

BRUM GROUP NEWS

THE MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF THE

BIRMINGHAM SCIENCE FICTION GROUP

APRIL 2017

ISSUE 547

HONORARY PRESIDENT: BRIAN W ALDISS, OBE

COMMITTEE: VERNON BROWN (CHAIRMAN); PAT BROWN (TREASURER);
CAROL GOODWIN (NEWSLETTER EDITOR);
DAVE CORBY (PUBLICITY OFFICER); WILLIAM MCCABE (WEBSITE);
NOVACON 47 CHAIRS: HELENA BOWLES AND ALICE LAWSON

WEBSITE:

www.birminghamsfgroup.org.uk/

FACEBOOK:

www.facebook.com/groups/BirminghamSFGroup/

EMAIL:

bhamsfgroup@yahoo.co.uk

TWITTER:

@BirminghamSF

DAVE HUTCHINSON

APRIL 7th

This month we welcome science fiction and fantasy writer Dave Hutchinson. By the age of 21 he had published four volumes of stories from 1979 to 1981. He then became a journalist until after a decade of non-fiction writing, he returned to publishing fiction.

In 2014 he published *EUROPE IN AUTUMN*, (published by Solaris) set in a near-future Europe of feuding countries and mini-states (which pre-dated Brexit!). It received many nominations including BSFA, *Locus* and the Arthur C



May 7th - SF/Fantasy writer and Clarke Award winner **Adrian Tchaikovsky**.

Clarke Award. The second volume of this *Fractured Europe* series, **EUROPE AT MIDNIGHT** was also well-received and nominated again for BSFA and Clarke Awards. The final volume, **EUROPE IN WINTER** was published in November 2016 and is again on the BSFA shortlist (Clarke Award shortlist is not yet available). More information can be found at his website, <https://hutchinsondave.wordpress.com/> or @HutchinsonDave on Twitter. 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.

ALL ABOUT DAVE – JUST AS HE'D LIKE IT by Theresa Derwin.

So, I'd already written this piece, and The Powers That Be, or Dave Holmes himself, made an almighty roar from above and deleted it from Evernote leaving me in a panic. It wasn't recoverable. That's when I figured it out; Dave was still being a pain in my a*** from 'Beyond' or wherever the hell he landed. (Let's hope it wasn't there, ahem).

You see, as Dave's friend, mentee, and sometimes other half, Dave had a habit of doing what he always did; telling it like it was. "Not good enough. Do it again." Which is what I think happened to my original piece, or when I told him a random dream like the last time I spoke to him, when he was in hospital near the end he said "write it down." He was always seeking perfection in others in his weird, gruff, honest and laconic way. He encouraged and mentored and supported quite a few writers, artists and photographers over time. Some little-known guy called

Clive Barker was a victim of Dave's support, and look how he turned out. Dave just knew what worked in the SFF and horror genre, from years working in *Andromeda Bookshop* with Rog Peyton, selling stock at cons such as Fantasycon and Novacon, and then running his own comic book shop, *The Magic Labyrinth* in Leicester where he finally settled. He was the ultimate Geek Guru, complete with beard, weird waistcoat, Batman or Superman T-shirt and a pint in his hand.

Yeah, speaking of the word 'pint' Dave loved his beer! At cons you'd either find him in the dealer's room, in the hotel bar with the old guard, or at another separate pub catching up with the locals. Whenever we'd meet it was in a pub, most of the time; Dave's home from home. Our local in Birmingham was the *Spread Eagle* in Acocks Green, with Jayne and the other bar staff, either just the two of us, or with my Dad along for company, or as part of The Grey Lodge a few years ago.



Latterly though, as I'd given up the drink, he had great fun at my expense when it came to Cider Festival time, trying all the samples in front of me and licking his chops with a 'mmmm' sound. Yep, he was a b - no, we don't use those kinds of words in the BSFG. But I loved him to pieces anyway.

Through his years at *Andromeda* and at the Cape Hill parties with the likes of Helena Bowles and Richard Standage, Joel Lane, Tony Berry, Bernie, Steve Green, Martin Tudor (who remembers *Critical Wave*?) Dave was a regular part of the SFF Community. He was sarky, he was cheeky, he was a font of comic book knowledge but most of all, he was unmistakable.

