

10-12 November 2017

Guest of Honour: Adrian Tchaikovsky
Park Inn, Nottingham



NOVACON 47

HARDY

BIRMINGHAM SCIENCE FICTION GROUP

Adrian Tchaikovsky

Dave Hutchinson

Aliette de Bodard

Peter F Hamilton

...have all been guests at our regular monthly meetings this year! If you live anywhere in or around the West Midlands, the BSFG is the group for you!



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We usually meet on the second Friday of every month at the Briar Rose Hotel on Bennett's Hill in Birmingham, only 5-minutes walk from New Street Station. Admission £4.

COME AND MEET US!

FOR FURTHER DETAILS PLEASE VISIT OUR WEBSITE AT:

WWW.BIRMINGHAMSFGROUP.ORG.UK

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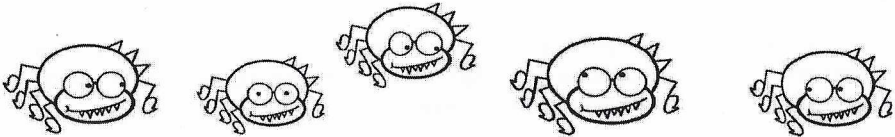
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If it was up to me you could copy this stuff all you liked, but it's not. This Committee is a hard bunch, they may not look it, lounging around the bar in search of free drinks, but don't let that fool you... Hard as nails, the lot of 'em. Tear you a new one without even spilling their drink. Cor blimey, sends a shiver up my spine just thinking about what they would do to you if they caught you copying this stuff. One of them is looking at me now..... I'd better go..... so, don't..... you know.... Just don't.

WORDS

FROM

THE

CHAIRS



By the time you read this, it'll be time! Are you unpacked yet? Sorting out the t-shirts and badges? Combing the beards and polishing the glasses? Cool hats and geeky jewellery ready to don? Excellent.

We think we've got a cracking Novacon lined up – thanks Grommit, I'll have some Wensleydale. Actually there's a thought experiment: a science fiction convention run by Wallace and Grommit. Forget the Trekkies, Wallace would get the lifts going sideways! And fix up something to ease the transition from your nice warm bed to the breakfast room so you don't miss out on the science speakers we have lined up.

For that matter, start getting your Quiz Teams together. Big pub quiz with added silly games on Saturday night. Leave your dignity in the restaurant, and come and have fun. Or at least laugh at other people. Whichever.

It seems appropriate at this point to offer some thanks. First must go to the wonderful Adrian Tchaikovsky, who has been one of the most laid back and obliging Guests of Honour in our history.

"What would you like to do?" we ask him tremulously, forelock clutched.

"Oh, anything," he replies nonchalantly. "Whatever you want."

Whatever we want? Oh, unwise response... but we have been nice and reasonable. We hope. And I hope you enjoy his tenure as GoH as much.

Then there's our committee, without whom etc. *All* have worked extremely hard but four have been faced some serious personal and familial crises which, in any other arena, would have led to them being invalidated out. They soldiered on and we are both awed and grateful.

There's Alice, my esteemed co-chair and arse-kicker extraordinaire. She kept us all in line, got things set up, then buggered off to America for the last three months. Thank you and well played, Alice...

Where Alice goes, Steve goes and so does the membership database. Thank you to him for keeping on top of that. From America, did I mention that? Not that I'm bitter... Mind you, the committee meetings have been shorter without his digressions.

Thank you to my partner Richard, who has pulled together the amazing programme we have this year while lending a willing ear to the various profanities that have issued from my end of the sofa as things went more or less pear shaped – and for suggestions as to how to get them back to the shape they should be.

Gary, your humble publications editor, has done wonders pulling together last minute submissions into coherent booklets that have style and character. Thanks, Gary.

And thanks Cat for the thankless task of being Minutes Secretary and making sure we all remember what we said we'd do towards the end of the meeting after several bottles of beer... at least we *assume* that's what we agreed to...

Tony has spent more time than is sensible driving up and down between Birmingham and Nottingham, making sure we keep in good with the hotel. Thank you Tony. And Steve will be back soon for you to derail the meetings with. You'll enjoy that!

Thank you to Eve, for keeping us on the financial straight and narrow. Any rumours about how she and John afforded that place in France should be disregarded as malicious slander.

John has kept the website sorted and up to date, a vital job, not least because none of the rest of us can do it! Thank you, John.

Finally, thank you to our two Committee Members without Portfolio, Doug and Dave. Seconded to the committee for their knowledge, experience, grace, charm and good looks (what am I saying?) They have both shouldered extra tasks without complaint.

And, finally, thank *you* for being here. Novacon would not be Novacon without its attendees, and while we try to provide you with as many amusements as possible, it's you who make Novacon what it is.

Thank you.

NOVACON CODE OF CONDUCT

“Let’s be excellent to each other!”

Oh... there needs to be more? OK, then.

A Convention is a private event and, as such, the Committee has always had the right and the ability to remove any attendee for antisocial behaviour. Over recent years, it has become standard practice for such events to publish a Code of Conduct providing guidelines as to what that antisocial behaviour may include.

For most people, the simple principle of, “Behave like a decent human being,” is enough of a guideline. However, just in case, these are the behaviours we feel lead to that result:

- 1. Be welcoming.** We expect all our attendees to respect each other’s right to be at **Novacon**. In particular, discriminatory behaviour or harassment will not be tolerated.
- 2. Be courteous** and aware we all have different sensitivities. If your language or behaviour is unwelcome to another attendee then stop. Anything else may be considered harassment.
- 3. Be respectful** of other people’s boundaries. Physical contact should only occur with all parties’ enthusiastic consent. Remember, not everyone likes being hugged.
- 4. Be aware** that communication may be verbal or non-verbal.

Discrimination includes, but is not limited to: sex, gender, gender identity, sexuality, ethnicity, age, religion and mental or physical disability.

Harassment includes, but is not limited to, any behaviour that can be reasonably expected to disturb or intimidate another convention attendee. It may be verbal or nonverbal.

Dealing with discrimination or harassment

If you feel comfortable, address the person and the problem behaviour directly. In most cases this will be all that is required.

If you are not comfortable with a direct approach then either:

-report the matter to the Duty Committee Member (look for the gold waistcoat). He/she will contact the designated people who will come to talk to you as soon as possible, or

- contact one of the designated committee members directly on the number below.

Convention Response and Responsibilities

The Novacon Convention Committee is responsible for enforcing the Code of Conduct and for maintaining confidentiality.

Two committee members are designated to deal with complaints. These are Helena Bowles and Alice Lawson. The complaint will be heard, in confidence, in a private place, and an appropriate response agreed upon with the complainant. This may be any of the following:

Arbitration between the parties involved.

One, and only one, verbal warning.

Rescinding of convention membership without refund and/or refusal of membership at future Novacons.

Reporting the incident to the police.

The committees decision in this matter is final

If a complaint is made about you, either to your face or via the designated committee members your interaction with the complainant is over. Full stop.

In cases of a dispute with the hotel, the committee will support the hotel and the hotel's own Code of Conduct.

The standard of judgement in these matters is the "reasonable person" standard as applied by the designated committee members. Attempts to "rules lawyer" the Code of Conduct will be seen as a sign of bad faith.

This Code of Conduct is considered to be a living document and is expected to evolve year on year. That said, we need to lock down the Code for each convention. This is the iteration that will be in use at Novacon 46. Constructive comments are welcome and will be considered when drawing up the Novacon 47 Code of Conduct. Please address suggestions to Helena Bowles on the email below.

DESIGNATED COMMITTEE MEMBERS AND CONTACT NUMBER

Helena Bowles & Alice Lawson: 0751 486 7770

Helena Bowles email:

helenalibriomaner@gmail.com

THE COMMITTEE'S

Dirty
Little
Secrets



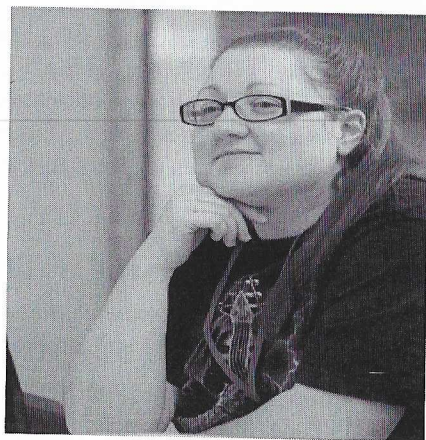
HELENA BOWLES - CO CHAIR

I think there's a reason why so many of us describe "discovering" Science Fiction and Fantasy. Unlike many tastes, SF&F does not appear to be an acquired one, but more an internal desire that is – suddenly! – fulfilled the first time we read it. "Ah," we think in delight. "This. This is what I have been waiting for."

