

BRUM GROUP NEWS

THE MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF THE

BIRMINGHAM SCIENCE FICTION GROUP

DECEMBER 2011

ISSUE 483

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

COMMITTEE: **VERNON BROWN (CHAIRMAN); PAT BROWN (TREASURER);**
THERESA DERWIN (SECRETARY); ROG PEYTON (NEWSLETTER EDITOR);
DAVE CORBY (PUBLICITY OFFICER); WILLIAM MCCABE (WEBSITE);
VICKY STOCK (MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY);
NOVACON 41 CHAIRMAN: STEVE LAWSON

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Friday 2nd 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. Your ticket is the entrance to a great evening of fun - there'll be the usual medieval game of Skittles which has 9 skittles which have to be reset manually – so volunteers for short sessions please. We have our own rules – many of which are made up on the spot to give everyone a chance of winning prizes. This year we'll be introducing a **NEW** version – never played before, in which the player with the lowest score gets the prize! As well as the prizes for your skittling prowess (or not!) there will be spot prizes given in our free raffle – wine, chocolates and other goodies. So there are many chances for you to win something. 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 reviews each year (but they do have to be ordered specially!

Jan 13th 2012 – THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING & THE AUCTION – Reports on 2011 and your chance to volunteer for next year's committee. Followed by our annual AUCTION where you can pick up new books for a few pennies.

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.

Order your tickets from Vicky Stock, our Membership Secretary, at the address on the back page of this Newsletter. However, as there are sometimes problems with the postal system if you apply by post please send Vicky an email at the same time in case your application is delayed. **THE DEADLINE FOR APPLICATIONS & PAYMENTS IS MONDAY 21st NOVEMBER** because the Tavern needs food numbers that week.

Numbers are restricted for safety reasons and we have reached that number every year previously (with the exception of last year when the appalling weather kept people away) and we had to refuse latecomers.

REMEMBER THAT TICKETS WILL NOT BE AVAILABLE ON THE NIGHT – GET THEM NOW! *RGP*



WORLD FANTASY AWARDS 2011

The World Fantasy Awards were presented at this year's World Fantasy Con in San Diego, California on October 30. This year's judges included Andrew Hook, Sascha Mamczak, Mark Rich, Sean Wallace, and Kim Wilkins.

Life Achievement: Peter S. Beagle and Angélica Gorodischer

Novel: WHO FEARS DEATH by Nnedi Okorafor

Novella: "The Maiden Flight of McCauley's Bellerophon" by Elizabeth Hand

Short Story: "Fossil—Figures" by Joyce Carol Oates

Anthology: MY MOTHER SHE KILLED ME, MY FATHER HE ATE ME edited by Kate Bernheimer

Collection: WHAT I DIDN'T SEE AND OTHER STORIES by Karen Joy Fowler

Artist: Kinuko Y. Craft

Special Award—Professional: Marc Gascoigne for Angry Robot

Special Award—Non-professional: Alisa Krasnostein for 12th Planet Press

NOVA AWARDS 2011

The Nova Award winners were announced at Novacon 41. The Nova Awards are presented to recognize excellence in British fanzine publishing and writing.

Best Fanzine: *Head* edited by Doug Bell & Christina Lake

Best Fanzine Writer: Claire Briale

Best Fanzine Artist: Dave Hicks

STANISLAW LEM CELEBRATION ANTHOLOGY

Comma Press, a not-for-profit, independent publishing house based in Manchester, has just recently published a book called **LEMISTRY: A CELEBRATION OF THE WORK OF STANISLAW LEM**. It's a collection of short stories and essays inspired by and exploring the life and works of Polish science fiction author and essayist, Stanislaw Lem. Featuring contributions from **Brian Aldiss**, Ian Watson, Frank Cottrell Boyce, Sean O'Brien and Trevor Hoyle, **LEMISTRY** contains stories inspired by his fiction, academic essays, and three original stories by Lem translated to English for the first time. One of his stories, "The Lilo", explores early notions of 'inception', years before Christopher Nolan produced his film about it. **LEMISTRY** was supported by the Polish Book Institute and co-commissioned by the Polish Cultural Institute in London.

