

# BRUM GROUP NEWS

November  
1990

Issue  
No. 230

## The monthly Newsletter of the BIRMINGHAM SCIENCE FICTION GROUP

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

1990 Committee: Chairman – Chris Murphy Secretary – Helena Bowles  
Treasurer – Chris Chivers Newsletter Editor – Dave Hardy Reviews Editor –  
Mick Evans Publicity Officer – Andrew White Novacon 19 Chairman – Bernie Evans

### THIS MONTH'S PROGRAMME THE UNIVERSITY CHALLENGE!

Friday 16 November at 7.45pm Admission: Members £1.25 Visitors £2.00



THIS is the meeting that the Birmingham University Science Fiction and Fantasy Society have been awaiting for a whole year – their chance to get their own back on the Brum Group for defeating their last motion by 20 to 5! This year it is our turn to propose the motion, which (in the absence of any better proposal from the membership) is:

**"THIS HOUSE BELIEVES THAT MODERN SF HAS BECOME AN  
AMERICAN LITERATURE"**

At the time of writing it is not known whether the University team will be for or against the motion, so you'll have to remain in suspense until the night. . . We don't even have the names of the teams, but it will be chaired by our own Chairman, Chris Murphy. You'll have *your* chance to participate!

The BSFG meets on the third Friday of every month (unless otherwise notified) at **THE IVY BUSH**, Hagley Road/Monument Road, Birmingham at 7.45pm.

Subscription Rates: £6.00 per person, or £9.00 for two members at same address.

Cheques etc. payable to the BSFG, via the Treasurer, c/o the Reviews Editor (below).

Chairman: All calls via 021 777 1802, please.

Book Reviews (only) to **Mick Evans** at 121 Cape Hill, Smethwick, Warley B66 4SH, which is also the Novacon Chairman's address. (021 558 0997)

**All other contributions and enquiries** to **Dave Hardy**, 99 Southam Road, Hall Green, Birmingham B28 0AB (Telephone 021 777 1802, fax 021 777 2792)



## TAD WILLIAMS

I must plead 'guilty' to being one of those who did not turn up for last month's meeting – but I wasn't well, it was the first meeting I've missed this year (and possibly last), and it wasn't raining. I heard Tad Williams interviewed on the radio, too, so don't feel that I've missed too much; but it is a pity that the attendance was so low for an American author who gave up an informal meeting with the British Fantasy Society to come to us. . .

Anyway, here's a report by our Chairman, Chris Murphy:

Tad Williams spoke to an audience of just 22 people. Are Brum Group members really so scared of rain or prejudiced against fantasy authors?

Those who didn't attend missed a lively and wide-ranging talk which covered SF as well as fantasy.

Tad spoke about the assumptions and influences that writers bring to their work, the process of having a manuscript turned into a printed book and the international market (Italians apparently ignore anything that doesn't have a very famous name on the cover!).

He discussed, among many other things, the reputations of some well-known writers and the sad state of American television. He also defended those authors who wrote successful series decades ago and recently decided to add extra volumes. Personally I didn't agree with him on the last point, but this was a thoroughly entertaining evening.

## WANTED: A COMMITTEE!

The AGM is fast approaching, and many of this year's Committee will be retiring, so it is time for you to start thinking about standing for office. If you don't, there may BE no Brum Group next year (you think I'm joking?!). All positions are open, and they are:

**Chairman:** Will (obviously) chair and keep in order (!) all meetings, and will also hold regular committee meetings (currently on the Tuesday after the Brum Group meeting), contact and host speakers, etc.

**Secretary:** should be able to type (we now have our own electric typewriter, or will when it comes back from repair), attend all Committee Meetings and produce Minutes of these to be sent to all Committee Members. Likewise of the AGM or other Group meetings, and may be asked to write to prospective speakers, etc.

**Treasurer:** If you don't know what he/she has to do, it's no use applying!

**Publicity Officer:** will produce A4-size posters for meetings, arrange for them to be displayed at local shops, libraries and other venues, and generally try to drum up new members. Should also contact radio, TV etc., when necessary. Needs IDEAS.

**Newsletter Editor:** needs to have access to desktop publishing facilities, a word processor, or at least a typewriter and a pair of scissors. Must get the *Brum Group News* out on time every month, and persuade/threaten members to produce contributions, obtain artwork, etc. Some knowledge of design and layout an advantage.

