

BRUM GROUP NEWS

THE MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF THE

BIRMINGHAM SCIENCE FICTION GROUP

OCTOBER 2016

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ANDY LOUND – *Pluto and the Outer Worlds*

14th October

This month we welcome back astronomer, lecturer, writer and broadcaster, Andy Lound. On his

last visit to the group in 2004, he gave an excellent presentation on “Mars in Fiction”. He appears regularly on various radio programmes including Radio WM and Radio 4. He is also the



November 4th - SF film night. We will be showing an SF film - details will be in next newsletter.

National Coordinator for The Planetary Society. His professional but accessible presentations combine high quality videos, music and props with the latest scientific research to inform his audience in an entertaining and amusing way.

This year has seen some remarkable discoveries and images from the exploration of the Solar System. One of the major highlights was the *New Horizons* mission to Pluto. We have therefore asked Andy Lound to stage his presentation “Out of the Darkness - Pluto and the Outer Worlds” which ranges from the discovery of Pluto in 1930, then other trans-Neptunian objects through to the latest discoveries and theories about the formation and evolution of Pluto. Further details can be found at Andy’s website, www.andrewlound.com

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.

THE CHRISTMAS SOCIAL. FRIDAY - 2nd DECEMBER

This year’s Social will be held at The Selly Park Tavern, 592 Pershore Road, Selly Oak, where we have once again hired the Skittles Room for our own private use from 7pm until 11pm on Friday 2nd December. To get there take a 45 or 47 bus from outside Boots, opposite New Street Station’s entrance on Smallbrook Queensway. (There are other stops in the City but the route does wander around a bit so give yourself extra time with these). Bus stops are still changing so check the destination sign carefully. Ask for The Selly Park Tavern - it’s about a 15-minute ride. Fuller details on how to get there are given on your ticket.

PLEASE NOTE THE CHANGE OF DATE FROM OUR USUAL SECOND FRIDAY

Tickets are £10 each which includes the buffet etc but not your drinks. As we have the Alley you can play skittles if you wish - there

will be prizes for winners and you don't even have to know how to play because we have our own variants of the game, designed to give everyone a chance, none of which would be allowed at competition or any other level. There will be a free half hourly raffle and, to judge from past comments, a good time to be had by all.

The buffet will consist of a selection of sandwiches, sausage rolls, quiche, chicken wings, pizza, salads etc., plus a separate selection for vegans/vegetarians, provided that this requirement is clearly stated when you order your ticket.

With this newsletter there should be an application form for one or two tickets. Please complete it as indicated and hand it to Pat, with the necessary money, at the October or November Group Meeting or send it to the Membership Secretary, together with a cheque/postal order for the appropriate amount, at the address on the back page of the Newsletter. However, as there are sometimes problems with the postal system if you apply by post please send her an email at the same time in case your application is delayed. **THE DEADLINE FOR APPLICATIONS IS FRIDAY 18th NOVEMBER** because the Tavern needs food numbers that weekend. However, by that time NOVACON will have happened and there may not be any tickets left - numbers are restricted for safety reasons and we have reached that number almost every year and had to refuse latecomers.

REMEMBER THAT TICKETS WILL NOT BE AVAILABLE ON THE NIGHT - GET THEM NOW! *VB*

FILM DISCUSSION - 9th September by Vernon Brown.

Although the September programme item was a last minute replacement for the scheduled Andromeda2/BSFG joint meeting it went off very well. Although a number of regulars could not attend for various reasons, there were enough there, plus two visitors, to keep a lively discussion going deciding which are the top five SF films of all time. In fact, it ran from about 8.15 to 9.50, including a short break, when several had to leave to catch trains etc.

Thirty-eight titles were submitted for consideration, some via email from absentees, of which seven had the largest number of nominations. These were:

2001: A SPACE ODYSSEY,
BLADE RUNNER,
BRAZIL,
FORBIDDEN PLANET,
ALIEN,
ALIENS,
INVASION OF THE BODY SNATCHERS (1976).

Each was debated in turn and a vote taken of those who thought that it should be one of the top five. Comparison of the votes cast showed that the first five of those listed were considered to be the top five SF films of all time in that order, with BRAZIL and FORBIDDEN PLANET being joint number three. If anyone would like to agree or disagree, letters are always welcome. An entertaining evening!

