

EMERALD CITY #117

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Introduction

Almost the end of May. Two months to go before Worldcon. Life? Did I have a life? Fortunately I am managing to find time to put *Emerald City* together. Kevin and I are also trying to inject a lot of fun into our division (hey, we are Events after all), and hopefully a lot of that will spill over into online stuff. More of that in the coming weeks.

In the meantime, there is now only just over a month left in which to cast your Hugo ballots. You can vote online. Details are here: <http://www.interaction.worldcon.org.uk/hugofinal.htm>. Whether you vote for me or not is entirely up to you. But I do want you to vote. It has always depressed me that no more than about 20% of Worldcon members ever exercise their voting rights. Let's try to do better this time, huh?

No small press interview this month. The person I asked wasn't able to do it, and the India trip got in the way of my finding a replacement. I am, however, starting to run out of likely candidates. If you happen to run a small press and want to be interviewed, please get in touch.

Finally, I am trying to do something to make that Best Web Site nomination a little less embarrassing. I was hoping to have something to announce this issue,

but sadly this didn't work out. Hopefully sometime soon.

Not that that prevents me from having a lot of very good books for you to read about. There's at least one very serious Hugo prospect in this issue. Onwards!

In This Issue

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Troy's Tempest

Seconds out, round two!

On the walls of Ilium Helen of Troy gazes down upon the battlefield. Paris is dead, but the war is not over. Hector and Achilles are now firm allies, but the war is not over. Greeks, Trojans and the funny little metal creatures called moravecs are united. Their enemies are the gods of Olympus. The war has just begun.

The moravecs, of course, are not overly concerned about the fate of a bunch of human primitives from places called Greece and Troy, especially as the Earth

on which those nations exist does not seem to be the Earth that they know. What worries the moravecs is just who these supposed "gods" are, how they managed to terraform Mars and set up a base on Olympos Mons, and what the heck they are doing with all that quantum technology. It is all very well that a bunch of apparent post-humans should mess around with silly games based on ancient poems, but when their excessive use of quantum teleportation and other extreme sciences threatens the stability of the entire solar system then the safety of Jupiter and its moons is at stake and the moravecs get very concerned.

Meanwhile, on Earth (the real Earth, or at least our Earth, the place that the designers of the moravecs came from) all is not well. The robotic voynix have rebelled and are slaughtering humans by the score. Prospero's Isle, destroyed by Daeman and Harman, has fallen to Earth as a rain of meteors. Caliban, escaping the destruction, is now loose upon the planet. And many-handed Setebos, for so long a prisoner on Mars, will soon be free as well. It is not a good time to be human, especially if you are just a bunch of harmless and ignorant Eloi kept as pets by the post-humans and living on in blissful ignorance since their passing.

Confused yet? Don't worry, you will be. Here, have some comedy droids for light relief.

"You put in a quarter and it dispenses a Coke," managed Hockenberry. "Only instead of a Coke, it's a forty-five kiloton bomb set to explode right behind the tail of the ship. Thousands of them."

"Correct," said Mahnmut.

"Not quite," said Orphu of Io. "Remember, this is a 1959 design. You only have to put in a dime."

Just in case you haven't guessed yet, we are of course talking about *Olympos*, Dan Simmons sequel to the delightfully strange and bizarrely inventive *Ilium*. The comedy droids in question are our old friends Mahnmut of Europa and Orphu of Io, and they now have with them an entire army of moravecs keen to save the solar system from destruction. Yet, being moravecs, they can't resist a little nostalgic whimsy, which is why they have built a space craft to a 1959 design and powered it with atomic bombs disguised as Coke cans. After all, why not? As long as you have enough dimes to keep the ship running.

But there is a serious matter to be dealt with here. The "gods", whoever they might be, are possessed of sciences far beyond anything that the moravecs have yet achieved. Our little (and in the case of Orphu, not so little) metallic heroes are scrambling to catch up.

Someone or something from Earth punched holes in multi-dimensional Calabi-Yau Space, connected branes across different universes, swapped our Mars for theirs... whoever and wherever "theirs" is... and left that other Mars... the terraformed Mars with gods on top of Olympos... still connected to the Ilium-Earth with quantum brane holes. And while they were at it, they changed the gravity and rotational period of Mars. Jesus, Mary, Joseph and holy crap!

Quite.

But the real problem for the moravecs is not science, at which they are rather good, but art, which for most of them is merely an obsessive hobby. The god in the machine, that devilishly cunning Mr. Simmons, has filled his narrative with endless references to the great poets of humanity's past: Homer, Shakespeare,

Robert Browning, William Blake, Gene Roddenberry, and Martin Silenus. Neither the moravecs, nor we the readers, will be able to unravel what is going on without a smattering of knowledge of the works of such people. Us 21st Century folks, being not too far removed from the source material, will have long ago recognised a transport system for humans called "faxing" as what it is. The moravecs are a little more rusty on their literary history.

"The old-fashioned idea of teleportation," said Orphu. "Storing all the data of a human being's body and mind and personality in code, breaking down the matter into energy, beaming it, then reassembling it elsewhere, just as in the old TV broadcast series from the Lost Era - Star Truck."

"Trek," corrected General Beh bin Adee.

"Aha!" said Orphu of Io. "Another fan."

The General clacked barbed killing claws in embarrassment or irritation.

Ultimately, of course, all has to be revealed. Simmons, thank goodness, thinks that two giant 800-or-so page volumes are quite enough for one novel. So there has to be an explanation for all the strangeness that is going on, how the "gods" happened to find a gateway through to what appears to be the actual Trojan War, and where the monstrous Setebos has actually come from. Simmons does have an explanation. It is a well used one (someone else used it in a book I reviewed back in #115). But unusually Simmons manages to pin the whole thing on Proust, even providing a lengthy quote to prove that the cunning Frenchman thought of the idea first. Proust as a fore-runner of modern SF? Who would have thought it?

Of course there are also technical issues to be sorted, including how to slap the

backsides of a bunch of naughty post-humans possessed of far too many toys, and what to do with a sunken nuclear submarine armed to the gills with unexploded singularity bombs. It is a good job that some deities are on the ball.

Night nods and raises her veiled face to the clouds roiling around her castle towers. "I can hear the stars scream, crippled Artificer. I know that when you say 'Kaos,' you mean chaos – on a quantum level. You are the only one of the gods, save for Zeus, who remembers us and our thinking before the Change... who remembers little things like physics."

So, there is an ending. Most of the Greeks, Trojans, gods, moravecs, post-humans, new-humans and other assorted good guys get to live happily ever after. Squamous and rugose beings bedecked with slime and possessed of excessive quantities of hands and tentacles generally do not. It all gets woefully sentimental, and the reader's final impression of the book could probably have been improved immensely by the excising of all 40-odd pages of epilogue material masquerading as "Part Four." But it was one hell of a ride getting there, and much fun trying to figure things out along the way. Will this one be on the Hugo ballot in LA? Of course it will.

Olympos - Dan Simmons - Gollancz - manuscript

Band on the Run

It is spring in England. The hills are green, the flowers are blooming, and the stores are full of gypsy-style skirts and

tops. Fiorinda, it seems, in back in fashion. But is the same true for the Rock 'n' Roll Reich? Is it time for Ax to serve a new term as Dictator, er President, or should he just make a new album? Whatever, it is time for a new book from Gwyneth Jones.

The cover of the book is one of those splendid Anne Sudworth woodland scenes. But this one contains no maidens in floating gowns. It shows an open glade at the center of which a small wood fire smolders. To one side, three guitars are stacked against a tree. Having finished the book, I know what the picture represents, but there are other woodland analogies here. In the heart of England's green and pleasant countercultural land, something burns. It burns slowly for now, but it could catch light at any moment and turn into a conflagration. It is also worth noting that in any woodland scene, if you look hard enough, you will find rot and corruption. And around that you will find life forms that are kept in the dark and fed shit. This is the England to which the Triumvirate returns.

The legacy of a terror régime is enduring: so many features that ought to be dismantled linger on, because they're so useful.

For yes, they have been away. They have been to Hollywood. They have defeated a bunch of waco, sorry whacko, cultists in Texas. They have saved the world from the Neurobomb, and saved Fiorinda from the dubious honor of being the fusion material that powers said bomb. The only problem is that the so-called "A-Team" did have a major effect on the world before they were defeated. Now everyone knows that a Neurobomb can be built. So of course every government wants one. Which is perhaps why the English government

wants Mr. President Preston and his friends home. If you want to build a bomb, you need to have the raw materials.

But then again, maybe something else is going on entirely.

"You're probably right. We won't get no hell dimension, magic is so last season. Something much worse and totally unexpected will come along instead."

And guess what, boys and girls...

In many ways, *Band of Gypsies* (named, of course, after the Jimi Hendrix album – the spelling is apparently Hendrix's own) is a transition volume. It is the fourth book in the *Bold as Love* series, and its function is to set the plot up for the fifth and, I think, final volume. Jones needs to get Ax, Sage and Fio back home, and she has to create some suitably climactic finale. That's the way the system works.

However, you won't find a writer as good as Jones doing anything so crass as simply moving the plot along. There are themes to be developed, relationships to be progressed, political and philosophical points to be made. In this particular volume there is much discussion of the nasty realities of politics. Not that the Second Chamber government are anywhere near as bad as the Green Nazis. Dear me no, they are moderate Celtics. They only hold human sacrifices when it is clearly necessary for the health of the nation. (Or when witches, werewolves and other undesirables need to be burned at the stake.)

So while Ax is supposedly re-instated as President, all of the actual power resides with the smarmy Prime Minister. And look, he happens to have a business-like wife who is much smarter than he is,

and a vicious, devious sidekick called Jack. Remind you of anyone? No, must be a coincidence. No one even mentions the term, Cool Britannia, any more, do they?

