hog and hold it in Conservative Party central office?

"Didn't it ever occur to anybody that writers spend a fair bit of their time manipulating symbols, and that therefore these might be quite important to us? Did the words 'Saatchi Gallery' just leap into the head of the person concerned with no associations, no implications, no weight of meaning (in which case, where has this person been for the last 14 years)? Perhaps it was just assumed that your average young (sic, in my case) novelist thinks, Hey, these Tories aren't really a shower of smug, mean-spirited, hypocritical incompetent Mars ; actually

they're kind of neat ... Well, wrong. Whatever ghastly lapse of taste or political sense led to the decision to use the Saatchi gallery, I shall not - as you might have guessed by now - be attending." (*PRIVATE EYE* #817, 9 April 1993.)

The New York Science Fiction Society - the Lunarians, Inc., have announced the establishment of the Isaac Asimov Memorial Award. Created as a tribute to Asimov's lifelong contributions to the fields of science fact and science fiction, the award will be presented at the Society's annual convention Lunacon. It is intended to honour those who have contributed significantly to increasing the public's knowledge and understanding of science through his or her writings and works in these fields, and who "exemplify the qualities which earned the late Dr Asimov the admiration of those who knew his work, and the love of those who knew the man".

The New York Science Fiction Society - the Lunarians, Inc., is a non-profit, educational organization whose purpose is to promote science fiction and science fiction fandom and to promote the improvement of sf and fantasy fiction. For more information about the Society, this award, or any of its other activities, contact: The New York Science Fiction Society - the Lunarians, Inc., PO Box 338, New York, NY 10150-0338, USA.

The International Association for the Fantastic in the Arts and *ISAAC ASIMOV'S SCIENCE FICTION MAGAZINE*, founded by its namesake in 1977, have joined to create an annual award in memory of the late author, who died in April last year.

The \$500 prize, sponsored by *ASIMOV'S*, will be presented to the best unpublished sf or fantasy story submitted by a college or university undergraduate ; the ceremony will take place at the IFAA's annual conference on the fantastic, held each March in Fort Lauderdale, Florida, and the story will be considered for publication in *ASIMOV'S*.

The deadline for the first competition is 15 November and entry is open to all full-time undergraduates at accredited universities and colleges. There is no limit to the number of manuscripts each student may submit, but each should be 1000-10000 words long and include the author's address and telephone number. The address for writer's guidelines and submissions is USF 3177, 4204 E. Fowler, Tampa, Florida 33620-3177, USA.

Congratulations to one-time Brum Group members Paul Kincaid and Maureen Speller who will be getting married on 26 June 1993, in

attendance will be Christ Priest as "Best Man" and Moira Shearman as "Best Woman".

Geoff Ryman's novel *WAS...* and David Langford's news-sheet *ANSIBLE* grabbed this year's Eastercon Awards for long and short texts, presented at Helicon on 11 April. Jim Burns' cover for *KAETI ON TOUR* was named best artwork, the Illumination firework display best dramatic presentation and Bridget Wilkinson received the Doc Weir Award, created in 1963 to honour fanfash achievement. The Ken McIntyre Award for artwork was not presented and jury spokesman Rog Peyton warned it might be abolished.

The full Eastercon Award ballot was as follows: Long text: *WAS...*, Geoff Ryman; *BARRAYAR*, Lois McMaster Bujold; *BLACK MARIA*, Diana Wynne Jones; *FIREBIRD*, Peter Morwood; *RED MARS*, Kim Stanley Robinson. Short text: *ANSIBLE*, David Langford; *CONRUNNER*, Ian Sorrensen; *THE LIGHT STUFF*, Rhodri James; "The Face of the Waters", Jack Deighton; "Innocents", Ian McDonald. Artwork: cover for *KAETI ON TOUR*, Jim Burns; cover for *THE WOLF'S TALE #4*, Keith Edmunds; cover for the Illumination programme book, Colin Johnson; cover for *LORD KELVIN'S MACHINE*, J K Potter; *HOUSE OF RAGING WOMEN*, Jaime Hernandez. Dramatic presentation: Illumination fireworks; *BEAUTY AND THE BEAST*; *GUARDS! GUARDS!*; *BLADE-RUNNER - THE DIRECTOR'S CUT*; "Kindred Blood in Kensington Gore", Brian Aldiss.

