

# BRUM GROUP NEWS

THE MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF THE

## BIRMINGHAM SCIENCE FICTION GROUP

APRIL 2014

ISSUE 511

HONORARY PRESIDENT: **BRIAN W ALDISS, O.B.E.**

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 44 CHAIR: STEVE GREEN**

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## GAV THORPE

Friday 11th April

Gav Thorpe is a professional Science Fiction and Fantasy writer and games developer and lives in the Nottingham area. He started working for Games Workshop in 1993 where he spent 14 years. Whilst there he was in charge of the *Warhammer Fantasy* games, including contributing to the design of *WARHAMMER 40,000* which is a military SF table top game. He also wrote around twenty of the tie-in novels printed under the Black Library imprint as well as many short stories. These

May 9th - Senior lecturer in robotics, **Dr Nick Hawes**

include 13TH LEGION (2000), THE CLAWS OF CHAOS (2002), ANGELS OF DARKNESS (2003), GRUDGE BEARER (2005) and RAVENWING (2013). In 2008 he left Games Workshop to concentrate on freelance writing. He has since published three novels with Angry Robot in the field of epic fantasy. These are THE CROWN OF THE BLOOD (2010), THE CROWN OF THE CONQUEROR (2011) and THE CROWN OF THE USURPER (2012). Further details can be found on his website at <http://mechanicalhamster.wordpress.com/>

*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*

## ***THE 2014 AGM MINUTES***

One of the members present at this year's AGM, Pauline Morgan, has pointed out that her comments at the Meeting were not reported in full. The following amendment is her comments in full and the response, and should be read in conjunction with the Minutes already circulated in hardcopy and by email.

### Original text:

"At this point a query was raised about Group meetings changing during November and rectifying this in 2014."

### Amended text:

"PM raised a query about the dates of NOVACON. Historically, Novacon was always held on the first weekend of November. For expediency, due to the hotel not being available, it was moved, initially as a temporary measure to the second weekend in November. At that time the BSFG meetings were held on the third Friday of the month so there was no clash of interests. When that was changed to the second Friday of the month, to accommodate the

commitments of the elected chairman, she did not remember any conflict of interests. In recent years, however, the BSFG has had to move its meeting to accommodate Novacon. In 2014, the second weekend in November and the second Friday do not coincide. She asked therefore why the dates of Novacon have been chosen so that a clash still occurs when there is the opportunity to return the situation to what it has been in the past?"

It was agreed that DC should ask SG, who was not present, to clarify the situation."

Steve Green's reply will form the basis of a future newsletter article.

### ***CLARKE AWARD NOMINATIONS - SHORTLIST***

The nominees for the Arthur C Clarke Award have been announced. The winner will be announced on May 1st at the Royal Society in London:

GOD'S WAR by Kameron Hurley (Del Rey)

ANCILLARY JUSTICE by Ann Leckie (Orbit)

THE DISESTABLISHMENT OF PARADISE by Phillip Mann (Gollancz)

NEXUS by Ramez Naam (Angry Robot)

THE ADJACENT by Christopher Priest (Gollancz)

THE MACHINE by James Smythe (Blue Door)

### ***NEWS IN BRIEF ....***



Magical realist and SF author **Lucius Shephard** died on March 18th. Much of his output was as novellas. His first novel **GREEN EYES** appeared in 1984. He won the John W Campbell award for best new writer in 1985, followed by a Nebula award in 1986 for his novella, **R & R**, which became the basis of

