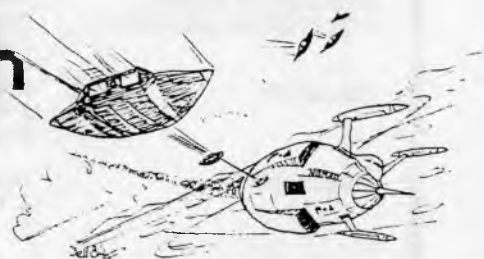


# Birmingham Science Fiction Group

(Honorary Presidents: Brian W. Aldiss  
and Harry Harrison)



## Number 157

## Sept 1989

The Birmingham Science Fiction Group meets on the third Friday of each month in the New Imperial Hotel in Temple Street, Birmingham City Centre. Details of our next meeting are shown below.

OCTOBER MEETING: FRIDAY OCTOBER 12TH AT 7.45 PM

## Christopher Priest



Young, British author, Christopher Priest will be our guest speaker this month and will, no doubt, tell us more about his latest novel, *THE GLAMOUR* which is published this month. Although officially his signing session for the book is at Andromeda on Saturday 13th I'm sure Roger will be selling signed copies on the Friday.

Chris Priest's previous works have included *THE AFFIRMATION*, *A DREAM OF WESSEX*, *THE SPACE MACHINE*, *FUGUE FOR A DARKENING ISLAND*, *INDOCTRINAIRE* and *INVERTED WORLD* but it looks as

if *THE GLAMOUR* will at last establish this talented author with an international reputation.

## Birmingham SF Group Newsletter

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TREASURER: Stan Eling, 124 Galton Road, Smethwick, Warley, West Midlands, B67 5JS

### MEMBERSHIP DETAILS OF THE BIRMINGHAM SCIENCE FICTION GROUP

The annual membership fee of £5 (£7.50 for two people at the same address) entitles members to a copy of this newsletter each month, reduced entrance fees to the monthly meetings, the opportunity of joining our free-to-members Amateur Press Association (APA-B) and the chance of meeting and corresponding with like-minded science fiction fans. All new membership fees and renewals should be sent to our treasurer

This issue of the Newsletter is copyright (c) 1984 Birmingham Science Fiction Group on behalf of the contributors to whom all rights revert upon publication.

## EDITORIAL

The Birmingham SF Group Newsletter heavily depends upon voluntary contributions, reviews, time and labour. Last month I was fortunate to have a very good response to my earlier pleas for help and judging from some of the reactions the issue was well received. Especial thanks are extended to all who helped produce that issue, not only the contributors but also the 'back room' helpers such as Chris Suslowicz who regularly supplies the envelopes and address labels, and Jan who assists with the typing and collating. Keep up the good work....please.

I hope to increase the scope of the Newsletter and will elaborate in future issues. This time around I'm experimenting with the use of pictures and photographs and have also added a convention report section. Next month sees our very own Novacon so I hope to receive as many Novacon reports from those of you attending as possible - the more the merrier. Let us know your opinions of the convention. After all, if you don't enjoy it then we can't try and rectify and problems you encountered at future Novacons if we don't know about them! On the other hand, if you enjoy the convention, then tell us what you liked. See you at the Novacon.

DEADLINE FOR NEXT ISSUE.....MONDAY NOVEMBER 5TH (Which means the next issue will very probably be collated at the Novacon itself. Could be a good excuse for a collating party!)

# Group News

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## NOVACON 14 NEWS

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I was hoping to be able to give more information on what will be happening at this year's Novacon but I've yet to receive Progress Report 4. It should be on its way Real Soon Now so if you've registered you'll soon have the details. If you haven't registered then never fear, there's still time to send your £6 membership fee to Ann Green, 11 Fox Green Crescent, Acocks Green, Birmingham, B27 7SD and she will send you all the Progress Reports to date. In case you've missed all previous publicity Guest of Honour is Rob Holdstock and the convention is being held at the Grand Hotel, Colmore Row on November 9th to the 11th. Even if you're not into SF be there for the real ale on sale in the fan lounge throughout most of the convention. 339 people have registered to date. All single/double rooms at the Grand have been booked and there are about 25 twin bed rooms left. There is a BSFG party with free booze on the Friday night.