Auctions at Helicon raised £63.40 for GUFF, £52.50 for Fans Across the World and £26.00 for TAFF. Membership totalled 830.

The 1995 Eastercon will be Confabulation, organized by the same team responsible for the 1992 filksinging convention Fourplay and held at the Britannia International Hotel in London's Docklands; in view of the Glasgow worldcon, it's intended that the event will be smaller than usual. For full details, write to 3 York Street, Altrincham, Cheshire, WA15 9QH.

The European Science Fiction Society, which also announced its annual awards at Helicon, placed Britain's Iain M Banks and Jim Burns in its "Hall of Fame", together with Dutch convention promoter Larry van der Putte, the Polish publisher Phantom Press and the Rumanian magazine *ANTICIPATIA*.

Its "spirit of dedication" awards for the best artwork and fanzine on display went to France's Gilles Francescano and the Spanish *BEM*, respectively, whilst a one-off European version of the UK's Doc Weir Award was announced for "most friendly aliens" Piotr W

Cholewa and Piotr "Raku" Rak, both from Poland. The work of new authors and artists were commemorated with "encouragement" awards for Sue Thomas (Britain), Radoslaw Dylis (Poland), Fons Boelenders (Belgium), Josef Zarnay (Slovakia), Vasily Zvyagintsev (Russia), Ludmilla Kozinetz (Ukraine), Cato Sture (Norway), Alexandru Ungureanu (Rumania), G Nagy Pal (Hungary), Paulo Brera (Italy), Peco Roca (Spain) and Jean Pierre Planque (France).

There will be no "dramatic presentation" category in the 1992 British Science Fiction Association Awards, due to be presented at Mexican V in May; the BSFA says that insufficient votes were cast to warrant retaining it this year.

Candidates for the "best novel" category are Simon Ing's *HOT HEAD*, Ian McDonald's *HEARTS, HANDS AND VOICES*, Kim Stanley Robinson's *RED MARS*, Lisa Tuttle's *LOST FUTURES* and Connie Willis' *DOOMSDAY BOOK*.

The British sf magazine *INTERZONE* scored heavily in the "best short fiction" ballot, publishing four of the five nominations on the final ballot: "Priest of Hands" by Storm Constantine, "Reification Highway" by Greg Egan, "The Sculptor" by Garry Kilworth, "Returning" by Ian MacLeod and "The Coming of Vertumnus" by Ian Watson. The remaining story, "Innocents" by Ian McDonald, appeared in the paperback magazine *NEW WORLDS*.

Jim Burns appears twice on the "best artwork" ballot, for his covers on *HEARTS, HANDS AND VOICES* and *KAETI ON TOUR*, the latter also used by *INTERZONE* #66. Mark Harrison's cover for *INTERZONE* #65 and SMS's for *INTERZONE* #58 are also nominated, as is the cover for *DOOMSDAY BOOK*, although New English Library neglected to identify either artist Mick van Hueton or art director Ian Hughes, who collaborated on both the hardback and soft-back jackets, and the nominee appears as "Unknown" on the ballot.

Maureen F McHugh's Nebula and Hugo nominated novel *CHINA MOUNTAIN ZHANG* has won this year's James Tiptree Jr Award, presented to works which significantly expand and explore gender roles in sf and fantasy. She received a \$1000 cheque and an etched glass typewriter, created by Nevanah Smith.

