



Galactic North

Alastair Reynolds

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Set in the Revelation Space universe-the first short story collection by "one of SF's best and most ambitious novelists." (SFX)

With eight short stories and novellas- including three original to this collection- Galactic North imparts the centuries-spanning events that have produced the dark and turbulent world of Revelation Space.

Centuries from now, the basic right to expand human intelligence-beyond its natural limits-has become a war-worthy cause for the Demarchists and Conjoiners. Only vast lighthugger starships bind these squabbling colonies together, manned by the panicky and paranoid Ultras. And the hyperpigs just try to keep their heads down.

The rich get richer. And everyone tries not to think about the worrying number of extinct alien civilizations turning up on the outer reaches of settled space...because who's to say that humanity won't be next?

Galactic North Details

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From Reader Review Galactic North for online ebook

David Sven says

While I'm still working through the audio of Redemption Ark I thought I might check out some of the Rev Space short stories he published earlier in this collection.

I'm glad I decided to read these in publication order because there is some crossover between the stories as well as the the two shorts in Diamond Dogs Turquoise Days. I was able to appreciate cameo appearances from characters who were written earlier which would otherwise just appeared random.

I think this is an excellent collection for fans of the Revelation Space series. Some of the shorts serve as origin stories for characters in the main series. Others just concentrate on one concept from the series and add a bit of extra detail.

Reynolds demonstrates he can write in the short story format, never trying to do too much and always adding his signature twist - which usually involves his characters revealing that they are someone totally different to who you thought they were. He does it a lot but he still gets me every time.

A must read for fans and it's 4 stars overall

Dilation Sleep

Off to a good start. This isn't the first book in the collection but I'm going in publication order.

The story is set on a star ship carrying 900 refugees escaping the melding plague on Yellowstone. Travelling at near light speed, passengers and crew are all placed in reefer sleep until the ship's surgeon is woken by the computerized sub persona to handle an emergency. What's weirder than being the only person out of 900 awake? When you're alone with something else awake with you.

This one has a very nice twist in the end. 4/5 stars

A Spy in Europa

An assassin/covert operative of the Gilgamesh Isis faction is sent deep into Demarchy territory to retrieve a package from a sleeper agent. Things go according to plan. The question is, what and whose plan?

Murder and mayhem ensue from the Hanging cities above Europa's surface to the Oceans below Europa's kilometre thick Ice. 3/5 stars

Galactic North

Pirates ambush an Ultra Lighthugger and steal some of its cargo of cryogenically frozen sleepers. What ensues is a space chase that spans 40000 years of future history. Not bad for a short story. A tale of betrayal, revenge, and obsession against the backdrop of humanity's struggle for survival. The story also includes Remontoire who enters the main series in Redemption Ark. 3.5/5 stars

The Great Wall of Mars

This covers the backstory of Nevil Clavain's defection to the Conjoiners. We are introduced to Galiana, Felka, Sandra Voi (Great Grandmother to the Sandra Voi in Redemption Ark) and we see Remontoire again. Of course we also learn what the Great Wall of Mars is and it was generally cool to learn more of the history hinted at in Redemption Ark. Also cool were the robotic killer worms.

And have you ever wondered how you might survive 5000 gees of deceleration? Easy. Just install a few

machines in your head and *'If you allow it, there's time for them to establish a structural web across your brain. We'll flood the cabin with foam. We'll all die temporarily, but there won't be any damage they can't fix...*

Sign me up! 4/5 stars

Glacial

Clavain, Galiana and Felka explore the century old ruins of a human outpost on an Ice planet. As they investigate to uncover the mystery behind the bizarre deaths of the colonists they discover the planet is not quite as dead as they first thought. 3.5/5 stars

Weather

It's Ultra vs Ultra as the Lighthugger *Petronel* is stalked by pirates. Space battles, unrequited love and a startling revelation about the Conjoiner drives that you won't find in the main series. 4/5 stars

Graffenwalder's Bestiary

Graffenwalder is a collector of rare and hideous species of animals...and maybe things that are more human than animal. But he's not the only one around Yellowstone with a fascination for the bizzare. Graffenwalder has competition in one Ursula Goodglass and when a specimen that has been Graffenwalder's lifelong obsession comes on the market he jumps at the chance to gain the ultimate kudos.

