

BRUM GROUP NEWS

THE MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF THE

BIRMINGHAM SCIENCE FICTION GROUP

MARCH 2019

ISSUE 570

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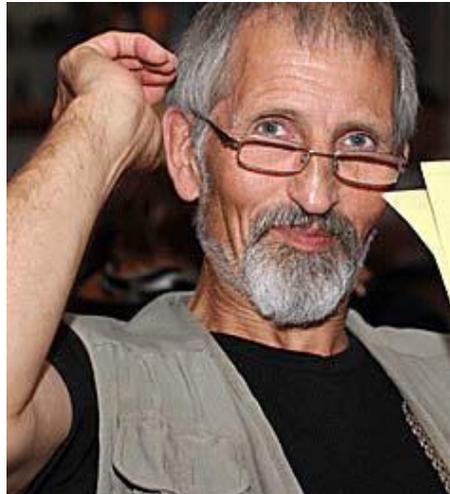
@BirminghamSF

CHRIS MORGAN

March 8th

Our guest this month will need no introduction to most of our members.

In addition to being a writer, reviewer, poet, teacher and book collector, CHRIS MORGAN has attended all 48 Novacon and been a Brum Group member since the early 1970s. Over the last 20 or 30 years he has become increasingly fascinated by art



April 12th - Fantasy author and BFS Award winner for Best Newcomer, **Zen Cho**

of all kinds as well as building his own collection. He has also been the auctioneer at the annual Novacon art auction for many years. This will be his third illustrated talk to the group on SF and Fantasy Art. This time he will be using his vast experience and knowledge to talk to us about 50 YEARS OF ART AT NOVACON & THE BRUM GROUP. 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 £6 for non-members.

BSFA AWARD NOMINATIONS – Novels

The shortlist for the British Science Fiction Association Awards have been announced. The winners will be announced at Ytterbium (Eastercon 2019) on Saturday 20th April in Heathrow. Details for other categories can be found at www.bsfa.co.uk.

EUROPE AT DAWN by Dave Hutchinson (Solaris)

REVENANT GUN by Yoon Ha Lee (Solaris)

BEFORE MARS by Emma Newman (Gollancz)

EMBERS OF WAR by Gareth L Powell (Titan Books)

ROSEWATER by Tade Thompson (Orbit)

Also, worth noting that our forthcoming July guest, **Nina Allan** is nominated in the Best Shorter Fiction category (“The Gift of Angels”) and Best Non-Fiction (“Time Pieces” in *Interzone* 2018)

NEBULA AWARD NOMINATIONS - Novels

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

THE CALCULATING STARS by Mary Robinette Kowal (Tor US)

THE POPPY WAR by R F Kuang (Harper Voyager)

BLACKFISH CITY by Sam J Miller (Orbit)

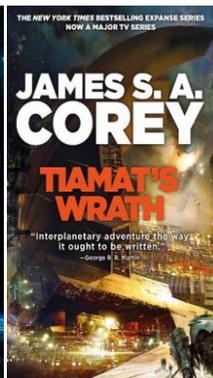
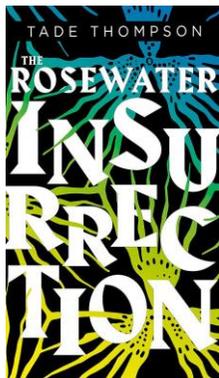
SPINNING SILVER by Naomi Novik (Macmillan)

WITCHMARK by C L Polk (Tor.com)

TRAIL OF LIGHTNING by Rebecca Roanhorse (Saga)

FORTHCOMING BOOKS

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

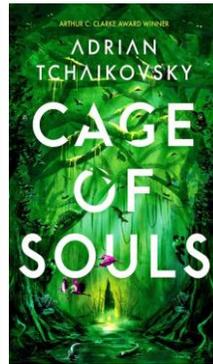
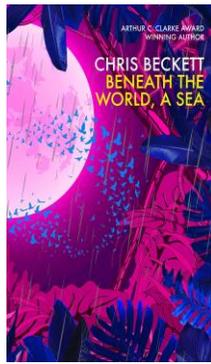
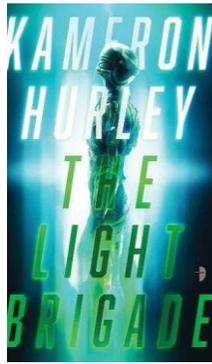
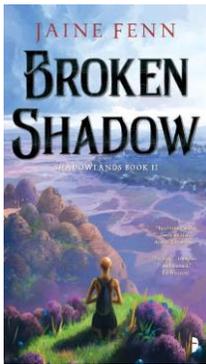


ROSEWATER INSURRECTION (Wormwood 2) by Tade Thompson / Orbit / 400 pgs / £8.99 paperback / ISBN 978-0356511375 / March 14th. SF. Rosewater city grew around an alien dome, but the dome is dying and its citizens face multiple threats.