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## MEMBERSHIP NEWS

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A special welcome to Ian Sorensen and Michael Molloy who have just joined the Group, despite both living in Glasgow. Welcome back to Jackie and Lawrence Miller and another couple by the name of Graham and Jan Poole. Wonder who they are?

Does anyone know of a Camilla Pomeroy? I have heard from Dave Langford that this person, who used to live at 130 Ashbrook Road, B30, has 'Gone Away' without giving Dave a forwarding address for her subscription copies of Ansible. Camilla has never been a member of the Group but I wonder if anyone has heard of her. If so, write to Dave at 94 London Road, Reading, Berks, RG1 5AU.

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## FORTHCOMING EVENTS

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**NOVEMBER:** Instead of wondering whether the team think or not we're assured that they do and the evening has been retitled "Team Think". Panellists have been decided and, barring accidents, should include Paul Brantingham, Steve Green, Chris Chivers and Pauline Morgan.

**DECEMBER:** Christmas party. Details to be announced soon.

**JANUARY:** Annual General Meeting.

**FEBRUARY TO MAY:** Should include Robert Rankin, Brian Aldiss and Ramsey Campbell but who knows what might happen before then.

**HITCH-HIKER'S GUIDE TO THE GALAXY:** On March 1st the BSFG will be visiting the Crescent Theatre in Birmingham to see the stage version of HITCH-HIKER. Tickets for this are immediately available from our treasurer at a cost of £1.75, a saving of 75p on the normal price. Orders to be accompanied by an s.a.e. please.

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## INFORMAL MEETINGS

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Every month there are two informal meetings held at the General Wolfe pub on the corner of Aston Road and Holt Street, near Aston University. On the first Friday of every month is the BSFG informal (next meeting 2nd November) and on the last Friday of every month is the MiSPiTs meeting (next one, 26th October).

2ND FESTIVAL OF READERS AND WRITERS: Being held at the Midlands Arts Centre, Cannon Hill 11th - 25th November. Amongst others, Brian Aldiss will be there with his agent and publisher on Wednesday 14th November at 7.30pm, and Chris Priest and Angela Carter on Sunday 18th November, again at 7.30 pm. Further details from Tim Bennett Goodman on 440 4221 Extn 22.

PHOTOGRAPHS AND PHOTOGRAPHERS WANTED: You see them at every convention, dozens of photographers snapping away at authors, BNFs, award winners, fancy dress...but do you wonder whatever happens to their photographs? Wouldn't it be a nice idea if some of them found their way into future issues of this Newsletter? For reproduction purposes black and white photos are best but it is possible to print colour photos as well, albeit reduced to black and white! All contributions that are used will be paid for and the prints returned after use. Please contact me if you are interested, especially if you get any embarrassing or compromising pictures!

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS: Thanks to all contributors for this issue including Martin Tudor, David Packwood, Pauline Morgan, Roger Peyton, Peter Weston, William McCabe and to John Dell for all artwork. Photographs of Chris Priest and Robert Heinlein from publicity material. I hope to be able to also publish photos of Chris Priest and Rob Holdstock in this issue but it depends on my fast-diminishing time.

## **Tom Shippey**

"What's wrong with the brains of these people?" demanded Tom Shippey, after reading out samples of gibberish uttered by various public figures in America. His theory was that they were somehow becoming indoctrinated into a system of garbled thinking in which they genuinely seemed unable to express a coherent meaning, but instead just splutter on, throwing out words which sound as if they might mean something - but actually don't.

What does that have to do with science fiction, one might ask?

Well, at the last meeting Tom (now Professor in charge of the English Department at the University of Leeds) discussed the use of language in 1984, particularly Orwell's idea of "doublethink", and compared and contrasted this with both the real world and other SF - examples in which a language has actually shaped the society concerned.