But as all we Rev Space readers know...Beware of Ultra's bearing gifts.

4/5 stars

Nightingale

A team of mercenaries is assembled to take in a war criminal hiding out in a ghost spaceship. Sometimes to catch a monster, you have to become a monster.

4/5 stars

KostasAt says

7.5/10

In his career as a science fiction author, Alastair Reynolds has written many great stories and adventures - from novels, to novellas and short-stories - and managing through all these to create also and one of the best universes in the field. But, with the completion of the novels of the Revelation Space universe, it left behind a desire for something more.

Galactic North comes to change that, collecting eight stories in this beloved universe; eight adventures that takes us deep into known and unknown places, and bringing us against with characters that can easily make you to love them - even through their evil deeds.

Great Wall of Mars

The first story opens this collection with Nevil Clavain, one of the main characters in the Revelation Space universe, as we follow him on a mission that will send him deep into the Great Wall of Mars - and the heart of Galiana's operations - trying to find a solution as to stop another war between the Conjoiners and the Coalition. But when, after an unexpected event, he's betrayed by someone who he trusted the most during the negotiations for their treaty, he will find himself in a great adventure, and a decision that may change his life forever.

Set long before the main trilogy, the story explores one of Nevil Clavain's first missions, and the beginning of his relationship with Galiana who put him in amongst the nets of the Conjoiners, with Reynolds making a fast, but otherwise strong adventure, managing to give - through his amazing style - an even greater depth to this awesome character.

Also, the story features some of the most deadly worms in the universe, showing thus how great influenced Frank Herbert had in the science fiction field, but adding always his own incredible ideas.

Glacial

Another story with Nevil Clavain following him, some years after the events of the *Great Wall of Mars*, in an adventure with Galiana on the remote Diadem: an ice planet, as they embark on a mission, seeking the long-missing American scientist Martin Setterholm and his colleagues who had been sent almost a century ago to explore it. However, when they reach the planet Diadem, they will begin to discover that something bad has happened on the American base, and when the only survivor turns out to be hiding something dark deep inside him, he and Galiana will be faced with a mystery that may lead them even to their deaths.

Unlike the previous story, *Glacial* is a mystery/crime story with the protagonists finding themselves this time in an adventure that will soon become much more personal.

Although it is certainly not as strong as the previous one, Reynolds manages through his writing to build beautifully the case around the missing American scientists, as well the relationship between Nevil and Galiana, putting thus a little more depth to their past than before, and making them even more beloved through their adventures.

A Spy in Europe

The third story of the collection focuses on Marius Vargovic, an agent of Gilgamesh Isis: a force that vies against Demarcy for the dominance of the system around Jupiter. However, when they receive a message from Cholok, a woman who has infiltrated into the heart of Europe - one of Jupiter's moons controlled by Demarcy - claiming to have something that could, if used properly, bring the destruction to their enemies, Vargovic will be sent to find her and make a deal with her. But, when this mission proves to be more difficult than he thought, he will find himself deep into a great adventure that will bring him amongst some unnatural beings, whom their only desire, is their long-prolonged freedom; something that they'll not hesitate even to kill to get it.

This is perhaps one of the darkest and cruellest stories of this collection as, interchanging through many flashbacks - making it thus even more complex - Reynolds takes us deep into a plot, but also into a betrayal, that will make even the most the ruthless skills of the protagonist seem impotent against his enemies. Certainly, not an easy story, but nevertheless sets strongly the setting between these two forces and their plots for power.

Weather

This novella focuses on the adventures of Inigo, an Ultra, and the captain of *Petronel* as, after an inevitable attack from a pirate ship - that somehow they managed to defeat against all odds, even with heavy losses - discover in its wreckage a young Conjoiner, their lives will change forever.

Bringing her aboard their ship against the captain's orders, Inigo will begin to see something different beyond her peculiarities that he never felt again, but soon, her threatening abilities, that can so easily lead them to their destruction, will bring a great turmoil amidst the crew of the *Petronel*. However, when something unexpected occurs along the way, putting their fate into her hands, they will be faced with their greatest challenge; something that, for Inigo, may cost him and the most.

