

DEAD DOG with maggots and flies,  
all on a sesame seed bun,  
and hold the mayonnaise please.

## Oxford University Speculative Fiction Group Newsletter Early Hilary 1989

### Library Meetings

Yet again Adrian hosts those rummage sessions, come and admire Ivan's main shelves catalogue, Paul Cray's meta-cataloguing of the stacks, and now Simon's attempts to classify every short story (last news was his removal of 34 Asimov's, let's hope we get them before they get him). All in 22 Museum Road Rm 6 at 8.15 pm on Sundays.

### Discussion meetings

Still at 8.15 on Wednesdays in Somerville Penrose 14, the line-up is as follows:

1 <sup>st</sup>	Vampires: Sex, Blood and Rock & Roll	Penny
2 <sup>nd</sup>	Stop, You're Killing Me - Ecological Disasters	John
3 <sup>rd</sup>	Horror, Awfully Bloody and Bloody Awful	Jason
4 <sup>th</sup>	The first 20,000 years of fantasy	Marina & Jen
5 <sup>th</sup>	Crowley, no-one else would take him on	Ivan

Spaces free at the end of term, anyone who wants to do a talk, see Mo.

### Video Meetings

Hopefully in St Hilda's MCR at 8.15 Mondays, provisional plan below, but both venue and video may change at short notice, ask Matt at library meeting before

2 <sup>nd</sup>	The Man with 2 Brains
4 <sup>th</sup>	True Stories
6 <sup>th</sup>	Slaughterhouse 5
8 <sup>th</sup>	Star Trek 4

Speaker Meeting - not a dickie bird as yet

### Banquet

We've provisionally booked Exeter for Friday of 6<sup>th</sup> week (24/2/89 in foot ocunes). but don't hold your breath.

### Picocon

Our traditional (well we did it last year) trip to ICSF at Empirical College for their mini convention. Heavily recommended as a gentle introduction to fandom (well hardly gentle, but there we go ...)

### AGM and Election

Held on Sunday of 6<sup>th</sup> week, any motions to John Bray 2 weeks in advance, any nominations 1 week before.

### Sweatshirts

Penny will be sending in an order for old (and possibly new) design sweatshirts, she'll be circulating a list early this term.

### Newsletter

Brought to you as always by John, Paul C and Mel (with Matt, Adrian and Simon as printers). Next issue will be the bumper (so long and thanks for all the orders) one. It's piled up well not a lot yet, so get writing soon, and send it all over John Bray at Exeter. (Anyone wanting to take it over, see me soon)

John Bray

### Convention Diary

John Bray

Thanks again to the Magician (Chris O'Shea II) for his very comprehensive convention listing. If anyone wants details of cons not mentioned, especially media cons, come and ask me, as they are almost certainly on Chris' list.

Feb 3 - 5 CONTABILE, The Chequers Hotel, Newbury. GoH's Gytha North and Leslie Fish (The Transatlantic Fish Fund finally made it!). Britain's first Filk (songs like what Jason writes, only sung better) convention. £12 attending to CONTABILE, 7A Mill Rd, Cambridge CB1 2AB. Don't think the OUSFG faithful will be going to this one, not even Matt can face a weekend of filk.

Feb 4 PICOCON, Imperial College, London. GoH's Bob Shaw, Dave Langford and Dave Lally. £5 on the door. Highly recommended as an introduction to conventions, the ICSF lot are a great bunch, it looks like a Conine clone with the extra delights of an Amateur Rocketry symposium, and the much heralded OUSFG - OUSFS herring fight. Ivan and Matt'll be conducting trials for the team soon, bring a fish, but note we observe the Billingsgate rules, no sharpening the spines, or ramming lollipop sticks up it for extra stiffness. Anyway, it should be a stunner, details of coach times nearer the event.

March 24 - 27 CONTRIVANCE, Hotel de France, St Helier, Jersey. GoHs Anne McCaffrey, M John Harrison (dead good last term wasn't he). £21 attending, £11 supporting to Contrivance, 63 Drake Rd, Chessington Surrey KT9 1LQ. Always a strong OUSFG and ex-OUSFG presence at the Eastercon, combined with the delights of the channel islands. The cost is a trifle high, £45 for the ferry from Poole, £10 a night in the hotel, but you could always plead for space on a floor, though not in my room, by jingo! Umpteen people going, if for no other reason than to push the OUSFG book and Spawn of Conine

May 26 - 29 MEXICON III, Albany Hotel, Nottingham. Fannish relaxacon with strong author attendance. Hotel £20 per night with breakfast/lunch voucher. £15 attending to Mexican III c/o Greg Pickersgill, 7A Laurence Road, South Ealing, London W5 4XJ. The con I would really want to go to, but finals loom....

