

BRUM GROUP NEWS

THE MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF THE

BIRMINGHAM SCIENCE FICTION GROUP

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WEBSITE:

www.birminghamsgroup.org.uk/

FACEBOOK:

www.facebook.com/groups/BirminghamSFGroup/

EMAIL:

bhamsfgroup@yahoo.co.uk

TWITTER:

@BirminghamSF

DR AMAURY TRIAUD

October 11th

Our guest this month is Dr Amaury Triaud from the University of Birmingham Physics and Astronomy School. He is the discoverer of over one hundred exoplanets. He is also credited as the co-discoverer of the TRAPPIST-1



November 1st - local fantasy and horror author, James Brogden.

system, which has seven rocky planets, of which three are orbiting inside the “Goldilocks” zone (where the temperature range will allow liquid water to exist on a planet). He will be using this expert knowledge to talk to the group in detail about the TRAPPIST-1 system and the search for Earth-like exoplanets.

Dr Triaud spent his early years in France, studied for his Masters of Physics at St Andrews in Scotland, and his PhD in Switzerland. The European Astronomical Association awarded him the MERAC prize for the best PhD thesis on observational astronomy. Subsequently, he held research fellowships at MIT, the University of Toronto, and Cambridge University before moving to the University of Birmingham. He is a committed science communicator and has made multiple experiences on TV including *The Sky at Night*. He has also written the script for a graphic novel (TRAPPIST-1, WHAT IS IT?) and was the consultant for the French-language SF trilogy, QUANTIKA by Laurence Suhner. CG

Information obtained via www.birmingham.ac.uk website

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.

THE CHRISTMAS SOCIAL FRIDAY - 6th 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.

To get there take a 45 or 47 bus from outside Boots, opposite New Street Station’s entrance on Smallbrook Queensway. (Stop NS4) Ask for The Selly Park Tavern - It’s about 15 minutes ride and is on the left a few stops past the Edgbaston Cricket Ground and the stop after the Nature Centre. Walk down the side of the Tavern to the skittle alley entrance.

Tickets are £10 each which includes the buffet etc but not your drinks. If you wish you can play skittles - 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, and/or you can socialise over a drink or two. 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, pizza, salads etc., plus a separate selection for vegetarians, provided that this requirement is clearly stated when you order your ticket.

You can obtain your ticket(s) in several ways:

1. From Pat at the October or November meeting.
2. By post - email Pat at bhamsfgroup@yahoo.co.uk for a postal address.
3. Online - Sort code: 40-43-28. Account No. 91493949. HSBC Bank. Please put your name in the reference field so that we will know who sent it and email Pat with your name, number of tickets required and type(s) of buffet required i.e. standard or vegetarian.

THE DEADLINE FOR APPLICATIONS IS FRIDAY 22nd NOVEMBER because the Tavern needs food numbers that weekend.

REMEMBER THAT TICKETS WILL NOT BE AVAILABLE ON
THE NIGHT

HALLOWEEN THEMED EVENTS AROUND BIRMINGHAM

As usual there are a number of Horror/Halloween-themed events around, so I have listed them separately here.

- **FRANKENSTEIN play, 2nd - 12th October.** Coventry Belgrade. From £8.50. Box Office 02476 553 055 or www.belgrade.co.uk
- **THE ROCKY HORROR SHOW, 14th - 19th October.** At the Wolverhampton Grand Theatre. From £17.50. Box Office 01902 429212 or www.grandtheatre.co.uk
- **THE EXORCIST play, 15th - 19th October at Alexandra Theatre.** Features Ian McKellen's voice as the Demon. Tickets from £13.50 - 66. At www.atgtickets.com
- **HORROR/GHOST-THEMED films, 19th October - 2nd November at Mockingbird Cinema.** Includes GHOSTBUSTERS (19th, 23rd, 26th Oct), LOST BOYS (24th - 26th), SCARY STORIES TO TELL IN THE DARK (25th, 26th, 29th, 31st), THE THING (25th - 26th)

and IT Double Bill (27th), THE SHINING: 4K RESTORATION (28th), HOCUS POCUS (29th, 1st & 2nd Nov). Custard Factory, Digbeth. Book: 0121 224 7456 or www.mockingbirdcinema.com/