FANTASYCON 2016 - an assessment by Chris Morgan



It was a sunny September weekend in Scarborough - just right for a late summer break. But this was a convention, where you stay inside the Grand Hotel almost all the time. Our room had a wonderful fifth-floor view of the beach and

harbour. It's a Victorian edifice, slightly crumbling and faded in places but mostly living up to its name, full of eccentricity and Art Nouveau details.

Fantasycon isn't really about fantasy, much more to do with horror. Pauline and I went with a carload of books, part of the collection of supernatural horror assembled by the late Joel Lane. When we arrived and found that we were stuck in a small room "The Library" at the end of a narrow corridor, with no passing traffic, we were pessimistic. But gradually books sold (all money to his mother Ella) and we returned to Birmingham with only half a carload.

Meanwhile the con was happening around us. We got to almost none of the programme items. A highlight was the launch of **SOMETHING REMAINS**, an anthology of stories based on Joel's ideas, written by those who knew and loved him. It's edited by Pauline (under her maiden name of Dugate) and by Peter Coleborn, and published by Alchemy Press. The launch party was a mass signing session, with most of the 38 authors participating.

On the Saturday evening Anne & Stan Nicholls hosted the David Gemmell Awards. This was very well attended and suitably witty. Awards went to Jason Chan (artist), Peter Newman (debut novel) and Mark Lawrence (best novel). Then Pauline and I read some of our poems at Allen Ashley's now traditional poetry event (accompanied for fifteen minutes by fireworks on the beach).

It was great to see many of Britain's horror writers attending the con, including Ramsey Campbell, Adam Nevill and dozens more. Also there were award-winning YA fantasy novelist Frances Hardinge (always wearing a black hat) and Joe Hill and Elizabeth Bear over from the US.

On the Sunday afternoon the British Fantasy (BFS) Awards were handed out and I'll leave it to Carol to list those winners.

Despite the presence of large numbers of mundanes at the Grand Hotel (they were all much older than us and probably wondered what we were doing; we tried not to interrupt their bingo) a good time was had. *CM*

HALLOWEEN THEMED EVENTS AROUND BIRMINGHAM

There appear to be quite a few forthcoming horror-themed events in the Midlands which are obviously due to Halloween. As there are so many I have decided to group them together rather than include them in the normal forthcoming events section.

- **THE EXORCIST**, 21st October - 5th November at **Birmingham Repertory Theatre**. Play in The House, Birmingham Rep. Cost £10 - £37.50. Book: www.birmingham-rep.co.uk or 0121 236 4455
- **DRACULA: THE MUSICAL**, 28th October - 5th November at **Blue Orange Theatre, Great Hampton Street**,

Jewellery Quarter. Play starts at 7:30 pm. Tickets £13. Box Office 0121 212 2643 or at www.blueorangetheatre.co.uk

- **HALLOWEEN screening, 29th October at the Mac Centre, Birmingham.** 8:15pm. Price £8. www.macbirmingham.co.uk or 0121 446 3232.
- **HALLOWEEN SILENT MOVIE SPECIAL: THE CABINET OF DR CALIGARI (1920), 31st October at Birmingham Town Hall.** Screening of the 1920 classic with live organ accompaniment, 7:30pm. £15 plus online transaction fee (£3). Book at Town Hall/Symphony Hall Box Office (0121 780 4949) or www.thsh.co.uk
- **ALIENS - 30th Anniversary, 29th October at National Space Centre, Leicester.** Screening of ALIENS. £5 + £1.12 fee Tel: 0116 261 0261 or www.spacecentre.co.uk CG

DAVID GEMMELL AWARDS

The 2016 David Gemmell Awards for Fantasy were presented at FantasyCon in Scarborough on the 24th September.

Ravenheart Award (for best cover art): Jason Chan for THE LIAR'S KEY by Mark Lawrence (Harper Collins)

Morningstar Award (for best debut novel): THE VAGRANT by Peter Newman (Harper Collins)

Legend Award (for best fantasy novel): THE LIAR'S KEY by Mark Lawrence (Harper Collins)

BRITISH FANTASY AWARDS 2016

The 2016 British Fantasy Award winners were announced on September 25th. The ceremony was at FantasyCon in Scarborough.

