

BRUM GROUP NEWS

THE MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF THE

BIRMINGHAM SCIENCE FICTION GROUP

FEBRUARY 2012

ISSUE 485

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

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NOVACON 42 CHAIRMAN: TONY BERRY

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Friday 10th February

??THE QUIZ??

It's Quiz time again. This is always held in February due to the expected bad weather and the risk of speakers being unable to get to Brum – or worse still, the members being unable to get into the city centre. Again, we've invited members of the Birmingham University SF Society to swell the numbers.

It's a Pub Quiz style event with several teams competing for honours and prizes. Last year I was on the winning team along with Dave Corby and Nick Jackson so we are setting the questions this year. Don't worry, the winners do not have to take responsibility for setting the following year's quiz – we volunteered last year as Vernon had run out of questions.

The questions for this year have already been done and we're now editing the questions to ensure clarity and preparing a few 'extras'. Answers can be purchased... – oops, sorry, they can't! Questions will cover SF and Fantasy in books, magazines, artwork, films, TV, radio, gaming, etc. so everyone has a chance of winning. Some will be very easy, most will be possible but there will

March 9th - award-winning SF author CHRISTOPHER PRIEST
will once again be talking to the Group.

also be a few real stinkers in there for the geeks among us. It is recommended that each team consists of no more than four people and each team should have members of both the BSFG and the University guys.

NOW is the time to start revising. Only you know your weak areas – start reading and start watching!
RGP

The meeting will take place in the conference room on the first floor of The Briar Rose Hotel, Bennetts Hill, off New Street.

The doors open at 7.30pm and the meeting will commence at 8.00pm so please arrive early, get your drinks from the bar on the ground floor, and be seated in plenty of time. The entrance fee for this meeting is free. Non-members are not eligible to vote on any motions in the AGM.

LAST MONTH'S AGM AND AUCTION

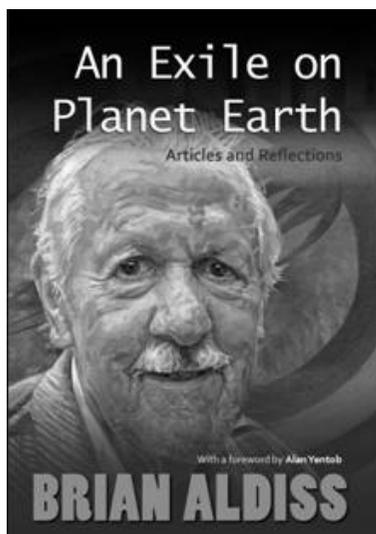
The Annual General Meeting was duly held and virtually all the committee retained their jobs – see masthead on Page 1.

Dave Nichols was elected as our new Secretary. Dave is a relatively new member so please make sure you make yourself known to him. He is currently the company secretary for a reasonably large international charity – www.homeless-international.org based in Coventry.

Vicky Stock, our Secretary for 10 years, also volunteered to come back on to the committee as an Ordinary Committee Member. She will be available for specific jobs that the rest of the committee deem necessary. She retains her position as Membership Secretary

And here's news of a new book by one of our Honorary Presidents...

BRIAN ALDISS: AN EXILE ON PLANET EARTH



Published to celebrate the deposit of the Brian Aldiss archive in the Bodleian Library, AN EXILE ON PLANET EARTH brings together twelve personal and revealing essays by the master of science fiction, offering real insight into his life and work.

This collection of essays, most of which are revised for this volume, is a testimony to the influences behind Brian Aldiss' writing, showing how the circumstances and events of his childhood are translated into strange metaphors in his novels and stories (the lonely boy playing on the beach in WALCOT), how his identification with the 'exile' is a recurring theme throughout his work (it is surely no accident that he was asked to write an

introduction to Solzhenitsyn's THE GULAG ARCHIPELAGO), and how a world without children (GREYBEARD) expressed his grief at the temporary loss of his own children after his first marriage broke up.

As Alan Yentob notes in the foreword, 'Here we find some brilliant observations and the kind of detail that will delight aficionados of his fiction: 'Cultivating the wilderness, it's what a writer does all the while. What we are fills the fictions we tell, often without our realizing it. What one pours out, alone in the room, is much like sessions of psychoanalysis, as one produces things that astonish even oneself.' For those revelations this is a book well worth reading.'

For the lovers of his many books and poems this volume reveals new insights into the man and his world, giving us a better understanding of his place in the history and literary criticism of science fiction and of his interest in the cultural importance of SF as a genre.

AN EXILE ON PLANET EARTH: ARTICLES AND REFLECTIONS,

Bodleian Library Publishing

Brian Aldiss, with a foreword by Alan Yentob

Format: 192 pp, 234 x 156 mm ISBN: 978 1 85124 373 0

Hardback, £19.99 Publication: 17 February 2012

For more information please contact:

Su Wheeler, Marketing and Sales Coordinator, Bodleian Library Publishing

Tel: 01865 283850, email: su.wheeler@bodleian.ox.ac.uk

Please note that she is in the office Wednesday to Friday of each week.

