

BRUM GROUP NEWS

THE MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF THE

BIRMINGHAM SCIENCE FICTION GROUP

JULY 2015

ISSUE 526

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Friday 10th July

ADRIAN COLE

Adrian Cole is a writer of fantasy, science fiction and horror. He has over 25 published novels and many short stories. He has lived in various parts of the UK (including Birmingham) but returned to his native Devon in 1976. His first published novels were his *Dream Lords* fantasy trilogy (A PLAGUE OF NIGHTMARES, LORD OF NIGHTMARES and BANE OF NIGHTMARES) which were published in the 1970's. From



August 14th - Summer meal at The Bull.

1976 to 1981 he had four SF novels published by Robert Hale. These were MADNESS EMERGING, PATHS IN DARKNESS, WARGODS OF LUDORBIS and THE LUCIFER EXPERIMENT. During this time his short stories also appeared in various anthologies and magazines. He then ventured into what is now called the “Young Adult” market with MOORSTONES and THE SLEEP OF GIANTS both set in his native South West England. Other novels followed including the four volume *Omaran Saga* (heroic fantasy) the *Star Requiem* series (SF/horror) and his sword and sorcery stories, *The Voidal* series. Following his retirement, Adrian has had time to concentrate more on his writing again and his SF novel, THE SHADOW ACADEMY (published by Hades Publications) was published in 2014. This is set in an alternative Britain where technology is almost lost and much of the land has returned to forest. The book deals with the conflict between a repressive Authority and the insurgent pagans from a remote part of the country. Also published in 2014 was his NICK NIGHTMARE INVESTIGATES (published by Alchemy Press). This is a collection of stories from the files of private investigator, Nick Nightmare as he deals with various supernatural threats and horrors. This is a fun mixture of film-noir detective and Lovecraftian monsters which have been described as “a potent blend of H.P. Lovecraft, Mickey Spillane and the roller coaster adventures of the golden age of the pulps”. Further information about Adrian Cole can be found at his website www.adrianscole.com

CG

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

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

AND WHAT DID YOU THINK?

THE LETTER COLUMN OF 'BRUM GROUP NEWS

Anything to say about the Group, meetings or SF in general? Email your opinions or queries to me at goodwincd@yahoo.com

Summer Meal 14th August – Vernon Brown

The August meal will again be held at the Bull, Price Street, Birmingham, just round the corner from Aston University, and about a 5 to 10 minute walk from the Briar Rose. We'll be meeting from 7.30 to sit down at 8pm.

For those who haven't been before, it's a small old traditional pub with a separate dining area, good beer and good food. Pat and I have family reunions there every so often because it's ideal for small group get-togethers.



The pub has a website (www.thebull-pricestreet.com/) that has photos, directions etc. Reservations can be made at this month's (July) meeting with Pat who will give you full printed directions on how to get there. A £5 deposit will be required (redeemed against your meal on the night). If you cannot attend the meeting please email Pat via the Group email

address (bhamsfgroup@vyahoo.co.uk) which is also on the front cover of this newsletter but please only do so if you intend coming - a table for 12 has been booked and we usually have a full house so if you book and don't turn up it may well be that someone else would have come but couldn't get a place. In either case please reserve your seat(s) as soon as possible - there's only a month to go.

Knightmare Club! by Theresa Derwin

BSFG Committee member and regular attendee **Theresa Derwin** is about to make her TV debut with fellow West Midlands author **Dave Jeffery** in the six-part show *Knightmare Club*.

Theresa will co-host with Dave and the first episode will be aired by Big Centre TV on 15th July. You can catch the show on Freeview channel 8 and Virgin channel 159. Big Centre TV attracts over 400,000 viewers per week.

The programme, which focuses on Horror, SF and Fantasy around the Midlands and beyond, will feature readings by local authors including Adam Millard, David Moody, fellow member **Pauline Morgan** and A Stuart Williams. The first episode, 'Sympathy for the Devil' will include a reading by Dave Jeffery from his short story collection **CAMPFIRE CHILLERS**, a chat about Frankenstein and 'that' weekend at Lake Geneva and will debate the idea of the 'humane monster'.

Other planned episodes will look at Conan Doyle and his link to Birmingham, conventions in the West Midlands, Zombies, Cthulhu, Vampires, Women in SF, genre art work and much more! So don't forget to tune in for this exciting new show. The bigger response, the better chance that more episodes will be scheduled. Thanks!

