

EMERALD CITY #115

Issue 115

March 2005

An occasional 'zine produced by Cheryl Morgan and available from her at cheryl@emcit.com or online at <http://www.emcit.com>

Introduction

We can start this issue on a happy note. For a long time I have been unhappy reviewing short fiction and have been looking for someone to help out with that role. Anne has now generously volunteered to give it a go, and her first column appears in this issue. Thank you, Anne!

Oh, and there are those Hugo things. Boy am I happy about the Best Novel category. Sure I would have liked to see other books on the list, but it is a great boost for the SF industry in the UK. And of course I am very happy indeed about getting three nominations, even though I quite obviously don't deserve the third one. Thank you, everyone!

There will be a lot more discussion of the Hugo short lists coming up soon, but in the meantime we have some conventions to cover.

Or at least we should. But because of Eastercon and the rush of Interaction activity that surrounded the Hugo Nominations release, not to mention all of the frenetic rushing around the world I have been doing, I have run out of time. I did want to write about Potlatch and Corflu, but I just don't have the time. There are no photos either. And there's absolutely no way I have time for an Eastercon report. The Eastercon report at least should appear next issue. Sorry.

In This Issue

Transreal Florida - Cheryl talks SF theory over a strawberry daiquiri or two at ICFA

Hugo Nominees - Cheryl gives this year's hopefuls a quick look over and apologizes for being boring

Not By Halves - Robert Charles Wilson has another Big Change novel out, and it is a likely Hugo nominee

Memphis, Alberta - Minister Faust delves into ancient mysteries in modern Canada

A Romp Through Time - Chris Roberson takes us Here, There & Everywhere

Taken by Faeries - Lisa Tuttle gets into Otherworldly crime

The Word of God - Tamar Yellin finds a long-lost Bible

Classic SF - Wesleyan reissues a Delany masterpiece

Short Fiction Reviews - from our new guest columnist, Anne K.G. Murphy

State of Confusion - Cheryl wonders why America hasn't taken to Iain Banks, and whether Night Shade Books can make a difference

Living on the Edge - Holly Phillips produces some very original fantasy

Before Tentacles – G.W. Thomas goes in search of the works that inspired Lovecraft

Bodily Delights – Nicola Griffith provides some lesbian short fiction

Interview: Aqueduct Press – Cheryl talks to L. Timmel Duchamp

A History of Danish Fandom - Olav M.J. Christiansen continues our tour of European fandoms

Going Underground – Peter Fitting journeys to the center of the earth

WSFS Matters – The not so small matter of Torcon 3's outstanding surplus

Out of Synch – Our regular survey of new books in the US that were reviewed here long ago on publication in some other country

Miscellany – News and stuff

Footnote – The end.

Transreal Florida

Ah, ICFA: the cool place to be. Well actually the warm place to be. When it is chucking it down with rain in California the smart thing to do is head off to Ft. Lauderdale for a weekend of Florida sunshine and good conversation. And thanks to the absurd amount of flying I end up doing for work, I can get there and back on points. Luxury.

This year's ICFA had a theme of Transrealism, largely because the writer Guest of Honor was Rudy Rucker. Transrealism is an idea that Rucker cooked up several years ago, and it appears to be basically a posh word for writing better books. A transreal book is one in which the characters and plot are sensible enough to pass for realistic fiction, except that it has some

speculative elements to it. Fine. A Geoff Ryman novel, then. Let's call it Mundane SF.

But this is ICFA and we can do better than that. We have the sharpest minds in the SF&F business to hand. Consequently Scholar GoH, Damien Broderick, managed to keep us hugely entertained on the subject of Transrealism, not to mention Australians living in Texas, for a considerable length of time. Broderick is seriously smart, and devastatingly witty when he wants to be.

The highlight of the convention for me was getting to meet John Crowley, who turned out to be an exceptionally nice man and even smarter than Broderick. Crowley seems to know more than John Clute, which is really quite scary, although I'm sure that Clute will dispute the assertion.

But hold on a minute, aren't there supposed to be papers and panels and things? Well there are, but not for slackers like me who prefer to spend their time lounging by the pool, drinking strawberry daiquiris, and chatting to people about books. I did get to two panels, however, and one of them came close to producing blood on the carpet. Dreadfully violent people, these academics.

The literary establishment in the USA is represented by an organization called the Modern Languages Association. It is notoriously conservative. But the latest issue of its journal, known as PMLA, was a science fiction special. I first saw it when I visited John Clute in London last month. Clute was fairly fuming over it, and at ICFA it was clear that he was not alone.

The issue of PMLA in question was edited by two well-known SF academics: Marleen Barr, who is a Feminist, and Carl Freedman, who is a Marxist. Both of them are people with an Agenda. Quite

what they would have produced if allowed a free rein is open to question, but in the bizarre world of PMLA “editor” is defined very loosely. In normal academic journals an editor solicits papers, the papers go to peer review, and the editor then sends them back with comments or publishes them. Not at PMLA. There the editor (and in the case of special editions like this one the guest editors as well) solicit papers and get them peer reviewed. The papers then go to “The Board”, who get to accept or reject the articles without providing any justification for their decisions. In the case of the SF special edition they rejected every article that was sent to them.

Quite what bizarre machinations went on behind the scenes in order to get the issue to print are still a mystery. Freedman talked about working with PMLA’s regular editor to exploit loopholes in the rules to get articles accepted. What those loopholes were, and how each article managed to exploit them, he diplomatically would not say, which is probably just as well because there seemed to be general agreement within the audience (and especially amongst fellow panelists, John Clute and Jeri Zuli) that those articles that did get in were rather poor.

One article that did get some discussion, because the author was there to be shot at, was the introduction by Marleen Barr, which introduced the concept of “textism”. As I mentioned earlier, Barr is a Feminist. She has been working on Feminist SF since the 1980s, and still bears the scars. Consequently she decided to take this opportunity to get even and express her anger at how Feminist SF, and women in general, have been treated by the literary establishment. I have a certain amount of sympathy for her. As Eileen Gunn said, students of Feminist SF have been

treated badly and have a right to be mad as hell about it. But at the same time, everything has a place. You can get mad at a demonstration. But when you finally get invited to the White House to present your case you don’t drop your pants and poop on the carpet. It doesn’t help.

The real issue for the panel, however, (and I can thank Farah Mendlesohn for raising this) was whether engaging with mainstream literary critics on their terms is a useful thing to do. It took Feminists a long time to realize that being emancipated did not mean behaving like men and being treated like men. There’s nothing wrong with being different, and being assessed on your own terms rather than on someone else’s.

In the case of SF, most specialist critics agreed that it is different. Samuel Delany put it most succinctly, when he said that mimetic fiction was about the subject and SF was about the object. SF is about things, or at least about the relation of people to things.

There is also an argument that goes all the way back to a dispute between Jules Verne and H.G. Wells. Verne insisted that everything in his books was based on well-known, provable science, whereas Wells, he said, just made things up: Martians and time machines and the like. We see this same argument presented today by Margaret Atwood, and by the Mundane SF crowd. All that they disagree on is where the label “science fiction” should be applied. Does it cover the entire spectrum of the genre, of which Vernian SF is merely a subdivision, or is “science fiction” only those books about talking squid in space?

Where all this leads, is the idea that what we mean by SF is often very different from what other people mean by SF (or sci-fi, as they tend to call it). Dave

Langford has a long-running feature in *Ansible* called "As Others See Us," which chronicles disconnects of this type. Carl Freedman makes the point more succinctly in his introduction to Samuel Delany's *Stars in My Pocket Like Grains of Sand* (reviewed elsewhere in this issue).

There are still many who persist in thinking of science fiction only in terms of its most simplistic instances – the pulp science fiction of the American magazines during the 1920s and 1930s, for example, or such cinematic successors to pulp as the films of George Lucas – and who therefore consider science fiction, almost by definition, incapable of intellectual rigor or psychological depth.

We can rail against this all we want, but it won't stop it being true. For most people the archetype of science fiction is a trilogy of movies based on classic hero quest mythology. No wonder people like Margaret Atwood insist that they don't write "science fiction".

Is there any way around this problem? Quite possibly not. Attempts to use the label "sci fi" to refer to pulp and movie nonsense, whilst reserving "science fiction" for more serious work, have been a notable failure. I suspect any other re-labeling will be similarly ineffective. But at least in trying to present what we do to the PMLA audience we might have started by trying to explain what it was we did rather than complaining about being discriminated against.

Hugo Nominees

The full list of Hugo Nominees is given in the Miscellany section, but I thought it

was worth devoting an article to some analysis. Let's work in the traditional reverse order.

John W. Campbell Award

This is one of the hardest categories for me. K.J. Bishop and Steph Swainston are both great young writers and both good friends. I love both of their novels. On balance I think Bishop is slightly more developed, but Swainston has a new novel out, which has just arrived. Having said all that, I expect David Moles to win because I think he has the best online presence.

Cheryl's Pick: K.J. Bishop

Expected Winner: David Moles

Best Web Site

People, people, people: what did I tell you? There is no way that *Emerald City* deserves a nomination in this category. There are a lot of top class web sites out there that are better: *SF Site*, *The Alien Online*, *SF Revu*, to name but three.

The trouble with this is that, as Mark Kelly has already said, it brings the whole idea of a Best Web Site category into disrepute. It was very good that Best Web Site got the third largest number of nominating ballots. But it is not so good if it produces silly results. I'm hoping that the full nomination lists will show that *Emerald City* placed 5th only narrowly above more deserving sites.

Should I have declined? Probably. But I was kind of jazzed at getting three nominations. And since Mark has let fly on his blog I can't because it will look like giving in to pressure from a fellow nominee. So you'll just have to not vote for me, OK?

As to the winner, everyone is expecting *Locus Online* to win by a mile. If it does a whole bunch of foolish people will then describe the category as yet another sinecure for Charles Brown, even though he has almost nothing to do with producing the site. But *Locus* doesn't have quite the same brand recognition in the UK as it does in the US, so I suspect that *Sci Fiction* may just sneak the category. Me, I'm voting for *Strange Horizons* because they publish my work.

Cheryl's Pick: *Strange Horizons*

Expected Winner: *Sci Fiction*

Best Fan Artist

Frank Wu is amazing. One visit to Eastercon and he seems to have half of British fandom charmed in just the same way as he has done in the US. This is rather tough on Sue Mason, but I suspect Frank will walk this one again.

Cheryl's Pick: Frank Wu

Expected Winner: Frank Wu

Best Fan Writer

How many votes was it I lost by in Boston? Ten or eleven, I think. This year it will probably be a lot more, because Dave is local hero. Next year. Next year.

Great to see FAAn Award winner, Claire Brialey, on the ballot.

Cheryl's Pick: I am allowed to vote for myself

Expected Winner: Dave Langford

Best Fanzine

Ah, this looks like a much more vibrant category than last year. It is great to see *Banana Wings* and *Chunga* on the ballot. Carl Juarez in particular really deserves

a Hugo. Of course I would like to win again, but it was made very clear to me at Eastercon that I am expected to lose gracefully this year.

Cheryl's Pick: Yeah, well...