The first time I had that feeling was at about five or six years old. Having gone through all the books of the graded reading scheme that my school used (usually one a night until my teacher was moved to ask my Mum to *slow me down*), I was let loose on the selected free readers. One I remember distinctly. It was called *The Thing that Ate Our House* and was about a something that fell from the sky, it fed on certain things and a young boy found it, investigated it and kept it fed. I remember the feeling that here was something different and special though I didn't have the context to call it Science Fiction.

The next book that stands out for me is from about the age of seven when I found Monica Hughes *Crisis on Conshelf Ten* in the school library. It was fab. Moon bred Kepler visits family on Earth and ends up living in a sub-ocean community. There was something thriller-ish going on too, but what I remember best is the descriptions of the undersea station, the moon pools (my first introduction to the concept, and the first piece of physics I would learn from SF), and the Earth-Moon shuttles.

By the time I was eight or nine I was being let loose in our local library on a weekly basis in an attempt to keep pace with my book habit. And here I found what was probably *the* book of my childhood. *The Rains of Eridan* by H. M. Hoover. Barely remembered today, Hoover was a star of the 9-12 age group SF&F in the late 70s and early 80s. I read *Eridan* more times than I can remember. Female scientist on a field trip accidentally witnesses two murders and rescues the adolescent daughter of the victims. They travel back to the scientists' base together and it becomes clear that the



political rebels who have killed the girl's parents are not the only danger. The seasons are changing in this part of Eridan, rain is coming, and so is a tremendous change in the planet's ecology. One that isn't very friendly for the human settlers... I reread this recently as an adult and was surprised how well the whole thing stands up. First big surprise – the realisation that these books had two female main characters. In 1977. It's rare to find that in children's literature *today*. Dr Thea, the scientist, appears to my contemporary eyes to be borderline Asperger's. She's certainly a very unusual female character – unsociable and prickly – and the relationship she develops with poor bereaved Karen is very well done.

Then there was Madeleine L'Engle's *A Wrinkle in Time* introduced me to the concept of a *tesseract*, different dimensions, and what might happen if you're an immortal angel-like being and you accidentally forget your 3D charges can't survive in a 2D dimension... yes, it's a very religious book, but not sectarianly so. And I fell in love with the image of three angels dressing up as tramps, and stealing sheets off washing lines because they were enjoying creating the Haunted House ethos *so very much*. Also stands up well to adult reading.

Lastly, because this is getting over long, must be Diana Wynne Jones' *Charmed Life*. Alternate universe – which is not explained *at all*, you're just dumped into this vaguely Edwardian-ish England where lots of things are the same but some are not and the biggest thing is that magic is absolutely real. I've been back to this book – and the series it birthed – many, many times. There was something about the whole idea of series of worlds splitting off and creating new ones at important points in history, with doppelgangers in each world who are the same person but different... and the whole story of poor Cat and Gwendoline, orphaned before their time and the growing horror that somehow Gwendoline is *using* Cat in some way... Wonderful stuff for any age but mind blowing when you're only ten. And, like most of Wynne Jones's work, it is just as enjoyable for adults as children.

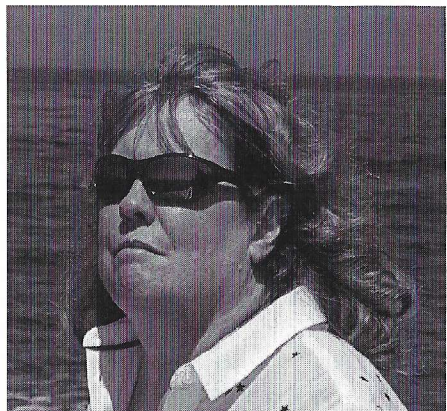
So adult SF had a bit of work to do, living up to its juvenile counterparts. Fortunately, it did.

Honourable mentions: Everything by Sylvia Engdahl (age 10 to 14), Abrashkin and William's *Danny Dunn* series (age 6 to 9), Hugh Walters *Chris Godfrey* books (age 8 to 11), and Douglas Adams's *Hitchhikers Guide* books (age 11 - 13)

And now I've taken up about three times my allotted space, I hand you over to the rest of the committee.

ALICE LAWSON - CO CHAIR

Having read from an early age I have many books that affected me in various ways. I guess that the *Chalet School* stories were a sort of fantasy, the first Science fiction / Fantasy book I remember reading



was Julian May's *The Golden Torc* which transported me not only to a different life but a different world.

I remember deciding to look at more of this odd stuff and it snowballed from there. Although I remember Michael Moorcock being an early favourite, I cannot say I have one particular book that affected me, but rather different books affected me at different times of my life depending on what else was happening. But the common factor is in the reading itself.

STEVE LAWSON - MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY

Where do I start, the first books I remember reading were Hugh Walters starting with *Blast Off At Woomera*, *Mission To Mercury*, and of course *Passage To Pluto*. Also EC Elliot's Kemlo books, I didn't realize of course that breathing in the vacuum was a little difficult, but I was only seven or eight at the time.

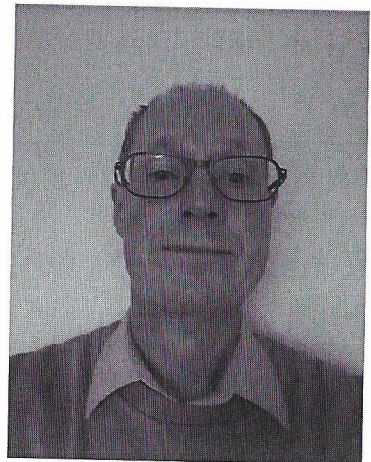
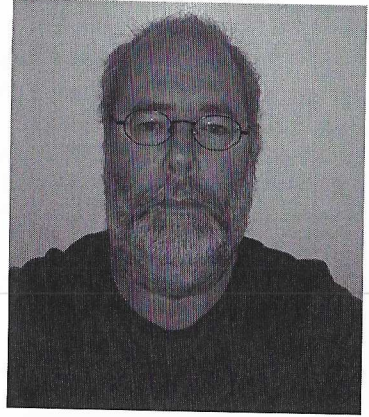
The main problem I found with my early reading was running out of science fiction books in the children's Library. They wouldn't let me join the adult Library until I was 11 but they would go through and get me books, luckily the libraries were separated into specific types of books so I could get the science-fiction ones. Starting with all the Gollanz books, the yellow jackets made it easier for them. The only downside was by the time I was old enough to join the adult Library I had run out of science fiction books after that it was second-hand book shops.

I have digressed slightly, but it just goes to show that it's difficult to pick any one book that's made a big influence on me. But, if I had to, it would probably be Arthur C Clarke's *2001 a Space Odyssey* which I did read when I was about 10 or 11 at which time the concept of reaching 2001 was quite strange, just goes to show.

Where's my jet pack?

TONY BERRY - HOTEL LIAISON

Like the rest of you, I've always been surrounded by books. One of my earliest memories is being read Kipling's *Just So* stories by the babysitter. As I got older, mum would bring me books from the library, including the occasional "space story" by Patrick Moore or Capt. W.E. Johns. Even then I thought *Kemlo* was silly, but I read it anyway, and I decided that Science Fiction was the way to go. Older still and the juveniles like Heinlein's *Have Space Suit Will Travel* and of course Doc Smith's *Lensman* series



really instilled the Sensawunda.

A large chunk of my meagre finances went to Ken Slater and Panther Books by mail-order. I discovered Asimov and Clarke, standout books being the *Foundation* trilogy, *Childhood's End* and Clarke's short story collections. Epics like Heinlein's *Stranger in a Strange Land* and Herbert's *Dune* were part of the Sixties experience, transcending the genre of SF to be widely recognized as major works.

I'm a slow reader, so wading through the classics took up many years of my life. You won't find much Fantasy on my shelves cos I prefer skiffy, but I recently re-read Zelazny's *Amber* series and remembered it fondly.

So, newer authors then? I've read all of Iain Banks's books, but always preferred his SF, especially the Culture novels. I want to live in the Culture! Now that Iain is gone, the only current author who I follow is Alastair Reynolds, who writes on a similar grand scale. Others have produced some of my favourites: Kim Stanley Robinson's *Mars* trilogy is in the top ten, as is Dan Simmons's *Hyperion* cantos. Two of Peter Hamilton's doorstops, *Pandora's Star* and *Judas Unchained* together make up one terrific story. And I love Connie Willis's Oxford time-travel books.

So many books, so little time. But, it's a start eh?

