

# BRUM GROUP NEWS

THE MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF THE

## BIRMINGHAM SCIENCE FICTION GROUP

AUGUST 2012

ISSUE 491

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

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## Friday 10th August SUMMER SOCIAL

The Black Eagle at Hockley is the venue for the summer social. The Black Eagle has won the CAMRA Birmingham Pub of the Year on several occasions due to their combination of warm and friendly service and excellent food and drink. The Black Eagle Bar and Restaurant is situated at 16 Factory Road, Hockley, Birmingham., about two hundred yards from Benson Road Metro Station on the Wolverhampton to Birmingham Metro line. If you would like to travel there with others several of us will be meeting at the entrance to Snow Hill Railway Station at

SEPTEMBER 14th - we welcome **SIMON GREEN**, author of both science fiction (*Deathstalker* series) and fantasy books (*Secret Histories* and *Nightside* series)

7pm to catch the Metro at five past the hour. If you want to go by bus catch the 74 or 79 in Upper Bull Street and ask for the stop before Villa Road..Get off at the second stop past the Hockley Flyover, just before St Michaels Road on the left and Villa Road on the right - there are churches on two corners and a temple on another. Walk down St Michaels Road and keep going until you reach the Black Eagle on your right. **(see important note in STOP PRESS on back page)**

There is a standard menu plus a specials board which changes daily. The wine list is reasonably varied and reasonably priced. The Black Eagle also offers an excellent range of guest ales and four or five permanent brews. The restaurant, which has won awards, is separate from the pub proper, although they are in the same building. We sit down around 8pm, although some people usually turn up a little earlier for a drink in the bar.

## ***2011 SHIRLEY JACKSON AWARD WINNERS***

The 2011 Shirley Jackson Awards winners were announced on Sunday, July 15th 2012, at Readercon 23 Conference on Imaginative Literature, in Burlington, Massachusetts. The awards are presented to recognise outstanding achievement in the literature of psychological suspense, horror and the dark fantastic

***Novel:*** WITCHES ON THE ROAD TONIGHT by Sheri Holman (Grove Press)

***Novella:*** “Near Zennor” by Elizabeth Hand (A BOOK OF HORRORS, Jo Fletcher Books)

***Novellette:*** “The Summer People” by Kelly Link (Tin House 49/STEAMPUNK! AN ANTHOLOGY OF FANTASTICALLY RICH AND STRANGE STORIES, Candlewick Press)

***Short Fiction*** “The Corpse Painter’s Masterpiece” by M. Rickert (F&SF, Sept/Oct, 2011)

***Single Author Collection:*** AFTER THE APOCALYPSE: STORIES by Maureen F. McHugh (Small Beer Press)

***Edited Anthology:*** GHOSTS BY GASLIGHT edited by Jack Dann and Nick Gevers (Harper Voyager)

## ***MEMBERS’ SUCCESS STORIES***

### ***An Interview with Janet Edwards by Pauline Morgan***

Janet Edwards is a talented new writer and a member of the Brum Group. Her first novel EARTH GIRL is coming out from HarperCollins in August under the YA imprint.

***PM:*** When did you start writing?

***JE:*** I dabbled a few times over the years, but didn’t begin writing seriously until I started Chris Morgan’s adult education writing class in the autumn of 2007.



*PM: What kind of thing did you start writing?*

JE: I started by writing some short stories aimed at competitions, so they were mainly general fiction. My first short story came second in the 2008 Yeovil short story competition and was broadcast on BBC Radio Somerset. Another was a finalist in the 2010 British Fantasy Society short story competition. I also won the first Words with Jam short story competition in 2010. About eight other stories were highly commended or in the short list for competitions.

*PM: Did this success encourage you to continue writing, or would you have done so anyway?*

JE: When I started writing, I didn't believe I'd ever get anything published, so I think the

successes encouraged me to take it more seriously.

*PM: Was EARTH GIRL the first novel completed?*

JE: EARTH GIRL was my first science fiction novel, but the third novel I wrote. I spent about a year working on my first novel, and learnt a lot from it. I then wrote the first draft of another novel at incredibly high speed, but abandoned that and moved straight on to write EARTH GIRL.

*PM: How easy was it to find a publisher for this novel?*

JE: I know many writers struggle for years to find an agent or publisher, so I was incredibly lucky to be introduced to people who asked to see EARTH GIRL. Disconcertingly, this happened when I'd finished the first draft and done my first major revision pass but I hadn't finished revising the book. I sent it anyway. They read it and were interested, so the book ended up circulating amongst publishers before I'd even finished tidying it up. Of course I had the chance to do that later during editing.

*PM: Your first novel, EARTH GIRL, is set in the far future. What made you want to write Science Fiction?*

JE: I've read a lot of SF since I was a child, so it was a very natural thing for me to write.