THE FIRST SF CONVENTION – LEEDS 1937

Science fiction fan historian Rob Hansen has uncovered rare photos! He writes... "3rd January 2012 is the 75th anniversary of the first SF convention, held in Leeds in 1937. A few months back I was put in touch with Jill Godfrey, daughter of Harold Gottliffe. It was Gottliffe who took photos of the event and not only did Jill have better prints of some of these than had come down the years, she also had several that were unknown to us.

"I've been holding these back so as to premiere them on the anniversary. If you go to those pages on my website now you'll see these, including a photo of the young Arthur C. Clarke that has never been seen before:

www.fiawol.org.uk/fanstuff/THEN%20Archive/1937con.htm.

"Along with the recently unearthed report by Ted Carnell (link also included) that's more new material on that historic convention than has turned up in years."

<<Well researched Rob. Anyone going on to this site will find a wealth of info and photos on the history of SF Fandom. Highly recommended. – RGP>>

NEWS IN BRIEF . . .

.... Editor and Agent **Glenn Lord** (b.1931) died on December 31. Lord was the agent for **Robert E. Howard**'s estate and edited several collections of Howard's stories, as well as writing *THE LAST CELT: A BIO-BIBLIOGRAPHY* of Robert Ervin Howard. Lord's essays about Howard and those who knew him appeared in a variety of fanzines, magazines, and books. Lord also worked to republish Howard's story in their original form and to find lost Howard works and



fragments **Dave Langford** underwent surgery on January 20 to repair a detached retina. According to his surgeon, the procedure, which corrected a rapidly deteriorating vision issue, was a success and Langford is currently recuperating, noting that "life is still blurry and full of typos." – Get well soon, Dave SFWA has announced that the recipient of the Damon Knight Grandmaster Award will be **Connie Willis**. Willis will be honoured during the 2012 Nebula Award Weekend in Arlington, Virginia the weekend of May 17-20, 2012 **Genevieve Valentine**'s debut novel *MECHANIQUE: A TALE*

OF THE CIRCUS TRESAULTI has been announced as the winner of the William L. Crawford Award. The Crawford Award is presented annually for a new fantasy author whose first book appeared during the previous year For a very interesting interview with **Peter Nicholls**, Editor Emeritus of *THE SCIENCE FICTION ENCYCLOPEDIA* in the *Independent*, go to <http://blogs.independent.co.uk/2012/01/12/qa-with-the-founder-of-E2%80%98the-encyclopedia-of-science-fiction%0E2%80%99/> International best-selling author **Audrey Niffenegger** is to pen her first ever story for a commercial trade anthology, after signing to Solaris' forthcoming short story collection, *MAGIC*, the third themed collection edited by Solaris' **Jonathan Oliver** **Pulpfest** has renamed the **Munsey Award**. The Munsey, previously named for nineteenth century publisher **Frank Munsey**, has been presented for efforts and ongoing involvement in the improvement, elevation, and continuance of keeping the pulps alive and well. In the future, the Award will be known as the **Rusty Hevelin Service Award**, after the fan who helped found Pulpfest, and who died in December. The first Rusty Hevelin Service Award will be presented at this year's Pulpfest in Columbus, Ohio on the weekend of August 9 **Wizards of the Coast** has announced that they will be reprinting the first edition *Advanced Dungeons and Dragons* rulebooks by **E. Gary Gygax** to raise funds for the Gygax Memorial Fund, with the goal of erecting a statue to Gygax in Library Park in Lake Geneva, Wisconsin Author **Diane Duane**, who wrote the *Young Wizards* series, numerous *Star Trek* novels, and has recently been publishing the *Omnitopia* series discovered that scammers have managed to get into her bank account, leaving her with a balance of nothing. Although the bank will eventually be able to restore her account, until that time, she is having a cash flow problem for bills

and is asking people to visit her on-line store, offering a 20% discount, as well The Chicago Literary Hall of Fame will be presenting **Gene Wolfe** with the first Fuller Award for lifetime achievement in literature on March 17 at an Evening to Honour Gene Wolfe. The event will take place at the Sanfilippo Estate in Barrington Hills, IL and will be hosted by **Gary K. Wolfe**. Authors scheduled to pay tribute to Wolfe include **Neil Gaiman, Luis Urrea, Michael Swanwick, Audrey Niffenegger, Jody Lynn Nye** and **Patrick O’Leary** with a performance of an adaptation of Wolfe’s story “The Toy Theatre” by **Lawrence Santoro**. Tickets begin at \$65 (plus air fare over there of course!!!) The 100-page **BLADE RUNNER SKETCHBOOK** is up on line for free. It contains drawings and designs from artists such as **Syd Mead**, artist **Mentor Huebner**, costume designer **Charles Knode** and **Ridley Scott** himself. The director is a gifted artist who contributed a great number of ‘Ridleygrams’ to the film's conceptualization process. For the entire book go to [http://issuu.com/futurenoir/docs/bladerunner sketchbook](http://issuu.com/futurenoir/docs/bladerunner_sketchbook) A new documentary about space tourist **Richard Garriott's** flight to the International Space Station is hitting cinemas now, but the SF movie he made aboard the orbiting lab remains under wraps. **MAN ON A MISSION**, which opened Jan13, chronicles Garriott's journey to the station in October 2008, a trip that cost him \$30 million of his own money. While up there, the video-game designer made a playful eight-minute film called **APOGEE OF FEAR** with some standout acting assistance from a Russian cosmonaut and two NASA astronauts. **APOGEE OF FEAR** is the first science-fiction movie ever made in space, Garriott said, and he would like to let the public see it. There has been some demand, with the Smithsonian Institution even asking to put the film in its permanent archives because of its historical value. But NASA hasn't given the necessary go-ahead, according to Garriott