Best Fantasy Novel (Robert Holdstock Award): UPROOTED by Naomi Novik (Macmillan)

Best Horror Novel (August Derleth Award): RAWBLOOD by Catriona Ward (Weidenfeld & Nicholson)

Best Short Fiction: "Fabulous Beasts" by Priya Sharma (Tor.com)
Best Novella: THE PAUPER PRINCE AND THE EUCALYPTUS JINN by Usman T Malik (Tor.com)
Best Anthology: THE DOLL COLLECTION edited by Ellen Datlow (Tor Books)
Best Collection: GHOST SUMMER: STORIES by Tamarive Due (Prime Books)
Best Independent Press: Angry Robot (Marc Gascoigne)
Best Comic/Graphic novel: BITCH PLANET by Kelly Sue DeConnick, Valentine De Landro, Robert Wilson IV and Cris Peter (*Image Comics #2-5*)
Best Artist: Julie Dillon
Best non-fiction: LETTERS TO TIPTREE edited by Alexandra Pierce and Alisa Krasnostein (Twelfth Planet Press)
Best Magazine/Periodical: *Beneath Ceaseless Skies* edited by Scott K Andrews (Firkin Press)
Best Film/Television production: JONATHAN STRANGE & MR NORELL by Peter Harness (BBC One)
Best Newcomer (the Sydney J Bounds Award): Zen Cho for SORCEROR TO THE CROWN (Macmillan)
British Fantasy Society Special Award (Karl Edward Wagner): The FantasyCon Redshirts, past and present

NEWS IN BRIEF

Author, illustrator and SF fan **David A. Kyle**, has died at the age of 97. He was active in SF since 1933, chairing the 14th Worldcon and being a fan guest of honour at the 41st Worldcon. He co-founded Gnome Press in 1948 and designed many of the covers for their publications. He wrote the text for BSFA Award-winning textbook, A PICTORIAL HISTORY OF SCIENCE



FICTION (1976). He also wrote for many fanzines and his own fiction, including three novels set in EE 'Doc' Smith's *Lensman* series. He even had his honeymoon at the 1957 Worldcon in

England, chartering a plane specially for friends and family Author **Robert Weinberg** has died aged 70. He was an expert on pulp magazines. He reprinted many pulp SF and Fantasy stories including the *Pulp Classics*, *Lost Fantasies* and *Weird Menace Classics* anthology series. He bought *Weird Tales* in 1976 and leased the title to various people over the years. He was a Hugo Award finalist and World Fantasy Award winner for A BIOGRAPHICAL DICTIONARY OF SCIENCE FICTION AND FANTASY ARTISTS (1988) and wrote his own fiction novels including many series. He wrote for comics as well, including Marvel Comics and won a Stoker Award for his comic NIGHTSIDE (2003) and for Lifetime Achievement in 2008. He was also given a Worldcon Special Committee Award in 2012 for “years of service in advancing the field of science fiction, fantasy and horror” A new **Hugo category of Best Series** will be trialled in the Helsinki 2017 Worldcon. Attending fans will be able to decide whether to ratify the series for future awards Hungarian SF magazine, Galaktika has been attacked by SF author, **Ann Leckie** for translating short stories and publishing them without paying the authors. Those affected include many high-profile authors such as Terry Pratchett, Terry Pratchett, George RR Martin, Robert Heinlein, Kim Stanley Robinson and Connie Willis The Los Angeles Science Fantasy Society has voted to give the 2016 Forrest J Ackerman Award for Service to Science Fiction to author and scientist, **Gregory Benford** Author **Seth Grahame Smith**, (PRIDE AND PREJUDICE AND ZOMBIES) is being sued by Hachette to recover a \$500,000 advance for a book which has not been delivered And finally, farewell to the *Rosetta spacecraft* which ended its twelve-year mission to comet 67-P in a slow crash to the comet surface, sending images during the descent. CG

Erratum: The Allie Awards mentioned in the last newsletter News section were given to the contender in each category that received the most nominations without becoming a finalist. Thanks to Dave Langford for the clarification.

NEW CINEMA FILM RELEASES

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

OUIJA: ORIGIN OF EVIL - Release date October 21st. Horror. Family running a fake séance business unwittingly unleash real evil.

DOCTOR STRANGE - Release date October 25th. *Marvel* film. Neurosurgeon with damaged hands becomes a powerful sorcerer.

MAX STEEL - Release date October 25th. Superhero film. Teenager and his alien companion, Steel combine their powers to become superhero Max Steel.