- **HORROR/GHOST-THEMED films, 30th - 31st October at Mac Centre.** Includes DON'T LOOK NOW: 4K (30th), HOCUS POCUS (31st), RING: 4K (31st) and GHOSTWATCH (31st). £5 - 8.50. Tel: 0121 446 3232 or www.macbirmingham.co.uk
- **HALLOWEEN SILENT MOVIE SPECIAL: THE HUNCHBACK OF NOTRE DAME (1923), 31st October at Birmingham Town Hall.** Screening of the black & white classic with live organ accompaniment, 7:30pm. £18. Book at Town Hall/Symphony Hall Box Office (0121 780 4949) or www.thsh.co.uk
- **SHOCK-tober films, 31st October - 3rd November at Electric Cinema.** DON'T LOOK NOW (13th & 16th), NOSFERATU (20th & 24th), RING (26th), SHAUN OF THE DEAD (31st) and HANNIBAL. www.theelectric.co.uk or 0121 643 7879

FORTHCOMING BOOKS

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

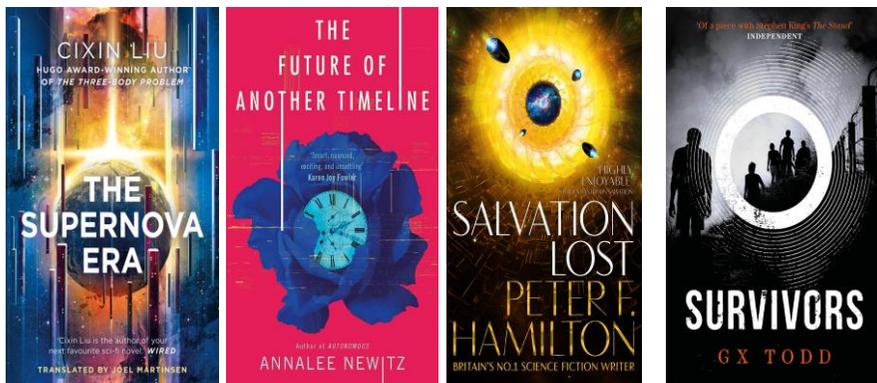


MISTLETOE by Alison Littlewood / Quercus / 304 pgs / £14.99 hardback / ISBN 978-1787475878 / October 10th. A widow moving into a run-down farmhouse begins having visions of former occupants.

THE QUANTUM GARDEN (Quantum Evolution) by Derek Künsken / Solaris / 300 pgs / £8.99 hardback / ISBN 978-1781085714 / October 17th. SF. Con man must travel back in time to prevent the destruction of his home world and people.

ANGEL MAGE by Garth Nix / Gollancz / 560 pgs / £18.99 paperback / ISBN 978-1473227712 / October 17th. A powerful mage manipulates four people in her quest to be reunited with her angelic lover.

ROSEWATER REDEMPTION (Wormwood 3) by Tade Thompson / Orbit / 400 pgs / £8.99 paperback / ISBN 978-0356511399 / October 17th. SF. A small group of fugitives and criminals may be humanity's last defence against the alien invasion.



THE SUPERNOVA ERA by Cixin Liu / Head of Zeus / 448 pgs / £18.99 hardback / ISBN 978-1788542388 / October 22nd. SF. Doomed adults race to pass their knowledge to children before supernova radiation arrives.

THE FUTURE OF ANOTHER TIMELINE by Annalee Newitz / Orbit / 384 pgs / £8.99 paperback / ISBN 978-0356511238 / October 24th. SF. In a world where time travel is possible, an unlikely group of allies battle against a restrictive elite.

SALVATION LOST (Salvation Sequence 2) by Peter F Hamilton / Macmillan / 480 pgs / £20 hardback / ISBN 978-1447281351 / October 31st. As alien ships threaten the people of Earth, humanity must find a way to defeat them.

