

NOVACON 24

Progress Report Two



NOVACON 24

Guest of Honour : Graham Joyce

Royal Angus Hotel, Birmingham

Friday 4th to Sunday 6th November 1994

COMMITTEE : Richard Standage is chair with Carol Morton doing Registrations; Helena Bowles as Treasurer; Sarah Freakley has taken on the Programme; Chris Murphy in charge of Ops; Tony Morton on Publications and Martin Tudor liaising with the hotel.

STAFF : Mike Siddall, responsible for the Bookroom; John Harold who will arrange the Artshow.

MEMBERSHIP and ENQUIRIES : This will cost £25 until 1st October when postal memberships close, then £30 on the door. Carol Morton (14 Park Street, Lye, Stourbridge, West Midlands, DY9 8SS Tel: 0384 825386) is the person to send your cheques to and will try to answer any convention enquiries.

ROOM RATES : Twin/Double rooms will be £29.95 (per person) and Single rooms £34.95 per night.

ADVERTISING RATES : Advertising is welcome for the final Progress Report and the Programme Book at the following rates: PROGRESS REPORT 3 (Professional) £22.50 full page, £17.50 half page, £7.50 quarter page, £40 back cover; (Fan) £17 full page, £9.50 half page, £5 quarter page, £30 back cover. PROGRAMME BOOK (Professional) £40 full page, £25 half page, £15 quarter page, £60 back cover; (Fan) £22.50 full page, £12.50 half page, £7.50 quarter page, £40 back cover. Anyone interested should approach Tony Morton at 14 Park Street, Lye, Stourbridge, West Midlands, DY9 8SS (0384 825386). Deadlines camera ready advertising copy 6th August (PR3) and 24th September (Programme Book).

BOOKROOM RATES : Tables will cost £15 for a six foot table for the whole weekend however, if you are allocated a smaller four foot table the cost will be £10. To book a table you must be a member of the convention and fill in and return your booking form (which is included with this PR).

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS : Our thanks go to Graham Joyce for his article, Tim Groome for the cover art, Steve Green for his article on the film programme Tony Berry for the Novas article and Helena Bowles for the review.

PROGRESS REPORT THREE : Graham Joyce writes on 'Reality', further details on the film programme and the programme itself.

Chairman's Bit

Richard Standage

Welcome to PR2. The wheels of planning are well in motion as I write (at least the committee assure me they are). Sarah's beaver away on what is shaping up to be an excellent programme; Tony as you can see is doing a great job with publications; Martin is spending time in hushed negotiations with the Angus; Carol tells me that registrations are flooding in; Chris is planning his operations team like a general and Helena is laughing all the way to her cash box thinking about all the money she's getting her hands on.

May I remind you at this point of the importance of getting back to us your hotel booking forms if you haven't already done so. You'll find one stuffed in the back of this PR. I should also mention that we thought we'd try an experiment this year by making the lounge bit between the bar and the corridor non-smoking. If you've never been to the Angus before you won't have a clue where I am talking about of course, but don't worry, we'll stick some signs up. Obviously we can't make this compulsory, but your co-operation will be much appreciated. Ta.

That's all I've got to say for now so take care and see you in the next PR.

Registrations

Carol Morton

If you have already sent your hotel booking form to me just go and put the kettle on or look somewhere else for a bit 'cause this is the point in time where I start to nag at the rest of the convention members. I need those hotel booking forms back, like yesterday. The hotel are beginning to make rumbling noises about the rooms our convention members need, so if you want to keep the mundanes out you need to book soon. If I haven't had a form from you and just in case you may have lost the last one I sent you, I am enclosing another booking form in this PR, if there is no booking form enclosed I've already received one from you so don't panic.

Nag No.2. I know there are out there convention members who wish to book art room space, so far to date I have received only one booking for art board space, so could those of you who wish to book either fill in the relevant spaces on the membership form and return it to me or contact John Harrold direct.

Nag No.3. (Oh god this registrations lark is making me sound like a right shrew, honest I'm not!) The Dealers room will be pretty empty unless the said dealers book, so please those dealers out there could you book soon please.

On a lighter note, elsewhere in this PR is an article, and enclosed a membership form that I'd like to bring to your attention. It is regarding Novacon 25, read, inwardly digest and join please.

I'm off now but I'll be back to nag at you in the next PR.