his second novel, **LIFE DURING WARTIME** (1987). He also won

a Locus award for **THE GOLDEN** (1993), a Hugo for **BARNACLE BILL THE SPACER** (1992), a Shirley Jackson award for his novella, **VACANCY** (2009) and the World Fantasy Award twice for collections. His most famous books are probably the *Dragon Griaule* series, which includes **THE SCALEHUNTER'S BEAUTIFUL DAUGHTER** .... Author **Michael Shea** has passed away. He began his career with the publication of **A QUEST FOR SIMBILIS** (1974) which was an authorised sequel to Jack Vance's *The Dying Earth* series. He won the World Fantasy Award twice, once in 1974 with his novel **NIFFT THE LEAN** and again in 2004 with the short story "The Growlimb". During his career he was also nominated for the British Fantasy, Nebula and Hugo Awards .... Screenwriter **Lorenzo Semple** died at the age of 91. His screenplays included **KING KONG** (1976), **FLASH GORDON** (1980) and he created the 1960's TV series, *Batman* including originating the word balloons during fight sequences and Robin's "Holy ---" catchphrase. Outside the genre he also wrote the screenplays for **PAPILLON** and **NEVER SAY NEVER AGAIN** .... NASA engineer, **Jack Kinzler** died on March 4th. He built the full-sized models of the Mercury, Gemini and Apollo spacecraft which were used in pre-flight tests. He also created the flags and plaques left on the Moon by the Apollo crews. He was also famous for his ingenuity including developing a fix for Skylab when its heat shield failed, using fishing poles thus avoiding the need for a dangerous spacewalk .... The **David Gemmell Awards** longlist is now open for voting until the 13th April. Details at [www.gemmellaward.com](http://www.gemmellaward.com) .... The final line-up for the 2014 eastbound Transatlantic Fan Fund (**TAFF**) has been announced. This is to bring a North American fan to Loncon 3. The candidates are Brad and Cindy Foster (standing jointly), Curt Phillips and Randy Smith. Voting is open until 22nd April. Further details and voting at [www.taff.org.uk](http://www.taff.org.uk) .... A stage adaptation of Tim Power's **THE ANUBIS GATES** will be performed at this year's Loncon3 .... Hodder & Stoughton has made an offer to buy Quercus, the owner of the SF/Fantasy imprint, **Jo Fletcher Books**. The deal is expected to be finalised by the end of April .... **SFX magazine** has an offer of two free ebooks from Angry Robot books. The books are **EMPIRE STATE** by Adam Christopher and **ZOO CITY** by Lauren Beukes.

To download go to <http://angryrobotbooks.com/sfx> and follow the on-screen instructions. Valid from the 2nd to 30th April .... SF and Fantasy publisher **Baen Books** has announced that from March 24th its ebooks will be available in a format suitable for **KOBO** e-readers .... BSFG member **Theresa Derwin** will become sole owner and director of horror publisher, Knightwatch Press. Although the takeover is not official until July, the first in a series of horror chapbooks will be launched on April 30th. Described as a post-apocalyptic story, it will be entitled **THE GIRL WITH THE DARK HAIR** and is written by Sean Page. Further details at [www.theresaderwin.co.uk/blog](http://www.theresaderwin.co.uk/blog) .... Astronomers have discovered the first case of an **asteroid with rings, Chariklo**. Previously only gas giant planets were known to have rings. The asteroid has an orbit between Saturn and Uranus and has two concentric rings, with a gap of about 9 kilometres between them. CG

### ***NEW CINEMA FILM RELEASES***

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

***THE QUIET ONES*** - Release date April 11th. A physics professor assembles a team to create a poltergeist.

***THE LAST DAYS ON MARS*** - Release date April 11th. A group of astronauts on Mars succumb one by one to a mysterious force.

***THE AMAZING SPIDERMAN 2*** - Release date April 18th. Only Spiderman can protect New York from supervillain, Electro.

***TRANSCENDENCE*** - Release date April 25th. A terminally ill scientist downloads his mind into a computer.

***TARZAN 3D*** - Release date May 2nd. Tarzan and Jane fight an evil capitalist searching for a new energy source.

## **FORTHCOMING BOOKS**



***JUPITER WAR (Owner 3)*** by Neal Asher / Tor / 400 pgs / £8.99 paperback / ISBN 978-0330524537 / April 10th. SF. Alan Saul, part-human /part-machine needs to escape the Solar System.