Rather more seriously, there is the matter of public sentiment to be examined. Of course no one really believes that the dear old UK could fall into the chaos of the Dissolution Summer and end up looking a lot like revolutionary France, do they? That was the Froggies that did that. And besides, it was a long time ago. And no one really believes that a modern, scientific, civilized nation could fall into the grip of a bunch of fundamentalist loonies, do they? Well, OK, the Yanks are a bit gullible, but it couldn't happen in dear old Blighty, right? We are far too sensible, old chap. So what does this Jones woman think she is up to? Look, the old Trojans knew what to do with people like that. Cassandra? Completely off her rocker. Ignore everything she says. Besides, it is almost time for Wimbledon. Another glass of Pims with your strawberries and cream?

More doom, gloom, rock music and quaint historical background are available on the *Band of Gypsies* web site, which is here: <http://www.boldaslove.co.uk/BOG/GypsiesFront.htm>.

Band of Gypsies – Gwyneth Jones – Gollancz – trade paperback

Family Feud

The first volume of Charlie Stross's *Merchant Princes* series, *The Family Trade*, ended completely *in media res* thanks to Tor's new policy of keeping book sizes down by chopping long books in half. The story continues in book 2, *The*

Hidden Family. While I quite understand the commercial reasons why Tor is doing what it is doing, with a fast-paced Stross narrative the effect is rather like trying to watch a series of 24 with 3 to 4 months between each episode. Thankfully Stross now knows the system, and with any luck will be tailoring future volumes to the desired length. And yes that does mean that there will be future volumes. This series is just tailor-made for it.

First, however, a little recap. In *The Family Trade* Miriam, a journalist living in present day Boston, discovers that she is the long lost heir to a noble family from a parallel world that is stuck in the Middle Ages. Her family have an unusual genetic talent that allows them to walk between worlds, and they have become fabulously rich by using their talent to move back and fore between their world and ours operating a smuggling ring, mainly in high quality drugs. The reason Miriam is long lost is that a feud developed between different factions of The Clan, as they call themselves, and Miriam's parents were assassinated when she was a baby, stranding her in our world. Now she has rediscovered her lost heritage, she too becomes a target.

For most authors, this would be quite enough for a fantasy series. But Charlie Stross is not really a fantasy writer. He thinks too hard about the realities of the worlds he creates, and wants to make them work. Thus he immediately sees economic problems with his set up and a way for Miriam to triumph, not through fate, or through force of arms, but by understanding economics.

The Clan, for all of their wealth and power, are a bunch of medieval barons at heart (or more accurately a bunch of Viking barons descended from Norse settlers in North America). It is entirely appropriate that the one great innovation that they bring back from the

USA to their world is the television set, so that they can watch old videos of *Dallas* to their hearts' content. Miriam can see that they are going to get caught completely flat-footed by the trend towards a surveillance society in America, and that in any case far greater amounts of could be created if only they were to allow a little economic development into their own world.

Of course the idea of a Boston Yankee princess in the court of King John gets tired very quickly, so for *The Hidden Family* Stross adds a third world. This is a more interesting alternate history set in Edwardian times but where France has conquered England and the exiled British monarchy now rules North America instead. Karl Marx is busy writing subversive books advocating the introduction of universal suffrage, votes for women, the abolition of the monarchy and the separation of church and state. Trying to set up in business as a single woman, Miriam quickly gets identified as a potentially dangerous political radical.

Stross now has three worlds to play with, and will probably add more as the series goes on, but his initial task is to extricate Miriam from the various sticky messes in which he left her in the previous book, and the new ones he creates in this one. This is done deftly, providing a real page-turner of book that is sure to leave the reader wanting more. And more is what they will get. If ever I saw a series designed to run and run, this is it. There is so much that can be done with it. In fact it is an ideal setting for a role-playing game. Someone has probably created a homebrew one already. You'd probably want to base it on GURPS as you'll need to run scenarios in a range of different time periods.

How long Stross can keep this up is another matter. I suspect that the series

will be a cash cow for him for a year or two yet, but someone as endlessly inventive as him will not be content to wallow in success and get stale. He'll do other things in the meantime. What I do hope he does, however, is keep on talking about economics in this series. The idea of wealth creation through economic development is not a popular one today. It is an absolute anathema to many environmentalists, and it is fashionable amongst Socialists to claim that the only possible effect is to make the rich richer and the poor poorer. Not only is economic development the central gospel of *The Merchant Princes*, Stross shows very clearly just how much better off in so many ways even the poorest people in modern America are compared to the richest folk in a medieval society. Given the lamentable tendency of fantasy fiction to argue for a return to primitivism, or at least to sing the praises of less complex times, this series should be recommended reading for all fantasy fans.

The Hidden Family - Charles Stross - Tor - manuscript

Day and Night

No reviewer is ever going to like every type of book put in front of her. Therefore there are some sub-genres of F&SF that I try to avoid reviewing because I'm pretty sure I won't like the books before I start. So I don't read most military SF, I don't read Pratchett-style comedies, and I don't read Sex-and-Vampires books. There are, however, always exceptions. When Robin McKinley produced *Sunshine* Neil Gaiman described it as, "Pretty much perfect." I avoided it. Anne told me that I really should read it because it was very good. I avoided it. Then it won the

Mythopoeic Award. Oh, alright then, power of threes and all that. So I finally succumbed and read the book, and I am just so glad that I did.

And a lot of demons look perfectly normal. Most demons have some funny habit or other but unless you live with one and catch it eating garden fertilizer or old combbox components or growing scaly wings and floating six inches above the bed after it falls asleep, you'd never know.

The first 8 or so pages of *Sunshine* are a perfectly ordinary introduction to a story about a young woman from a small city in America who has an OK job making cinnamon rolls and other bakery goods for her step-father's coffeehouse, has a poor relationship with her mother, a reformed biker for a boyfriend, and tearaway step-brothers about whom the family is very worried.

The next few pages tell us that we are anywhere but in Kansas. This is not America, this is some parallel world in which Others are common. Most of them: the weres, the demons, and so on, are relatively harmless. But vampires are deadly and alien and implacably opposed to humanity (on whom of course they feed) and with whom mankind is in an on-and-off state of warfare. The vampires, of course, are winning.

Our heroine, Raven Seddon (Rae for short, and *Sunshine* to her friends) has little to do with sorcery. Charlie's Coffeehouse is in a rather poor part of town, but not so poor as it would be frequented by vampires, and those thrill-seekers who chance their luck by trying to spot one. About the strangest things ever get is dear old Mrs. Bialosky, a regular customer whom everyone suspects is a were but no one can guess what type. Besides, the coffeehouse is

also a favorite haunt of members of the local squad of the SOF – Special Others Forces – the crack police unit dedicated to protecting mankind from creeps and ghoulies and folk that go bump in the night. What could possibly go wrong?

And then one evening Rae takes a drive alone along a beautiful lakeside road. She stops for a while to admire the view, and she becomes prey.

Another story about vampires is that the one domestic pet a vampire may keep is a cat, because vampires understand the way cats' minds work.

Of course no human has ever escaped from vampires. It doesn't happen. You don't live long enough to get the chance anyway. But then not everyone gets picked up by a vampire pack purely to play a role as a pawn in a feud between two vampire masters. Rae is to be a torture implement: chained up in the same room as a starving vampire, yet tantalizingly out of his reach. His name is Constantine. He is incredibly old, incredibly dangerous, and possessed of a few old-fashioned habits of gentlemanly conduct. Imagine being stuck in a cage with a hungry, wounded tiger who desperately wants to eat you but can't and is therefore happy to indulge in civilized conversation to pass the time.

The other reason most people don't escape from vampires is that most people are not members of the Blaise family. Not that Rae had much knowledge of being such. Following her divorce, Rae's mother cut off all contact with her ex-husband's family and reverted to her old surname. Apart from a few visits to grandma, during which she learned some parlor tricks of transmutation, Rae has no idea that she is the daughter of a very powerful sorcerer. That she is a walking, talking,

living weapon. That she is Sunshine, the vampire slayer.

What I love about this book is that it is so totally and utterly in genre, and yet so totally refreshing. McKinley has done a wonderful job of building a world in which vampires are real, magic works, and a young woman finds herself in the position of being mankind's last best hope against a terrible enemy. And yet Sunshine is one of the most human and ordinary heroines I have ever read about. The whole plot is totally and utterly silly and predictable, and yet fully believable at the same time.

Some of this, of course, is because McKinley has used the vampire setting to make valid social points about our world. In building a society in which werewolves and demons exist, she draws upon the way that we treat people who are far less different from humanity than people with horns, wings and forked tails.

Every now and then it happens to a grown-up. There was a famous case a few years ago about a thirty-eight-year-old bank manager who suddenly grew horns. They fired him. He'd had an exemplary career till that moment. He appealed. The case got a huge amount of publicity.

They still fired him.

In addition she has very carefully changed small things about her world to fit in with its nature. Language is always a good clue to what is going on. I have no idea why, in Sunshine's world, "carthaginian" is a swear word. (Doubtless McKinley has a reason, I'm just not smart enough to spot it.) But I do know exactly why kids don't disparage something by saying, "it sucks!" They say "it blows" instead. Clever.

Mostly, however, the book works because of Sunshine. She doesn't want to fight vampires. She doesn't want to save the world. What she wants to do is bake cinnamon buns and make her customers happy by providing them with vast quantities of comfort food. Unfortunately, in life, shit happens, and when it does a girl's gotta do what a girl's gotta do, even if it does mean a high probability of a violent and painful death. *Sunshine* is the first book I can remember reading in which the heroine, before setting off for the final encounter with the Bad Guys, goes round setting her life in order in the sure knowledge that she isn't coming back. Sunshine may be many things, but she is not Buffy.

I didn't know what I was supposed to do: note to myself, in my next life, get some martial arts training – get a lot of martial arts training – just in case.

So there we have it: a beautifully constructed fantasy world, some great characters, sharp social observation, wicked humor. Even the inevitable sex scene, when it comes, is both tastefully handled and surprisingly arousing. *Sunshine* is, as someone once said, pretty much perfect.

