

BRUM GROUP NEWS

THE MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF THE

BIRMINGHAM SCIENCE FICTION GROUP

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CHRISTOPHER PRIEST *11th March*

It is a great pleasure to welcome back Christopher Priest to the Brum Group. He is a regular guest of the Group and has been Guest of Honour twice at Novacon (1979 and 2000). As many of you know far better than me, he always gives us a quality, first-rate talk.

From his start writing for fanzines, he has published thirteen novels, four short story collections and other works including biographies, novelisations and children's non-fiction.

April 8th - SF/Fantasy Author, Jacey Bedford

He has won the BSFA Award four times for his novels; *INVERTED WORLD* (1974), *THE EXTREMES* (1998), *THE SEPERATION* (2002) and *THE ISLANDERS* (2011) and once for a short story (“Palely Loitering”). *THE SEPARATION* also won the Arthur C Clarke Award. He has also won many international awards for excellent writing including the Campbell Memorial, Eurocon, Ditmar, Kurd Lasswitz and Le Grand Prix de L’Imaginaire. In 2001 he was awarded the Prix Utopia (France) for lifetime achievement and has been nominated four times for the Hugo Award. His novel, *THE PRESTIGE* won two major literary awards; the World Fantasy Award and the James Tait Black Memorial Prize.

Furthermore, he has written drama for film, radio and television and his features and reviews have appeared in *The Times*, *The Guardian*, the *Independent*, the *New Statesman* etc. In 2006, the film version of his novel, *THE PRESTIGE* received two Academy Award nominations.

His most recent novel, *THE GRADUAL* will be published by Gollancz this year. Further details can be found at his website, www.christopher-priest.co.uk CG

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 normally 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 our January AGM is free and the August and December socials are ticket only events. All other meetings the entrance fee is £3.00 for members and £4 for non-members.

THE AUGUST MEAL – Vernon Brown

For the past decade or so the August meeting has taken the form of a meal because it’s the holiday season which can lead to a relatively small gathering and a “wasted” speaker. For a number of years, we went to “The Black Eagle”, a couple of stops from the city centre on the Metro, a small award-winning restaurant in an award-winning pub where Pat and I have eaten and drunk for many years, as have other Group members.

Then, a few years ago Sod’s Law operated. An unusually warm evening brought many more diners than usual to the garden tables, the restaurant was similarly full, the owner/ manager was on holiday, the chief waitress was at a hen party, the relief manager wasn’t completely used to the place and things went to h*ll in a hand basket. It literally took hours to be

served and, worst of all, Brian Aldiss had come up from Oxford to join us. It was a one-off but most there refused to go again.

When Pat and I went there for lunch some time later the owner, as soon as he saw us, came over and said that he had heard what had happened, apologised and offered us whatever we wanted from the menu/wine list the next time we dined there. But the damage had been done.

Since then the Group has gone to “The Bull” in Price Street, a few minutes’ walk from the city centre. Pat and I know it and have eaten there with family; it’s a small old pub with a separate dining area. It’s a pleasant place but there is a bit of a drawback in that there’s a wall bench rather than chairs on one side of the table which makes it difficult when someone in the centre wants to get out.

Recently several people who know the place have suggested that we return to “The Black Eagle”. It’s a bit further from Brum than “The Bull” but Pat and I think that it’s more suitable for our needs. However, that’s just our opinion! At the last committee meeting, the matter was discussed and it was decided to see what others interested in attending this year’s meal thought.

The question is essentially: If you have attended the meal at either or both venues

(a) which would you prefer?

(b) would you like to try somewhere else? Where?

If you would like to try somewhere else, there are a number of points to consider. The place must be within 10/15 minutes of the city centre with reasonably easy and frequent public services, not noisy i.e. not an open pub or/with loud music, smallish i.e. not a Wetherspoon’s type place, with a table to seat 12/15 people. We need an adjacent bar area where we can meet during the previous half hour and we don’t want the sort of place that gives the feeling of wanting us to finish so that the next lot of diners can sit down. And it’s on a Friday night when a lot of people go out.

If you have any thoughts on the matter, please email me via the Group’s address or speak with me at the March meeting. VB

VISIT TO LEICESTER SPACE CENTRE? – Carol Goodwin

Is anyone interested in a group visit to the Leicester Space Centre? The Committee have been looking into arranging a group visit, but we need to know if enough people are interested to make it viable.