***HEAVEN'S QUEEN (Paradox 3)*** by Rachel Bach / Orbit / 400 pgs / £8.99 paperback / ISBN 978-0356502373 / April 22nd. SF. With alien races and human government hunting her, Devi must make a stand.

***INFIDEL (Bel Dame Apocrypha 2)*** by Kameron Hurley / Del Rey / 400 pgs / £8.99 paperback / ISBN 978-0091952808 / May 1st. SF. Sequel to BSFA winning GOD'S WAR. SF. The Bel Dames sisterhood of assassins lead a coup and former Bel Dame, Nyx is the best option to stop them.

***BROKEN HOMES (Rivers of London 4)*** by Ben Aaronovitch / Gollancz / 352 pgs / £7.99 paperback / ISBN 978-0575132481 / May 8th. Humorous fantasy. PC Peter Grant investigates odd happenings in the Elephant and Castle housing estate.



***MIDNIGHT CROSSROAD*** by Charlene Harris / Gollancz / 320 pgs / £18.99 hardback / ISBN 978-0575092846 / May 8th. New Fantasy. Midnight, Texas - a Western town with hidden inhabitants and secrets.

***THE BEST SCIENCE FICTION AND FANTASY OF THE YEAR: VOL. 8*** edited by Jonathan Strahan / Solaris / 432 pgs / £12.99 paperback / ISBN 978-1781082157 / May 8th. Anthology featuring stories by Neil Gaiman, Ian Macleod, Joe Abercrombie, M John Harrison etc.

***AUTHORITY (Southern Reach 2)*** by Jeff VanderMeer / Fourth Estate / 352 pgs / £12.99 hardback / ISBN 9780007553464 / May 8th. The inquest of the disastrous 12th expedition uncovers some of Area X's sinister secrets.

***THE DARK BLOOD OF POPPIES*** by Freda Warrington / Titan / 400 pgs / £ 7.99 paperback / ISBN 978-1781167076 / May 9th. Fantasy. Ballerina Violette's terrible destiny is revealed with her change into a vampire.



## BOOK REVIEWS



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

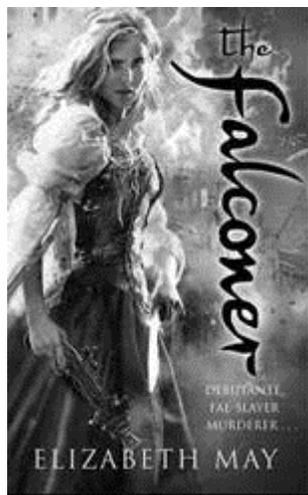
***THE FALCONER* by Elizabeth May**

**Gollancz / 336 pgs / £12.99 hardback / ISBN 978-0575130401**

**Reviewed by Theresa Derwin**

Written in first person present tense, *THE FALCONER* is set in Edinburgh 1844 and tells the story of Aileana Kameron (Kam), debutante, heiress and murderer. The press release suggests this is *Buffy* meets an historical romance and it isn't far off. Kam is a fae hunter but in her ordinary life she is a lady subject to the taunts of the local gentry, who whisper that she murdered her mother, having been discovered above the body covered in blood. However her father, the Marquess of Douglas and the authorities insist the death was caused by an animal attack. Kam has been in mourning for a year, but two weeks ago she returned to normal society, attending balls and the like. After her year of mourning she's lost the art of polite conversation and insult but with the help of her best friend Catherine, her return to society is easier. With her support, and her own tight control, Kam is allowed to "feign pleasant smiles, complete with forced laughter that's a touch vapid, even stupid. I can never let the real me show." And the real Kam is a frightening creature; trained by a gorgeous and elusive fae, Kiaran (who plays Giles to Kam's Buffy) Kam spends her evenings hunting fae. These are not the pretty winged Disneyesque creatures we see regularly, these are vicious, evil, and dangerous and feed on humanity. And it was a fae who killed her mother, so she is intent on revenge and seeks the fae that did the deed.