Sunshine - Robin McKinley - Jove - mass market paperback

Biological Warfare

A little while back the announcement of the all-British shortlist for this year's Best Novel Hugo prompted some ill-advised comment around the blogosphere on the supposed death of American SF. This, of course, is nonsense. American SF is very

much alive and well. The problem is, it doesn't appear to be getting read and voted for by Americans. There are a number of fine young American writers whose work you should be investigating: Chris Moriarty and Wil McCarthy, for example, but for this review we are focusing on California-based writer, Mark Budz.

The first thing to note about Budz is that his editor is Juliet Ulman. If you start from the reasonable assumption that anyone with enough brains and good taste to pick up writers like M. John Harrison, Jeff Vandermeer and K.J. Bishop from other publishers is also going to be good at spotting new talent then you'll already know that Budz is going to be good. In addition, if you have happened to have read his Phil K. Dick Award short-listed debut novel, *Clade*, you will also know that he is innovative. The new book, *CRACHE*, does not disappoint.

In *Clade*, Budz invented a biotech version of cyberpunk, a world controlled not by software, but by pheromones. Not just your social class, but your very ability to get into the office to do a day's work were rigidly controlled by chemicals produced by your body. Sophisticated biotech engineering was required to allow simple freedom of movement. As nightmare futures go, it was pretty appalling.

On the surface of it, *CRACHE* is a fast-paced adventure story about how a Mexican-Chinese musician called Luis Mario Chi (stage name L. Mariachi), an ex-Jesurette cheerleader, and a drug-addicted Texan gene programmer manage to save the world from a deadly disease. Look a little deeper into the scientific explanations, however, and you will discover that Budz has come up with a brilliant way to hack the biotech control structure that he invented in *Clade* and free the world from its

domination. I can't tell you how he does it — that would be way too much of a spoiler — but I was seriously impressed. If you want a clue, think about some of the ideas used by one of my other favorite American SF writers.

On top of that there is a fair amount of impressive world-building and social observation. The world of Budz' books might be significantly more technologically advanced than ours, but it suffers very similar problems.

Cultural fundamentalism. It's happening more and more these days. Most people without a viable future find it easier to look back instead of ahead. The past is readily accessible, ripe for the picking. Except, of course, for those who have nothing to go back to.

In addition Budz has a nice touch, leavening the seriousness of both his science and his social commentary with dashes of humor. For all the cyberpunk grimness of the narrative, there is still plenty to smile about.

"Lamarck also believed that the permanent disuse of any organ weakened it," Num Nut informs him edgewise. "That its functional capacity would diminish until it finally disappeared."

Which is obviously false, L. Mariachi thinks. If it wasn't, 99 percent of the people in the world would be walking around without a brain. And all men would have cojones the size of cantaloupes.

If that isn't enough recommendation for you I can add that part way through the book we encounter a Mexican pleasure ranch, catering to rich and perverted Texan men, called "The Crooked W." I think the book is worth it just for that.

(If you didn't get it, try pronouncing the ranch's name in Texan.)

CRACHE - Mark Budz - Bantam - mass market paperback

Behold, the Author!

Having been a fan of Jeff Lint's work for many kiloseconds, I was delighted to receive a review copy of Steve Aylett's erudite and perceptive biography of the man who an eager publicist once (erroneously) described as, "comparable to all of the greatest science fiction authors ever at their best all at the same time!!!" Obscurely titled *Lint*, Aylett's book follows his subject's career from early childhood through many commercial disasters to his untimely death¹.

We first pick up Lint's writing career in the 1950's at which time he was a mainstay of the pulp magazine industry. He gained his first big break when he sold a story to Hugo Gernsback thanks to the cunning stratagem of submitting it under the pseudonym of "Isaac Asimov." From then on he was wonderfully prolific.

Between 1950 and 1955, Lint sold 123 stories to Astounding, Bewildering, Confusing, Baffling, Frazzling, Scalding, Mental, Marginal, Fatal, Useless, Appalling, Made-Up and Meandering, as well as the short-lived Completely Unbelievable Explanation, Maggoty Stories, Way Beyond Your Puny Mind, Overelaborate Alibis and Maximum Tentacles.

¹ Harlan Ellison described Lint's death with the words, "it came several centuries too late."

From there, Aylett continues to examine both Lint's and writing style in a masterly forensic fashion that would be a credit to any academic study of the subject. There are footnotes² (although none of the footnotes are actually footnoted). Aylett also revels in in-depth discussion of the complex philosophical arguments that Lint presented in his works.

Turn Me into a Parrot took issue with the fundamentalist notion that the world was only a few thousand years old and that dinosaur bones had been planted to test man's faith. Lint asserted that the world was only fifty years old and that the mischievous god had buried sewers, unexploded bombs and billions of people.

Maintaining the reader's sense of the unique and eccentric nature of Lint's character is occasionally a strain on the narrative. For example, the sections on Lint's activities in the Sixties, whilst entirely accurate, do not seem at all bizarre against the background context of that benighted decade. Indeed, so archetypical does Lint become of the times that it is quite plausible to conclude that the cultural nosedive known as the Seventies was in fact entirely Lint's fault. This theory is made all the more believable by Aylett's complete failure to mention it in any way. Surely he is hiding something here.

However, Aylett is unstinting in his praise for Lint's artistic intuition. Here, for example, he describes Lint's wildly incisive and profound attempt to reveal the core philosophical dialectic of *Star Trek* through the medium of a sadly rejected episode script.

² Well, to be honest, they are actually endnotes, but let's not get pedantic about this.

In "The Encroaching Threat" the smug, unoriginal blandness aboard the Enterprise finally reaches such an unnatural pitch that it triggers an event horizon, heightening exponentially the vividness of everything else in the universe by way of compensation. The Enterprise itself is the one drifting bubble of gray in an exuberant hyperevolving fizzescape of boundlessly creative fertility.

Aylett's recounting of Lint's time in Hollywood brilliantly explains how Lint carved a career for himself as a provider of unique and innovative screenplays, none of which actually made it into production but which nonetheless inspired lesser hacks, brought in to tone down his work, to feats of greatness. Who would have thought that *Shaft* began life as Lint's attempt to write an Agatha Christie-style country house mystery?

However, Hollywood politics seem to have forced Aylett to be circumspect with the more controversial aspects of his subject's career. For example, he gently skirts around the oft repeated rumor that elements of Lint's original screenplay for *Patton*, in particular the haunting and hypnotic "Dance of the Tiger Tanks," were plagiarized by the young Francis Ford Coppola and used in a slighted amended form in one of his later movies.

Aylett is also strangely silent on Lint's claim to have both scripted and directed the TV footage that NASA used to fool the world into believing that they had succeeded in landing men on the Moon. In his autobiographical work, *The Man Who Gave Birth to his Arse*, Lint states that he refrained from claiming credit for the work at the time because he was furious about the way that Neil Armstrong had ad-libbed freely during the crucial first steps sequence, removing all of Lint's

references to Jules Verne, H.G. Wells and giant space lobsters.

Of course the true mystery of Lint's life is that surrounding his supposed death and subsequent re-appearance. As Aylett explains, the first report of Lint's death was probably a simple mistake, but the consequences for his career were to be tragic.

The biographical notes on the back cover – with the now inevitable photo of Lint kissing a tortoise – stated that Lint had died in 1972. The media, poised to praise him after his death, sprang in with lamentations that he had been tragically neglected by commercial enterprise and that it was baffling that his artistic genius had not been more appreciated. Their bitter embarrassment upon learning that he was still alive and open to their patronage drove a bigger wedge than ever between the media and Lint – they had no recourse but to pretend he did not exist at all.

The argument over whether or not Lint was dead, or indeed if he had ever been alive, raged fitfully in the fannish press from then on. So great was the level of confusion engendered that when Lint did finally die in 1994 many people refused to believe it. The fact that sightings of Lint have been reported at UFO and Elvis conventions around the world every year since has done nothing to dispel the fog of mystery enveloping his life. Encyclopedist John Clute once commented, "The debate over Lint's materiality is shrouded in such a quagmire of convolution and entanglement that the veracity of any claim is unlikely to achieve verification within any conventional cosmological epoch."

Jeff Lint won a Nebula Award for his posthumously discovered but as yet unpublished novel, *Us the Undead*, in 2008. Although Lint would have been appalled to receive such an honor from what he regarded as a bunch of talentless hacks barely fit carry his empty coke cans to the recycling bin, Aylett comments that the fact that a medium claiming to be channeling Lint was the only surviving member of SFWA at the time the award was made should not in any way diminish the honor bestowed.

Aylett's book has already been optioned by Hollywood and will be made into a big budget comedy musical with screenplay by A.R.R.R.R.G.H. Roberts and using music from The Unofficial Smile Group's Lint-inspired album, *The Energy Draining Church Bazaar*. Attempts to secure Brad Pitt for the starring role initially foundered on the requirement that the actor grow a pot belly for some of the scenes, but Pitt's agent has now apparently agreed to the contract on the understanding that the belly will be inserted in post-production using CGI.

Steve Aylett may or may not be, as Michael Moorcock claims, "the most original voice on the literary scene." But he is certainly the man who described Jeff Lint's attempt at writing a Tolclone fantasy novel as having an "elf-clotted landscape," and for that service to literary criticism he surely deserves to be richly rewarded. I think we should nominate *Lint* for Best Related Book in next year's Hugos, just to see how many people will take umbrage.

Lint – Steve Aylett – Thunder's Mouth Press
– trade paperback

All that Jazz

Just because Anne is busy working her way through the Hugo nominees, it doesn't mean that the flood of anthologies and collections offered for review dries up. And indeed there are some such books that I have sufficient confidence in that I want to read them for myself. Once such work is the forthcoming collection of stories by Greg Frost, *Attack of the Jazz Giants and Other Stories*, due out any day now from Golden Gryphon.