TD

NEBULA AWARD WINNERS

The Science Fiction Writers of America presented the annual Nebula Awards in Chicago, California on June 6th. The winners were

Best Novel: ANNIHILATION by Jeff VanderMeer (Fourth Estate)

Best Novella: YESTERDAY'S KIN by Nancy Kress (Tachyon)

Best Novelette: "A Guide to the Fruits of Hawai'i" by Alaya Dawn Johnson (*Fantasy & SF*, 7-8, 2014)

Best Short Story: "Jackalope Wives" by Ursula Vernon (*Apex*, 7/1/2014)

Andre Norton Award for Young Adult Science Fiction and Fantasy:

LOVE IS THE DRUG by Alaya Dawn Johnson (Levine)

Ray Bradbury Award for Outstanding Dramatic Presentation:

GUARDIANS OF THE GALAXY.

Kevin J. O'Donnell Service to SFWA Award: Jeffrey Dwight

Damon Knight Grand Master Award: Larry Niven.

LOCUS AWARDS 2015

The winners of the Locus Awards were announced on the 27th June.

Science Fiction Novel: ANCILLARY SWORD by Ann Leckie
(Orbit)

Fantasy Novel: THE GOBLIN EMPEROR by Katherine Addison
(Tor)

First Novel: THE MEMORY GARDEN by Mary Rickert
(Sourcebooks Landmark)

Young Adult Book: HALF A KING by Joe Abercrombie (Harper
Voyager)

Novella: “Yesterday’s Kin” by Nancy Kress (Tachyon)

Novelette: “Tough Times All Over” by Joe Abercrombie (in
ROGUES)

Short Story: “The Truth About Owls” by Amal El-Mohtar (in
KALEIDOSCOPE)

Anthology: ROGUES edited by George R R Martin & Gardner
Dozois (Titan)

Collection: LAST PLANE TO HEAVEN by Jay Lake (Tor)

Non-Fiction: WHAT MAKES THIS BOOK SO GREAT by Jo
Walton (Corsair)

Art Book: SPECTRUM 21: THE BEST IN CONTEMPORARY
FANTASTIC ART edited by John Fleskes. (Flesk)

Artist: John Picacio

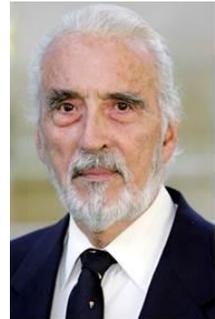
Editor: Ellen Datlow

Magazine: Tor.com

Publisher: Tor

NEWS IN BRIEF

The actor **Sir Christopher Lee** has died at the age of 93. He appeared as many iconic monsters and villains in SF, fantasy and film roles. For older readers he is probably best remembered for his unforgettable Dracula in the Hammer Horror films whilst younger people remember him more as Count Dooku (*Star Wars*) or Saruman (the *Lord of the Rings* films). Other roles included the Mummy, Fu Manchu, Scaramanga (THE MAN



WITH THE GOLDEN GUN) and Lord Summerisle in THE WICKER MAN. He won several Lifetime Achievement Awards including Saturn, Empire, SFX and Bram Stoker. He had a fascinating life off-screen as well. In World War II he served as an Intelligence Officer with the Long Range Desert Patrol (precursor to the SAS) fought in North Africa and Sicily and later joined the SOE. After the war he hunted Nazis with the Allied Forces until he started acting at age 25. He was a world champion fencer, an opera singer, spoke six languages and released a heavy metal album at the age of 88 Composer **James Horner** died in a plane crash. His award-winning music featured in many SF and fantasy films including APOLLO 13, BLADE RUNNER, AVATAR and STAR TREK II: THE WRATH OF KHAN and ALIENS. He was nominated for seven music Oscars and won one for the music for TITANIC The winner of the **Campbell Award** (SF Novel) was THE FIRST FIFTEEN LIVES OF HARRY AUGUST by Claire North. The winner of the **Sturgeon Award** (Short Story) was won by Cory Doctorow with “The Man who sold the Moon” The new inductees to the Science Fiction Hall of Fame were **James E Gunn, Georges Melies, John Schoenherr** and **Kurt Vonnegut** SF Author **Lavie Tidhar** has won the Jerwood Fiction Uncovered Prize which is awarded to a British writer of outstanding works of fiction for his book A MAN LIES DREAMING Yet more fallout from the controversy over the Hugo nominations and the **Sad/Rabid Puppies** factions. Irene Gallo (Art Director at Tor USA) unwisely posted a message on her personal Facebook page in which she described the two factions as “right wing to neo-Nazi groups”. Supporters of the “Puppies” faction deluged Tor and Macmillan with angry emails. Tor publisher Tom Doherty responded by saying that it was a personal comment and she wasn’t speaking for Tor and had been admonished for it. Following this some people have tried to organize a boycott of Tor whilst others have organized a counter-campaign to promote buying Tor books. And so it continues! Astronomer and SF writer **Fred Hoyle** would have been 100 in June The Minor Planet Center have announced that they will name a 6-mile wide asteroid **Nimoy**, in honour of the late actor. There is already an asteroid named **Mr. Spock** (since 1971) but apparently the