RINGS - Release date October 31st. Horror. A young woman is threatened by a curse which will kill her in seven days. *CG*

FORTHCOMING BOOKS

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



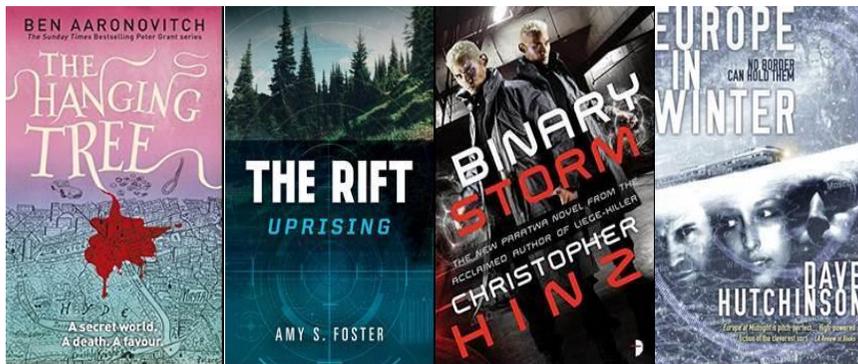
THE WRAITHS OF WAR (Obsidian Heart 3) by Mark Morris / Titan Books / 400 pgs / £7.99 hardback / ISBN 978-1781168745 / October 14th. Fantasy. Hero must uncover secrets in different time periods to discover the true nature of the Obsidian Heart.

A CLOSED AND COMMON ORBIT (Wayfarers 2) by Becky Chambers / Hodder & Stoughton / 384 pgs / £16.99 hardback / ISBN 978-1473621442 / October 20th. SF. Lovelace, a former ship AI struggles to adapt to her new but illegal synthetic body.

THE STAR OF THE SEA (Weird Space 4) by Una M^cCormack / Abaddon / 304 pgs / £6.17 paperback / ISBN 978-1781084830 /

October 25th. SF. Stella Maris, a small outlying world where three intelligent species co-exist, now finds its peace threatened by outside interests.

THE BLOOD MIRROR (Lightbringer 4) by Brent Weeks / Orbit / 704 pgs / £20 hardback / ISBN 978-0356504605 / October 27th. Fantasy. As the resistance to the White King's armies' falters, the only person capable of averting the war is trapped in a magical prison.



THE HANGING TREE (Rivers of London 6) by Ben Aaronovitch. / Gollancz / 400 pgs / £14.99 hardback / ISBN 978-0575132559 / November 3rd. Fantasy. PC Peter Grant must investigate suspicious deaths at an exclusive party as a favour to the intimidating Lady Ty.

THE RIFT UPRISING by Amy S Foster / Harper Voyager / 400 pgs / £12.99 paperback / ISBN 978-0008179243 / November 3rd. SF. 17-year old soldier, Ryn begins to question who are the true monsters - those she is trained to fight or those she fights for.

BINARY STORM by Christopher Hinz / Angry Robot / 400 pgs / £11.57 paperback / ISBN 978-0857666215 / November 3rd. SF. Binaries are assassins with a single consciousness shared between two bodies.

EUROPE IN WINTER (Fractured Europe 3) by Dave Hutchinson / Solaris / 320 pgs / £7.99 paperback / ISBN 978-1781084632 / November 3rd. SF. In an alternate Europe, the Community is now

the largest nation in Europe. It should be a time of peace but secret threats remain. CG

📖📖📖📖 **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)**

***VIGIL (Verity Fassbinder 1)* by Angela Slatter.**

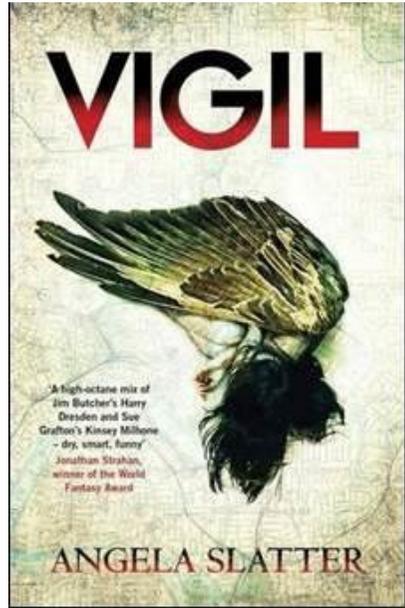
Jo Fletcher Books / 368 pgs / £14.99 paperback / ISBN 978-1784294021

Reviewed by Theresa Derwin

Jo Fletcher books (an imprint of Quercus) is fast becoming the publisher to go to for high quality, award level genre fiction. So, team up multi-award winner author Angela Slatter with her first full length novel, and you have pure gold.

