

BRUM GROUP NEWS

THE MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF THE

BIRMINGHAM SCIENCE FICTION GROUP

JUNE 2015

ISSUE 525

HONORARY PRESIDENT: BRIAN W ALDISS, OBE

COMMITTEE: VERNON BROWN (CHAIRMAN); PAT BROWN (TREASURER);
VICKY STOCK (SECRETARY); CAROL GOODWIN (NEWSLETTER EDITOR);
DAVE CORBY (PUBLICITY OFFICER); WILLIAM MCCABE (WEBSITE);
VICKY STOCK (MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY); THERESA DERWIN (ORDINARY
MEMBER); NOVA CON 45 CHAIR: TONY BERRY

WEBSITE: www.birminghamsfgroup.org.uk/

EMAIL:

bhamsfgroup@yahoo.co.uk

FACEBOOK:

www.facebook.com/groups/BirminghamSFGGroup/

TWITTER:

@BirminghamSF

Friday 12th June

**STEPHANIE
SAULTER**

This month we welcome Science Fiction author, Stephanie Saulter as our guest. She was born in Jamaica, studied at MIT and spent many years in the USA before moving to the UK in 2003. She is the author of the *@Evolution* trilogy (published by Jo Fletcher Books) which is set in a near-future London and uses the lens of an altered humanity to take a new look at the old issues of race, class, religious extremism and social conflict.



Photo credit: © Frederique Rapier

Her first novel, *GEMSIGNS*, (reviewed in newsletter #510)

July 10th - Fantasy and horror writer, Adrian Cole.

has been called “a powerful commentary on contemporary society and politics” and was named among the best science fiction of 2013 by the *Guardian*. It was released in the US in 2014 to considerable acclaim.

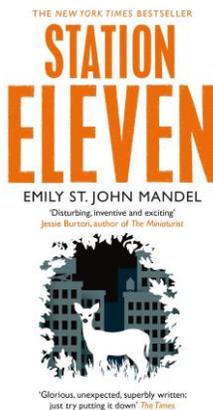
BINARY, (review in BSFG #511) the second book in the series, was published in April 2014. *SF Signal* commented that, “Some books are good, some books are even great. This one is *important*.” The final book, **REGENERATION** (reviewed this issue) will be released in the UK in August 2015 and in the US in 2016.

Stephanie now lives in London, and further details can be found at her blog, <http://stephaniesaulter.com> and twitter account as [@scriptopus](#).

The meeting will take place in the conference room on the first floor of The Briar Rose Hotel, Bennetts Hill, off New Street.

The doors open at 7.30pm and the meeting will normally commence at 8.00pm so please arrive early, get your drinks from the bar on the ground floor, and be seated in plenty of time. The entrance fee for our January AGM is free and the August and December socials are ticket only events. All other meetings the entrance fee is £3.00 for members and £4 for non-members

ARTHUR C CLARKE AWARD



The winner of the Arthur C Clarke Award has been announced as **STATION ELEVEN** by Emily St. John Mandel (Picador). The story is set 20 years after a global apocalypse (the Georgia Flu) has wiped out 99% of the human population) and is the story of the Travelling Symphony, a group of actors who perform Shakespeare in the remnant settlements. It is a book that asks if civilisation is lost, what would you preserve and how far would you go to protect it?

DAVID GEMMELL AWARD NOMINATIONS - SHORTLIST

The shortlist for the David Gemmell awards for Fantasy is now open. Over 17,000 votes were received in the first round. The awards will be presented at a ceremony on the 8th August at Nine Worlds Geekfest in London. Voting online is open until 17th July at www.gemmellawards.com

THE LEGEND AWARD FOR BEST FANTASY NOVEL

HALF A KING by Joe Abercrombie (Harper Voyager)

PRINCE OF FOOLS by Mark Lawrence (Harper Voyager)

VALOUR by John Gwynne (Tor)

WORDS OF RADIANCE by Brandon Sanderson (Gollancz)