This particular story is a little different than the rest as Reynolds, using perfectly the first person, manages

through a space adventure to make a wonderful love story, putting Inigo's beliefs - and feelings - into a constant turmoil against his captain's abhorrence for the Conjoiners. It is a story that, in the end, manages to touch even the deepest parts of your heart and make you feel the protagonist's feelings, showing thus Reynolds' great talent as he manages to make something so different from his usual adventures - and he does wonderfully.

Dilation Sleep

The next story follows Uri, aboard the starship *Wild Pallas*, as he and his crewmembers are trying to escape the planet Yellowstone and the effects of the Melding Plague, seeking for a better future. But, when Uri awakes during their long journey, lost amongst dreams, he will begin to discover that something has gone completely wrong - something that can threaten the ship, and even and their own existence.

This story was one of the very first he managed to publish and start his great career. It is a quite a short story, but with a big twist as Reynolds puts the protagonist, through this space adventure, into a world of dreams that are so real that you cannot distinguish them from the reality.

Surely not the best story of the collection, as it still shows his first steps as a writer, but it's quick, imaginative and mysterious enough to hold your interest.

Grafenwalder's Bestiary

Set two hundred years after *A Spy in Europa*, this story focuses on Grafenwalder, a collector of rare and unnatural creatures, seeking for the only thing he never had: to capture one of the legendary Denizen monsters. However, despite his cruel and selfish ways, when a mysterious broker sends him a message, claiming to have that he so much desires - and which will make him one of the most famous collectors of the Circle - he will find himself unsuspected amongst a scheme, bringing him against into a deadly threat - and into a forgotten past - that may well cost him something more than his own life.

Building through this ruthless protagonist, Reynolds explores in this story the dealings - and the backstabs - of the small society of the Circle's richly collectors, but managing also, through his ideas, to create and some of the most amazing monsters of the universe, and showing us thus that revenge, is always best served cold.

Nightingale

The second biggest novella in the collection follows Dexia, a former soldier on the planet Sky's Edge, and a team of specialists as they're recruited by Tomas Martinez - a well-known soldier seeking to persecute the war criminals - to find and return to justice Colonel Jax whose said to be aboard *Nightingale*: a ship that was supposedly destroyed long ago. But, as they'll get to the ship, and will start looking for Colonel Jax, they will soon discover something terrible; something that will put them into a great adventure for their survival, and against a horrendous truth.

With a, relatively, simple storyline Reynolds manages here to make a powerful, suspenseful, and very enjoyable adventure - showing how much he has improved over the years - as he manages to build wonderfully the mystery around the ship *Nightingale*, and managing also, with great mastery, to offer in the end and many doses of horror. Definitely one of the top, and one of my personal favorites of the collection.

Galactic North

The titular, and last story follows Captain Irravel, on her first interstellar trip, and Markarian as, when their ship *Hirondelle* gets damaged and are forced to land on a comet of an uninhabited system to repair it, they will be faced with an attack by pirates. But, when this attack proves to be more fierce than they expected, endangering not only themselves, but also and their twenty thousand passengers, and the pirates - through their threatening ways - get in their hands their most dangerous weapon, which has the ability to terraform

even entire planets, they will find themselves in an adventure through the centuries, and in a future that may well bring the extinction of the human kind.

Coming at the end of the collection, Reynolds brings us to one of his most ambitious stories, taking us into a distant, unknown future that all seems to be on the brink of destruction. Although written before the main trilogy, the story extends much farther than the novels, with Reynolds exploring also the race of the Nestbuilders - linking them thus directly to the books - as well and the future of mankind as he takes us in another great adventure throughout the universe; a story that manages, once again, to put you in thoughts for what the future may hold.

Overall, *Galactic North* is a collection with a wide variety of stories, with Reynolds showing his imagination - and his influences - through his career as an author, but without failing to make again and some incredible adventures that takes us throughout the Revelation Space universe.

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William says

A good mixed bag, but the 1999 story **Galactic North** is fascinating as it is the map of most of the stories from Revelation Space. **Weather** is the best of the bunch.

Great Wall of Mars (2000) - 4.5 star

Great stuff. Fast pacing, good characters, short but wonderful early days of Revelation Space

Glacial (2001) - 4.5 star

Wonderful continuation of Clavain and Galiana, this time on an ice world, with a murder mystery. Truly great stuff.