Illusions Graham Joyce

The worst Illusion I ever saw was when I was working as a Greencoat at the Derbyshire Miners' Holiday Camp. (Yes yes yes.) Hardly an illusion at all, it was more of a dirty trick. We Greencoats had to help out the Children's Entertainer in Uncle Alexi's Magic Hour. Actually, the notion of Children's entertainment was an illusion in itself: it was really just babysitting in funny clothes while the Mums had an hour to take their teeth out and put their curlers in as they made ready for the real evening's entertainment, which was Bingo. Bingo was another illusion, designed to lighten wallets by fooling people into thinking they had a gambler's chance of winning simply because they could see money being paid out across a bar the size of a spitfire hangar. But that's another story.

This particular illusion involved spinning plates. Uncle Alexi would spin a plate on a stick, all while telling a funny story and blowing his nose. Then these waifs from the audience would be invited on stage to have a go at plate spinning themselves. Of course, they couldn't do it. Why? Uncle Alexi, the rat, hater of children, polluter of magic, had a special stick and a plate with an underside dimple into which the stick would slot. This seemed to me so close to cheating that I almost lost my faith in human nature over it; and along with the other Greencoats, I took to sabotaging Uncle Alexi's props backstage. Life has little to offer as satisfying as making a magic trick misfire when you hate the guy doing it.

But the world is full of it. I remember when I was a kid listening to Archie Andrews, the ventriloquist's dummy, on radio. Even then I couldn't understand what was the point of having an act like that on radio. I mean, it might have been two people.

But do we learn? When I was much older, and just out of student years, I donated a week's wages to a little fat guru already living in considerable luxury in Switzerland. In return I was given a word which I was told to repeat over and over. Shit, did he seem me coming! How the hell did I drop for that? I'll tell you: he went everywhere barefoot never stopped smiling. As I would if I could find enough suckers like me.

After a few Archie Andrews/Trick Plates/Fat Little Guru experiences, it dawns on you what we're made of. It doesn't matter what it is, Politics or Philosophy, Faith or Feminism, Conspiracy Theories or Cereology: if you offer the mind half a circle it can't help but supply the other half. This is what my books are about: exploring relationships against a given psychological condition which runs through a spectrum of misunderstanding, self-delusion, deception, lies, fantasy, wishful thinking, projections and hallucination.

Unless I'm just kidding myself. Which is always on the cards.

Graham Joyce - Bibliography

NOVELS

| | |
|----------------------|-------------------------|
| DREAMSIDE | Pan, May 1991 |
| DARK SISTER | Headline, November 1992 |
| HOUSE OF LOST DREAMS | Headline, June 1993 |

DARK SISTER won the 1993 August Derleth Award for Best Novel, presented by the British Fantasy Society

SHORT STORIES

| | |
|-----------------------|---|
| THE CAREPERSON | Interzone, April 1992 |
| LAST RISING SUN | 'In Dreams', Gollancz 1992 |
| MONASTIC LIVES | 'Eurotemps', Penguin 1992 |
| UNDER THE PYLON | 'Darklands 2', 1992 reprint Best New Horror 4 |
| GAP SICKNESS | 'New Worlds 3', Gollancz 1993 |
| THE RECKONING | 'Royal Crimes', NAL 1993 |
| THE VENTRILOQUIAL ART | 'Dark Voices 5' Pan 1993 |
| THE APPRENTICE | Interzone, November 1993 |

DREAMSIDE by Graham Joyce Reviewed by Helena Bowles

With his first novel DREAMSIDE Graham Joyce has produced what is at first glance a traditional morality tale. The story is of four students taking part in an old professor's psychology experiment. The original aim of the study is group evolution and dynamics but to disguise his intentions Professor Burns states he is investigating the phenomenon of lucid dreaming, of dreaming whilst being aware that one is asleep and dreaming. To his surprise four students, Lee, Ella, Brad and Honora do start to make strides in dream awareness and control. Burns, the professor, is intrigued and begins to work seriously with them. The four become able to meet on the dreamside, interact, exchange messages and affect the landscape. After some months of work Burns dies and against Ella's better judgment the four continue the experiments. Without Burns' scientific discipline, investigation takes second place to experience and the rationale for the experiments is lost. Lee and Ella play with a private project to activate their sexual relationship on the dreamside, a project that splits the group leaving Brad jealous and Honora isolated whilst

the barriers between dreaming and waking grow thinner. When Brad finally reaches out to take what he thinks he wants Honora is hurt and runs. The dreamside cabal is broken.

Twelve years later the dreams start again and it is up to Ella, the leader of the team, to pull all four together again to finish the business started so much earlier and to conclude events once and for all.