CAT COAST - SECRETARY

The book I remeber most is *The Hunting of Wilberforce Pike* By Molly Lefebure. Illustrated by A. Wainwright, bought from school, and read by me aged nine. I still have it as a prized thing. Digested read; innocent young domestic cats get into danger, are then rescued by a gang of feral cats. Aforementioned feral cats have questionable morals and habits. They smoke, drink, take cat drugs, steal and swear murderous oaths of revenge. However they demonstrate deep bonds of loyalty and comradeship which leave the young cats conflicted and confused.

The details may be inconsistent at times, for example the cats start the book with a traditional lack of feline manual dexterity; by the end of the story they are driving Land Rovers to the Lake District.

There is also a distinct *Carry On*/Peter Sellers flavour to some of the antics and characters which feeds my personal theory that much of second half of 20th century to the present day literature is heavily influenced by the authors having watched a lot of film and TV – and that it is difficult to avoid. I won't spoil the ending. (They murder someone.) How this book got past the Board of Education I'll never know, but the lesson must be: never underestimate a children's book. It could be the making of someone.

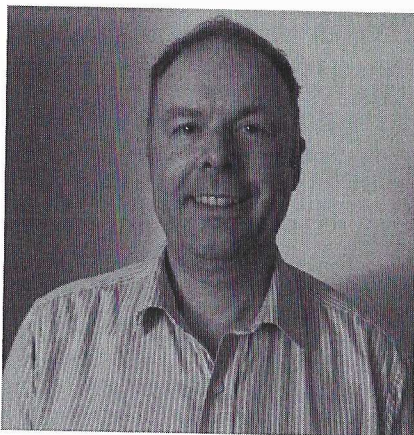
Incidentally, unknown to my nine-year-old self, the illustrator is the Alfred Wainwright, legendary fell walker and diarist who inspired a fannish type of following of his own. Its all beginning to make



sense....

RICHARD STANDAGE - PROGRAMME

A very early and influential SF (kinda) book that has always stuck with me is Danny Dunn And The Smallifying Machine by Jay Williams and Raymond Abrashkin. It features Danny and his friends Joe and Irene Miller, along with Cecil the dog. They suspect spies are pursuing Professor Bullfinch and go to warn him in his secret hideaway in the woods where they encounter a weird looking machine on which Danny can't resist trying out a couple of the levers (something we can all relate to I am sure). As a result, they all get drastically shrunk (or smallified as Danny eventually comes to call it).



So why this book? Well, while I learnt a lot of my formative physics from the likes of Arthur C Clarke, this book can hold its own when it comes to the sciency stuff, particularly in relation to scale. The implications of water surface tension is explored when they try to drink. The fact that they have a different weight distribution and have to walk with a different gait...

Now I am not suggesting this is truly hard SF. There is only a nodding explanation for instance to how the machine works – essentially using a matter re-arranger to make a copy and then create an exact miniature version. Sounds reasonable enough, and at the time I was more than willing to give this one the benefit of the doubt.

EVE HARVEY - TREASURER

My significant book

Hell, I don't know!!! I remember when I was very young, that the first book I ever read on my own was an SF one. Unfortunately, since I was only about 4 at the time, I can't remember who wrote it, and even what the title was – something like *'The Blue Asp'*, but I've never been able to find anything that might have been it. At the time, we were buying 2nd hand books from a local bookshop, and then selling them back when we'd read them. That made the total cost quite low! Dad was always buying army/war books, and mum was improving her English through reading SF books! (She was German.) So, there were only these two types which were available to me, and I didn't/don't like war stories! After that I liked virtually all SF books I read, so it's very difficult for me to highlight a significant one. Even now, I could tell you which books I don't like, but to separate one from all those I do like



is very difficult. So, hell, I'm not giving a title!!!

JOHN HARVEY - WEBSITE

I blame Brian W Aldiss and his wonderful anthology '*Penguin Science Fiction*'. Up to the point of reading this book I'd dismissed all magazine SF as hack rubbish. I was a keen SF reader; devouring HG Wells, John Wyndham, Aldus Huxley ('*Brave New World*') and George Orwell ('*1984*'). But this was literature as well as SF not any of your pulpy rubbish.

Then one Saturday on my weekly visit to the bookshops of Manchester I found BWA's anthology. I read it in one sitting and it was a revelation. It wasn't the stories, as excellent as they were, that opened my eyes but Brian's introduction that did it. He starts off discussing that old chestnut 'what is SF' and then moves on to praise the magazines that originally published the stories. He says "These magazines have been and are the life blood of SF". That was all I needed to be converted.



So the next time I was at the newsstand in what was Manchester's Central Station, I saw a copy of '*New Worlds SF*' and grabbed it. My fate was sealed; from here it was only a short distance to SF fandom, fanzines and conventions.

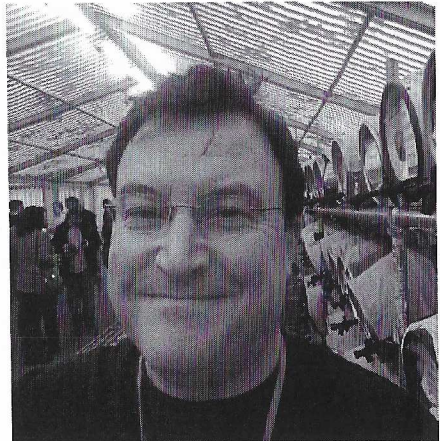
So Brian it's your entire fault and I thank you so much for it. A giant of the genre, we will all miss you.

GARY STARR - PUBLICATIONS

I think it was the works of Dan Brown that got me into reading..... Just joking. Despite what some cruel people think the books I read don't have to have pictures in them... it helps me understand, but is not strictly necessary.

I always enjoyed reading, even as a child, and I remember a book called *The Hunting Of Wilberforce Pike* by Molly Lefebure, as influencing me to read more. I notice, oddly, that I am not the first person here to list that particular book. Spooky.

However, Sci-Fi was just something else that was on TV until I saw *Star Wars* at the cinema when I was 13. I cannot stress the impact this had on me, but it wasn't until a friend of my father gave me a copy of *Perry Rhodan No. 27, Planet Of The Gods*, that I began avidly reading Sci-Fi. I remember going into WH Smiths the next Saturday to get another fix and picking up the massive (by



comparison) *Grey Lensman* by E.E. "Doc" Smith. I loved this and continued to read the rest of the series going on to the *Lord Tedric* series and then on to Simak's *Way Station*, which I loved. From there it was Harry Harrison's *Stainless Steel Rat* (which introduced me to the world humorous novels which has pretty much dictated my choice in reading to this day) and onwards and downwards.

I have to say that my passion for this kind of fiction led to many trips across the country to find places like Andromeda Bookshop and Forbidden Planet in London (before it became a franchise). You had to travel if you wanted this stuff, imports were not available locally and there was no internet to order from. At best WH Smith could order it if it was current catalogue but if you, say, were determined to find all the English editions of *Perry Rhodan*, then you had to scour the second-hand bookshops of the country to complete the set (I did, and it took many years to get them all).

I still love reading though over the years I have found a lot of Detective Fiction creeping into my reading list, particularly Robert Crais, Christopher Fowler and Harlan Coben to name a few.

December 1977 was where it all went wrong, I could have had friends, I could have had a career but, oh no, I had to get into Sci-Fi. Damn you George Lucas!

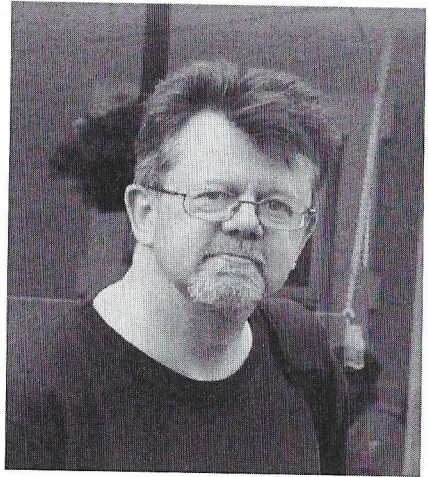
DAVE HICKS - STAFF MEMBER

Babel-17 by Samuel Delaney

One 70s summer, young Dave sat down and asked no-one in particular "is that it?". I'd loved the "classic" SF authors who were, I read later, in business to take my beer money (although I was too young to buy beer then), and the rest of the "if you liked this you may also enjoy..." list at the library. They'd all been new to me, revelatory even, but there came a creeping sense of "done that... what now?"