astronomer who discovered that named it after his cat Voting for the **David Gemmell Awards** closes on the 17th July. Vote at www.gemmellawards.com Author **Margaret Atwood** is to contribute a series of her own cartoons to crowd-funded, all-female anthology **THE SECRET LOVES OF GEEK GIRLS** **Neil Gaiman's** **AMERICAN GODS** is to be made into a TV series and the author will be writing some of the episodes The NASA spacecraft **New Horizons** is due to make a close **flyby of Pluto** on the 14th July. It will be travelling too fast to go into orbit but will move on to try and capture data about some of the other objects in the Kuiper Belt. CG

NEW CINEMA FILM RELEASES

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

SONG OF THE SEA - Release date July 10th. Arnold Schwarzenegger as a father whose daughter will turn into a zombie in six weeks' time.

MAGGIE - Release date July 17th. Fantasy. Animation about a brother and his magical sister who is drawn to the sea and the seals.

ANT MAN - Release date July 17th. *Marvel Comics* Ant-Man who can control ants when he shrinks to their size.

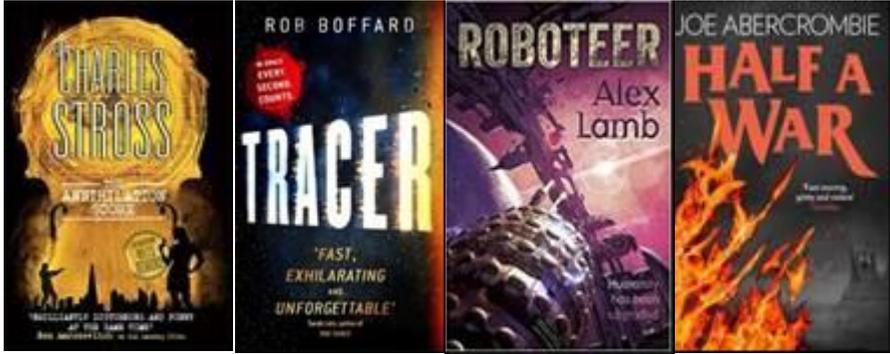
THE GALLOWS - Release date July 17th. Horror. School students re-stage a play from 20 years ago which ended in tragedy.

FANTASTIC FOUR - Release date August 6th. Remake. Four young people find their physical forms are altered in strange ways.

PIXELS - Release date August 12th. Comedy. Aliens attack the Earth in the form of old video games. CG

FORTHCOMING BOOKS

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

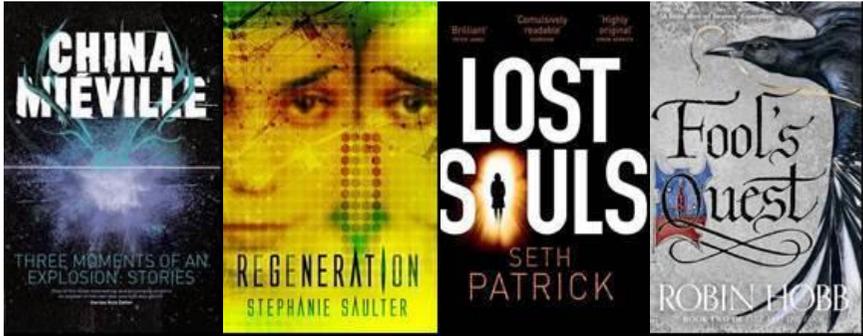


THE ANNIHILATION SCORE (Laundry Files 6) by Charles Stross / Orbit / 416 pgs / £16.99 hardback / ISBN 978-0356505312 / July 2nd. When average citizens develop supernatural powers, agent Mo O'Brien is the unfortunate secret agent caught in the middle.