SURVIVORS (The Voices 3) by **G X Todd** / **Headline** / 512 pgs / £18.99 hardback / ISBN 978-1472233165 / October 31st. In a world destroyed by people who hear “Voices”, Pilgrim travels back to where everything began and the people he left behind. **CG**

CINEMA FILM RELEASES

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

GEMINI MAN - Release date October 11th. SF. An older hitman is threatened by a younger clone of himself.

MALEFICENT: MISTRESS OF EVIL - Release date October 18th. Maleficent and her god-daughter face the threat of new dark forces.

TERMINATOR: DARK FATE - Release date October 23rd. Sarah Connor and a hybrid cyborg human must protect a young girl from a new liquid Terminator from the future.

THE ADDAMS FAMILY - Release date October 25th. An animated version about the peculiar and creepy Addams family.

DOCTOR SLEEP - Release date October 31st. Horror. The now adult child from **THE SHINING** tries to protect a young girl with strange powers.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Actor **Aron Eisenberg**, most well-known for playing the Ferengi, Nog in *Star Trek: Deep Space 9* has died, aged 50 **Terrance Dicks**, the *Doctor Who* writer and script editor has died aged 84. He wrote episodes for the programme from the 60's through to the 80's. He also wrote over 50 Doctor spin-off novels in the *Target* series of



books, including the *Sarah Jane Adventures* Gollancz and Ben Aaronovitch are launching a writing prize for “under-represented voices in science fiction, fantasy and horror”. The “**Gollancz and Rivers of London BAME SFF**” prize will be open to submissions of a short writing sample

from 1st October until 31st January. The overall winner will receive £4000, a critique and a year-long mentoring programme with Gollancz commissioning editor, Rachel Winterbottom Following on from the re-naming of the Campbell Award for New Writers to the *Astounding* Award, The Gunn Centre for the Study of Science Fiction has announced that it will change the name of the Campbell Conference to the Gunn Center Conference. They also are discussing alternative names for the **John W Campbell Memorial Award** for best science-fiction novel The **James Tiptree Award** organisers have also announced that this award will be re-named (replacement name yet to be announced). The continued use of the James Tiptree name is controversial due to the actions of Alice Sheldon (the real name of the author) at the end of her life It has been announced that **Nine Worlds Geekfest** convention is likely to be permanently shut down, as the governance committee so far cannot find anyone who has the requisite skills and time to take on the role of Director. A final decision is due at the end of September BSFG Committee member, **Theresa Derwin** has won the Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley Scholarship Award from the Horror Writers' Association. The Award is given annually to encourage and develop female author horror writers. The scholarship is worth \$2500 to be spent on approved writing education over two years For **Dan Dare fans**, *Titan Comics* will be re-issuing the first two years of his comic adventures from *The Eagle* (written and drawn in the 1960's by David Motton and Keith Watson). This is the first time they have been re-printed **Game of Thrones** won the Emmy for outstanding drama series for the fourth time. Peter Dinklage also received his fourth Emmy for his Best Supporting Actor as Tyrion Lannister in the same series NASA scientists announced that **Venus could have had an Earth-like climate** for 3 billion years and may have had shallow seas. However around 715 million years ago, something happened and massive amounts of carbon dioxide were released into the atmosphere, causing a runaway greenhouse effect that turned it into the hot planet we see today. *CG*