Interviewed by Andrew Porter's *SF CHRONICLE*, McHugh said that Tiptree, whose real name was Alice Sheldon, directly influenced her own writing career. "I published my first short story under a male pseudonym, and when I sold my first short piece to *ASIMOV'S SF*, I submitted it as by 'M F McHugh' and received an acceptance note that began 'Dear

Mr McHugh'. I had to stop and think about why I was doing it, and I thought a great deal about James Tiptree Jr and about the assumptions people make when something is written by a woman. And I decided that at this point in time, it was important to be perceived as a woman."

The current administrators of the award are Pat Murphy and Karen Joy Fowler; recommendations for the 1994 jurists should be forwarded to Fowler at 3404 Monte Vista, Davis, CA-95616, USA. A fund-raising sequel to the Hugo-nominated cookbook *THE BAKERY MEN DON'T SEE* is being produced to support the award, and a Tiptree quilt will be auctioned at ConFrancisco in September.

Richard Grant has picked up the 1993 Philip K Dick Award for best original paperback with his novel *THROUGH THE HEART*, published in the USA by Bantam Spectra. He received a \$1000 cash prize and a commemorative scroll. The runner-up prize of \$500 was presented to Elizabeth Vonarburg's *IN THE MOTHERS' LAND*. The other nominees were Colin Greenland's *TAKE BACK PLENTY*, Elizabeth Hand's *FESTIVAL TIDE* and R A Lafferty's *IRON TEARS*.

Nicola Griffith, whose novel *AMMONITE* is now available in paperback from HarperCollins, is among those nominated in the sf and fantasy category of this year's Lambda Awards, due to be presented at May's ABA Conference in Miami.

This year's DUFF race was won by the American sf fans Dick and Leah Smith, co-editors of the fanzine *STET*; the other candidates were Richard Brandt and Charlotte Proctor. The winners were due to attend Swancon 18, the national Australian convention, over the Easter weekend, 8-12 April.

US author Connie Willis won both the novel and short story categories of this year's Nebula Awards, with *DOOMSDAY BOOK* and "Even the Queen" respectively. The winning novella was James Morrow's "City of Truth", the novelette "Danny Goes to Mars" by Pamela Sargent. Frederik Pohl was named this year's Grandmaster of Science Fiction and Fantasy.

The Science Fiction and Fantasy Writers of America awards banquet took place on 17 April at the Holiday Inn Crowne Plaza in New Orleans, Louisiana.

Authors Peter James and Tad Williams, as well as artist Les Edwards, will be the guests of honour at Fantasycon XVIII at the Midland Hotel, New Street, Birmingham, in October.

Full details from 137 Priory Road, Hall Green, Birmingham, B28 0TG.

Fans of the macabre may be interested in the Ghost Story Society Convention, to be held at Chester's Euromill Hotel over 30-31 October; guests will include authors Ramsey Campbell, Jonathan Aycliffe, Robert Westall and Michael Cox. Further information from Barbara and Christopher Roden at Ashcroft, 2 Abbottsford Drive, Penyffordd, Chester, CH4 0JG.

A new sf magazine, *EXPANSE*, has hit American news-stands, priced US\$4.00. Contributors to the first edition include John Brunner, L Spague de Camp, Darrell Schweitzer and Don D'Ammassa.

Peter Jackson's bizarre puppet fantasy *MEET THE FEEBLES*, released in the USA as *BAD TASTE 2*, went sell-through in Britain on 4 May. Other recent and forthcoming video releases include *TRANCERS III: DETH LIVES* [14 May], *RAISING CAIN* [14 May], *CYBORG COP* [26 May], *HIGHLANDER, THE GATHERING: FREEFALL* [tv fix-up, 26 May], *DUST DEVIL* [19 May], *TALE OF A VAMPIRE* [23 June], *STAY TUNED* [June], *TWIN PEAKS: FIRE WALK WITH ME* [June], *HELLRAISER III: HELL ON EARTH* [July], *HONEY I BLEW UP THE KID* [July], *BRAM STOKER'S DRACULA* [August], *BRAIN DEAD* [summer], *DEATH BECOMES HER* [summer], *BODY SNATCHERS* [September], *CANDY-MAN* [September], *FOREVER YOUNG* [October], *INNOCENT BLOOD* [November], *ARMY OF DARKNESS* [autumn], *HIDEOUS MUTANT FREEKZ* [autumn], *ALIVE* [winter] and *GROUNDHOG DAY* [winter].