Expected Winner: *Plokta*

Best Semiprozine

Everyone keeps saying that *Locus* is a certain winner. And as a loyal *Locus* staff member I'll be voting for Charles. It is a very good magazine. But remember that *Interzone* won in 1995. I don't think Andy Cox's 2005 *Interzone* is quite up to the same quality as David Pringle's 1995 version. He could really have done with a year or two to build up some steam. But the category is not the foregone conclusion that many people think, and my heart goes out to *NYRSE*, which has had so many nominations for a fine product without success.

Cheryl's Pick: *Locus*

Expected Winner: *Locus*

Best Professional Artist

I am so happy to see John Picacio on the ballot. It is unlikely he'll win this year because it is his first time, and Jim Burns is a local favorite. But he will win one day, I am sure of it.

Kelly Freas will get a lot of votes too. He was a truly great artist, but I am not a fan of voting for people because they have just died. The award is for work in 2004, not for lifetime achievement.

Cheryl's Pick: John Picacio

Expected Winner: Jim Burns

Best Professional Editor

Let's get this straight folks: vote Hartwell; vote Hartwell; vote Hartwell. Got it? Good. Let's give a book editor some credit for once.

Cheryl's Pick: David G. Hartwell

Expected Winner: Ellen Datlow

Best Dramatic Presentation: Short Form

Oh dear, the lowest number of nominating ballots of any category. Interest in TV SF seems to be waning. Here's hoping we get some good new material this year. I want this category to succeed.

The general buzz seems to be that "Smile Time" will win. Something about Muppets.

Cheryl's Pick: No Award

Expected Winner: "Smile Time"

Best Dramatic Presentation: Long Form

I haven't seen any of the nominees. The general buzz seems to be that *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind* is by far the best of the five, but *The Incredibles* is the most popular.

Cheryl's Pick: *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind*

Expected Winner: *The Incredibles*

Best Related Book

Another fascinating category. I mean, Patrick Moore nominated for a Hugo? Wild. (For the benefit of US readers, this is rather like seeing a nomination for Bill Nye the Science Guy. Many UK fans became fans because they grew up

watching Patrick Moore's astronomy programs on the BBC.)

Personally, however, I'm fed up with the grip that art books have on this category. David Hardy's work is great, but I really want to see a work of criticism win for a change.

Cheryl's Pick: *The Cambridge Companion to Science Fiction*

Expected Winner: *Futures: 50 Years in Space*

Best Short Story

Shudder. Not more mawkish sentimentality, I hope. Thank goodness for Jim Kelly.

Cheryl's Pick: "The Best Christmas Ever"

Expected Winner: I haven't a clue

Best Novelette

As Niall Harrison said at Eastercon, this is a really great category. I love Ben Rosenbaum's story, and Kelly Link's. The buzz about Christopher Rowe's story is very positive as well.

Cheryl's Pick: "Biographical Notes..."

Expected Winner: "The Voluntary State"

Best Novella

Aha, Charlie v The Bujold Juggernaut. Lois has a huge fan base. Charlie is the local hero. And he has tentacles on his side. I know who I'm voting for; I don't want my brains eaten.

Cheryl's Pick: "The Concrete Jungle"

Expected Winner: "Winterfair Gifts"

Best Novel

Wow, it doesn't come much better than this. We have Iain Banks, the local hero for many years and one of the best writers never to have won a Hugo (heck, this is his first nomination!). We have China Miéville and Charlie Stross, both with large followings on either side of the Atlantic. We have the very stylish and heavily promoted Susanna Clarke. And we have the surprise package of Ian McDonald. If we had voted on the Hugos at Eastercon McDonald would have won. But I suspect he will be hampered in that the US edition will not come out until too late.

I really wasn't expecting *River of Gods* to make the ballot. But now that it is there I have some personal reasons for voting for it, which I shall explain to China next time I see him.

So far I haven't seen much gnashing of teeth on the part of US fans, nor the accusations of a fix that some people at Eastercon were predicting. But to be honest, Americans have no one but themselves to blame. Look at the number of nominations and compare them to last year. They are significantly down. Yet the number of people eligible to nominate is almost certainly higher. Noreascon 4 did the right thing by sending out reminder postcards to its members. And the vast majority of the ballots came in online, so postage cannot have been an issue. There is the point that the Scientology block vote does not appear to have happened this year, but they tend to only vote in categories where they have a candidate anyway. It is all very odd. Maybe America is tired of voting.

Cheryl's Pick: *River of Gods*

Expected winner: *Jonathan Strange & Mr. Norrell*

Not By Halves

This is a spoiler warning. I don't often do this, but I don't think it is possible to talk intelligently about the new Robert Charles Wilson novel, *Spin*, without telling you a little about what happens in the first 50 or so pages. But if I do that, then you won't be able to enjoy the same jaw-dropping amazement when you read what Wilson has done this time. If you like big surprises, and boy are these good ones, stop reading now.

So, where to start? Well, there you are, gazing up at the night sky, and suddenly it vanishes. No stars, no planets, no Moon even. Certainly no galaxies. Earth, it would appear, has just been taken out of the universe. All that is left of the familiar universe we knew is the sun that rises in the morning.

Of course it wasn't really the sun. It was an imposter sun, a clever fabrication. But we didn't know that yet.

Well actually of course Earth hasn't really been kidnapped. It has just been surrounded with some sort of field or membrane, something that becomes known as The Spin. And it has some interesting properties. Blocking out light from the stars and the Moon appears to be a by-product of the need to control the amount of sunlight received. And why is that necessary? Because time passes more slowly inside The Spin, and if large quantities of solar radiation from outside were concentrated into small time periods inside, well it would not be good for life on Earth.

And just how slowly is time passing on Earth? For every second of Earth time, a little over 3 years goes by in the universe

outside. At that sort of gearing, the outside years mount up pretty quickly.

“How much time, Jason?”

It's been five years and a couple of months since the October Event. Outside the barrier, that translates into a little over five hundred million years.

The problem with this, of course, is that solar systems have lifetimes. Suns grow old, and when they do that they grow bigger. Eventually dear little Sol will grow into a red giant, and swallow the Earth whole. Normally we don't worry about such things. Solar lifetimes are measured in billions of years. But inside The Spin, they are measured in decades.

Fortunately, while little can get through the membrane to trouble the slowed-down Earth, things can get out. So what does mankind do to get out of this pretty pickle it finds itself in? Well, we do have a few billions years of outside time to play with, so why not terraform Mars, send a colony up there, and leave them to come up with an answer.

Robert Charles Wilson does not do things by halves.

When you have been hit by three huge science-fictional ideas like that in the space of a little over 50 pages it is hard not to want to stop for breath. Thankfully, not even Wilson can keep up that sort of pace. So the rest of the book simply tells the story of the next few decades on Earth, and examines how mankind copes. Naturally, many of us don't do too well.

The suicidally disgruntled were legion, and their enemies included any and all Americans, Brits, Canadians, Danes, etc.; or conversely all Moslems, dark-skinned people, non-English-speakers, immigrants; all

Catholics, fundamentalists, atheists; all liberals, all conservatives... For such people the consummate act of moral clarity was a lynching or a suicide bombing, a fatwa or a pogrom. And they were ascendant now, rising like dark stars over a terminal landscape.

If Wilson continued to work only on this sort of level he'd end up sounding like Olaf Stapledon. But as regular Wilson readers know, he always roots his scientific speculations within very personal tales of relationships. In this case the story concerns two twins – Jason and Diane Lawton – and their childhood friend, Tyler Dupree. The two families are forever linked by the friendship of the children and the complex relationships of their parents, and forever kept apart by a vast gulf of wealth. Jason reacts to The Spin by dedicating his life to trying to find a solution to Earth's problems, while Diane retreats into religion.

Some of those people who have not read Wilson before may balk a little at this characterization. Why is it, one might ask, that the boy becomes a brave scientist and the girl becomes a superstitious ninny? It might have been interesting to do things the other way around. But Wilson has written strong female characters before, and Diane is not quite as dumb as she might seem. Indeed, in many ways she is a product of a male-dominated household in which she has been trained from birth to feel insignificant and at the mercy of an all-powerful father. I'm inclined to forgive Wilson this one.

Besides, he does all sorts of wonderful things. He talks intelligently about US politics and the way the needs of the aerospace industry dominate space policy, even when the latter is facing issues that could doom the planet. He seems to have a good understanding of

why people join religious cults, and more importantly why they stay in them after becoming disillusioned. But most of all, *Spin* is a book about faith: specifically, our faith in ourselves.

Most of the time it is very easy for us humans to feel insignificant in the face of a vast and uncaring universe. It is perhaps not really surprising that so many of us turn to religion for solace. But let us suppose, Wilson asks, that we suddenly become significant. Suppose that our generation became the last generation on Earth, and that we had a chance to fix things if only we were clever and brave and cooperative enough. Would we pass the test, or would we descend into despair, superstition and selfishness?

Wilson's last novel, *Blind Lake*, was my pick of the Hugo short list last year. Given his reputation, and the quality of *Spin*, I am pretty sure that Wilson will be on the Hugo ballot again next year. Of course he'll be up against the new Neil Gaiman novel, but *Spin* is a book that gets to the very heart of science fiction. It is the sort of book that deserves to win Hugos.

Spin - Robert Charles Wilson - Tor - publisher's proof

Memphis, Alberta

When the nominees for this year's Philip K Dick award were released I commented on what a strong field it was. But there was one book in the list that I had not read, indeed had not even noticed, until the short list came out. Which is kind of surprising, given that it had the very strange name of *The Coyote Kings of the Space Age Bachelor Pad*. What sort of a novel has a title like that? And what is it doing in such exalted

company? Why, being a contender for the prize, of course.

First things first, however: *Coyote Kings* (if I might be permitted to take a few liberties with the length of the title) is at root a sort of H.P. Lovecraft meets Indiana Jones in Edmonton, Nubian version. Plot, however, is merely the teeniest, tiniest morsel of the cornucopia that Minister Faust spreads before you. For example, this would not be anywhere near as good a book as it is were it not for the fact that both the heroes and the henchmen of the Evil Overlord are science fiction fans. Why, the bad guys even call themselves the FanBoys.

No, no, groan ye not, dear readers. It isn't like that. Seriously. Faust manages the magnificent balancing act of both poking fun at these uber-geeks and simultaneously letting us know that he is only able to do so in such style because he is one of them himself. I mean, how many other SF books have you read recently that manage to mention Jeff Wayne's musical version of *The War of the Worlds*, Adam Warlock, and The Legion of Substitute Heroes?

Besides, Faust cleverly uses his geekery as a means of setting up his cast. Most of the main characters get a viewpoint chapter or two at some point during the book, and as each one is introduced Faust gives their character stats according to some bizarre gaming system of his own invention. Key amongst these tends to be what special powers each character has in answering trivia questions. But you can also tell a lot about a character from his "genre alignment." The protagonists are fans of folks like Alan Moore and Philip K. Dick. The dumb thug from the gang of henchmen is a fan of *Star Trek: Voyager*. Need I say more?

Who, then, are these bold fans who are about to save the world from rather more doom and destruction than Jack Kirby could cram into an entire story about Galactus? Meet Hamza and Yehat, two twenty-something guys of Canadian nationality and African ancestry, two walking encyclopedias of all things sci-fi. Their life trajectories have taken something of a nose-dive, career-wise, since leaving college, but they care little as long as they are having fun and at least getting to think about girls. Besides, they have each other, and like all best mates do, they exist in an atmosphere of mutual respect and admiration. Here's Yehat on Hamza.