June 16 - 18 ICONOCLASM Griffen Hotel, Leeds (a LUCON II). GoH Diane Duane and Peter Morwood. £11 attending (up to 1/4/89) to Iconoclasm c/o Penny Glover, 16 Aviary Place, Armley, Leeds LS12 2NP. This really is slap bang in the middle of finals!

Aug 4 - 6 INTERCON 89 University of Oslo. GoH Sam Delany et al. £10 attending to Kev McVeigh, 37 Firs Road, Milnthorpe, Cumbria, CA7 7QF. At least 1/3 of programme in English. All Scandifans speak english, they'll provide floors to sleep on, and touristy things. Anyone else tempted to combine it with a tour of Scandinavia?

August 11 - 13 NICON, UNICON 10, Queen's University Belfast. £6 attending, rooms £6 normal, £3 student, GoH Terry Pratchett, Iain Banks, James White. Write to U-Nicon, 106 Somerton Rd, Belfast BT15 4DG, N, Ireland. Lots of fun as with all Unicons, OUSFG going to sell Spawn of Conine, anyone interested in combining it with a wander round Ireland?

31 August - 4 September NOREASCON, the Worldcon in Boston, with Andre Norton, details from Colin Fine, 28 Abbey Road, Cambridge, CB5 8HQ. Anyone planning to hit the East Coast of America could well consider this.

April 13 - 16 1990 EASTCON, the Eastercon in Birmingham

August 23 - 27 CONFICTION, the Worldcon in the Hague, Netherlands

If I had a phallic symbol 430 feet long there'd be no problem - Stuart Aston

Ok, I admit it, Paul Cray is my mother - Adrian Cox



We have finally got round to subscribing to Foundation, the triannual sf criticism magazine from the North East London Poly's SF Foundation, and the first issue is in the library. Selected heavyweight highlights include a staggeringly detailed critique of Gibson, a fascinating piece on why there are no time machines in fairystories and folk tales (that is fascinating if you're deeply into fairytales) and several articles on feminist sf, some of which are quite amusing and insult Brian Stableford [of course - ed].

Books reviewed include Crowley's *Agypt* (hah! wordprocess your way out of that one John [dead easy, its the way that ratio becomes ration that gets me, thank god we don't compare the ratio of rationalists rations to irrationalist's rations across Nato nations... anyway back to the fray - ed]) and Rudy Rucker's *Wetware*, line by line [great name for a bondage firm that - ed].

All in a good read, (how did a simple statement of fact turn into a meta-review? {answers in the form of meta-meta-reviews on a postcard please to Penny - Levi}) Get it out now, all of you at once, and annoy Adrian by Otising the library.

Authors Penny goes on and on about without giving a shred of justification: Part 1:  
Walter Tevis

Walter Tevis is a completely awesome and godlike author because he wrote "The Man who fell to Earth" which was made into a film starring David Bowie and if the book hadn't been written the film wouldn't have been made and that stunning haircut would have been lost for ever.

Other than that it's quite a good book, fast to read but not lightweight; with a sort of gently tragic atmosphere as the fragile hero tries to save two planets whilst he himself descends into humanity and gin; eventually unable to care about the races' fates. Like most of Tevis' work the gadgets and science are only symbolic; the emphasis is on the characters and the inevitable destruction of the central character. It has recently been reissued in a cover making no reference to the film, or indeed to the dreaded s-----e f-----n, I suspect an attempt to disguise it as a Modern Novel.

Mockingbird (just acquired by the OUSFG library) also starts off melancholy but has a happy ending. Other than that it's very like 1984 with Asimov robots and Huxley drugs and without the evil government and .. OK so it's not like 1984 at all. Set in far future New York where reading is a dead art that the Flowers-for-Algeron-esque hero rediscovers and the entire population is zonked on soma except for the millions of robots of varying intelligence. Gradually the hero is helped by a girl he meets in the zoo to react to the strange lack of children and the odd way people keep setting fire to themselves... The secret of what's going on and how they deal with it is quite interesting and if you guessed it 2 pages in I don't want to know.