THE BROKEN EYE by Brent Weeks (Orbit)

THE MORNINGSTAR AWARD FOR BEST FANTASY NEWCOMER

TRAITOR'S BLADE by Sebastien de Castell (Jo Fletcher Books)

THE MIRROR EMPIRE by Kameron Hurley (Angry Robot)

THE GODLESS by BEN PEEK (Tor)

THE EMPEROR'S BLADES by Brian Staveley (Tor)

THE AGE OF IRON by Angus Watson (Orbit)

LOCUS AWARD NOMINATIONS

The Locus Science Fiction Foundation has announced the finalists for the 2015 Locus Awards. The nominees for the SF novel and Fantasy novel categories are given below. Full details of all categories are available at www.locusmag.com/News/2015/05/2015-locus-awards-finalists/

SCIENCE FICTION NOVEL

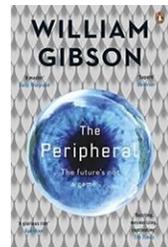
THE PERIPHERAL by William Gibson (Penguin)

ANNIHILATION/AUTHORITY/ACCEPTANCE
by Jeff VanderMeer (Fourth Estate)

ANCILLARY SWORD by Ann Leckie (Orbit)

THE THREE-BODY PROBLEM by Cixin Liu (Tor
US)

LOCK IN by John Scalzi (Gollancz)



FANTASY NOVEL

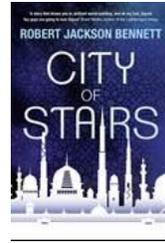
CITY OF STAIRS by Robert Jackson Bennett (Jo Fletcher)

THE GOBLIN EMPEROR by Katherine Addison
(Tor)

STELAS OF THE SKY by Elizabeth Bear (Tor)

THE MAGICIAN'S LAND by Lev Grossman
(Arrow)

THE MIRROR EMPIRE by Kameron Hurley
(Angry Robot)



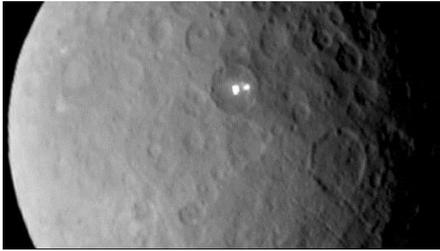
NEWS IN BRIEF



The SF, fantasy and horror author **Tanith Lee** has died at the age of 67. She wrote more than 90 novels and over 300 short stories. She was twice nominated for the Nebula Award, won the World Fantasy Award twice for Best Short Story (1983 and 1984) and was the first woman to win the British Fantasy Award for Best Novel (**DEATH'S MASTER**). She was also the recipient of two Lifetime Achievement

Awards: for Fantasy from the World Fantasy Convention in 2013 and the Horror Writers Association in 2015.... **Malcolm Edwards** is to resign as Deputy CEO of Orion at the end of the year. He will become chairman of Gollancz, and a consultant publisher to Orion. The move is said to allow him to focus on fewer projects SF author **John Scalzi** has signed the largest publishing deal to date for an SF author, with Tor for \$3.4 million dollars to write 13 books over the next 10 years. In addition to sequels in the *Lock In* and *Old Man's War* series, he will also be writing some YA novels A TV adaptation of Arthur C Clarke's **CHILDHOOD'S END** is being made by the Syfy Channel **Margaret Atwood** has contributed a story to the Future Library Project, but it will not be available to read until 2114! 99 more authors (one per year) will contribute to the project, with all texts being released in 2114. The Future Library Project has planted 1000 new pine trees in Norway and when grown

they will be used to print the Project texts The Prometheus Hall of Fame Award winner is the story “Repent, Harlequin!” Said the Ticktockman” by **Harlan Ellison** Hugo Award winning writer, **Kristine Kathryn Rusch** has created a new site (Women in Science Fiction) to collect SF stories published by women but not previously included in anthologies to prevent them being lost. In particular she is interested in stories published in the 20th century. Suggestions can be left at www.womeninsciencefiction.com **SFX magazine** is celebrating its 20th Anniversary In another 20th anniversary, **DUNE** by Frank Herbert is now 50 years old Local independent