Then a nice man opened a second-hand book shop just around the corner with dusty boxes of old paperbacks with Chris Foss covers by "different" SF writers. For less than the price of one imported Marvel comic (1974 prices!) I picked up *BABEL-17*. It would be several years before the term meant anything to me but this was my gateway to the New Wave, to the writers in business to take my lysergic acid money, perhaps.

Later came Dick and Zelazny; Moorcock and Priest. But there, then, young Dave got a slap in the face by a book that said there is so much *more* you can do! It's not that there isn't space opera, derring-do, battle and cunning plans – but beyond there was a literary sensibility, an artistic agenda, hell - even some theorising on how language



shapes minds.

I don't know that I'd argue now that it's the best thing he wrote, or that there aren't other, more worthwhile, books from the era but without this one book I might very well not be here.

PS F&%king good thing I didn't pick up *ATLAS SHRUGGED* back then, eh?

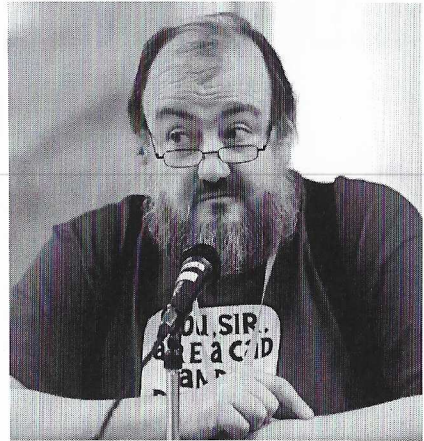
DOUG SPENCER - STAFF MEMBER

I honestly couldn't tell you which book – or books – got me into SF. It was too long ago; I have been reading SF almost as long as I've been reading, and the identity of the books that got me into SF have been lost to history.

I can, however, identify with certainty which book – or books – got me into SF fandom.

See, my first interaction with SF fandom was in a group which calls itself ZZ9, the official Douglas Adams fan club. It was an advert inside the cover of one of the books in the *Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy* then-Trilogy which put me in touch with ZZ9; it was information inside ZZ9's quarterly magazine that enabled me to go to my first convention; it was a group of people at my first convention that sold me a membership to my first small-fun-convention-on-a-May-bank-holiday; it was a group of people at my second convention who sold me a membership to my first **Novacon, Novacon 22**.

And here we are, a quarter of a century later; **Novacon 47** is my 77th convention, and it's clear to us all that my presence in fandom is all Douglas Adams's fault. Blame him.





Ok, here it is. This is what you have really come to **Novacon** for isn't it? Repeat after me: I will not sit in the bar all weekend... I will not leave the hotel to eat out... I will go to all these fantastic programme items...

As you will know (because you are very well informed people), we have the excellent Adrian Tchaikovsky as our **Guest of Honour**. There will be lots of opportunities over the weekend to get to know Adrian and his work, including his interview with Juliet McKenna on Saturday.

Another major highlight is our Saturday afternoon items on the rise of African SFF. Geoff Ryman is going to introduce us to a number of authors and their work that you may not be so familiar with. By way of a quick introduction we are being joined by Tosin Coker, Ezeiyoke Chukwunonso, Masimba Musodza and Nick Wood.

Geoff Ryman himself is the author of the web series hosted by *Strange Horizons*, *100 African Writers of SFF* which won the British Science Fiction Association Award for Best Non-Fiction. The series visits many cities in Kenya, South Africa, Malawi, Uganda, Ghana and Nigeria to talk to SFF writers. Geoff is also the Administrator of the Nommo Awards for Best Speculative Fiction by Africans, voted for by the African Speculative Fiction Association. The winners of the first Nommo Awards will be announced on 16 November at the Ake Festival in Abeokuta, Nigeria. He guest-edited the Manchester Review Special Issue 18 which reprinted 21 key stories from the history of African SFF in online format (just Google and go). Geoff is the winner of 16 Awards including the Arthur C Clarke Award twice and in 2012 a Nebula for his Nigeria-set novelet *What We Found*.

While Tosin Coker always had a lifelong passion for Science Fiction, her burning desire to contribute new blood to the genre was hindered by feelings of inadequacy. The UK market had never seen works released by a black female writer before, but by way of what she dubs a "Mission Impossible-style challenge", Coker set out to buck the trends. A decade later, Coker is celebrated as one of Science Fiction's most talented and refreshing players, with five novels already on the shelves. From her London home, she continues to

write her sixth, bringing her total authored book count to thirteen.

Ezeiyoke Chukwunonso is an MA graduate of Creative Writing, Swansea University Wales. A collection of his stories, *The Haunted Grave and Other Stories* has been published by Parallel Universe Publication. His short stories, poems and non-fiction have appeared in a couple of journals, anthologies and magazines such as *Emanation: Foray into Forever*, *Africa Roar Anthology*, *Open Road Review*, *Criterion Journal*, *ANA Review*, *Ground's Ear Anthology*, *Future Lovecraft*, *African Eyeball*, *Miracle e-zine*, *Episteme Journal*, *Texts on SAVVY Journal*. He has been short listed in *Ideas Tap Inspires: Writers' Centre Norwich Writing competition*, *Ghana Poetry Prize*, and *Quickfox Poetry Competition*.

Nick Wood is a South African clinical psychologist, with over twenty short stories previously published in *Interzone*, *Infinity Plus*, *PostScripts*, *Redstone Science Fiction* and *Fierce Family* amongst others. He has a YA speculative fiction book published in South Africa entitled *The Stone Chameleon* as well as a debut novel *Azanian Bridges*, which has been shortlisted for four Awards, including the Nommos for Best African SF Novel (2016). His next book is *Water Must Fall*, a solar-punk thriller. Nick has completed an MA in Creative Writing (SF & Fantasy) through Middlesex University.

We hope you enjoy this panel and the readings that will follow it. See below for details about this and all the other fantastic stuff we have lined up for you this weekend.

FRIDAY

18.45

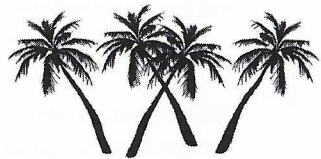
Opening Ceremony

It all starts here! Come along and meet the committee and our **Guest of Honour**. Find out what delights we have planned for you over the course of the weekend.

20.00

Desert Island Books

In conversation with Carol Goodwin, our **Guest of Honour** Adrian Tchaikovsky tells us about the books he would like to be washed up on a desert island with, and why they mean so much to him.



21.15

Book Launch Party

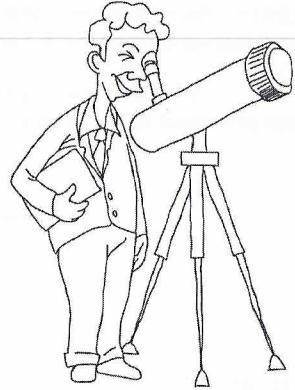
Come along and get a copy of Adrian's new book, *The Dogs Of War*, signed on the spot for you. Free wine and nibbles to get you into the convention party groove.

22.30**In Memoriam**

We very sadly lost Brian Aldiss and Peter Weston this year, two people who were very important to **Novacon** and the **BSFG**. Come along to view some documentaries and footage of both and share your memories of their life and their work.

SATURDAY**10.00****Science Talk: Adventures In The Goldilocks Zone:
The Search For Other Earths**

It's only Saturday so set your alarm for this one. Around 3500 confirmed planets and another 4500 candidate objects new exoplanets are being discovered every day. Professor Frazer Pearce from the University of Nottingham discusses how these recent discoveries have influenced our ideas about the formation of our own Solar System as well as how exoplanets are discovered and their properties measured. The Trappist-1 system, which contains 7 Earth-like planets, 3 of which orbit within the Goldilocks zone will be discussed as will the prospects for upcoming exoplanet detection missions.

**11.15****Other Fans' Obsessions**

We are at a loss to know how they have the time, but Anne Nicholls, Stan Nicholls and Juliet McKenna apparently have interests outside of SF and Fandom. Come along and be enthused by their other passions. Moderated by Yvonne Rowse.

12.30**Growing Up Fannish**

The more astutely observant among you will have noticed the next generation of fandom popping up at conventions over the last few years. What is like to grow up fannish and get let loose with your friends in a hotel a couple of times a year? Emjay Ameringen, Penny Hicks and Magdalen Standage-Bowles share their experiences. Alice Lawson is in loco parentis.

13.45

Guest Of Honour Interview

Guest of Honour Adrian Tchaikovsky in conversation with Juliet McKenna.

