

BRUM GROUP NEWS

THE MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF THE

BIRMINGHAM SCIENCE FICTION GROUP

DECEMBER 2010

ISSUE 471

HONORARY PRESIDENTS: **BRIAN W ALDISS, O.B.E.**
& **HARRY HARRISON**

COMMITTEE:

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FRIDAY 3RD DECEMBER



CHRISTMAS SOCIAL

The Christmas Social is a **TICKET ONLY** event and hopefully you will have purchased your ticket by the time you read this. That ticket is the entrance key to a grotto of wonderful things - there'll be the usual medieval game of skittles (transformed by our American cousins into the modern automated ten pin bowling) which has 9 skittles which have to be reset manually – so volunteers for short sessions please. Never played skittles before? Don't know the rules? Don't worry!!! We have our own rules – many of which are made up on the spot to give everyone a chance of winning prizes. As well as the prizes for your skittling prowess (or not!) there will be spot prizes given in our free raffle. So there are many chances for you to win something. Lots of non-alcoholic drinks (well, who wants alcoholic drinks in December anyway? Drive safely!!!). For those sensible ones among us who go by bus or taxi there will be real ale, cider, etc., available! And not forgetting the superb buffet..... even the vegetarian choices get rave

December 3rd – the **CHRISTMAS SOCIAL**. Full details inside on Page 2 – NOTE that it is on the first Friday of the month and that tickets **MUST** be booked for this event.

Beleriand. If a map to accompany THE SILMARILLION is what you want, then this is at least a beautifully presented package that fulfils that role admirably.
DC

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

All details are correct to the best of our knowledge, we advise contacting organisers before travelling. Always enclose a stamped, self-addressed envelope when writing to any of the contact addresses.

Any information about forthcoming SF / Fantasy / Horror events are always welcome - please send to me at rog [dot] peyton [at] btinternet [dot] com

The Central Library SF and Fantasy Reading Group meets on Thursdays at 5.45pm to 7pm monthly, in GP5 on the 5th Floor at the Central Library, Chamberlain Square, B3 3HQ. It's a small friendly group meeting to discuss SF & fantasy books. Contact person is Pam Gaffney on (0121) 303 3398. Future books to be discussed to be announced

THE MISFiTs are an informal group of local SF fans who meet regularly at 7pm at the Wagon & Horses, Oldbury on the third Friday of each month. Real ale, good food and great company. More details from Martin Tudor - (empties084 [at] btinternet [dot] com).

ILLUSTRIOUS is the 2011 Eastercon to be held at the Hilton Metropole Hotel, the NEC, Birmingham over the Easter weekend 22-25 April. Guests of Honour are US author **DAVID WEBER** and UK author **PETER F HAMILTON**. Artist GoH is none other than our own **DAVID A HARDY!** Fan GoH is **VINCE DOHERTY**. More info:
<http://www.illustrious.org.uk/>

THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING Jan 2011

NOW is the time to be thinking about the Group's activities during the forthcoming year. At January's AGM the 2010 Committee will stand down and elections will be held to elect the 2011 Committee. Not all the present committee members are necessarily standing for re-election, so if you want to do your bit and are interested in standing for any of the posts please read the following 'Job Descriptions' and email the Committee (see page 1 header) for more information and details of current Committee activities.

GENERAL DUTIES (and a requirement)

To organise BSFG meetings throughout the year including the annual Quiz, summer Social and Christmas Social.

To attend monthly Committee meetings in the City Centre, usually on the Wednesday evening of the week preceding the week in which the Group Meeting is held.

To assist other Committee members in their duties as necessary.

To present a report at the AGM.

To present a report at Committee meetings.

To have email access at home.

OFFICERS' DUTIES

CHAIRMAN

To chair Committee meetings and present a report as necessary.

To chair Group Meetings, introduce and thank the Speaker.

To negotiate with hotels and other organisations on behalf of the Group.

To liaise with the Secretary in arranging the Committee meeting agenda.

SECRETARY

To communicate with Speakers on behalf of the Committee.

To communicate with other persons and organisations on behalf of the Committee.

To take and circulate ASAP Minutes of Committee meetings.

MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY (This post and the post of Secretary may be held by one person)

To maintain BSFG Membership records.

To organise the collection of membership subscriptions, renewals etc.