BOOK REVIEWS

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

ONCE UPON A PARSEC: The Book of Alien Fairy Tales edited by David Gullen

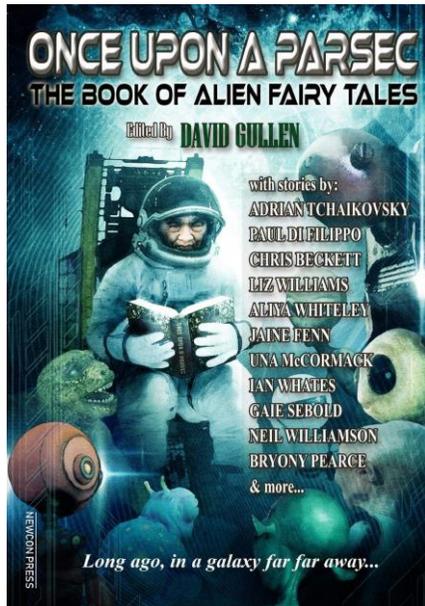
NewCon Press / 228 pgs / £12.99 paperback / ISBN 978-1912950300

Reviewed by Carol Goodwin

I must admit to not being sure on reading the subtitle of this book, “The Book of Alien Fairy Tales” if and how this was going to work. In actuality, I think it works really well, mainly I think because of the very broad interpretation of what exactly constitutes a fairy tale. In ONCE UPON A PARSEC the stories also encompass what I would call legends (where there is a grain of truth distorted over time), fables which like those of Aesop

have a moral message, and as parables which convey a forgotten or forbidden message. Indeed, the blurb on the back of this book gives a more accurate representation of the scope of this anthology when it says “just as our world is steeped in legends and lore and half-remembered truths of the mystical and the magical, so are theirs”.

There are seventeen stories in the anthology, including some by well-respected science fiction and fantasy authors. Whilst as usual I have my favourites, I think they are all of a high standard even if the occasional story doesn't suit my tastes.



The first story in the collection is the excellent “The Little People” by Una McCormack. It's an SF story which in a short space leaves the reader with plenty to think about. It's set on a new colony where the adults in desperation have committed a massive war-crime. They believe that they have covered it up so their children won't have to bear the guilt. However, nothing is completely hidden and as the children find fragments of evidence, they begin to construct their own haunting mythology.

The next story “Lost in the Rewilding” by Paul Di Filippo is also an SF story but like some traditional stories it's also an origin story, where a pair of genetically-engineered intelligent creatures escape and are the “Adam and Eve” of their race. It's told as a story handed down orally for

generations, so the objective truth of what “happened” is obscured by later embellishments of the narrative.

The next story is “Goblin Autumn” by Adrian Tchaikovsky and is one where the cause of an impending catastrophe has to be puzzled out from clues left in ancient ruins and old warning rhymes. Despite its title it is an SF tale, with the resolution of the tale depending on alien biology and a long-orbit planet such as in Brian Aldiss’ *Helliconia* trilogy. As I’ve come to expect from this author, this is a superb tale which cleverly also examines the treatment of “other” and the personal impact of large-scale changes.

“Myths of Sisyphus” by Allen Ashley has a scientific observer talking to intelligent species on the planet Sisyphus, where they each think they have been expelled from the “paradise” that the other now inhabits. In my opinion the story then loses focus by introducing another species and the new “theme” felt as though it diluted and distracted from the original focus of the narrative.

Chris Beckett in “The Land of Grunts and Squeaks” has written a splendid “fairy story”. It’s a cautionary fairy tale of a telepathic race who are cursed by a witch to only hear their own thoughts. As the hive race struggles to communicate, one person begins to develop a replacement verbal “language” that helps them to co-operate but they are still to be forever pitied for their loneliness and isolation. It’s a clever little tale and is another “fall from grace” type of story.

I also liked Susan Oke’s “The Blood Rose” in which a nursemaid uses a fairy story to impart a “suppressed” history to her young charge. She sees her race as true protectors of a “magical” crystal and whose place has been usurped. But as with many legends, the truth has been distorted over time and all is not as it seemed.

“Starfish” by Liz Williams I found a little confusing, but perhaps that’s the point as it’s about the difficulties of trying to communicate between a human and an alien who has multiple conversations simultaneously.

The next two stories, by Neil Williamson and Aliya Whiteley are both thoughtful tales about being careful what you wish for, though with very different styles, of which I prefer the former. Gaie Sebold and Kim Lakin-Smith both have another SF-style “origin” story; each has a rebellious younger generation forging a new and different life separate from the older generation. By contrast, Jaime Fenn’s “Pale Sister” has an older, altruistic alien passing on a precious heritage to newly arrived humans, and is well-crafted as I would expect from an accomplished author.