Frost, it would appear, is not a hugely productive writer of short fiction. The book contains some 14 stories covering a period dating back to 1981. This is quite interesting in that there does seem to be a clear progression in Frost's writing skills. Some of his early work seems a little unpolished, especially when compared to the much-nominated "Madonna of the Maquiladora." Which is not to say that there are any particularly bad stories in the collection, merely that Frost does seem to be getting even better with time, which is rather encouraging for the future.

One thing that did surprise me was the variation in content. I had sort of had Frost pegged down as a dark fantasy writer, but while the majority of the material in *Jazz Giants* could be described as "dark" in some form or another, some of it is also SF, some is comedy, and much of it is classic horror material. Frost has a fondness for things like Jack the Ripper, Edgar Allan Poe and Oscar Wilde's "The Picture of Dorian Gray." He even manages a story, "Lizaveta," that is essentially Lovecraftian, except of course that the prim Lovecraft would never have chosen as a narrator a beautiful Russian woman driven to seek a living through prostitution having been made penniless and suicidal thanks to her encounter with Dark Forces.

The oddest story in the collection is "Touring Jesusworld," one of the stories from Damon Knight's notorious "Jesus issue" of *Pulphouse*. The basic story is that of a journalist being given a tour of the failing theme park, Jesusworld, and speculating on what the people of America really want from popular religion. The answer, of course, is Elvis. I guess this counts as a horror story too, especially as it is so believable.

Another very odd piece is "The Road to Recovery," an amusing little SF tale done in the style of a Hope & Crosby Road movie. I'm not very familiar with those films myself, but the style was instantly recognizable, even without the few obvious in-jokes. In her introduction Karen Joy Flower notes that Frost is a good singer and dancer, and has a marvelous talent for impersonating cartoon voices. Given all this, and his facility with comedy scripts, I am beginning to wonder if he is not wasting writing books. The story is the one unpublished work in the collection, and well worth seeking out.

Then again, there are stories like "The Bus" and "Collecting Dust," both wonderful pieces of social commentary on modern America that don't appear to have been nominated for any awards but darn well should have been. It would be a sad day if Frost were too busy on the stage to write stuff like this.

All in all, then, a highly entertaining collection, and one with definite promise for the future. Not only is Frost's writing getting steadily better with time, but he's also working on a fascinating project called Shadowbridge, "a place where mythologies, legends and fables of every sort find purchase." His story, "How Meersh the Bedeviler Lost His Toes," which appeared in *Asimov's* in 1998, is the only published work set in this world, but it is very interesting indeed. Frost says that "Meersh" is based on

Coyote the Trickster, but the story sounds to me far more like a Sufi parable. Frost writes that it is part of a much larger project, and that "Meersh" only appeared because Michael Swanwick urged him to get some part of it in print. I'm now adding my voice to Swanwick's. I'd like to see more of Shadowbridge. Greg? Please?

Attack of the Jazz Giants and Other Stories - Greg Frost - Golden Gryphon - publisher's proof

The Wild Man

Charles Coleman Finlay is one of the rising stars of American SF. In 2003 he was a nominee for the John W. Campbell Award for best New Writer, and his story, "The Political Officer" - essentially a Russian submarine thriller set on a space ship, was a nominee for both a Hugo and a Nebula. He also had a short story nominated for the Sidewise Awards. Now Pyr is to publish what I believe is Finlay's debut novel. It is very different from the stories he made his name with: it is called *The Prodigal Troll*.

If asked to give a quick summation of the novel I would probably describe it as "Tarzan of the Trolls." It features a young nobleman from a medieval society who is abandoned as a baby and reared by trolls. Those of you who hate spoilers should stop reading here, because the book is in three distinct parts and it is impossible to discuss parts two and three without giving away the endings of parts one and two.

Part one, then, tells how two loyal retainers, a knight and a nursemaid, smuggle a young baby out from a castle that is under siege. They hope to take him to another castle owned by friendly

relatives of the young lordling, but the attack on their lands turns out to be in far greater force than they had thought and they are forced to flee into the wilds where they die.

In part two baby Claye is found by a female troll whose own infant has just been killed by a lion. Against the wishes of most of her band, Windy raises the human baby as her own, naming him Maggot. Although much weaker and with poorer senses than his troll brethren, Maggot grows up to be a useful member of the band thanks to his bravery and intelligence.

Eventually, however, Maggot comes to realize that he will never be fully accepted into troll society. If he wants to find a mate, he will need to find his way back to human civilization and learn human ways. Doing so proves more difficult than he had expected.

Finlay has put a lot of work into developing his world. The trolls, for example, are heavily based on great apes. They have a clear social structure and modes of behavior that all seems to make good sense. The local humans of the region are somewhat like Native Americans, having a tribal society and living in tents. Their masters, who have invaded from elsewhere, are vaguely medieval in style, but are also matriarchal. Men are not allowed to own property, but there is a tradition amongst noble families to have one son reared as a eunuch, and therefore female, to get around this. From a fantasy point of view it is a fascinating world, and there is a lot that Finlay could have done with it, but actually all he does is use it as background for a relatively short (350 page) novel about Claye/Maggot.

This is where the book runs a little bit into trouble, because there isn't much for the reader to identify with. In part one

you certainly feel for the aging knight, Yvon, who is trying to do his best for his lord but is on the run in the wilderness laden down with a baby and a beautiful but sulky and naïve nursemaid.

Part two ought to leave you with some feeling for Claye/Maggot, but it doesn't because Finlay chooses to play it mainly for laughs. The trolls are certainly very comical at times. But as far as Maggot is concerned the reader is never quite sure whether she is supposed to feel sorry for him or to laugh at his frequently inept attempts to behave like a troll. It is hard working with a character who is part hero and part an object of ridicule.

Finally there is part three, where Finlay could have taken a traditional fantasy approach and gone for Happy Ever After. Thankfully he doesn't, but while I'm pleased at the lack of cop-out, I also worry that the continued downbeat nature of the story will affect the success of the book.

I think this novel is a promising start, but that Finlay has to work a bit on the novel writing art. He is clearly very smart, and in short fiction being smart is generally enough to carry you through. With a novel you need to have some sort of hook that keeps people reading. That either means in depth exploration of your world, or it means characters that people will care about, preferably both. *The Prodigal Troll* has a fascinating world that is only briefly explored, and characters who are mostly difficult to like. Still, maybe there will be a sequel. It is a fantasy novel, after all.

The Prodigal Troll – Charles Coleman Finlay – Pyr – publisher's proof

So This Is It, Then

The classic science fiction story of the 1950's tells how bold space travelers suffer misfortune out in the void but, through application of scientific skills and raw human courage, they triumph over adversity. Joanna Russ, who has built an entire career out of puncturing stupidity, could hardly let a target like that go begging. Thus her novel, *We Who Are About To...*, newly re-released by Wesleyan University Press. Samuel Delany, in his introduction to the new edition, explains the set-up far better than I could.

When, in the real world, 95 percent of all commercial airline crashes are one hundred percent fatal and we live in a solar system in which presumably only one planet can support any life at all, from the thirties through the fifties science fiction was nevertheless full of spaceship crashes (!) in which everyone gets up and walks away from the wreckage unscathed – and usually out onto a planet with breathable atmosphere, amenable weather, and a high tech civilization in wait near-by to provide twists in subsequent adventures.

The same, of course, could be said of *Star Trek*, except that the guys in the red suits often didn't long survive the crash.

Of course there would not be much of a story if Russ's space travelers had all been killed in the crash, so let us suppose that some sort of lifeboat system was available and that our heroes somehow manage to land safely on an inhabitable planet. Now all they have to do is survive. To do so they have to come to understand their environment, adapt to it, and most importantly conquer that terrible threat to survival, human nature.

Whereas the typical science fiction story will feature a cast made up of military and scientific types, all convinced of the virtues of order, discipline and cooperation, and possessed of exactly the combination of skills required to allow them to thrive in an alien environment, Russ postulates that her shipwrecked travelers are merely passengers. The crew has bravely gone down with the ship, frantically making last minute attempts to save it before something terminal happens to the engines. Those that are left are rather too used to having things done for them.

The majority of Russ's characters start out exactly as you would expect from a traditional SF story. They make plans, they talk grandly of colonizing the planet on which they find themselves. They dream of rescue. Only the narrator of the story actually understands just how little they know, and how much trouble they are in. Her attempts to explain the hopelessness of their predicament to her fellow castaways merely get her marked down as a troublemaker who needs to be disciplined by the rapidly developing community.

Then the men sit down and decide that what the colony really needs is more hands. The only way to get that is for the women to have babies, and therefore the women must all agree to allow themselves to be made pregnant as quickly as possible, regardless of the potential risks in the absence of medical facilities, and whether they like it or not. Things go rapidly downhill from there.

No matter how you dress it up, *We Who Are About To...* is not a pleasant book. The narrator is not at all a nice person, and she very clearly cracks up under the strain of understanding the reality of her situation. Most of the other characters are fairly unpleasant too. And everyone comes to a bad but believable end. There

is no happy ending, nor should there be one. It is a book that needed to be written, and Russ did a fine job of producing it. What is more she managed to say what needed to be said in a little over 100 pages. This is, I think, a book that all science fiction fans should read, just to encourage them to ask questions about other books. Once again, well done to Wesleyan for helping it stay in print.

We Who Are About To - Joanna Russ - Wesleyan University Press - trade paperback

Hugo Nominees: Best Novelette

By Anne K.G. Murphy

The Clapping Hands of God

"The Clapping Hands of God," by Michael F. Flynn is a challenging read for a westerner. The main characters more closely resemble middle-eastern Muslims and people of other cultures than the usual western prototypes. There is romance here, but it is subtle and soulful. And with that I am referring to both the romance between an interplanetary scout team and the planet they are exploring and the romance between the team's leader and one of his crew.

Silently, they withdrew into Hassan's pavilion, where Hassan sat on an ottoman while Iman, standing behind him, kneaded his shoulder muscles.

