

# BRUM GROUP NEWS

THE MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF THE

## BIRMINGHAM SCIENCE FICTION GROUP

JUNE 2016

ISSUE 537

HONORARY PRESIDENT: **BRIAN W ALDISS, OBE**

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## IAN WHATES

*10th June*

This month we welcome back a former guest, Ian Whates. He is a writer, editor and owns the well-regarded independent press, NewCon which will celebrate its 10-year anniversary this year.

Ian has been interested in SF since childhood, in particular he recalls a radio adaptation of *THE CHRYSALIDS* by John Wyndham which led to him haunting the SF section of the local library. His first stories appeared in the late 1980's in small press magazines such as *Dream* and *New Moon*

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

*Quarterly*. He then took a break from writing until the early 2000's, when he joined the Northampton SF Writers Group and started submitting stories again. His short fiction has been subsequently published in many places, including *Nature*. His short story "The Gift of Joy" was nominated for a BSFA Award in 2007. He has also published six novels, the latest, PELQUIN'S COMET was published in 2015.

In 2006 he founded NewCon Press, an independent publisher specialising in SF, Fantasy and Horror. It publishes original stories from established and debut authors and has won an impressive number of awards including BSFA and British Fantasy Society Awards. As part of its ten year celebrations it will be releasing an anthology, NOW WE ARE TEN featuring stories by Peter Hamilton, Eric Brown, Jaine Fenn and other well-known names.

Ian has also been a director of the Science Fiction Writers of America (SFWA) and the BSFA. This year he is on the judging panel for the Arthur C Clarke Award. Further information about Ian can be found at [www.ianwhates.co.uk/](http://www.ianwhates.co.uk/) and the NewCon Press website, [www.newconpress.co.uk/](http://www.newconpress.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.

### ***SPACE CENTRE VISIT- 20th August by Carol Goodwin***

A visit to the Space Centre in Leicester has been booked. A Johnsons minibus (driven by a professional driver) will depart from Colmore Row (near Snow Hill Station/Sainsburys) at 9:30 am on Saturday 20th August. The return coach will leave the Space Centre at 4pm and is estimated to arrive back at Birmingham City Centre around 5:30pm.

The booking at the Space Centre includes access to the galleries, a free ride on the 3D Simulator (for those brave enough or fit enough!) and a free Planetarium show at 12:30pm. **N.B. Lunch is**

**not provided** although there is a café available on site (this will shut at 3pm.)

The price will be £10 for members or accompanying persons and this includes the cost of transport and entry. Please note that places are limited to a maximum of 16 due to the size of the minibus. Places can be booked at a Group meeting or by sending a cheque (payable to the “Birmingham Science Fiction Group”) to me at 73 Langfield Road, Knowle, Solihull, B93 9PS. If doing the latter, it would be appreciated if you also sent an email to let me know you want a place so I can reserve you a seat immediately without having to wait for the post. The full amount will be required at the time of booking.

The final date for booking will be 31st July, to allow time for cancellation without penalty if we do not have sufficient people wanting to go. If this happens, your money will be returned.

PS It has also been suggested that some people might want to go for an evening meal once we return to the city centre. If interested in this idea, please let me know

*CG*

### ***AUGUST SUMMER SOCIAL – MEAL VENUE***

The Summer Social Meal this year will be at the Black Eagle on August 12th. Full details will be in next month’s newsletter. A deposit of £5 per head is required which is refundable against the meal. Please let Pat or Vernon have this as soon as possible because, as usual, there is a limited number of seats available. *VB*

### ***NEBULA AWARD WINNERS***

The Science Fiction Writers of America presented the annual Nebula Awards in Chicago, California on May 14th. The winners were

**Best Novel:** UPROOTED by Naomi Novik (Del Rey)

**Best Novella:** BINTI by Nnedi Okorafor (Tor.com)

**Best Novelette:** “Our Lady of the Open Road” by Sarah Pinsker (*Asimov’s*, June 2015)

**Best Short Story:** “Hungry Daughters of Starving Mothers” by Alyssa Wong (*Nightmare*, October 2015)

**Andre Norton Award for Young Adult Science Fiction and Fantasy:** UPDRAFT by Fran Wilde (Tor)

**Ray Bradbury Award for Outstanding Dramatic Presentation: MAD  
MAX: FURY ROAD.**

**Kevin J. O'Donnell Service to SFWA Award: Lawrence M Schoen  
Damon Knight Grand Master Award: C J Cherryh.**

### ***LOCUS AWARD NOMINATIONS***

The Locus Science Fiction Foundation has announced the finalists for the 2016 Locus Awards. The nominees for the SF novel and Fantasy novel categories are given below. Full details of all categories are available at [www.locusmag.com/News/2016/05/2016-locus-awards-finalists/](http://www.locusmag.com/News/2016/05/2016-locus-awards-finalists/)