CRITICAL WAVE #30 reported that as they went to press, they were "awaiting a statement from the Intersection committee regarding the excessive delays in processing membership cheques (up to four months in some cases). Treasurer KIM Campbell had indicated cheques would be accepted at the rates applicable when received, but the promised written confirmation was outstanding more than a week later." They hope to carry Intersection's statement in their June edition.

The first international literary competition organized by the Universitat Politècnica de Catalunya in Barcelona, Spain, has been won by American entrant Jack McDevitt; his novella, "Ships in the Night" earned him one million pesetas.

A former Marine, taxi-driver and training officer for the US Customs Service, McDevitt has published 40 short stories and two sf novels, *THE HERCULES TEXT* (1986) and *A TALENT FOR WAR* (1989); a third, *THE ENGINES*

OF GOD, is as yet unpublished.

More than 80 works were submitted to the jury of the UPC Science Fiction Novella Prize, in Catalan, English, Spanish and French. The judges were sf lecturer Miquel Barceló, sf author and publisher Domingo Santos, UPC Library director Lluís Anglada and two computer science lecturers, Pere Botella and Josep Casanovas. At the awards ceremony, the British author Brian Aldiss addressed "Science Fiction: the Awareness of the Future".

McDevitt's novella will appear in Ediciones B's sf anthology series *NOVA CIENCIA FICCIÓN*, along with Mercè Roigé's "Puede usted llamarme Bob, señor", which earned a special mention and 250,000 pesetas, and Professor Antoni Olivé's "Qui vol el Panglós?", named best story entered by a member of UPC. Ediciones B has already published McDevitt's *THE HERCULES TEXT* in Spain. Submissions for the 1993 award should be directed to the Consell Social de la Universitat Politècnica de Catalunya, Edifici ETSAB, Diagonal 649, 08028-Barcelona, Spain, by 30 August.

THE ENCYCLOPEDIA OF SCIENCE FICTION, edited by John Clute and Peter Nicholls (editor of the landmark 1979 first edition), was published in April, priced £45. Unfortunately I am unable to review or comment on the content or quality of the book as the publisher, Orbit, are not distributing review copies.

HELICON

Jersey, 9-12 April 1993
Report by Mike D Siddall

...so I said to Brian Aldiss, "Brian, old chum, about this story of yours in *INTERZONE*...". Well, no, I didn't say that, but the point is I *could* have done. There are many reasons put forward for cons; but if you're a neo, the chance to rub shoulders with those figures who first taught you that the universe inside your head is just as big as the one outside it, has to be way up there. You can listen to John Brunner order a pint of Mary Anne, fail to pluck up the courage to ask George Martin why they completely bolloxed up the Wild Cards by bringing in the Jumpers; or stand next to Ramsey Campbell in the toilets. These people are real, you could touch them; although on the whole, I think this inadvisable in the toilets. I'm babbling, sorry, back to the con.

Helicon was held on Jersey at the Hotel de France, and in addition to being an Eastercon was also this year's Eurocon. Brace yourself, it was a well-organised success. Apparently this wasn't a universally held opinion, when I expressed it to one committee member (Rob Meades) he was so astonished he got on the wallyphone to Ops. I had to steady his nerves by telling him I was blind drunk (true, but I meant what I said).

Still, I'm only a neo, what do I know? As one female fan informed me, while explaining why she didn't care for 'X', "...the trouble with 'X' is he follows you around like a neo." How crushing ("I suppose that means wild, animal sex is right out of the question?" might have been a good rejoinder, but I'm nothing if not a coward).