Kam is a strong female character, at war with her need to obey the rules of etiquette and find a suitable husband, whilst inventing weapons and fighting battles at night. The narrative is fast paced and witty. Reflecting on ladies fashion Kam notes "The adornments are beautiful but absolutely useless in battle." There is an authenticity here in respect of the Nineteenth Century and the rules of society which entertainingly offsets the fight



scenes. Kam also has a Pixie companion, Derrick, who is used as a source of humour in the book, especially when drunk on honey, and lives in her dressing room exchanging honey for repairing her battle-worn dresses. A seal protects the 'normal' world from the majority of the dangerous fae, but the seal is weakening and in six days it will fail. As is always the way with these prophecies, Kam is the only one who can repair the seal and save humanity.

As well as being very similar to *Buffy* in parts, this book, which ends on a distressing cliff-hanger, is set to become a series and reminded me of *The Split Worlds* trilogy by Emma Newman or the *Parasol Protectorate* series by Gail Carriger. But that is no bad thing as both of those series remain strong and have a great leading lady.

May is an incredibly talented writer, keeping the reader hooked from start to finish. This is one of the strongest period fantasies I have read in a very long time and I can't wait to read the sequel. If you love your heroines kick-ass and funny, then this is the book for you. *TD*

*(Review copy kindly donated by Gollancz)*

***BINARY (@evolution 2)* by Stephanie Saulter**

**Jo Fletcher Books / 407 pgs / £14.99 paperback / ISBN 978-1780878928**

**Reviewed by Carol Goodwin**

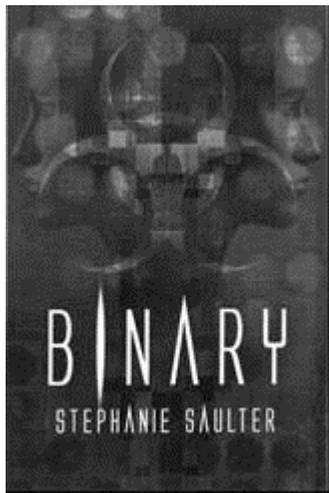
This sequel is set some months after the dramatic events at the end of the first book in the series, *GEMSIGNS*. The GEM's (Genetically Modified Humans) now have full legal protection and they are starting to integrate and become more accepted by "norm" society. All human DNA genestock has been removed from the gemtech companies and is held in supposedly secure government quarantine. However, many of the Gems still face health and reproductive problems from the specialised and sometimes experimental gene manipulation they have undergone.

Zackva Klist, the ruthless gemtech company executive appears to be trying to rehabilitate her image and announces a shift from genetic engineering back towards information technology, which had been neglected during the disastrous Syndrome years. To do this, she needs the abilities of some of the gems and the propaganda value of their approval. Although reluctant, Aryel Morningstar, the winged leader of the gems must cooperate in order to gain their expertise to help the sick gems, particularly as one is her younger stepbrother, Rhys. However can this new Zackva be trusted?

Against these apparently positive developments, a theft of genestock from the government storage raises the spectre of possible black market genetic engineering. As DI Sharon Varsi, a "normal" human

married to a gem, attempts to find the thief and their motive the trail starts to uncover secrets from both Aryel and Zackva's past which have consequences in the present.

Having enjoyed immensely the first book in this series, there was some trepidation as to whether the sequel would maintain the quality. I need not have worried. Having done some excellent world building in the first novel, this book has more space to explore the characters in detail. In particular, in uncovering more of the past of Aryel Morningstar and Zackva we get a better understanding of their personalities and fragilities. In particular, one even finds some sympathy for the villain, Zackva despite some of her monstrous acts.