15.00

The Rise of African SFF

In 2009 it was commonplace to say that ‘Africans don’t write science fiction.’ Now it is commonplace to say ‘Africans have always written science fiction.’ 2016 was a bumper year of SFF novels by Africans and Africans in diaspora. The **Nommo Awards for Speculative Fiction** got financial support for prize money in four categories with winners to be announced right after Novacon at the Ake Festival in Abeokuta Nigeria. In 2016, the **African Speculative Fiction Society** was founded, with roughly 150 writers, editors and artists as members. Omenana magazine is publishing regularly online from Abuja, Nigeria. What are some of the key works from this explosion of creativity? What are some of the national differences in SFF from the continent? What are the issues for African writers? What makes SFF by Africans distinctive? Panellists are Yoruba language and SFF author Tosin Coker, Ezeiyoke Chukwunonso, Masimba Musodza and Nick Wood. Moderated by Geoff Ryman.

16.15

The Rise Of African SFF Part 2

Tosin Coker, Ezeiyoke Chukwunonso, Masimba Musodza and Nick Wood grab a quick comfort break (we’re kind like that) and return to the stage to do readings from their work.

17.30

Eaters Con

If a committee replaced George R R Martin at the last minute with the bloke who said ‘these aren’t the droids we’re looking for’ people might be a bit miffed. If the hotel ran out of bacon they’d need a new identity. Food is important to fans, it’s become part of the ritual of attending conventions and visiting new places. A panel of bon viveurs moderated by Dave Hicks will consider our culinary tastes, excesses, indulgences, and times when we’ve accidentally eaten the Guest of Honour’s starter.

18.45

Gor Blimey! Things Ain’t What They Used To Be

Join Theresa Derwin, Chris Stocks and others as they theatrically deliver the narrative from some of the worst SFF books they’ve come across. Think Thog’s Masterclass with attitude.

20.00**Open Mic Poetry**

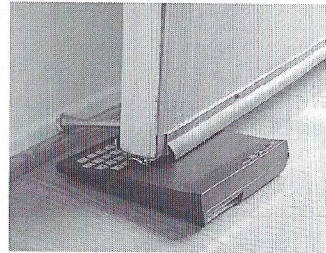
Former Birmingham Poet Laureate Chris Morgan leads a session for all you budding poets to come along and share your work. Beginners welcome!

**21.15****Pub Quiz**

Get yourselves sorted into teams, come up with a really cool team name and then dazzle us with your fund of useless knowledge. Includes silly games and fabulous prizes.

SUNDAY**10.00****Science Talk:****The Tech And The Amazing Stuff We Can Do With The Tech**

In a talk that does what it says on the tin, Professor Michael Merrifield from the University of Nottingham, who is overseeing the UK's involvement in the Extremely Large Telescope, tells us about (yes you guessed it right) the tech and the amazing stuff we can do with the tech.

**11.15****The Secrets Of Porcupine Books**

Porcupine Books has survived on the choppy seas of used bookselling for nearly twenty years. Come and find out how this small bookseller has managed to sell books at consistently low prices, as Claire Briarley interrogates Brian Ameringen, and take the opportunity to ask the questions that will uncover Porcupine's Hidden Secrets...

12.30**I Couldn't Possibly Put THAT In The Novel!
(The Joys And Pitfalls Of Research)**

Guest of Honour Adrian Tchaikovsky, along with Andrew Bannister, Christina Lake and Juliet McKenna discuss the trials and tribulations of the research process for world building and getting all that pesky detail bang on correct. Moderated by Andy Sawyer.

13.45**Art Auction**

Hopefully you have taken the opportunity over the weekend to go and have a look at some of the fantastic artwork on display in the art show. Now's your chance to bid for it and give it pride of place on your living room wall.

15.00 What's Happened To The Story? TV Narratives In The Streaming Age

We used to watch TV as a family, one channel at a time. Even when we got central heating, and second TVs, then satellite and cable, we still clung to an episodic shared storyline. Now we're freewheeling. How do we discover new shows, how do we come together to talk about them? Programmes had a structure and a rhythm built around ad breaks, cliffhangers, mid-season breaks. What happens now? Moderated by Dave Kirby with Fran Dowd, John Dowd and Magdalen Standage-Bowles.

16.15**Recycling The Redshirts**

A talk on science, cookery, cannibalism and Star Trek. Douglas Spencer presented this talk at Worldcon 75 in Helsinki, but when the room wasn't big enough to accommodate everyone who wanted to hear it, he undertook to present the talk again on a future occasion. This is a future occasion.

17.30**Handover Ceremony**

Say good bye to this year's committee and GoH. Meet the suckers splendid people who will be organising this all over again for next year. Who will be Guest of Honour? All will be revealed.

20.00**Dave Holmes Memorial Beer Tasting
And Guest Of Honour Banquet**

Our traditional Novacon wind down. This year's beer tasting is dedicated to the memory of Dave Holmes whom we very sadly lost this year. Entry via beer badge only, available from Registrations for £6 or three bottles of beer. Soft drinks will be freely available.

The banquet, as chosen by Adrian, is Chinese. Again, you must have a ticket for this, also available from Registrations. Come along to either or both and spin out the convention as long as long as possible before real life returns on Monday.

OFF-PISTE

Look out as well for other off-piste items in the downstairs bar or the downstairs syndicate rooms. Check out the notices stuck up on the walls or the committee member with the loudest voice making an announcement in the bar. Here are some confirmed items, exact times to be announced. Look out for sign-up sheets for Kaffeeklatsches as well.

Friday

19.15 - Come along for wine and nibbles and the launch of Theresa Derwin's latest anthology, *Her Dark Voice 2*. This Pre-Book Launch will have Readings by Pauline E Dungate and a surprise guest. The book will be dedicated to Vicky Stock and help raise money for Breast Cancer Campaign.

Saturday

Late - Book auction. Brian Ameringen is the auctioneer. Come along and give all those lonely book a home.

Sunday

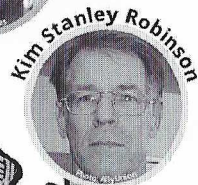
Afternoon - Follycon will be holding a Tea Party. Come, have tea!

Follycon

**The 69th British National
Science Fiction Convention**

Four days of talks, panels, exhibits and events celebrating science fiction and fantasy in all their forms. The Majestic Hotel, Harrogate, North Yorkshire, UK.

Attending membership £70 until 30 November 2017, then £80. Join online at www.follycon.org.uk or by cheque (payable to Eastercon 2018) to Follycon, 19 Uphall Road, Cambridge, CB1 3HX



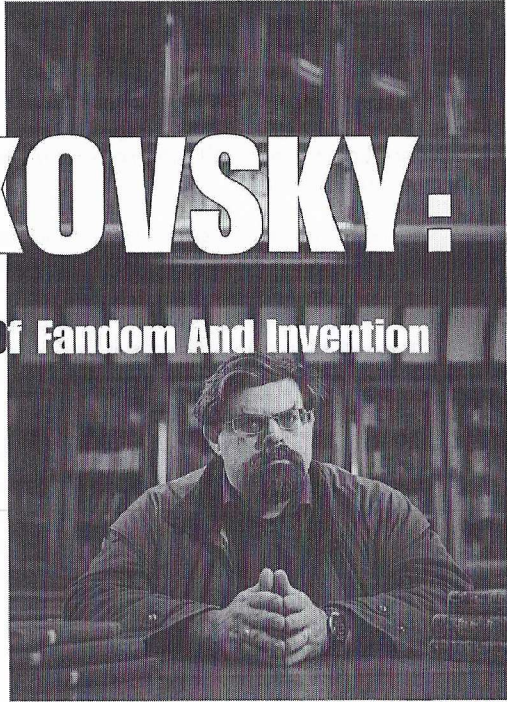
**The 2018 Eastercon,
30 March to 2 April 2018
www.follycon.org.uk**

ADRIAN TCHAIKOVSKY:

Writing At The Cusp Of Fandom And Invention

by

Juliet McKenna



Back in 1986 I went to hear a commissioning editor talk about what the book trade looks for in unpublished novels. She summed it up as 'the same but different'. New novels need to give fans what they know and love, but that's not nearly enough. The writer has to offer something new, to make the reader sit up and take notice. I find this is Adrian Tchaikovsky's work. His writing comes from the synthesis of a lifetime's reading and loving Science Fiction and Fantasy. Everything he reads is reflected on, thought through, and provides the inspiration for his strikingly inventive imagination.