If sufficient people want to go, the Group would arrange for a minibus with a professional driver to take people from Birmingham City Centre to the Space Centre and return. It is proposed that Group funds

would be used to cover most (if not all) of the cost of the transport (a rough idea of the cost has been obtained but cannot be confirmed until we have exact numbers). The cost of a group entry ticket would be £9 per person (including a Planetarium show) and this would need to be paid by people attending. An accompanying partner/friend would be allowed as well, although there might be an additional charge (still to be discussed).

In order to get the group rate, we need to have a minimum of 15 people. If you are interested, please email the group address (bhamsfgroup@yahoo.co.uk) or talk to a Committee member at the meeting. If you also have any thoughts on dates, that would be appreciated, although they need to fit the following criteria; be on a Saturday (to avoid school parties and enable people who work to attend), be in term-time and not school holidays, not on a date with a special event running at the Centre and be sufficiently far ahead to allow time for collecting deposits

At this stage you will not be committed to attending, until final costs and proposed dates are finalised. CG

NEWS IN BRIEF



The SFWA has announced that SF writer, **C J Cherryh** has been named as the 32nd Damon Knight Grand Master for her contributions to the literature of Science Fiction and Fantasy The 2016 **World Fantasy Convention** has announced its guests of honour as **Mercedes Lackey**, **Larry Dixon** and **L E Modesitt Jr.** There was some controversy as, despite pressure they did not reveal their accessibility and harassment policies until the day after the membership rates increased substantially

.... The **Locus recommended reading lists** for work published in 2015 were released and can be found in the February issue or at www.locusmag.com/News/2016/02/2015-locus-recommended-reading-list/ Worth noting is that three of the BSFG's guests in 2015 were nominated in the SF Novels section, **Emma Newman** (PLANETFALL), **Justina Robson** (GLORIOUS ANGELS) and **Stephanie Sautler** (REGENERATION) Two previously unknown poems by **J R R Tolkien** have been found in a magazine, *Abingdon Chronicle* from 1936. One is a Christmas poem and the other was re-worked later into a poem included in THE ADVENTURES OF TOM BOMBADIL The **Kitschies shortlist** for novels with “elements of the speculative and fantastic” has been announced. Details at www.pornokitsch.com/2016/02/the-2015-kitschies-shortlist.html All 175 issues of **If magazine** (published from 1952-1974),

are now available free online at <https://archive.org/details/ifmagazine> The magazine won three Hugo Awards for best professional magazine three years running under the editorship of **Frederik Pohl** Salisbury city council has given its backing to a proposal to erect a statue of **Terry Pratchett** To celebrate the 150th anniversary of the birth of **H G Wells**, the town of Woking is opening a trail of sites used in **THE WAR OF THE WORLDS**. The 3-mile tour starts at the author's house and includes Horsell Common. CG

NEBULA AWARD NOMINATIONS - Novels

The nominees for the Nebula Award have been announced. Other categories can be found at www.sfwaworld.org

RAISING CAINE by Charles E Gannon (Baen)

THE FIFTH SEASON by N K Jemisin (Orbit)

ANCILLARY MERCY by Ann Leckie (Orbit)

THE GRACE OF KINGS by Ken Liu (Saga)

UPROOTED by Naomi Novik (Del Rey)

BARSK: THE ELEPHANTS' GRAVEYARD by Lawrence M Schoen (Tor)

UPDRAFT by Fran Wilde (Tor)

BSFA AWARD NOMINATIONS – Novels

The shortlist for the 2015 British Science Fiction Association Awards have been announced. The winners will be announced at Mancunicon (Eastercon 2016) on Saturday 27th March. Details for other categories can be found at www.bsfa.co.uk

EUROPE AT MIDNIGHT by Dave Hutchinson (Solaris)

MOTHER OF EDEN by Chris Beckett (Corvus)

THE HOUSE OF SHATTERED WINGS by Aliette de Bodard (Gollancz)

LUNA: NEW MOON by Ian McDonald (Gollancz)

GLORIOUS ANGELS by Justina Robson (Gollancz)

NEW CINEMA FILM RELEASES

Listings should not be necessarily taken as recommendations. Release dates are subject to change. View at your own peril!

BATMAN V SUPERMAN: DAWN OF JUSTICE - Release date March 25th. Batman and Superman must set aside their differences to face a new threat, Doomsday.