bookshop, **Southcart Books** who stock many new and old SF titles and support local authors with their book launches have launched a crowdfunding appeal to develop a website and advertising campaign. The

appeal and details of how to contribute can be found at www.crowdfunder.co.uk/bookshop-relaunch/? The Dawn spacecraft has sent back intriguing images from the **dwarf planet, Ceres** including some mysterious bright spots (see picture). Closer images will be released in the next couple of months TV comedy **The Big Bang Theory** (about four geeky scientists) has created a £2.6 million scholarship fund to support low income science students.

NEW CINEMA FILM RELEASES

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

TERMINATOR GENISYS - Release date July 2nd. SF. In a new time-line, Kyle Reese teams up with Sarah Connor and an ageing terminator to prevent “Judgement Day”. *CG*



FORTHCOMING BOOKS

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



CHILDREN OF TIME by Adrian Tchaikovsky / Tor / 480 pgs / £18.99 hardback / ISBN 978-1447273288 / June 4th. SF. Humans and aliens both want to occupy the same terraformed world.

THE LONG UTOPIA (Long Earth 4) by Terry Pratchett & Stephen Baxter / Doubleday / 384 pgs / £18.99 hardback / ISBN 978-0857521767 / June 18th. SF. The AI, Lobsang discovers a subterranean threat to all the worlds of the Long Earth.

CRASHING HEAVEN by Al Robertson / Gollancz / 368 pgs / £20 hardback / ISBN 978-1473203396 / June 18th. SF. Jack Forster and his symbiont AI, Hugo Fist hunt traitors before Hugo's expiring licence kills them both.

THE IRON SHIP by K M McKinley / Solaris / 384 pgs / £7.99 paperback / ISBN 978-1781083338 / June 18th. Fantasy. An impossible ship, combining machines and magic tries to traverse an un-crossable ocean.



***THE HUNTER'S KIND* (Hollow gods 2) by Rebecca Levene / Hodder & Stoughton / 432 pgs / £16.99 hardback / ISBN 978-1444753752 / July 2nd. Fantasy. Krish must travel to forbidden Mirror Town to unlock its powerful magic.**

***WAY DOWN DARK* by James P Smythe / Hodder & Stoughton / 288 pgs / £13.99 paperback / ISBN 978-1444796322 / July 2nd. SF. The colony ship *Australia* never landed. A possible return to Earth is opposed by the violent ruling factions.**

***TIME SALVAGER* by Wesley Chu / Angry Robot / 432 pgs / £8.99 paperback / ISBN 978-0857665232 / July 9th. SF. With Earth uninhabitable, time travellers raid the past Earth for resources to help survive in the outer solar system.**

***AURORA* by Kim Stanley Robinson / Orbit / 480 pgs / £18.99 hardback / ISBN 978-0356500461 / July 9th. SF. Mankind's first voyage beyond the solar system in search of a new home.**

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

All details are correct to the best of our knowledge, we advise contacting organizers before travelling. Always enclose a stamped self-addressed envelope when writing to any of the contact addresses. Any information about forthcoming SF/Fantasy/Horror events is always welcome - please send to Carol at goodwincd@yahoo.com

POP IN SPACE: WE CHOOSE TO GO TO THE MOON, 21st February - 18th July, Wolverhampton. Exhibition of artists'

responses to the Space Race during the Cold War. Wolverhampton Art Gallery. Free Admission. Lichfield Street, WV1 1DU. Tel: 01902 552055

SFSF Social III, 27th June, Sheffield. Readings and Q&A with Jacey Bedford and Paul Kane. 4 to 10 pm. Upstairs at Eten Café, 2-4 York Street, Sheffield, S1 2ER. Free entry. See www.britishfantasysociety.org/