Imagine being a fly on the wall, when *Empire in Black and Gold* first landed on an editor's desk. A fantasy world where all the people are some sort of half-insect? How can that possibly work? Well, from the first chapter, it's apparent this is no mere gimmick, so we can stop worrying. All the key players are vividly realised individuals with whom we will rapidly identify. More than that, these people we've come to know and care about are in danger. The Wasp Empire is on the move, aggressive and expansionist. Unfortunately the Lowland cities are more concerned with their own rivalries and prejudices. We learn this as explanations and revelations about history, politics and this business of people's dual natures are threaded through fast-moving events. Ants are telepathic. Mantids are swift and deadly fighters. Wasps can both fly and sting. When you need to know something, you find out. Tchaikovsky writes with a clarity and economy worth noting for its unobtrusive effectiveness, deftly avoiding data dumps and those dreaded 'As you know, Bob' conversations.

All this means Stenwold Maker, teacher in the intellectual centre of Collegium, has a fight on his hands, if he and his disparate band of pupils, allies and spies are to

convince the powers that be of the looming threat. So far, so archetypically fantasy, giving readers what they will enjoy. But so many things make this world different. There are workshops, smithies and mechanical artificers, firearms, airships and steam trains. Not that this is steampunk. Tchaikovsky clearly understands steampunk's appeal but he has no interest in grafting what's already been done onto his own writing. Rather he takes that element of current SF&F, and sees how his fertile imagination can remake it. This trait recurs in his work.

There's magic alongside the technology, or rather, different magics and their equivalents. The Ancestor Arts link the different races to their insect kindred. The mystic arts are practised by those with no aptitude for technology, such as the Moths, who've been driven into the shadows and remote places. Once again, we see so much that appeals to readers in classic fantasy narratives; magic, mystery and a war for mastery between distinct races with arcane powers, but all set in a world like nothing we've ever seen.

As the multifaceted struggle unfolds through the ten-volume **Shadows of the Apt** series, Tchaikovsky writes in the finest tradition of contemporary epic fantasy, rich with nuance and eschewing outdated stereotypes. Individuals of all races range from the heroic to the conflicted to the truly vile. There's unflinching honesty about violence but without the relentless nihilism of grimdark. There's sacrifice, devotion, and the worst of times bringing out the very best in people.

His next series, **Echoes of the Fall**, currently stands at two volumes. In the first book, *The Tiger and the Wolf*, we find another intriguing world of dual-natured people, influenced by myths of shapeshifters from across Europe, Asia, North and Sub-Saharan Africa as well as the Americas. Once again, Tchaikovsky is weaving such traditions into something dramatically new. I find this notable after seeing various writers try and fail to adapt the popularity of urban fantasy's furred and fanged protagonists into epic. As before the strengths of his writing underpin this with compelling characterisation, coherent world-building, and well-paced and structured plots.

The different tribes of this primitive world can Step into the animal form of their hereditary god; wolf, bear, tiger, serpent and many more besides. Technology is limited to tools of stone and bronze, with a very few jealously guarding the secret of forging iron. How does all this magic work? Perhaps the priests conducting bloody and arcane rituals know but for everyone else, who cares? This simply is how life *is*, red in tooth and claw, amid the challenges of staying alive across the cold tundra of the north, through vast forests and endless plains, all the way south to the lands of great rivers and the burning sun.

Rather than a multi-stranded epic, this story focuses on Maniye, soon to be known as Many Tracks. She is young, ill-informed and destined to become a pawn for other people's ambitions, including but not limited to her unloving and warring parents. With tiger on one side of her heritage, and wolf on the other, she seems to belong nowhere. Wherever she turns, someone wants to cut her down to size and she's small enough already. No wonder she flees her claustrophobic existence, not with any particular destination in mind but just to get *away*.

She can run, but she cannot hide from those relentlessly pursuing her and able

to sniff out her trail whatever her current form. Though she does run into powerful strangers who are travelling far from home for their own purposes. Will helping Maniye help them, or has she simply found yet more people who'll exploit her? Well, that which does not kill us makes us stronger and travel broadens the mind. As long as Maniye can stay alive, she can try to stay one step ahead by applying the lessons she's learned. Her willingness to adapt gives her at least that key advantage over her inflexible pursuers. If she can master undreamed-of secrets from before the dawn of time, then maybe she can stop running. Tchaikovsky more than proves he can write 'the same but different' when it comes to new directions in his own work.

So far, so fantastic, but what about Science Fiction? In *Children of Time* Tchaikovsky proves that his talent for satisfying and surprising readers extends across the speculative fiction spectrum.

The premise is merely one of many classic science fiction elements here; humanity is trying to save itself by terraforming new worlds before Earth succumbs to faction fighting and environmental degradation. Orbiting a distant planet, Dr Avrana Kern designs a nanovirus to uplift a race of primates to sufficient intelligence to serve as humanity's slaves. Except defiance and violence aren't limited to Earth and her plans are dramatically frustrated. There will be no pliant primates waiting for mankind's elite, when they complete their thirty year journey in near-light-speed ships. There will however be insects, thanks to a spectacularly unintended consequence of technology.

Tchaikovsky's fascination with insects and arachnids enables him to construct a wholly alien society that's rooted in real zoology where the females of the species are bigger, stronger and dominant. They're spinning their webs and following their own evolutionary paths while humanity drifts through interstellar space. This makes for a first contact story where we see both sides' point of view, just as we've come to realise that these intelligences are literally worlds apart. Can there ever be a meeting of minds? All bets are off until the very last pages.

On the human side of the narrative, we're drawn into the disjointed lives of the Key Crew, hauled out of hibernation whenever their skills will be vital to saving the *Gilgamesh*, or their expertise is needed for some new and desperate ploy to secure a home for this increasingly ragged remnant of mankind. It's not only the generation ship's systems that degrade with age and which suffer unexpected drains on limited resources.

As well as testing the implications of generation ships, Tchaikovsky glances at such classic SF ideas as the vulnerabilities and abuses of technology, through time dilation and relativistic effects, to the rapture of the nerds and more than one vision of dystopia. He reflects on contemporary SF's debates; on gender, on diversity, on self-determination, on ecological awareness, and the arrogance of science versus the polarising effects of religion. Crucially though, these things are never clumsily shoe-horned into the novel, just for the sake of it. Intensely personal stories are always to the fore while the exploration of big ideas arises naturally in the background to give this novel a rich hinterland. It is most assuredly a worthy winner of the 2016 Arthur C Clarke Award.

There's a great deal more I could say about his writing, as well as other books to discuss. This will have to be enough to be going on with, until we can meet up for a chat. Meantime, if you're not familiar with his work, I heartily recommend you start reading it.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Series

Shadows of the Apt

1. *Empire in Black and Gold* (2008)
2. *Dragonfly Falling* (2009)
3. *Blood of the Mantis* (2009)
4. *Salute the Dark* (2010)
5. *The Scarab Path* (2010)
6. *The Sea Watch* (2011)
7. *Heirs of the Blade* (2011)
8. *The Air War* (2012)
9. *War Master's Gate* (2013)
10. *Seal of the Worm* (2014)

Tales of the Apt

1. *Spoils of War* (2016)
2. *A Time For Grief* (2017)

Echoes of the Fall

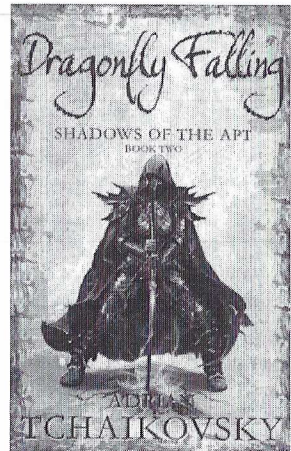
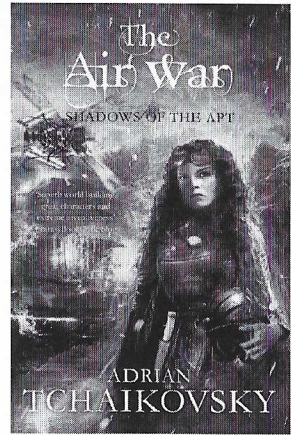
1. *The Tiger and the Wolf* (2016)
2. *The Bear and the Serpent* (2017)

Novels

- *Guns of the Dawn* (2015)
- *Children of Time* (2015)
- *Spiderlight* (2016)
- *Dogs Of War* (2017)

Collections

- *Dark Currents* (2012) (with Nina Allan, Aliette de Bodard, Una McCormack, Sophia McDougall, Adam Nevill, Rod Rees, Tricia Sullivan and Lavie Tidhar)
- *Hauntings* (2012) (with Paul Kane, Tanith Lee, Alison Littlewood, Mark Morris, Marie O'Regan, Robert Shearman and Liz Williams)
- *Feast and Famine* (2013)
- *Looking Landwards* (2013) (with J E Bryant, Storm Constantine, Kim Lakin-Smith, Den Patrick, Steven Pirie and Jetse de Vries)
- *The Girl at the End of the World Book 2* (2014) (with Kim Bannerman, Alec McQuay and Cheryl Morgan)
- *The Private Life of Elder Things* (2016) (with Adam Gauntlett and Keris McDonald)
- *Ctrl Alt Delight: Digital Science Fiction Anthology* (with Digital Fiction, G. Scott Huggins, Ian McHugh, Vincent L Scarsella, Martin L Shoemaker, Rosemary Claire Smith, David Steffen, J J Steinfeld and David Tallerman)