Those that know him of old, will remember that belly, forged through years of excellent beers and his own culinary creations (he

was a damn good cook). His truffles were to die for (ooh, sorry Dave).

However you knew him, Holmsey was a force of nature. He was an iconic part of the genre and will be remembered with snorts rather than smiles, over that dirty laugh and familiar glint in his eye.

You'll be missed my Bob, my Thorin Oakenshield, my Thor, my Elmo. Ta da

NEWSLETTER PRINTING

Carol Goodwin

Unfortunately, we will have to cease using our present printers in the near future. We have been using a company's in-house printer, and paying non-professional rates. However, as the person who organised this is leaving that company, we will no longer have access to that option. We have looked at various commercial printing firms but the quotes to date involve a three to four-fold increase in price over our current monthly bill. If anyone has any contacts who might be able to take on the printing at a reasonable rate, the Committee would be very grateful for any suggestions.

If we have to go with one of the printers we have found to date, there will need to be some changes to the newsletter. Options might include one or more of the following; going back to black and white, shrinking the number of pages, increasing membership/entry fees or going completely digital ie an electronic copy sent via email.

EDITOR'S NOTE

Carol Goodwin

This newsletter has had to be produced a couple of weeks ahead of my normal schedule as I will be away on holiday in March. Any significant news, awards etc which happen during my absence will be included in the May newsletter. The newsletter will have been printed to the normal schedule so you should have received it at the usual time.

FORTHCOMING BOOKS

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

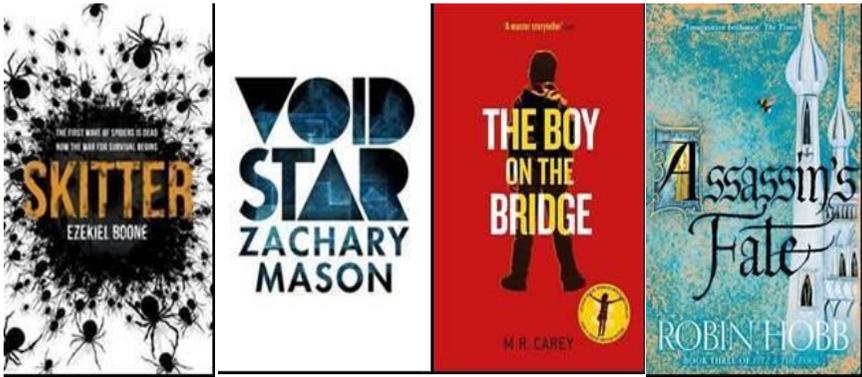


COLD WELCOME (Vatta's Peace 1) by **Elizabeth Moon** / Orbit / 464 pgs / £8.99 paperback / ISBN 978-0356506289 / April 13th. SF. Admiral Vatta's shuttle is sabotaged and she must lead her fellow survivors to safety, whilst avoiding the saboteurs.

DREAMS BEFORE THE START OF TIME by **Anne Charnock** / 47North / 224 pgs / £8.99 paperback / ISBN 978-1503934726 / April 18th. SF. In a near-future London, what does it mean to be a parent when science changes the whole process of procreation?

FROM DARKEST SKIES by **Sam Peters** / Gollancz / 336 pgs / £14.99 hardback / ISBN 978-1473214750 / April 20th. SF. Widower searches for his wife's killer, aided by an AI recreation of her personality.

SKULLSWORN by **Brian Staveley** / Tor / 320 pgs / £16.99 hardback / ISBN 978-1509822959 / April 20th. Fantasy. Pyrra must find love within a month and then kill them to complete her assassin's initiation.



SKITTER (Hatching 2) by Ezekiel Boone / Gollancz / 352 pgs / £7.99 paperback / ISBN 978-1473215214 / April 27th. In a world overrun by predatory spiders, humanity searches for a solution.

VOID STAR by Zachary Mason / Jonathan Cape / 400 pgs / £16.99 hardback / ISBN 978-0224098243 / April 27th. SF. In a future San Francisco, memory-enhanced Irina and Kern, a Brazilian refugee are brought together by dangerous secrets.

THE BOY ON THE BRIDGE (Girl with all the Gifts 2) by M R Carey / Orbit / 400 pgs / £16.99 hardback / ISBN 978-0356503530 / May 4th. A boy is sent out into the zombie-infested world to help save the survivors.

