

BRUM GROUP NEWS

THE MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF THE

BIRMINGHAM SCIENCE FICTION GROUP

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JACEY BEDFORD *8th April*

Our guest this month is SF and Fantasy author, Jacey Bedford. She has published short stories on both sides of the Atlantic. The first two books in her SF *Psi-Tech* series, *EMPIRE OF DUST* (2014) and *CROSSWAYS* (2015) were published by Daw and the third, *NIMBUS* will complete the trilogy. The stories concern an augmented human (a 'Psi-tech') on the run from a powerful mega-corporation after uncovering massive corruption.

May 13th - Guest still to be confirmed. Details in next newsletter.

This year she has published the first novel, WINTERWOOD in an historical fantasy series (*Rowankind*) set in 1880 and featuring a female privateer, a jealous ghost and a wolf shapechanger. This and the sequel, SILVERWOLF will also be published by Daw.

She is also the secretary of the Milford Writer's Conference, an annual peer-to-peer workshopping week for established and aspiring SF/Fantasy writers, which she has been attending since 1998. She also co-ordinates NorthwriteSF, a face to face writing group for speculative fiction writers in the North of England. Further details can be found at her website, www.jaceybedford.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 for members and £4 for non-members.

ANDROMEDA TWO CONVENTION



This is to announce that the Andromeda 2 website is now up and running (details below). After a hiatus of a couple of years the excellent Andromeda convention is back. For those of you who are unaware, Andromeda One in 2013 had an exceptional line-up and as those of the Brum Group who attended could tell you, was a thoroughly enjoyable day. This time, the convention will be in Moseley, Birmingham from 4pm on Friday September 9th to all day Saturday 10th. Organised by BSFG committee member, **Theresa Derwin** it features as Guests of Honour, BSFG member **David A**

Hardy and author/publisher Sam Stone. The convention will also feature many other SF celebs, dealers' room, etc (and of course, beer!). The venue this time is the Moseley All Services Club (91 Church Road, Moseley, B13 9EA). Tickets are £25 (Saturday only) or £30 (weekend ticket including Friday night buffet dinner). Further details at <http://ac2.greatbritishhorror.com/>.

BRITISH SCIENCE FICTION AWARDS

The winners of the BSFA Awards were announced at Mancunicon (Eastercon) in Manchester on the 26th March.

Best Novel: THE HOUSE OF SHATTERED WINGS by Alette de Bodard (Gollancz)

Best Short Fiction: "Three Cups of Grief, by Starlight" by Alette de Bodard, in *Clarkesworld* 100.

Best Artwork: Jim Burns for the cover of PELQUIN'S COMET by Ian Whates (Newcon Press).

Best Non-Fiction: RAVE AND LET DIE: THE SF AND FANTASY OF 2014 by Adam Roberts (Steel Quill Books)

NEWS IN BRIEF

The Science Fiction Writers of America (SFWA) has announced that **Sir Terry Pratchett** is the recipient of this year's Kate Wilhelm Solstice Award. The award is for those who have had a significant impact on the SF or Fantasy landscape The winner of the **Philip K Dick** Award for original Science Fiction in paperback is **Ramez Naam** for his novel APEX (Angry Robot) The **Kitschies Awards** for works containing "elements of the speculative and fantastic" have been announced. The winner for best novel (Red Tentacle) is THE HEART GOES LAST by **Margaret Atwood** (Bloomsbury). Details of other category awards can be found at www.tor.com/2016/03/07/announcing-the-kitschies-2015-winners/ The Horror Writers Association (HWA) has named **Alan Moore** and **George A Romero** as their 2016 Lifetime Achievement Award winners The group scheduled to run **Pasgon**, (Eastercon 2017) in Cardiff have announced that their convention is no longer viable and have withdrawn **Eastercon 2017** has been confirmed as