THE TRUE QUEEN (Sorcerer to the Crown 2) by Zen Cho / Macmillan / 384 pgs / £13.99 hardback / ISBN 978-1509801107 / March 21st. Two Malaysian sisters travel to Regency London seeking help from the Sorceress Royal at her controversial all-female academy.

LUNA: MOON RISING (Luna 3) by Ian McDonald / Gollancz / 448 pgs / 16.99 paperback / ISBN 978-1473216754 / March 21st. SF. Five warring families battle for control on the Moon.

TIAMAT'S WRATH (The Expanse 8) by James S A Corey / Orbit / 544 pgs / £20 hardback / ISBN 978-0356510354 / March 28th. SF. As humanity uses newly opened gates to expand into the galaxy, mysteries and threats grow deeper.



***BROKEN SHADOW* (Shadowland 2) by Jaine Fenn** / Angry Robot / 400 pgs / £8.99 paperback / ISBN 978-0857668035 / April 2nd. SF. The mysterious artefact shielding Shadowlanders from their lethal sun is failing. A rebellious scientist risks her life to find answers.

THE LIGHT BRIGADE by **Kameron Hurley** / Angry Robot / 358 pgs / £8.99 paperback / ISBN 978-0857668233 / April 2nd. SF. Soldiers are broken into light to send them to a brutal interplanetary war. Most make it, some don't and some come back ... different.

BENEATH THE WORLD, A SEA by **Chris Beckett** / Corvus / 288 pgs / £17.99 hardback / ISBN 978-1786491558 / April 4th. SF. A British police officer in 1990's South America investigates killings of mysterious creatures, the Duendes, but the closer he gets the more he unravels.

CAGE OF SOULS by **Adrian Tchaikovsky** / Head of Zeus / 608 pgs / £18.99 hardback / ISBN 978-1788547246 / April 4th. SF. On an ancient, dying Earth, Stefan Adveni's travels shows the desperate struggle for existence between old and new life forms. *CG*

CINEMA FILM RELEASES

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

US - Release date March 22nd. Horror. A family are terrorised by a group of doppelgangers.

DUMBO - Release date March 29th. Live action remake of Disney film about an elephant who can fly.

SHAZAM! - Release date April 5th. A 14-year old boy transforms into an adult hero by shouting a magic word - Shazam!

PET SEMATARY - Release date April 5th. Horror. Remake of Stephen King story of a sinister pet cemetery.

MISSING LINK - Release date April 5th. Animation. A “missing link” recruits an explorer to help find his long-lost relatives.

HELLBOY - Release date April 12th. Hellboy battles a vengeful, ancient sorceress. *CG*

NEWS IN BRIEF ...



Legendary editor and publisher, **Betty Ballantine** has passed away aged 99. Along with her husband, Ian Ballantine they were pioneers who were largely responsible for the development of mass market paperback publishing. Working with Penguin USA, founding Bantam Books and then their own company, Ballantine Books they championed SF and Fantasy books, especially at a time when most SF was in magazines. They were jointly honoured with two special professional World Fantasy Awards (1975, 1985) and a SFWA Award for pioneering contributions (1985). Betty also won a special SFWA President’s Award (2002) and a World Fantasy Lifetime Achievement Award (2007). The Ballantines were inducted into the Science Fiction Hall of Fame in 2008 The multi-award-winning author, **Carol Emshwiller** passed away in February. She was known for experimental and feminist fiction. She won the World Fantasy Award (1991) for **THE START OF THE END OF IT ALL AND OTHER STORIES**, the Nebula twice (for short stories, “Creature” (2003) and “I Live With You” (2006)), and the Philip K Dick for a novel, **THE MOUNT**, as well as many other award nominations. In 2005 she was awarded a World Fantasy Award for Lifetime Achievement The 2018 **Locus Recommended Reading List** is available at

<https://locusmag.com/2019/02/2018-locus-recommended-reading-list/>.