To liaise with the Treasurer as necessary.

TREASURER

To maintain the current BSFG Bank Account.

To attend Group Meetings, arriving early and ensuring that the Meeting room is prepared for Group use.

To collect admission money etc at Group Meetings.

To liaise with the Membership Secretary.

PUBLICITY OFFICER

To advertise the BSFG by all means possible.

NEWSLETTER EDITOR

To maintain contact with sources of potential information for the Group Newsletter.

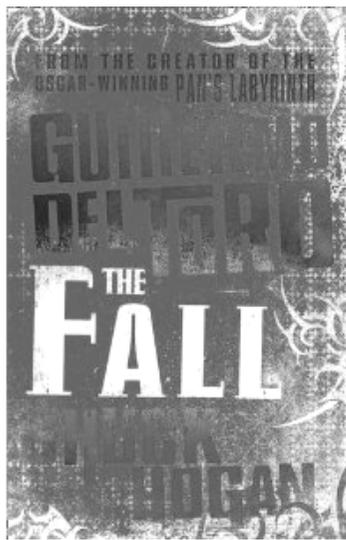
To edit and produce master copy ready for printing.

To organise printing of the Newsletter, and to distribute it, to a specific timescale.

To liaise with book publishers for review copies.

ORDINARY MEMBERS – two required, one of whom will automatically be...

the world. Guided by the Master, this is a concerted effort to destroy humankind, regardless of the fact that without humans, their food source dries up. But then, the majority of these vampires are mindless and savage. The condition is caused by a virus; their blood is white and worm-like entities in their bodies keep them animated. Until now, the authorities have refused to accept that there is a



problem, but with anarchy stalking the streets they are having to reassess the situation. Small groups are fighting them, including Setrakian and his friends. Against the overwhelming numbers their plight is fairly hopeless.

Del Toro has great visual acumen. He knows what will work in a film. Unfortunately there are a number of inaccuracies that have been allowed to creep in to the script. The greatest of these involves a group of children used as kind of sniffer vampires. They were, we are told, all blinded during the total solar eclipse that signalled the start of the mayhem. Looking at an occluded sun during an eclipse does not cause blindness. It is looking directly at the sun at any other time that does.

I would much rather see del Toro putting his talent into good films that into allowing his name to appear on mediocre horror novels. PM

WEST OF THE MOUNTAINS, EAST OF THE SEA

by Brian Sibley. Illustrated by John Howe

HarperCollins / 80pgs / £9.99 cloth-bound hardback ISBN: 978-0007312702

Reviewed by Dave Corby

This map and book, which detail the lands as described in J R R Tolkien's THE SILMARILLION (known as Beleriand), are presented in a deluxe format similar to the map of Middle-earth published last year as THE ROAD GOES EVER ON AND ON. As such, they form a deluxe series, but it is unknown if any further maps will be forthcoming.

Brian Sibley is one of the foremost Tolkien scholars and has many renowned works published inspired by or about Tolkien, not least being the script for the award winning BBC radio adaptation of THE LORD OF THE RINGS. This new edition of his essays about the map of Beleriand (originally published in 1994) is a beautiful cloth-bound A5 size book, with one of John Howe's gorgeous paintings adorning its cover.

At this event I met Rog Peyton, a stalwart of the SF scene here in the UK and frequent 'Engineman' to Novacon and the Brum group. Rog gave me his contact details and I gave him mine. He promised, and duly delivered, the latest Brum Group's newsletter. I received this in time to attend the Friday meeting with Charlie Stross as the speaker. Thankfully reminded before I missed the Friday evening event, I made my way there. There I had another enjoyable time, and badgered Rog some more. Rog asked if I had booked my ticket to Novacon 40, and when receiving a negative response asked 'Why not'. And promptly explained to me, as an aspiring SF writer, why I needed to attend.

Being a very busy person, as running my own business leaves me very little spare time, it was a good few days later before I rang Steve Lawson to sort a ticket. Much to my pleasure I discovered that I could book a one day pass for the Saturday and just turn up on the day.

So on the Saturday and with some trepidation, I headed over to Nottingham on the 14th of November. "One person in a Klingon uniform and I am out of here" I said to myself. I really didn't know what to expect, but having a previous girlfriend who was a serious Trekkie, I had, shall we say, a few concerns. Thankfully, none of these concerns amounted to anything to worry about. Thankfully!