The themes and subjects discussed in the book are nano-technology, artificial intelligence, robotics, cyberspace, space exploration and physics.

There is also a free launch event on Friday 2nd December at 7pm at Madlab, The Northern Quarter, Manchester, UK. With readings and talks from Andy Sawyer, Annie Clarkson, Trevor Hoyle, plus a special screening of the Quay Brothers' film **MASKA**. There will also be an opportunity to purchase copies of **LEMISTRY** but you can buy copies from their website. <<unfortunately, they didn't give their website address and the link they gave didn't work, but if you google 'Comma Press Lemistry', you should find full details. – RGP>>

THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING Jan 2012

NOW is the time to be thinking about the Group's activities during the forthcoming year. At January's AGM the 2011 Committee will stand down and elections will be held to elect the 2012 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...

WEBSITE MANAGER

To maintain the BSFG 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 2011 Committee Members are restanding for 2012 (but that doesn't mean you can't stand against someone!), although Theresa will not be restanding as Secretary. This means that we need a volunteer for that post. (And I wouldn't mind a rest from producing this newsletter every month....)

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 Theresa at bhamsfgroup@yahoo.co.uk for more information.

NEWS IN BRIEF . . .

.... Author **Les Daniels** (b.1943) has died from an heart attack. Daniels has written five historical novels about the vampire Don Sebastian de Villanueva. In addition to his fiction, Daniels has written about the history of comics Japanese rights have now been sold to **THE QUANTUM THIEF** by **Hannu Rajaniemi**. The British hardcover has sold 1500 copies, the trade paperback 16,500 and the e-book 4000 copies. The paperback is published this month **William and Kim Gilchrist** of Damnation Books LLC have announced the cancellation of *Realms of Fantasy* magazine. The Gilchrists bought the magazine last year after **Warren Lapine** cancelled the magazine after purchasing it from Sovereign Media. The Gilchrists are looking for a buyer Beware of being ripped off by cheap e-books published by Hephæstus Books - go to <http://www.lawrenceperson.com/?p=6829> and read the report. **Jerry Pournelle** and **C J Cherryh** have been among the first to report on the nefarious activities of Hephæstus Books, which seems to be publishing omnibus editions of hundred or thousands of books for which they haven't bothered to obtain the rights **Mickey Zucker Reichert** has written a trilogy featuring Susan Calvin from **Isaac Asimov's** original I, ROBOT collection. The first volume is now out from Ace and is titled I, ROBOT: TO PROTECT **Steve Davidson**, who was recently awarded the lapsed *Amazing Stories* trademark, has announced the formation of an advisory board which consists of four former editors of the magazine: **Barry Malzberg**, **Patrick L. Price**, **Ted White**, and **Joseph Wrzos**. Davidson has also commissioned a cover for the first electronic issue, from artist **Frank Wu** Just published – BUGF#CK: THE USELESS



WIT AND WISDOM OF **HARLAN ELLISON** edited by **Arnie Fenner** – quotes, anecdotes and a brand-new essay by Ellison **Harlan Ellison's** lawsuit against New Regency and director **Andrew Niccol** over plagiarism for their film IN TIME has been settled. Ellison claimed that IN TIME was based on his 1965 story “Repent, Harlequin! Said The Ticktockman”. Ellison's original lawsuit asked that all copies of the film be destroyed, its release stopped,

and he be paid compensatory damages. The settlement calls for the film's release to go ahead with an on-screen credit for Ellison **Barnes & Noble's** bid of \$13.9 million for the intellectual property of the Borders bookshop chain has now been approved Astronauts **John Glenn**, **Neil Armstrong**, **Buzz Aldrin** and **Michael Collins** were honoured on November 16 when they were each awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor in a ceremony at the Capitol Rotunda. The Congressional Gold Medal is the highest civilian award in the United States