I'm not saying Hamza's cheap, but if the only thing standing between our solar system and a fleet of intergalactic enslavers was Hamza's wallet crunched inside his fist, we'd all be drilling methane wells on Pluto right now.

As with fanboys the world over, girls are an issue. Yehat picks them up with practiced ease, and loses them again just as quickly. Hamza gets a girlfriend approximately once a millennium, hears wedding bells after 10 minutes of the first date, and is plunged into a Black Hole of Depression for centuries after she dumps him. But hey, a girl can come between mates, right? Well, thankfully Hamza isn't like that, and when he meets the Angel of Delight who calls herself Sherem he is only too happy to sing Yehat's praises to her, as only a fanboy can.

"Anyway, one night we're cruising when for whatever reason some cop stops us. Yehat pulls over, and the cop comes up to the window. He's got one of those little copy mustaches, you know? Real Fascist type.

"And he says, 'You boys got some identification?' Now, yeah, I know we were seventeen, but I still don't like being called boy, you knawn sayn?"

"So Ye says to the cop, no lie, 'You don't need to see our identification.' The cop stops for a second, and Ye says to him again, but this time kinda waving his fingers like a spell, 'These aren't the druids you are looking for.'"

She laughs. "Well, did it work?"

"Naw, he roused us."

Yehat, however, is suspicious. After all, how many girls in the universe are there who not only recognize a Star Wars quote when they hear one, but can come right back with quotes of their own. And as for Hamza meeting a beautiful broad who claims that Watchmen is her favorite comic, well, the probabilities are how low? She must be up to something.

Yehat does not know how right he is, because Sherem is actually a highly trained warrior priestess in the service of the Jackal god, Anubis. He might know everything that there is to be known about warp drive engines, but he can't quite make the connection between jackals and coyotes. Nor can he imagine the darkness that lurks behind the homely façade of downtown Edmonton.

Enter the Meaney Brothers, Heinz and Kevlar. Enter also Dulles Allen, ex-CFL footballer turned club owner and gangster, not to mention boss of the aforementioned FanBoys. As every student of Lovecraft knows, there are Things that lurk beyond the sight of normal men, Things That Man Was Not Meant To Know. Unfortunately for Edmonton, Canada, and quite possibly the world, both the Meaney Brothers and Mr. Allen know some of these Things. They are closing in on their target, and only Sherem can stop them. All she

needs to complete her quest is a little help from someone with coyote powers.

Put like that, of course, it all sounds faintly ludicrous. But Faust yet again manages a magnificent balancing act in making a book that is both hilariously funny and deadly serious. There are some very nasty murders in *Coyote Kings*, some long passages about mateship, and a great deal about love and family. Faust even manages to sound like M. John Harrison on occasion (in spirit if not in words).

"They're everything that's wrong in this instant-coffee and microwave age. 'I want it now.' There used to be that romantic image of going off to Tibet and climbing a mountain to speak to the wise man. And when you got to the top, he could tell you the truths of the universe. Now people wanna take a helicopter to the top – or email him!"

True wisdom, of course, has to be earned, generally in a baptism of fire. If that fire happens to be coming from a bunch of well-armed gangsters, so much the better. Well at least that's what Hamza and Yehat hope they will get to tell themselves after it is all finished. Assuming that they are not finished themselves.

To sum up, then, *Coyote Kings* is a very fine book. It is a little difficult to read in parts, because much of the dialog is written in dialect and slang, but it is well worth the effort. The book is undoubtedly worth its place in the Philip K. Dick Award short list. Who knows, it might even win, if only because it is so different that it will stand out like a beacon compared to all those books by white guys. And even if it doesn't win, I am going to keep a look out for other books by Minister Faust and review them as soon as possible.

[Update: Well it didn't win, but in a field like that not winning is no shame.]

The Coyote Kings of the Space Age Bachelor Pad
- Minister Faust - Del Rey - trade paperback

A Romp Through Time

I first encountered Chris Roberson through "O One", a clever little alternate history story about computers in the Chinese Empire. Since then I have interviewed him in his role as the supremo of Monkey Brain Books. This has all been very impressive, so I have been wondering what Roberson would do with something novel length. Now Pyr have sent me a copy of Roberson's *Here, There & Everywhere*, which will be their first entirely new publication (John Meaney's *Paradox* being a reprint of a UK title). On the cover there is a quote from Michael Moorcock describing the book as, "A whole new literary form." Yeah sure, I thought. Oops.

How do I describe *Here, There & Everywhere*? Well to start with it isn't really a novel. It is a collection of short snapshots from the life of its heroine, Roxanne Bonaventure. Each chapter is pretty much standalone, with Roxie herself being the only continuing character. The other thing linking the narrative is the concept that Roxie is somehow able to travel through space and time, and most importantly through the multiple worldlines of what Roberson called the Myriad. So yes, this is a book based on the concept that the probabilistic nature of quantum mechanics produces multiple worldlines. In some ways it is similar to Moorcock's Multiverse. And yes, it is a shame about the Ashfar Experiment, but that's still being debated by physicists and in any case Roberson has been working on this

book for years so we really can't complain.

So what exactly is new about *Here, There & Everywhere*? Well of course nothing is really new, but this book does seem to mark a return to the simpler days of the pulps. In some ways (as Roberson mentioned in his interview) it is in the same spirit as what Michael Chabon is doing with the McSweeney's anthologies, but Roberson also quotes writers such as Moorcock, Alan Moore and Kim Newman as inspirations. It is certainly not a book about science; it is a book that uses the idea of time travel to tell a bunch of fun stories.

And yet, Roberson does know his time travel. There are a number of places where he gets briefly serious and talks intelligently about quantum physics and time travel paradoxes. The point is that he balances them with things that are pure fun. One of the more interesting ideas to come out of multiple worlds theory is the idea that parallel worlds exist in which fictional characters are real. Roberson plays with that in some stories. The last time I saw anyone do that was in *The Number of the Beast*, and I suspect writers may have steered clear of the idea because of that. But Roberson is much more amusing than Heinlein, and thankfully no part of Roxie ever goes Spung!

At the end of the book, Roberson tells a little of its history, including the now familiar tale of failed submissions to big publishing houses. One editor apparently said that the book was "too smart" to be a commercial success. Most of them, I suspect, simply thought it was too different. Book publishers in the US are becoming very much like Hollywood – they only want to publish books that are just like other successful books. So kudos to Lou Anders and Pyr for taking a punt on both a new writer and a very different style of book.

Which leaves us with just one question, did it work? Well it was certainly fun. I think that the semi-fix-up nature of the narrative will lead to people commenting that some chapters are better than others. Certainly they are all different, sometimes wildly so, in style. So I'm still waiting to see what Roberson will do with a proper novel. I suspect that a lot of people will come away from the book thinking "oh" rather than "wow". But when they sit back and think about it they will realize that they did enjoy reading it, and that is, after all, what books are for.

Here, There & Everywhere – Chris Roberson – Pyr – publisher's proof

Taken by Faeries

Sometimes it seems like hardly a week goes by in the UK without some poor girl or young woman going missing, and most likely turning up dead with clear evidence of sexual assault. Partly this is because of the UK media's obsession with all things sexual, but sadly it is not far from the truth. People do go missing all the time. Sometimes, of course, they run away. And sometimes they are taken by faeries.

Well, at least that is the premise of Lisa Tuttle's new novel, *The Mysteries*. If the idea seems trite, I should add that to begin with I was very excited by this book. I knew that Tuttle was unlikely to make light of such a serious subject, and I was hoping for something very powerful indeed. In the end, however, it turned out that Tuttle didn't make much of it at all. Let me explain.

Our hero, Ian Kennedy, is an American living in London. Supposedly he has a career as a private detective, specializing in the finding of missing persons. In

practice he spends much of his time looking for people who are either already dead or who don't want to be found, on behalf of desperate families who were probably the cause of the running away in the first place. But just once, many years ago, Kennedy did rescue a woman from the clutches of the fair folk. And his latest case sounds suspiciously familiar.

The book goes back and fore between Kennedy's current case and the original one. Much is made of the reluctance of 21st Century people to believe in faeries, and the inevitable about face when faeries choose to believe in them. Methods of rescuing people are discussed, including appropriate times for finding a sidhe open, and the "hang on for dear life" tactic used so successfully by Janet in the legend of Tam Lin. Tuttle certainly knows her faery lore. And a very entertaining book has been produced as a result.

But for us hardened cynics who read far too many novels than is good for us, Tuttle's book is also something of a disappointment. It promised much. It seemed like it would turn out to be dark and brooding and disturbing, and it turned into a fairly straightforward adventure story. Part of this was, as I alluded earlier, because the focus on disappearing women shifted rather into a focus onto two individuals who were actually loved and wanted, and in little danger save for their being stuck in a world where time runs differently from our own. But it was also because the faeries simply weren't scary enough.

For example, the humans remained pretty much in control of the situation throughout. Sure the faeries tried to trick them, but tricks were about all the weapons that the faeries had. If you were steadfast and believed in what you were doing then you would be OK. In addition, far too much of the story was

told in flashbacks. We hardly ever got to see the faeries in action first-hand, we only had their doings reported to us. The story hardly ever got visceral and in your face. Everything happened to other people, not to me, the reader.

None of which is to say that *The Mysteries* is a bad book. It is an entertaining read and will probably do very well in the market. It also ends in exactly the right way (which is to say in a way that would be thrown out on its ear by a Hollywood focus group because it isn't unambiguously happy). However, it isn't the grab-you-by-the-throat book that it could have been. It is, I think, something of a wasted opportunity.

The Mysteries - Lisa Tuttle - Bantam - hardcover

The Word of God

I first encountered Tamar Yellin as the translator of Zoran Živković's fine novella, "The Book". In my review I said, "Tamar Yellin has done an amazing job. I would never have picked this book as a translation had I not known. It has cockney rhyming slang. It has jokes about spelling." Živković himself commented in his acknowledgments that Yellin should be credited as co-author of the book. So when Jeff Vandermeer offered me a copy of Yellin's debut novel to review I said "yes" enthusiastically, even though Jeff said that there was hardly anything fantastical in the book.

I have no arguments there. The book, *The Genizah at the House of Shepherd*, is certainly not a conventional fantasy, although there is one unexplained event in the book. Instead it is a very ordinary story about a fairly ordinary Jewish

family. It contains a whole lot of things that I try very hard to avoid: extreme religiosity, family feuds, and dill pickle. It is, nevertheless, a fascinating piece of work.

The viewpoint character, Shulamit, is a biblical scholar living in England. When she hears that the old family house in Jerusalem is about to be demolished to make room for a new apartment block she decides to visit Israel and look up her family one last time. On arriving there she discovers that in tidying out the old house the family has found a mysterious and potentially valuable manuscript: an ancient, hand-written copy of the Torah. By asking about her family history she discovers that the Codex, as it is called, may have been written by Jews from one of the ten Lost Tribes of Israel.

For generations my family were scribes and collectors of scrolls. They spent their days bent over the desk, examining the letters of holy writ, or writing them carefully with a reed pen. They were close workers, keen-sighted and meticulous. Particular and perfectionist. They had to be. The integrity of the Torah depended on their efforts. If they changed one letter, they destroyed the world.