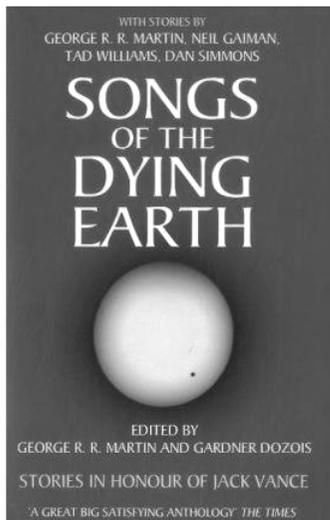
Whilst at the con I had the chance to have an extended chat to the GoH Iain M Banks. He gave me some good advice, and explained how he was completely naïve in his early days as a writer trying to get published and that I could save a lot of time & trouble following a few basic 'rules'. As an aspiring writer, his sound advice will be followed. He is a genuinely nice chap to boot.

But why on earth did I have to bid on so many books? Thankfully my wallet was saved from future grief as a text message arrived which required a follow up call.

The dealers' rooms could do some major damage to your wallet without serious discipline! I did however get out the credit card to pay for next years Eastercon. My wallet was saved from a further hammering at Rog's bookstall because my stomach growled, reminding me that there was bar food available and that I required sustenance.

magicians, share the land uneasily with a variety of mutant and supernatural beings. This book and some later sequels did much to help create his reputation as one of the foremost writers of Science Fiction and Fantasy.

Now twenty-two of the world's leading fantasy writers have got together in a joint tribute to a work which influenced their early lives and writing careers and have produced a collection of stories set in the milieu of the *Dying Earth*. Although in some cases making free use of Vance's backgrounds, and even some of his characters, these are in no real sense sequels to his work (with one or two exceptions) but reflect each writer's individual creativity and his or her personal interpretation of the original concept - all with Vance's full approval.



Of course, Jack Vance wrote in a uniquely inimitable style, full of sly wit and making extensive use of carefully selected (sometimes invented) words to convey just the right nuance of meaning. Although some of these writers have come fairly close to reproducing this unique voice, none has quite succeeded: indeed it might seem that some have not even tried. Similarly, not all have been able to reproduce the spirit, the 'feel' if you like, of the original THE DYING EARTH although again, some have come close. Also, and inevitably, some of these stories are better than others, covering as they do a range from moderately good to a bit silly.

The result therefore is a somewhat uneven collection of stories with the same setting but little else in common. It might be of interest to readers who have not previously encountered THE DYING EARTH, although some may wonder what it is all about. Such potential readers would however do far better to seek out the original work of which this is a pale imitation. True and knowledgeable Vance fans on the other hand will probably find little to admire. *Mj*

CITY OF GHOSTS* by *Stacia Kane

(Book Three of the *Downside Ghosts* series)

Harper/Voyager / 408pgs / £7.99 paperback ISBN: 978-0007352845

Reviewed by Pauline Morgan

After the discussion in the newsletter about what constitutes science fiction, the publishers produce a series that thumbs its nose at any classification. The *Downside Ghosts* series is set in the future, which makes it science fiction but this is a world where ghosts have become real and dangerous. If the event at which this

informative panel of the day was the 'Best Books' session, which turned into a heated debate about women in SF & I think is a panel I would enjoy next year. Kari & Liam made the debate relevant and fun at the same time.

But the highlight, apart from running into old friends & making new friends (I spent a lot of the weekend nattering to 'The Walking Green Room'), was Rog's sophisticated auctioneering technique (ahem). The 11pm continuation of the book auction was a blast & thanks to Rog I bagged a rather esoteric piece of sexist pulp with some great artwork. No, the bondage says NOTHING about me :)

I just wanted to say thanks for welcoming me & making my first Novacon a truly memorable experience. TD

<<The two pictures above of the Novacon Guest of Honour, Iain Banks and Special Guest Brian Aldiss, were taken by BSFG member Robert Day.

Robert has recently started work as a freelance photographer after a thirty-year career as a civil servant. He has been taking photographs seriously for nearly forty years, and has been doing it for money on and off for the past fifteen. He won a major international award in 2008, and during 2010 had photographs exhibited simultaneously in the USA and Australia.