**Reviews Editor:** is actually an Ordinary Member (see Constitution), but may be appointed to receive and distribute review copies of SF/fantasy books as fairly and appropriately as possible and collect and compile (re-type) reviews received each month, in time for inclusion in the Newsletter.

One other **Ordinary Member** may be appointed by the Committee at any time during the year, if necessary.

Now – which job do YOU fancy?

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# You Write...

The snag is – you *didn't*! I have no letters, no drabbles, no articles, no unsolicited video reviews – nothing. As I have commented before, I'm supposed to edit, not write everything, so the result should be a blank page, which it is. Except:

Prompted by a comment by Peter Weston that he might send in his Top Ten SF books (which he hasn't, yet), Wendell Wagner's last act before leaving the Brum Group for pastures new was to send me his own Top Twenty. So I'm publishing it, below.

Now I'm sure you'd like to have a think about your own Top Ten (yes, we'll leave it at ten in future) and let me have it, wouldn't you? You can also add a few comments about why you chose certain books, how and when you first came across them and SF in general. That way, perhaps we can ensure that there are no blank pages in future newsletters. . .

## Wendell Wagner's Top Twenty

1. *First and Last Men and Starmaker*: Olaf Stapledon
  2. *The Riverworld Series*: Philip Jose Farmer
  3. *Dune* (and maybe its sequels): Frank Herbert
  4. *The Stars My Destination* (a.k.a. *Tiger! Tiger!*): Alfred Bester
  5. *The Space Merchants*: Frederik Pohl and C.M.Kornbluth
  6. *The Time Machine* by H.G.Wells
  7. *The Man in the High Castle*: Philip K. Dick
  8. *The Left Hand of Darkness*: Ursula K. LeGuin
  9. *A Canticle for Leibowitz*: Walter M. Miller
  10. *Solaris*; Stanislaw Lem
  11. *Against the Fall of Night*: Arthur C. Clarke
  12. *Lord of Light*: Roger Zelazny
  13. *The Forever War*: Joe Haldeman
  14. *The End of Eternity*: Isaac Asimov
  15. *The Tin Men*: Michael Frayn
  16. *City*: Clifford Simak
  17. *More Than Human*: Theodore Sturgeon
  18. *The Einstein Intersection*: Samuel R. Delany
  19. *Ringworld*: Larry Niven
  20. *Stranger in a Strange Land*: Robert Heinlein
- (Incidentally, in future only one title per number, please!)

# COMPETITION

# TIME!

In a desperate attempt to fill this newsletter, I thought that we'd have a competition – something we haven't done for quite a while. So: a free drink of your choice to the member who comes closest to the correct answer to the following question (naturally we trust you not to cheat by playing your video!):

How many minutes and seconds into the movie *Star Wars* does this scene appear? (You didn't think I was going to ask you to identify the film, did you!)



## The Brum Group Christmas Party

In a nutshell, there isn't going to be one. We have drawn a blank in trying to find a suitable venue at a price that will suit all members, and there have been objections to going back to the University (eg. female members are worried about walking around in that locality) plus the last one wasn't too well attended. So we're thinking in terms of as many members as possible going to a local (Chinese?) restaurant for a meal. But what are *your* thoughts on the matter? Let us know soon, as we shall have to book.

## The meddling Time traveller

by Tim Groome



"A watched kettle never boils. Mr Watt. . ."

# The Jophan Report

by Martin Tudor

News and Gossip from the world of Science Fiction, this month consisting exclusively of Martin Tudor's famed **Jophan Report**. If YOU have any information of interest, please send or phone it in to the Editor.

Horror writer Mark Morris is to write a bi-monthly column on the genre for *MILLION: The Magazine of Popular Fiction*, due to be launched early next month. The magazine will be edited by *INTERZONE*'s David Pringle, assisted by author Kim Newman, and will feature interviews with and articles on bestselling writers. *FEAR ITSELF*, a collection of essays on the horror fiction of Stephen King, receives its British edition this month from Pan Books. Edited by Tim Underwood and Chuck Miller, contributors include Peter Straub, Fritz Leiber and Douglas Winter. Pan's Dec releases include K W Jeter's *SOUL EATER* and Arthur C Clarke's revised edition of *CHILDHOOD'S END*.