RGP



BOOK REVIEWS

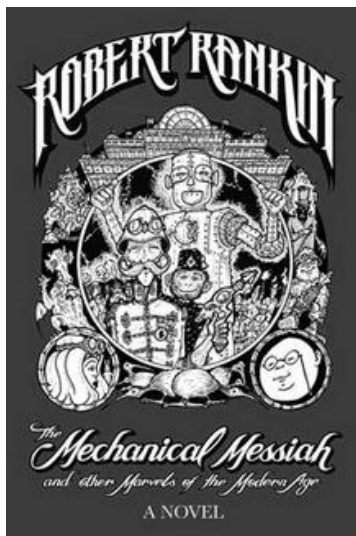


(**REVIEWERS** please note:- all reviews should be emailed direct to me at rog [dot] peyton [at] btinternet [dot] com) **Deadline for each issue is 14 days prior to the date of the monthly meeting.**

***THE MECHANICAL MESSIAH AND OTHER MARVELS OF THE MODERN AGE* by Robert Rankin**

Gollancz / 485 pgs / £16.99 hardcover ISBN: 978-0575086357

Reviewed by Dave Hardy



I should probably start by saying that it helps if you have read *THE JAPANESE DEVIL FISH GIRL*, as while this book is not exactly a sequel it is set in the same ‘universe’. That is, the War of the Worlds (and WW2) has happened, the world’s technology is basically steampunk, enlightened (literally) by Mr. Nikola Tesla’s new electricity, and we are regularly visited by Venusians and Jupiterians, or Jovians. Under the leadership of Winston Churchill the Martians were of course defeated in the first Worlds War, and we then went to Mars and committed genocide on the rest of the Martian race. . .

Also, if the Rankin novels you have read previously have been from the *Brentford Trilogy* series (of which there are far more than three) and you’re expecting more of the

exploits of John O’mally and Jim Pooley, centred around the *Flying Swan*, you’re in for a surprise. While none of Bob’s books can really be said to be science fiction as we know it (Jim), he has clearly embraced the steampunk ethic and has really entered into the spirit of it.

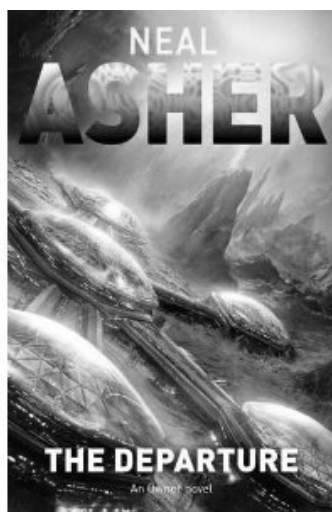
The main characters here are Cameron Brown, a private detective, whose nemesis is Commander Case of Scotland Yard; Alice Lovell – the Alice of Wonderland fame, who takes to the stage of the Electric Alhambra with her trained kiwi birds; Lord Andrew Ditchfield, the Alhambra’s owner, and Colonel Katterfelto, who has now acquired the talking monkey, Darwin, who first appeared in the previous novel. But we also meet Joseph Merrick, better known as The Elephant Man, Aleister Crowley (who requires no introduction), and a sinister, black-caped mystery figure who intends to take over the world and bring it to its knees in worship of him alone. Indeed, all worlds.

But Mr. Bell has found the Ring of Moses, which the Beast needs in order to complete his dastardly plans, and much of the story concerns the Beast's attempts to wrest it from him. In passing, we also meet Charles Babbage, who is responsible for the amazingly intricate workings of the Electric Alhambra, and Surgeon General Sir Frederick Treves, who looks after Joseph Merrick and tries to thwart his many rather malicious practical jokes. Not to mention The Travelling Formbys, so I won't. (By the way, if the dates of some of the characters don't seem to coincide, don't worry about it. The author doesn't.)

Colonel Katterfelto has already constructed one Mechanical Messiah, in Wormcast, Arizona, but it failed to become imbued with divine energies as expected. Thanks to Darwin the citizens of Wormcast took it instead to be a demon employed by the Antichrist, and it all ended, Frankenstein-like, in blazing torches and flames. As a result he is reduced taking his Katterfelto's Clockwork Minstrels to the stage, to join Alice's ferocious kiwis. But he is not deterred: thanks to skilful writing, it turns out that a missing ingredient, essential to bringing his creation to life, is a form of gold called Magonian, found lying around only on the surface of Venus. So, of course, a hunting expedition to Venus is joined by the colonel and his monkey. Here Alice also has an encounter with a White Rabbit.