MIDNIGHT SPECIAL - Release date April 8th. A father and son go on the run after realising that the child possesses special powers.

THE HUNTSMAN: WINTER'S WAR - Release date April 8th. Fantasy. The Huntsman (who previously helped Snow White) tries to stop two evil sisters from conquering the land. CG

FORTHCOMING BOOKS

(NB Prices given are Recommended Retail Price and may be available at cheaper prices)



UNCLEAR SKIES (Dome 2) by Jason LaPier / HarperVoyager / 400 pgs / £13.99 paperback / ISBN 978-0008160265 / February 25th. SF. Rogue cop and fugitive are caught between a corrupt security force and a criminal gang.

THE IMMORTAL THRONE (The City 2) by Stella Gemmell / Bantam / 576 pgs / £18.99 hardback / ISBN 978-0593071489 / March 24th. As the City struggles to recover from revolution, it faces internal and external threats.

THE LAST MORTAL BOND (Unhewn Throne 3) by Brian Staveley / Tor / 656 pgs / £20 hardback / ISBN 978-0230770454 / March 24th. Fantasy. The Annurian Empire is losing a war on two fronts, and their brilliant general is a traitor.

AZANIAN BRIDGES by Nick Wood / NewCon Press / 208 pgs / £11.99 paperback / ISBN 978-1910935125 / April 4th. SF. In an alternative South Africa, which still has apartheid, a young man is pursued for the secret he holds.



FELLSIDE by M R Carey / Orbit / 496 pgs / £16.99 hardback / ISBN 978-0356503585 / April 7th. Fellside is a maximum security prison where the walls whisper to inmate Jess Moulson.

SAINT'S BLOOD (Greatcoats 3) by Sebastien de Castell / Jo Fletcher Books / 576 pgs / £18.99 hardback / ISBN 978-1782066804 / April 7th. Fantasy. Someone is murdering the Church's Saints. Falcio must find them before the backlash turns the country into a harsh theocracy.

LONG DARK DUSK (Australia 2) by James P Smythe / Hodder & Stoughton / 368 pgs / £13.99 paperback / ISBN 978-1444796377 / April 7th. SF. The generation ship *Australia* has crash-landed and Chan is now searching for another possible survivor, a little girl called Mae.

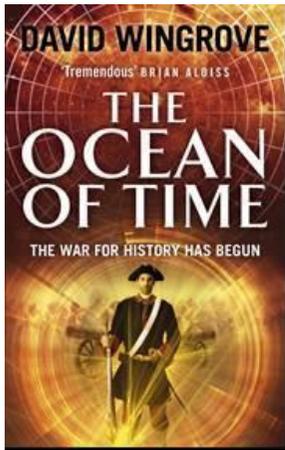
TRIDENT'S FORGE (Children of a Dead Earth 2) by Patrick S Tomlinson / Angry Robot / 400 pgs / £5.70 paperback / ISBN 978-0857664877 / April 7th. SF. Survivors of the *Ark* are building a new colony until a meeting between humans and the indigenous G'Tel goes disastrously wrong. CG

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

THE OCEAN OF TIME (Roads to Moscow Book 2) by David Wingrove
 Del Rey / 528 pgs / £14.99 paperback / ISBN 978-0091956172
 Reviewed by Pauline Morgan.

Time, from our perspective is a one-way system. Yes, there are the old saws of history repeating itself, but it is never meant literally, only that humans have a habit of not learning from their mistakes. Writers, though, love the idea of playing with time. Exponents of historical fiction have a tendency to re-write the past (it makes better fiction), literary archaeologists search out documents that tell different stories from the ones we traditionally accept. The Science Fiction writer plays with time itself. In **THE TIME MACHINE**, H G Wells built a machine that would travel in time and despite there being no scientific suggestion that this can be possible, writers have continued to do so. Often the scientists that discover the technique are from our far future, such as in Kage Baker's *Company* novels.



Sometimes they can only be observers, sometimes they attempt to change the past. David Wingrove has melded some of these tropes in his *Roads to Moscow* series.