He is currently in negotiation with a well-known UK transport publisher over a series of books of his historic railway photographs, scheduled for release at Xmas 2012.

Robert is available for commissions, as well as the sale of prints suitable for framing from his extensive collection. Subjects covered include landscapes, architecture, abstracts and transport subjects, as well as photographs from recent UK sf conventions. His work can be viewed at: www.robertdayimages.co.uk and he can be contacted at rday@madasafish.com. He also has a Facebook page where a selection of his photographs can be seen. - RGP>>

THE 2010 WORLD FANTASY AWARD WINNERS

The 2010 World Fantasy Awards were presented today at World Fantasy Con in Columbus, Ohio. Winners are:-

Novel: THE CITY & THE CITY by China Miéville

Novella: "Sea-Hearts" by Margo Lanagan

Short Story: "The Pelican Bar" by Karen Joy Fowler

Anthology: AMERICAN FANTASTIC TALES: TERROR AND THE UNCANNY: FROM POE TO THE PULPS/FROM THE 1940S TO NOW edited by Peter Straub

Collection (tie): THERE ONCE LIVED A WOMAN WHO TRIED TO KILL HER NEIGHBOR'S BABY: SCARY FAIRY TALES by Ludmilla Petrushevskaya; THE VERY BEST OF GENE WOLFE/THE BEST OF GENE WOLFE by Gene Wolfe

Artist: Charles Vess

that it plans to keep production of **THE HOBBIT** in New Zealand, where **Peter Jackson** previously filmed the three *Lord of the Rings* films. The New Zealand government offered to change some local labour laws and offered increased financial incentives. Filming on the two films is expected to begin in February Recent measurements of **Eris**, the dwarf planet discovered in 2005 which led to the reclassification of Pluto, indicate that the object may be smaller than originally believed. Eris's high density means that the plutoid is most likely smaller, although more massive, than Pluto, which may now be the largest of the dwarf planets. The new measurements of Eris were conducted during an occultation by the plutoid of a star in Cetus, observed in the Chilean Andes on November 6

RGP

BOOK REVIEWS

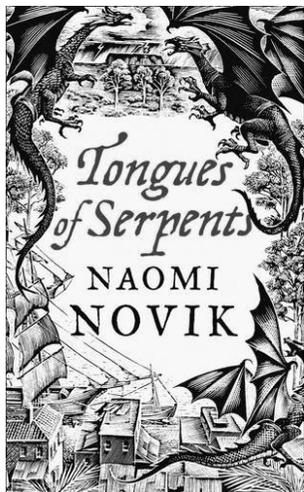
(**REVIEWERS** please note:- all reviews should be emailed direct to me at rog [dot] peyton [at] btinternet [dot] com) **Deadline for each issue is 14 days prior to the date of the monthly meeting.**

***TONGUES OF SERPENTS* by Naomi Novik**

(Book six of the *Temeraire* series)

Harper/Voyager / 347pgs / £17.99 hardcover ISBN: 978-0007256778

Reviewed by Pauline Morgan



For those unfamiliar with Naomi Novik's books, *Temeraire* is a huge Chinese celestial dragon the size of a small ship. Laurence is his human captain and soul-mate. Both are part of the British Aerial Corps which is desperately trying to keep Napoleon's French dragons from English shores.

In this series so far, Laurence and *Temeraire* have visited China, found dragon-led civilisations in Africa, flown the length of Europe and repulsed Napoleon's invasion of Britain. Now, because Laurence gave the cure for a fatal disease of dragons to the French, they have been transported to Australia for treason. There is a basis in historical fact in that they arrive after the Governor, Bligh of the *Bounty* fame, has been sent packing by the new Australians. They arrive on a transport ship along with a fire-breathing dragon, *Iskierka*, as escort and three eggs in the hope of establishing a covert on a largely unexplored continent with no known indigenous dragons.