#### **SCIENCE FICTION NOVEL**

THE WATER KNIFE by Paolo Bacigalupi (Orbit)

AURORA by Kim Stanley Robinson (Orbit)

ANCILLARY MERCY by Ann Leckie (Orbit)

SEVENEVES by Neal Stephenson (The Borough Press)

A BORROWED MAN by Gene Wolfe (Tor)

#### **FANTASY NOVEL**

KAREN MEMORY by Elizabeth Bear (Tor Books US)

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

WYLDING HALL by Elizabeth Hand (P S Publishing)

THE FIFTH SEASON by N K Jemisin (Orbit)

UPROOTED by Naomi Novik (Pan)

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

**Andre Fernand Brahic**, the French astrophysicist has died. He was credited with the discovery of the rings around Neptune and was awarded the Carl Sagan Medal .... **Robert Silverberg** suffered a heart attack on May 9th. He has subsequently had surgery and is expected to make a full recovery .... The **Bram Stoker Awards** for Horror writing have been announced. The best novel was **A HEAD FULL OF GHOSTS** by Paul Tremblay .... After 15 years, the Hugo Award-winning website, **SF Signal** will cease publication. The writers are searching for someone to host the archives .... The **Rosetta spacecraft** has discovered amino acids and other organic molecules

(key building blocks for life) on comet 67-P .... Radio 4 has commissioned a new series of *Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*. *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 CONJURING 2*** - Release date June 17th. Horror. A single mother with 4 children is plagued by malevolent spirits.

***INDEPENDENCE DAY: RESURGENCE*** - Release date June 23rd. SF. Two decades after the last invasion, Earth is faced with a new alien threat.

***THE LEGEND OF TARZAN*** - Release date July 8th. Live action. Tarzan returns to his jungle home to investigate mining activities. *CG*

### ***FORTHCOMING BOOKS***

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



***NINE FOX GAMBIT*** Vol. by **Yoon Ha Lee** / Solaris / 384 pgs / £7.99 paperback / ISBN 978-1781084483 / June 14th. SF. Disgraced Captain must redeem herself by capturing a Star Fortress but her only ally may be mad.

***ESCAPOLOGY*** by **Ren Warom** / Titan / 400 pgs / £7.99 paperback / ISBN 978-1785650918 / June 14th. SF. Cyber-thief accepts a job which is impossible, illegal and insane.

***FALSE HEARTS*** by **Laura Lam** / Macmillan / 384 pgs / £12.99 hardback / ISBN 978-1447286424 / June 16th. SF. When her sister is arrested for the first murder in decades, Taema goes undercover to bring down a drug syndicate.

***THE NIGHTMARE STACKS: A Laundry Files novel*** by **Charles Stross** / Orbit / 400 pgs / £18.99 hardback / ISBN 978-0356505343 / June 23rd. When Alex catches vampirism, his only option is to join the Laundry, Britain's counter-occult intelligence agency.



***THE LONG COSMOS (Long Earth 5)*** by **Stephen Baxter & Terry Pratchett** / Doubleday / 416 pgs / £18.99 hardback / ISBN 978-0857521781 / June 30th. SF. Six decades after Step Day, the inhabitants of all the versions of Long Earth receive a message from the stars.

***THE HIGH GROUND (Imperials 1)*** by **Melinda Snodgrass** / Titan / 356 pgs / £7.99 paperback / ISBN 978-1783295821 / July 5th. SF. Emperor's daughter is the first woman admitted to the elite military academy, the High Ground.

***TIME SIEGE (Time Salvager 2)*** by **Wesley Chu** / Angry Robot / ? pgs / £8.99 paperback / ISBN 978-0857666321 / July 7th. SF. Ex-time scavenger hides from the authorities on the toxic wasteland that is Earth.