It sounds a bit serious, maybe, but Tom presented his talk in the usual dry manner, peppered liberally with insults aimed at George Orwell and Yours Truly in roughly equal measure!

One of our more thoughtful meetings and doubly welcome for that! Plenty of questions, drinking to 11.00 p.m. and a Chinese meal afterwards completed the evening.

Peter Weston ●

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# REVIEWS

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TIME OUT OF JOINT by Philip K. Dick, Penguin, £1.95, 187 pages  
Reviewed by D.L.R.Packwood

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The year is 1959 and the place is a small, sleepy town in Wyoming, USA. Ragle Gumm, forty six, unemployed and still living with his sister Margo, supports himself by entering a newspaper competition. Each day he dutifully submits his entry and awaits the results on the morrow. Ragle wins the contest invariably, or does he? In TIME OUT OF JOINT, nothing is quite what it seems: "Skimmed milk masquerades as cream", to borrow a phrase.

A series of events, unwittingly originated by Ragle's long-suffering brother-in-law Victor Nielson, alerts Ragle to the disquieting thought that his seemingly innocuous hobby could conceal a more sinister motive. He begins to strip away the spurious layers of his small town existence in the belief that there is something more... Thus he discovers, but that would be telling: Suffice to say, that the final revelation is well worth waiting for!

As in so many of Philip K. Dick's "ontological" works, TIME OUT OF MIND challenges the contention that there is an objective reality. Drawing heavily on his life experience, Dick paints a portrait of an individual beset by self-doubt and (in this instance) justifiable paranoia: The analytical "psychotic" Gumm pokes holes through the shaky fabric of his futile existence until he sees the whole truth for better or worse laid out before him.

Yet, even at the climax of TIME OUT OF JOINT, one can't help asking: "Is there something more?"

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PROST by Robin W. Bailey, Unicorn, £2.95, 209 pages  
Reviewed by Pauline Morgan

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Frost is an outcast. In her world for a woman to handle weapons means death. Her prowess becomes important when she meets a dying stranger who gives her a book, the legendary Book of the Last Battle, with instructions to take it to the sorcerer Kregan. The problems come thick and fast. Pursued by wizardry, vengeful swordsmen and demons she and Kregan take the Book to Chondos, the country where everyone is a sorcerer. Here a fearsome battle ensues. This action packed volume makes extremely enjoyable reading.

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THE CHILDREN OF THE WIND by Geraldine Harris, Unicorn, £2.50, 196 pages  
Reviewed by Pauline Morgan

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In volume one, PRINCE OF THE GOBORN, Kerish and his half-brother Forollkin set out to find the seven keys that would release the saviour of Galkis from his prison. THE CHILDREN OF THE WIND begins with the party travelling North through marshes in the guise of botanists. When they finally reach the home of the sorcerer Tir-Zulmar they have to turn back with a promise of the key if... The Children of the title do not appear until half way through the book and are the herders living on the plains they now have to cross. At this point the book begins to come to life. A reasonable second volume of a juvenile tetralogy.