FUTURE MEETINGS OF THE BSFG

Jan 14th 2011 – Annual General Meeting and Auction

Feb 11th – QUIZ with Birmingham University SF Society (to be confirmed)

Mar 11th – Fantasy author FRANCES HARDINGE

April 8th – comic SF/Fantasy author ROBERT RANKIN

May 13th - SF author JOHN MEANEY (who will also be Guest of Honour at Novacon 41 next year)

June 10th - Happy Birthday BSFG! 40th Anniversary Special Meeting

July 8th – SF author and mathematician IAN STEWART

Aug 12th - SUMMER SOCIAL at the Black Eagle

Sep 9th – SF/Fantasy author LIZ WILLIAMS (to be confirmed)

Oct 14th Nov 4th – tba

BRUM GROUP NEWS #471 (December 2010) copyright 2010 for Birmingham SF Group. Designed by Rog Peyton (19 Eves Croft, Bartley Green, Birmingham, B32 3QL – phone 0121 477 6901 or email rog.peyton [at] binternet [dot] com). Opinions expressed herein do not necessarily reflect those of the committee or the general membership or, for that matter, the person giving the ‘opinion’.

Thanks to all the named contributors in this issue and to William McCabe who sends me reams of news items every month which I sift through for the best/most entertaining items.

ABOUT US... The **Birmingham Science Fiction Group** meets on the second Friday of each month. Membership is £16 per year per person (or £21 for two members living at the same address). This includes the 12 free issues of the Newsletter plus reduced entrance fee at each meeting. Cheques should be made payable to ‘The Birmingham Science Fiction Group’ and sent to our Secretary, 10 Sylvan Avenue, Northfield, Birmingham, B31 2PG

reviews each year (but they do have to be ordered specially!

The Social will be held at The Selly Park Tavern, 592 Pershore Road, Selly Oak from 7.00pm until 11.00pm. To get there take a 45 or 47 bus from Corporation Street. Ask for The Selly Park Tavern - its about 15 minutes ride.

Some of our regular attendees have other commitments on this day (bad planning!) there are several tickets left. Because the Selly Park Tavern knows us, or possibly because of Vernon's charm (?), they have extended the deadline for knowing food numbers to Monday 29th November. So if you would like to join us for an excellent evening out with fellow fans please complete the form sent to you last month and send it to the BSFG Secretary Vicky, address on the back page of this newsletter, as a matter of urgency, together with a cheque. It would be a good idea to send Vicky an email as well just in case.

If you've mislaid the form, email me on rog (dot) peyton (at) bntinternet (dot) com and I'll email you another copy. *RGP*

HAPPY 80th BIRTHDAY, SF FANDOM

On Monday October 27th, 1930, the Ilford Science Literary Circle held its inaugural meeting at 32 Thorold Road (which a check of contemporary electoral rolls shows to have been the home of George & Mary Dew), the first ever meeting of our first ever SF fan group. If British fandom has a birthday, this is it. Here is Walter Gillings' report on the outcome of the event. (For a picture of that report in *THE RECORDER* for Friday 30th October 1930, go to <http://www.fiawol.org.uk/FanStuff/THEN%20Archive/ISLFC2.htm> as it is too big to reproduce here).

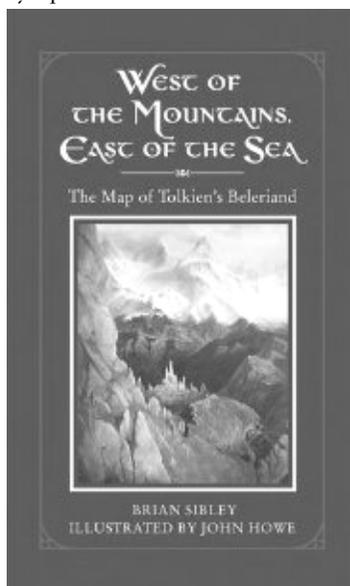


Fan historian Rob Hansen went along with three other fans and stood outside that house on the actual Anniversary. They took photos and a bottle of champagne which they drank outside. Which sounds quite a nice thing to do but I wonder what the people now living there thought as they looked through their front window, being photographed?

Brum Group member Peter Weston should also have been at the event but an unhelpful little man in a British Rail car park put paid to Peter's plans. (Ask Peter). *RGP*

Two essays are included. The first giving an insight into the creation of maps of Tolkien's works in general, and how that process was integral to the creation of his stories. The second is an overview of the creation of the Beleriand map itself. Of these the former gives an insight into Tolkien's creative process, but is really only a superficial overview; the reader wanting a detailed look at the process of the creation of the map should refer instead to *THE HISTORY OF MIDDLE-EARTH*, edited by Christopher Tolkien, which gives a much more in-depth account (especially volume IV, *THE SHAPING OF MIDDLE-EARTH*).