"you've been carrying something heavy on these," she said, "they are so hard and knotted up."

"Oh, nothing much. A world."

"Listen to Atlas." She squeezed hard and Hassan winced. "Nothing you can do will affect this world. All you do is watch."

[...]

He reached back over his shoulder and stilled her ministrations. "Perhaps you had better stop now."

"Am I so heavy then?"

"It's not that. You scare me. I don't know who you are."

Hassan is a cautious man, always waiting for the surprise that will demonstrate that the beautiful new planet is dangerous. But sometimes the greatest danger is a romance that entangles your soul. This is a classic alien contact story, lyrically written if a little slow-paced. I felt Flynn gave the ending a bit of a short shrift, leaving the reader to wonder exactly what he meant by his final commentary, but on the whole I would recommend it.

"The Clapping Hands of God" by Michael F. Flynn (*Analog* 07-08/04)

The Faery Handbag

Did you ever have a relative tell you stories you weren't sure whether or not to believe? A bag full of them revolves around the village where Genevieve's Grandmother Zofia grew up in Kelly Link's wonderful story "The Faery Handbag". Well, the village, and also the people under the hill. The bag in question is hairy and black, and the main plot involves love, responsibility, and adventure. The bag, well, it may end up in The Garment District, but then again, it may not... in any case, Genevieve will keep looking for it, because of who lives inside. Link does a terrific job of maintaining her young protagonist's voice in this story, told in

first person from Genevieve's point of view. I highly recommend it for readers young and old.

"The Faery Handbag" by Kelly Link (*The Faery Reel* Viking)

Biographical Notes to 'A Discourse on the Nature of Causality, with Air-planes' by Benjamin Rosenbaum

Benjamin Rosenbaum plays with alternate reality in his "Biographical Notes to 'A Discourse on the Nature of Causality, with Air-planes' by Benjamin Rosenbaum", imagining another version of himself as the protagonist of a mid-air adventure story, replete with Raja and consort, assassin, pirates, rebels, and the fannish favorite, zeppelins. Our protagonist is a plausible fabulist himself, and he in turn imagines an alternate world; one with no zeppelins, in which events are produced purely by linear cause and effect, the simplest of the Five Forms of causality. He wonders what his shadow self would make of his own adventure, and finds himself applying Democritan materialist logic to his different situations, as if it wasn't all a dream. What if his own life was made up of only chance coincidences and mechanical causes? How should he interpret it then? An inventive epistemological exploration that is also a delightful romp through a fantastic and well-developed physical and social space. Rosenbaum's *Wisdom Ants* must have been giving him suggestions in addition to ink as they helped him compile this tale.

"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 People of Sand and Slag

When people are evolved (or redesigned) so they can survive most anything and subsist on mud, there's no practical motive for keeping other animals around. In "The People of Sand and Slag" Paolo Bacigalupi explores how some bad-ass security guards gain insight into vulnerability when they discover a creature running loose in the mine area they're guarding and by chance don't slag it before realizing it's a dog. In case you were starting to think I don't like anything I read, hold onto your hats, because I really liked this story. It's a reminder of the experiences that make it important to keep the Earth a place where a diversity of creatures can survive, and a preview of the psychological desolation we might face if we let the planet become a wasteland.

"The People of Sand and Slag" by Paolo Bacigalupi (*Fantasy & Science Fiction* 02/04)

The Voluntary State

When I started reading "The Voluntary State" by Christopher Rowe, I was intrigued by the nanotech and cybernetics but disturbed by the geography. Something was off. I later came to understand that this is the reader's first clue that The Voluntary State of Tennessee might be a dystopia. "The Voluntary State" is a classic exploration of issues of mental freedom and technology run rampant, presented in a completely new fashion. And one cannot help but be amused by the dog-like devotion of the protagonist's car... and pleased when that is both crucial and explained in a story where the maths all line up even when they are counting on chaotic unpredictables.

"The Voluntary State" by Christopher Rowe (*Sci Fiction*, scifi.com 5/5/04)

A Teen Book for All Ages

Kelly Link's "The Faery Handbag" joins Bradley Denton's Hugo-nominated novella "Sergeant Chip" and many other fabulous stories in *The Year's Best Science Fiction and Fantasy for Teens*, edited by Jane Yolen and Patrick Nielsen Hayden (Tor, 2005). This is an excellent collection, not only because it has a diverse selection of stories that are all worth reading, but also for the way the book presents a pathway for further exploration in the genre. The introduction to each story advises the reader on other works and authors they should check out if they like the story that follows. And the feminist in me is pleased to note that women authors are referenced almost as often as men. My favorite story in the collection is Delia Sherman's "CATNYP", where a changeling living on the borderlands in New York City befriends the catalog of the New York Public Library (CATNYP), an appropriately feline creature who helps her research a bet about love and will likely guide her farther in life as well. As long as she keeps sneaking it sandwiches... But all of the stories are good. My only real disappointment in the anthology is that the exciting Donato cover turns out not to be illustrating any of the stories inside.

The Year's Best Science Fiction and Fantasy for Teens, - Jane Yolen and Patrick Nielsen Hayden (eds.) - Tor - hardcover

SF, My Parents, and Me

By Daniel M. Kimmel

A few years ago I got my mother to read Robert Sawyer's novel *Illegal Alien*. It's a courtroom drama involving a visiting alien charged with murdering a human. She enjoyed it. However in order to convince her to read it I had to explain to her that it was like a John Grisham book, only with some space aliens mixed in. A few years earlier she turned me on to Ken Grimwood's *Replay*, which I enjoyed. It's about a man who gets to keep reliving his adult life, keeping his memories. The time travel element is never really explained which has never seemed to bother the many fans of the book.

Thus ends my SF history with my mother. This is very different from, say, the numerous infants and toddlers in tow I see at various cons. My mother never took me to a convention. I didn't attend my first Worldcon until the age of 34 and that was as a reporter.

Other than the two previously mentioned books and taking her to see *2001: A Space Odyssey*, my mother and I have no real SF ties. When I tell her I'm off to the annual 24 marathon of SF movies held which have been held at various theaters in the Boston area she inevitably says something like, "Oh, that's that crazy thing you do. Have fun." I'm sure she doesn't bring it up in conversation the way, say, she might mention when I've been on television. (Just in case my mom should see this: she is a lovely woman, a devoted mother and grandmother, and never once raised an objection to my large library of comic books and, later, SF books.)

Now my father is a slightly different story. If you were to tell him he was a science fiction fan he would deny it. He certainly doesn't read the stuff, and probably couldn't name any authors beyond Asimov, Bradbury, and Clarke, if even them. Yet in looking at how I

came to be a fan in the first place, I'd have to pin it on him.

Certainly he would acknowledge taking me to the movies at an early age. I'm told I saw some monster movies around age 4. Obviously they didn't traumatize me. According to family lore I was too busy consuming Chiclets to be frightened by what was going on onscreen. As I got older, I not only got to see the usual Disney fare but such films as *The Seven Faces of Dr. Lao*, *Fantastic Voyage*, *The Wonderful World of the Brothers Grimm* (in Cinerama!), and *Planet of the Apes*. Indeed, I remember going with him to see all five *Apes* movies in one night when the last one of the original series was released.

On TV we watched some of the older SF films, including *Invasion of the Body Snatchers*, *King Kong*, *The War of the Worlds*, and *The Time Machine*, as well as such early '60s fare as *The Twilight Zone* and *The Outer Limits*. Then one night in 1966 a new show came on, and we were instantly hooked. It was the original *Star Trek*.

We weren't necessarily watching for the same reasons. I was 11 and was less interested in Captain Kirk's reputation as a babe magnet than with his encounters with the Klingons and Romulans, but it was something we could share together. Years later when, as a media critic, I acquired a couple of tribbles during the promotion of the *Deep Space Nine* sequel to "The Trouble with Tribbles," I made sure to send him one. I didn't have to explain what it was. He knew.

Since I've grown up he doesn't follow SF as much any more, although he did become a devoted fan of *Next Generation*. (I have standing instructions to notify him if I ever meet Marina Sirtis, who played Counselor Troi. He's ready to travel on a moment's notice.) But *Babylon*

5 or *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*? No, not even *The X Files*.

So how did I become an SF fan without parents carefully paving the way? I don't think it's that odd at all. My parents encouraged me to read, to use my imagination, to explore. They didn't see movies or TV as wastes of time (with the possible exception of when I was going through my "Three Stooges" phase), but simply as another way of storytelling. Becoming an SF fan — both literary and media — was the most natural thing in the world. I liked the books and movies and shows, and they seemed to like me back.

Now that I'm a parent myself and I spent a lot of time wondering how I can introduce my daughter to this world. I've bought SF children's books. Artist and Godzilla authority Bob Eggleton provided the means to introduce her to Japanese monster movies. (If you think your youngster will like monster movies, start with *Godzilla's Revenge*. Ignore the title.)

Last year I took her to her first Worldcon and by January she was wowing the crowd at the Arisia masquerade. As she gets older she'll either continue or develop her own interests and go her own way. With any luck she'll do both. Since she's only in third grade, I think I've got some time.

Meanwhile, what I've learned is that parents can only open so many doors. Kids will eventually decide on their own which ones they want to go through. It's not so much about choosing the doors to open for them. It's teaching them how to open the doors for themselves.

Daniel M. Kimmel is the Boston-based film critic for the *Worcester Telegram and Gazette* and correspondent for *Variety*. His reviews can be found at rottentomatoes.com. His most recent book was *The Fourth Network: How FOX Broke the Rules and Reinvented Television*. He is currently working on a history of DreamWorks.

Not So Funny Books

I haven't been to a comics event in years, decades probably, but Interaction needed someone to spread the good word to the UK comics industry and there was a major convention taking place conveniently close in Bristol, so I hopped on the train to Temple Meads to see what was going on in British comics these days.