CHRISTOPHER PRIEST



ROBERT HOLDSTOCK





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## CONVENTIONS

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- OCTOBER 12-14...MIDCON '84. A Star Trek con in Leicester with guests George Takei & Bruce Hyde. Details from Terry Elson, 8 Ennerdale Close, Oadby, Leicester, LE2 4TN.
- OCTOBER 12-14...CONQUEST. A con devoted in the main to Elfquest, but featuring James White as a guest as well as Richard & Wendy Pini. Contact Pat Brown, 104 Pretoria road, Patchway, Bristol, NS12 5PZ.
- OCTOBER 19th...POLYCON. At Hatfield Polytechnic. Contact Keith White, PSIFA c/o Hatfield Polytechnic Students union, PO Box 109, Hatfield, Herts.
- OCTOBER 27-28...GALACTICON. A multi-media con in London. Contact either Eileen Windgrove, 334 Parkside Ave., Barnehurst, Bexley Heath, Kent or Irene Ambrose, 171 Heath Rd., Hounslow, Middx.
- NOVEMBER 2-4...CYMRUCON IV. A multi-media con to be held in the Central Hotel, St. Mary's Street, Cardiff. Guest of Honour Ken Bulmer, other guests include the creative crew of 'Warrior' and possibly Colin Baker & Paul Darrow (have yet to confirm). Membership until the 2nd of November will cost £9.00 (chqs to CYMRUCON) full details available from R. Lewis, 56 Honiton Rd., Llanrumney, Cardiff, CF3 92L. The main feature of the con will be as in previous years the 24 hour bar...
- NOVEMBER 3rd...BIRMINGHAM COMIC MART. A comic and fantasy mart in the Methodist Central Hall, opposite the Law Courts, Corporation Street, Birmingham. Mart only, afternoon only, entrance free.
- NOVEMBER 9-11...NOVACON 14. THE BSFG'S OWN CONVENTION AT THE GRAND HOTEL IN BIRMINGHAM CITY CENTRE. MEMBERSHIP ONLY £6.00. GUEST OF HONOUR ROBERT HOLDSTOCK. FULL DETAILS AVAILABLE FROM ANN GREEN, 11 FOX GREEN CRESCENT, ACOCKS GREEN, BIRMINGHAM, B27 7SD. (The lapse into capitals during the last entry was of course purely coincidental...)
- NOVEMBER 16-18..FOURTH LEONARD NIMOY CONVENTION. For Nimoy the actor detail from Carol Davies, 77 The Ridings, Ealing, London, W5 3DP.
- DECEMBER 14-16..SANTACON. A multi-media con in Leeds. Contact SANTACON, 84 Ambrose Street, Fulford Road, York, YO1 4DR.

### 1985

- MARCH 22-24.....THE DENTON CONVENTION. Rocky Horror con in Birmingham with all profits going to the Save the Children Fund. Send S.A.E for details to The Denton Convention, 16 Tonbridge Road, West Molesey, Surrey, KT8 OEL.
- APRIL 5-8.....YORCON III. The 36th Annual British Easter SF Convention to be held at the Dragonara and Queens Hotels in Leeds. Until the 31/12/84 attending membership will remain at £8.00 (£6.00 for the unemployed) from the 1/1/85 it will be £10.00, at the door it will be £12.00. Further details from Mike Ford, 45 Harold Mount, Leeds, LS6 1PW. Guest of Honour Greg Benford, Fan Guest of Honour Linda Pickersgill.
- JULY 26-28.....BECCON '85. Guest of Honour Richard Cowper, membership £8, but rumour has it that the con is now 'sold out'. Details from 191 The Heights, Northolt, Middx.
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## FANTASY CONVENTIONS (7th - 9th, 14th - 16th September 1984)

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Some years ago there was only one fantasy convention a year and then Mythcon was born three years ago when the British Fantasy Society, who run Fantasycon, did not consider Anne McCaffrey a suitable guest.

Mythcon was held at the College of Further Education in Hull with extremely low room rates but, as several people noticed, high travel costs. There were approximately 80 people in attendance - I can't be sure of the figure because an attendance list was not available. The people who did attend appeared to be either media or Dungeons and Dragons types keeping mostly to the game room. The main programme consisted of talks (one for each guest) and films (3 different with Rocky Horror repeated). There were long breaks for meals and a separate video programme. Most of the fun of the con seemed to be in the unprogrammed items such as the gathering in the bar after the programme finished and the late-night room parties, the only possible exception being Jack Cohen's apparent reaction to his first sight of Rocky Horror (I was stuck at the reception at that time and only caught the aftermath). Brian Froud, the Guest of Honour, was interesting but somewhat overshadowed by the comparatively youthful Steve Gallagher's explanation of how Sarah Sutton came to drop her skirt for the TV and the overpowering presence of McCaffrey, especially as Froud tended to sit between them in the bar.