The second essay is a rather nostalgic read for veterans of *THE SILMARILLION*, being an overview of the places in the map and the events that occurred there. However, it does not give any new insight or add anything in particular; it merely celebrates *THE SILMARILLION* in an evocative and sympathetic fashion.



The remaining pages are given over to a gazetteer of the map, giving a brief description and notable events occurring at every location named on the map. This is potentially quite useful, especially for a first-time reader, as *THE SILMARILLION* is noted for its bewildering array of names and locations.

The package is rounded off with John Howe's map of Beleriand. This is beautifully illustrated with John's wonderfully evocative pictures, and the map itself is pleasingly rendered in a pictorial fashion. The detail is clear and all the pertinent detail at this scale is included without getting cluttered. This is an item of beauty (it makes the official *LOTR* film maps look extremely gaudy and ugly by comparison).

However, as this map has been around for some time it is quite possible that many readers of *THE SILMARILLION* will already own a copy of it. Furthermore, the *MAPS OF TOLKIEN'S MIDDLE-EARTH: SPECIAL EDITION*, which is still in print, includes this map, the other maps relating to *THE LORD OF THE RINGS* and *THE HOBBIT*, as well as the exclusive map of Numenor, all for an RRP of £20. Therefore it is hard to recommend the single map over the set.

In conclusion I think that this map would be best recommended for *THE LORD OF THE RINGS* fan who is considering a dive into the 'deeper' facets of Tolkien's work. It might prove most useful to help a new reader decipher *THE SILMARILLION*. And, unlike last year's *THE ROAD GOES EVER ON AND ON*, it is much less likely that fantasy readers in general already have a map of

WEBSITE MANAGER

To maintain the BSG Website to an agreed format and to update it as necessary.

The other ORDINARY MEMBER

To take on specific special jobs as directed by the rest of the committee.

To contribute to the efficient functioning of the Committee.

Most of the 2010 Committee Members are restanding for 2011 (but that doesn't mean you can't stand against someone!), although Vicky will not be restanding as Secretary. This means that we need a volunteer for that post.

Provided that you can come to Committee meetings, all that you need is the ability to take notes, a computer and internet access. No experience as Secretary is needed. Minutes are produced to an established format and any communication with speakers etc., is shared with other committee members. So if you think that you may like to take on the job, email Vicky at bhamsfgroup@yahoo.co.uk for more information.

<<The following two articles were received within a couple of days of Novacon 40 ending, completely unsolicited, and I thought it would be good to disclose newcomers' views on our annual event... Sean is a complete newcomer and would-be author while Theresa, a friend of Martin Tudor's used to be a regular customer at Andromeda where she regularly badgered me for books by Chelsea Quinn Yarbro (whatever happened to her?) - RGP>>

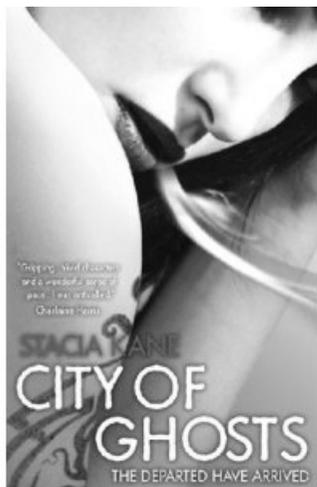
I FINALLY MEET SCIENCE FICTION FANDOM ***by Sean Jones***

This article is being written by a 'Saturday', which means I didn't have a number or a badge with my name on it. It also means that I wasn't at Novacon 40 for the whole weekend.

My journey to Novacon is a little different from most. I only recently moved to the Midlands, and I was completely unaware of Novacon, or the fantastic science fiction 'scene' up here. I do remember making a trip up from Kent some twenty six years ago to visit one of the best SF bookshops in the country called Andromeda. Little did I know back then that the Midlands really was central to the entire SF scene here in the UK.