*PM: You have travel between planets via a portal system. Was there anything that influenced you in choosing this way of travel rather than an FTL drive for spaceships?*

JE: The concept of EARTH GIRL is that in a future where people casually travel between a thousand planets, a few people are born with an immune system that means they can only live on Earth. They're regarded as handicapped, people are prejudiced against them, and Earth is regarded as a ghetto planet. For this handicap to work, travelling between worlds has to be as much part of everyday life as travelling to another city is for us. I needed something like interstellar portals,

because everyone travelling around in spaceships would demand too much time and resources.

*PM: In EARTH GIRL one of the focus themes is archaeology. Is this something you have an interest in?*

JE: Not archaeology specifically, more history in general. I'm interested in the similarities between people living in different times. Things like the graffiti on the walls of Pompeii are fascinating.

*PM: One of the important plot strands in this novel is the Carrington Event. How early in the development of the plot did you know that this had to be a feature?*

JE: I'm what people describe as a discovery writer rather than someone who plots out a novel in detail before writing it. I discovered the Carrington Event was happening literally at the point in the book where someone says those words. I then ran round the house in jubilation because I'd been wondering why I was writing so much about solar storms and now it made perfect sense. I think my subconscious knew about the Carrington Event a lot earlier than my conscious mind. Yes, some writers are truly weird. At least this one is.

*PM: Did the knowledge of the real Carrington Event influence the date at which the novel is set?*

JE: The date wasn't influenced by the Carrington Event. I had a future history time line, with several events that had to happen before the start of the book. I added them up and found that put the book at the end of the 28th century.

*PM: For the benefit of those who don't know, can you briefly explain what a Carrington Effect is, and how it would affect our society?*

JE: A Carrington Event is a solar super storm. We had one of these in 1859, named after an astronomer who observed it. That solar super storm just took out the telegraph system, but now we have a much more technological society. A major solar storm in 1989 caused blackouts in Quebec. A true solar super storm could severely damage power grids and satellites. They're rare events, only one every 500 years on average, so let's hope we don't get one for another century or two.

*PM: Jarra, the main character, is - particularly at the start of the book - a bit of a superwoman. Is this a reflection on the person you would like to be?*

JE: That's a very scary thought. No, I've no wish to be Jarra. This is a girl who has spent her life watching vid's made by people on other planets. They make jokes about people like her being stupid and ugly, which makes her very angry, but part of her believes they're right. She's driving herself obsessively hard, desperate to be superhumanly good at her work on the dig site. She claims she's trying to prove to the off-worlders that she's as good or better than they are, but really she's trying to prove it to herself.

*PM: When you started writing this novel, were you aiming specifically at the young adult market?*

JE: It was aimed to be a crossover novel, for both adults and older YA.

*PM: When you set up the premise for the novel - that occasional children would not be able to survive anywhere but Earth - did it worry you that this was the aspect of the novel about which you were most likely to be challenged for scientific accuracy?*

JE: This is the first time anyone has raised that point but I did think hard about it. My reasoning was that an increasing number of people have allergic reactions to things on our own planet. In rare cases these are fatal. Related conditions like asthma are also becoming more common. I therefore find it quite credible that some people would have a fatal reaction to other worlds. Medical science in EARTH GIRL is very advanced but concentrates on vaccines and growing replacement organs and limbs. That wouldn't help them deal with the incredible complexity of immune system problems.

PM: *One of the important themes you tackle in EARTH GIRL is one of prejudice. Was this your intention from the start or one of those themes that you gradually became aware of writing about?*

JE: The prejudice theme was intended from the start. EARTH GIRL is a complete book in itself but also the first book in a trilogy. The prejudice theme continues through the next two books.

PM: *As a reader of SF, are there any writers who have influenced the way that you approached the development of this future?*

JE: Oddly enough, I think it was non-fiction history books that influenced me into creating my future history timeline. A lot of my future world was built around the consequences of the events in that timeline.

PM: *Thank you. We all wish you the best of luck with this novel and all the future ones.*

To find out more about this author go to [www.janetedwards.com](http://www.janetedwards.com)

## **NEWS IN BRIEF . . .**

.... New Zealand children's writer **Margaret Mahy**, 76, died July 23, 2012 in Christchurch, New Zealand. Mahy wrote about 40 novels, more than a hundred picture books, and published 20 collections of short stories. Most of her work for young adults had supernatural or SF elements, notably World Fantasy Award nominee **THE TRICKSTERS** (1986), Carnegie Medal winners **THE HAUNTING** (1982) and **THE CHANGEOVER: A SUPERNATURAL ROMANCE** (1984), and 'highly commended' Carnegie Medal runner-up **MEMORY** (1987). Mahy received a Hans Christian Andersen Award for Writing in 2006, recognizing her body of work for children, and a Sir Julius Vogel Award in 2006, for services to SF and fantasy .... Author **Suzanne Allés Blom**, 64, died June 23, 2012 from complications of intestinal cancer. Blom is best known for her alternate-history novel **INCA** (2000). She also published the SF story "In the Memory of Prince Edward" (1993) .... Astronaut **Sally Ride** (b.1951) died on July 23. In 1983, Ride became the first American woman (and youngest at that time) astronaut to fly into space when she flew on Challenger flight STS-7. Prior to that she worked on the development of the shuttle's robotic arm. She flew on Challenger again in 1984 and was in training for a third flight when Challenger exploded. Ride left NASA in 1987 and taught physics. In 2003, she served on the Space Shuttle Columbia Accident Investigation Board .... **Simon Ward** (b.1941) died on July 21. Ward appeared as Zor-El in **SUPERGIRL** and the Duke of Buckingham in **THE THREE MUSKETEERS**. Other roles included made-for-