Paper Tiger released the softback edition of David Hardy's acclaimed artbook *VISIONS OF SPACE* on 11 October, priced at £10.95. Subtitled "Artists Journey Through The Cosmos" and featuring a foreword by Arthur C Clarke, the volume includes hundreds of illustrations, all in colour, plus biographies of the leading astronomical artists. The publication of other Paper Tiger books scheduled for Oct / Nov release have been delayed. This means that it is now unlikely that Jim Burns, Chris Foss and Mark Harrison will be signing copies of their latest works at the Andromeda signing session on Friday at Novacon 20, although it is understood that Jim Burns will be attending the con.

December sees the launch of *SF NEXUS*, a quarterly magazine of sf criticism and fiction, produced by *INTERZONE* assistant editor Paul Brazier with aid from Geoff Ryman, Colin Greenland, M John Harrison, John Clute, Diana Wynne Jones and others. A subscription costs £10, to: PO Box 1123, Brighton, BN1 6EX.

Nominations have opened for next year's TransAtlantic Fan Fund race, with the European winner attending the 1991 worldcon in Chicago. European fans who are interested in standing should contact the current administrators, Lillian Edwards

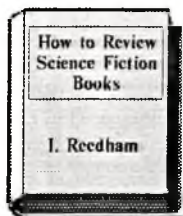
and Christina Lake, at 47 Wessex Avenue, Horfield, Bristol, BS7 0DH. The closing date for nominations is 31 Dec, votes must be in by 15 May, 1991.

A display of *CRITICAL WAVE* cover illustrations, featuring original artwork by Ian Brooks, Jim Porter and Iain Byers, will be mounted at Novacon 20. As from 1st Jan 1991 a sub for 6 issues of *CRITICAL WAVE* will rise to £6. Further details from Martin Tudor, 845 Alum Rock Road, Ward End, Birmingham, B8 2AG (please note COA).

The internationally renowned Cannon Hill Puppet Theatre presents "Dragon Tails: Magical Tales of the Chinese Horoscope" at Birmingham's Midlands Arts Centre until 1 Dec; the six fables are aimed at children aged between three and six years.

Stephen King's novel *MISERY* is the latest of many to reach the screen, revealed screenwriter William Goldman in *the Observer*. Starring James Caan and directed by Rob Reiner, Golding added that it was receiving test screenings in Oct before being released in the US sometime in the autumn. "They know that people like the movie. But they don't know how to get people to see it."

Meanwhile bestselling author King has revealed he considers *STAND BY ME*, adapted from his short story "The Body", to be the first successful translation of his writing to the screen since 1976's *CARRIE*. In his introduction to his new book *FOUR PAST MIDNIGHT*, published in the UK by Hodder & Stoughton, King describes the movie's director Rob Reiner as "one of the bravest, smartest film-makers I have ever met" and is "amused to note" that Reiner's subsequent production company was dubbed Castle Rock in tribute to their association. Like *DIFFERENT SEASONS*, the book which included "The Body", *FOUR PAST MIDNIGHT* showcases 4 King stories.



# Book Reviews

All books reviewed here by members were provided by the publishers, who receive a copy of this Newsletter. Members may keep review copies (or may donate them as Raffle or Auction items. . .)

Please keep reviews to under 150 words unless instructed otherwise. Deadline for reviews: at least two weeks before next Group meeting.

RATS AND GARGOYLES by Mary Gentle; Bantam; 411 pages; £12.99 hardback.

Reviewed by Pauline Morgan.

Imagine if you can a world that has five points to the compass, a room has five corners all at right angles and the gods, all thirty six of them, are alive and dwell in a vast structure called the Fane at the edge of the city. This city is dominated by Rats - large, warlike, intelligent creatures - and humans keep to their own sectors. Add to this, among others, a tailed girl, Zar-bettu-zekigal, who is a trainee Kings Memory (she can remember any conversation word for word, accent for inflection), and two scholar-soldiers (the grossly fat Baltazar Casaubon and a mistress of Hermetic magic called White Crow.) This will give only a hint of the treasures in this book as all the factions race toward a moment of change. A complex novel, this book interweaves fantasy and alchemical philosophy in an environment where the impossible (according to our laws of physics and nature) are a part of every day life. What comes across clearly is the enjoyment Mary Gentle got out of writing this book. Worth having a go at.

THE ICEMEN by M E Morris; Grafton; 384 pages; £3.99 paperback.