ASSASSIN'S FATE (Fitz and the Fool 3) by Robin Hobb / Harper Voyager / 864 pgs / £25 hardback / ISBN 978-0007444250 / May 4th. Fantasy. Fitz and the Fool gain dangerous allies in their quest to rescue Fitz's kidnapped daughter from the White Prophets. CG

NEW CINEMA FILM RELEASES

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

A DARK SONG - Release date April 7th. Horror. A couple perform a dangerous ritual that will grant their wishes.

COLOSSAL - Release date April 21st. A woman discovers that catastrophic events are linked to her mental breakdown.



GUARDIANS OF THE GALAXY 2 - Release date April 28th. The team of superheroes try to unravel the mystery of Peter Quill's parentage.

ALIEN: COVENANT - Release date May 12th. The crew of a colony ship discover an uncharted "paradise".

KING ARTHUR: LEGEND OF THE SWORD - Release date May 12th. Young gang member in Londinium discovers his heritage when he draws Excalibur from the stone.



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**)

Editor's Note - I have included a review of the first of the Fractured Europe series by our guest, Dave Hutchinson, reprinted from December 2014 issue.

EUROPE IN AUTUMN by Dave Hutchinson

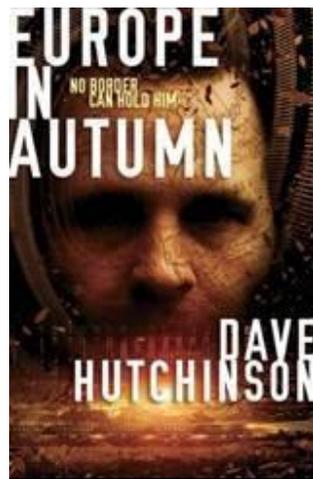
Solaris / 317 pgs / £7.99 paperback / ISBN 978-1781081952

Reviewed by Pauline Morgan.

Predicting future political trends is difficult. As Charles Stross has now found not everything turns out the way you want it. Several of his novels will now have to be regarded as alternative histories. Not that Stross will be particularly worried as there is a fine tradition in alternative histories. Extrapolating current trends into

a relatively near future is an interesting exercise. Currently, there seems to be a desire for ethnic groupings to desire autonomy. Whether or not this is economically viable depends on the strengths of the group. Dave Hutchinson has taken this trend to extremes and postulated a Europe divided into ever decreasing blocs which may or may not have free movement across borders. **EUROPE IN AUTUMN** is set largely in Central Europe and centres around Rudi, an Estonian cook working in a Polish restaurant. It's not an easy life but he's reasonably content. Max, the owner, pays protection to keep in business. It's an accepted part of the system in a Europe where the authorities think they have better things to do. Rudi is able to move more freely across borders than most Polish nationals and with less suspicion so he is asked to go to the small state of Hindenberg and bring back a message from Max's cousin. This is the start of a new career. While still working at the restaurant he is trained as a Coureur. Using a carefully constructed set of aliases, Coureurs smuggle documents and people across the borders faster than going through diplomatic channels.

This is a novel that starts off well. The seediness of the characters, settings and plot structure is reminiscent of a realistic spy thriller - far more gritty than the Bond novels. These are people that most would not notice as any good spy ought to be. Rudi's frustration at the tedium of his initial training is shot through with reality. The first third is well written, pacy and holds the attention, everything that a good thriller should be. These qualities don't diminish but as Rudi gets deeper into the role that has been elected into, the plot becomes more episodic. The result is something that could easily be turned into a many-part TV series. It has the same quality. There is a cast of regular characters who have developing roles and face changing dilemmas. There is the mysterious Zone. This is an area on either



side of a railway line that crosses Europe and which steadily becomes the focus of Rudi's activities. This is the story arc which creeps into the episodes, unnoticed at first but heading towards the big denouement in the final episode. For this reason, it is a shame that Hutchinson has confined himself to a single novel. Some of the episodes feel as if they want to be expanded and made more complex. A trilogy would have been nice. A longer series would have made the readership sit up and take notice. *PM (Review copy kindly donated by Solaris)*

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

All details are correct to the best of our knowledge, we advise contacting organizers before travelling. Any information about forthcoming SF/Fantasy/Horror events is always welcome - please send to Carol at goodwincd@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.