Innominate. This will be held at the Hilton Metropole NEC in **Birmingham** on the 14th to 17th April. Guests of Honour to date are **Pat Cadigan, Judith Clute** and **Colin Harris**. Website is www.eastercon2017.uk **Eastercon 2018** will be in Harrogate and is called Follycon The **David Gemmell Awards** for Fantasy have announced that this year's ceremony will take place at Fantasycon in September. The ceremony will take place on 24th September. This year's Guests of Honour will be Costa Book Award winner, **Frances Hardinge** and Horror author, **Adam Nevill** Special effects designer **Tony Dyson** has died at the age of 68. He is best known for the creation of *Star Wars* droid, R2-D2. Mr Dyson also worked on special effects for **SUPERMAN II, MOONRAKER** and **DRAGONSLAYER**. He also designed and built robots for Sony, Philips, Toshiba and other electronics companies Further data from the **New Horizons** flyby of Pluto has shown what appears to be the remains of a frozen nitrogen lake. This suggests that at one time Pluto was warmer and had flowing rivers and lakes of nitrogen The joint European/Russian ExoMars mission to Mars launched successfully on 14th March. Its mission is to look for trace gases, including methane which can be an indication of life *CG*

NEW CINEMA FILM RELEASES

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

THE LAST MAN ON THE MOON - Release date April 8th. Documentary about Apollo astronaut, Gene Cernan.

CRIMINAL - Release date April 15th. The memories and skills of a deceased CIA agent are implanted into a dangerous convict.

FRIEND REQUEST - Release date April 22nd. Horror. When a college student “unfriends” a mysterious girl online, she finds a demonic presence is now killing her friends.

CAPTAIN AMERICA: CIVIL WAR - Release date April 29th. Latest *Marvel* superhero film. Political interference causes a rift between former allies, Captain America and Iron Man. CG

FORTHCOMING BOOKS

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



NEMESIS (Roboteer 2) by Alex Lamb / Gollancz / 560 pgs / £16.99 hardback / ISBN 978-1473206113 / April 21st. SF. Forced into an uneasy truce by the threat of powerful aliens, will the fragile alliance between genetically modified and unaltered humans last?

INTO EVERYWHERE (Jackaroo 2) by Paul McAuley / Gollancz / 432 pgs / £16.99 paperback / ISBN 978-1473203983 / April 21st. SF. Humanity is about to discover why the Jackaroo came to help humanity and the hidden costs.

SLEEPING GIANTS by Sylvain Neuvel / Michael Joseph / 320 pgs / £12.99 hardback / ISBN 978-0718181680 / April 21st. SF. An enormous metal hand that predates human civilisation is found, and a race begins for other missing pieces but what happens if it is completed?

SHARP ENDS: Stories from the World of the First Law by Joe Abercrombie / Gollancz / 304 pgs / £18.99 hardback / ISBN 978-0575104679 / April 26th. Fantasy. Short stories set in the brutal First Law world.



HEX by Thomas Olde Heuvelt / Hodder & Stoughton / 384 pgs / £16.99 hardback / ISBN 978-1444793215 / April 28th. Haunted by the Black Rock Witch, a village is quarantined until rebellious teenagers spread word of the witch and unleash a dark nightmare.

WAR FACTORY (Transformation 2) by Neal Asher / Tor / 560 pgs / £18.99 hardback / ISBN 978-0230750746 / May 5th. SF. A human and an alien, both warped by the rogue AI Pennyroyal, hunt the AI and the War Factory that made it.

CHILDREN OF EARTH AND SKY by Guy Gavriel Kay / Hodder & Stoughton / 592 pgs / £19.99 hardback / ISBN 978-1473628106 / May 12th. Fantasy. The powerful Khalif's massive army attempts to take the great fortress that is the gateway to the Western world.

THE CORPORATION WARS: DISSIDENCE by Ken MacLeod / Orbit / 336 pgs / £12.99 hardback / ISBN 978-0356504988 / May 12th. SF. Sentient machines work and die for the corporations. But when they want autonomy, the companies would rather see them dead. CG

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BOOK REVIEWS

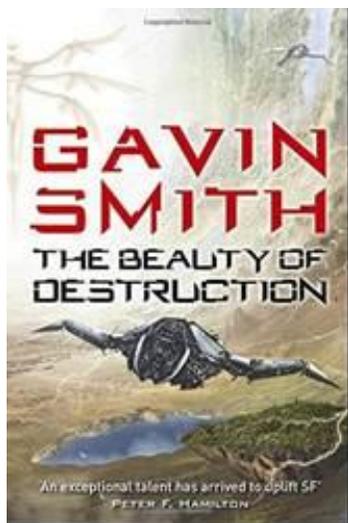


(**REVIEWERS** please note: - all reviews should be emailed direct to me at goodwinced@yahoo.com **Deadline** for each issue is 14 days prior to the date of the monthly meeting)

THE BEAUTY OF DESTRUCTION by Gavin Smith

Gollancz / 583 pgs / £18.99 paperback / ISBN 978-0575127210

Reviewed by Jim Pearce



I almost did not finish reading this book; after 30 to 40 pages I thought that it was not for me, being too odd and confusing. Then I thought again, I had obtained the book from Carol as I had previously reviewed Gavin Smith's first book *VETERAN* for the BRUM Group back in March 2011 and rather enjoyed it. So I decided that I had a responsibility to both Carol and Gollancz, who had kindly provided the book for review, and should persevere with it. That said I'm glad that I did as the more I read the more compelling and enjoyable it became.