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.**

***TRANSMISSION* by John Meaney**

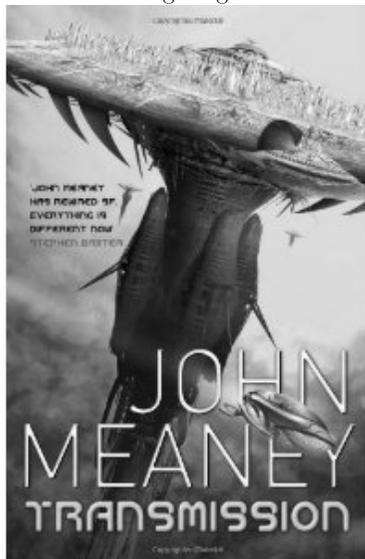
Gollancz / 421pgs / £18.99 hardcover / ISBN: 978-0575085350

Reviewed by Theresa Derwin

Volume two in the *Ragnarok* trilogy, **TRANSMISSION** is John Meaney’s latest epic Space Opera and spans thousands of years as various characters find themselves intertwined inexplicably through time.

In 8th Century Norseland Ulfr, a young Warrior can see an evil in the shape of a darkness, that no one else can see.

In Europe WWII, Gavriela also sees a darkness that few others can see, as the Third Reich closes in. She finds herself adept at code breaking and aids the Allies in their fight against evil.



In 2603, Pilot Roger is mourning the loss of his parents and his planet as he comes to terms with his new life alone, pursued by the same darkness, as he is trained in the espionage skills shared by his father. This is a new life for Roger and he is intent on finding the evil that destroyed his family.

Ulfr, Gavriela, Roger – all are linked through time and through their ability to see a darkness that few others can see.

As to be expected with a second volume in a trilogy, questions do remain unanswered at the close of the novel. However, this power house of SF is an example of why Meaney remains a strong voice in the genre. Meaney's love and knowledge of the martial arts and hypnosis feed into the novel, as does his scientific knowledge. For science novices, some of the theories explained can be a little confusing, but this does not detract from the readers' enjoyment.

The characters are well written, the world building is phenomenal and the pace, as chapters switch from time zones, is just right, keeping the tension levels up. The female characters are particularly strong and literally jump off the page, particularly the WWII code breaker Gavriela. The novel is also steeped in historical accuracy and authenticity.

Though a little hard going at times this novel is a prime example of hard SF done right. I look forward to what volume three of the *Ragnarok* trilogy holds.

TD

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 \[at\] binternet \[dot\] com](mailto:rog [dot] peyton [at] binternet [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 at the Radisson Edwardian Hotel, Heathrow, London, UK. Guests of Honour: Paul Cornell, George R.R. Martin & Tricia Sullivan. Fan Guests of Honour: Margaret Austin, Martin Easterbrook. Registration is £65. Website is www.olympus2012.org

ALT.FICTION WEEKEND FESTIVAL 2012 marks its sixth year with a fantastic weekend for readers and writers of science fiction, fantasy and horror. 14th & 15th April 2012 at the Phoenix Digital Arts Centre, Midland Street, Leicester, LE1 1TG. Guest of Honour will be Ken MacLeod. Website is <http://altfiction.co.uk/event-registration?ee=1>

DISCOVER: A WEEKEND OF SF, FANTASY & HORROR -18-20 May at Snibston Discovery Museum, Coalville, Leicestershire. Workshops, panels, talks, etc from many authors. Peter F Hamilton and Graham Masterton are the Guests of Honour. Attendance is £45 plus £2 booking fee. Website is <http://www.discoverfestival.co.uk/>

TOLKIEN WEEKEND at Sarehole Mill - May 19-20. Details at <http://middleearthweekend.org/>

THE EIGHNNNNNNN DISCWORLD CONVENTION - 24-27 August at the Metropole Hotel, Birmingham. Guest of Honour: Sir Terry Pratchett. Website: <http://www.dwcon.org/>

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10% discount for members of the BSFG

NOVACON 42

9-11TH NOVEMBER 2012

GUEST OF HONOUR

JAINE FENN

FUTURE MEETINGS OF THE BSFG

Feb 10th – the Annual Quiz

Mar 9th – Christopher Priest

Apr 13th – tba

May 11th – tba

Jun 8th – Graham Joyce

Jul 13th – tba

Aug 10th – Summer Social – meal at the Black Eagle

BRUM GROUP NEWS #485 (February 2012) copyright 2012 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] 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 Membership Secretary, 10 Sylvan Avenue, Northfield, Birmingham, B31 2PG