The first thing I noticed was how convenient the location was. There is this cavernous Victorian hall that was presumably once part of Temple Meads station but now belongs to the British Empire and Commonwealth Museum. You practically fell off the train into the convention. A good start.

And it was buzzing when I arrived. Lots of dealers, several publishers, and a whole host of comics creators. The Artist Alley thing is very popular, and being used to author signings I was quite gobsmacked at how the comics artists would sit there and draw a sketch for each punter before adding a signature. Boy their hands must get tired.

However, this event wasn't just a trade show. It was a genuine convention. As with all conventions there was some good and some bad. Compared with a well-run SF convention it was sadly lacking in many areas, but impressive in others. Let's deal with the bad news first.

The con had two sites: the dealers' room, which was in the big shed, and the hotel, where all the programming took place. The hotel wasn't visible from outside the dealers' room. There was no map in the Souvenir Book telling you how to get there. I couldn't see any signs or leaflets in the dealers' room with the info on either. When you got to the hotel (thanks Katie!) there were no signs to tell you that you were at the convention until you were practically on top of the two function rooms.

In addition there seemed to be no concept of Programme Ops. There were no posted schedules of events. I didn't find out until quite late on that the headline GoH, J. Michael Straczynski, had cancelled at the last minute. There were no tent signs with panelist names, timekeeping seemed to be down to the panelists, and so on. If there was a Green Room it was well hidden. But the panelists seemed quite happy so I guess they were used to a more relaxed atmosphere.

Other things went much better. The Souvenir Book was beautifully put together. The web site was focused on selling the convention rather than talking to other fannish conrunners. And there was an excellent collection of dealers and other participants.

The thing I liked most about the convention was the structure. If I said it was half way between World Fantasy Con and a CreationCon you'd think I was mad, but I mean it. Here's how it works. The convention kicks off with something called a ProCon. For Bristol this was just one day, but a similar event planned for Brighton in November will have a 3-day ProCon. That is then followed by a weekend Expo, which is centered around the dealers room but has some fan programming as well.

The point of the ProCon is that it acknowledges that there is a commercial side to the comics business. It is held during the week when industry professionals can probably attend but most fans are at work. It allows the pros to get together and discuss their issues (much like a World Fantasy Con). And it ensures that a goodly number of pros are on hand to meet and greet their adoring public come the weekend.

Entry to the dealer area was £5/day, which ensured a massive attendance. Interestingly this also entitled you to attend the fan programming. Possibly the fact that the hotel was so hard to find was a cunning plan to keep the hoi polloi away from the program rooms. But actually I think most of the punters just weren't interested. They were there to buy stuff and to get stuff signed, and that was all.

This is in direct contravention to the accepted wisdom about SF cons. Whenever I have suggested opening up Worldcon dealer rooms to the general public I've been told that this would be a disaster because of all the effort that would have to be put into keeping the riff raff out of the important program sessions. But if most of them are not interested in the programming then this is no longer an issue.

Anyway, more information about the Brighton event is available here: <http://www.comicexpo.biz/> (parts still under construction). And more info about some of the neat comics I came away with is in the following articles.

Art on the Edge

Possibly the last thing I expected to find in Bristol was the launch of a spectacular new British-based, art-focused comic.

Event Horizon, from Mam Tor Publishing, is a new venture masterminded by artist Liam Sharp. (Mam Tor, by the way, is a hill fort in Derbyshire and as far as I know has nothing to do with Tom Doherty.)

I think the best description I can give of *Event Horizon* is that it reminds me strongly of *Heavy Metal*. To start with it is a thick publication containing many strips. Compared to an American comic, the focus is more on the art than on the stories. While there is some traditional British humor, most of the strips are serious. Indeed, most of them involved people getting killed messily. Fountains of blood are a common theme. Some of the scripts are a little thin, amounting to little more than people fighting and saying "fuck" lots. But there are two actual, genuine prose short stories, which I guess makes *Event Horizon* a new venue for SF&F writers. The comic does have a sub-title of "21st Century Pulp Fiction." Sounds good to me, let's make it so.

But wait, what about the content? Let's start with Liam Sharp himself. Not being up to date with the comics business, I wasn't familiar with his work. I just happened to notice this impressive looking pile of material and a tall, blonde, muscle-bound guy with Celtic tattoos down one arm. Being utterly shameless I went up to talk to him, and that was Liam. I soon found out that we had a friend in common: China Miéville. In fact Liam is doing the illustrations for China's forthcoming book of short stories, *Looking for Jake* (to be launched at Worldcon - hint!). Now China is a pretty impressive artist himself, so if he picks someone to illustrate his stories that person is going to be good, right? Just to make sure, I asked China who said:

"I've always loved pen-and-ink work. Although I can see the virtuosity in color work and computer based work, it's old-

school pen-and-ink that touches my soul. And don't get me wrong, Liam can do the color stuff with the best of them. But he is an absolute fucking master of ink. And he can draw across a whole range of styles. It was kind of awe-some seeing his work come in, to be honest."

So there, now you know. If you want to see some of Sharp's work, his excellent cover for *Event Horizon* #1 is on the Mam Tor web site (<http://www.mamtor.com/>). There is also a gallery of his work at the BritComicArt web site (<http://www.britcomicart.com/gallery/sharp>). Doubtless *Looking for Jake* will have somewhat fewer naked, pneumatic women battling the Legions of Hell, but you'll get to see how good Sharp is.

Another particular favorite of mine is Kev Crossley's *Zombie Viking Elves*. They are just so Not Orlando Bloom. I think next time I see a convention with another (yawn) Dark Elves panel I'll just take along a few panels of Crossley's art. It really says all that needs to be said on the subject. (See <http://www.kevcrossley.com/> for an example.)

There's a wide variety of other art on display in the magazine. If blood-n-guts fantasy is not your scene you could try to clean, chrome lines of Bagwell's illustrations for the story, "The True Adventures of Jed Lightsear, Space Pirate!". There are many other art styles available too, some of which will be more or less to your taste. (Some of them are less to my taste, but I can't complain as there's loads of good stuff.)

So, there it is, the future of British comics just sort of fell into my lap. Here's hoping it succeeds.

Event Horizon #1 - Liam Sharp (ed.) - Mam Tor Publishing - comic

Back to the Future

Ask any kid today who is the most famous character in British comics and they will almost certainly say "Judge Dredd." But ask someone of my age and you'll get a very different answer. Long before the granite-jawed lawman nabbed his first perp, British kids were thrilling to the space-born adventures of Dan Dare.

The original Dan Dare strip ended with the demise of *Eagle* in 1969. Since then there have been several attempts to resurrect the character, most notably in *2000AD*, which tried to modernize Dare, and the truly awful TV cartoon, which tried to Americanize him. Dare fans, however, at least those of my generation, were only interested in the real Dan Dare, and now they have him back again.

Sometimes, even in this world of cutthroat rights protection, good things happen. And one of those good things is that a group of old time Dare fans has got permission to produce their own comic, containing original Dan Dare stories. *Spaceship Away* is now up to issue #5 with #6 due out any day now, and it seems to be doing rather well. The artists, the late Keith Watson and Don Harley have done a fabulous job of capturing the original feel of Frank Hampson's strips. Rod Barzilay, the main driving force behind *Spaceship Away*, has produced a convincing Dare script that fills in a continuity gap in the original series. And I particularly like the way that each episode is presented as if it were reprinted from *Eagle*, complete with the *Eagle* logo in the top left of the first page.

As the comic has developed, more material has been added. Issue #1 was 24 pages with only the Dare strip plus a back cover spoof called Dan Bear and some support material. Issue #3 has

grown to 36 pages and features two new strips. One is set in the past, Dare-relative, and features the young Hubert Guest. The other is set in a future in which Dare is the Commander of Spacefleet, Flamer is a senior pilot, and Sir Hubert's grandson, Hugo, is the dashing young hero. The villain is a scheming politician whose appearance is somewhat reminiscent of someone called Blair. The issue also contains one of Graham Bleathman's magnificent cut-away drawings of the *Marco Polo*, one of the spaceships from the main strip.

Issue #6, I am told, will feature an entirely new strip based around the 1950's BBC radio series, *Journey Into Space* (which was set in the far future world of 1965).

I spent quite a bit of time talking to Rod Barzilay while I was in Bristol and his enthusiasm for Dare is obvious. He and his friends also had a fine collection of hand-built models of Dare spaceships, old Dare toys and so on. The Mekon was there, of course, glaring balefully down on the attendant fans as is his wont.

I should note that Rod has been learning layout as he goes along. The comic strip pages themselves look great, but some of the text-based supporting material needs a decent designer. All in all, however, it is a very impressive magazine, especially considering that it is essentially a fan effort. The magazine doesn't yet have its own web site, but you can see some sample art here (<http://www.2000ad.nu/spacefleet/spaceshipaway/flyer.html>). Issues #1 and #2 were £7.80 each (£10 outside the UK). From #3 onwards the price dropped to £6.99 an issue (£9 outside the UK). If you talk to Rod nicely he may do you a deal on all 6. You can find him at 8 Marley Close, Preston, Weymouth, Dorset DT3 6DH. Yes, it is a little expensive, but to keep Colonel Dare in print I think it is worth it. And the more people who sign

up, the better value *Spaceship Away* is likely to get.

Spaceship Away #1 and #3 - Rod Barzilay (ed.) - Rod Barzilay - comic

Glorious Albion

Coming up with new and different characters is a constant challenge for comics creators. But there are a lot of old characters out there whose strips have long since been abandoned and forgotten, at least by all but the most dedicated comics fans. Of course many of those characters deserved to be forgotten, but others were simply products of their time. So, let us suppose that you are one of the world's greatest comics creators and that you are looking for a new challenge. Let us further suppose that you have fond memories of characters whose adventures you enjoyed in your rather distant youth. Could you re-invent them? Could you make them new, interesting and relevant? Listen, if you are Alan Moore you can do just about anything.