Reviewed by Chris Chivers.

Antarctica: - a white wilderness of inhospitable ice and snow, but full of untold riches in the untapped wealth that lies underground. For the men and women of the American Navv who flew the supply planes to the American bases it was a long cold tour of duty. When Commander Marc Bradford and Lt Frosty Cohn started their journey back to the South Pole, little did they realise that this tour of duty would be far from usual. Thrown into this Antarctic hell were the thriving remnants of Hitler's Third Reich, that were finally being moved from Argentina to a land that they could call their own. Once again America would fight World War II, without even knowing it. M E Morris is the brand of author that technically knows his stuff, but obviously feels more at home with machinery than people, and the story fails to realise its full potential.

CARRION COMFORT by Dan Simmons; Headline; 690 pages; £14.95 hardback.

Reviewed by Michael Jones.

The idea of the vampire seems to have become of interest in Science Fiction of recent years. Brian Stableford and George R.R.Martin are just two of the writers who have produced books in which vampirism is given an historical and scientific background which lends it an aura of respectability far removed from Bram Stoker, let alone the Hammer House of Horror. Now Dan Simmons has come up with another concept: Mind-Vampires who can control ordinary people by mental power. This appears at first a simple reversion to the supernatural, although a kind of explanation involving brainwaves lends an aura of plausibility. However, there is still no explanation of how it works, or where the Ability came from in the first place, or indeed how these creatures obtain a kind of emotional feedback from the process of "using" people. What is clear is their total and utter lack of regard for the people they are Using in their games. A group of those with the Ability have used it to obtain for themselves positions of incredible wealth and power from which they are able to continue to indulge in an ongoing orgy of perversion and murder; and the underlying story of the book is the battle of one man to revenge himself for what they did to him forty years before, a battle which seems foredoomed to failure because of the almost impregnable forces arrayed against him. As the story ranges across the United States and, briefly, to Israel, the tension never slackens and this is truly one of those books that are difficult to put down. It may not be to everyone's liking, but those who do like it will like it a LOT - I certainly did.

BROTHERS IN ARMS by Lois McMaster Bujold; Headline; 338 pages; £4.50 paperback.

Reviewed by Pauline Morgan.

This is high adventure, space opera and fun. It continues the exploits of Lieutenant Lord Miles Verkosigan, a minor officer of the Barrayan Imperial Command. He is also his own double - as Admiral Naismith of the Gendarii Free Mercenary Fleet. The problem is that as a hunchbacked dwarf he is instantly recognisable. With the fleet in orbit around Earth and his alter-ego assigned to the embassy in London, he has to rapidly invent a story explaining why there are two of him, a story that becomes alarmingly prophetic. Also the payroll for the mercenary fleet appears to have gone missing and it is incurring debts for repairs and supplies, and someone appears to be trying to kill Miles. This fast paced, all-action novel is easy to read despite the complex twists of the plot. Recommended.

FOUR HUNDRED BILLION STARS by Paul J. McAuley; Orbit: 253 pages; £3.50 paperback. Reviewed by Chris Chivers

In the land of the blind the one eyed man is king. To Dorothy Yoshida it could be a curse. As a telepath the teeming masses of Earth could be a constant nightmare. To escape Dorothy becomes an astronomer, the combination of her unique talents come to the notice of Space Navy and Dorothy is conscripted to find out more about the "Enemy". The "Enemy" is believed to have planiformed a small planet orbiting a red dwarf star on which lives a primitive life form. Also on the planet Dorothy senses an unusual intelligence which seems to be tied in with the nomadic herders. Dorothy's subsequent travels with another scientist Kilzer reveal the enormity of the "Enemies" schemes that tie together the herders and the reason for the planiforming of the planet. Paul J McAuley has woven together an unusual combination of speculation and Science Fiction to produce a well written tale for the SF aficionado.

FIRE AND HEMLOCK by Diana Wynne Jones; Mandarin: 341 pages; £2.99 paperback. Reviewed by Pauline Morgan.