television productions of DRACULA and AROUND THE WORLD IN 80 DAYS .... Screenwriter **Don Brinkley** (b.1921) died on July 14. Brinkley wrote for *Voyage to the Bottom of the Sea* and *The Invaders* .... The *Doctor Who* actor **Mary Tamm** has died aged 62. Tamm, who played the Doctor's companion Romana alongside Tom Baker, died at a hospital in London on Thursday morning. She had been suffering from cancer for 18 months .... Writer **Ursula K. Le Guin**, comics legend **Stan Lee**, and special effects pioneer **Ray Harryhausen** will receive **Eaton Awards for Lifetime Achievement in Science Fiction**, awarded by the University of California, Riverside. The awards will be presented at the 2013 **Eaton Science Fiction Conference**, to be held April 11-14, 2013, in Riverside CA .... The longlist for the **Man Booker Prize** includes three titles of interest to SF/fantasy readers: **THE TELEPORTATION ACCIDENT** by **Ned Beaman** (Sceptre), **UMBRELLA** by **Will Self** (Bloomsbury) and **COMMUNION TOWN** by **Sam Thompson** (Fourth Estate). The Booker is awarded to the best novel of the year written by a citizen of the United Kingdom, the Commonwealth, or the Republic of Ireland .... The World Fantasy Convention has announced the **2012 World Fantasy Life Achievement Awards** will go to **Alan Garner** and **George R.R. Martin**. The awards will be presented during the World Fantasy Awards ceremony on Sunday, November 4, 2012. The convention will take place November 1-4 in Toronto, Canada, exploring the themes of Northern Gothic and Urban Fantasy .... To celebrate its sixth birthday **Abaddon Books** is calling for open submissions for a new e-novella series. Starting later this year, Abaddon will publish a series of brand new e-novellas - and authors can either play in one of Abaddon's ten shared worlds or create their own. Submissions will be open for the month of September 2012, from midnight BST on 31st August to midnight on 30th September. For full details on the submissions process, go to [www.abaddonbooks.com](http://www.abaddonbooks.com) .... The **Cordwainer Smith Rediscovery Award** has been awarded to **Fredric Brown** (1906-1972). This award is given to "a science fiction or fantasy writer whose work displays unusual originality, embodies the spirit of Cordwainer Smith's fiction, and deserves renewed attention or 'Rediscovery'". Brown was a master of the science fiction short-short story though he also wrote three classic novels: **WHAT MAD UNIVERSE** (1949), **THE LIGHTS IN THE SKY ARE STARS** (1952), and **MARTIANS, GO HOME** (1955) .... *The Guardian* has an interview with **M John Harrison** (Friday July 20) - view online at <http://www.guardian.co.uk/culture/2012/jul/20/m-john-harrison-life-in-writing?INTCMP=SRCH> .... A teenager has begun a campaign for a memorial to be built in honour of the Somerset-born science fiction writer, **Sir Arthur C Clarke** in his birth town of Minehead. The memorial would be a nine-foot high black granite monolith. West Somerset Council said if there is sufficient public interest, the idea can be explored further .... The **NASA Curiosity Rover** is set to land on Mars at about 5.30am GMT on 6 August, ahead of a two-year mission to explore the planet's surface .... The first progress report for **London 2014 Worldcon Bid** is now available at [www.londonin2014.org.uk](http://www.londonin2014.org.uk) .... **Amazing Stories** is set to relaunch. Further details and preview "Relaunch Prelaunch" issue 1, followed by Prelaunch

issue 2 (from August 1<sup>st</sup>) can be viewed online at [www.amazingstoriesmag.com](http://www.amazingstoriesmag.com).  
Issue 2 has a cover illustration by BSGF member, **Dave Hardy** .... *CG*