Anyone can vote for their favourites and the winners will receive Locus Awards in June. Voting is open till April 15th at <http://locusmag.com/2019-locus-poll-and-survey/> Author **Graham Masterton** has been awarded the Horror Writers Association (HWA) annual Lifetime Achievement Award An unpublished book by **Robert A Heinlein** has been reconstructed from notes and typed manuscript pages, and is an alternative version of his much-maligned novel **THE NUMBER OF THE BEAST** (1980). It is hoped that it will be published by the end of 2019 Japanese spacecraft, **Hayabusa-2** has successfully touched down on an asteroid (Ryugu) and collected a sample. It will hopefully return to Earth in 2020 The **first privately financed mission to the Moon** launched in February. The Israeli non-profit company hopes to land its craft, Beresheet on the lunar surface in about two months time The New Horizons flypast images have now revealed that the dual-lobed distant object, **Ultima Thule** is not fully spherical but has a flattened (“pancaked”) shape. 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**)

SHELTER by Dave Hutchinson

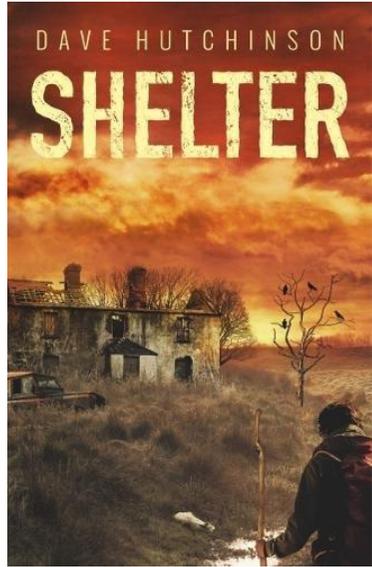
Solaris / 294 pgs / £7.99 paperback / ISBN: 978-1781085042

Reviewed by Pauline Morgan.

The phenomenon of authors writing further stories about familiar characters or in familiar settings has a long pedigree. Once fan-fiction is excluded, there is quite a body of work revolving around out of copyright authors such as Sir Arthur Conan Doyle and Bram Stoker, some of which are commissioned by the publisher (such as Freda Warrington’s sequel to **DRACULA - DRACULA THE UNDEAD**). Some franchises are linked to popular TV series like *Star Trek*, *Doctor Who* or *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*.

Publishers of anthologies quite like a theme for a volume but within it the authors have the scope to explore the idea. What is much rarer is the publisher coming up with the theme for a series of novels and persuading different authors to produce subsequent books.

Allowed free reign, authors have a tendency to follow their own paths and any two can produce totally different works from the same starting point. So when Solaris came up with the idea of a series of books under the banner of *The Aftermath*, they would have had to devise a Bible within which the novels have to be restrained. Dave Hutchinson has kicked off this series with **SHELTER**, a book that all subsequent authors will have to keep in their sights. It sets out the landscape within which the stories have to take place. They may choose other places and other characters but there will need to be an internal congruency for the series to work.



The basic premise is that almost a century before the current action, a fragmenting comet struck the Earth causing a series of natural disasters which have wiped out most of what most would have regarded as civilisation. Gradually, communities are beginning to piece themselves back together, but it is a hard job.

Dave Hutchinson is no stranger to the fragmentation of society as recounted in his acclaimed *Fractured Europe* series which began with the perceptive **EUROPE IN AUTUMN**. In this Britain, the centre of potential is Portsmouth, where the naval base had enough resources to begin to piece together civilisation. The problem is that everything else being fragmented has allowed different groups to arise that could cause problems. Adam Hardy is basically a spy. His job is to estimate the danger a community poses to the progress Portsmouth has made and whether they are a likely trading partner. We first meet him venturing into Thanet. One of the Portsmouth operatives disappeared there. He has to find out what happened to her and whether the tyrannical dictatorship there is a threat.

We are also introduced to the farming communities in Oxfordshire. The main farms are well fortified as during the early days after the disaster armed gangs fought for survival. The trouble here starts when Max, the patriarch of one farm is attacked and severely

injured on his way home from visiting another stronghold. As he is in no state to report the truth, it is assumed that he killed the three youths found nearby. One is the son for a rival farming community. From here the armed conflict escalates and Adam finds himself in the midst of it while trying to make his way to his next rendezvous.

Hutchinson masterfully portrays the hardships of the communities as they struggle to survive and the results of making assumptions. This is an excellent novel to begin a series with. Hutchinson has set the bar high and provided a template for those who come after.