Anyway, back to the beginning. After reading Peter Hamilton's BLOG I found out that he was doing a talk/event at Birmingham Library. Peter is one of my favourite writers at present. I am still finishing THE EVOLUTIONARY VOID at time of writing. So I booked a ticket and trotted along. I had no preconceptions of what to expect. Much to my surprise I had a great time and those in the Brum group will no doubt remember the annoying chap at the front with the fifty million questions.

happened is explained it must have been in an earlier volume, but the implications are that it could have been a scientific experiment gone wrong. The ghosts, and the nasty things they do, make this supernatural horror. Then there is the magic that is used to banish them. That must make it fantasy. Surely, though, it is the publisher that wants a label, not the reader, who will either enjoy it or not.



Chess Putnam is a Debunker. She works for the Church (not quite the Church we recognise but having more mediaeval and magical overtones – you don't have to believe anything, just tell them when you have seen a ghost). Her job is to deal with hauntings and send the ghosts back to the City of Souls where they are confined. Chess is not the usual Church employee as she lives in the unsavoury area of Downside, hangs out with the local gangs and is a drug user. By the start of CITY OF GHOSTS she has annoyed her boyfriend so much that he is deliberately avoiding her but she has performed so well workwise, that she is given a special assignment. A group of witches known as the Lamaru are back in town and are plotting to

destroy the Church, free the ghosts and create anarchy. Not only is Chess forced to work with a woman she does not trust, but she accepts a Binding Spell which will not permit her to talk about the case to anyone other than those involved in it.

If you can put Chess's personal angst to one side, this is a fast-paced, action filled novel. It has all the ingredients of this genre – sex, gore and supernatural beings. Whatever you do, don't leave it around for children to pick up.

PM

THE FALL by Guillermo del Toro and Chuck Hogan
HarperCollins / 300pgs / £14.99 hardcover ISBN: 978-0007319497
Reviewed by Pauline Morgan

Guillermo del Toro is the director of the brilliant film PAN'S LABYRINTH. This book is the second of a trilogy. It is written from the point of view of someone with an eye for a filmic scene, some of which hark back to the early days of James Herbert by showing the seemingly ordinary lives of people who are about to die horribly. In this book they usually do.

Abraham Setrakian has been hunting vampires for years, since he was released from the Treblinka concentration camp. Then, they were few and well hidden. Now, suddenly, they are simultaneously taking over the major cities of

Whilst queuing at the bar I met another very pleasant chap, and in no time at all I was enjoying a lasagne with Professor Ian Stewart who was enjoying a hot Cornish pastie. Together we talked about writing and such like. I was genuinely amazed at how really nice everyone was at Novacon and that I should



chastise myself for even thinking about a Klingon costume.

Iain's guest of honour 'interview' was highly amusing and entertaining. As was Brian Aldiss's, what a most entertaining man he is, and what a full life he has had: something that will no doubt inspire many a fan in attendance. Brian's anecdotal stories made

many people laugh out loud.

Before Novacon I didn't realise just how completely oblivious of the interest in SF and its authors I was. I was also completely unaware that the Nova awards came from Novacon! I was never aware of just how much help and assistance that established authors were readily, and happy, to give to fledgling writers such as myself. So to me this Novacon was a very big eye opener, and for that I am very grateful.

If you want/need/require a fuller report from someone who was there for the entire weekend, and stories from the curry evening, then you need to speak to a full member who attended the entire weekend (if they can remember it!), but for me, having dipped my big toe in the Novacon water, I find it very much to my liking. So here's to Novacon 41 next year. *SJ*

NOVACON 40 by Theresa Derwin

What an amazing time I had. Apart from the absolute shock of hearing Rog utter the blasphemous word 'discount', there were more surprises in store! Our illustrious Guest of Honour Iain M Banks was superb, witty, insightful & friendly; everything you would want from the GOH. To top it off, Steve & Iain did a great if eclectic interview, mostly on the topic of whiskey.

Geoff Ryman fully got into the swing of the weekend & delivered a brilliant presentation on Silent Movies whilst 'Bob Shaw's Scientific Talk' at the 40th birthday party was a hoot. By the Sunday I was a bit more clued up and selective about what panels to attend. For me, the most entertaining &

When one of the eggs is stolen, we are treated with a flight north-west across Australia after the thieves. They encounter a few problems, like bush fires and bunyips but it is only when they arrive on the northern coast that the action really begins to be stepped up, after two hundred pages.

The author's note at the end of the volume refers to 'the colourful character of Sir Willoughby'. Perhaps he is/was, but he appears less than fifty pages from the end, making him a minor player in the plot.