Many adventures ensue, and it all ends, as you may expect, with a mighty battle between the Powers of Darkness and Light. I won't spoil the ending for you, but if you enjoy a rollicking adventure tale with a good few laughs thrown in, this is for you! I can't end, however, without a word of praise for the cover art, which in the case of both books is (of course) by the author. On this book in particular he has excelled himself, with a magnificent line drawing; and chapter headers, to boot.

DH



***THE DEPARTURE* by Neal Asher**
Tor / 498 pages / £17.99 hardcover
ISBN 978-0230708730
£12.99 trade paperback ISBN 978-0230746725

Reviewed by Michael Jones

Neal Asher here begins what is promised to be a long-running series featuring "The Owner of the Worlds". This first *Owner* novel is set mostly on a hugely over-populated Earth in the mid-22nd Century. A totalitarian world government calling itself The Committee has taken complete control and maintains and exercises its power through every cruelty and atrocity that can be imagined. Onto this scene comes Adam Saul, a

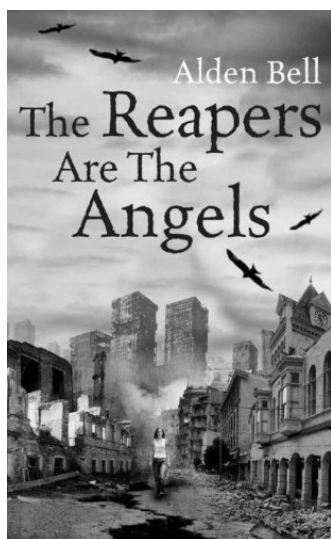
genius with a head full of computer implants which enables him to bring down The Committee and destroy its powerbase.

The background to this narrative is hardly original, portraying as it does an extrapolation of current world trends such as over-population, unequal distribution of resources and the kind of totalitarianism which leads to suppression of a majority of the world's population. These ideas have been explored before by numerous contemporary writers, as well as others at least as far back as George Orwell's NINETEEN EIGHTY-FOUR. Even the idea of mind/computer interfacing has been seen before, although Asher takes it to a new level, one so high as to seem at times barely plausible.

On the whole, the book comes over as rather shallow and hastily contrived. Adam Saul had appeared from nowhere two years earlier, with no explanation either of where he came from or what he did during those years. Once he gets going as the proverbial one man wave of destruction the action is relentless and at times events are almost obscured in a fog of blood and body parts, but the overall structure is completely one-dimensional with no depth to it at all. The book ends with him having become the self-styled Owner and about to embark on whatever course of action subsequent volumes in the series will recount. Meanwhile a subsidiary plot concerning a Mars colony had seemed largely irrelevant until it becomes apparent at the very end that it might after all assume some importance in what is to follow.

Asher has produced some excellent and highly-praised work in the past but it is hard not to feel that he has let himself down here. Later volumes may be better as the series beds in, and it may become possible to look back on this as an effective introduction to what is to follow. On its own though, not very satisfactory.

Mj



THE REAPERS ARE THE ANGELS
by Alden Bell

**Tor / 294pgs / £7.99 paperback ISBN:
978-0330518963**

Reviewed by Pauline Morgan

The best way of describing this book is a cross between Cormac McCarthy's THE ROAD and Richard Matheson's I AM LEGEND but with zombies instead of vampires. Unfortunately, it doesn't approach the quality of either of these two books and distinctly second rate for two important reasons. First is the layout. Experimental writing is not a problem. Neither is the use of present tense throughout. Since this is a third person narrative, the lack of punctuation for dialogue is an inexcusable

affectation. It adds nothing and confuses the reader.