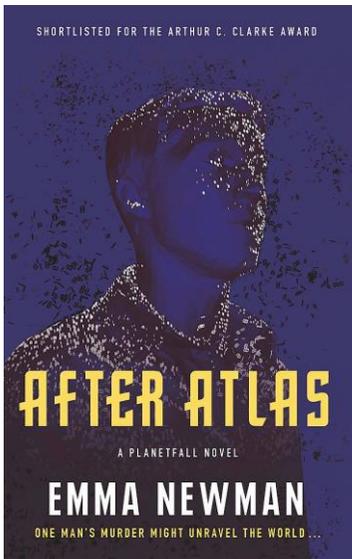
PM

(Review copy kindly donated by Solaris)

***AFTER ATLAS (Planetfall 2)* by Emma Newman**

Gollancz / 384 pages / £9.99 paperback / ISBN 978-1473223875

Reviewed by Carol Goodwin



I have recently been watching the TV series *Hunted* where a group of people try to evade capture by a team who use all the modern methods of tracking and surveillance. This includes CCTV, social media tracking and appeals, and tracking data from cars, phones and traffic monitoring systems etc. Although clearly manipulated to a degree for television, it is frightening how effective this can be and how much our privacy is being eroded by changes in technology.

In *AFTER ATLAS*, a near-future SF novel by Emma Newman, this has been extrapolated to a world where most people now manage all their devices, shopping, money etc via an “APA” chip implanted in their brain (think of this as a semi-intelligent virtual secretary). The ubiquity of “chipped” people means that most crimes are easily solved as people and their activities can be easily traced. For the few remaining crimes which need more detailed investigation, there are a few highly trained and skilful investigators. Carl(os) Moreno is one of the best of these detectives.

When a wealthy, foreign, high-profile cult leader is found dead at a country hotel that specialises in offering private and personal service, Carl is assigned to the case. In a very politically sensitive atmosphere, he is the only one deemed acceptable by the US, European and British governments who all have their own interests and agendas in solving (or covering up) the mystery. Whilst part of his selection is for his skills, it is also because of his previous connection to the dead man (and his cult) from when he was a child. Having fled the North American cult as a youth, Carl was a refugee to Britain. Unbeknown to many, he is now indentured to the Ministry of Justice. He must work to pay off the constantly accumulating “debt” he owes to them and the “hothouse” company that educated him. These companies take talented refugees and train them as skillful assets to be sold to the highest bidder. Any infraction or bad performance review can add penalties and increase his debt. Whilst he tries to determine why Alejandro Casales is dead and who was involved, his job is complicated by all the political ramifications, his own grief and unresolved feelings about Casales (who was an important part of his childhood) and also by the constant monitoring of his own behaviour via the APA in his head.

As in the previous book in this series, PLANETFALL, this is a superbly imaginative yet very realistic extrapolation of currently developing technology that has the potential to make a huge impact on people’s lives. Emma Newman also continues to show a superb ability to write subtle, multifaceted characters who have been emotionally and mentally marked by their experiences, with a perceptive and sensitive eye that is rare particularly in the SF field. Whilst this book is number 2 in a series, the setting is completely different and can easily be read as a stand-alone. I really enjoyed this intelligent and convincing novel. The emotional toll of constant monitoring and slavery in all but name was convincing and at times genuinely disturbing. If I have a criticism it is that I felt it could have been longer. The latter part of the book when Carl visits the Circle cult in the USA felt a little rushed at times and wrapped things up a little too quickly for my liking. Despite that caveat, Emma is, in my opinion, a talented SF author who is writing some very fine, different and thought-provoking Science Fiction.

(Review copy kindly donated by Orion Gollancz)

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

SFF FILM SCREENINGS, 10th March - 6th April. At Mockingbird Cinema. Includes TRON and TRON LEGACY double bill (10th March) and A CLOCKWORK ORANGE (5th & 6th April). Custard Factory, Digbeth. Book: 0121 224 7456 or www.mockingbirdcinema.com/

RETURN TO THE BREWERY OF MADNESS, 15th March Horror based book readings, poetry etc. at Gunmakers Arms, 93 Bath St, B4 6HG Free. 7pm to 10pm Tel: 0121 238 5197 Details at www.facebook.com/events/229975920898648