The next two stories, “Alpha42 and the Space Hermits” by Stephen Oram and “The Teller and the Starborn” by Peter Sutton puzzled me somewhat as to the point they were trying to make, though I’m sure others will enjoy them.

Ian Whates’ “The Winternet”, which although the people aren’t quite human, still captures the feel of many old stories; ones told around a warm fire sheltering from the cold winter and the threats it holds, but it’s also about the problems and responsibilities of growing up.

The final story in the anthology, “The Awakening” by Bryony Pearce is again an origin story; this time of a machine intelligence helped or “midwived” by the last two remaining humans.

All in all, this is a first-rate set of stories, and the authors have produced some very readable tales based on an unusual theme. Whilst as usual I have my preferences, I think they are all of high quality even if the occasional story doesn’t suit my tastes. NewCon has yet again shown the superior writing that some small presses are publishing at the moment. *CG Review copy kindly donated by NewCon Press*

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

GARTH NIX signing, 14th October. Garth Nix is signing his new book, ANGEL MAGE. Waterstones, High Street. 12:30 pm. Free. No booking needed.

IN CONVERSATION WITH MARGARET ATWOOD, 28th October. Symphony Hall. £20.50 - £38. Box Office (0121 780 3333 or www.thsh.co.uk)

MUSIC FROM GAME OF THRONES, LORD OF THE RINGS & THE HOBBIT, 31st October. Symphony Hall. £28.50 - 63. 7:30pm. Box Office (0121 780 3333) or www.thsh.co.uk

MUSIC of ANDREW LLOYD WEBBER, 1st November. Symphony Hall. £13 - 55. 7:30pm. Box Office (0121 780 3333) or www.thsh.co.uk

BIRMINGHAM STRIKES BACK, 6th November. University of Birmingham explores *Star Wars*. An evening of science, politics and entertainment. Bramall Building, Birmingham Uni at 6pm. Register at www.birmingham.ac.uk//university/colleges/socsci/events/esrc-festival-2019/event-forms/birmingham-strikes-back.aspx

CONVENTIONS and EXHIBITIONS

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.

FANTASYCON, 18th -20th October, Glasgow. Guests of Honour Jen Williams, Paul Tremblay & Una McCormack. Golden Jubilee Conference Hotel, Glasgow. £75. www.fantasycon.org

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. Nottingham Sherwood Hotel (same venue - name has changed), Nottingham. Tickets £49 till 1st September. Details at www.novacon.org.uk

UK GHOST STORY FESTIVAL, 29th November - 1st December, Derby. Authors include Adam Nevill, Paul Kane, Marie O'Regan, Alison Littlewood etc. Derby. Tickets for individual sessions at www.derbyquad.co.uk

CONCENTRIC (EASTERCON), 10th - 13th April 2020, Birmingham. Guests of Honour are Tade Thompson, Rhianna Pratchett and Alison Scott. At the Hilton Metropole, NEC, Birmingham. Membership £70 at www.concentric2020.uk

STOKERCON UK, 16th - 19th April 2020, Scarborough. International Horror Convention. Guests of Honour: Kim Newman, Grady Hendrix, Gillian Redfearn. At the Grand/Royal Hotels, Scarborough. £115 Non-HWA Member <https://stokercon-uk.com>

SATELLITE 7, 22nd - 24th May 2020, Glasgow. Guest of Honour Alette de Bodard. At Crowne Plaza, Glasgow. Membership £70. <https://seven.satellitex.org.uk>

FUTURE MEETINGS OF THE BSFG

November 1st - author James Brogden

December 6th - Christmas Social



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Science Fiction
Fantasy
Modern Firsts
Comics

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ABOUT US... The Birmingham Science Fiction Group meets on the second Friday of each month. Membership is £25 per year per person (or £35 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