Which is why *Albion*, the latest release from DC's Wildstorm imprint is going to have a Union Jack on the masthead. The stories will be set in contemporary Britain, but they will feature the strangest set of superheroes ever to grace a comic book.

The characters in question all first saw the light of day so far back in the dim and distant past that even I don't know some of them. They appeared in comics such as *Buster*, *Hurricane*, *Lion*, *Roy of the Rovers*, *Tornado*, and *Valiant*. Some of them are genuine heroes. Captain Hurricane had a long and successful career fighting Nazis. Robot Archie forged a heroic path for artificial men long before The Vision joined the

Avengers. Others are reformed crooks. The Steel Claw was persuaded from a life of crime to help the British Secret Service. As for The Spider, probably the only reason he became a crimefighter was because if every other crook in the world is in jail there is no one to dispute his claim to be the world's greatest criminal mastermind. He has the sort of ego that normally leads people to lay Heath Robinson traps for Batman in the warehouses of Gotham City.

Then there were comics like *WHAM!* (nothing to do with George Michael) and *SMASH!* (nothing to do with *Smash Hits*). These were genuine funny books, full of very silly strips, many of them by the incomparable Leo Baxendale, creator of *Minnie the Minx* and *The Bash Street Kids* for *The Beano*. For *WHAM!* and *SMASH!* Baxendale created Bad Penny (a naughty schoolgirl) and "The Rottenest Crook in the World," **Grimly Feendish**.

It is of course debatable as to whether Baxendale described **Feendish** as "rotten" because of his wickedness of because of his incompetence, but fiendish he certainly was. He looked like an over-weight, be-fanged version of Uncle Fester and every week he dreamed up new and more bizarre crimes to commit, most of which failed dismally as far as I remember. He was frequently accompanied by bats and octopuses. Baxendale had a habit of inserting mystery tentacles in **Grimly Feendish** panels to give them extra "ugh!" factor.

So, Bad Penny and **Grimly Feendish** as superheroes? You'd better believe it. I have seen it, and it rocks!

The primary creative team behind *Albion* is Alan Moore (plots), Dave Gibbons (covers), Leah Moore and John Reppion (scripts), Shane Oakley (pencils) and George Freeman (inks). Oakley was one

of the prime movers behind the *Albion* project and has also contributed to the plots. Leah is Alan's daughter, and John is her husband. Both already have a good track record as comics writers. Most of the team were in Bristol, along with Andrew Sumner of IPC who is on the business end of the project (IPC currently own all of the characters, though they don't do much in the way of comics these days).

For Bristol the team had available a black & white mock-up containing sample pages. I'm assuming the final thing will be in color, although Oakley uses a lot of blocky shadows in the art so it may not. Penny appears to have (ahem) grown a little. Most of the team are in a rather unpleasant prison. There are little in-jokes in the backgrounds. I particularly liked the movie poster for *The Trigan Empire Strikes Back*. And yes, I am sure it is all going to make sense eventually.

There will be other stuff too. The sample contains a couple of pages from a story featuring Janus Stark, the Victorian escapologist, which looks just like the original but I think is an Oakley recreation. At the panel on *Albion* there was talk of reprints of original Spider stories to be published by Titan. All sorts of wonderful things may happen.

Oh dear, I think I am going to have to start buying comics again. *Albion* #1 is due out in late June.

I would now go off and start working on a script for a **Grimly Feendish** solo adventure, but I understand that there's a Mr. Gaiman ahead of me in the queue.

Albion #1 - Alan Moore et al - Wildstorm - ashcan edition

Another World

So, this month I got to spend several days in New Delhi. There is, apparently, a meme going around fandom that I am fabulously rich and can travel wherever I want to in the world. Sadly this is far from the truth. The reason I get trips like this is generally because my clients' own staff don't want to go. Not everyone wants to get continually dragged away from home and family. There is a market niche for someone daft enough to travel anywhere she is sent, and be prepared to give entertaining and intelligent presentations while running on jet lag. Said daft person happens to be me.

Of course there are benefits. The pay is not too bad (though this particular trip was well below average), and I do get to see interesting places and stay in top class hotels (on which this trip delivered magnificently).

Living in the Taj

The Taj Mahal Hotel in New Delhi looks like the sort of place that I could never afford to stay at, even in my wildest dreams. I was picked up from Delhi airport by a talk Sikh gentleman and driven direct to the hotel where porters and receptionists met me at the door, greeted me by name and escorted me up to my room. This was not what I was expecting. Thankfully a long flight from London was a good excuse for being totally gobsmacked.

This sort of thing is, of course, horribly embarrassing. Being treated like I was a fabulously wealthy heiress is all very well, but if you are not fabulously wealthy but are instead running on overdrafts and credit card debt, you can't return the favors as expected. I'm sure the hotel staff thought I was incredibly stingy, but I couldn't afford to give massive tips to everyone.

The impression that I was fabulously wealthy was no doubt enhanced by the fact that I was booked into one of the exclusive Taj Club rooms. For those of you who have been to Wiscon, this is rather like being booked into the Governor's Club at the Concourse. You have your own lounge, you get free breakfast, and there's a happy hour in the evening. Beautiful furniture and nice view as well. And no looming portraits of former governors of Wisconsin. The luxury was great, but it was still embarrassing.

I suspect I only got all of this luxury treatment because the conference I was speaking at was also being held in the hotel. Given the amount my clients were spending on banqueting and function space, we probably got the rooms well below rack rate.

Delhi Tourism

The best part of the trip was that I had negotiated a day to recover from jet lag. Much of this I did need to spend getting my head together and checking over my presentations (the final versions of which I had not yet seen). However, I did get a chance to go and do a little bit of tourist shopping.

Getting around New Delhi is interesting. Taxis are absurdly cheap, and they will wait for you to do your shopping, free of charge, rather than risk losing the fare for taking you back to your hotel. The little yellow and green tricycle taxis that throng the streets are even cheaper, and quite pleasant as long as the weather isn't bad. The locals kept apologizing for the heat, to which I replied, "You've never been to Sacramento, have you?"

The traffic in New Delhi was thick, but apparently mild by the standards of Mumbai or the old city. Most people were riding scooters and motorbikes.

Indian women ride pillion sidesaddle because of their saris, and without helmets. Thankfully the traffic never gets terribly fast. And everyone sounds their horn, all the time. In India horns do not mean "danger, look out!" they just mean, "I am going to move forward now."

Shopping in India is quite unlike anything I have experienced before. There are ordinary shops. I went to a bookstore, for example. But most of the tourist shopping is done in "emporia". These are rather like department stores specializing in tourist goods. They do carpets, jewelry, works of art, tourist tat, and of course clothes. Different areas seem to be run by different people, and you get handed from one section to another, but pay for everything at a cash desk at the end.

I have never experienced such hard sell tactics in my life, not even from mobile phone and second-hand car salesmen. The Indians just don't know when to give up. A Western salesman prides himself on being able to work out how much money his customer wants to spend and fleecing her of every penny of it, plus a bit more. He will not waste his time trying to sell a customer on something that she can't afford or obviously doesn't want. Not so in India. I got the impression that it was impolite to refuse to look at any goods. It was OK to refuse to buy them, but the salesmen just wouldn't give up until they had shown you everything they had, just in case.

Of course some of the merchandise was truly spectacular. I wish I could afford posh jewelry, because it is really cheap in India. I wish even more that I had somewhere to put a Kashmiri carpet. The real thing is absolutely stunning. And if you get offered the real thing in the West, here's an easy way to check it out. Take a look at it, then turn it

through 180 degrees and look again. If it doesn't look a totally different color when viewed with the nap and viewed against the nap then it isn't the real thing. It really is quite magical the way the color changes.

Still, I did have some money, and as you might expect most of it went on clothes. I spent way too much on saris, but they sure are gorgeous. There were some really lovely pashminas as well. And absurdly cheap cashmere sweaters (though I only saw them for men). I also bought a bunch of presents for people. And I said "no" to salesmen about once every two minutes.

Interestingly the Indians seem to have very fixed views as to what Western tourists might want. The hotel gift shop (which is very expensive and not recommended except to buy the sunscreen you forgot to bring with you) was the only tourist shop I saw that sold books. And no one seems to have cottoned onto the fact that British people not only eat curry, they cook it too. One store did have a few pre-mixed curry powders, but what these guys should have been selling was the raw spices, recipes, and most of all kitchen gadgets. They would do a roaring trade. It is rather sad when you can get much better selection of teas in Tesco than in a tourist shop in India.

Land of Curry

There are two things for which India is justly famous: cricket and food. Sadly there was no test series on while I was there. Watching an international cricket match in India has nothing in common with such sedate pursuits as watching a game on a village green in England, or even watching baseball. But I did eat lots of really good food.

The Taj Mahal Hotel has three restaurants. One specializes in Chinese food, which is doubtless very nice but not what I expect out of a trip to India. Another, Machan, is essentially a fusion restaurant. It served Western-style food such as burgers, but also local versions thereof. I had lunch there, and chose a "sandwich" meal that was actually pita bread stuffed with chicken tikka and served with potato wedges.

I spent a lot more time in Haveli, the hotel's North Indian cuisine restaurant. It was fabulous. I had three really wonderful meals, and none of them cost me more than about \$30. You would pay as much in any Indian restaurant in London, and get food that was nowhere near as good.

Haveli was also beautifully decorated (see the photos on the web site - http://www.emcit.com/ph_india_01.shtml) and provided entertainment in the form of traditional dances. Presumably this was the sort of thing that Mughal emperors liked to watch. They had two dancers: one male and one female. Both were very good, but the guy had much more interesting dances and costumes. I was particularly impressed with his "peacock dance."

The other evening my clients took me out to eat at what is generally viewed as one of the best restaurants in New Delhi. Bukhara is located in the Sheraton hotel and specializes in tandoori cooking. It was a very traditional restaurant. You got a full bib rather than a napkin, and the default was to eat with your fingers, though forks could be provided upon request. All of the dishes were kebabs of some sort. And they were fabulously good. Yum!