BIS WEST MIDLANDS SPRING TALKS, 16th March, Droitwich. Talks on “India and China - A New Space Race?” and “Polaris, Chevaline & Peace Courage”. 1:45 pm - 4:30 pm at Gardeners Arms, Droitwich, WR9 8LU. Book at www.bis-space.com

NOUGHTS & CROSSES play, 26th - 30th March, Coventry. Malorie Blackman’s dystopian SF love story in a future Britain, where historically Africans gained ascendancy over Europeans. £14.50 - 18.50. Coventry Belgrade Theatre. www.belgrade.co.uk or 0247 655 3055

ARTISTS IN SPACE; THE EARLY YEARS, 3rd April, London. BSFG member **Dave Hardy** gives an illustrated talk with art by Rudaux, Bonestell, and other “lesser known” artists. 7pm - 8:30 pm at BIS, 27/29 South Lambeth Road, Vauxhall, SW8 1SZ. £10 (Free to BIS members). Booking: www.bis-space.com

CHRIS BAKER (FANGORN): A FANTASTIC VOYAGE, 19th June, Birmingham. SFF Artist Chris Baker (well known to the group) talks about his work. At RBSA Gallery, 4 Brook Street. Booking Essential. 6 - 8:30pm. Info at www.rbsa.org.uk. Free to RBSA Friends/Non-members £5. Book: Gallery /0121 236 4353

AN EVENING WITH HELEN SHARMAN, FIRST BRITISH ASTRONAUT, 22nd June. Helen Sharman talks about her experiences. At Town Hall, Birmingham. £20.50 - 53. At Box Office, 0121 780 49490 or www.thsh.co.uk CG

CONVENTIONS and EXHIBITIONS

50th ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION OF JOHN WYNDHAM - 11th March, London. Talk followed by drinks/food. Anyone interested gather outside Penn Club (21-23 Bedford Place, WC1) at 6pm. Details at <https://triffidalley.com/index.html>

NEW APOLLO 50th ANNIVERSARY exhibition, 23rd March - 3rd November, Stoke on Trent. A special exhibition featuring 50 models, memorabilia etc. Free entry. The Potteries Museum, Stoke on Trent.

YTTERBIUM (Eastercon 2019), 19th - 22nd April, Heathrow. Guests of Honour Frances Hardinge, Sydney Padua, John Scalzi & DC. At the Park Inn, Heathrow, London. Membership £80 (£90 after 1st April) at www.ytterbium.org.uk/

EDGE-LIT 8, 13th July, Derby. Literary SF/Fantasy festival. Guests of Honour Anne Charnock, Tim Lebbon & Sarah Lotz. Tickets £30 at www.derbyquad.co.uk/whats-on/events/edge-lit-8

TOLKIEN 2019, 7th - 11th August 2019, Birmingham. 50th Year Anniversary of Tolkien Society, MacDonald Burlington Hotel (New Street). £95 www.tolkiensociety.org

WORLDCON 2019, 15th - 19th August 2019, Dublin. Guests of Honour Ian McDonald, Jocelyn Bell Burnell, Steve Jackson, Diane Duane, Ginjer Buchanan and Bill & Mary Burns. Convention Centre. 235 Euros. <https://dublin2019.com/>

BRISTOLCON, 26th October, Bristol. Guests of Honour Diane Duane, Gareth Powell & Andy Bigwood. Doubletree Hotel. £20. Details at www.bristolcon.org

NOVACON 49, 8th - 10th November, Nottingham. Guest of Honour is Mike Carey. The Park Inn, Nottingham. Tickets £49. Details at www.novacon.org.uk

FUTURE MEETINGS OF THE BSFG

April 12th - Fantasy author **Zen Cho**

May 10th - SF author **Daniel Godfrey**

June 14th - Fantasy authors **Jeannette Ng** and **Micah Yongo**

July 12th - SF authors, **Christopher Priest** and **Nina Allan**

August 9th - Summer Social

September 13th - tbc

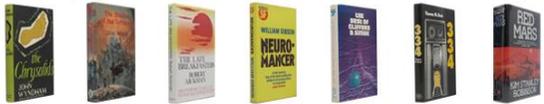
October 11th - Space scientist, **Dr Amaury Triaud**

November 1st - tbc (NB early in month due to Novacon)

December 6th - Christmas Social

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Durdles Books is run by Ian & Lou Morley, BSFG members
Some expensive items but we have books to suit all budgets



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Science Fiction
Fantasy
Modern Firsts
Comics

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