The other Tevis sf I recommend is the collection "Far From Home" most of which deals with Oedipus complexes. It also contains the good bits of his novel "The Steps Of The Sun" without containing its central character.

As far as I am concerned the aforementioned c.c. is the single most ghastly creation in all of sf, Lazarus Long and Hari Seldon included. "I don't know whether Tevis intends him to be sympathetic or not and I don't bloody care. To explain; this incredibly wealthy hero develops sexual problems and becomes so frustrated that he goes off into space to discover a new form of safe uranium and save the earth. So far so good, from then on he whinges continuously, gets hooked on opium (much to his surprise since he knows he has terribly strong will power) extols the joys of capitalism, treats several women very badly in flashback, saves the world and gets tied to a bed and harrassed by elderly Chinese generals for a month (there is absolutely no attempt to even think about why every position of authority in China is held by women) and whinges some more. If "impotent Heinlein hero" were not a contradiction in terms that is what this decaying pus-filled verruca on the little-toe of literature would be. This is not a good book.

One might be forgiven for failing to be enticed by this book. It is faintly printed, and it does give the impression of being a Parisian-bookstall type critique, and it is 720+ words long. But, for all that, it deserves a second glance. After all, it has been published in a single newsletter when it could have been strung out over three discussion meetings, and it is by Ivan Towlson, who has already demonstrated in his horrific newsletter editing that he is no bald waiter (misprint ?-ed.).

It must be admitted that *Reviewworld* is not going to go down in history as a major literary event. The syntax is routine, the character set adequate but unremarkable (ranging from é to £) [whereas John has @ \$ % ^ & \* ~ ¨ ± ¶ » and j - come up and see it some time ...] and the images and ideas erratic. But Towlson is at least trying to produce Pretension here, and while he is not entirely successful he has by no means descended to comprehensibility.

Towlson has a tendency to get excessively clever-clever, especially when someone lets him near the words "Wolfe" or "Crowley", but it's a delight even watching him show off. When, as here, there's more to his writing than plotting with theory, he is utterly fascinating. Not exactly a mighty piece of plotting, but everything else is excellent. Very strange and therefore highly recommended. Towlson is one of the finest writers alive today, and most of his best work is here. Rich, dark and strangely beautiful (this doesn't sound like Ivan to me -ed.): the stuff that dreams are made of. Borrow it and read it--but supercharge your pretension centres first.

Maybe he can write reviews after all.

Those Bloody French are at it again

John Bray

To celebrate its 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary, the New Society for the Promotion of the Eiffel Tower plan to launch a astral monstrosity in 1992. The satellite will be a necklace of 100 reflective Mylar balloons 15ft across, strung on a loop 15 miles in circumference (it will weigh 1200 lb, and fit in a box 1m<sup>3</sup>, inflated in orbit by water that would vapourise in the hard vacuum).

They say it will be very pretty, each balloon will be brighter than the pole star, the whole ring appearing as an ellipse about as big as the full moon. Astronomers think it'll be a fucking nuisance, as it orbits the Earth 16 times a day it will wander across the field of view of one telescope or another about once a week. As modern solid state detectors can amplify light signals by up to 10<sup>7</sup>, this pretty bauble could blow all their observing equipment. Unlike the bright planets and comets, its orbit will be highly unpredictable due to buffeting in the remnants of the atmosphere, so no-one could tell when to close the telescope shutters.

The French plan to raise the £18 million needed by public suscription, but as yet have no-one to launch it, with the shuttle too expensive, and the European Space Agency under great pressure from astronomers not to launch it with the predominantly French Ariane rocket. But with cheap Japanese and Chinese flights on the horizon, and the Russian's keen for foreign involvement (did you read that they were willing to send up a British astronaut selected by Scottish Television using a variant of the Krypton Factor TV show) perhaps they might yet succeed.

What with the American Celestis Group planning to launch the ashes of 15000 people in an orbiting mausoleum, perhaps the Clarke story of Coke adverts on the moon and Asimov's Buy Jupiter are not too far away. I ask you all to visit the Eiffel Tower, find an attendant, and quoting their spokesman - "Outer space is like the high seas, outside territorial waters, everyone has the right to express himself as he wishes" - thump him on the 'ooter.