When Bernie Evans persuaded me to write this ("...for God's sake, put down that blow-torch, I'll do it, I'll do it"), I thought I'd do a little research into what non-UK fans of thought of Helicon. Okay, so two Russians, two Dutch, three Germans, a Hungarian, an Irishman and some assorted Americans and Antipodeans isn't exactly extensive research, but then Martin Tudor was far and the bar was near.

Their reaction was very positive, there were a lot of programme items devoted to international themes, and plenty of interst. Good to see so many Eastern Europeans, despite the difficulties. On which subject; they tell me Bridget Wilkinson is a really nice lady, and I hate to hear a lady swear, so allow me. The immigration authorities who put so many obstacles in the way of Romanian fans trying to attend the con are a bunch of complete and utter wankers.

Anyone want to hear some travel stories? Well Helicon had plenty of them (if you want to avoid serious soft-tissue damage, do *not* say "never mind you're here now" to someone who's just spent two days in an airport departure lounge). They say Jersey is a pleasant, sunny island. Not when there's a con on, it isn't. I arrived on the Tuesday, the following day the sun disappeared, not to reappear until the con was over, leaving behind it a fog-bound airport. Let's just say chaos ensued, and leave it at that. Although I dare say perusal of upcoming fanzines will tell you more than you want to know.

The press were there, and tv, not that they got an ecstatic welcome. Now I thought fans who said they'd witter on about "beaming in" were being paranoid; until my own brother used the dread cliché, "Ha, ha *tres amusant*, Alan" I said, through clenched teeth. "Why are you clenching your teeth?" he asked. Still, his daughter's a *RED DWARF* junkie, so it can't be genetic.

Right, enough frippery, the programme.

Yes, the programme.

Lot of it, wasn't there? A whole lot. What's more, I take back what I said about organization, some bastard next scheduling events I wanted to go to against each other. There was a theme, it said s right there in the progress reports, but don't ask me what it was. I was too busy to notice. Not that I was gophering (hell, I'm not a *complete* neo), I was having fun. Sometimes even at programme events; not being a trufan, and therefore not having had my body supurgued to the nearest bar.

To say the least the programme was varied, where else could you get your back rubbed, try to write a

conreport and have Pam Wells try to sell you... things, all at the same time (I don't care if it is for TAFF Pam, I am not buying a Piers Anthony novel). There were even serious items; literary of course, science based, a good one on censorship with most of the guests of Honour, I'll gladly sit and listen to people of this calibre any time. I particularly enjoyed the part where a female member of the audience complained about the composition of the panel (it was all male), mainly for the reaction of my neighbour, "Aaaargh feminist," he muttered "let's all go and read some John Norman novels, that'll show her."

Not that the programme was all serious, plenty of fun items, sometimes even intentionally so. There was a Masquerade, elections for Ruler of the Universe, Conkiller and so forth. The only really chaotic event I attended was the Closing Ceremony; the previous panel over-ran, the slide-show wouldn't co-operate and so forth.

This was Tim Illingworth's 100th con; now I'd never heard of this august personage before Helicon, but I heard plenty about him during it, mostly good-natured abuse (at one informal panel we voted him Fan We'd Least Like To See In Drag). At least I assume it was good-natured, everyone cheered when he was presented with a suitably inscribed five kilogramme bar of chocolate. My neighbour gave me a withering look when I said he'd be a long time eating that; presumably he knew Mr Illingworth better than I.

If you want a few statistics; attendance was over 800 filling eight hotels, the chocolate shop sold one and a half tonnes of five kilogramme bars alone, the bar ran out of real ale (and they said it couldn't be done), the con raised £1000 for the Jersey Wildlife Trust. The hotel was fine, a cavernous Dealer Room, good staff, bars with cheap booze; but I would say that the food left a lot to be desired.

Helicon, according to those I asked, worked as a Eurocon; according to me, it worked as an Eastercon. It must have, I signed up for Sou'Wester, and Mexican, and Novacon and Timisoira. Help! Somebody help me, I think I'm turning into Tim Illingworth.