The second major problem is the background. Twenty five years previously, the dead started coming back to life. It was apparently universal and simultaneous as civilisation rapidly collapsed. Nevertheless, there are survivors living in enclaves or, like Temple, the focal character, wandering the countryside. Temple is fifteen and has never known a different world. Most of the novel she is fleeing from the brother of a man she killed when he tried to rape her. The issue is that after a quarter of a century, cars found at the roadside still work, gas stations still have plenty of fuel to be pumped out and stores still have edible food. If we were watching the collapse of civilisation this would be acceptable but to still have electricity lighting the streets of America after this period of time is highly over optimistic.

Although the plot line has merit, the novel is let down by everything else. PM

ELANTRIS by Brandon Sanderson

Gollancz / 622pgs / £8.99 paperback ISBN: 978-0575097445

Reviewed by Jim Pearce



Although written in 2005 this is the first ever publication of ELANTRIS in the UK. Brandon Sanderson is well known within the UK as the author completing the late Robert Jordan's epic *Wheel of Time* saga as well as for a string of his own novels.

Elantris is a city once gleaming and pristine, the home of a godlike people who are the protectors of the country of Arelon. Now it is a stinking, crumbling wreck covered with dark slime and inhabited by pitiful wretches. Once you became an inhabitant of Elantris by succumbing to the 'Shoal' which turned your skin silver, your hair white and gave you the power to perform magic. Now the Shoal has been contaminated and its 'victims' have black patches on their skins and have been turned into the living dead who continually suffer pain and hunger. For the last 10 years it has made gods into beasts. This is the background to and a continuing thread of the story of Prince Raoden of Arelon and his promised bride, Princess Sarene of Teod, who arrives in the country to find that he has just 'died'. But we the readers know that he has succumbed to the Shoal and has been banished to Elantris.

Arelon and Teod have a common enemy - the Fjordell Empire - a fanatic religious hegemony that intends to rule the whole world. To further its aims now that Elantris has fallen, the Fjordell high priest Hrathen has been sent to the

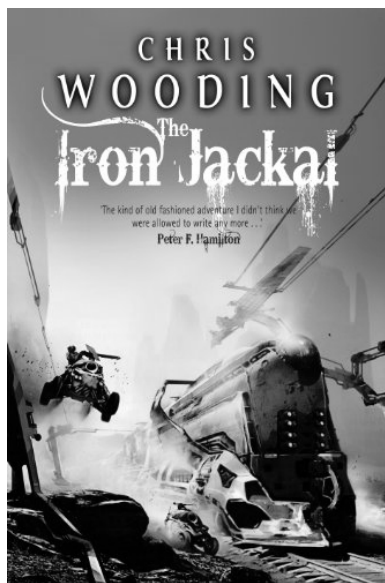
court of King Iadon of Arelon. Much of the book is taken up by his machinations and the efforts of Sarene to counter them as well as her efforts to make a place for herself in her new home now that her husband is 'dead'. Although he is dead to the people of Arelon, Raoden strives mightily to improve the lot of the inhabitants of Elantris and to find out why the magic failed. As with all of his books Brandon Sanderson has populated Elantris with a rich and varied band of characters none of whom are surplus to the tale.

Elantris started slowly and I was not impressed, but it quickly picked up and turned into a very enjoyable tale indeed. *JTP*

THE IRON JACKAL by Chris Wooding

Gollancz / 476pgs / £12.99 trade paperback ISBN 978-0575098077

Reviewed by Michael Jones



This is the third instalment in the ongoing saga of Darian Frey, captain and owner of the airship the *Kelly Jay*. Having come out of the last book in a reasonably secure and prosperous situation, he now takes on a new criminal commission working for his bitter rival Trinica Dracken, the woman he left at the altar years ago. The job appears simple: to rob a train and steal a priceless historical relic. It appears at first to go off quite successfully with copious gunplay and general mayhem. Unhappily, Frey mishandles the situation and ends up subject to a daemonic curse which can only be lifted by returning the relic to the place from whence it was originally removed. And that means he has to steal it all over again, which turns out to be much more difficult than the first time.

Fortunately he has the loyal and unstinting assistance of his crew, a bunch of former misfits and inadequates who have begun to work almost as a properly functioning unit. Together they fight their way across the planet to the ruined city of a long-lost former civilisation, and the curse is lifted. Hurrah!