Compared with earlier volumes in this series, this is relatively slight. Australia as a penal colony has been written about in much more exciting ways by mainstream authors and the addition of dragons adds little as this is basically a book about the continent rather than the characters. To see Australia in perspective, try the works of Peter Carey, a far, far better writer.

It doesn't help either, that Novik's dragons and some of her plot lines have features in common with McCaffreys' (Anne and Todd) stories of Pern, the most recent ones of which also deal with the consequences of dragons dying of a disease. The resolution in each case is different though.

One of the biggest annoyances, though, is the punctuation. Other than the apostrophe, that is most abused seems to be the colon and semi-colon. As most people do not know how to use them, the best idea is to avoid them and use something else. Unfortunately, Naomi Novik has fallen in love with them. They do not add to the prose, in fact they often complicate an already badly written sentence. She even puts semicolons in speech. Only lecturers and bores speak in semi-colons. The presence of this kind of over-the-top misuse of punctuation destroys any pleasure that should be had from the reading. If this was an isolated incident, it can be forgiven but it occurs in all her books and appears to be getting worse, or at least, more noticeable.

As yet, Novik has not taken Temeraire to the Americas. I am sure she will, but she would do better to get him and his crew back in to the fray in Europe, fighting the French. The series was originally conceived as an aerial navy, with dragons taking the place of frigates and ships of the line with the attendant danger and real threat of death. Perhaps it is time for this series to get back to those roots and inject more action and tension to the story-lines. *PM*

SONGS OF THE DYING EARTH

edited by George R R Martin & Gardner Dozois

Harper/Voyager / 660pgs / £12.99 trade paperback ISBN 978-0007277506

Reviewed by Michael Jones

1950 saw the publication of Jack Vance's first book. Titled THE DYING EARTH, it was a collection of stories set in the unimaginably distant future when the Sun has become a fading red giant and the few people left on the Earth, many of whom would once have been scientists but were now powerful

Special Award-Professional: Jonathan Strahan for editing anthologies

Special Award-Non-professional: Susan Marie Groppi for Strange Horizons

THE 2010 NOVA AWARDS

The winners of the Nova Award, presented at Novacon 40 selected by a vote of the membership of Novacon were

Best Fanzine: *Journey Planet #7* edited by Christopher J Garcia, Claire Brialey and James Bacon

Best Fan Writer: Mark Plummer

Best Fan Artist: James ATom



NEWS IN BRIEF . . .

.... Filmmaker **Dino De Laurentiis** (b.1919) died on November 11. De Laurentiis produced several science fiction and fantasy films including the remake of KING KONG, DUNE, CONAN THE BARBARIAN, BARBARELLA, FLASH GORDON, THE DEAD ZONE, and ARMY OF DARKNESS. In 2001, he won the Irving R. Thalberg Award and he won an Oscar in 1957 for LA STRADA. The Academy of Science Fiction, Fantasy & Horror Films presented him with a lifetime achievement award in 1997

Laura Haywood-Cory has been promoted to Associate Editor at Baen Books. Haywood-Cory has previously served as an editorial assistant at

Baen and has long been active in science fiction fandom and con-running Tor are starting to reprint **George R R Martin's** *Wild Card* series. Each volume will be expanded with new original material Remember **A Bertram Chandler's** *Rimworld* stories? Baen will publish TO THE GALACTIC RIM – a collection of the stories and novels of the young John Grimes in March. Presumably the later stories of Grimes will follow The same month, Baen will publish the third volume of **Poul Anderson's** *Polesotechnic League*, RISE OF THE TERRAN EMPIRE Only weeks after **Realms of Fantasy** announced it was ceasing publication, it has been revived by **Kim Richards Gilchrist** of Damnation Books. Damnation will publish the December issue as a print issue (previously it had been announced as available on-line only) and will begin publishing new material with the February issue, not missing any issues. Damnation has already announced that the April issue will be a dark fantasy issue to coincide with World Horror Con and the June issue will be a celebration of the magazine's 100th issue. **Douglas Cohen** has announced that both he and **Shawna McCarthy** will be continuing in their positions with *Realms of Fantasy* under the new publisher Following a demonstration and negotiations, Warner Brothers has announced