Fantasycon, however, is a different proposition. It is true that they have a speech (only one) and a few panels but most of the programme is films and, in this case, all but two of them Italian horror movies. I don't know if anyone has ever held a room party at a Fantasycon but somehow I doubt it. The great spectacle here was, as always, the Saturday night raffle in which everyone gets a prize of some sort which, in many cases, they end up trading with someone else. I came out with two posters and £2 in change.

Considering the great difference between the two conventions I do not find it at all surprising that only three people showed up at both. Fantasycon will, presumably, be back next year but may not be all that well advertised. Mythcon will not appear again until at least 1986 when the GOH maybe Marion Zimmer Bradley.

One more point - Fantasycon has it's own awards which, from the wrong side, look quite obscene. The 1983 version, presented this year, went to:-

- Best novel - FLOATING DRAGON (Peter Straub)
- Best Short Story - NEITHER BRUTE NOR HUMAN (Karl Edward Wagner)
- Best Small Press (Semi-pro fanzine) - GHOSTS AND SCHOLARS  
(ed. Rosemary Pardoe)
- Best Artist - Rowena Morrill
- Best Film - VIDEODROME
- Special Award (for lifetime contribution to ...) - Donald and  
Elsie Wollheim.

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William McCabe

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# Books Received

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**JOB: A COMEDY OF JUSTICE** by Robert A Heinlein, published by New English Library in hardback on October 15th, price £8.95, 368 pages.

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"It started obliquely enough on a cruise in the South Pacific. An outing of ordinary tourists from the liner visited an island to witness the fire-walking ceremony. Mr Graham, more foolhardy than courageous, decided to try it himself. He survived, but something happened to the world he inhabited. He returned to a ship strangely altered.



With his beautiful companion Margrethe, a ship's stewardess, Graham discovers that he is being tormented by some higher intelligence. Pursued from alternate world to alternate world, Graham has barely time to learn a new set of mores and master a different currency before the ground shifts beneath his feet. Things are not helped by the fact that in many ways his value system is that of a religious bigot and his only marketable skill is the ability to wash mountains of cutlery. Margrethe, attractive and intellectually more flexible, fares rather better. It seems that the couple are being tested, but by whom? When at last the pattern becomes clear the implications are cosmic. In a heavenly bureaucracy stricken by congestion and political intrigue Graham finally meets the creator of all the universes in a confrontation that is both funny and profound.

In this latest novel Robert A. Heinlein questions some of the fundamental belief systems that have sustained man's sense of purpose - but he does so with penetrating intelligence and great humour. **JOB: A COMEDY OF JUSTICE** is an important novel of religious ideas and human comedy that is destined to be controversial."

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**AGAINST INFINITY** by Gregory Benford, published by New English Library in paperback on August 6th, price £1.75, 251 pages.

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Ganymede, the largest moon of Jupiter: a world of ice and cold rock, of ammonia streams and deep-buried mineral-rich meteor debris. Airless and utterly hostile to man, yet it is being gradually turned into a habitable world by complex biological engineering. The project is complicated by the presence on Ganymede of a large, mysterious, ancient quasi-living alien artifact, the Aleph. It burrows beneath the moon's crust, seldom seen but sometimes, casually lethal. Threat and fable, the Aleph was a magnet to the imagination. Tracking down the Aleph, understanding its nature had become to some a quest, an over-riding obsession.

Benford's previous stories have included, amongst others, **IF THE STARS ARE GODS** (1975), **IN THE OCEAN OF NIGHT** (1976) and **TIMESCAPE** (1980) which won the Nebula Award, the British Science Fiction Award, the John W. Campbell Memorial Award and the Australian Ditmar Award for International Novel.

# BRUM 2184

The story so far - Spaceman Ernest Smith is on leave in Birmingham - He's about to meet some old friends....



We heard the "Royal Angus" was due into New Street today - We missed you at the spaceport but, as you can see we tracked you down. Come along Smith - We've got a 'Copterbus to catch.....



We're taking you for a treat in the HARBORNE TOWER..... Then we've a favour to ask



NO ONE NOTICES A SINISTER BLACK LIFTER FOLLOWING THEM  
FIND OUT MORE... NEXT ISSUE!