Verity Fassbinder has her feet in two worlds; daughter of a human and a Weyrd, she can walk in both worlds. Though she doesn't have much power herself, her ability to walk between worlds is a valuable asset. This lands her the job of keeping the peace between both races and ensuring the Weyrd stay hidden.

The Council of Five act as a sort of government for the Weyrd now living in this analogue city of Brisbane. Most of the Weyrd (often fleeing persecution) have arrived over in the past from whatever old country they came from and established themselves. Verity's ex- 'Bela' (full name of Zvezdomir 'Bela' Vlad Tepes (you may recognise the name)) turns up at Verity's door one eve, looking drop-dead gorgeous as usual, if a little bit goth. He's arrived in a distinctive purple taxi cab driven by Ziggi, her usual chauffeur (Verity was injured during her last job for Bela and now sports a limp hence



the transport). Verity clammers into the car, complete with shrunken head Gris-Gris in the window, to find one of the Council of Five sitting there. Over twenty children have gone missing, some normal, some Weyrd, and the Council of Five and Bela, who is there as chief spy/cop/enforcer want to hire her to find out where the children have gone and who has taken them.

This is a solid Urban Fantasy set in an 'other' Brisbane where the Weyrd blend in as the homeless, the drunk, the disenfranchised and the alternative community. Angela Slatter's voice, though distinctively unique and hers, reminds me a little of Jim Butcher (*Dresden Files*) and Seanan McGuire (*The Incryptid* and *October Daye* books). Predominantly because Slatter combines high-octane, fast-paced action with PI Procedural, a whole host of wonderful creatures (not just bog standard vampires and werewolves), a cracking sense of humour and a deeper thread running through it. That thread? Racism, prejudice and treatment of other. Slatter isn't afraid to veer towards the issue of how 'other' is often treated and her cast of characters is wonderfully diverse. Add to this the ongoing tension between Bela and Verity (how can he really be her ex when she blooming well works with him?) and how this affects her, and you have a great addition to the genre, and one I predict will last the long haul.

A smashing book which kept me reading through the night, as in, couldn't put down! Splendidly written too. TD
(*Review copy kindly donated by Jo Fletcher Books*)

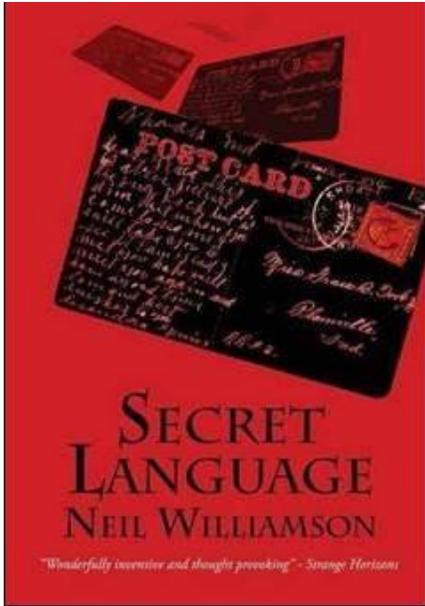
SECRET LANGUAGE by Neil Williamson

NewCon Press / £12.99 paperback / 211 pgs / ISBN 978-1910935149

Reviewed by Pauline Morgan.

When perusing job ads, so many of them demand that the applicant should be a good communicator. It can be taken as read that a writer tries their best to be such but down the ages there have been many attempts to create secret languages, understandable only to those in the know. The Victorians had their language of flowers - the contents of a posy being carefully chosen to convey a message, perhaps of love. Before that, in Regency England, the way a fan was held or manipulated told a suitor whether or not their attentions

were welcome. According to Neil Williamson, in the second story in this volume, the way a stamp is positioned on a letter or postcard is significant. This story, 'The Secret Language of Stamps', has the mark of the old masters such as M.R. James in that it begins innocently, here with the relationship between landlady and lodger. When he goes abroad for business he sends her postcards. Gradually, the situation becomes more sinister as, though he is reported dead, the postcards continue to arrive.