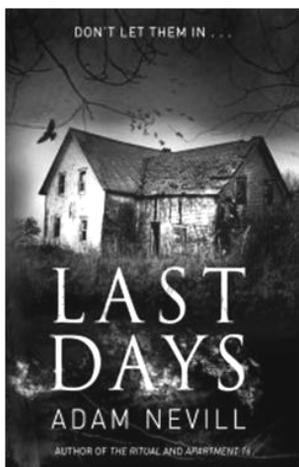
📖📖📖📖 **BOOK REVIEWS** 📖📖📖📖

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

***LAST DAYS* by Adam Nevill**

**Tor / 530 pages / £12.99 trade paperback / ISBN: 978 0230757769**

**Reviewed by Michael Jones**



The Temple of the Last Days was a pseudo-religious cult which began in London in 1967 and imploded in a massacre in Arizona in 1975, with a brief sojourn in Normandy in between. Now guerrilla filmmaker Kyle Freeman is hired to produce a documentary account of the cult and what happened to it. His employer has lined up interviews with surviving former members as well as police officers involved in the investigation of what actually happened at the end, and has arranged visits to the sites once occupied by the Temple.

Kyle and his friend and cameraman Dan then embark on a harrowing odyssey in the course of which they find out a great deal more than they ever wanted to know. It eventually becomes clear that the Last Days had accessed an evil supernatural force first aroused during a religious conflict in the sixteenth century. Worse, that evil is still extant wherever a connection with the Temple of the Last Days still exists. Kyle and Dan find themselves under attack; Dan is nearly killed in London and Kyle, having learned that the cult of The Last Days and its horrific Blood Friends still exist, returns to America for a showdown planned to put an end to it forever.

Whether or not this is the sort of book that leaves you afraid of the dark depends on your susceptibility. The intention is obviously to scare and horrify in equal measure, but if that fails what remains is an admittedly fairly intriguing account of an evil supernatural haunting. That aspect of it is worked out well enough, but there is a tendency to go into too much detail, slowing things down and making the book longer than it needed to be. Fortunately the pace picks up again as the climax approaches, and the ending is satisfyingly apocalyptic. *MJ*

## ***WHEN SHE WOKE* by Hillary Jordan**

Harper Collins / 342 pages / £12.99 hardcover Ebook £9.99 / ISBN 978-0007461745

Reviewed by Dave Corby

Many novels search for that elusive, excellent hook in the first sentence. 'It was a bright cold day in April, and the clocks were striking thirteen' is pretty hard to beat. Hillary Jordan's first line is really two, but 'When she woke, she was red. Not flushed, not sunburned, but the solid, declarative red of a stop sign' is not a bad try, all in all.

WHEN SHE WOKE is Hillary Jordan's second book, but her first work that falls within the broad boundaries of SF. It concerns a young woman, Hannah Payne, living in a none-too-distant and not-too-implausible Christian Fundamentalist version of the USA. She has always tried to conform to her religious upbringing and finds herself in a situation with which modern readers might be able to sympathise, but which the society she lives in cannot tolerate.

The killer hook at the beginning occurs when Hannah awakes following administration of her punishment for having an abortion and thereby being convicted of second degree murder. As opposed to a prison sentence, Hannah is 'chromed', whereby she is genetically programmed

to pigment her skin scarlet and released back into society, making the punishment fit the crime.

The first part of the book gives us the back story while Hannah reflects on it during the thirty days she is incarcerated before being released. This has to cover not only Hannah's falling in forbidden and secret love but also her childhood in a religious family and an overview of recent American history which shows us how society has evolved to the fundamentalist. Throughout this we get the feeling that Hannah is not always the model child, often asking awkward questions where she is supposed to blindly accept. An example is made of her inability to accept that Noah's Ark must also have carried examples of the known dinosaurs alongside all the other animals.

However this does mean that the first sixty-odd pages contain mostly flashback. This reviewer found himself tiring of the technique after a while and was glad when the second part started with Hannah's release into society. It's a good opening line, certainly, but at the expense of the book being harder going for the first sixth of its length.

The next section was the best in this reviewer's opinion. It deals with Hannah's attempts to continue to conform to the Christian Fundamentalist ideal. She enters a kind of institute for fallen women - all 'chromes' of one colour or



another, with different colours denoting the kind of crime. Green, for example, denotes a convicted committer of violence. Given their status the treatment these women receive can be considered harsh at best and downright inhuman in some cases, as Jordan introduces us to the potential abuses of position that can occur in individuals with authority, but without accountability, in fundamental societies.

From there it seems downhill. The rest of the book deals with Hannah's journey through various rebellious and nefarious situations. Gradually, she questions her blind faith, discovers more in life and goes through fire and water to find solace in places and peoples she would never have dreamed possible.

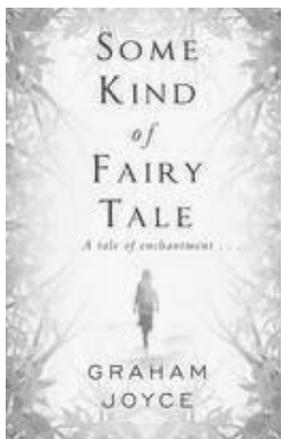
In the end, none of the later parts of the book can live up to the strength of that second section. It is almost as if Jordan has had a great idea for a story, but isn't sure where to go with it. In the end, the conclusion feels anti-climactic and weak. Also, there is a kind of bizarre tacked-on happy ending on the last page, which seems out of place given the boldness of earlier parts of the book.