In for a penny, in for a pound - John Bray  
That's cheap - Penny Heal



Harry Clement Stubbs finally retired from American high school teaching and seems to have returned to writing, more's the pity. I'm quite a fan of Clement, while all his aliens act like teenagers reading textbooks, the worlds he described shone through it all, with *Mission of Gravity* and *Close to Critical* excellent examples of hard sf that would work.

In his latest novel however, his concern with scientific accuracy is so acute as to stultify a novel which takes far too long to get nowhere. To gain their 'Respected Opinion' degrees, a group of 5 assorted alien students are dropped on the standard test planet Engima to find out why such a small body still has an atmosphere. While exploring the surface the human Molly is trapped underground, and we are then treated to umpteen pages of description of underground caverns, filled with stupefyingly dull descriptions of alien plants and ammonia phase changes. Much as I like technical details in these books, such quotes as when discussing whether a storm on the surface could be heard below: "But would sound get through rock - I don't mean that; it would travel better in rock, of course - but would it get through the rock-air interface well enough to be audible", get on even my goat.

Virtually nothing happens for the next 150 pages, the characters are hardly less concerned about each other than I was, and the denouement isn't. What more can I say but, Hal, please take up some other hobby for your declining years.

Gene Wolfe: *The Birth Of The New Sun*

IVAN TOWLSON

These paperback editions for the sequel to *The Book Of The New Sun*. Did it need it? If there was to be one, couldn't he have done a bit better than this? It has a lot of interesting points, and some people appreciate the illumination it provides, but I have deeply, deeply mixed feelings. Try to borrow a copy and decide for yourself.

Keri Hulme: *The Windcatcher/The Kaihau*

Brilliant short story collection including some of sf interest. Passionate and telling, with a fair bit of old-fashioned experimentation (veering on the surreal in places). Only one disappointment, and many outright triumphs, including 'A Brief In Dream', a prequel to the novel *The Bone People*, and the strange and disturbing title story.

Carol Hill: *Amanda And The Eleven Million Mile High Dancer*

Strange book about extra-dimensional robots trying to destroy the world in various ways, magical tech called Sincrounger and the first manned mission to Mars being diverted to Epsilon Eridani. Lots of quantum physics metaphors (though someone should have told Ms Hill that the H<sup>+</sup> is not a quark, and that headphones designed to let through sounds higher than 10 MHz would be singularly useless even to omniscipetents like the heroine). Enjoyable dose of random weirdness near the end and plenty of lovely acid-casualty characters. Not the 'great American novel' the blurb claims it to be, but worth a look. (Alternatively, to borrow Phil Raines' comment: "Quantum physics has a lot to answer for.")

Leigh Kennedy: *The Journal Of Nicholas The American*

Another explanation of the Penny Heal phenomenon, this one disguised as an obvious but rewarding *Dying Inside* clone. Kennedy's hero tries to damp down his empathic powers with enormous amounts of vodka, with the result that everybody who gets to know him quickly becomes convinced that he's an alcoholic. (So now you know.) It's a simple, easy read, but worthwhile for its portrayals of death, pain and joy. Borrow, or buy a second-hand copy (unless you were really that attached to *Dying Inside*, in which case strongly recommended).

Paul Auster: *The New York Trilogy*

Metaphysics and metafiction in the world of New York City private sleuthing. Definitely not sf, in the same way that *The Nagus* is definitely not sf--i.e. somebody else has come round to Philip K Dick's way of thinking and is following it in their own way. In this case I am not entirely clear which bits are real and which aren't. I do know that Paul Auster makes a cameo appearance in the first novella after the protagonist starts impersonating someone whom he (Auster) is not, and it all progresses from there. Strange and hence wonderful.

This is the latest addition to the saga of the Eternal Champion, this time in the guise of John Daker, who has the unenviable destiny of being able to remember all his previous incarnations. The story is designed to close the chronicles of Fate's Soldier, and this it does almost as an afterthought, in an indifferantly unheroic manner. This is not meant to imply that Daker meets a tragic demise as do Elric, Corum and Erekoze; perhaps a heroic would more clearly convey the impression of anticlimax and inconclusiveness that I experienced.