At this point the inevitable comparisons with Dan Brown's *The Da Vinci Code* begin. The publishers will push them, trying to make Yellin's book sound as if it is "more like Dan Brown"; and lazy reviewers will use the comparison as an easy way of filling paragraphs. Fuelling this is the fact that Yellin (perhaps mischievously) attributes the Codex to the Tribe of Dan. But Yellin's book is nothing like Brown's. To start with we never get to find out what is in the Codex. It is bad enough that it should be different to the official version. Indeed,

given that it is different, it is almost irrelevant how it differs.

Or perhaps, I theorise, he became mesmerized by that gap between language and revelation, by the imperfection of language as against the perfection of the Word. Perhaps he was paralysed by the implications. Because of God could allow versions, if God was unable to prevent mistakes, what did that say about divine power – what became of the concept of divine truth?

Yellin's book, then, is not about mysterious and dramatic revelations concerning the history of Judaism. It is about Judaism itself, and about being Jewish. It is about religious belief in the incorruptibility of the Word of God. It is about being torn between living in Israel or out in the non-Jewish world. And it is about people and families. As a result it could be very pedantic and depressing. But given the marvelous Jewish talent for comedy and habit of making fun of their more eccentric brethren, it all works superbly. And it is beautifully written. It is, in fact, just the sort of book that gets mainstream critics excited. I do hope that the little bit of magic towards the end doesn't scupper its chances of winning literary prizes.

The Genizah at the House of Sheper – Tamar Yellin – Toby Press – publisher's proof

Classic SF

There are many things that people tend to look for in a really good SF novel, but two of the most common are these: does it stand the test of time; and does it predict any technological innovations? When a book fulfills both of these requirements, it surely deserves to be

called a classic, which is presumably why Wesleyan University Press has produced a 20th anniversary edition of Samuel R. Delany's *Stars in My Pocket Like Grains of Sand*.

The way to deal with timelessness, of course, is not to get too specific about your technology. Set your story far in the future, and try not to use too many present day ideas. Just mutter vaguely about amazing technical things. Delany does this well. But he also talks quite a bit about one specific technology. It is an online library called General Information (GI). His access technology is way ahead of ours, but the general concept is the same, even down to the difficulty of getting good data in amongst that vast sea of information.

"The problem [...] with information you get from [...] GI is that it's often ten years out of date – if not a hundred. Especially when it comes through the Web."

Not bad for a book written in 1984, when cyberspace was only just being invented.

The story, however, is not about technology. It is primarily about interaction between intelligent beings, about sexual politics, and with a pleasant seasoning of galactic intrigue thrown in.

We begin with the tale of Rat Korga. He lives on the planet of Rhyonon and he is one of many people who has undergone voluntary Radical Anxiety Termination. This is a sort of clever lobotomy that leaves the patient able to function, but unable to worry or get agitated about anything. Rats, as the patients are called, make perfect slaves. Why do people opt for this treatment? Because it is easier than having to worry about living. After it has been done, you are still alive, but you no longer care.

The problems of everyday life, however, turn out to be of minor importance to the people of Rhyonon. Their planet is about to be destroyed. Possibly it was a war, brought on by the population going into Cultural Fugue. Possibly it was an attack by the mysterious, alien Xlv. Whatever, it was terminal. Korga was the only survivor.

"The flame shell," Japril said, "where it roared across Rhyonon's surface, was over fifty thousand feet high – which effectively did in any passing air travel. Most of the actual holocaust was confined to the equatorial areas. So was ninety percent of Rhyonon's population. The resultant gaseous toxins alone, not to mention the incredible heatstorms that went raging out north and south, pretty well did in the parts of the world that were not directly burned."

Having rescued Rat Korga from his dead planet, the Web authorities need to find a home for him. As a rat, he is clearly incapable to adapting easily to a new environment, and his condition is not easily curable. He needs someone to take care of him. A little personality analysis turns up an ideal candidate. Marq Dyeth is an Industrial Diplomat (i.e. a trader who negotiates deals across the vastness of space and between alien species). His sexual proclivities are a little unorthodox, but then so are Korga's. As the Spider, Japril, explains to Dyeth:

"Besides being the single survivor of Rhyonon, Korga happens to be your perfect erotic object – out to about seven decimal places."

And so we enter the gender politics aspect of the book. Aside from having an interesting pair of gay central characters, Delany also plays with the reader's

expectations. For example, in the language of Marq Dyeth's people the general term for an intelligent being is "woman". This applies regardless of gender, and regardless of whether one is talking about humans, or about the reptilian evelmi with whom they share their planet. It makes the book hard to follow at times, but it certainly helps get you inside the minds of a people for whom racism and sexism are incomprehensible concepts.

Of course this doesn't apply to everyone. By and large, Dyeth's people adhere to a political philosophy called The Sygn. Other worlds are followers of The Family. Interestingly Delany distinguishes the two philosophies by explaining that followers of the Sygn try to make the best of life in this world, whereas followers of The Family believe in following strict rules in this life so as to guarantee their happiness in the afterlife.

Rhyonon was one of the worlds where neither Sygn nor Family had the upper hand, which is perhaps an explanation for it collapsing into Cultural Fugue. In any case, as Korga explains, it was not free from strange laws.

"On my world sex between males was illegal until you were twenty-seven, although it went on pretty constantly anyway. What was completely illegal on my world was sex between a person your height and a person of mine. For all genders."

I guess it takes all sorts...

The book proceeds to tell the story of the developing love between Korga and Dyeth against the background of galactic politics. The Thants, a family from another planet who are friendly with the Dyeths, are thinking of throwing their lot in with The Family, having been

offered the opportunity to become rulers of a planet with political difficulties. Meanwhile Japril and her colleagues continue to worry about Korga, who is fast becoming a media celebrity on Dyeth's homeworld, Velm. They also worry about what actually happened on Rhyonon. I have to say that the book ends entirely *in media res*, and if there were a vote as to which science fiction novel was most in need of a sequel, *Stars in My Pocket Like Grains of Sand* would almost certainly win.

That very small gripe aside, it is an excellent book of which I have barely scratched the surface. There is, for example, the way that the evelmi use language centered on the idea of taste rather than sight as we humans do. There is the fact that on Velm everyone eats meat, but only meat cloned from humans or evelmi. Eating an animal would be a disgraceful act. And of course there is the famous dragon hunt (dragons on Velm bear a similar relationship to the evelmi as chimps do to humans). Delany delights in constantly challenging the reader's expectations and social mores. His language is a little dense at times, but it is well worth working at. This is certainly a book that deserves to stay in print for a long time.

Stars in My Pocket Like Grains of Sand - Samuel R. Delany - Wesleyan University Press - trade paperback

Short Fiction Reviews

By Anne K.G. Murphy

Fantasy & Science Fiction

The April edition of *Fantasy & Science Fiction* (F&SF) presents us with something new in the form of

"Domovoi" by M.K. Hobson. A *domovoi* is the spirit of a building, and this one teaches a lesson of pain and transformation to a real estate developer whose pride in his work is his most treasured possession. Sometimes what a man's been missing is the love of a strong... building. And the understanding that she doesn't want to be saved could lead to his own redemption. That may sound high-handed but the writing is quite gritty and well worth a read.

Much of the rest of the April *F&SF* is a study on the line between reality and fiction, from an author's pseudonym come to life in "The Secret Sutras of Sally Strumpet," a trippingly glib piece by Paul Di Filippo, to Michael Libling's revelations about a woman's former lives as Confucius, Goldilocks and Lady Capulet (among others) in "The Gospel of Nate". Claudia O'Keefe also plunges into this theme with an almost-too-fierce intensity in a vignette about memory called "Black Deer". Filling out the remainder of the magazine are two adventure/detective serials, a vampire story that could be summed up as a lecture on how to remove a stain from a shirt (or a small town), and a sort of religious essay in prose, none of which are really my cup of tea.

On the *F&SF* website <<http://www.fsfmag.com>> they currently have posted two stories that are nominated for this year's Nebula Award that they originally published in 2003. You can read them on the web and I recommend you do, especially "The Tangled Strings of the Marionettes" by Adam-Troy Castro. I had hoped that would make the Hugo ballot in 2004 and I am pleased to see it getting some recognition now. A Neurec reporter's look at human participation in an alien ritual art, a Ballet that requires tremendous study and substantial

alteration of the human dancers, not always successful, where their ultimate performance is quite literally their last. This is hard SF as speculative as it comes, and beautifully written.

Aeon

The editors of *Æon Two* admit that in years to come they'll probably refer to it as "The God Issue." Two particularly well-written stories in this collection are on that God theme. "Eyes the Color of Earth as Seen From Above," by P.R.A. Stillman, presents a thoughtful reverie on Fatherhood and flying. What if God was hanging out in Alaska with his latest wife, Edna, while his youngest son, Luke, occasionally stops by with another get-rich scheme he wants God to fund. How do you think He'd *really* feel about crosses? A nice study on caring, action, inaction and maturity.

In "A Voice for the Goddess of Mercy" Pat MacEwen explores one possible Justice that could have been meted out to the architect of the September 11th attacks. I'm not sure what I thought about this story. On the one hand, it's nice to picture the Goddess of Mercy taking a hand in the dealings of people, operating through one of the last of the Paiwan. And the writing is compelling. On the other hand, this *still* reads as a kind of holier-than-thou vengeance fantasy. Which is all the worse for how many times it protests that it isn't one. It could be that I'm overly sensitive to the common American treatment of that specific terrorist act as being absolute evil with no attempt to understand what led to it; this story continues with the traditional emphasis on understanding only the victim's point of view, and pain. And I find the picture of possible atonement to be very western (despite a reference to enlightenment), and not as

thoughtful as I was expecting this story to be.

Bruce Holland Rogers also challenges expectations (in a more positive way) in a clever test called "Vocabulary Items", and Gary W. Shockley does an admirably surreal job of imagining what it might have looked like if Salvador Dali's artistic opposition had tried to go back in time and obstruct his introduction to Gala, the woman who became his muse and companion back when he was just "Dali, at Age 26, Believing Himself to be Heavyweight Champion of the World". *Aeon Two* is available now. Their web site <<http://www.aeonmagazine.com>> gives preview snippets of the stories and links to where you can purchase it.

State of Confusion

The apparent disconnect between American SF readers and Iain Banks is one of the great, unsolved mysteries of our time. There is no doubt that Banks produced some wonderful SF novels through the '80s and '90s. Those novels have been published by major US companies. And yet Banks has not been a success over on the left-hand side of the Atlantic. There are plenty of theories about this – Banks is too Socialist, too British, or whatever – but no one seems to have a coherent explanation. Now one of those theories is being tested.

Some people claim that the US publishing houses didn't know how to market Banks, or at least didn't understand him well enough to do a good job of selling his work. Well, he is now being published by people who love what he does, and are amongst the most enthusiastic SF&F publishers I know: Night Shade Books. Later this

year they will be publishing Banks' latest novel, *The Algebraist*, but for now they have on offer his short story collection, *The State of the Art*.

What is the Culture? What do we believe in, even if it hardly ever is expressed, even if we are embarrassed about talking about it? Surely in freedom, more than anything else.

from "The State of the Art"

Ah, yes, freedom. And therein lies the rub. America, of course, is the country of freedom. America also has great difficulty with the idea that freedom of any sort can be possible in an avowedly Socialist society like The Culture. And these days "freedom" is a convenient euphemism for "do what we say or we'll shoot you." Bush Newspeak has come to the USA. And one of the more interesting things about *The State of the Art* is that Banks saw the war that we are currently fighting way back in 1988. Unfortunately he was a little too optimistic.