Books such as this should not be allowed to fall into the hands of children - it is much too good for them. Diana Wynne Jones writes adult sized novels for young people firmly rooted in the real world but with touches of fantasy. The *Fire and Hemlock* of the title refers to a picture that hangs over nineteen year-old Polly's bed in her grandmother's house. She remembers that she once thought the shadows in it were people racing towards the blazing haystack. As she does so she begins to recall other memories: of how she gatecrashed a funeral and how she met Tom Lynn, of how they invented a secret life for each other despite the fact that she was a child and he a grown man, and how some of the things they invented somehow became real. And there was someone who was trying to keep them apart. The story is woven with a high degree of credibility with just the right touch of humour to balance the sinister happenings. An excellent novel, full of originality and making no concessions to the young people it was written for.

THE STEERSWOMAN by Rosemary Kirstein; Pan: 299 pages; £3.99 paperback. Reviewed by Carol Morton.

The steerswomen are a guild of information gatherers and givers, they travel their world collecting and collating information and answering - as best they can - any question asked of them. Should anyone refuse to answer a steerswoman's question then the guild will treat them in kind by refusing to answer their questions. Such a situation exists between the steerswomen and the magicians. A steerswoman, Rowan, becomes intrigued by shards of a blue crystal that have been found in places that are themselves in such a pattern as to be a straight line on a map. When Rowan tries to investigate further several magical attempts are made to stop her, the magicians obviously have a secret to hide. This is an excellent novel, the idea of steerswomen is original and entertaining. It is a good one-off but it has so many loose ends it could be extended - but I hope not. The rather theatrical cover does let the story down, but don't be put off. Recommended.

BLOOD IS NOT ENOUGH ed by Ellen Datlow; Grafton: 414 pages; £4.50 paperback. Reviewed by Chris Morgan.

You don't need to suck blood to be a vampire - that's the message of this anthology of 17 vampire stories. On the whole, the six reprints are the best, especially "Carnion Comfort" by Dan Simmons (now enlarged into a highly regarded novel), "The Sea Was Wet as Wet Could Be" by Gahan Wilson (a masterpiece of originality which owes just a little to Lewis Carroll's *Through the Looking Glass*) and "Down Among the Dead Men" by Gardner Dozois and Jack Dann (set in a Nazi concentration camp). Among the new stories, the outstanding contribution is "Varicose Worms", a clever and totally nauseating piece from Scott Baker. Other notable stories are by Fritz Leiber, Harlan Ellison and Chet Williamson. Despite a few make-weight pieces it's a very good read.

THE MARIANNE TRILOGY by Sheri S. Tepper; Corgi: 525 pages; £4.99 paperback. Reviewed by Helena Bowles.

These are very formulaic books. Each is an exploration of a dreamscape or foray into the unconscious mind of Marianne, a psychologically damaged woman haunted by her brother's actions, especially his attempted rape of her when she was thirteen. Despite this interesting and very sinister premise, book one is very naive and superficial in its exploration of the fantasy world Marianne has created and, for little apparent reason, is flung unwittingly into. Seen as a journey towards enlightenment the conclusion of book one is quite satisfactory as Marianne gains strength and power and is able to destroy her tormentors. However at the height of this power she chooses to travel back to her childhood to undo the events that caused her pain and thus grow up a different woman. Book two deals with two Mariannes inhabiting one body, though this is not explored in any depth. The journey into Marianne's psyche merely tells us she is laundering her past in rather clumsy imagery. Book three is a very pleasant surprise, after the predictability of book two and the relief of its ending. This time we are not (thank god) exploring Marianne's unconscious, but following her as she plays a fantastic, macabre board game - as one of the pieces. The imagery is inspired and reminiscent of Lewis Carroll. Edward Lear and the Grimm Brothers at their darkest. The book is worth reading for these episodes alone - but only if one can ignore the predicted and predictable rescue attempt (for the third time - yawn...) and the trite ending. Generally not recommended.

THE SEA SWORD by Adrienne Martine Barnes; Headline; 292 pages; £3.50 paperback.

Reviewed by Carol Morton.

Once more the d'Avebury family are the pawns of the Gods. This time Claire d'Avebury, eldest child of Geoffrey and great-grandaughter of Eleanor, is aided (in a fashion) by Kali in her quest to rid the Earth of the Shadow. The outcome of this generation's quest is more urgent. Should Claire succeed, men and Gods will once more commune, should she fail the Earth will be overcome by the Shadow. Claire's travels to find the Sea Sword and its Sheath take her through India and across the Orient to China where it is Claire's task to restore the rightful heir to the Dragon Throne of Asia. It is not made clear if this is the last in the series as Claire's twin Rodrick has a sword to find and a task to accomplish. But even if that tale is not told, this as been an excellent series telling of a family's struggle against evil through four generations. Wonderful.