The story is paced well enough, taking place in another set of interconnecting planes of the multiverse, termed the Middle Marches by the incongruous Champion's Companion, Ulrich von Bek. In order to cohere the threads of his acclaimed concept of the multiverse, Moorcock designates this character to be the 20th Century descendent of the von Beks featured in *Warhound* and the *World's Pain*, and the chronologically intermediate City in the *Autumn Stars*. Still searching for his lost love, Ermizhad, with whom he found peace as Erekoze, Daker embarks upon this adventure in the hope of coming closer to being reunited with her. Although this is an underlying theme, the focus of the story is the Sword, in which a fire-drake has been imprisoned in lieu of its usual malignant sentience. Several factions are racing to acquire the Sword for different reasons, while all of this is bound up with the familiar theme of Chaos attempting to break through and corrupt the planes.

I found the book readable, although I felt the ideas have lost the diversity and freshness of previous works. Despite the few redeeming descriptive features such as of the marsh-faring Hulls, the characterizations remain unexpanded or uninteresting. The pleasing coherence of the different aspects of the multiverse has been lost as the latter have become constrained to a sphere: the original inventiveness contorted and bent back on itself to ultimate repetition as Euclidian space in a closed universe.

Considering Moorcock's most recent previous excursion into the nether realms of the Champion concept, *The Dragon in the Sword* lacks the complexity and deeper statements of *City in the Autumn Stars* and is consequently less demanding. For me the cycle was completed with Erekoze's sacrificial destruction of the Balance in a suicidal act of despair; this book is at best a stop-gap while new ideas are being consolidated and at worst superfluous.

Melissa Joseph

Dad's Nuke: Marc Laidlaw

Simon McLeish

A marvelous satire on the American dream, the American way of life and the nuclear arms race. *Dad's Nuke* is set in what appears to be typical suburban mid-west America, Keeping up with the Jones' is still the most important pastime - but it goes a little bit farther than nowadays. Bill Johnson thinks he has got ahead when he has his youngest daughter's digestive system adapted to handle nuclear waste. But, things really begin to hot up when Jock Smith installs his very own tactical nuclear missile in the backyard .....

In a book "reminiscent of the work of Philip K Dick" (as the blurb says - and it is at least as good as that suggests) just about everything in American middle-class culture from clam chowder (of which the description of the Host (?) is distinctly reminiscent) to fundamental Christianity has the piss taken out of it. Marc Laidlaw certainly seems to have matured from his cyberpunk origins - and I'm certainly looking forward to his next novel



Starsailing by Louis Friedman

John Bray

John looks up reference in index of volume I of Astrophysics text book, sod it, its in volume II, lets go to Blackwells and buy it. (I really hate those Saturday afternoons when I get mad urges to buy things, if anyone wants flowers, its probably the best time to ask me .....). Anyway in Blackwells with a £23.95 book under one arm, I see a £6.50 book on solar sailing and thinks, well at least I can review it for the newsletter, so voila!

Louis Freedman works for NASA at JPL, and the book starts off with the results of a feasibility study he made in 1977 for a possible rendezvous with Halley's Comet (actually matching speeds, not merely shooting past). His aim is to give a layman's guide rather than a technical report, and certainly he's best chattering away rather than quoting figures in grams, microns, acres and ounces per square foot.

Solar sails work by being pushed by the photons from the sun, the force ain't much, if a sail weighs only 8 grams per m<sup>2</sup>, it will accelerate at 1/10000 g, 0 to 60 mph in about 8 hours, so it may even pass Mel on her bike, if its one of her off days. To make the sails you cover polythene with a thin layer of reflective aluminium, and spread them like sails of windmill, spinning slowly to keep them taught. Yes this book has enough detailed diagrams of rigging, deployment sequences and fabrication techniques to keep anyone happy.

We then move on to exploring the cosmos, with up-to-date (1987 +) summary of future missions, good but b/w pictures from the planetary probes, and a comparison of solar sails with ion drives in the solar system. We can then have a good laugh at the interstellar flight bit, where Robert L Forward's solar sail in Dragonfly is discussed, with the crunch being the cost, something like \$10<sup>17</sup>, compared to the Tories spending \$3 10<sup>11</sup> each year, I doubt if even Labour could afford that. (subtle political dig eh)

I liked this book, its written by a man in the know, and has lots of useful (?) stuff. The style is very readable provided he steers clear of potted explanations of 'equations as mathematical sentences', but the drawback is the price, don't buy it, come and see me (and if its Saturday, you might even get some flowers .....)

William Burroughs: *The Sort Machine*

IVAN TOWLSON

Doesn't sex what *The Naked Lunch* did for drugs only not as well. A sort of male homosexual blood and guts in high school without the pelvic inflammatory disease and with something about Aztecs, I'm not sure what, thrown in for good measure.