Let the crazies burn rock albums and hunt the Ark on Ararat; let them look stupid while we look to the future. We just have to hope that there are always more of us than there are of them, or at least that we are more influential, better placed. Whatever.

from "Piece"

Oh dear. A bit late now, isn't it. Of course the obvious thing wrong with that is that there always have been more of them than us, and perhaps always will be. But certainly we didn't look to the future. Or at least if we did it was with an air of doom and gloom and general dismissal of the value of looking to the future. Way too much Leftist thought is wasted on pining for an

imaginary past before evil things like Capitalism, Profit and Economics were invented. Besides, human beings have always had a tendency towards naivety.

What am I doing here?

It is as if I drifted into this situation. I didn't ever think about fighting or doing anything risky at all, not until the war came along. I agreed it was necessary, but that seemed obvious; everybody thought so, everybody I knew anyway. And volunteering, agreeing to take part; that too seemed... natural. I knew I might die, but I was prepared to risk that; it was almost romantic. Somehow it never occurred to me that it might involve privation and suffering.

from "Descendant"

There are times when Banks himself has been accused of naivety. Compared, say, to the hard-edged realism of Ken MacLeod's *Fall Revolution* series, how can Banks justify the seemingly idyllic utopia that is *The Culture*? And aren't its human inhabitants simply pets of the all-powerful AIs? But Banks has thought about these things, and in "A Few Notes on the Culture" he explains why he thinks a space-faring society will inevitably be Socialistic. Interestingly his arguments bear some resemblance to Heinlein's ideas about why a space-faring society will inevitably be Libertarian. But that brings us back to MacLeod again.

In the meantime, *The State of the Art* is full of stories that have a very human dimension. They are sad, they are thoughtful, they are funny, but most of all they are about people. Some of them do show a little historical wear and tear: they do, after all, date back as far as 1987. But they all show a very fine author at work. Here's hoping that Night Shade manages to sell a whole pile

of copies, and that America finally learns to love Iain Banks.

State of the Art - Iain M. Banks - Night Shade Books - harcover

Living on the Edge

One of the things you learn to do when you review books a lot is spot editors who are smart. A keen editor will throw everything he has at you, regardless of whether you are going to like it or not. A smart editor, on the other hand, will read your reviews, learn to recognize what you like, and target you with books he is pretty sure will get good reviews.

Sean Wallace of Prime Books is smart. When he sent me a collection of short fiction by a Canadian writer I had never heard of before I did wonder a little. It should be pretty obvious by now that I'm not a big fan of short fiction. But Sean was very insistent. He kept checking with me to make sure I had the book. There was something going on here. So I read it.

Autumn has been invaded by the relics of an imagined history. Ivy, brown and sullen green, twines through huge blocks of (perhaps) machinery. The objects, some of them as big as railway cars, are complex and have a sense of purpose, of movement stilled, but rust and dying vegetation obscure what details age might have spared. The light is flat and gray, the air hangs heavy with silence, there is a stale smell of fungus and bracken dust.

From "In the Palace of Repose"

Sean knew I would like this. The book in question is *In the Palace of Repose*, a collection of what one might call dark

fantasy stories by Holly Phillips. It is, very precisely, the sort of thing I like. The stories are disturbing without being horrifying, they are edgy, and they have that air of uncertainty about the nature of the universe that Lovecraft strived for, without Lovecraft's sometimes terrible prose.

Indeed the title story, "In the Palace of Repose", was first published in *H.P. Lovecraft's Magazine of Horror*. Not that it is particularly horrifying, unless you think about it too much. It is set in a fairly modern society: a democracy with a large and well-established civil service. But one small department within that organization is responsible for the maintenance of the royal palace, and for ensuring that the King stays inside, and stays asleep, by whatever magical means necessary. It is the most fantastical story in the collection.

Another story, "The New Ecology", provides an interesting twist on faerie mythology. In this story the faeries have evolved to townscapes and have learned to love machines. Naturally they take to junkyards and similar places. The boggles and goblins and similar sprites just love it.

First came a creature the size of a pug dog, a thing of segmented legs that threw themselves over as much as they scuttled forward, like a spider caught in surf. A junkyard spider: the dim light gleamed off the twisted tin of its limbs, the tarry rags of its joints. It scuttle-tumbled to the edge of the walk between the street and the house and stopped with its legs bunched under, ready to pounce.

From "The New Ecology"

The book features an introduction by Sean Stewart. His favorite story, and I think perhaps mine, is "Summer Ice",

which has no fantastical elements to it at all. The only magic in the tale is the magic of human creativity and friendship, and it is a truly beautiful tale.

It is, however, really hard to pick a favorite from this book. There are nine stories in a little under 200 pages, and all of them are very good. I sat down and read the whole book through, and loved every tale. Should I ever grow up, I want to be able to write like Holly Phillips.

In the Palace of Repose - Holly Phillips - Prime
- publisher's proof

Before Tentacles

No idea in SF&F is entirely new, and therefore the origins of H.P. Lovecraft's Cthulhu mythos must lie in stories that the author had read. Given that Lovecraft fancied himself as a scholar, we can pretty much guarantee that he was familiar with the field. But what exactly were his favorite stories, or at least his favorite writers. G.W. Thomas, a mythos scholar himself, has made a stab at collecting the "Stories that Inspired the Cthulu Mythos." The book is called *Elder Signs*, and is available from reprint specialists, Renaissance E Books.

I have no idea whether Thomas's list is in any way accurate, or indeed complete. But one look at the list of authors selected and you know that you (and presumably Lovecraft before you) are in for a good read. Here they are: Edgar Allan Poe, Ambrose Bierce, Robert W., Chambers, Arthur Machen, H.G. Wells, M.R. James, William Hope Hodgson, Lord Dunsany and Algernon Blackwood. Poe's story, "Silence - a Fable", opens the collection in classic style:

"LISTEN to me," said the Demon as he placed his hand upon my head. "The region of which I speak is a dreary region in Libya, by the borders of the river Zaire. And there is no quiet there, nor silence."

From Ambrose Bierce we get an introduction to a classic Mythos location in "An Inhabitant of Carcosa". The Chambers story is not the classic "The King in Yellow" (which Renaissance E Books has published in a separate volume), but "In the Court of the Dragon". But you'll be pleased to hear that the story does not end without mentions for both Carcosa and the dread King himself.

One doesn't normally think of H.G. Wells as a horror writer, but as Thomas rightly points out the Martians from *The War of the Worlds* were squidgy, tentacled monsters. Besides, "The Sea-Raiders" starts like this:

"Until the extraordinary affair at Sidmouth, the peculiar species Haploteuthis ferox was known to science only generically, on the strength of a half-digested tentacle obtained near the Azores..."

See, tentacles. That proves it.

The anthology itself is fairly short, totaling just over 150 pages. But a further 80 pages or so are devoted to Lovecraft's famous essay, "The Supernatural Horror in Literature." All in all, if you are a mythos fan, this is a book to get. And it is an e-book too, so it is nice and cheap. Buy it online at <http://www.renebooks.com/>.

Elder Signs - G.W. Thomas - Renaissance E Books - ebook

Bodily Delights

Our small press interview this month is with L. Timmel Duchamp of Aqueduct Press. In it she talks about the company's Conversation Pieces series of chapbooks (which I shall continue to call "chapbooks" because "small trade paperbacks" is just too much of a mouthful). One of them has been written by a favorite author of mine, Nicola Griffith. What better book, then, to review in company with the interview?

The book, *With Her Body*, is a collection of three short fictional works by Griffith, plus an afterword by Duchamp. As we have come to expect from Griffith, each story has a strong lesbian element to it. The first, "Touching Fire", features a girl attracted to a mysterious and dangerous lover. In the second, "Sound of Bullfrogs, Cry of Geese", the heroine mourns her dead lover in a world wracked by plague. And the final story, "Yaguara", is about two women finding and losing each other while on an archaeological dig in Central America.

However, none of the stories is exclusively about lesbian love. The first has an interesting SFnal idea. The second is as much about finding the will to live in a world struck by disaster as about anything else. And the final story is a fantasy rooted in Mayan religion.

Duchamp says in her afterword that Griffith uses lesbian characters so as to be able to write about women without constantly having to refer to them in relation to men. This is certainly true. Men are irrelevant to most of these stories. But there may be other ways in which Griffith's work is feminized. For example, two of the stories take place in hot, steamy environments full of luxuriant plant growth and animal life. There is a real sense of fecundity in the stories.

Everywhere she looked life leapt out at her: huge black carpenter bees buzzing around red melastoma flowers the size of roses; a leaf frog, gaudy and red-eyed, peering from the depths of a sapodilla; the flicker of a gecko's tail. And there were millipedes and rove beetles, silberfish and woodlice, and spiders spinning their silent webs to catch them. The air was luxuriant with rot, like the breath of a carnivore.

From "Sound of Bullfrogs, Cry of Geese"

Given the quality of the stories, unless you are the sort of person who gets turned off by descriptions of lesbian sex, this book is well worth reading. Griffith is an excellent writer and *With Her Body* contains three fine works.

Entirely fortuitously, Duchamp's afterword manages to touch on one of the themes that we were discussing at ICFA this year; in particular the idea that SF has its own techniques and purposes and therefore cannot be fairly judged by standards devised for mimetic fiction.

Interestingly, science fiction tends to be less interested in illuminating the human condition than in exploring the meaning and limits of being human.

L. Timmel Duchamp

I'm fast coming to the conclusion that *Conversation Pieces* is a really neat idea. Certainly the two I have read so far have been good, and I'm really looking forward to the one based on Sumerian mythology that Duchamp mentions in the interview. I think the series is a good marketing idea too.

In the meantime, best of luck to Griffith in the Lambda literary Awards, and here's hoping that the book raises lots of money for the Multiple Sclerosis charity to which the proceeds are being donated.

With Her Body – Nicola Griffith – Aqueduct Press - chapbook

Interview: L. Timmel Duchamp of Aqueduct Press

Aqueduct is a fairly new small press with a very clear mission. Although it hasn't been around for very long, it has already received a lot of favorable critical attention. I spoke to the company's editor and publicist, L. Timmel Duchamp.

CM: Aqueduct doesn't seem to have been around very long. When did you start up? And who else is involved with the project from the publishing side?

LTD: We published our first book in April 2004, and to do that, we set up shop in September 2003. From the beginning there have been four of us involved: Kath Wilham, our managing editor, who handles production and book design, shares some of the editorial tasks with me, and does all the copyediting and proofreading; Tom Duchamp, my partner, who handles the finances, distribution, and direct sales; Lynne Jensen Lampe, who designs our covers and advises Kath on fonts and other aspects of book design; and me – who finds the manuscripts we publish, provides editorial direction to our authors, participates heavily in the first rounds of editing, and handles promotion. Between them, Lynne and Kath have years of experience with copyediting, typesetting, graphic design, and other aspects of publishing. I would never have dreamed of starting Aqueduct without them.

CM: It is fairly clear from your web site that your intention is to publish feminist

SF. On your mission page you note that such material will rarely hit the bestseller lists. That would seem to define a clear need for a small press to meet that market, yes?