TRACER by Rob Boffard / Orbit / 448 pgs / £7.99 paperback / ISBN 978-0356505138 / July 16th. SF. The last humans exist on a failing space station and a madman now threatens their existence.

ROBOTEER by Alex Lamb / Gollancz / 320 pgs / £20 hardback / ISBN 978-1473206076 / July 16th. SF. Will has been bred to interface with robots and his abilities are his planet's only hope in the interstellar war.

HALF A WAR (Shattered Sea 3) by Joe Abercrombie / Harper Voyager / 512 pgs / £12.99 hardback / ISBN 978-0007550265 / July 16th. Fantasy. Yarvi's conflict with the High King and his evil minister, Grandmother Wexen reaches a climax.



THREE MOMENTS OF AN EXPLOSION: STORIES by China Mieville / Macmillan / 400 pgs / £18.99 hardback / ISBN 978-0230770171 / July 30th. New short story collection.

REGENERATION (@evolution 3) by Stephanie Saulter / Jo Fletcher Books / 384 pgs / £16.99 paperback / ISBN 978-1782060222 / August 6th. SF. The Gems (Genetically modified humans) are forging new lives in society but old and new enemies threaten.

LOST SOULS (Reviver 2) by Seth Patrick / Pan / 384 pgs / £7.99 paperback / ISBN 978-1447213413 / August 13th. Jonah, who revives the dead to testify, is threatened by religious fanatics and an unknown evil.

FOOL'S QUEST (Fitz and the Fool 2) by Robin Hobb / Harper Voyager / 744 pgs / £20 hardback / ISBN 978-0007444212 / August 13th. Fantasy. Retired assassin, Fitz must avenge his old friend and rescue his kidnapped daughter.

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

SHOCK AND GORE V Film Festival, 17th - 23rd July, Birmingham. Horror and fantasy film festival featuring live events, sneak previews and classic features. This year includes **SHAUN OF THE DEAD**, **A CLOCKWORK ORANGE**, **TERMINATOR**, **ROBOCOP** and **FRIGHT NIGHT** (original version). At Electric cinema. www.theelectric.co.uk

MONSTERS AND MAYHEM FILM SEASON, 24th July -22nd August, Birmingham. Season of films in the Outdoor arena at the MAC, Cannon Hill Park, B12 9QJ. Featuring **GHOSTBUSTERS**, **BACK TO THE FUTURE II** and **ALIENS**. Prices £10 per film. Events go ahead regardless of weather. Tel: 0121 446 3232 or email info@macarts.co.uk

BEOWULF, 25th July, Birmingham. Puppet version of the Anglo-Saxon epic. Old Joint Stock Theatre, 8pm. (4 Temple Row West, B2 5NY). Tickets £10 at 0121 200 0946 or www.oldjointstock.co.uk

MIDDLE EARTH WEEKEND, 5th - 6th September, Birmingham. Family friendly event celebrating JRR Tolkien and his works. Includes music, arts and crafts, historical re-enactments etc. at Sarehole Mill, Hall Green Details at <http://middleearthfestival.co.uk/>



BOOK REVIEWS



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

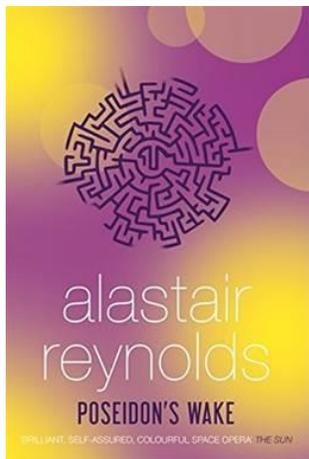
POSEIDON'S WAKE by Alastair Reynolds

Gollancz / 800 pgs / £14.99 Trade Paperback / ISBN 978-0575090507 (also available as £18.99 Hardback (ISBN 978-0230750722) and an eBook £9.99)

Reviewed by **Jim Pearce**

When I first picked up **POSEIDON'S WAKE** from amongst those offered for review at the BRUM Group meeting I was informed that it was the third in a series. The first volume entitled **BLUE REMEMBERED EARTH** being published in 2012 and the second

ON THE STEEL BREEZE in 2013. Fortunately I had already read the previous two volumes in this series. In fact as I progressed through this book I found that as the current tale unwound Alastair Reynolds provided all I needed to know about the back story. This would ensure that new readers to the series would not be disadvantaged. As with the previous two this book is complete in itself. While it would be pleasant for readers to have first read the earlier books, not having done so would not in my opinion detract from enjoying this book. That is the mark of a master craftsman.