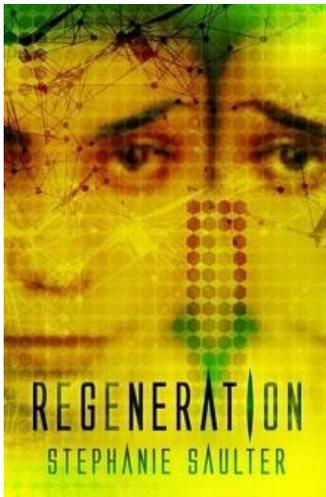
📖📖📖📖 **BOOK REVIEWS** 📖📖📖📖

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

***REGENERATION (@evolution 3)* by Stephanie Saulter**

Jo Fletcher Books / 384 pgs / £16.99 paperback / ISBN 978-1782060222

Reviewed by Carol Goodwin.



This third novel in the *@evolution* series takes place nearly a decade after the events of the first two books (*GEMSIGNS* and *BINARY*). The genetically modified humans (GEM's) freed from control of the gemtech companies, are recovering from their institutionalised lives, establishing families and forging new independent lives financed by using their unique specialised abilities commercially. This story focuses in particular on one GEM-controlled project, the building of a new tidal power station in the river Thames. This is run mainly by a group of amphibious GEMs called “gillungs” who are combining their ability to work underwater and a new Gem-developed method of energy storage (quantum batteries). However there are conservative factions who have ideological and financial reasons to not want the project to

succeed and try both legal and illegal methods to achieve their aims. In addition, the gems' old antagonist Zackva Klist is being released to house arrest - is this a coincidence and is she involved in this latest attempt to attack the gems?

As I have come to expect from Stephanie Saulter, in this third book she continues to write a well-paced story with lots of action. The future developments in technology and biology in particular are clever and believable and well integrated into the story. As with **BINARY** the author is not afraid to move focus from the main protagonists of the previous stories. Although the leaders of the opposing factions, Aryel and Zackva still have significant roles, the story concentrates to a large extent on characters from the first novel (**GEMSIGNS**). In particular, the gem couple Bal and Gaela and their family of two adopted children. These are the now nearly adult, Gabriel (whose mind-reading abilities were pivotal in **GEMSIGNS**) and his eight year old sister, Eve. It is their background and abilities which will be vital in uncovering and defeating the opposition. Some fans might be a bit disappointed that their favourite characters have a lesser role but I think that the emotional heart and depth of this novel is the consideration of the upcoming generation and the difference that being raised in a family rather than an institution will make to the gems. This is an excellent and thoroughly recommended story which examines regeneration on many levels. My only disappointment is that this might be the last I see of this world as there are so many characters and themes I loved and want to follow further.

CG

(Advance uncorrected proof kindly donated by Jo Fletcher Books)

ROOK SONG (*The Gaia Chronicles 2*) by Naomi Foyle

Jo Fletcher Books / 496 pgs / £18.99 paperback / ISBN 978-1782069195

Reviewed by Carol Goodwin.

The first novel of this series, **ASTRA** (reviewed BSFG #514) was the story of a young girl growing up and gradually discovering that the perceived utopia of her country (Is-Land) is in fact a controlling, totalitarian society. As a child she is persuaded to avoid a gene-modifying "Security Shot", which all the village children are to

receive as she is told it will limit her intellect. The consequences of this decision ultimately lead to disaster for her and her foster parent, Hokma. At the end of the story she is exiled from her country, still suffering from the physical and mental effects of the “memory pacification” brainwashing to which she has been subjected. The first novel had given very little detail of the outside “Non-Land” other than as somewhere which was intent on destroying or infiltrating Is-Land.