There is a degree of originality but no great depth here, just a series of exciting adventures for Frey and his crew as they struggle to survive, lurching almost uncontrollably from crisis to crisis and knocking off a few bad guys on the way. Something of an old-fashioned pulp thriller in other words, set in exotic surroundings with a touch of the supernatural thrown in but not much by way of advanced science or weaponry, nothing more advanced than rifles and shotguns (plus a useful magic cutlass).

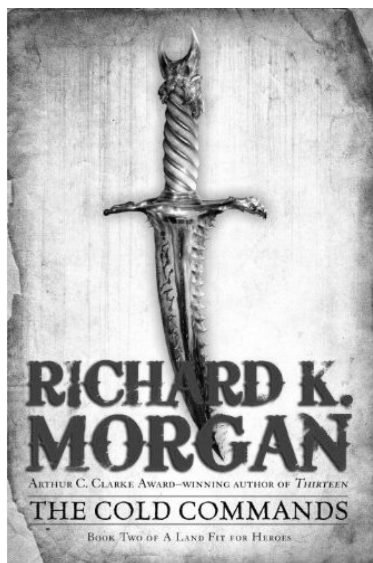
This volume works reasonably well on its own in that knowledge of the previous books in the series is not essential, although it does help a little here and there. As it is, a few loose ends remain unresolved – will the crew stay together? Can they keep one step ahead of the authorities? Most importantly, will Darian and Trinica get back together? Wooding has promised one more book in which these questions should be answered and which may be the last on the subject. Or maybe not.

Mj

THE COLD COMMANDS by Richard K Morgan

Gollancz / 407pgs / £12.99 hardcover ISBN: 978-0575077935

Reviewed by Jim Pearce



Richard Morgan has proved himself to be the master of two genres, i.e. SF with his first novels: The *Takeshi Kovacs* trilogy, MARKET FORCES and BLACK MAN and now with THE COLD COMMANDS and its predecessor THE STEEL REMAINS he is demonstrating his mastery of dark fantasy.

In THE COLD COMMANDS a warning has been given by the Kariathi helmsman Anasharal (an AI) of the reappearance after 4000 years of a ghost island in the northern ocean which is reputed to be the mausoleum of the greatest emperor of the Dwenda, the Illwrack Changeling. The Dwenda are a humanoid race, formally mankind's masters and deadly enemy. This reappearance is forecast to have

dire consequences for humanity.

With this in the background the story follows the adventures or misadventures of Ringil Eskiath, sometimes called 'Angeleyes', a disreputable scion of one of the Trelayne (Northern) League, a scarred hero of the Gallows Gap battle and a self described 'faggot'. While his is the greater part in the tale, his strand is skilfully interwoven with those of other heroes of THE STEEL REMAINS. That is Egar the Dragonbane, a majak (steppe nomad) mercenary living in the southern empire city of Yhelteth and their friend Archeth the last remaining member of the Kariath race and special advisor to the Emperor Jiral. Many other characters, including the Emperor, a sect of religious fanatics, the Kariathi helmsmen and dark gods add to the overall richness of the plot.

Like many books this one started very well, but suffered a brief dip into the doldrums in the middle with Ringil languishing in the misty 'Grey Places' a dimension that partly overlaps with that in which humanity dwells and which is

home of the Dwenda and the Dark Gods and the occasional human. However, this is brief and is germane to the story and does not distract from the overall excellence of *THE COLD COMMANDS*. Highly recommended. *JTP*

***THE WATCHTOWER* by Lee Carroll**

Bantam Press / 397pgs / £12.99 trade paperback, ISBN: 978-0593065976

Reviewed by Pauline Morgan



It didn't surprise me to find that Lee Carroll is the pseudonym for two Americans. They have fallen into the trap that even highly respected writers encounter when trying to set novels in other countries and other times. They get it wrong.