These books mainly follow the fortunes of the strong women of the Akinya family from the matriarch Eunice, also known as Senge Dongma, the lion-faced one, via her granddaughter Sunny, her daughters and the next two generations. In all these books action takes place on Earth, Mars and, as the Akinyas travel to and live on them, extrasolar planets. Interlinked with their exploits are those of the elephants that they care for as well as the robots, whose

evolution on Mars Eunice accidentally initiated. To add spice and mystery there is the Mandala structure discovered on Crucible, the first planet to be colonised and also the enormous alien robot spacecraft that both observe the Mandala and make human space travel perilous.

In POSEIDON'S WAKE the story follows Kanu and Ndege Akinya, Eunice's descendants as they separately and then jointly respond to an enigmatic radio message received on Crucible. This was to all intents and purposes sent by Eunice from a third star a 150 light years away. Extra depth to the tale is added by a strong cast of supporting characters. Without a doubt Alastair Reynolds is a master at writing SF. The science is good. The characterisation is excellent and the story flows with plenty but not too much action. Overall this is individually a story, and a series well worth reading.

(Review copy kindly donated by Orion Gollancz)

JTP

X7: A SEVEN DEADLY SINS ANTHOLOGY edited by Alex Davis

KnightWatch Press / 87 pgs / £9.85 enlarged paperback / ISBN: 978-1909573116

Reviewed by Pauline Morgan (abridged).

Putting together an anthology with a theme is not easy. The idea behind X7 is simple - a story for each of the seven deadly sins. Something like this cannot be an open anthology, authors have to be invited to take part and be assigned their sin. Then the editor has to keep all fingers crossed that not only does the story fit the sin, but the quality is of an acceptable standard - even the best authors can produce duffers sometimes.

There are good things and not so good things about this volume. The first thing a reader wants to know is who wrote the stories. This is missing from the contents page as is any indication of price from the back cover. Each story is frontispiced by a line drawing. Some of these are quite effective but are better reproduced smaller and in colour as cards on the front cover.



Lust is represented by Nicholas Royle's "Dead End". It begins with a man on holiday in France with his mistress. This could be a straight forward story of illicit sex, but in a horror anthology it is reasonable to expect something nasty to happen. Sin needs to be punished. Royle is a skilful writer and salts clues naturally into the story. It does, though, seem a little rushed towards the end.

Amelia Mangan introduces us to Envy in "If I Were You". Edwin has discovered that he has a younger sister who was not given up for adoption as he was. He wants to be her, so much so that he is stalking her, observing everything that she does and copying it.

There have been a number of stories of dining clubs whose members seek the ultimate taste experience. None perhaps are quite as revolting as "Gravy Soup" by Simon Clark. This story represents Gluttony. It is the reluctance of some members of the Gymnasium

Supper Club to share the secret of the best, most addictive food ever that has Gordon Clumsden sneaking around graveyards at night. This is the grossest story in this volume.

“The Devil In Red” by Alex Bell represents Wrath. Although this story is cleverly and skilfully written it is the most problematic in the context with its theme. Joshua Ackland is a defence lawyer. The client he sees on this day is obviously guilty - he was caught carrying a sack containing some of his wife’s body parts. He claims that the woman he killed was not his wife despite contrary evidence. I can’t quite equate deliberate acts with wrath. It is, though, an intriguing supernatural story that needs a bit more substance.

Simon Bestwick bases his tale of Greed, not on an individual person but the corporate greed of mankind. In “Stormcats” it is that vice and the disregard of the consequences that have led to the situation that Aaron and his family find themselves in. They flee rising floodwaters (caused by global warming) to a cottage which becomes an island. The fight for survival becomes surreal as Aaron reaps the effects of greed.