One of Williamson's passions is music. A number of the stories here reflect this and many of them have horrific elements. 'Sweeter Than', though, is an engaging story about the music of life and relationships and the different tempos they have at varying times in a life. 'Arrhythmia' on the other hand is the rhythm under-lying life in a dystopian world. Steve has been born to it but like many young people he tries to break away from the beat and rebel. Most personal rebellions end up in failure and the paths you think you are trying to avoid (the ones

the parents took) have a habit of returning. 'Pearl in The Shell' contains the interesting, and soul-destroying idea that only a handful of songs are different enough to be copyrightable. In this scenario, any piece of music with only a faint similarity has the royalties paid to the originator of a riff. The way around it is fast sampling. The Vistas crew have the idea that a songwriter who have recently died, might have invented something new and they intend to steal it. The story is an indictment of the current trends in the music business and the recent plagiarism cases. 'Killing Me Softly' is crime. The victims are apparently committing suicide, after practicing for a local karaoke competition. Doloretta Siwek is the DI in charge of the investigation.

Involved is a siren and it is only her knowledge of mythology that stops her succumbing as well. 'This Is Not A Love Song' considers love songs as epitomises three stages of a romance, but breakups hurt so Michael wants only the falling in love part. To that end he seeks out a DJ and a club that provides that. The problem is that it is addictive. The last music based story is 'The Death Of Abigail Goudy' is a story about echoes of the past and how music can invoke them.

The other stories in this volume cover a mixture of genres. 'The Posset Pot' is a post-apocalyptic SF story. The world has been devastated by the appearance of bubbles which form around people and objects and vanish taking anything inside them away. There are a number of theories as to what they are or where they came from but survival is the main concern of the only two people who seem to be alive in the ruins of Glasgow. 'Lost Sheep' is more of a space opera with Danny, the pilot of *Hope to Die* discovering a long lost generation ship while on the run from the authorities. The occupants have long been genetically modified to survive but have the skill of weaving patterns that tell stories into their carpets but they also seem to have been at all significant events in history. Both these stories have a well thought out background and it seems a pity to waste it on a short story. In both there is scope for more set against the same backgrounds.

'Silk Bones' is a kind of apocryphal story. Ria has found a way to forget the bad things she has done by whispering them to a bone, wrapping it in silk and burying it in snow. After traumatic events, people often bury the memories deep in their minds but as Ria discovers, they are not gone and there is always the danger of them resurfacing and the original events being relived. This is a clever story as is 'Deep Draw'. This, though, is very different. It is a good choice for the first in this volume as it is about telling stories. As Vincent Deluca tells his story to a barman, an empty carafe fills with what is apparently water.

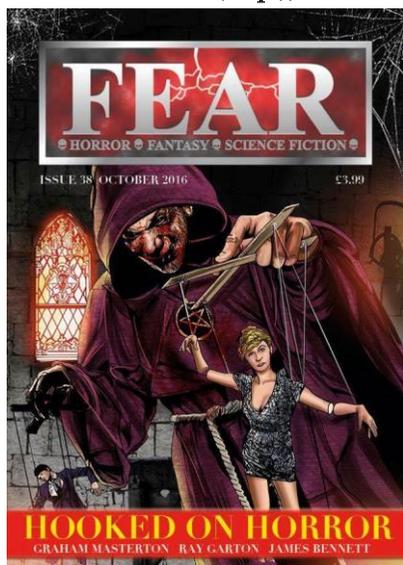
All the other stories in this volume are worth reading but the stand out one is 'Fish On Friday'. It is an extreme portrait of the nanny state. In an independent Scotland the government has decided that everyone should be fit and healthy. To that end, legislation has

been passed that requires everyone to do the required amount of exercise and only order food from a specified list. Ninety-three-year-old Ms MacArthur has breached the rules by not ordering any fish. This is a transcript of the phone call that reprimands her. It is tongue-in-cheek and delightful. The book is worth it for this one alone. There is, however, a wide range of stories and there is something for everyone here. PM

(Review copy kindly donated by NewCon Press)

FEAR A magazine review by Chris Morgan

Issue #38 £3.99 (<http://www.fear-magazine.com>)



After a hiatus of 27 years John Gilbert has relaunched his horror magazine as a bi-monthly, with the first (called Issue 37) out in August 2016. It's a good-looking 50-page glossy with stories from Ramsey Campbell and Johnny Mains & Simon Bestwick, interviews with Campbell, Mains, Gary McMahon, Jonathan Maberry and artist Jim Pitts. There's a tribute to film director Robin Hardy, lots of film news and some reviews of books and films.