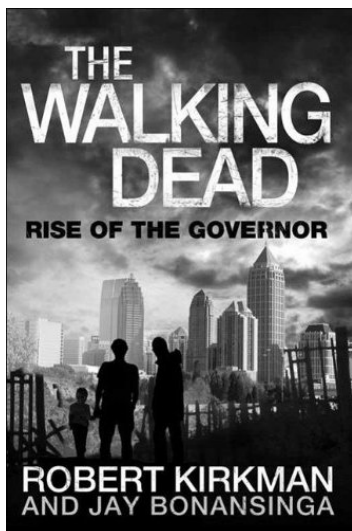
This book is written as two parallel sections. One deals with Gareth James, a modern American woman who has fallen in love with a vampire only to discover that the original focus of his affections was her four-hundred year dead ancestress. Marguerite was an immortal fey who gave up her immortality to be with Will Hughes at the same time as he was trying to become immortal to be with her and was tricked into becoming a vampire by John Dee. One strand of the narrative relates Will's original quest for immortality, the other follows Gareth's search for a way to make Will mortal again. Although the modern sections may well have been visited and recorded accurately by the authors, there are so many inaccuracies in the English Tudor sections to make the novel extremely irritating. To compound matters, one character, who has an extensive part, is referred to only as 'the poet' when patently this is supposed to be Shakespeare.

Also, the only place that states that this is the second volume in a trilogy is in the acknowledgments, which most people do not read. Instead it drops you straight into the middle of the story with so many issues in the past lives of the characters that it is difficult to understand where they are coming from. Disappointing. *PM*

***THE WALKING DEAD: RISE OF THE GOVERNOR* by
Robert Kirkman & Jay Bonansinga**

Tor / 308pgs / £7.99 paperback ISBN: 978-0330541336

Reviewed by Theresa Derwin



It is Friday 21st October. Not for a long time has there been such anticipation for a second season of a genre programme. *The Walking Dead: Season Two* premiered on FX tonight and what a start (yes, this is a book review. Stay with me...). Because those clever producer chaps decided to cash in on the network premiere by releasing a tie-in book on the same date.

The episode delivered on all counts, drama, gore tension and zombie goodness. What a shame that RISE OF THE GOVERNOR let the side down.

Touted as a standalone trilogy, this novel features the journey of widower Philip Blake, daughter Penny, his brother Brian and a couple of hard-as-nails old school friends as they try to reach the CDC in Atlanta. It starts

three days into the zombie apocalypse and is written, rather distractingly, in third person present tense. The point of view is predominantly Brian, with a dash of Philip. However the whole technique means that the book lacks in emotion where the reader should obviously feel something.

There is no denying the scenes of gore and the vista of despair that is the broken city of Atlanta is stunningly bleak, and the story itself is sound, but there is something missing from this novel. It's called 'feeling'. It is an unrelentingly grim piece of fiction. If that's what you like, then great - if it isn't, watch the series or read the comics instead.

TD

RECOMMENDED SF BOOKS – Rog Peyton

And the final 10. Please note that these 10 books are NOT my least favourite ten, or whatever – I've just picked books from the 100 at random. I can't believe I almost forgot David Ambrose!!! Please remember that I may be able to supply most of these titles – just email me and I can bring orders to the Group meetings. Recommended Fantasy next month.... (short list!!)

Currently in print and widely available:-

Brian Aldiss – NON-STOP (1958) aka STARSHIP in USA. Roy Complain lives in cramped Quarters. Everyone in his tribe has forgotten where they are and

so he, along with a renegade priest, goes searching, hacking away at vegetation that is everywhere. What they discover turns their world upside-down. (Gollancz SF Masterworks 978-1857989984 £7.99)

David Ambrose – THE MAN WHO TURNED INTO HIMSELF (1993)

Rick Hamilton has the perfect life; a great career, a wonderful son and a beautiful wife. Until one day, halfway through a vital business meeting a chilling premonition tells him his wife is about to die in a car crash. After rushing to the crash he discovers a staggering scene. Rick Hamilton finds he is trapped in a parallel universe. (Jonathan Cape hardcover 978-0224035194 £13.99)

Eric Brown – the *Bengal Station* trilogy – NECROPATH, XENOPATH and COSMOPATH (2008/2009/2009)