LTD: Over the last two and a half decades, the continual shift in large publishers' criteria for determining a book's success and even its viability has resulted in an ever narrower margin for books predicted to appeal to relatively small audiences. And so a lot of interesting and worthy work necessarily falls through the cracks of commercial publishing. Medium-size, small, and micro-sized publishers, while lacking many of the advantages of the big guys, do best when serving small, particular audiences, as the big guys generally do not. The major publishers have not stopped publishing feminist SF; but it does happen that they pass over work that readers like me want and need. And so yes, I think that under the circumstances we need small presses (and micro-presses, like Aqueduct) to pick up the slack.

CM: I was also interested to see that the mission page went rather beyond the need to find a means of getting feminist SF to market. You went on to talk about, or rather quote André Schiffrin talking about, the need for books to challenge prevailing opinions, about the need for continuous discourse in a democratic society. That would seem to be particularly appropriate in America today, where people can be accused of being unpatriotic for criticizing the government.

LTD: The fear of being accused of being unpatriotic has certainly constricted public discourse on important issues. But the threat to discourse extends far beyond that. The current administration is waging a war against knowledge itself on several fronts. It has enlisted at least twenty federal agencies and spent

upwards of a quarter of a billion dollars producing and distributing fake news segments that have been aired through local news venues all over the country and making scripts available to the producers of local news shows. It hires actors to pose as reporters and puts pundits and journalists covertly on the government payroll. But that is not all.

LTD: The US Government has always been a significant patron of science research and development. Under the Bush Administration, many scientists employed by the government have been pressured to alter their data, their findings, and their analyses, while scientists seeking grants have found themselves questioned about their views on a variety of political issues. And across the board, this administration is making a point of withholding access to basic information as well as the sort of documents and materials that have previously been available to the public. In the meantime, the US Congress continues to serve corporate interests by impeding public access to information on a variety of consumer products.

LTD: Democracy has never been a matter of merely casting a ballot at the polls: some of the most repressive regimes of the twentieth-century routinely held elections. Freedom of speech, which for most of our history has been highly prized in the US, is useless when those exercising speech are not reasonably well-informed. We need both the Internet and independent presses to resist the attack against facts, information, and knowledge. I have no idea what I'd be making of the world I now live in without the Internet and independent publishing, but I suspect it would be significantly different.

CM: Your logo is a picture of Mary Wollstonecraft Shelly. Is that just in recognition of her role as one of the

founders of science fiction, or is there something deeper here?

LTD: Mary Shelley is the logo for our Conversation Pieces series. (The press's logo is an image of an aqueduct.) I chose her as the logo for the Conversation Pieces series for two reasons. First, I see her as an emblem for how women — as writers and as fans — have been positioned socially as well as discursively in SF for most of its history. In the opening essay of *The Grand Conversation* (a collection of essays that is the first volume in the series), I consider the image of Mary Shelley, who voraciously read and seriously thought about the important scientific and intellectual issues of her day, seated with Percy Bysshe Shelley, Byron, Dr. Polidori, and other men in that social circle — attentive but silent. We know from her journals and her fiction that she had passionately strong opinions on the matters the men discussed. But although she was tolerated inside the boys' clubhouse, she was not a full, unselfconscious member of it. The discussion inside the clubhouse mattered tremendously to her, but her active contribution to the clubhouse conversation mattered not at all to the men (and was perhaps even discouraged).

LTD: Second, SF texts continue even today to engage in conversation with Shelley's *Frankenstein* although it was first published almost two hundred years ago; in my essay I argue that although Shelley only listened when she sat with the men as they discussed scientific and intellectual matters, she in fact engaged with their arguments in her fiction — most particularly *Frankenstein*. I therefore see Shelley as exemplary of the intertextuality that characterizes SF in general and feminist SF in particular, and find it fitting to take her image as the logo for a series intended to both

document and facilitate the conversation that is feminist SF.

CM: The first novel that you published was *Life* by Gwyneth Jones. Clearly it has feminist themes, but was there anything else that attracted you to it?

LTD: First, I'm always attracted to fine writing that challenges me to do some serious thinking. Second, I have long wished that more SF represented the practice of science more realistically and acknowledged the role of the politics and sociology of science in scientific and technological developments; and *Life*, of course, does so effectively. Third, in the course of editing the novel, I read it at least five times, and every time I read it I reacted differently to the characters. This, in my experience, is unusual, and I believe that I did so because the three most prominent characters in *Life* are so three-dimensional that my perception and judgment of them varied from reading to reading. I gather that many people have felt ambivalence toward the characters. While this makes the book less attractive to some readers, I see this as a tribute to the quality of the writing.

CM: I understand from Gwyneth that she's been trying to sell *Life* for some time, with little success. Yet here it is winning the Philip K. Dick Award and on the *Locus* Recommended Reading List. Who is out of touch here, the critics or the big publishers?

LTD: I think it's fairly obvious that although critics and big publishers share many interests in common, they each have different objectives in their judgment of the works they consider. The critics are making judgments about quality, while the big publishers are primarily concerned with commercial potential. (Which is not to say that the latter aren't interested in quality, but that quality, in and of itself, isn't a sufficient reason for publishing.) One of

the editors who turned *Life* down recently said to me, even as he expressed his high regard for it, that in his view it simply wasn't commercial, and that Aqueduct's publishing it was a Good Thing. My own sense is that if *Life* had been marketed as a mainstream literary novel and provided with a large advertising budget, it *could* have been a bestseller. A professional publicist would have been able to clean up, riding the wave of the Larry Summers' controversy.

CM: Larry Summers?

LTD: Larry Summers is the President of Harvard University, a man whose public utterances carry considerable weight. Remarks he made at a conference held by the National Bureau for Economic Research, advancing three possible explanations for the severe under-representation of women at the upper levels of US engineering and physical sciences departments, recently provoked an uproar among women professionals in science, as well as among US feminists generally. Summers' speculations, which included the suggestion that women might be genetically inferior to men, are tired old bromides numerous studies about gender in the sciences have long since shown to be inadequate to the issues they purport to explain. And yet many of his defenders have accused the scientists who walked out of his talk of trying to impose feminist notions of political correctness on Summers' speech and thus by implication seek to hinder the pursuit of "freewheeling inquiry." His remarks seem even more striking when taken together with the decline in tenure appointments for women at Harvard under Summers' own administration.

LTD: My own feeling is that the fact that the president of Harvard University sees nothing amiss in speaking from a position of such naiveté and ignorance

simply rubs salt in the wound: he is saying, in other words, that he doesn't care enough to educate himself on the subject. Moreover, the crudity of his thinking has seemed so odd that some academics have gone so far as to hypothesize that he hoped to stir up a controversy in order to gain allies in the struggle to fight sex discrimination at Harvard! In any case, Gwyneth Jones's *Life* offers a complex, sophisticated view of how the conditions as well as conditioning of gender impacts the work and career strategy of a not particularly feminist woman scientist.

CM: Alongside *Life* you have also started a series called Conversation Pieces, which are chapbooks containing everything from novellas to poetry to academic essays. I've not seen any other small press do anything like this. What was the thinking behind the series?

LTD: We began by calling them "chapbooks" but several booksellers have informed us that they aren't chapbooks, but "small trade paperbacks." Whatever one calls them, my idea is to get a wide spread of work likely to interest people who read and write feminist SF into print with a minimum investment. Again, I'm concerned to serve audiences that might not be large enough to interest the big publishers. Besides bringing out new work or making available work that is hard to get hold of, I'm keen to bring attention to work that is in danger of fading out of sight – for instance, fiction that appeared in magazines or anthologies published sometime over the last twenty-five years and thus will tend not to be known to the younger readers to whom it is likely to appeal. What makes this series particularly exciting for Aqueduct is the rapidity with which we are able to bring these volumes into print.

CM: Does having two such very different types of product confuse distributors?

LTD: We are not making the Conversation Pieces available to distributors but marketing them only through our web site <<http://aqueductpress.com/>> and a very few independent booksellers. (We also intend to sell them by subscription to those who are interested in acquiring a complete set as they are printed. We're hoping to have the subscription set up before WisCon.) The smallness of the print-runs (which in turn makes the per-unit price a good deal higher than that of our other books) and the resulting narrowness of the pricing margin effectively rule out our selling through distributors.

CM: What about the printing process? Do you, for example, use PoD for the chapbooks but more traditional methods for novels?

LTD: Yes. I actually had the brainstorm for the series when we had Advanced Reading Copies made for *Life*. The technology of PoD can be used for quick production not only of single copies of books, but for runs of 100 or more. (Print-runs of Conversation Pieces volumes vary in quantity from volume to volume, but our minimum print-run is 100; and because our printer is local, we know that we can reprint almost instantly when a run has sold out.)

CM: Getting back to the Conversation Pieces series, I see that Nicola Griffith's short story collection, *With Her Body*, has been short-listed in the Sci-Fi/Fantasy/Horror category of the Lambda Literary Awards. You are doing very well in this year's awards. You must be very proud.

LTD: I am! We Aqueductians are especially thrilled that *Life* has won the P.K. Dick Award. And let me also add

that two of our books — *Love's Body*, *Dancing in Time* and *Life* -- have been short-listed for the Tiptree, too. When I started Aqueduct I had no idea what it would be like to bring other people's work into print. I suppose I thought my relationship to the works we published would be similar to my relationship to works I've critiqued in manuscript. But it's much more than that — and my pleasure in bringing good work into print is all the greater when the work receives critical recognition.

CM: I understand that Griffith is donating all of the royalties from *With Her Body* to charity.

LTD: Yes. Nicola Griffith, who herself has MS, is donating the royalties from *With Her Body* to the Rehab Services of the Multiple Sclerosis Association of King County (MSA). She feels strongly about the MSA's yoga and hydrotherapy classes, which are specifically designed for people with MS. To quote Nicola: "These classes aren't just about therapy, they're about taking joy in the body, even one that's not perfect. I want to share that joy — just as I try to in my work."

CM: Outside of the Conversation Pieces series, you are publishing two of your own works: a short story collection, *Love's Body*, *Dancing in Time*, and a forthcoming novel, *Alanya to Alanya*. How do reconcile the conflicting roles of publisher and author?

LTD: Very shortly after we began to prepare *Love's Body* for publication my attitude toward the book altered materially: I more or less ceased to think about it from the perspective of its author. This shift in attitude was absolutely necessary for producing, distributing, and promoting the book. I think some of this might have resulted from our having acquired *Life* at around that same time. *Life* claimed more of my

attention than *Love's Body*, and my focus on it brought me to view *Love's Body* as just one of Aqueduct's titles. Later, when I toured with Gwyneth Jones and Eileen Gunn, because we were launching *Life* I was more interested in promoting it than in promoting *Love's Body*, which had already been out for six months.

LTD: In another sense, however, the two roles are more difficult to reconcile. I have considerable confidence in my editorial judgment when working with other writers' novels. But because it is impossible for any writer to see her own novels entirely from the outside, I can't feel such confidence in applying my judgment to my own work. I'm therefore heavily reliant not only Kath's advice, but also on the judgments of writers whose critical chops I respect as well as a few academic critics.

CM: Can you tell us a bit more about *Alanya to Alanya*. The description on the web site makes it sound like an "aliens invade Earth" story, but I have a suspicion that there will be a lot more to it than that.