I also liked that minor characters eg Herran and Sharon from the previous book were given bigger roles and the introduction of new interesting characters. My favourites included the relationship between Callan and Rhys and I also think the autistic savant, Herran has potential to be developed even further in subsequent books. Yet again the pacing was good and the story kept me gripped as I tried to work out the significance of various acts and discoveries. Ms Saulter is expert at keeping you speculating, teasing you with breadcrumbs which hint at but don't obviously telegraph the exciting climax and conclusion. The

author has produced an excellent sequel, with improved character development whilst maintaining great storytelling and lots of plausible speculative SF ideas. Definitely recommended. *CG*

*(Review copy kindly donated by Jo Fletcher Books)*

## ***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](mailto:goodwincd@yahoo.com)*

**BIRMINGHAM INDEPENDENT BOOK FAIR, 12th April, Birmingham.** Featuring independent publishers of poetry and fiction from across the UK. Complete participant details unavailable at present but

SF/Fantasy publisher Alchemy Press is confirmed. Free entry - Drop in between 11am - 5pm at Ikon Gallery, 1 Oozells Square, Brindleyplace, B1 2HS.

**HER DARK VOICE BOOK LAUNCH, 26th April, Coventry.** Launch of Dark Fantasy/Horror anthology at the Coventry Transport Museum Café. 7- 9pm. Contributors include Jaime Fenn, Vicky Stock, Gaie Sebold, Lynn M Cochrane and Theresa Derwin. Some authors will be in attendance (details TBC). Proceeds, after royalties and costs to Breast Cancer Research.

**LAINI TAYLOR BOOK SIGNING, 1st May, Birmingham.** Talk and signing her latest book, DREAMS OF GODS AND MONSTERS (Fantasy series) at Waterstones, Birmingham High Street. Tickets £3 book instore or telephone 0121 633 4353.

## ***CONVENTIONS***

**SATELLITE 4 (EASTERCON), 18th - 21th April, Glasgow** Guests of Honour include John Meaney, Juliet McKenna, Alice & Steve Lawson, Jim Burns, Dame Jocelyn Bell Burnell and Sir Terry Pratchett (limited appearance subject to health). £65/50 concessions. Membership form at [www.satellite4.org.uk](http://www.satellite4.org.uk)

**EDGE-LIT 3, 19th July, Derby** One day event at the Quad. Guests of Honour Joe Abercrombie and Charles Stross. Other speakers include Jaime Fenn, Janet Edwards and Freda Warrington. £25 from [www.derbyquad.co.uk/special-event/edge-lit-3](http://www.derbyquad.co.uk/special-event/edge-lit-3)

**LONCON 3 (WORLDCON 72), 14th - 18th August, London.** Held at ExCel exhibition centre. Guests of Honour include Chris Foss, and Robin Hobb. £125 Adult membership. See [www.loncon3.org](http://www.loncon3.org)

**SHAMROKCON (EUROCON), 22nd - 24th August, Dublin.** Guests include Hugo Award nominated Seanan McGuire, Andrzej Sapkowski (THE WITCHER also now a TV series and game) etc. Price is £35) at [www.shamrokon.ie](http://www.shamrokon.ie)

**FANTASYCON, 5th - 7th September, York.** Guests of Honour are Kate Elliott, Toby Whithouse and Larry Rostant. Master of Ceremonies is Graham Joyce. Tickets £50 (£35 for British Fantasy Society members). Tickets and details at [www.fantasycon2014.org](http://www.fantasycon2014.org)

**NOVACON 44, 14th - 16th November, Nottingham.** Guest of Honour: Kari Sperring and Science Guest: John Gribbin. Cost £45 (subject to review after Easter). Details at [www.novacon.org.uk](http://www.novacon.org.uk)

## ***FUTURE MEETINGS OF THE BSFG***

May 9th - Senior lecturer in robotics, **Dr Nick Hawes**.

June 13th- SF and fantasy author **Stephen Hunt**

July 11th - Urban fantasy author **Sam Stone** and publisher **David Howe**.

August 8th - **Speaker tba**

September 12th - **Chris Morgan**

October 10th - Dr Who fan and lookalike **Richard Ashton**

November 7th - SF and fantasy author **Storm Constantine**

December 5th - **Christmas Social**

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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