Where the story differs from the morality tale is in the belief that it is not the experiments in dreaming that are wrong but in the loss of the scientific method, the responsibility of learning that causes the final disaster. Burns, their guide and mentor advocates scientific, controlled visits to the dreamside. The quest is knowledge, safety is paramount. After Burns' death the discipline is lost and the dreamside visits an addictive quest for sensation. It is after Burns' death that Lee and Ella's private experiments split the group. They deny their responsibility to the well being of the team. Personal responsibility is the major theme of the novel and it is that which gives it the erroneous feel of a morality tale. In fact the only moral basis of the story is a conviction that everyone is responsible for their own actions. Even on the dreamside, the four have responsibilities to each other. The priest that Honora confesses to says, "If our dreams are out of our control that is one thing... But if we start to be able to control our dreams and therefore are able to choose between sinful and righteous acts at this level, that's another."

Brad is unable to accept this. Aware of Ella and Lee's sexual activity he attempts Honora's seduction:-

- You're the luckiest girl ever to have lived... I mean have you're cake and eat it won't you. Have the beauty of knowing what it's like and still being a virgin. It doesn't count on dreamside -

- Oh yes? -

- Yeah! There's no sin on dreamside -

Brad is wrong, of course. By creating an arena where free will operates, even in the world of dreams the four have created an arena where morality - or responsibility, must also exist. Brad's final rape/seduction of Honora has consequences he could not foresee. Honora becomes pregnant. In the outer world she attempts suicide and miscarries. On the dreamside however she finds herself repeatedly drawn back to the same dreamscape the four worked with before. Now, however, she is pregnant and eventually delivers the child on the dreamside. At the birth, alone and embittered she performs an action she will have to take responsibility for both on the dreamside and in the outer world. She tells Ella, years later:-

"... I offered the tiny soul of that dreamside baby to the curse I put on Brad Cousins"

"But in the end it's only words, Honora. Words are not real things. They're only words."

"Not on the dreamside they're not. Words are things there. I cursed the baby and I washed it and then I wished it away."

This curse, the result of Brad's selfish and unthinking sexuality, is another action that has consequences to be lived with. Honora's curse is "sinful". She will live racked with guilt about it, the baby, even about Brad's actions, yet in the final analysis, whatever Brad's provocations, however wrong Honora's curse, Brad committed the first sin of commission on the dreamside and it is he who must ultimately pay the price.

Lee and Ella's unthinking flaunting of their sexual relationship is not wrong, but their sin of omission, of not realising its effects on Brad or on the team that the four have become, is a contributory factor in the disaster that follows. Sex is very important to the dreaming. It is Lee's erotic dreaming encounter with Honora and its realworld replay with Ella that opens the door for him to become aware of his dreaming and to cross the barrier. His relationship with Ella feeds off the sexual experience of Dreamside. Being dreamside is described as "almost like the moment before orgasm the tiniest mundane things were incredibly stimulating and exciting things unbearably so." It is this intensity of experience that leads to his experiments with Ella, a project to achieve penetration and orgasm in the heightened sensuality of dreamside. This initially unsuccessful project awakens the sexual tensions in the group, Honora's affection for Lee and determination to keep her virginity, Brad's antagonism to Ella hiding a profound desire. Brad's jealousy is both of Lee and of the intense experiences he is sharing with Ella. His attempts to assuage part of his desire at least, that for the experience of sex dreamside, are rebuffed by Honora. At the same time Lee and Ella find they are unable to achieve their goal, the dream dissolving each time. It is significant that they can only consummate the relationship dreamside at the same time that Brad forces Honora, the intensity of the experience requiring all four of them to be involved.

Just as Lee's outerworld experiences with Ella enabled him to cross to the dreamside, consummation dreamside opens the door the other way. After this episode Lee awakens to find dreamside flowers entangled in Ella's hair. Honora wakes to find her sheets stained with blood. It is this incident which breaks down the already overly thin walls between dreamside and the outer world. By the time Honora gives birth and curses Brad, elementals from dreamside are able to cross and haunt him, just as her child can haunt Honora.

Dreamside is a novel on many levels. Joyce has produced a story that is at once an erotic horror fantasy, an examination of the concept of responsibility and of morality as well as drawing detailed character, rare in this genre.

Programme Notes

Sarah Freakley

For all those who have not read PRI, the theme for this years programme is "Dreams and Illusions."

The Programme so far . . .