The whole thing is well printed and published with plenty of pictures (Ramsey Campbell smiles out from the front cover), very professional and a snip at £3.99. For my taste there's rather too much film and interview material, not enough fiction. The stories are well worth reading and the interviews are well conducted. John Gilbert is in the process of appointing a fiction editor and intends to have a higher proportion of fiction in future issues. Recommended. CM
(Copy kindly donated by John Gilbert)

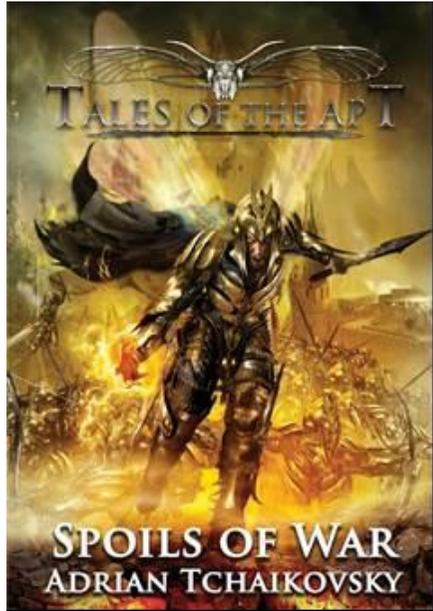
Editor's Note: Issue 37 is sold out. Next available is the October/November issue (#38)

SPOILS OF WAR (Tales of the Apt 1) by Adrian Tchaikovsky
NewCon Press / 258 pgs / £12.99 paperback, £2.99 ebook / ISBN
978-1910935217

Reviewed by Carol Goodwin.

Every reader has their favourite authors and Adrian Tchaikovsky is one of mine. He recently won this year’s Clarke Award for his SF novel, **THE CHILDREN OF TIME**. Before that though, he is most well-known for his 10-volume *Shadows of the Apt* fantasy series,

This collection of short stories is a companion (using the same background) to that series. For those unfamiliar with his work, in the original series the world is populated by different races of humans, called *kinden* who have aspects/abilities based on a particular insect; Wasp-*kinden* can “sting”, Fly-*kinden* are small but can fly rapidly etc. It is set in a time when the Apt, those able to think scientifically and use machines are in the ascendant against the more traditional rulers, the Inapt who have more mystical abilities. In particular, the militaristic Wasp Empire is on a campaign of invasion and conquest.



In this first volume of *Tales of the Apt*, the stories focus on the experiences of individuals set mainly against the backdrop of one of the major events of the novels, the twelve-year invasion and conquest of the Dragonfly Commonweal by the Wasp Empire. Whilst having read the novels adds some extra background, the stories work well as stand-alone pieces and the only thing the new reader really needs to understand is the central concept of the different *kinden* races.

Not all successful novel writers have the ability to write good short stories, but here the author demonstrates that he excels in both fields. The stories feature a range of characters, ranging from rich to

poor, the noble of heart to the self-centred and amoral yet all feel real and complex. The characterisation is exceptional and there is always some aspect of a character that the reader sympathises or identifies with whatever their faults in a way that reminds me very much of David Gemmell. Adrian Tchaikovsky also avoids the trap of too many collections/anthologies in that the stories here are varied both in tone and theme, from dark through to wry humour. For example, in “Ironclads” we see elite soldier Sergeant Varmen’s heroic defence of his crashed aircrew and of the growth of respect between enemies whereas in “Camouflage” the story is of Cari, one of the Pioneers, the lowest group in the Wasp army, who perform all the dishonourable, despised but necessary tasks of war. Doubly isolated by her job and her disfigured, ugly appearance, her patient and delayed vengeance earn her the admiration of the lieutenant who narrates the tale. In another change of tone, I thoroughly enjoyed “An Old Man in A Harsh Season” which reads very much like a Spaghetti Western, where an old warrior is challenged to a duel but is aided by an unlikely group of allies all for their own selfish reasons. All in all, a very entertaining and unusual collection which I thoroughly recommend. CG

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

NOTE: Waterstones Birmingham have kindly agreed to a 50% discount on any of their events for Brum Group members. Just tell them you are a member when booking your place.

TIM PEAKE’S PHOTOS FROM SPACE, 23rd September - 31st December, Birmingham. Exhibition of photos taken whilst aboard the ISS at Thinktank, Millennium Point. No Booking required, Thinktank entry fee applies (£13)

SCREENING of THE GIRL WITH ALL THE GIFTS, followed by Q&A with MIKE CAREY, 8th October, Birmingham. 7:30 pm

at The Mockingbird, The Custard Factory. £8. Book: 0121 224 7456 or Facebook. Screening only (no Q&A) on the 7th for £5.