A Spy in Europa (1997) - 3.5 star

A short but interesting spy story, with a nice twist at the end.

Weather (2006) - 5 star

Wonderful, poignant, and a terrific insight into Conjoiner minds and engines. All superbly written!

Dilation Sleep (1990) - 3.5 star

Single concept story. Not bad, but not surprising. First story of the Melding Plague

Grafenwalder's Bestiary (2006) - 3.5 star

Some nice twists, good pacing, not too much dialogue diarrhoea.

Nightingale (2006) - 1 star

Blah blah infinite dialogue, repeated. A very short story made horrifically long and dull. Pages and pages of idiots arguing over which way to go in a "hedge-maze", etc. Worst-ever piece of work by Reynolds.

Galactic North (1999) - 4 star

I grand, sweeping vision of the entire Revelation Space series. It's very episodic, but nicely realised in the

subsequent books and stories.

Still, nothing here compares to Reynold's finest work: Turquoise Days (2002)

NOTE: Please, please also read *Turquoise Days*, a novella, and short stories *Enloa*, *Weather*, and *Zima Blue*. Surely his finest works, along with *House of Suns*.

Bradley says

I'm supremely happy to know that Reynolds as a short story writer is just as good as Reynolds as a novelist. Some of the stories were unabashedly nostalgic for me, but others, such as the last one, *Galactic North*, really bit deep into my subconscious and wouldn't let go. I wanted more and more of that one, but there were a few others that even verged on the mythical. I'm thinking of a certain medical ship, not to mention a fascination of worms.

Strangely enough, I got a lot out of the afterward, as well, when he explained his debts to other writers, and I think no less of him for adding such a long list. I suppose I'd do the same, in his shoes. But then again, I see no fear that he took too much from them, or made anything else less than stellar.

I'm very impressed and I enjoyed every story.

Matt says

There's just nobody like Alastair. I've had this on my shelf for a while, and I was worried that I might have forgotten crucial finer details from the *Revelation Space* trilogy and *Chasm City* in the post-interim, but I just trusted the process and got immersed in the *Ultras* and *Conjoiners* and *Demarchists* and my mind boggled all over again at the possibilities of the far future's centuries-long traveling and free-exchange of identities across flesh, machinery, plagues and space. The afterward with references to Reynolds' influences is a generous footnote to this collection, and his spellcraft is such that he's a writer I'll always return to.

Florin Pitea says

Liked it a lot, especially the title novella... And the Afterword.

Claudia says

Great addition to *Revelation Space* universe.

Even if not all stories are related to the trilogy, they are set in the same universe and bring in some new details related to some of the events and concepts used in the series.

> *Great Wall of Mars* - the story of Clavain from way back when he became a Conjoiner, set in the events

on Mars and also his first encounter with Felka. A beautiful story about honour and betrayal. 5/5

> **Glacial** - gripping tale about Clavain's mission on Diadem, an Earth-like planet, to investigate the death of the researchers established there. Reynolds definitely has the talent to write also policier-like stories. 5/5

> **A Spy in Europa** - a mission to pull out something from Europa has an unforeseen turn. It's a thriller with horror accents, featuring the Denizens (an engineered sentient species, created by the Demarchists). 5/5

> **Weather** - reveals a major secret regarding how a lighthugger drive is functioning. Mind blowing. Also, made me wonder what is it about the name Inigo, for both Reynolds and Hamilton to have a character named the same... 5/5

> **Dilation Sleep** - gives us more details about the Melding Plague and reefersleep. 4/5

> **Grafenwalder's Bestiary** - a monsters collector finally gets his hands on the ultimate specimen for his collection, which gives him the surprise of his life. 4/5

> **Nightingale** - the most shocking story of this collection. A parable of war consequences which will give you nightmares (view spoiler). Yes, Reynolds' worlds are dark but the horror of this story totally shocked me. 10/5 (!)

> **Galactic North** - brings in some details after the end of Revelation Space trilogy. Not all questions are answered but, at least, fewer remained now. 3/5

Beside the fact that all stories are set in the same universe, they also have something more in common: an utterly unexpected end. Mr. Reynolds knows damn sure how to glue the readers to his writings.