This reviewer found the actual text to be easily read and the pacing felt urgent. It is a good book, but, maybe, not as good as it might have been. If the invention and commitment of the first 150 pages was sustained then the hyperbole from the press release might be better suited. As things stand, this is a thoughtful and enjoyable book that speaks well of Jordan's future output. *DC*

### ***SOME KIND OF FAIRYTALE* by Graham Joyce**

**Gollancz / 398 pages / £9.99 Hardback / ISBN 978 0575115286**

**Reviewed by Michael Jones**



There is an age-old tradition of people – men and women of all ages – being taken away by ‘the fairies’ and returned many years later, if at all. Sometimes they are changed, sometimes unchanged, either outcome being in its own way equally mysterious.

In his latest book Graham Joyce tells the same kind of story in a thoroughly modern setting. Fifteen-year-old Tara, who disappeared whilst out with her boyfriend in an ancient woodland, reappears just as unaccountably twenty years later. To almost all outward appearances she has not aged, although one or two tell-tale signs emerge which might put the lie to her assertion that for her only six months have passed. Her story of what has happened to her gradually emerges – she was to all intents and purposes abducted to a hidden land by a representative of what may be some kind of supernatural folk whom she resolutely refuses to refer to as any kind of faerie.

However, it is not Tara's story that constitutes the majorly significant theme of the book, but the effect of her disappearance and, more importantly,

reappearance on others. Principally affected are her brother Peter and the erstwhile boyfriend Ritchie, who were originally best friends but became estranged as a result of her disappearance. Also involved are Peter's family, together with other characters who at first seem peripheral but who acquire greater significance as the book unfolds. It is in the various reactions of these people to what may or may not have happened, and the consequences for their lives and futures, that the true substance of the book is found.

A subsidiary theme of the book is the question of what rational explanation there might be for incidents of the kind of thing that has happened to Tara. This is explored by introducing a psychiatrist who listens to Tara's account of her experience and endeavours to make sense of it by relating what she says to possible alternative interpretations, with a view to bringing about a 'cure' for her supposed delusions.

This multiplicity of important characters does introduce something of a problem for the reader in that each has his or her own individual story and the narration switches every ten or so pages from one point of view to another, making it difficult to follow. There is a perpetual temptation to skip ahead in order to better pursue an individual narrative line. It is better to resist, and in the end the reader finds his or her perseverance rewarded as it all comes together, with a couple of unexpected twists which suggest that this tale is only one part of an ongoing cycle.

The complex structure and an ambiguous ending work to make this another excellent book from a writer who rarely fails to delight and who here demonstrates on every page that he is a master of his craft. *MJ*

### ***EARTH GIRL by Janet Edwards***

**HarperVoyager / 358 pages / £7.99 paperback / ISBN: 978-0007443529**

**Reviewed by Pauline Morgan.**



This is not just a debut novel from a talented new writer but Janet is also one of our own - a Brum Group member.

*EARTH GIRL* is the first of a trilogy narrated by Jarra Reeth, an eighteen-year-old brought up on Earth. This is not her choice and she is resentful of the circumstances that have forced this circumstance on her. Most of the population of Earth migrated to other planets once the 'portal system had been developed and the planets' okayed for colonisation by the Military. Unfortunately, a few children are born allergic to all other planets and have to be shipped to Earth almost instantly. These children are raised to know that they can never leave the planet, and most are rejected by their parents. Jarra is one of these. To compound matters the 'exos'

(those who live on other planets) tend to regard Earth children as inferior throwbacks. They are the bottom of society's heap and the butt of racist taunts.

Jarra is a rebel. Although she knows she can never leave, she is determined to prove that she and her friends are as good as anyone else. As history is her passion (her friends are always telling her to shut up about it) she enrolls in the University of Asgard as an archaeological student. This suits her fine as the Foundation course takes place entirely on Earth at various digs. She has already visited many of them and knows her way around, especially New York where they are based for the first section of the course. Her problem is that she doesn't want the other students to know she is an Earth Girl so she manufactures a history for herself, claiming that she is Military born. As the Military move from place to place she doesn't need to claim a planet of origin, and can pretend that the skills she has already acquired are the result of a Military upbringing.

Jarra begins her course with as many prejudices regarding her fellow students as they have about her kind. If anything, these come across as stereotypes. Planets have been settled in sectors as the portal system has expanded. The oldest colonised, Alphas, are populated by the rich and the spoiled (or so Jarra thinks). Beta planets allow a very louche lifestyle - skimpy clothes, uninhibited sexual mores while Gammas are up-tight puritans. Gradually, though, Jarra begins to understand that the stereotypes are just that and her fellow students are as fallible as she is, their attitudes relating to their up-bringing.