KIM STANLEY ROBINSON, 3rd April, London. Kim Stanley Robinson in conversation with Francis Spufford and Adam Roberts. 7pm. Waterstones Piccadilly (203/206 Piccadilly, W1J 9HD) £8 redeemable against author titles. Book at www.waterstones.com/ or 0207 851 2400.



DAVID BRIN signing, 11th April, London. David Brin will be signing CHASING SHADOWS: VISIONS OF OUR TRANSPARENT WORLD. 6 to 7pm. Forbidden Planet, London Megastore, 179 Shaftesbury Avenue, WC2H 8JR

IN CONVERSATION WITH LAINI TAYLOR, 11th April, Birmingham. Fantasy author discusses her new novel, **STRANGE THE DREAMER**. Waterstones 7 pm. Free but booking required at 0121 631 4353, or call instore.

ELECTRIC CINEMA SCREENINGS, 16th - 30th April, Birmingham. Includes **HARVEY** (16th April) starring James Stewart, **GODZILLA** (27th April) - 1954 version with whisky "taste along" and **MAD MAX: FURY ROAD** (30th April) - black and white version. £9.50 or £11.50 sofa seat. www.theelectric.co.uk or 0121 643 7879

CONVENTIONS and EXHIBITIONS

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

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

INNOMINATE (EASTERCON), 14th - 17th April, Birmingham. Guests of Honour are Pat Cadigan, Judith Clute and Colin Harris. At the Hilton Metropole, NEC, Birmingham. Membership £70 at www.eastercon2017.uk/home

INTO THE UNKNOWN: A JOURNEY THROUGH SCIENCE FICTION, 2nd June - 1st September, London. Major exhibition at the Barbican Centre. Includes original manuscripts by Jules Verne and others, music, film and art. Details at www.barbican.org.uk/

VISIONS OF SPACE 2, 10th -24th June, Wells. Exhibition of SF art by British Artists including **David A Hardy**, our September guest **Jackie E Burns** and Mat Irvine (BBC Special effects) etc including illustrated talks at Wells & Mendip Museum, 8

Cathedral Green, Wells, Somerset, BA5 2UE. 10am - 5pm. Free entrance (closed Sundays). Info: www.wellsastronomers.org.uk

EDGE-LIT 6, 15th July, Derby. Literary SF/Fantasy festival. Guests of Honour Joanne Harris, Stephen Baxter, Peter Newman and Jeff Noon. Tickets £30 at www.derbyquad.co.uk/film/edge-lit-6.aspx

NINE WORLDS GEEKFEST, 4th - 6th August, London. Multi-media con with strong literature strand. Tickets £99 at <https://nineworlds.co.uk/>

SFW IN THE CITY, 7th - 8th October, Sheffield. Sci-Fi Weekender spin-off multi-media convention. O2 Academy. Various prices depending on level of access/accommodation. www.sfwinthecity.com/

BRISTOLCON, 28th October, Bristol. Guests of Honour Jonathan Howard and Jen Williams. Doubletree Hotel. £20. Details at www.bristolcon.org

NOVACON 47, 10th - 12th November, Nottingham. Guest of Honour is Adrian Tchaikovsky. The Park Inn, Nottingham. Tickets £48. Details at www.novacon.org.uk

FUTURE MEETINGS OF THE BSFG

May 12th - SF/Fantasy writer **Adrian Tchaikovsky**

June 9th - SF/Fantasy writer **Aliette de Bodard**

July 14th - literary agent **John Jarrold**

August 11th - **Summer Social**

September 8th - astronomical artist **Jackie Burns**

October 13th - **Andy Sawyer**, from the SF Foundation

November 3rd - SF author **Peter F Hamilton**

December 1st - Christmas social (date subject to change)

BRUM GROUP NEWS #547 (April 2017) copyright 2017 for Birmingham SF Group. Articles, artwork and photographs must not be reproduced in whole or part without the consent of the editor and/or the respective authors. This issue produced by Carol Goodwin (goodwincd@yahoo.com). Opinions expressed herein do not necessarily reflect those of the committee or the general membership or, for that matter, the person giving the ‘opinion’. Thanks to all the named contributors in this issue.

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. Details of how to join/pay can be obtained at a meeting or by email to bhamsfgroup@yahoo.co.uk