One recommendation: read the trilogy (Revelation Space, Redemption Ark and Absolution Gap) before starting this collection. Otherwise the stories may be perceived as too abrupt.

Neal Asher says

I just finished Galactic North the other day, and am now looking forward to reading The Prefect. It's nice to be once again reminded why I enjoyed reading his Revelation Space series. A few of the stories in here I'd read before (was The Great Wall of Mars in Interzone?) but I still enjoyed them second time around. The story Galactic North seemed a bit disjointed, but I still enjoyed the big space and huge breadths of time. All of it: huge Gothic spaceships, weapons like dangerous beasts lurching in cathedral caches, borge-like ultras, nano-plagues and ... more stuff with Conjoiners in it, please, Alastair!

Jan Bednarczuk says

I can't get enough of the Revelation Space universe. I just can't. This future history feels almost as real and detailed and nuanced to me at this point as real history does.

I've already read most of the novels in this series, and with some trepidation moved on to this collection of

short stories. So many authors who excel in longer forms do poorly with short stories, and vice versa.

I needn't have worried. Reynolds is, if anything, even more skilled at the short story format; perhaps because it forces him to rein in his tendency towards wordiness that affects some of the novels.

I'm not sure how well this collection would work for someone new to this universe. Possibly it would be fine. But some of the delight for me was in seeing stories filled in for what had been only bits and pieces of incidental plots or characters in the other books.

This is now my second favorite book in the series, following only *Chasm City* for sheer enjoyment. Highly recommended.

Stuart says

Galactic North: Reynolds excels at shorter lengths

Originally posted at Fantasy Literature

Having read all the full-length novels in Alastair Reynolds' **REVELATION SPACE** series, I knew I'd eventually get to his shorter works set in the same dark and complex universe. The main novels are **Revelation Space**, **Redemption Ark**, **Chasm City**, **Absolution Gap**, and **The Prefect**. Reynolds has produced a detailed future history, inspired by works such as Bruce Sterling's **Schismatrix**, Larry Niven's **KNOWN SPACE**, and Iain M. Banks' **CULTURE** novels, and the stories in **Galactic North** (2006) fill in important details and serve as memorable tales of post-humans in a cold and inhospitable universe.

When I read Reynolds' full-length works last year, one of my biggest complaints was that they were overlong, turgidly-paced, and heavy on exposition. Those problems are largely absent from this collection — these stories are action-packed, dense, and effective. They revolve around morally-complex, highly-augmented mercenaries, hive-mind humans, conflicted ships captains, ruthless pirates, and scientists, and often pack a nasty punch at the end — this is not a forgiving galaxy for humans of any kind. But when you get used to it, it really draws you in. Now that I understand the chronology and scale of his universe better, I appreciate the events of the novels more. As with all Alastair Reynolds' audiobooks, the stories are narrated well by John Lee, whose dignified British delivery is a good fit for his work.

Reynolds' milieu is fully developed. Mankind has colonized many worlds in our part of the galaxy, but has not developed FTL technology, so star travel is frequently done while in hibernation ("reefer sleep"), and the level of cybernetic technology has split humanity into a number of sub-groups, including Demarchists (moderately-augmented humans that practice real-time democracy via neural implants), Ultras (highly-augmented cyborg humans), and Conjoiners (mentally-linked humans with hive-mind traits). Humanity has also encountered the remains of many dead alien civilizations, illustrating Fermi's Paradox of why we have not been contacted by other alien species despite the billions of potentially-habitable worlds in the universe. The stories are ordered in a rough chronology ranging from 2,205 CE in "Great Wall of Mars" to 40,000 CE at the end of "Galactic North." These are the stories in the collection:

Great Wall of Mars

This is the earliest story in Reynold's future chronology, the pivotal story of Nevil Clavain, a prominent figure in the main **REVELATION SPACE** series, and Galiana, the founder of the Conjoiner movement. It's a tense tale of the fight between Coalitionists, Demarchists, and a rebel group led by Galiana holed up on

Mars. The Earth forces have the rebels pinned down in their fortified construct (the “Great Wall”) which extends deep underground. Clavain and Galiana are ostensibly enemies, but events conspire to force them together, and a young girl with severe brain damage plays a surprising role. The first-hand description of the Conjoiners’ collective consciousness is fascinating, and the story is action-packed and gripping.