- *Ctrl Alt Delight: Digital Science Fiction Anthology: Volume 7* (Short Story Collection) (2016)

Novellas

- *Reading Between the Lines* (2013) (with Janine Ashbless)

Series contributed to

Afterblight Chronicles

- *The Bloody Deluge* (2014)
- *Journal of the Plague Year* (omnibus) (2014) (with Malcolm Cross and CB Harvey)

Monstrous Little Voices

- *Even in the Cannon's Mouth* (2016) (with Jonathan Barnes, Kate Heartfield, Foz Meadows and Emma Newman)

Awards

- **Arthur C. Clarke Award** Best Book winner (2016): *Children of Time*

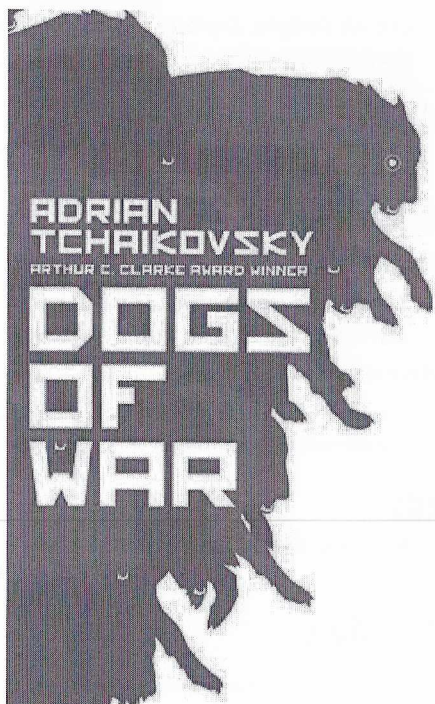
Short Fiction

- *The Artificial Man* (1996)
- *Fallen Heroes* (2008)
- *Loyalties* (2008)
- *Ironclads* (2008)
- *Queen of the Night* (2009)
- *The Naturalist* (2009)
- *The Sun of the Morning* (2009)
- *The Price of Salt* (2010)
- *The Last Ironclad* (2011)
- *The Dissipation Club* (2011)
- *Pipework* (2011)
- *Bones* (2012)
- *Good Taste* (2012)
- *The Fall of Lady Sealight* (2012)
- *21st-Century Girl* (2012)
- *Not a Cat Person* (2012)
- *The Mouse Ran Down* (2012)
- *Lost Soldiers* (2012)
- *Feast and Famine* (2013)
- *Reading Between The Lines* (2013)
with Janine Ashbless
- *Fragile Creations* (2013)
- *2144 and All That* (2013)
- *Care* (2013)
- *Rapture* (2013)
- *The God-Shark* (2013)
- *The Roar of the Crowd* (2013)
- *Charlie's Ant* (2013)
- *Family Business* (2013)
- *Lost to Their Own Devices* (2014)
- *The Final Conjunction* (2014)
- *The House on the Old Cliffs* (2015)
- *Crossed Gates* (2015)
- *Children of Dagon* (2015)
- *This Blessed Union* (2015)
- *The Coming of the Cold* (2016)
- *The Binds That Tie* (2016)
- *Dress Rehearsal* (2016)
- *The Language of Flowers* (2016)
- *A Time for Grief* (2017)
- *Alicea's Children* (2017)
- *The Peacemongers* (2017)
- *The Expert System's Brother* (2017)

DOGS OF WAR

by
ADRIAN
TCHAIKOVSKY

A review by
Helena Bowles



It's the day after tomorrow, and there's a nasty little war going on in south Mexico. It started with a rebellion that the standing government was hard pressed to put down, and it eventually spread to include a whole raft of Private Security groups employed to protect the interests of foreign and/or multinational companies with assets there.

If it had been merely tomorrow, both the government and the mercenary forces would have been saving human lives by using robotic fighting tools, but that didn't work so well. There are whole areas of the world that are currently no-go zones due to drone killing machines whose programming has been so corrupted and hacked – often by other machines – that they answer to no one and are outside all chains of command. Fully mechanised warfare has created some major problems and is not presently in fashion. Yet Human lives are important. The wealthy countries of the world understand that and if robots are not the answer... well, there has to be another solution, surely?

In Mexico, Rex leads a multiform bioform squad. They are an attempt to find that answer: how to wage war without expending Human life, or, at least, human life on the right side. Rex and his squad have no problem spilling Enemy human blood. It is what they were created for. Rex's Master tells him who the enemy is, and Rex and his three friends wade in. It's not that they are without conscience, but they have been programmed to obey – quite literally. They all have a hierarchy written into their software that means, for them “only obeying orders” is not just an excuse. There are four of them: Rex, the eight foot tall, over muscled dog-form, who would not look out of place in the pages of *2000 AD*, Honey, the even larger bear form who specialises in heavy weaponry, Dragon, a huge lizard-form with the ability to camouflage himself

against his surroundings, who is an assassin, and Bees who is... bees. Bees is a Distributed Intelligence Network, dependent for consciousness on her swarm integrity. She is both espionage and reconnaissance, as well as an airborne fighting force dispensing poisons secreted within her own bodies. For a long time they obey Rex's Master, Murray (the first of a number of nods to *Moreau*), without question, but there are odd times when they inexplicably lose comms with Master and his team, and Honey is starting to ask questions that make Rex uncomfortable. Rex wants nothing more than to be Master's *Good Dog*, but he trusts Honey, knowing she is far cleverer than he is, and he is starting to wonder, a little, about what being a *Good Dog* actually means.

Finally, through a series of accidents, Rex and his team are free. They are loose, feral, off the reservation, with only Rex to make decisions, aided by Honey who, it is becoming clear, is far more intelligent than she was ever intended to be. Honey has *plans* and she is gently manipulating Rex in the decisions he makes. The questions remain: who are they? What are they for? Is there a life for them outside of warfare? Honey has begun to understand the nature of a *war crime*, and she has a very good idea about what happens to weapons that are too dangerous. She sees that if they are to be used in war – and they are too well engineered not to be – it must not be as weapons, but as soldiers. But that is a long way in the future. The first hurdle is simply to be seen as intelligent thinking beings, albeit not *human* intelligences.

When you start *Dogs of War*, you think the story will be about Rex and his squad maturing and learning to be independent intelligences, then as the story unfolds, you think this is the story of how they are recognised as such by human society. Another turn of the plot and the story is about bioforms finding their place in the world, then it is about the possibility of a *human* distributed intelligence network and how that would work, and later still about *Homo sapiens* having to relearn how to exist on a planet where it is not the only intelligent species. It's like starting at the centre of an onion and moving outwards. Each layer you pass is larger and more far reaching than the one below, but it remains the story of Rex, Honey, Bees and the people who pass into and out of their lives.

It would be traditional to make Rex an object of pity: caught between dog and human (plus artificial hardware), caught in thrall to a Master who, it is perfectly clear, is a psychopath of the first water: the kind of man who would thrive in a dirty little war where the concept of *human rights* has been thrown by the wayside. But Rex is not pathetic. At first he is a little simple; he struggles with some concepts, but once freed from his burdensome programmed hierarchy of obedience, he adapts to his new circumstances with dignity. His narration cleverly, and almost imperceptibly, increases in sophistication so that the Rex writing at the end of the book is a very different being to the one at the start.

Obviously, there's a lot of consideration of ethics here, particularly of warfare, and how it would apply to sentient bioforms. Are they just weapons? Once they are considered intelligences, what rights does that give them? They are beings created in a laboratory. What rights do their creators have over them? Any? And if not, what about the money sunk into their development? Given how they are so specifically engineered for warfare, *can* they be "just people". The problem is they are intelligences, but not human intelligences. They have different senses, different ways of thinking, they are not

just humans in funny faces/bodies. They are *different* in a world where there has only been one type of intelligence for at least 24 000 years.

There are also nods to the future of cybernetic implants for humans. If we could communicate with or live in each others' thoughts via brain implants, what change will that bring? Would that make yet another kind of intelligence? A human distributed intelligence network? And how does that change our sense of ourselves as individual humans? Could we even survive as individual humans? Or would we become something more like Bees, consciousness in aggregate?