In the first of the series, **THE EMPIRE OF TIME** (reviewed in January 2016 newsletter), we were introduced to the concept of a war down the time lines between Germany and Russia. Otto Behr, the narrator is a time traveller from the German camp. He, like others of his trade, has a focus implanted in his chest, pressure on which will take him back to his far future base. At the end of the first book, he had fallen in love with the daughter of a Russian

merchant, and by manipulating time managed to marry her, posing as a German trader. His real reason for being in Novgorod in 1289 is political. He has destinies to alter but right now he is more concerned with the love of his life. He has to keep Katerina secret from his superior because he would order her killed, or at least, wiped from the time-line. Otherwise she would be a hostage that could alter the course of the war.

The first part of **THE OCEAN OF TIME** sees Otto and Katerina travelling overland towards Moscow. At this time, it is not the capital of Russia. What should be a straightforward journey begins to unravel when they are attacked and to keep Katerina safe, Otto uses an anachronistic weapon. He explains to her what and who he is, thus committing a heinous crime - according to the rules he is supposed to live by.

This is not the only part of history that the two empires are meddling in. Certain key turning points have been identified, one of which revolves around the battles of Frederik the Great. Otto doesn't like him as a person but he has to win the wars he has embarked on unless the tide of

time is going to change in favour of the Russians. Otto is committed to time-hopping if he is to keep Katerina a secret, and he can only go back to her at intervals. Just to confuse matters, he is sent to California in 1952, to meet Philip K. Dick.

The most enjoyable parts of this volume involve the time-hopping and the attempts to change history. The first section, where Otto spends most of his time in old Russia with Katerina is less interesting, partly because there have been a lot of novels recently featuring historical Russia and the countryside is becoming over-populated with writers. As a second volume of (at least) a trilogy, this is well written and enjoyable. *PM*
(Kindly donated by Ebury Press)

***THE LONG WAY TO A SMALL, ANGRY PLANET* by Becky Chambers**

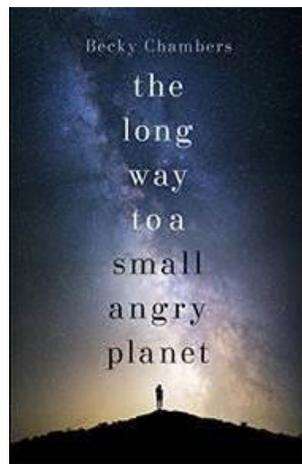
Hodder / 432 pgs / £7.99 paperback / ISBN 978-1473619814

Reviewed by Carol Goodwin.

This entertaining space opera has an interesting route to publication. The author funded her writing time via a Kickstarter appeal. It was then successful enough in the highly competitive self-published field to be offered a publishing contract by Hodder (UK) and Harper Voyager (US).

The *Wayfarer* is a dilapidated old spaceship which builds hyperspace tunnels between solar systems. When young Rosemary Harper joins its mixed human and alien crew she is looking for a break from her privileged but troubled past and a chance to see more of space than the narrow confines of the Solar system. Soon after she joins, the admittance of a new species into the galactic alliance provides them with a unique and lucrative opportunity. The *Wayfarer* is hired to build a new high-speed tunnel to connect the new species' system to the galactic network. The only catch is that the tunnel needs to be anchored from the new system, which means a long outward journey through war-torn and unstable systems. The challenges along the way uncover secrets from all the crew's past as they work together to survive the threats along their route.

The main enjoyment for me in this book is the characters of the various crew-members and the development of their relationships. This is a crew that is diverse in the extreme, and has credible aliens with different



morphology, biology and cultures from the human representatives in the crew. The alien crew-members include a six-legged chef and medic, Dr Chef; the reptiloid pilot, Sissix; a navigator infected with a symbiotic intelligent virus, Ohan and an intelligent AI running the ship's systems, Lovelace. The human crew members also have very different personalities; the new member, Rosemary, at first quiet and over-awed but who grows in confidence; the reclusive and emotionally distant life-support technician, Corbin; the scatter-brained but brilliant engineer, Kizzy and her partner-in-crime, the smart-mouthed but friendly computer technician, Jenks and finally the long-suffering captain, Ashby struggling to keep them all in order and in business. Unlike many space operas, this is an optimistic story. Although there are hardships and losses, what is gratifying is the way that the crew do work together and support each other including, very importantly, emotionally as well as practically.