THE BEAUTY OF DESTRUCTION follows three distinct strands. The first is set in 'Ancient Britain' actually the Iron Age pre-Roman invasion and describes the fight of a disparate group of warriors and 'druids' against the 'Dark Man', Crom Dhubh and his magically enslaved minions. The second describes apocalyptic action taking place 'Now' i.e. 20th/21st century and follows the fight by two humans augmented with alien technology (tech) against another dark man (Mr. Brown) and his augmented minions in an increasingly dystopian world being turned into a Lovecraftian nightmare. Thirdly, there is the also dystopian far-future strand entitled 'A Long Time After The Loss'; presumably the Loss is that of Earth described in the 'Now' section. Not unexpectedly, there is also a 'Dark Man' in this strand, called the 'Patron'. The story proceeds in cyclic tranches; strand 1, strand 2, strand 3 then back to 1 again. While it is still

compelling there are some disjoints in the narrative, however these tend to be resolved as the story progresses. There is fast and furious violence throughout, but without this there would be no story. I am pleased to note that unlike some stories there is a definite ending to the three tales as the strands come together at the end of the book.

In **THE BEAUTY OF DESTRUCTION** Gavin Smith has demonstrated an exceptional and febrile imagination and talent and after a shaky start I thoroughly enjoyed this book and can recommend it to others.

JTP

(Review copy kindly donated by Gollancz)

THE TIGER AND THE WOLF (Echoes of the Fall 1) by Adrian Tchaikovsky

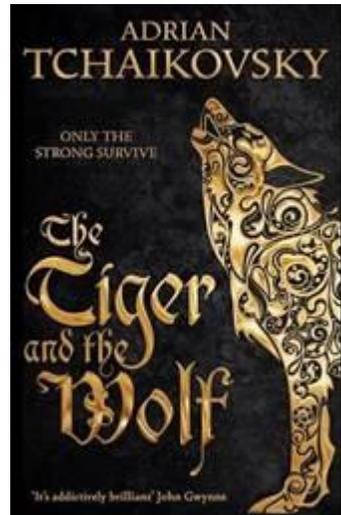
Macmillan / 608 pgs / £16.99 hardback / ISBN 978-230770065

Reviewed by Carol Goodwin

For someone who is so prolific, producing thirteen novels and numerous short stories in around 8 years, Adrian Tchaikovsky is never content to rest on his laurels. Whenever I read an Adrian Tchaikovsky book I know that I am going to find something unique that is never just a clone of a popular trend.

However, when I read the blurb for this, his latest novel and that it was about a tribe of wolf shapeshifters I was momentarily worried. Shapeshifters, particularly wolves have become a popular and in my opinion, over-used trope, particularly in the romantic end of the urban fantasy genre. Thankfully that is not what this novel is about and I found something which, true to his record, was extremely enjoyable.

In the world of this novel, clans have a totemic animal whose shape they can assume and whose spirit they attempt to emulate and please. Maniye is the daughter of a Wolf clan chieftain, but she is an outsider in her tribe and tolerated purely as a pawn in the political



ambitions of her father. She also hides the secret that due to her unique heritage, she can take on both wolf and tiger shapes. Refusing to follow her father's plans, she escapes with the help of a prisoner, the snake priest, Hesperec. Pursued by her tribe and also fighting the tiger and wolf parts of her which vie for dominance, she must try and find her place in the world and freedom from her father.

One of the major strengths of this book is in the characters. Nobody does everything right and even with the antagonistic characters, such as Maniye's father, Akrit, the reader sees the credible emotions and motivations which have led him to his present position, whilst still disagreeing with them. As with his other novels, the author's love of biology is used to inform the animal side of the characters. Although a fantasy, the integration of animal and human abilities and behaviours feels natural and credible.