INTERZONE 4 ed by John Clute, David Pringle & Simon Ounsley; Hodder & Stoughton; 208 pp; £3.50 p/b.

Rev by Tony Morton.

If, as the Brum Group, Interzone wish to further the interests, knowledge, et al of SF then they will not encourage new readers with their latest offering. Beginning with what I must call a pompous, cliquish introduction from Clute I was immediately intimidated into supposing the high brow readers a la Times Literary Supplement were looking over my shoulder to assess the credibility of the genre. This feeling continued into some of the stories, which appear self-congratulatory and obtuse. However not in vain did I continue; Greg Egan provides a gem of a story in "The Cutie" (a near future baby story with twists) while Eric Brown with "The Time Lapsed Man" (problems retrospective to space travel) a future quandary, Barrington Bayley's "Tommy Atkins" (anti-war story you MUST read) provides a sombre critique on the workings and propaganda in war. "Before I Wake" by Kim Stanley Robinson provides a powerful story of a possible future, and a Nicola Griffith story, "Mirrors and Brimstone" (humans' disregard for indigenes) powerful in its thoughtful telling. However for me the best was near the end, "Driving Through Korea" by Ian Lee provides a wonderful highspot, a story about people and an'alien (who can disguise his/her/itself as anything - which character is it ?) has such charm and wit to positively gloat. Overall the stories do stand up, but I would advise would be readers - and "new" SF readers - to ignore the intro and get to the stories, after all SF, while having the serious/knowledge aspects, must also be fun!

HYPERION by Dan Simmons; Headline; 346 pages; £13.95 hardback.

Reviewed by Pauline Morgan.

Dan Simmons is a remarkable writer. His first novel *Song of Kali* won the world fantasy award. His recent horror novel *Carrion Comfort* may well win it again having already taken the British Fantasy Society Award and been voted best horror novel of the year by the readers of *Locus*. This novel, *Hyperion* has honoured him with this year's Hugo. It is very definitely science fiction despite the horrific elements that creep into the narrative. The setting is a far future where the worlds of the Hegemony are linked by farcaster (a kind of teleportation system) in a web that continues to reach out and devour ecosystems. In that, mankind has not changed and if anything is more voracious, having a seemingly infinite number of planets to rape. Currently outside the Hegemony is Hyperion, a world containing an enigma - the Time Tombs - and the legendary Shrike, described and worshiped variously as a killing machine and a god. Hyperion is under threat by the Osters, a dissident group of humankind who are at home in space and have continued evolving. As the confrontation approaches a group of seven pilgrims are permitted to visit the Time Tombs for what maybe the last time - pilgrims do not return. As they journey they each tell their tale, explaining what has made them request this pilgrimage to certain death. Although discrete, except in setting, the individual stories give insight into this future. The effect is Chaucer-like and although they reach their destination, the story is not yet over - perhaps it has not yet really begun. Everyone should make a point of reading award winning books to find out what all the fuss is about: in this case they will find the effort well worth while.

IVORY by Mike Resnick; Legend; 374 pages; £3.99 paperback.

Reviewed by Al Johnston.

This is an excellent novel, powerful and totally enthralling. Seven thousand years after the last elephant died, Duncan Rojas compiles and researches the dimensions of rare and extinct animals for Braxton's Catalogues. One day his free time is commissioned by Buboka Mandaka, last of the Maasai, to find the location of the biggest tusks ever known. Gradually he unfolds the history of the Ivory, and of Melina Temboz, the Mountain that walks, whose teeth they were. Two questions remain:- what do the tusks have to do with the Maasai? and why is Mandaka so obsessive about their recovery? A great combination of tangible SF future and African mythology. Highly recommended.

SALVAGE RITES by Ian Watson; Grafton; 252 pages; £3.50 paperback.

Reviewed by Chris Morgan.

*Salvage Rites* is a collection of fifteen reprinted stories, recommended highly on account of its richness of ideas and eloquent writing. "The Moon and Michelangelo" (perhaps the best in the book) is a fine, chilling SF-detective story involving a human sculptor on an alien planet. There are also fresh, satirical versions of vampire, werewolf and demon stories, with SF settings.