The world-building is excellent and the journey introduces us to other characters and civilisations than just the crew members. Although the main focus is on the crew, there are plenty of events which keep the story flowing at a satisfactory pace. It is evident that substantial effort has gone into planning the complex inter-relationships both within the crew and the differing galactic races. The author has exceptional imagination and as a debut novel this is extremely impressive. Although the word might not be quite appropriate given the aliens in the plot, it is the humanity and emotional depth of this novel which I really liked. Although an enjoyable space opera, it might not suit anyone who prefers an all-action type of narrative. And finally, in case it has got lost in all the above, it must be emphasised that this book is great fun and extremely readable. *CG*

***THE GEARS OF MADNESS* by Iain Grant**

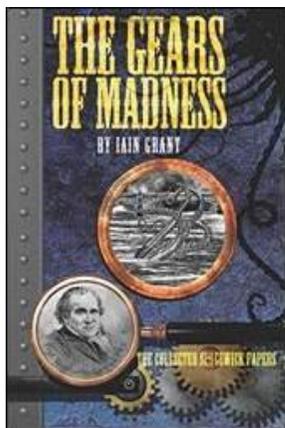
Pigeon Park Press / 295 pgs / £8 paperback / ISBN 978-0993060779

Reviewed by Pauline Morgan.

Steampunk is a strange phenomenon. It is a combination of nostalgia and alternative science. While some exponents of the sub-genre want to take science back to the Victorian Era, some use it as a jumping off place for another direction of development. A few turn it into a genuine alternative history along with a different physics. Iain Grant is one of the latter.

This collection of seven stories started life as a series of adventures only available on the internet. This book brings them all together to form an ongoing narrative. The sub-title is "The Collected Sedgewick Papers". This is not quite an accurate description even though there are links between them. Many, though not all, are purported to be from the memoirs of Mr J Cadwallander and mostly concern the situations he was

dragged into by Professor Erskine Sedgewick at the start of the twentieth century. There is enough in the basic relationship between the two men to wonder if the initial inspiration was Conan Doyle's *Sherlock Holmes* stories.



In this world, as is consistent with some of the beliefs of Victorian natural philosophers, the space between planets is not a vacuum but stratified layers of aether. To get between the layers there are a series of locks through which ships can travel. The first story in the book, set in 1902 is “The Angels of the Abyss”. When something strange seems to have occurred in one of these space-locks, Sedgewick inveigles himself and Cadwallander onto the expedition to find out what is going on. They find that the cylindrical structure has been invaded by alien beings which manifest as angels but are deadly to

whoever touches them. It is during the events here that Cadwallander loses an arm, which is replaced later by a very efficient mechanical one.

“The Pearl of Tharsis” set a year later introduces the adventuress, Mina Saxena, who has a place in several other of these stories. Sedgewick and Cadwallander are on Mars when a sandstorm downs their flying machine. They and the passengers and pilot take shelter in a labyrinth of caves. Mina has suffered the same fate, but sees an opportunity to hold the professor to ransom. Music, though lures them deeper into the caverns where they encounter Chioa Khan (an alias of Aleister Crowley). Here a god-like being has summoned people by supernatural means to a perpetual party where no debauchery is forbidden.

Mina tells the next story. In “The Well of Shambala” she has attached herself to a British expeditionary force in Tibet, which sets out to investigate a temple in the mountains. They have a limited time as by a certain date, the artillery on a space platform will shell the Russian forces in the area. What they find is literally, out of this world.

“The Bridge to Lemuria” uses several meanings of the word bridge in its execution. There is an actual bridge across the North Sea that is being built to link Britain with Belgium. It is almost complete when a murder sends Sedgewick to Yarmouth to investigate Edward Klein, the architect of the project. Where the two halves join in the centre he has constructed an arch of chthonic design. The finished construction is intended, not just as a bridge between countries, but between eldritch worlds. It is worth noting

that Mina Saxena is initially accused of the murder that sets the events in train.

At first “The Shadow Under London” seems unconnected with the rest of the stories other than the narrator, Inspector Wilmarth who was the arresting officer in “The Bridge to Lemuria”. He is called in when his cousin is accused of the murder of a doctor working in the tunnels that will become a deep underground railway. The only connection with Sedgewick is that the nurse working there is his niece. Like several other stories in this collection the resolution involves eldritch gods.

“The Herald of the Ancients” and the title story, “The Gears of Madness”, are actually two parts of the same, longer story but written separately due to the original format. They bring together a number of characters from other stories, including Mina Saxena and Chioa Khan and rearrange the alliances seen earlier. It is a tale of gods and aliens.