Friday

| | |
|--------------|---|
| 5 pm | Film - see Film Programme |
| 7 pm | Opening Ceremony |
| 8 pm | University Challenge - First Round |
| 9.30 pm | Joyce and Bradbury's Emporium of Dreams and Illusions |
| Midnight-ish | Film - see Film Programme |

Saturday

| | |
|--------------|--|
| 10 am | TBA |
| 11.15 am | Book Auction |
| 1.30 pm | TBA |
| 2.30 pm | University Challenge - Second Round |
| 3.30 pm | GOH Speech |
| 5 pm | TBA |
| 6.30 pm | The Return of the All New Streamlined Silly Game |
| 8 pm | Film - See Film Notes |
| 10 pm | The Live Band |
| Midnight-ish | Film - See Film Notes |

Sunday

| | |
|----------|--|
| 10 am | The Cutting Edge of Medical Technology |
| 11.30 am | Art Auction |
| 1 pm | TBA |
| 2.30 pm | University Challenge - 3rd/4th Play Off, Final |
| 4 pm | TBA |
| 5 pm | Turkey Readings |
| 6 pm | Awards Ceremony |
| 7.30 pm | Film - See Film Programme |
| | Beer and Sausage Tasting |

So there you have it campers. All the TBA slots are unconfirmed Panel items/talks. The possible items are:

1. Serious Science
2. Hypnotism
3. Literature of Dreams
4. Special Effects
5. Virtual Reality Research
6. Pro. Writers Angst Panel

I stress this is only a **PROVISIONAL** Programme and is subject to change, especially if anyone has any really Amazing ideas. The Live Band has not been confirmed yet, however Bad Influence said they will play providing they are back from their whistle-stop tour of the US, and we can't find anyone else good enough. As usual suggestions on a postcard to Sarah Freakley, 63 Medina Road, Tyseley, Birmingham, B11 3SA. Tel 021-708-1773.

Novas
Tony Berry

Things are looking good on the fanzine scene, with at least a dozen titles out at Eastercon and promises of more to follow. Can you stand the excitement? Probably.

Fanzines received since PRI:

ANSIBLE #80,81. Dave Langford, 94, London Rd., Reading, RG1 5AU.

BEER CAT SCRATCHINGS #15. Alisdair Hepburn, 123c Chobham Rd., Stratford, London, E15 1LX.

CYBERSPACE #27,28. Keith Cosslett, 12 Crowsbury Close, Emsworth, Hants., PO10 7TS.

CYBRER BUNNY #1. Tara & Robert Glover, 16 Aviary Place, Leeds, LS12 2NP.

THE DIGEST. James Steel, 15 Maldon Close, Camberwell, London, SE5 8DD.

THE DOG FACTORY #3. Dave Wood, 1 Friary Close, Marine Hill, Clevedon, BS12 7QA.

DRAGON'S BREATH #4,5. Tony Lee, Zine Kat c/o SA Publishing, 13 Hazely Combe, Arreton, Isle of Wight, PO30 3AJ.

EMPTIES #13. Martin Tudor, 845 Alum Rock Road, Ward End, Birmingham, B8 2AG.

ERG #125. Terry Jeeves, 56 Red Scar Drive, Scarborough, N. Yorks, YO12 5RQ.

ETRANGER #2. Steve Glover, 16 Aviary Place, Leeds, LS12 2NP.

EYEBALLS IN THE SKY #8. Tony Berry, 55 Seymour Rd, Oldbury, Warley, W. Midlands, B69 4EP.

FANS ACROSS THE WORLD #35,36. Bridget Wilkinson, 17 Mimosa, 29 Avenue Rd, Tottenham, N15 5JF.

FILM AT ELEVEN. Tony Chester, 44 Brook St, Erith, Kent, DA8 1JQ.

FROM THE KELPIE'S POOL #1. Alison Freebairn, Police House, Kilmacolm, Renfrewshire, PA13 4LG.

MORIARTY'S REVENGE #1. Dave Hicks, Top Flat, 8 Dyfrig St, Pontcanna, Cardiff, CF1 9LR.

OBSESSIONS #3. Bridget Hardcastle, 13 Lindfield Gardens, Hampstead, London, NW3 6PX.

ONE DAY #1. Dave Haden, 104 Freer Rd, Aston, Birmingham, B6 6NB.

ONE THIRD OF AN UNWELL OCTOPUS. Ian Sorensen, 7 Woodside Walk, Hamilton, ML3 7HY.

PLATYPUS #3. Simon Ounsley, 25 Park Villa Court, Leeds LS8 1EB.

RASTUS JOHNSONS CAKEWALK #5. Greg Pickersgill, 3 Bethany Row, Narberth Rd, Haverford West, Pembrokeshire, SA61 2XG.

READING MATTERS #10. Tibs, 1/L 30 Falkland St, Glasgow, G12 9QY.