Jarra herself is a very likable teen who bounces onto the page and never stays still. She begins as a bit of a super woman, accomplishing tasks easily that her fellows have yet to learn. She has a lot of growing up to do throughout the course of the novel and there are surprises waiting for her.

The setting and situations are well thought out and the image of the crumbling ruins of New York five hundred years in the future is a powerful one. Despite the occasional plot convenience, this is a light, enjoyable romp but with deeper issues being considered in the undertow. An excellent start to what, hopefully, will be a productive writing career.

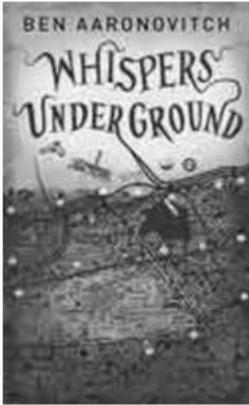
*PM*

***WHISPERS UNDER GROUND* by Ben Aaronovitch**

**Gollancz / 418 pages / £12.99 Hardback / ISBN: 978-0575097643**

**Reviewed by Michael Jones**

The latest instalment in the popular and successful series about police constable and apprentice wizard Peter Grant effectively begins with the discovery of the body of an American student on the platform of Baker Street Underground station. He had apparently been stabbed to death on the tracks somewhere between there and the next station along. And the fact that he is, or was, the son of a US Senator is not going to help matters, with an FBI Agent, sent over to keep an eye on things, who must be kept from discovering any inconvenient truths.

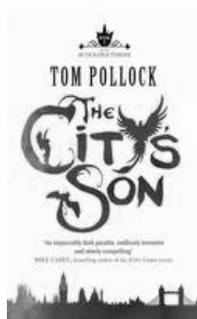


One thing leads inevitably to another, in this case to the discovery of a secret community living below the streets of London, in and around the tunnels of the Underground and Bazalgette's sewers, and employing magic to stay hidden. The crime is solved and the murderer caught: meanwhile, there is a tantalising, brief, but significant contribution from the Big Bad Guy who first showed up in the previous book and will presumably provide a major ongoing story arc in subsequent volumes.

Like the previous books in the series, this one begins on a relatively light-hearted, almost jocular note. Then, as things start to get serious and events look as though they might spiral out of control, there is less time for jokes although the irreverently humorous style never completely goes away. The deployment of magic as an art with a firm scientific foundation is consistent and logical and is almost seamlessly integrated into the more conventional aspects of the murder investigation.

There is, however, a slight feeling that the overall planning of the story is on occasion somewhat forced. This, coupled with the fact that publication of this book was delayed some six months beyond the date originally announced, suggests that it ended up as a bit of a rush job. Also, it would have benefitted from better proofreading. However, neither of these solecisms need be allowed to detract from the overall success of what is definitely a Good Book and a worthwhile follow-up to the previous two. Further instalments are eagerly awaited. MJ

## ***FORTHCOMING BOOKS***

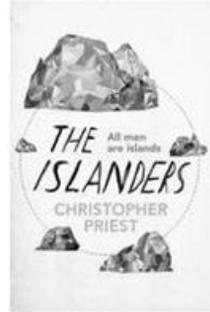
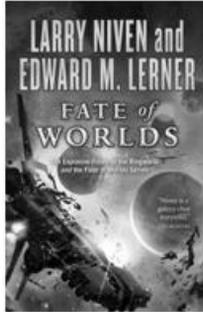
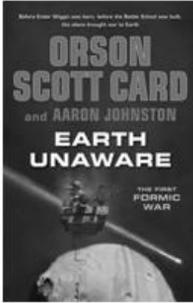


**THE AIR WAR (*SHADOWS OF THE APT 8*)** by Adrian Tchaikovsky / Tor / 356pgs / £12.99 paperback / ISBN 978-0230757004 / August 2<sup>nd</sup> Fantasy with insect kinden (humans with abilities related to differing insects). The Wasp Empress prepares for war with both machines and magic against the free cities.

**THE CITY'S SON: THE SKYSCRAPER THRONE: BOOK ONE** by **Tom Pollock** / Jo Fletcher Books / 422pgs / £12.99 hardcover / ISBN 978-1780870069 / August 2nd YA novel. Graffiti artist, Beth must help to save London's secret underground city of monsters and miracles .

**GHOST STORY** (*Dresden Files* No. 13) by **Jim Butcher** / Orbit / 624pgs / £8.99 paperback / ISBN 978-1841497167 / August 2nd Wizard PI Harry Dresden must battle to save Chicago and his friends despite being invisible and magic-less.