While these stories belong to the steampunk genre, they also have a Lovecraftian influence as each contains monsters or monstrous beings masquerading as gods. Grant has obviously had a lot of fun creating this world and playing with history and historical characters. While not overtly humorous, the breakneck pace makes them highly enjoyable. *PM*
(*Kindly donated by the author*)

***STARBORN (Worldmaker 1)* by Lucy Hounsom**

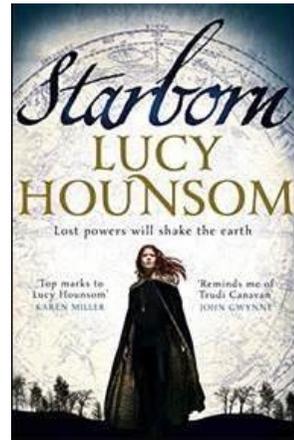
Pan Macmillan / 512 pgs / £8.99 paperback / ISBN 978-1447268550

Reviewed by Carol Goodwin

On the day Kyndra is set to be welcomed into adulthood, her village’s celebration is ruined when she accidentally breaks the relic at the heart of the ceremony. When the same day a disastrous storm causes havoc, Kyndra is made the scapegoat and only escapes with her life due to the magical intervention of two mysterious travellers. However, their aid comes with a cost and reluctantly, Kyndra has to agree to leave the village with them.

The strangers wield powers drawn from the sun and the moon and come from a hidden citadel called Naris. They are investigating a magical phenomenon, the Breaking that is destroying places across the land. Believing Kyndra’s visions may be connected to the Breaking and that she has the potential to become another Sun or Moon wielder, they take her back to their hidden city. In a city divided into rival factions who want to either use or destroy her, Kyndra must struggle to access her latent power and to determine the truth behind the dangers facing her world.

Epic fantasy can, to me at least, feel an overcrowded field and it can be difficult to produce something original which still pleases fans of the genre. This author does seem to have managed well with this tricky balancing act. In particular, the believability and depth of the characters is excellent. The main character, Kyndra shows a pleasing growth in maturity from someone being pulled along to someone who actively makes her own decisions. The other characters are also well-delineated and have their own issues which makes them more rounded and interesting.



The story builds well as Kyndra and the reader gradually reveal more about the history and politics of Naris. The climax reaches a satisfactory conclusion whilst still setting up future possibilities for a sequel. This book has been compared with Trudi Canavan's *Black Magician* trilogy. Whilst fans of that should certainly find much to like, I think this book is superior and an impressive debut. *CG* (Kindly donated by Pan Macmillan)

CHALLENGER UNBOUND edited by Michael R Brush and S.G. Mulholland

KnightWatch Press / 257 pgs / £9.99 paperback / ISBN 978-1512240245

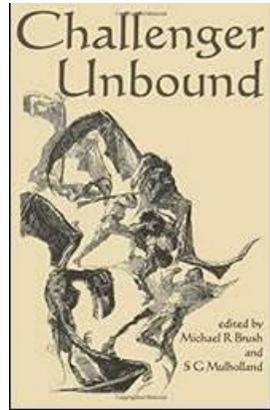
Reviewed by Pauline Morgan.

There has been a tradition of writers, especially those honing their skills, to add to the adventures of their favourite characters. Children do it every time they play with the characters and other toys from films and TV programmes, such as *Thunderbirds* and *FROZEN*. Most stories either stay under the bed, or turn up in fanzines shared with others with the same enthusiasms. Some writers such as Storm Constantine, encourage such fan fiction and allow the best to be published in books, and others, such as *Star Trek*, develop a franchise of officially sanctioned novels by respected authors. When a favoured writer has been dead long enough for their work to be out of copyright, there is an opportunity for other enterprises such as *PRIDE AND PREJUDICE AND ZOMBIES*. **CHALLENGER UNBOUND**, with the blessing of Conan Doyle's estate, has taken the irascible Professor Challenger as the centre of a series of short stories.

While the project is a worthwhile enterprise, I have some issues with this particular book. It is not the fault of the editors that no female writers submitted stories. The question is whether this is a reflection of the

appeal of the character or whether enough publicity was done in the right places. What is less forgivable is the typesetting of the book. Anyone who opens a book, real or electronic will know that you do not leave a line-break between paragraphs. It makes the book very annoying to read, and encourages a reader picking it up to put it straight back on the shelf. Proof reading could have been a little more rigorous as well (Challenger's daughter has different names in different stories).