BOOK REVIEWS

THE MISTS OF AVAALON by Marion Zimmer Bradley
Penguin, 1009 pp, £5.99, p/b

Reviewed by Pauline Morgan.

This is the book that Ken Livingstone chose to take with him to Radio 4's desert island. Whether this can be regarded as a recommendation I cannot say though the length is enough to keep any castaway reading for some considerable time. Originally published in 1983, this belongs in the Arthurian sub-genre of fantasy and is told from the point of view of the women involved. First there are Igraine (Arthur's mother), Viviane (priestess of Avalon) and Morgause

(sister to the other two and later wife to Lot of Orkney). Then, as time passes, the other women at the heart of this legend - Morgaine, Igraine's daughter, and Gwenhwyfar, who comes across as a guilt-ridden agoraphobic.

The basic story is known well and need not be dwelt on here. The setting used is 5th century post-Roman Britain, with Bradley aiming for the Celtic realism sub-set of this genre, with added fantasy. The Isle of Avalon exists simultaneously with Glastonbury Tor but is slowly drifting into the mists. Basically, if you know the magic spells, you can get to Avalon, if you don't all you find is the monastery at the foot of the hill. Magic is being driven out of Britain by Christianity - again, not a new idea.

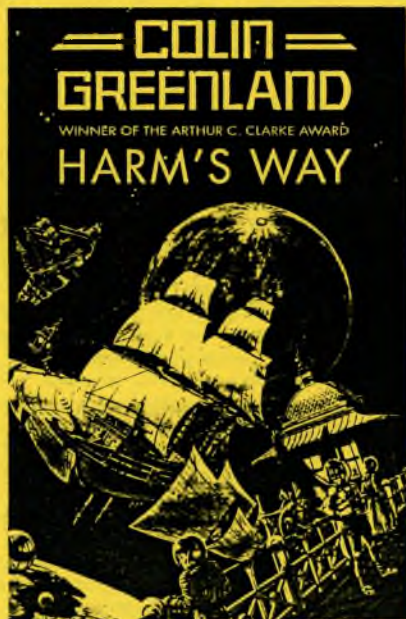
Really, this book is useful if you need a good, thick book to while away your time. It doesn't add anything significant to the genre, being just another version of a seam that is virtually played out.

HARM'S WAY by Colin Greenland

HarperCollins, 364pp, £14.99 h/b, £8.99 trade p/b

Reviewed by Martin Tudor.

HARM'S WAY is an ambitious book; you have to respect an author who attempts to merge such an unlikely combination of genres as the Victorian coming of age story and out-and-out space opera. You have to admire an author who pulls off such a stunt with as much panache as Greenland does here.



This is an amazing novel, peopled with delightful Dickensian characters and wonderfully weird aliens. The fast-paced plot sweeps us giddily through a host of extravagant, exotic locations - the planets of our solar system as they *should* have been!

This is a universe where Britannia rules the stars, where space frigates speed between the planets, their great sails catching the solar winds, guided by members of the Most Worshipful Guild and Exalted Hierarchy of Pilots of the Aether. A universe where ancient alien races are ripe for exploitation by the space-faring European empires. All this and more Green-land describes colourfully and vividly through the voice of his innocent young heroine Sophie Farthing.

Sophie runs away from her poor, bleak life in the flying island of High Haven, because she is desperate for information about the mother she has never known. *HARM'S WAY* is the tale of her search for the truth about her mother as she travels to the Moon, through the dirt and grime of London, escapes the horrific depths of the Martian city of Ys, dwells for a time amongst the Angels of Mars and finally finds her answer on a frozen moon of Jupiter.

Every bit as exciting as *TAKE BACK PLENTY* - but very different in flavour, *HARM'S WAY* is a magnificent read, I cannot recommend it too highly - buy it now, you won't regret it.

AMMONITE by Nicola Griffith
Grafton, 397 pp, £4.99, p/b

Reviewed by Chris Ridd.