Dr Aldiss with David Wingrove: *Trillion Year Spree*

Now reissued at normal paperback size and not-too-abnormal paperback price (£5.95). An excellent critical history of sf, from its earliest precursors up to its most modern practitioners. Once it gets past the boring people and onto the post-Campbell era it's very interesting, very readable and surprisingly up-to-date. Read or perish.

John Crowley: *Aegypt*

As enthused about at length about 9 months ago. Still compulsory reading, now out in paperback with yukky generic fantasy cover (mutter, complain). Stunning contemporary almost-fantasy about history and hermetica. Read or face searing, agonising death.

David Eddings: *Demon-King Of Karanda: Malloreon 3, or The Further Adventures Of The Return Of The Son Of The Belgariad*

It made my bum sore.

L Ron Hubbard: *Mission Earth: The Biggest Science Fiction Dekalogy Ever Written Book 1: The Invaders Plan*

Besides, bogroll works out a lot cheaper.

PIERS ANTHONY: Being a Green Mother

Simon McLeish

And yet another series reaches its conclusion, and the world is saved from the forces of evil and anti-American activities yet again. The fifth volume in the Incarnations of Imortality series, *Being a Green Mother* has quite a strong beginning, a woman's search for a magical song which contains the essence of everything good, which is done in a very competent manner. The novel then goes on to a not bad middle, in which she falls in love with the only man in the world able to sing as well as her. Then everything goes sour as she discovers that her whole relationship with this man has been a lie, and that he is Satan. This is quite a powerful idea and could have been written about very well, but Anthony's triteness overwhelms him at this point to give a really terrible ending in which Satan is overcome by love, and, by singing a hymn, gives up his right to all the souls in Hell. Some good ideas overcome by bad writing.

MICHAEL BISHOP: Phillip K Dick is Dead, Alas

Simon McLeish

This is an excellent book, a worthy attempt to put Dick into a context that reads like his own novels. It is set in an alternate universe, where Nixon is still president in 1982 and is becoming more and more autocratic, almost to the point of insanity. Here, Dick was an establishment writer who changed his mind about politics in the late 60s and is forced to go underground, never publishing another book legally until VALIS, which is panned as one of the biggest publishing political mistakes of all time. The book centres around Cal Pickford, a big Dick fan (oh the temptations of a slip of the Shift key - ed) who has all the illegal novels in photostat (a nice little idea is that the titles of the novels keep changing throughout the book) and his reaction to news of Dick's death. However, if Dick is dead, what is he doing in Cal's wife's office (she is a psychotherapist) claiming to be an amnesiac named Kai before disappearing before her very eyes? And why are the authorities suddenly interested in Cal and his friend Roan? All this (and more) leads to a denouement on the Moon, in which the world is revealed to be a Dick novel (which explains why you've always thought everyone was out to get you...). Buy this book. Better yet, read it.

Garry Kilworth: Witchwater Country

Ivan Towlson

Titch Swan is growing up in the Essex marshes in the early 1950s. By day he and the gang of which he is a member spend their time enacting imaginary battles and scrumping apples; by night he lies in bed, terrified of the dark. *Witchwater Country* tells the story of his transition to adulthood, by reason simply of his increasing understanding, and reads something like an Alan Garner rewrite of *The Go-Between*.

One day, the gang leader dives into one of the marsh pools and doesn't come up, and the gang conclude that he has been killed by the water witch as punishment for stealing her windfalls. Scared that she will come after them next, they decide to try to get rid of her. Meanwhile Titch is finding himself increasingly confronted by changes in his home life...

"Where does childhood end?" Titch wonders towards the end of the book. "It ends with the death of fantasy, when fear of the dark is replaced by a fear of the light. When you see and know the object of your fear then you enter that adult world you yearn for so much as a child." Kilworth's powerful descriptive writing and convincing characters illustrate his theme brilliantly. Few authors are capable of writing books about childhood as perceptive as this: the absence of any fantastic occurrences should not put sf readers off, as fantasy nevertheless lies at the heart of *Witchwater Country*. Recommended.

It's the old woman's jar of foreskins that really made it for me - Graham

Penny used to be a c dappy, but now she is totally ga-ga - Damian Cugley  
I think she's doing serious drugs now - Alan Jeffrey