LTD: *Alanya to Alanya*, which is at the printer's now and will be out on June 1, could be described in several ways. Among other things, it tells the story of protagonist Kay Zeldin's metamorphosis – from an academic into a political hero, from a go-along/get-along type individual into an anarchist revolutionary. And it introduces the overarching theme of the Marq'ssan Cycle, which as a whole addresses the question of what it takes to effect profound social and political change in the postmodern world. Finally, it serves as a baseline for the Marq'ssan Cycle's subsequent volumes: readers' perceptions of the events in *Alanya to Alanya* will be complicated and in some points overturned by what they learn in later volumes, much as Kay Zeldin throughout *Alanya* is continually forced

to revise her perceptions and judgments. Aqueduct has posted an image of the cover as well as blurbs for the novel from Samuel R. Delany, Jeffrey Ford, and Joan Haran and is planning to post a chapter or two of the text in the near future.

CM: There are five books planned for the series?

LTD: Yes. And they were all written in the mid-1980s. Besides *Alanya to Alanya*, there is *Renegade*, *Tsunami*, *Blood in the Fruit*, and *Stretto*. Aqueduct will be posting images of all five covers and brief synopses of each volume on its site in the near future. When I first started writing the Marq'ssan Cycle, I aimed to tell a story in which the world becomes a place in which the thriving of every person (rather than a tiny minority) matters. I wanted this to be a story charting an on-going process of change, not one in which a tabula-rasa utopia is created in the wake of an apocalypse allowing everyone to "start over" without significant institutional baggage. In the course of writing the first novel, I soon realized that getting rid of a repressive regime is the easy part. The characters in these books are as resistant to changing ingrained patterns of political and social behavior as any living person is. Which is why the series spans two decades and comprises five long novels.

CM: The web site also mentions forthcoming Conversation Pieces titles from Kim Antieau and Rosaleen Love, which are mainly fiction, and from Anne Sheldon, which is poetry. Is there anything specific we should know about those titles?

LTD: Kim Antieau's volume, *Counting on Wildflowers* (which should be available around the first week of April) actually comprises a mix of essays, poetry, and fiction, both original and

previously published; and the poems are illustrated by Terri Windling. The author chose to subtitle her volume “an entanglement” rather than as a characterization of the forms themselves because all the pieces in the volume are thematically entangled.

LTD: Rosaleen Love’s volume, *The Traveling Tide*, is entirely fiction, both original and previously published. The author, who is an Australian with a doctorate in the history and philosophy of science, recently published *Reefscape: Reflections on the Great Barrier Reef* for the National Academy Press, a poetic personal essay infused through and through with science. Love’s imagination takes a very long view of the earth and its processes, and sea imagery runs through most of the stories in this collection. *The Traveling Tide* will be available in late April or early May.

LTD: Anne Sheldon’s volume, *The Adventures of the Faithful Counselor*, is a narrative poem relating stories about the ancient gods Inanna and Gilgamesh from the point of view of Inanna’s lover and sidekick, the warrior Geshtinanna. Besides being a poet, Sheldon is a storyteller, and the style of her poem is that of the story-teller. This volume will be available in late April.

CM: People have enough trouble defining “feminist” and “science fiction” separately, let alone as a single term. Would you care to take a stab at defining what you are looking for from writers?

LTD: I’m not fond of making definitions. But overall, I would say that I’m looking for work that stretches the imagination, challenges the intellect, and moves the heart. I imagine that many editors would say something similar, so I should probably add this: for me, every kind of feminism (and there are many) encompasses a fierce sense that our social and political reality is not set in

stone, that it can be changed, and that we can and will change it. I want to publish work that engages imaginatively in this sense of feminism.

CM: Are you open to submissions?

LTD: I’m always open to queries. We’re too small and too busy to consider unsolicited submissions, but with the Conversation Pieces series, especially, I’m happy to hear from writers interested in submitting work or proposing projects for future volumes. We need a broad diversity of voices, perspectives, and styles in the series in order to make it an interesting, wide-ranging conversation.

CM: Is there anything I have forgotten to ask you that you want to talk about?

LTD: I’d just like to say that I’m grateful for all the generous assistance we’ve gotten in the form of essential advice and information from other small SF presses and a few individuals with special expertise. I won’t mention their names, lest I inadvertently omit one. But it’s a wonderful thing to launch my little boat on such a wild voyage and find well-wishers in the sea all around me, helping me to chart my path.

CM: L. Timmel Duchamp, thank you for talking to *Emerald City*.

A History of Danish Fandom

By Olav M.J. Christiansen

To present Danish fandom in a short article suitable for a web site is an almost impossible task. To the outside world Danish fandom has been almost non-existent, but internally a lot of things have been going on for years. Therefore a short article like this can never be fair

to all the people and organizations that have been part of Danish fandom for many years, and you should just consider this to be an overview based on one particular fan's view of things (i.e. yours truly).

To present this history of Danish fandom I have divided the events into three distinct periods in history: ancient fandom, historical fandom and recent fandom. Ancient fandom is the period until approximately 1974. Historical fandom covers the time from approx. 1974 until approx. 1996. Recent fandom is the latest 5-10 years.

Ancient fandom

I use the term 'ancient' fandom for the period before 1974 mostly because there was little or no organizing of fans before that time. A lot of people had an interest in SF&F, and some of those met at each other's homes. These were people such as H.P. Inselmann, Svend Kreiner Møller, Cay Dollerup, Casper, and Bent Irlov.

From the early sixties until the early seventies "Boghallen" was a place for gathering of fans. This was the bookstore in central Copenhagen that had most SF, and the people at the shop would not look strangely at you if you asked for the latest Hoyle or Asimov. Here the first disorganized fandom was created, with various meetings and other activities, including some mini-cons.

There were a lot of small private meetings as well as some yearly "big meetings" (more or less inspired by the Swedish SFSF), which reached a peak in the years 1972-73.

The first real convention took place in 1973, and it involved the newly establish shop "Fantask" (which still exists today and is a gathering place for fans) and the Danish Film School. There were

something like 35 movies shown, as well as 40 documentaries (mostly about space) and there were four big name guests: Brian Aldiss, Tor Åge Bringsværd, Philip Strick, and Sven Christer Swahn.

Historical fandom

Fandom started to get properly organized with the advent of Science Fiction Cirklen (SFC), which started in 1974 – more or less as a protest against a club for the professionals.

SFC started out with people like Steen Knudsen (chairman), H.P. Inselmann (treasurer) and Carsten Schiøler (editor of *Proxima* - which is now Denmark's oldest SF mag). Jannick Pedersen took over as chairman and was the club's outside representative for the first few years.

Almost every year SFC has held a small relaxacon called Dancon. Sometimes this was turned into a really big event and renamed Fabula: this happened in 1977, 1980, and in 1996. These conventions had a lot of international as well as Danish guests, including Niels E. Nielsen, Merete Kruise, Frits Remar, Tage Eskestad, Erwin Neutzsky-Wulff, Brian Aldiss, Philip José Farmer, Sam Lundwall, Bob Shaw, Harry Harrison, Inge Eriksen, Bruce Sterling, Sheryl Jordan, William Gibson, Svend Åge Madsen, Inge Eriksen,...

During the years from 1974 and until now (2005) SFC has also published a lot of books and magazines, such as *Cirkelserien* (many issues), *Nye Verdener* (short stories - several issues), a members magazine (currently *Novum*) and Denmark's oldest SF-mag *Proxima*.

At the 1996 convention, the Star Trek club "trekkies.dk" was formally created. Today the club has more than 700 members.

After 1996 many of the active fans had more or less burned out, and SFC had a quiet period for a few years – with yearly Dancons and issuing of *Novum*, *Proxima* and some other publications.

Recent fandom

In 2003 a few of the active fans from SFC started a new club together with some other fans (14 in total). The name was Fantastik, and the aim was to cover all the fantastic genres in all media.

The new club is still struggling to get more members but has a very high activity level with lots of meetings and Internet activities. In 2004 Fantastik introduced a new yearly convention, Fantaticon. This year the convention has a clear international profile with people from at least ten different European countries attending.

A lot of small and big clubs have emerged over the last few years. Many of these do not consider themselves to be part of the organized SF&F fandom, but quite a few are represented at Fantaticon 2005. Some of the clubs that are more or less still active are: trekkies.dk, SFC (still publishing books etc.), Dennis-klubben (fan club for Danish author Dennis Jürgensen), several role playing clubs, Star Wars clubs and Tolkien societies.

Links and references:

<http://www.sciencefiction.dk/Forening/hist.htm> (a history of Danish fandom from 1974 until 1984 by Erik H. Swiatek. First published in *Proxima's* 10 year anniversary issue).

Fanmarkshistorien (150 page book with Danish fannish history from before 1974 until 1999 by Niels Dalgaard. Published by SFC – Science Fiction Cirklen). Catalogue:

<http://www.sciencefiction.dk/Udgivelses/SFC%20Katalog%20Januar%202005%20Download.pdf>

Link collection of clubs:
<http://www.fantastik.dk/links/linkforeninger.html>

The author has been a member of SFC since 1980, editor of the SFC magazine *Novum* for a couple of years, member of trekkies.dk, involved with Fabula 96, chairman of Fantastik (has just been re-elected), and responsible for Fantaticon 2004 and Fantaticon 2005.

Going Underground

The trouble with scholarly works is that the people who produce them tend to be, well, scholarly. A fiction editor who produces an anthology sets out to produce an enjoyable and entertaining collection of stories. An academic who does the same thing sets out to survey the field, which is a very different thing.

On the face of it, Peter Fitting's anthology, *Subterranean Worlds*, is a great idea. Fitting has set out to explore the idea of the world within. He is looking at works that inspired Verne's classic *Journey to the Center of the Earth*, and briefly works that followed it. That is a good thing for an academic to do. It is not his purpose, but his methodology that I take issue with.

I'm no expert on this subject, so I can't say whether Fitting's survey is comprehensive or not, but it is certainly interesting. I was fascinated to learn for example, that both Edmund Halley and Cotton Mather were adherents of the Hollow Earth theory. And as for the revelation that the Smithsonian Institution is descended from an expedition sponsored by the US

Congress to go in search of the world within our world, well, the mind boggles. Think of the possibilities. Maybe they found it. Maybe there are things stored in the Smithsonian that the US Government dare not let us see. I'll bet there is a secret tunnel leading from Washington to Area 51.

Anyway, I am pleased also to see space being given to classic works like Edgar Allan Poe's "The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym." And the book has introduced me to a lot of Hollow Earth stories (mainly somewhat dubious utopias) that I had never heard of before.

So what is the problem? Well, what I expect out of a book like this is a series of in-depth essays studying each work. Instead Fitting provides a general overview of each work, and then bulks out the book with extracts from the works in question. The extracts are not long enough to be entertaining in themselves, and the essays are not long enough to tell us much more than what each story is about. There is good material here, but one comes away with the feeling that one has just been looking at a collection of sad-looking dead butterflies, pinned into boxes. I wanted to know more about them, and I wanted to see them fly.

Subterranean Worlds - Peter Fitting - Wesleyan University Press - hardcover

WSFS Matters

Those of you who follow the SMOFs mailing list will have noticed a surge of activity just before Easter. The initial cause was that Noreascon 4, the Boston Worldcon, has begun paying membership reimbursements to program participants. To get this done less than a year after your Worldcon is a

tremendous achievement. Deb Geisler and her team should be congratulated.