***SOUTH*** by **Frank Owen** / Corvus / 416 pgs / £12.99 paperback / ISBN 978-1782399612 / July 7th. SF. In a US divided by civil war

and deadly windborne viruses, three survivors are on a quest for the Cure. CG



## BOOK REVIEWS

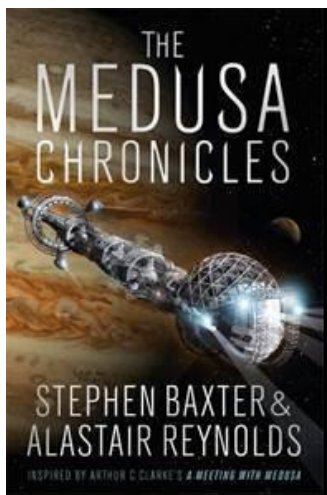


(**REVIEWERS** please note: - all reviews should be emailed direct to me at [goodwincc@yahoo.com](mailto:goodwincc@yahoo.com) Deadline for each issue is 14 days prior to the date of the monthly meeting)

***THE MEDUSA CHRONICLES*** by Stephen Baxter and Alastair Reynolds

Gollancz / 336 pgs / £16.99 hardback / ISBN 978-1473210189

Reviewed by Michael Jones



In one of his last stories – albeit one published some seventeen years before his death – Arthur C. Clarke told how dirigible captain Howard Falcon was left crippled by a crash and was rebuilt as a cyborg. This enabled him to make a voyage into the atmosphere of Jupiter where he encountered indigenous sentient lifeforms which he called Medusae.

That story ended with clear hints that one day there would be more to be told and now two of our leading SF writers have applied themselves to doing so in a story which spans several ensuing centuries.

As mankind begins to explore and develop the Solar System, increasing reliance comes to be placed on machines in which burgeoning artificial intelligence eventually moves on to completely autonomous self-awareness – aided and stimulated, it has to be said, by the intervention of Falcon.

The result is the machines uniting to constitute a mech civilisation (if that is the right word) which advances to the point of challenging human civilisation for ownership of the Solar System. Over the centuries Falcon observes this progressing, attempting to

intervene here and there. Eventually, an ill-considered attempt is made to use an unwitting Falcon as a weapon against the machines which are now occupying Jupiter, but this backfires when Falcon discovers what has been done to him. Instead, he and a representative of the machines embark on an incredible and epic journey to the centre of Jupiter where they discover a gateway to a higher realm of organised intelligence.

This is indeed a worthy and successful continuation of what Clarke began. The earlier part of the book even captures some of the style of his writing, and a verbatim quotation from 2001 is just one of several oblique nods to his work. In due course scientific and technological wonders are deployed which in a present-day context are every bit as far-out as some of Clarke's ideas were in his own day in such books as *CHILDHOOD'S END* and *THE CITY AND THE STARS* - perhaps even more so.

Unfortunately, the final conclusion is somewhat open-ended, leaving one to speculate as to whether the intention is to make this the first in a series, or at least to leave open the possibility of a sequel. Be that as it may, it is a book well worth reading, and perhaps more than once in order to fully work out the timing and all the intricate and subtle nuances it contains.

*MJ*

*(Review copy kindly donated by Orion Gollancz)*

***FABLES AND FABRICATIONS* by Jan Edwards**

**Penkhull Press / £9.99 paperback (£2.99 Kindle) / 194 pgs / ISBN 978-0993000843**

**Reviewed by Carol Goodwin**

While being aware of Jan Edward's considerable skills as an editor and co-publisher of Alchemy Press, I had not previously read much of her own writing. *FABLES AND FABRICATIONS* is a collection of fourteen short stories interspersed with poems. All of the stories have been previously published elsewhere although the haiku's (three line poems with a 5-7-5 syllable structure) are all original.