Glacial

This takes place shortly after the previous story, as Clavain and Galiana arrive on an ice planet named Diadem, where they discover an abandoned Earth colony in which the colonists have all died after apparently going insane. They find one survivor who has jury-rigged a form of cryo-stasis, and revive him enough to question what happened. His story sounds fairly plausible, but Clavain has a nagging suspicion some details don’t add up. This is a fairly typical SF setup — the abandoned colony, mysterious deaths, and a suspicious survivor. But to Reynolds’ credit, he adds in some interesting alien biology about ice-worms, and the resolution of the mystery was a surprise to me.

A Spy in Europa

This is a short but intense story of an undercover agent who goes to a city situated under the ice sheet covering Europa. He is embroiled in the power struggle between the Demarchists (controlling Europa) and the Gilgamesh Isis (who control Ganymede and Callisto). He undergoes dramatic surgical alteration to be equipped with gills to survive in the freezing waters under the ice, and sets out to discover crucial secrets that will aid his side and undermine the Demarchists, but encounters some unexpected beings instead, who seem to be allies at first...

Weather

This is one of the best stories of the collection. It’s about Inigo, the shipmaster of the Ultra ship Petronel, which is attacked by pirates while transporting colonists in cryosleep. By a stroke of improbable cosmic luck, the pirate threat is eliminated and they find a lone Conjoiner woman being held prisoner. She has a name that is completely incomprehensible to baseline humans, but since it’s origin is from the gas cloud formations of Jupiter, he calls her “Weather.”

Inigo tries to establish a friendship with Weather though she is technically a prisoner, but the Captain distrusts her deeply as a Conjoiner due to events in his own past. But when the Petronel is pursued by a sinister stealth ship and needs to escape, they discover that the Conjoiner drive is damaged and no baseline humans or Ultras have the ability to repair it. It’s an ingenious aspect of Reynolds’ universe — the Conjoiners have mastered near-light-speed travel and have shared it with other human groups, but refuse to reveal the secrets of its working. The slightest tampering will result in the entire engine going supernova and destroying the ship and everything nearby. All of a sudden, the Conjoiner woman’s cooperation is the only thing that can save them...

Dilation Sleep

This is apparently the first story written by Reynolds in his **REVELATION SPACE** universe. It’s a shorter tale of a man who wakes from cryosleep aboard a ship that is fleeing the Melding Plague that has overrun Yellowstone (these events are covered in greater detail in **Chasm City**). He did not remove the neural implants that make him vulnerable to the plague, but did make a digital copy of his wife, whose simulation tells him he needs to operate on one of the other passengers immediately. I thought this was one of weaker stories, which may reflect it being one of the earliest written.

Grafenwalder's Bestiary

This is a dark and baroque tale of wealthy and decadent collectors of rare and freakish creatures in Chasm City. Grafenwalder is the most renowned collector, and he deeply covets something that will impress his little circle. Initially he manages to acquire a live adult-sized hamadryad (a creature also featured in **Chasm City**), but later gets whiff of something even more rare and valuable — a living specimen of a genetically-engineered human-fish hybrid first created on Europa many years back. He gets a DNA sample from his dealer which seems legitimate, and arranges the purchase. When he gets his prized specimen he can't wait to show it off to his closest rival, with unexpected results...

Nightingale

This is a novella-length story of a group of mercenaries sent to track down a criminal accused of war crimes. An team of mercenaries is gathered (one of Reynolds' favorite themes), the usual assemblage of highly-augmented Ultras and baseline humans. They get wind that their target, Colonel Brandon Jax, may be hiding out on an abandoned hospital ship called Nightingale. During the war on Sky's Edge, this ship was in charge of healing soldiers on both sides of the conflict, but since the war ended it has been left untended.

However, when they arrive on the ship, it seems to be functioning more than should be the case for a derelict. Before you can say "Aliens or The Expanse," it's time to explore the ship's innards. The team find increasingly strange activities aboard the ship, and when they encounter the AI intelligence running the ship, they're in for a very nasty surprise...