Adrian's fascination with different ways of thinking and the cultures that could grow out of them is very evident here. Bees reminds me a little of the Ant colonies in *Children of Time* and the way decisions and even consciousness are an emergent phenomenon from the interactions of the large numbers of component bodies. Bees is a fun character, incomprehensible as she is some of the time. The story has an awareness of the prejudice faced by the bioforms and the ways that minority groups have to "soften" their impact to avoid threatening the dominant culture – though this is not yet another "fantasy racism" metaphor, thank goodness. Honey, in particular, is aware she is presenting a slight figure of fun with her aping of human clothes and spectacles, and that she must do this in order to defuse humans' fears for as long as possible. Rex works less closely with humans and is often employed specifically for his fearsome air, so this affects him less, but he, too, is aware of the need to constantly tread carefully, lest the fragile tolerance they have achieved be tested.

This a very assured novel. The story telling is highly economical, which is how there is so much going on. It's a story that will repay a second or even a third read. There are things happening that are a little puzzling on the first read – though the narrative has enough pace and interest to keep you going despite there obviously being Things Being Left Unexplained. This is carried to the point that, while the chapters are headed with the viewpoint character, one set is simply described as "Redacted" which I did think was the author bordering on being overly cheeky... However, that character is a major plot point and theme so I can see why it was done. A second go through with the withheld knowledge in mind makes certain parts of the narrative read very differently.

Dogs of War is a complex, deceptively cleverly written, intelligent and thought provoking novel. Like Adrian's previous work, the Clarke Award winning *Children of Time*, it is redolent with the tropes and concerns of traditional Golden Age SF. However, it brings to the table a modern sensibility – a feel for characterisation, for the necessity of showing the micro- as well as the macro- scale effects of the plot. By the end of the story we care for Rex, and Honey, and Bees and the other smaller characters, as much as we care for the story of how bioforms are used in the world – how they change the human world in ways that no one was looking for. They are a challenge but also an opportunity for humanity to expand their own consciousnesses. There are small, almost throwaway sections of story that come back to you repeatedly, resonating with the real world – if *Dogs of War* is one of those creations that feels as real as the one outside the window.

Review based on free ARC received from Head of Zeus.

IN MEMORIAM



BRIAN ALDISS
1925-1917



VICKI COOK
1979-2017



DAVE HOLMES
1955-2017



PETE WESTON
1944-2017

FONDLY REMEMBERED.
NEVER FORGOTTEN.



SHOOING

BRIAN ALDISS

The last time I ever saw one of our greatest writers was to chuck him off stage.

Novacon 40 was unlike other **Novacons**. Running the programme was not the usual matter of trying to find content. With so many talented people we were struggling to work out how the hell we were going to fit them all in! Other past guests of honour turned up unannounced and, when offered a chance to appear on stage, said no thanks, they were fine just hanging around in the bar. If you stood at the bar and threw something over your shoulder the chances were you'd hit a science fiction writer or well-known scientist. It was the year Stephen Baxter couldn't make it and we just said "never mind".

One of these people was Brian Aldiss. He was, he said, "probably coming by helicopter" although our hopes that he'd land directly on the hotel roof as an added attraction did not materialise.

Of course, we had a programme slot dedicated to Brian's work with an interview by Chris and Pauline Morgan. Then Brian offered to do a reading as well. Well, you don't turn that down, do you? The programme was hastily rejigged (of course we never do that normally...) And you can't shuffle him off to some small room downstairs because too many people will turn up. Even on a Sunday morning.

The room was packed. Brian sat on the edge of the stage and read a selection of his short stories, eschewing a microphone so people had to lean forward to catch the intonation and subtleties. Everyone was having a lovely time and would have been happy there for another hour or so.

Then some rotten bastard turned up and ruined it. We still had to get Iain Banks, Kari and Chris Priest on later. Next up were Ian Stewart and Jack Cohen.

Brian was finishing *A Tupelov Too Far* and he saw me out of the corner of his eye and knew I was there to wind the item up before I even started making apologetic "five minutes" hand gestures.. He looked at me dolefully and didn't need to say out loud: "Aw, but Dave, we're having so much fun!" (some of the audience did).

Seven years later, I still feel guilty about that. Even if the next item was also very good.

He left in a huff, or was it a helicopter?

Dave Hicks

NOVA CON

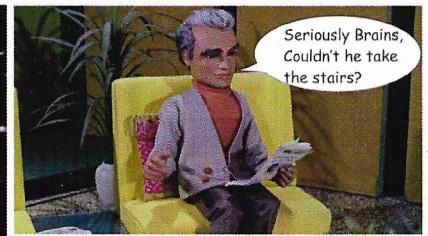
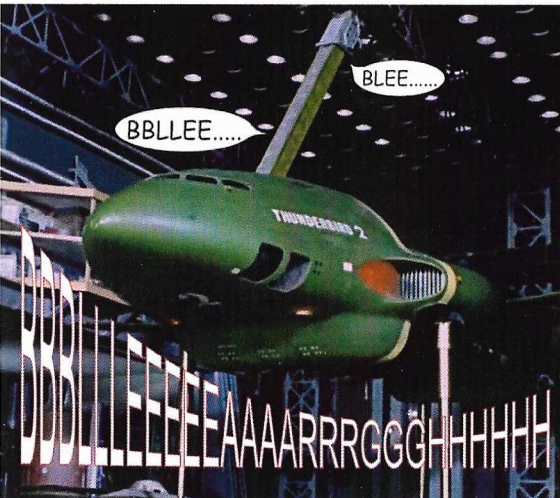
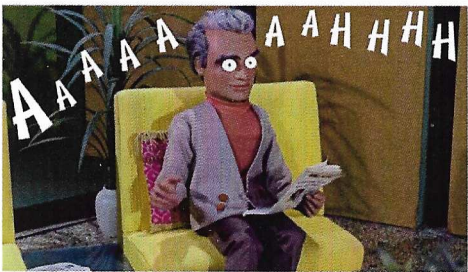
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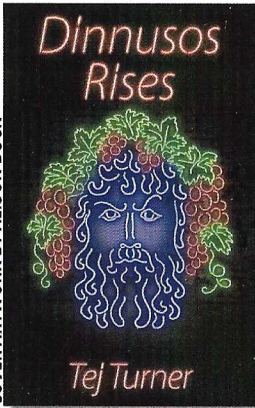
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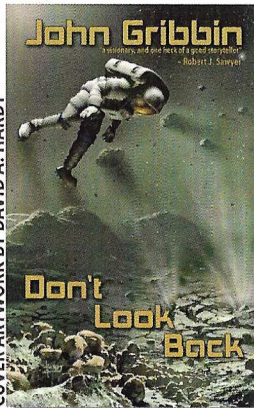
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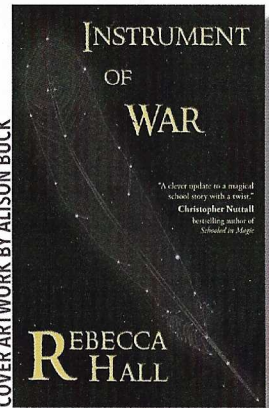
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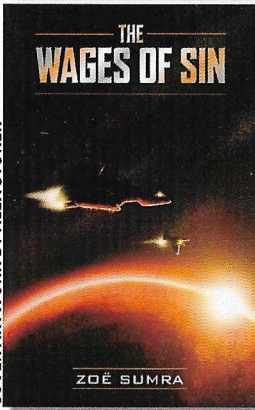
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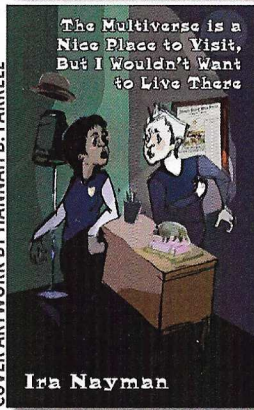
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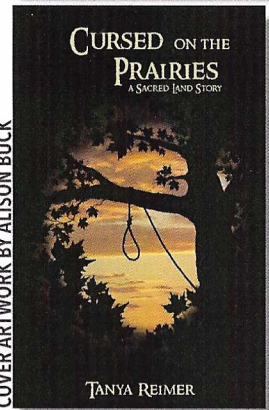
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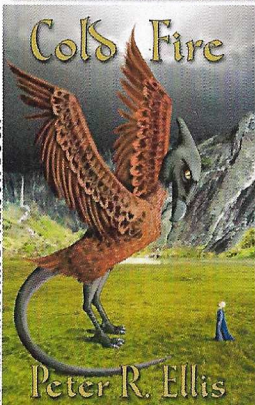
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