This is about a colonised world, Jeep, that has been abandoned by Earth. A team of people are returned to the world and find that an unknown virus has killed all the original men; the virus proceeds to kill all the team members who set foot on Jeep. The main character, a company rep, is sent down to the planet to discover if a vaccine being developed on the orbiting station works. On her journey through the world she discovers how the remaining women breed (no men, remember, and no medical facilities...). She also gets stuck in a conflict that threatens the whole colony.

The scenario rather reminds me of Cherry's *FORTY THOUSAND IN GEHENNA*. The theme of a planet of women has possibly been done before (!), but this is actually quite a good book, despite the uneven pace of the story.

THE CALL OF EARTH by Orson Scott Card
Legend, 304 pp, £8.99, "C" format, (£14.99 h/b)

Reviewed by Pauline Morgan.

This is the second volume in the *HOMECOMING* series. Although it continues the story of Nafai and his family it also contains a story that is complete within this volume. In book one, *MEMORIES OF EARTH*, the computer that had controlled the planet Harmony

for the past four million years recognises that it is breaking down and foresees the destruction of the planet in the same way that Earth was destroyed. It thinks it can get some of the people back to Earth, which should by now have had time to rejuvenate itself, and has begun to manipulate them through dreams. Although the interactions between Nafai and his brothers is an ongoing theme throughout the book - here they have to return to the city of Basilica to fetch out the women who are to be their wives - the focus is on General Vozmuzhainoy Vozmozhno (Moozh). The leader of the Gorayani army seizes the opportunity to capture Basilica while the people are in a state of confusion following the murder of Gaballufix, who can be best described as a men's rights activist - only women are allowed to own property within the city walls and men can only stay within them at night by invitation of a woman. Guided by the Oversoul (Harmony's master computer) - Moozh believes he is doing the opposite - the General's actions are the trigger that forces Nafai's reluctant family to set out on the quest for Earth that it wants them to make.

As usual, this is an extremely competent and enjoyable book from one of science fiction's most versatile authors.

THE EARTH IS THE LORD'S by William James
Orbit, 535 pp, £5.99, p/b

Reviewed by Carol Morton.

Tarvaras is a barren, desert-like planet that had been devastated by a nuclear war centuries earlier. Because of this, the planet is quarantined, all contact with its inhabitants forbidden, and to enforce this the Imperial Space Navy has blockaded the planet. Admiral Rostov has been in a space battle and has recovered sufficiently to return to light duties, and has been assigned to inspect the blockading forces. Whilst undertaking those duties there is an attempt to kill him, the outcome of which finds Rostov and his retinue stranded on Tarvaras with no hope of return to the fleet.

Despite the nuclear war man has survived and built up a culture that parallels that of the Khans of Asia. Rostov and his party are captured by Burun Khan, a favoured Warlord of the ruling Kha-Khan, and are given the choice of either slavery or joining Burun's forces in a war of conquest against a neighbouring country. They opt for the latter and Rostov not only becomes an officer in Burun's army, but also his trusted friend.

As with the Khans of Earth, there is a lot of political manoeuvring in an attempt to gain the Kha-Khan's favour. Burun and Rostov become the victims of one such plot, and as personal warring between Khans is forbidden Rostov finds himself in a no-win situation. He can either be killed by Burun's rival, or be executed by the Kha-Khan for avenging Burun's honour.

An excellent novel, the first in what promises to

be an interesting trilogy. For a new novelist this work shows maturity and depth. The tale has obviously been well researched, the characters are finely drawn and the storyline is absorbing and entertaining. I do have one quibble. At the beginning of the book there is a "family tree" of the Kha-Khans that covers the whole trilogy, and this gives away several pivotal points in the plot, negating some of the suspense. It would have been far better to have shown only those characters and alliances by marriage in existence at the point that Rostov was stranded on Tarvaras. That minor quibble apart, this is a superb novel. I'll certainly be on the lookout for the rest of the trilogy, and I advise you to do the same.

DRIFTGLASS/STARSHARDS by Samuel R. Delany
Grafton, 535 pp, £5.99 p/b

Reviewed by Chris Morgan.