One of the problems I often have with single author collections is that the stories often become very similar. That is most definitely not the case here. While most of the stories could be classed as fantasy (with a couple of exceptions) the stories are



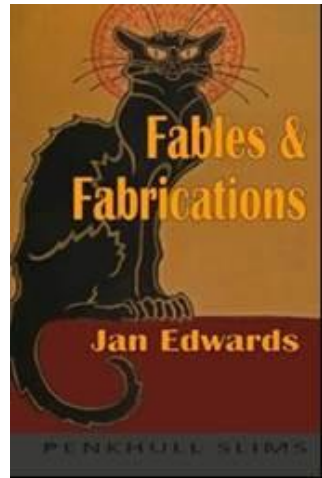
pleasingly varied in subject and style, ranging from light humorous pieces through to some dark and emotionally affecting tales. It is no easy task to write well over such a wide range, and is a good reflection of the author's significant abilities and imagination. I also like the prose style which makes very effective use of similies and metaphors so that they are evocative without being cliched. Whilst every story is not equally enjoyable, I feel this is more a question of my individual taste than anything inherent to the crafting and quality of the story.

One of my favourites is the first story, "Drawing down the Moon" which looks at the high price which must be paid for communicating with the dead. I really liked the shift from the mundane setting of a seedy café to the high drama later in the story. It also amply demonstrates the author's ability to write credible female (and male) protagonists. Other favourites include; "Midnight Twilight" about a journalist searching for a mysterious creature in the remote Arctic, which again is very atmospheric; "The Abused and Him" which is not fantasy but paints a realistic and unsettling picture of the after-effects of abuse on a victim; and "Princess Born" which is a very funny re-writing of the Princess and the Pea fairy story. The author is clearly familiar with a lot of folklore, both British and European and plays with these themes very effectively in many of the stories, which appealed to me personally.

Regarding the poetry, I am always hesitant commenting but I did enjoy the Haiku in particular as one can see the real skill in capturing an impression or emotion in very few words.

This is a collection of thoughtfully written, wide ranging stories which I thoroughly recommend with the only caveat being that it is not for those who want science fiction stories. CG

*(Review copy kindly donated by the Author)*



## **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](mailto:goodwinced@yahoo.com)*

**WATCH THE WORLD BURN with JOE HILL, 7th June, Birmingham.** Joe Hill discusses his latest novel THE FIREMAN at Waterstones High Street from 6:30 pm. £3. Booking: 0121 631 4353, or call instore. (Also at Nottingham Waterstones, 11th June at 4pm. Call 0115 9470069 for details)

**RUSSIAN SF FILMS - STALKER and SOLARIS, 14th & 19th June, Birmingham.** Screening of Russian director Andrei Tarkovsky's SF films - STALKER, (based on ROADSIDE PICNIC by Arkady and Boris Strugatsky) - 14th June at 8pm and SOLARIS (author Stanislaw Lem) - 19th June at 2pm. Mac Centre. Price £8. [www.macbirtingham.co.uk](http://www.macbirtingham.co.uk) or 0121 446 3232.

**Meet JUSTIN CRONIN, 22nd June, Nottingham.** Author of post-apocalyptic SF signing his new novel, THE CITY OF MIRRORS. At Waterstones Nottingham. 12:30pm. Details: 0115 947 0069.

**BSFA/SFF MINI-CONVENTION & AGM, 25th June, London.**

Special guests are Liz Williams and David A Hardy. At Imperial College London, SW7 2AZ. Entry free from 9:30 am to 4:30 pm. See [www.bsfa.co.uk/bsfasff-mini-convention-and-agm-saturday-25th-june-2016/](http://www.bsfa.co.uk/bsfasff-mini-convention-and-agm-saturday-25th-june-2016/)

**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](http://www.thsh.co.uk)

**AN EVENING with DAN VYLETA, 8th July, Nottingham.** Author discusses new fantasy novel, **SMOKE**. Waterstones Nottingham. 9 pm. Free but must be booked. Details: 0115 947 0069.

### ***CONVENTIONS***

**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](http://www.derbyquad.co.uk/special-event/edge-lit-5)

**NINE WORLDS GEEKFEST, 12th - 14th August, London.** Multi-media with strong literature strand. Tickets £100 at <https://nineworlds.co.uk/>

**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.** Guests 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](http://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](http://www.novacon.org.uk)

**INNOMINATE (EASTERCON), 14th - 17th April 2017, Birmingham.** Guests of Honour are Pat Cadigan, Judith Clute and Colin Harris. To be held at the Hilton Metropole, NEC, Birmingham. Membership £60 at [www.eastercon2017.uk/home](http://www.eastercon2017.uk/home)

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

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

August 12th – **Summer Social Meal** – venue Black Eagle

September 9th – **tbc**

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

November 4th – **Film night**

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