But people then noticed that Torcon 3 has not only failed to pay any reimbursements, they haven't even issued any accounts yet. At Noreascon 4 Larry Hancock explained that the con's books were in a mess and needed sorting out, but apparently they are no nearer being published.

In addition The Millennium Philcon, the 2001 Worldcon, had made additional Passalong Funds payments. According to the rules, they paid the money to ConJosé, Torcon 3 and Noreascon 4. ConJosé immediately paid the money forward, and Noreascon 4 was able to use it on their convention, but Torcon 3 did nothing with the money, even though all of the rumors suggested that they did not need it.

Larry Hancock did his convention no favors at all by appearing to try to weasel out of giving a straight answer to anyone's questions. Fandom being what it is, this immediately gave rise to suspicions of a conspiracy. Having had dealings with Hancock before when I was WSFS Secretary, I suspect this was in part just Larry being Larry. To say that he is a stickler for protocol is rather like saying that Mount Everest is a rather large hill.

Fortunately wiser heads seem to have prevailed, and just before everyone headed off for the Easter conventions Hancock announced that the Passalong Funds from The Millennium Philcon were being released by Torcon 3 and would be paid forward. This is a good start. But we are still no nearer seeing a set of accounts for Torcon 3. Hancock needs to produce these, and ideally set a target for starting to pay reimbursements, at Interaction.

A number of people on SMOFs have asked why Hancock was being hounded

so badly over this. The answer is very simple: he is sitting on **our money**. A very significant sum of it. When a convention is selected to become a Worldcon it signs up to certain provisions of the World Science Fiction Society Constitution which bind it to being a non-profit organization operating for the benefit of science fiction fandom and the industry. If Torcon 3 has a surplus then it is expected (under the terms of the agreement by which they received Passalong Funds from their predecessors) to pay part of that in Passalong Funds to future Worldcons. And it is required to pay membership reimbursements to program participants and staff if it can afford to do so. After that, it must use its money for the benefit of fandom and the SF industry.

Of course there is nothing that WSFS can do to enforce this contract. If Torcon 3 chooses to ignore it they will get away with it. But consider what happens if they do. The only thing that holds the Worldcon system together is peer pressure and a general belief that we do what we do for the good of the community. Currently there is still no credible evidence of malfeasance on the part of Torcon 3. But if one Worldcon can get away with keeping its surplus for itself, then others will be tempted to do so too, and the whole system will fall apart. It is therefore essential that as much pressure as possible be put on Torcon 3 to ensure that it follows the agreements it signed up to when it became a Worldcon.

If the system does not work, the only alternative will be for WSFS to incorporate and require each new Worldcon to sign binding legal contracts.

Out of Synch

Top of the list of US re-issues of British books in April is the Night Shade Books edition of Gwyneth Jones' *Bold as Love*. Hopefully the victory of *Life* in the Philip K. Dick Award will generate further interest in this very fine (and Arthur C. Clarke Award winning) book.

Only very slightly behind the UK edition, Tor are producing a US hardcover version of Robert Reed's *The Well of Stars*. Lovers of galactic-scale SF should snap it up straight away.

And finally the good folks at Pyr are issuing *The Resurrected Man* by Australian writer, Sean Williams. This book was high on my list of unjustly neglected foreign books, and I am delighted to see it getting published in the US at last.

Bold as Love - Gwyneth Jones - Night Shade Books - hardcover

The Well of Stars - Robert Reed - Tor - hardcover

The Resurrected Man - Sean Williams - Pyr - hardcover

Miscellany

Hugo Nominees

Best Novel (424 nominating ballots): *The Algebraist* by Iain M. Banks (Orbit); *Iron Council* by China Miéville (Del Rey; Macmillan); *Iron Sunrise* by Charles Stross (Ace); *Jonathan Strange & Mr Norrell* by Susanna Clarke (Bloomsbury); *River of Gods* by Ian McDonald (Simon & Schuster).

Best Novella (249 nominating ballots): "The Concrete Jungle" by Charles Stross (*The Atrocity Archives*, Golden Gryphon Press); "Elector" by Charles Stross

(Asimov's 09/04); "Sergeant Chip" by Bradley Denton (*Fantasy & Science Fiction* 09/04); "Time Ablaze" by Michael A. Burstein (*Analog* 06/04); "Winterfair Gifts" by Lois McMaster Bujold (*Irresistible Forces* NAL).

Best Novelette (215 nominating ballots): "Biographical Notes to 'A Discourse on the Nature of Causality, with Air-Planes' by Benjamin Rosenbaum" by Benjamin Rosenbaum (*All-Star Zeppelin Adventure Stories* Wheatland); "The Clapping Hands of God" by Michael F. Flynn (*Analog* 07-08/04); "The Faery Handbag" by Kelly Link (*The Faery Reel* Viking); "The People of Sand and Slag" by Paolo Bacigalupi (*Fantasy & Science Fiction* 02/04); "The Voluntary State" by Christopher Rowe (*Sci Fiction*, scifi.com 5/5/04).

Best Short Story (269 nominating ballots): "The Best Christmas Ever" by James Patrick Kelly (*Sci Fiction*, scifi.com 5/26/04); "Decisions" by Michael A. Burstein (*Analog* 01-02/04); "A Princess of Earth" by Mike Resnick (*Asimov's* 12/04); "Shed Skin" by Robert J. Sawyer (*Analog* 01-02/04); "Travels with My Cats" by Mike Resnick (*Asimov's* 02/04).

Best Related Book (263 nominating ballots); *The Best of Xero* by Pat and Dick Lupoff (Tachyon Publications); *The Cambridge Companion to Science Fiction* ed. by Edward James and Farah Mendlesohn (Cambridge University Press); *Dancing Naked: The Unexpurgated William Tenn, Volume 3* by William Tenn (NESFA Press); *Futures: 50 Years in Space: The Challenge of the Stars* by David A. Hardy and Patrick Moore (AAPPL; Harper Design International); *With Stars in My Eyes: My Adventures in British Fandom* by Peter Weston (NESFA Press).

Best Dramatic Presentation – Long Form (340 nominating ballots): *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind* (Focus Features) Story by Charlie Kaufman & Michael Gondry & Pierre Bismuth;

Screenplay by Charlie Kaufman; Directed by Michael Gondry; *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban* (Warner Brothers) Written by Steve Kloves; Based on the novel by J.K. Rowling; Directed by Alfonso Cuarón; *The Incredibles* (Walt Disney Pictures / Pixar Animation Studios) Written & Directed by Brad Bird; *Sky Captain and The World of Tomorrow* (Paramount Pictures) Written & Directed by Kerry Conran; *Spider-Man 2* (Sony Pictures Entertainment / Columbia Pictures) Screen Story by Alfred Gough & Miles Millar and Michael Chabon; Screenplay by Alvin Sargent; Based on the comic book by Stan Lee & Steve Ditko; Directed by Sam Raimi.

Best Dramatic Presentation – Short Form (161 nominating ballots): "Heroes Part 1 & 2" - *Stargate SG-1* (MGM Television / The Sci Fi Channel) Written by Robert C. Cooper; Directed by Andy Mikita; "Not Fade Away" - *Angel* (20th Century Fox Television / Mutant Enemy) Written by Jeffrey Bell & Joss Whedon; Directed by Jeffrey Bell; Pilot Episode of *Lost* (Touchstone Television / Bad Robot) Story by Jeffrey Lieber and J.J. Abrams & Damon Lindelof; Teleplay by J.J. Abrams & Damon Lindelof; Directed by: J.J. Abrams; "Smile Time" - *Angel* (20th Century Fox Television / Mutant Enemy) Story by Joss Whedon & Ben Edlund; Teleplay by Ben Edlund; Directed by Ben Edlund; "33" - *Battlestar Galactica* (NBC Universal Television / The Sci Fi Channel) Written by Ronald D. Moore; Directed by Michael Rymer.

Best Professional Editor (296 nominating ballots): Ellen Datlow; Gardner Dozois; David G. Hartwell; Stanley Schmidt; Gordon Van Gelder.

Best Professional Artist (232 nominating ballots): Jim Burns; Bob Eggleton; Frank Kelly Freas; Donato Giancola; John Picacio.

Best Semiprozine (238 nominating ballots): *Ansible* ed. by David Langford; *Interzone* ed. by David Pringle and Andy Cox; *Locus* ed. by Charles N. Brown; *The New York Review of Science Fiction* ed. by Kathryn Cramer, David G. Hartwell and Kevin J. Maroney; *The Third Alternative* ed. by Andy Cox.

Best Fan Writer (241 nominating ballots): Claire Brialey; Bob Devney; David Langford; Cheryl Morgan; Steven H Silver.

Best Fanzine (218 nominating ballots): *Banana Wings* ed. by Claire Brialey and Mark Plummer; *Challenger* ed. by Guy H. Lillian III; *Chunga* ed. by Randy Byers, Andy Hooper and Carl Juarez; *Emerald City* ed. by Cheryl Morgan; *Plokta* ed. by Alison Scott, Steve Davies and Mike Scott.

Best Fan Artist (179 nominating ballots): Brad Foster; Teddy Harvia; Sue Mason; Steve Stiles; Frank Wu.

Best Web Site (311 nominating ballots): *eFanzines* (<http://www.efanzines.com>) ed. by Bill Burns; *Emerald City* (<http://www.emcit.com>) ed. by Cheryl Morgan; *Locus Online* (<http://www.locusmag.com>) ed. by Mark R. Kelly; *SciFiction* (<http://www.scifi.com/scifiction>) ed. by Ellen Datlow, Craig Engler, general manager; *Strange Horizons* (<http://www.strangehorizons.com>) Susan Marie Groppi, editor-in-chief.

John W. Campbell Award for Best New Writer (187 nominating ballots) (Not a Hugo Award - an award for best new science fiction writer of the past two years, sponsored by Dell Magazines and administered by the current Worldcon committee.): Elizabeth Bear (second year of eligibility); K.J. Bishop (second year of eligibility); David Moles (second year of eligibility); Chris Roberson (second year of eligibility); Steph Swainston (first year of eligibility).

BSFA Award Winners

Best Artwork: the cover of Ken MacLeod's *Newton's Wake*, US edition (Tor) - Stephan Martiniere.

Best Short Fiction: *Mayflower II* (PS Publishing) - Stephen Baxter.

Best Novel: *River of Gods* (Simon & Schuster) - Ian McDonald

It was a great weekend for Ian McDonald. He won the BSFA, he was the clear winner at the "NOT the Clarke Award" panel at Eastercon (in which various critics say who they think should win the Clarke), and he was nominated for a Hugo.

Phil K. Dick Award

And capping a magnificent week for the UK, Gwyneth Jones won the PKD Award with *Life*. Special citation was given to Lyda Morehouse for *Apocalypse Array*, so it has been a good weekend for transgendered angels as well.

Footnote

I have a pile of books: Steph Swainston, Damien Broderick, Carol Emshwiller, Martin Sketchley, Fiona Avery, Ian Hocking and Joanna Russ, to name but a few. The trouble is that a client may want me to spend two weeks in Brisbane at the end of April, and if they do I have no idea how I am going to get #116 online at the right time. Wish me luck.

Ciao,

Love 'n' hugs,

Cheryl