CONVERSATION WITH MIKE CAREY, 9th October, Birmingham. Talks about his writing and the making of THE GIRL WITH ALL THE GIFTS film. Part of Birmingham Literature Festival. **VENUE CHANGED TO WATERSTONES B'HAM 6 - 7pm.** £8. Book: 0121 245 4455 or at www.birmingham-box.co.uk/event/in-conversation-with-mike-carey/

SPECTACULAR SCIENCE FICTION, 10th October, Nottingham Q&A discussion with 4 SF Authors (Andrew Bannister, Deborah Install, Rod Duncan and Mike Brooks) at Waterstones Nottingham 7 pm. Free but book. Call 0115 947 0069 or ask instore.

THE ROCKY HORROR SHOW, 10th - 15th October, Birmingham. Rock and Roll Horror musical comedy. New Alexandra Theatre. www.atgtickets.com/venues/new-alexandra-theatre-birmingham/ £17.90 - 52.40

CHRIS HADFIELD VISIT, 13th October, Leicester. At Leicester Space Centre - Q & A with astronaut Chris Hadfield. Prices from £30 (inc space centre admission), £60 with dinner. Details at www.spacecentre.co.uk/

TIM PEAKE VISIT, 14th October, Leicester. At Leicester Space Centre - Talk followed by Q & A with astronaut Tim Peake. Normal space centre admission but advance booking essential. £14. Details at www.spacecentre.co.uk/

INTO THE NARROWS with JAMES BROGDEN, 15th October, Birmingham. Local fantasy author James Brogden talks about writing and getting published. Part of Birmingham University Book to the Future, Venue **tba.** 2 - 3pm. Free - limited spaces. Book at www.birmingham.ac.uk/university/colleges/artslaw/events/btbf/2016/james-brogden-register.aspx

UNIVERSAL MONSTERS SEASON, 15th October - 15th November at Electric Cinema, Birmingham. Screening of many Universal monster films including DRACULA, FRANKENSTEIN,

THE MUMMY, THE INVISIBLE MAN, BRIDE OF FRANKENSTEIN, THE WOLF MAN and THE CREATURE FROM THE BLACK LAGOON (3D) £8.70. www.theelectric.co.uk or 0121 643 7879

AN EVENING WITH CHRIS BECKETT, 25th October, Birmingham. Author will be discussing DAUGHTER OF EDEN with Arthur C Clarke Award Director, Tom Hunter. Waterstones High Street 7 - 9 pm. Free. Booking: 0121 631 4353, or call instore.

AN EVENING WITH BECKY CHAMBERS, 26th October, Birmingham. BSFA/CLARKE award-winning author of SF book, THE LONG WAY TO A SMALL ANGRY PLANET Waterstones High Street 7pm. £3. Booking: 0121 631 4353, or call instore.

CONVENTIONS

(Thanks to Dave Lally for information on 2017 London exhibits)

WINDOWS ON OTHER WORLDS, October - January, Dronfield. Exhibition of SF art by Alex Storer at Art 4 Restore Gallery, The Forge, Church Street, Dronfield, Derbyshire S18 1QX. Tues-Sat 10am - 5pm

SCI-FEST YORKSHIRE, 24th - 30th October, Huddersfield. SF-themed festival featuring Ken MacLeod. Events priced individually. <https://scifestyorkshire2016.wordpress.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

SLEDGE-LIT, 26th November, Derby. Literary SF/Fantasy festival. Guests of Honour Justina Robson & Stephen Volk (novelist & screenwriter). Tickets £25 www.derbyquad.co.uk/special-event/sledge-lit

ROBOTS: 500 years of Humanoid Robots, 8th February - 3rd September. Major exhibition at the Science Museum, London. £15 at

www.sciencemuseum.org.uk/visitmuseum/plan_your_visit/exhibitions/robotbots

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

INTO THE UNKNOWN: A JOURNEY THROUGH SCIENCE FICTION, 2nd June - 1st September 2017, London. Major exhibition at the Barbican Centre. Includes original manuscripts by Jules Verne and others, music, film and art. Details still to follow.
www.barbican.org.uk/news/artformnews/art/into-the-unknown-a-journey-throu

FUTURE MEETINGS OF THE BSFG

November 4th - **Film night**

December 2nd - **Christmas Social**

January 13th - **AGM**

February 10th - **Quiz**

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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