Jeff Vaughan is a telepath in the overcrowded Bengal Station, an interstellar port in Asia. More ideas in these 3 books than most authors have in their whole careers. Further proof that Eric Brown is currently the best storyteller in the SF field. (Solaris 978-1844166497 / 978-1844167425 / 978-1844168323 £7.99 each)

Robert Silverberg – THE BOOK OF SKULLS (1971) Four students discover a manuscript, THE BOOK OF SKULLS, which reveals the existence of a sect, now living in the Arizona desert, whose members can offer immortality to those who can complete its initiation rite. To their surprise, they discover that the sect exists, and is willing to accept them as acolytes. But for each group of four who enter the rite, two must die in order for the others to succeed. (Gollancz SF Masterworks 978-1857989144 £7.99)

And currently out of print:-

David Ambrose – THE DISCRETE CHARM OF CHARLIE MONK

(2000) Charlie Monk is a highly trained assassin in a department of some obscure government agency. Or is he...? An unputdownable thriller where even Charlie Monk starts to doubt himself.

Poul Anderson – THE ENEMY STARS (1959; rev & expanded 1979) A spaceship is travelling to a distant star. A matter transmitter on board allows the crew to be changed periodically. But, inevitably, something goes horribly wrong...

Octavia Butler – PARABLE OF THE SOWER (1993) Set in a California where civilization has all but broken down and poverty and unspeakable violence is the norm, teenage Lauren Olamina, knowing there must be a better way to live, invents Earthseed, an entirely new religion.

Anne McCaffrey – THE SHIP WHO SANG (1969) The brain was perfect, the tiny, crippled body useless. So technology rescued the brain and put it in an environment that conditioned it to live in a different kind of body - a spaceship.

Daniel Quinn – ISHMAEL (1993) Ishmael is a creature of immense wisdom and he has a story to tell, one that no other human being has ever heard. It is a story that extends backward and forward over the lifespan of the earth from the birth of time to a future there is still time to save.

Jack Vance – BIG PLANET (abridged text 1957; and 1978 – this is the first publication of the unabridged text) The objective of the mission from Earth to

Big Planet was to ensure that the whole world didn't fall under the domination of the tyrant Lysidder. But when the mission spacecraft crash-lands, the survivors are faced with a 40,000 mile trek across the vast and unknown surface of the planet.

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.

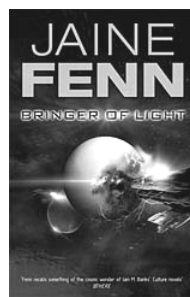
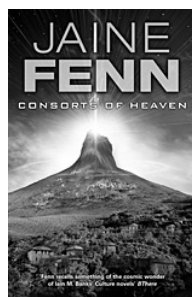
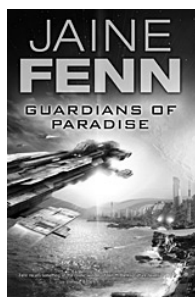
Any information about forthcoming SF / Fantasy / Horror events are always welcome - please send to me at rog [dot] peyton [at] btinternet [dot] com

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

OLYMPUS 2012 - The 2012 Eastercon, 6th - 9th April 2012 at the Radisson Edwardian Hotel, Heathrow, London, UK. Guests of Honour: Paul Cornell, George R.R. Martin, Steph Swainston. Fan Guests of Honour: Margaret Austin, Martin Easterbrook. Registration is £55 and increases on Aug 31st so register NOW. Website is <http://www.olympus2012.org/>

NOVACON 42

??? November 2012



Guest of Honour

JAINE FENN

**Full details to be announced as soon as I get the info
from Novacon Chair Tony Berry**

FUTURE MEETINGS OF THE BSFG

Jan 13th 2012 – Annual General Meeting and Auction

Feb 10th – the Annual Quiz

Mar 9th - tba

Apr 13th - tba

BRUM GROUP NEWS #483 (December 2011) copyright 2011 for Birmingham SF Group. Designed by Rog Peyton (19 Eves Croft, Bartley Green, Birmingham, B32 3QL – phone 0121 477 6901 or email rog [dot] peyton [at] buinternet [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 Membership Secretary, 10 Sylvan Avenue, Northfield, Birmingham, B31 2PG