**BONELAND** by **Alan Garner** / Fourth Estate / 160pgs / £16.99 hardcover / ISBN 978-0007463244 / August 3rd. Conclusion to **A WEIRDSTONE OF BRISINGAMEN** and **MOON OF GOMRATH**. Now grown-up, Colin must recover his childhood memory if he is to rescue his lost sister



**EARTH UNAWARE (FIRST FORMIC WAR)** by **Orson Scott Card and Aaron Johnston** / Starscape / 368pgs / £17.99 hardcover / ISBN 978-0765329042 / August 13th. Prequel to the *Ender* series describing the origins of the Formic War

**FATE OF WORLDS : RETURN FROM THE RINGWORLD** by **Larry Niven and Edward M Lerner** / Tor / 320pgs / £16.62 hardcover / ISBN 978-0765331007 / August 21st Book 5 in the *Ringworld* series. Louis Wu and the Hindmost reappear as the Puppeteers' Fleet of Worlds is threatened both internally and by three converging space fleets

**THE FRACTAL PRINCE** by **Hannu Rajaniemi** / Gollancz / 448pgs / £20 hardcover / ISBN 978-0575088917 / September 6th. SF sequel to **THE QUANTUM THIEF** where LeFlambeur must break into the mind of a living god

**THE ISLANDERS** by **Christopher Priest** / Gollancz / 352 pages / £7.99 mass market paperback / ISBN 978-0575088641 / September 13th. Now in paperback, this is a guide to the islands of the Dream Archipelago and a murder mystery

## **NEW FILM RELEASES**

Listings should not be necessarily taken as recommendations. View at your own peril!

**TOTAL RECALL** - Release date August 24th. Remake Of the 1990 film, based (loosely) on the Philip K Dick story "We Can Remember It For You Wholesale". In 2084, factory worker Doug Quaid visits Recall, a company that implants artificial memories of lives people want to live. NB No trip to Mars this time!

**THE WATCH** - Release date August 31st. SF comedy film starring Ben Stiller and Vince Vaughan. A neighbourhood watch group uncovers an alien plot and must act to save the world.

**DREDD** - Release date August 31st. British remake based on the *Judge Dredd* character from the *2000 AD* comic where 'Judges' try to police the violent, post-apocalyptic Mega City One. More serious than the Sly Stallone version.

**PARA NORMAN** - Release date September 14th. A stop-motion animation from the makers of *CORALINE*. Norman is an 11 year old boy who can speak to the dead and his battle against ghosts, zombies and grown-up

## ***FORTHCOMING EVENTS***

*All details are correct to the best of our knowledge, we advise contacting organizers 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 is always welcome - please send to Carol at [goodwincd@yahoo.com](mailto:goodwincd@yahoo.com)*

**Edinburgh Book Festival** 11th to 27th August, Edinburgh. One of this year's themes is *Science Meets Fiction* and there are a number of excellent talks featuring Science, Science Fiction and Fantasy writers including Neil Gaiman, China Mieville and Neal Stephenson amongst others. For details of prices and venues see Website [www.edbookfest.co.uk](http://www.edbookfest.co.uk). NB Some talks may already be sold out

**The Return Of The Ring** 16th to 20th August, Loughborough. The Tolkien Society's five-day 'festival and conference' celebrates 75 years of *THE HOBBIT*, and takes place at Loughborough University. Author Brian Sibley is the Guest Of Honour. Expect guest talks, banqueting, an art show, quizzes, live music, workshops, book signings, Middle-earth re-enactment and more! Tickets: Adult £90, adult concession/participating child £75, babe-in-arms £1, supporting (all publications but not attendance) £30 Website: [www.returnofthering.org](http://www.returnofthering.org) Email: [queries@returnofthering.org](mailto:queries@returnofthering.org)

**Frightfest** 23rd to 27th August, London. UK's premiere horror festival. Special guests will include Spanish directors Paco Plaza (for the UK premiere of [REC]: Genesis and his collaborator Jaime Balaguero (with his thriller *SLEEP TIGHT*). Festival passes £160; day passes £27 (Thursday), £54 (Friday/Saturday/Sunday), £45 (Monday); single tickets £12. Website: [www.frightfest.co.uk](http://www.frightfest.co.uk) Twitter: [@Film4FrightFest](https://twitter.com/Film4FrightFest)

**G Willow Wilson Author talk** 29th August, Bath. Debut novelist G Willow Wilson will be talking about her book *ALIF THE UNSEEN* (which 'blends cyberpunk adventure with the enchantment of Middle Eastern mythology') at Toppings Booksellers in Bath (BA1 5LS) - doors open at 7.45pm. Tickets: £6.00/£5.00, with the same amount off the price of the book. Website: [www.toppingbooks.co.uk](http://www.toppingbooks.co.uk)

**NOR-CON** 2nd September, Norwich. Norwich's very own sci-fi convention at Norwich North Holiday Inn (NR6 6JA). Guests include Robert Llewellyn (*Red Dwarf*), and *Doctor Who* stars Sylvester McCoy, Colin Baker and Nicola Bryant. Tickets: £6 adults, £4 concessions, £20 family ticket (2 adults and 3 children). Website: <http://www.nor-con.co.uk> Email: [info@nor-con.co.uk](mailto:info@nor-con.co.uk)