Over more than thirty years of writing sf, Delany has produced very few short stories, and all of them are collected here. If you're aware of the awesome power and originality of Delany's work you'll probably already possess copies of most of these stories; if you're not you'd better buy this volume. It contains two Hugo and Nebula winners ("Aye, and Gomorrah...," and "Time Considered as a Helix of Semi-Precious Stones") and several award nominees. There are also two previously uncollected stories and a brilliant (and lengthy) piece of autobiography. Delany is the sf author against whom all others must be measured. If you haven't read him you've missed out on The Best.

BOY'S LIFE by Robert McCammon
Penguin, 536 pp, £4.99, p/b

Reviewed by Pauline Morgan.

This book draws heavily on the author's childhood. The principle character, Cory Mackenson, is a writer looking back at one particular year, one which not only typified his memories of what it was like to be young but also one of change. It is that year that balances the security of early years with the knowledge that nothing lasts for ever. This story starts when Cory and his father are driving on his father's milk round and a car shoots out a side road and careers into the lake-filled quarry. Although Cory's father tries to save the driver he cannot, partly because he is already dead, and partly because the corpse is handcuffed to the steering wheel.

The years of childhood are magical, partly because they can never be retraced, partly because the memories are unique to the person who lived them - none of us sees events in exactly the same way. Thus as Cory recalls the happenings of the year in which he was twelve he recounts the things that brought him pleasure, relives the magic of being a boy of that age in a small American town. This in itself makes a good, narrative story. There are tragedies - his friend's hunting accident; disasters - the river

bursts its banks, his father loses his job; thrills - a monster from the visiting fair escapes into the woods; triumphs - Cory takes the first steps towards a writing career. The town is peopled with eccentric characters like the Glass sisters, one who always dresses in green, the other in blue, Vernon Thaxter who walks the streets naked, the Lady and her husband Moonman who are the leaders of the black community. But the other story, the one about the murdered man is an undercurrent to the main narrative. Although events are related exactly as they would happen in real life, showing the clues Cory picks up which eventually lead to the revelation of the killer, they tend to intrude. So there are two stories here, one about the magic of childhood, for which it is well worth reading this book, and the detective story, and they do not quite fit together.

THE CRYSTAL LINE by Anne McCaffrey
Bantam, 271 pp, £8.99, "C" format

Reviewed by Carol Morton.

Killashandra Ree and Lars Dhal are the most gifted of Crystal Singers and have a record breaking partnership when it comes to cutting the crystals of Ballybran. So when a new type of what appears to be living crystal is found on another planet, they are assigned to investigate after the original contact crew has all died. It is assumed that Crystal Singers, with their symbiont, will survive. After investigation using some slivers of Ballybran crystal the pair conclude that, although the new form is interesting, they cannot see that it has any use, but later events will prove them fortuitously wrong.

On return to Ballybran they find the Guild in rapid decline, with only 400 Singers actually cutting, as opposed to 4000 odd when Killashandra joined. The memory loss caused by the crystal symbiont is to blame, as many Singers cannot remember where their most lucrative claims are, and as time passes their awareness of danger is reduced, so many are killed or badly injured whilst in the ranges cutting. Lanzecki, Killashandra's one time lover and now Guild Master, dies. He bequeaths his post to Lars, who proposes several methods by which Singers, active or inactive, could be made to tell where their claims are. This brings him into dispute with Killashandra and their relationship, already strained by Lars' promotion, breaks up. A request from the people now studying the new crystal form finds Killashandra returning to the planet, enabling Lars to finally advertise the Guild.

This story is a fitting end (well, it's more than likely the end) to a fine trilogy that finally proved to many that Anne could write a series about something other than Dragons. I've felt that her work (other than the Pern novels) has not been up to standard lately, so it was a relief to read this and to know that she is still, for me, one of the best sf writers around. If you haven't yet read the Crystal Singer books, go on and treat yourself.