THE STARTLED BUNNY #3. Jackie McRobert, 75 Balmalloch Rd, Kilsyth, Glasgow, G65 9NS.

STITCH TROUGH TIME #1. Giulia De Cesare, 52 Westbourne Terrace, Reading, RG3 2RP.

TASH #9. Tommy Ferguson, 42 Ava Drive, Belfast, N. Ireland, BT 3DW.

THINGUMYBOB #11. Chuck Connor, Sildan House, Chediston Rd, Wissett, Suffolk, IP19 0NF.

All of the above are available for "the usual" which means in return for letter of comment, trade, article or a large SAE. Enquiries about the Awards or a copy of the Rules (50p to cover copying and postage), contact Tony Berry at 55 Seymour Rd, Oldbury, W. Midlands, B69 4EP.

Filmscape: Dreamscape II

Steve Green

Last time out, I briefly outlined the structure of Novacon 24's film stream: a thematically-linked selection of the obscure and the overlooked which, despite the fact that it's being organised (and discussed in this progress report) separately from Sarah Freakley's work on the programme, is intended to be as integral a part of the Novacon experience as the panels, games and guest speakers.

At this stage, we're still drawing up a final checklist (you can virtually guarantee at least one of the movies you've painstakingly tracked down will be screened a couple of weeks before the con, necessitating a last-minute reshuffle), but it's our intention to include a detailed listing in the final progress report (rather than the programme book, which tends to lie in people's bags until the following weekend).

However, one point I want to stress is that the film programme need not be limited by its adherence to the themes within Graham Joyce's novels and dreams in particular. True, the "...and then I woke up" narrative cheat which Graham rightly criticised last issue is as popular on screen as it is in print, but it also turns up in such acknowledged classics as the Freudian fantasy THE WIZARD OF OZ and the cyclical horror anthology DEAD OF NIGHT. The dream dimension can also supply the stage itself; even aside from Freddy Krueger's killing spree on the ELM STREET production line (six movies and still counting) and creator Wes Craven's stillborn attempt to repeat that success with Horace Pinker in SHOCKER, there's DREAM DEMON, PAPERHOUSE (adapted from Catherine Storr's novel MARIANNE DREAMS), DREAMSCAPE, and THE COMPANY OF WOLVES to name just four.

Nor need that element be so explicit. AKIRA KUROSAWA'S DREAMS drew its inspiration from his own subconscious, but the REFLECTING SKIN effects a similarly dream-like undercurrent whilst remaining rooted in conventional reality (as did NIGHT OF THE HUNTER, in turn suggesting the visual flavour of THE COMPANY OF WOLVES; as E M Forster said, only connect).

Which at this juncture, is as narrow as I want to focus the discussion, especially as the film programme will simultaneously aim to touch upon the mystical heart of Graham's second book, DARK SISTER, and perhaps even tread the supernatural path taken by his (as yet untitled) fourth novel. So until next time: dream easy.

Membership List as of May 6th

| | | |
|----------------------|------------------------|---------------------|
| 068 Mike Stone | 098 Lesley Swan | 113 Christina Lake |
| 084 Bob Shaw (real) | 099 Steve Mowbray | 114 David Peek |
| 085 Lynn Edwards | 100 Sue Mason | 115 Chris Amies |
| 086 Harry Bell | 101 Dave Mooring | 116 Mike Figg |
| 087 Margaret Bell | 102 Sara Dibb | 117 Janet Figg |
| 088 Tim Broadrib | 103 Huw Walters | 118 Simon Hovell |
| 089 Kati Wright | 104 John D Rickett | 119 Bruce Saville |
| 090 Chris Stocks | 105 Rhodri James | 120 Elda Wheeler |
| 091 Norman Shorrocks | 106 Mike D Siddall | 121 Mike Molloy |
| 092 Ina Shorrocks | 107 Jackie McRobert | 122 Malcom Davies |
| 093 Marcus Cooper | 108 Mike Moir | 123 Kate Solomon |
| 094 Jane Killick | 109 Debby Moir | 124 Jim Barker |
| 095 Marsha Jones | 110 Bridget Hardcastle | 125 David V Barrett |
| 096 Simon Ounsley | 111 Steve Brewster | 126 Jilly Reed |
| 097 Doreen Rogers | 112 Peter Thompson | 127 Molesworth |
| | | 128 Molesworth2 |

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CRITICAL WAVE #35 featuring the results of the Eastercon, BSFA, Arthur C Clarke and Nebula awards is available now.

CRITICAL WAVE #36 featuring a new column by Graham Joyce, Novacon 24's guest of honour, will be on sale in June.

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