Pride can take many forms and seems a relatively innocuous sin. The problem comes when pride causes hurt to other people. In “Walls” by Gaie Sebold, Darren is proud of his beautiful wife. Most people would want to show off the things they take pride in. However, Darren keeps Chrys shut away, inventing excuses as to why she mustn’t go outside. From the start there are clues suggesting that all is not as it appears. According to the saying it seems reasonable to expect that Darren is heading for a fall. It’s a good story but the pride aspect of it could have been stronger.

“Seagull Island” by Tom Fletcher is a slothful story. It doesn’t do much but those in the grip of sloth don’t do much either. The narrator spends the whole story lying on a rock by the sea. Although I like a story that goes somewhere and has a bit more action, this offering is the epitome of sloth. Its shape totally encompasses that state.

Seven stories, seven sins. Some work better than others but in any anthology that is a given. All stories veer to the horrific side of life and for the most part the characters are exhibiting human frailty. There will be at least one story that all readers of horror fiction will

appreciate whether or not they feel it encompasses the sin it intends to depict.

PM

(Review copy kindly donated by KnightWatch Press)

TAMARUQ by E.J. Swift (The Osiris Project 3)

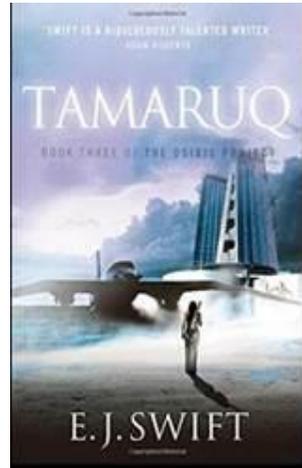
Del Rey / 432 pgs / £8.99 paperback / ISBN 978-0091953102

Reviewed by Carol Goodwin

TAMARUQ is the third book in *The Osiris Project* trilogy. As this is the third book in a series, some description of the preceding two books is necessary although it is always difficult to try and do this without giving away too much to those who have not read them.

In the first novel, OSIRIS we were introduced to the sea city of Osiris. Osiris was built as a technological showcase and a living place for the elite. However then there was a devastating war and the refugees fled to Osiris and now the city is brutally divided into the opulent East, where the original settlers live and the poverty stricken West where the refugees have been permanently quarantined for decades, with only a few “uplifts” ever able to cross over to the East. The Osirians believe they are the only humans left alive. Continental land is thought un-inhabitable after being scourged by bio-engineered diseases and the sea is un-navigable because of immense hyperstorms. Adelaide Rechnov, spoiled granddaughter of one of the founders and Vikram Bai, from the slums of the West both become advocates for change but the fledgling rebellion ends in disaster.

In the second book, CATAVEIRO we learn more about the fate of the rest of the world and the after-effects of the war. A boat from Osiris is ship-wrecked on the South American coast with only a single survivor. This arrival disrupts the fragile détente between the surviving regimes and the survivor becomes a pawn that everyone has an interest in controlling. Osiris is not alone and in this book we uncover some of the reasons why Osiris had remained isolated and out of communication.



In this third book TAMARUQ Osiris is revealed to all the world and various continental powers compete for control of its resources. However it is the returning shipwrecked refugee and the secrets uncovered by a Patagonian pilot, Ramona that hold the key to saving both Osiris and the rest of the world.

E J Swift is a relatively new writer. Her previous work, before this trilogy, was short fiction (published in *Interzone* magazine and anthologies from Jurassic London and NewCon Press). Her short story "Saga's Children" was shortlisted for a BSFA Award. What E J Swift does very well in these books is establish a well-thought out and believable world and the effects on the people who live there seems realistic. The closed, small world of Osiris is contrasted very well with the vast, lonely continent of South America.

Although I enjoyed this third book, in attempting to re-connect these two contrasting scenarios, it felt like there were too many story strands and some did not get the attention that I felt they deserved. My favourite of the trilogy was the first as I found the complex society of Osiris and the characters more appealing and was less engaged when they were not the only focus. That being said, this is a very ambitious and well-written SF trilogy by a talented writer who I would happily read more of.

CG

(Review copy kindly donated by Del Rey)

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 (increasing after 1st July) at <https://ninemeworlds.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 - author **Justina Robson**

November 6th - author **Emma Newman**

December 4th - **Christmas Social**

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

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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