**Adam Christopher signing** 6th September, London The author of EMPIRE STATE will be reading from and signing his new novel SEVEN WONDERS at Forbidden Planet's London Megastore (179 Shaftesbury Avenue, WC2H 8JR), from 6.00-7.00pm. Website: <http://forbiddenplanet.com>

**Weekend At The Asylum** Lincoln, 6th to 8th September. Steampunk festival including competitions, panels, workshops and more. Tickets: £22 adults, £10 children for a weekend wristband. See website for lots more options. Website: <http://steampunk.synthasite.com> Email: [ericaegerton@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:ericaegerton@yahoo.co.uk)

**Lords Of Time** 7th to 9th September, Birmingham. Three-day *Doctor Who* event the Hilton Birmingham Metropole near the NEC featuring special guest, David Tennant. Tickets: Adult standard £88, children standard £29 (aged 7-10, under-sevens free), with more expensive silver, gold and VIP packages also available. Website: <http://massiveevents.co.uk> Email: [info@showmastersonline.com](mailto:info@showmastersonline.com) Twitter: [@MassiveEvents](https://twitter.com/MassiveEvents)

**The Kitschies Present: Beukes, Miéville and Ness** 11th September, London. This literary event will see authors Lauren Beukes, China Miéville and Patrick Ness discussing the legacy and social responsibility of science fiction and fantasy and its role in social change. The event starts at 6.30pm and will include readings and a panel discussion, followed by signings and a drinks reception. It all takes place at the Free Word Centre in Farringdon (60 Farringdon Road, EC1R 3GA) Tickets: Full price £7.50+£1.10 booking fee, concessions £5.00+£0.95. Website: [www.freewordonline.com/events](http://www.freewordonline.com/events)

**Immersive screening of SILENT RUNNING** 15th September, London. Following their interactive screening of THE OMEN in a church crypt, The Vanishing Point are taking a similar tack with 1972 eco-SF SILENT RUNNING. The screening will take place on the rooftop of the Utophia Gallery (120 Deptford High Street, London, SE8 4NS) from 7.30pm. We're promised musicians, 'immersive surprises', a blast-off bar and food stalls. Attendees are encouraged to 'bring cushions and blankets, as you will be sitting on a rooftop during the launch of the ship'. Tickets: £13/concessions £11. Website: [www.thevanishingpoint.org.uk](http://www.thevanishingpoint.org.uk)

## **CONVENTIONS**

**FANTASYCON 2012, 27th-30th September, Brighton.** This year's British Fantasy Society meeting once again takes place at the Royal Albion Hotel, Brighton (35 Old Steine,

BN1 1NT). Guests include Muriel Gray, Joe R Lansdale and Brent Weeks. The highlight will be the presentation of the British Fantasy Awards on the Sunday afternoon. Tickets: Weekend membership £55 (£50 to existing BFS members). Email: [info@fantasycon2012.org](mailto:info@fantasycon2012.org)

**NOVACON 42, 9th-11th November, Nottingham.** Now in its fifth decade, Novacon is held at the Park Inn Hotel in Nottingham. **Guest of Honour Jaime Fenn.** Website [www.novacon.org.uk](http://www.novacon.org.uk) Twitter: @Novacon42

### ***FUTURE MEETINGS OF THE BSFG***

Aug 10th - **SUMMER SOCIAL** - meal at the Black Eagle

Sep 14th - Comic Fantasy/SF author **SIMON R GREEN**

Oct 12th - horror writer **ADAM NEVILL**

Nov 2nd - SF author **ERIC BROWN**

Dec 7th - **CHRISTMAS SOCIAL** - Skittles and buffet

Jan 2013 - Annual General Meeting and Auction

**BRUM GROUP NEWS #491** (August 2012) copyright 2012 for Birmingham SF Group. This issue produced by Carol Goodwin ([goodwincd@yahoo.com](mailto:goodwincd@yahoo.com)) and designed by Rog Peyton (19 Eves Croft, Bartley Green, Birmingham, B32 3QL – phone 0121 477 6901 or email [rog \[dot\] peyton \[at\] btinternet \[dot\] com](mailto:rog[at]peyton[at]btinternet[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.

## **STOP PRES ... STOP PRESS ... STOP PRESS**

Win £10,000 for your writing!

Manchester Metropolitan University are launching a Poetry Prize, deadline 31st August 2012.

For details go to [www.manchesterwritingcompetition.co.uk](http://www.manchesterwritingcompetition.co.uk)

## **SUMMER SOCIAL**

**Please note that there are only 2 tickets left. Contact me on 477 6901 or my email (see above) if you wish to come along. It's also been discovered that Upper Bull Street is no longer in use by buses. Check West Midlands Transport website for new terminus for routes 74 and 79.**

**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