Galactic North

This is another highlight of the collection, a wide-ranging novella that spans many centuries and covers many epochs of Reynolds' future history, starting in 2,303 but ending far in the future around 40,000, covering some of the climactic events mentioned in **Absolution Gap**, the final book of the main **REVELATION SPACE** trilogy. At the end of that book, we learn of a new threat to the galaxy innocuously named Greenflies, but there are few details. In fact I found it quite frustrating for this to be introduced at the end of a massive trilogy (around 2,000 pages in total) along with several other mysterious alien presences and not enough explanation. Well, "Galactic North" explains what the Greenflies are and how they came to threaten the galaxy.

The story centers on Captain Irravel Veda, who is ambushed by pirates when making an unplanned stop for repairs. She is guarding two types of valuable cargo — 20,000 colonists in cryosleep, and terraforming Von Neumann machines called Greenflies. They fall under the control of the sadistic hyperpig Run Seven (yeah, don't ask). He manages to pry the security codes via torture and trickery and flees with the cargo (why do badguys always leave their enemies alive, one might wonder?). What follows is a cat-and-mouse chase through time and space as Irravel pursues the pirates to get revenge.

Meantime, the Greenfly machines have malfunctioned and are dismantling every star system they encounter to build artificial habitats complete with plant-life (hence their name). Sounds great, except they destroy everything in their paths and don't make exceptions for sentient beings or civilizations. It's a particularly Reynolds-type of implacable disaster. Despite all the might of various space-faring civilizations, there isn't much that even ancient races like the Nest Builders or Inhibitors can do but flee to the far reaches of the universe. There are some overlaps with Absolution Gap, but I'd be lying if I said there was total closure in this story.

Andre says

Alastair Reynolds has an imagination that spans a universe. An excellent collection of his, perhaps lesser known, short fiction.

Whether it's detective, espionage or plain horror. He effortlessly weaves it into the fabric of space and hard scifi. Especially the nightmarish Nightingale deserves a special mention. Can somebody PLEASE make this into a movie or at least an episode of 'Black Mirror'?

Not to be missed...

Karl says

"Galactic North" by Alastair Reynolds is a selection of 8 short stories set in Reynolds' "Revelation Space" universe. All of the stories are good.

Heidi says

Great Wall of Mars provides more background for Nevil Clavain, his dealings with Galiana, Felka and the Conjoiners and how he became one himself as well as some early Revelation Space universe history. A great story about war, diplomacy and betrayal. *(5 stars)*

Glacial also features Clavain and partly deals with his attempts to adjust to being a Conjoiner. But it's first and foremost a Whodunit mystery and a pretty good one at that. The 'icy' atmosphere of a planet approaching an ice age adds to the bleak and solitary mood. *(4.5 stars)*

A Spy in Europa combines elements of classic spy/assassin thrillers à la John le Carré with a science fiction setting and a pinch of horror and does so very effectively. *(5 stars)*

Weather

(4 stars)

Dilation Sleep was first published in 1990 (according to Wikipedia), 10 years before "Revelation Space", Reynolds' debut novel - and it shows. Dealing with the isolation of deep space travel, it starts off quite atmospheric, but ends abruptly and confusing. *(2.5 stars)*

Grafenwalder's Bestiary

(4.5 stars)

Nightingale

(4 stars)

Galactic North

(I'll wait until I've read "Absolution Gap" to tackle this one.)

Manuel Antão says

If you're into stuff like this, you can read the full review.

SF will not become SciFi: "Galactic North" by Alastair Reynolds

Is SF becoming SciFi? I hope not.

Dumbing down is the order of the day. Our marketing and publishing departments no longer want to see SF in SciFi, maybe because it couldn't be labeled, but I think, like many others, because so long as they called it "SciFi" they had to give scifi. Now that they're calling it "SyFy", they can put on anything. The name isn't a promise, it's just a (TV) brand. Gymnastic shows, Wrestling, Ghost hunting, etc., with some science twists, like making ice cream with liquid nitrogen make it possible to brand something trivial as SyFy.

You can read the rest of this review elsewhere.

NB: SF = Speculative Fiction.

Bee says

Reynolds writes short stories as naturally as he does long and engaging space opera. And especially because all these stories fit in the Revelation Space universe, they add a lot of depth to the stories that we know and love. Each story in this series adds something to a thread that was left dangling during the main sequence of books.