Another thing that has clearly had a lot of thought behind it is the fighting sequences, and the way in which characters rapidly switch or "step" between their different forms for tactical advantage.

I also liked that as previously mentioned, the author avoids a lot of clichés. There is no great romance or complete 'happy ever after' ending, even though there is a satisfactory resolution to the book. The story has excellent pacing and succeeds admirably in the tricky task of combining emotional depth with an exciting action-packed plot. Thoroughly recommended, even to those of you who are normally allergic to most fantasy!

(Review copy kindly donated by Macmillan Tor)

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

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. Book at 0121 631 4353, or call instore.

EUGENE CERNAN DINNER & SCREENING, 13th April, Leicester. Q & A with Apollo 17 astronaut Eugene Cernan, and screening of documentary **THE LAST MAN IN THE MOON**. Prices from £20, £60 with dinner, £100 VIP. Details at www.spacecentre.co.uk/

BLOODMAGE Launch - Stephen Aryan, 14th April, Birmingham. Author Stephen Aryan is launching his new Fantasy novel, **BLOODMAGE** at Waterstones High Street from 7 pm. Free. Book at 0121 631 4353, or call instore.

MEET CASSANDRA CLARE, 17th April, Birmingham. Author Cassandra Clare will be meeting fans and signing books at Waterstones High Street from 5 pm. Free. Booking: 0121 631 4353, or call instore.

FLATPACK FILM FESTIVAL, 19th - 24th April, Birmingham. Various venues. Events include screenings of some SF, Fantasy and Horror films. Details on venues, bookings and prices at <http://flatpackfestival.org.uk/>

DORIAN GRAY, 20th -23rd April, Birmingham. Theatre production at the Old Joint Stock at 8pm. £12 at www.oldjointstock.co.uk or 0121 200 0946.

POW-WOW WRITING FESTIVAL, 24th April, Birmingham. One-day festival with writers and industry experts. (NB. Not specifically SF). Prince of Wales pub, Moseley. Tickets £12 +booking fee. Details at www.powwowfest.com/

LET'S WRITE A BOOK with ALEX DAVIS, 25th April, Nottingham. SF author, editor and publisher, Alex Davis hosts 8-week course with in-depth feedback. At Waterstones Nottingham. 1 - 3 pm. £128. Details: 0115 947 0069.

SCREENING of J G Ballard's HIGH RISE, 29th April - 5th May, Birmingham. Adaptation of Ballard's 1975 novel about society breakdown in a high-rise apartment complex. Mac Centre. Price £7.50. www.macbirmingham.co.uk or 0121 446 3232.

WEIRD ALES Book Launch, 30th April, Birmingham. Launch of WEIRD ALES anthology edited by Theresa Derwin including stories from BSFG members, Pauline Morgan & Lunn Edwards. Buy the book and get free drink (up to £2 value). At the Spread Eagle, Acocks Green, 6 - 7pm

AN EVENING with CLAIRE NORTH, 10th May, Birmingham. Campbell Award-winning author, Clare North is discussing her new book, THE SUDDEN APPEARANCE OF HOPE at Waterstones High Street from 7 pm. £13.99 including book, £3 without. Booking at 0121 631 4353, or call instore.

STAR WARS & BEYOND, 2nd July, Birmingham. A selection of SF-themed music with lasers and fireworks. Symphony Hall. 7:30 pm. £16.50 - £44.50 plus transaction fee. February performance sold out early hence early notification. Book at Town Hall/Symphony Hall Box Office (0121 780 4949) or www.thsh.co.uk

CONVENTIONS

SATELLITE 5, 28th - 29th May, Glasgow. Guests of Honour Jaime Fenn & Ed Buckley. At the Marriott Hotel, Glasgow. Attending £55 (until 4th April). 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

ANDROMEDA 2, 9th - 10th September, Moseley. SF/F convention organised by Theresa Derwin. Guests of Honour: David A Hardy, Sam Stone. Master of Ceremonies: Jasper Bark. Moseley All Services Club, 91 Church Road, Moseley, B13 9EA. Tickets: £25 (Saturday only) or £30 (weekend ticket including Friday night buffet dinner). Details at <http://ac2.greatbritishhorror.com/>

FANTASYCON BY THE SEA, 23rd - 25th September, Scarborough. Guest of Honour Adam Nevill, Frances Hardinge and Scott Lynch. 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

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