Those familiar with the original *Professor Challenger* stories, especially THE LOST WORLD, will have some familiarity with many of the characters that appear in these pages. Anyone meeting them for the first time here may wonder who they are as there is an ingrained assumption that the reader is in the know. There is an added confusion in that there has been no attempt to put these stories in any kind of chronological sequence. There is also no kind of cohesion in the selection of the stories. Two, including the first in the volume ('The Last Expedition' by Simon Kurt Unsworth) feature the death of Challenger, and of these, the better written is the second, 'The Death of Challenger' by Steve Lockley. This story has some interesting features, but I wasn't convinced that this could only be a Challenger story. This is a problem I had throughout. Too many of the stories could not honestly say that they could be nothing else but part of the *Challenger* sequence.



In one of the original *Challenger* stories, the Professor came up against an inventor, Theodore Nemor, who invents a disintegration machine which Challenger deems too dangerous to exist and so destroys it. Yet, three of these stories make use of this invention. I would be wary of one use of it, but this is too many and causes an internal conflict within the structure of the anthology as a whole. Challenger might have been disingenuous; his chroniclers should not be.

A dilemma that a book like this has is whether the stories should stylistically copy the original, or have narrative brought up to date with more modern approaches. One positive thing these stories have in common is they have all tried to keep to the vernacular that Conan Doyle used.

This could have been an interesting addition to the Challenger portfolio if it had had a tighter editorial control on the content of the stories. As it is, it doesn't work for this reader.

PM

(Kindly donated by KnightWatch Press)

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 goodwinced@yahoo.com

INTRODUCTORY COURSE ON SPECULATIVE FICTION WRITING with IAN C DOUGLAS, 5th March, Nottingham. SF author, Ian C Douglas looks at world-building, avoiding info-dumps etc. At Waterstones Nottingham. 10:30-4:30pm. £50. Details: 0115 947 0069.

MEET M R CAREY, 9th April, Birmingham. Author of THE GIRL WITH ALL THE GIFTS will be signing copies of his new book, FELLSIDE at Waterstones High Street from 6:30pm. Free. Booking: 0121 631 4353, or call instore.

CONVENTIONS

SCI-FI WEEKENDER 7, 17th - 20th March, Hafan Y Mor, North Wales. Commercial multi-media convention. Literature guests include Adam Nevill, Stan and Anne Nicholls, Sam Stone, Emma Newman etc. Various prices depending on level of access/accommodation. See www.scifiweekender.com

MANCUNICON (EASTERCON), 25th - 28th March, Manchester. Guests of Honour are Alette de Bodard, David L Clements, Ian McDonald and Sarah Pinborough. To be held at the Hilton, Deansgate, Manchester. Attending £75 (from December 1st). Details at www.mancunicon.org.uk/

SATELLITE 5, 28th - 29th May, Glasgow. Guests of Honour Jaime Fenn & Ed Buckley. At the Marriott Hotel, Glasgow. Attending £55. Details at www.satellite5.org.uk/

EDGE-LIT 5, 16th July, Derby. Literary SF/Fantasy festival. Guests of Honour M John Harrison, Emma Newman & Alastair Reynolds. Tickets £30 at www.derbyquad.co.uk/special-event/edge-lit-5

FANTASYCON BY THE SEA, 23rd - 25th September, Scarborough. Guest of Honour Adam Nevill. At the Grand and Royal Hotels. Tickets £50 + £35 Awards Banquet. <http://fantasyconbythesea.com>

BRISTOLCON, 29th October, Bristol. Guests of Honour Ken MacLeod, Sarah Pinborough and Fangorn. Doubletree Hotel. £20. Details at www.bristolcon.org

NOVACON 46, 11th - 13th November, Nottingham. Guest of Honour is Juliet McKenna. The Park Inn, Nottingham. Tickets £46. Details at www.novacon.org.uk

FUTURE MEETINGS OF THE BSFG

April 8th - SF/Fantasy author **Jacey Bedford**

May 13th - **tbc**

June 10th - author, editor and publisher **Ian Whates**

July 8th - SF fan and convention organizer **Dave Lally**

August 12th - **Summer Social Meal** - venue tbc

September 9th - **tbc**

October 14th - astronomer and lecturer **Andy Lound**

November 4th - **tbc**

December 2nd - **Christmas Social**

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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