At the beginning of **ROOK SONG**, the seventeen year old Astra is given shelter and citizenship by a multi-national UN-style organisation called CONC. Non-Land is revealed as a desert land extensively damaged by the pollution of the societal collapse which led to the formation of Is-Land. It is not a homogeneous society but consists of various factions. These include some of the original inhabitants of Is-Land who were expelled by the settlers who now run Is-Land. It is a land of poverty, disease and disability which is a huge contrast and shock to Astra. Is-Land here exists behind a heavily defended wall and despite its avowed ecological principles also controls a mine whose unadmitted uranium deposits are blamed for the high rate of genetic deformities in the native population. As Astra tries to concentrate on finding the



exiled father she has never known, she becomes a focus for various factions (including the Is-Lander military arm, **IMBOD**) due to her resemblance to a prophesied saviour. We also see the full effects of the “Security Shot” on her maturing contemporaries who are becoming easily manipulated and savage “super-soldiers”.

The first story was told very much from Astra’s point of view. In this second novel, separate chapters concentrate on different characters’ viewpoints. With the only introduction to many new characters being a name as a chapter title, this was very confusing. I also felt that Astra, who had been a convincing character in the first

book, was now inconsistent and did things purely to advance the plot at times. This book has clearly become a more obvious allegory about the Middle East and Israel and I feel it has sacrificed the subtlety that I liked in the first book. The Is-landers have become more caricatures than characters and there are some nasty violent scenes. The author then throws in religious, gender and disability politics and Astra's story, which had potential becomes drowned beneath too many obvious metaphors. There is a long tradition of good SF novels as commentaries on politics (eg 1984 and THE HANDMAID'S TALE) but it still needs the balance between message and a strong story and unfortunately in my estimation, this has swung too far towards the former at the expense of the latter.
(Review copy kindly donated by Jo Fletcher Books)

CONVENTIONS

EDGE-LIT, 11th July, Derby. Literary SF/Fantasy festival. Guests of Honour M R Carey, Joanne Harris, Paul McAuley, Claire North & Samantha Shannon. Tickets £30 from 01332 290606 or www.derbyquad.co.uk/special-event/edge-lit-4

NINE WORLDS GEEKFEST, 7th - 9th August, London. Multi-media with strong literature strand. Guests of Honour tba. Tickets £95 (from April 1st) at <https://nineworlds.co.uk/>

BRISTOLCON, 26th September, Bristol. Guests of Honour Jasper Fforde, Jaine Fenn and Chris Moore. Doubletree Hotel. £25. Details at www.bristolcon.org

FANTASYCON, 23rd - 25th October, Nottingham. Guests of Honour are John Connolly, Jo Fletcher and Brandon Sanderson with Master of Ceremonies Juliet E McKenna. East Midlands Conference Centre & Orchard Hotel. Tickets £65 (non-members of BFS) from <http://fantasycon2015.org/> - price expected to increase on 1st July.

NOVACON 45, 13th - 15th November, Nottingham. Guests of Honour are Anne and Stan Nicholls. The Park Inn, Nottingham. Tickets £45. Details at www.novacon.org.uk

FUTURE MEETINGS OF THE BSFG

August 14th - **Summer Meal**

September 11th - editor, reviewer and author, **Professor Edward James**

October 9th - **tbc**

November 6th - author **Emma Newman**

December 4th - **Christmas Social**

January 8th - **AGM and Book Auction**

BRUM GROUP NEWS #525 (June 2015) copyright 2015 for Birmingham SF Group. Articles, artwork and photographs must not be reproduced in whole or part without the consent of the editor and/or the respective authors. This issue produced by Carol Goodwin (goodwincd@yahoo.com). Opinions expressed herein do not necessarily reflect those of the committee or the general membership or, for that matter, the person giving the 'opinion'. Thanks to all the named contributors in this issue.

ABOUT US... The **Birmingham Science Fiction Group** meets on the second Friday of each month. Membership is £16 per year per person (or £21 for two members living at the same address). This includes the 12 free issues of the Newsletter plus reduced entrance fee at each meeting. Cheques should be made payable to 'The Birmingham Science Fiction Group' and sent to our Membership Secretary, 10 Sylvan Avenue, Northfield, Birmingham, B31 2PG