I might add that the kebabs were almost all Bukhara did well. The rice was unimaginative and the naan were not very good. The kulfi was nice, but I was

reminded very much of American steak houses such as Cattleman's where the meat itself is wonderful but the rest of the meal is no better than you'd get in Denny's. Fortunately the kebabs in Bukhara more than made up for any shortcomings of the rest of the food. And the prices were very reasonable. I've eaten in many restaurants that are more expensive.

The trip to Bukhara was also notable for the fact that there was an ambassadorial reception going on in the hotel that evening, so the place was packed, there was a red carpet out in the lobby, and you caught sight of the occasional bunch of well-armed soldiers.

Downsides and Dreams

There are negative sides to a trip to India. Getting a visa is long-winded and expensive. You can't buy rupees before you go, you have to change currency when you get there. You need a whole pile of inoculations, and the anti-malaria pills taste disgusting. Delhi airport is a marvel of disorganization. But all in all it was a wonderful trip.

One of the things I forgot to mention about the Taj Mahal Hotel is that it had wi-fi in the rooms, and at prices similar to what you would pay in the UK. I was thus able to keep in touch with the world very easily. You can't say that for most similarly-priced London hotels, which generally only manage a hot spot in the lobby. This, of course, meant that Kevin and I kept having, "we have got to come here for a holiday" conversations. Silly idea, of course. When would we get the time? Or the money? But India is certainly a country I want to come back to as often as I can. In the meantime I need to find somewhere where the climate is suitable for wearing saris. Guess I need to get back to California.

Out of Synch

It has all gone quiet in America. After a few months of busily doing US issues of UK books, we only have one scheduled for June. On the other hand, it is doubtless eagerly awaited. *Century Rain* is the first Al Reynolds novel since the end of the Revelation Space series and Reynolds many US fans will doubtless be eager to pick it up.

Also worth chasing down in the US bookstores is the Bantam edition of *The Thackery T. Lambshead Pocket Guide to Eccentric and Discredited Diseases*. Yes folks, America can now get its Lambshead fix without the need to take bookstore clerks aside and whisper, "pst, do you do Night Shade?" No home should be without this essential guide to all things obscurely medical. Why, I own several copies myself!

Century Rain - Al Reynolds - Ace - hardcover

The Thackery T. Lambshead Pocket Guide to Eccentric and Discredited Diseases - Dr. Mark Roberts & Dr. Jeffrey Vandermeer (eds.) - Bantam - trade paperback

Miscellany

Clarke Award

The winner of this year's Arthur C. Clarke Award is China Miéville's *Iron Council*. I was unable to be at the ceremony due to being in India at the time, but China is of course delighted and most other people seem pretty pleased as well. I for one was greatly relieved, given some of the other books on the shortlist.

One sour note was sounded by Jessa Crispin on Bookslut who commented that the preference for *Iron Council* over *Cloud Atlas* was, "continuing the trend of genre awards refusing to award merit over their strictly defined standards of what SF/F is supposed to look like." This is daft on so many levels that really all you can do is laugh. But it does illustrate how ignorant and prejudiced even relatively SF-friendly literary critics are. Here are a few thoughts.

Of all SF awards, the Clarke has probably the best track record of both using non-genre judges and of selecting winners to a large extent on raw literary merit. (This first ever winner of the Clarke, to the fury of many traditionalist fans, was Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale*.)

If Crispin followed the Clarke at all, she would surely know that those who have "strictly defined standards of what SF/F is supposed to look like" created one hell of a fuss last year because the award was given to Neal Stephenson's *Quicksilver*, a book that its detractors claimed was "not SF." If those same people had been in charge this year they would undoubtedly have preferred *Cloud Atlas*, with its cloning and post-apocalypse themes and references to classic SF works, over *Iron Council* which is generally agreed to be, shock horror, a fantasy.

And finally, there is an unspoken assumption in Crispin's comment that all SF award should be judged to exactly the same standards as those for mimetic fiction, that in fact there is nothing to distinguish SF from other types of novel other than the presence of talking squid in space. This is rather as if Malcolm Glazer, instead of buying Manchester United, has demanded that the Tampa Bay Buccaneers be given a place in the Premier League on the grounds that, as

recent Super Bowl winners, they are one of the best football teams in the world.

There is by now a very large body of critical opinion commenting on just what SF is and how it should be judged. It doesn't all agree, but neither does it focus merely on superficial tropes. *Iron Council* and *Cloud Atlas* are both very fine SF books, and I would have been happy to see either of them win. But I firmly dispute the notion that *Iron Council* won simply because it had better talking squid.

Locus Poll

Voting in the Locus Poll has now closed and the results are known to a select few at Locus HQ. The results won't be officially announced until a ceremony Westercon 58, which takes place in Calgary in July, but to whet people's appetites the Locus team has decided to issue "shortlists" comprising the top five finishers in each category. Here they are.

Best Science Fiction Novel: *The Algebraist*, Iain M. Banks (Orbit); *Eastern Standard Tribe*, Cory Doctorow (Tor); *Forty Signs of Rain*, Kim Stanley Robinson (HarperCollins UK; Bantam); *The Baroque Cycle: The Confusion*; *The System of the World*, Neal Stephenson (Morrow); *Iron Sunrise*, Charles Stross (Ace).

Best Fantasy Novel: *The Dark Tower: Song of Susannah*; *The Dark Tower*, Stephen King (Grant/Scribner); *Iron Council*, China Miéville (Del Rey); *Going Postal*, Terry Pratchett (Doubleday UK; HarperCollins); *The Family Trade*, Charles Stross (Tor); *The Wizard Knight*, Gene Wolfe (Tor -- 2 Volumes: *The Knight*, *The Wizard*).

Best First Novel: *Jonathan Strange & Mr Norrell*, Susanna Clarke

(Bloomsbury); *The Coyote Kings of the Space-Age Bachelor Pad*, Minister Faust (Del Rey); *Trash Sex Magic*, Jennifer Stevenson (Small Beer); *The Year of Our War*, Steph Swainston (Gollancz; Eos 2005); *City of Pearl*, Karen Traviss (Eos).

Best Young Adult Book: *Abarat: Days of Magic, Nights of War*, Clive Barker (HarperCollins); *The Faery Reel: Tales from the Twilight Realm*, Ellen Datlow & Terri Windling, eds. (Viking); *The Blue Girl*, Charles de Lint (Viking); *Gifts*, Ursula K. Le Guin (Harcourt); *A Hat Full of Sky*, Terry Pratchett (Doubleday UK; HarperCollins).

Best Novella: Baxter, Stephen, *Mayflower II* (PS Publishing); Denton, Bradley, "Sergeant Chip" (*F&SF* 9/04); Shepard, Lucius, *Viator* (Night Shade); Stross, Charles, "The Concrete Jungle" (*The Atrocity Archives*); Wolfe, Gene, "Golden City Far" (*Flights*).

Best Novelette: Baxter, Stephen, "PeriAndry's Quest" (*Analog* 6/04); Beagle, Peter S., "Quarry" (*F&SF* 5/04); Kelly, James Patrick, "Men are Trouble" (*Asimov's* 6/04); Link, Kelly "The Faery Handbag" (*The Faery Reel*); Miéville, China, "Reports of Certain Events in London" (*McSweeney's Enchanted Chamber of Astonishing Stories*); VanderMeer, Jeff, "Three Days in a Border Town" (*Polyphony* 4).

Best Short Story: Ford, Jeffrey, "The Annals of Eelin-Ok" (*The Faery Reel*); Gaiman, Neil, "Forbidden Brides of the Faceless Slaves in the Nameless House of the Night of Dread Desire" (*Gothic!*); Miéville, China, "'Tis the Season" (*Socialist Review* 12/04); Waldrop, Howard, "The Wolf-man of Alcatraz" (*Sci Fiction* 9/22/04); Wolfe, Gene, "Pulp Cover" (*Asimov's* 3/04).

Best Magazine (*Locus* excluded): *Analog Science Fiction, Science Fact; Asimov's Science Fiction; The Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction; Realms of Fantasy; Sci Fiction*.

Best Publisher: Ace, Baen, DAW, Del Rey, Tor.

Best Anthology: *The Locus Awards: Thirty Years of the Best in Science Fiction and Fantasy*, Charles N. Brown & Jonathan Strahan, eds. (Voyager Australia; Eos); *The Year's Best Fantasy and Horror: Seventeenth Annual Collection*, Ellen Datlow, Kelly Link & Gavin Grant, eds. (St. Martin's); *The Year's Best Science Fiction: Twenty-First Annual Collection*, Gardner Dozois, ed. (St. Martin's); *Year's Best SF 9*, David G. Hartwell & Kathryn Cramer, eds. (Eos); *Between Worlds*, Robert Silverberg, ed. (SFBC).

Best Collection: *Mother Aegypt and Other Stories*, Kage Baker (Night Shade); *The Collected Short Fiction Of C.J. Cherryh*, C.J. Cherryh (DAW); *Phases of the Moon: Stories of Six Decades*, Robert Silverberg (Subterranean; ibooks); *The John Varley Reader*, John Varley (Ace); *Innocents Aboard*, Gene Wolfe (Tor).

Best Editor: Ellen Datlow; Gardner Dozois; David G. Hartwell; Patrick Nielsen Hayden; Gordon Van Gelder.

Best Artist: Kinuko Y. Craft, Bob Eggleton, Donato Giancola, Frank Kelly Freas, Michael Whelan.

Best Non-Fiction: *The Gernsback Days: A Study of the Evolution of Modern Science Fiction from 1911 to 1936*, Mike Ashley & Robert A.W. Lowndes (Wildside); *Ray Bradbury: The Life of Fiction*, Jonathan R. Eller & William F. Touponce (Kent State); *The Wave in the*

Mind: Talks and Essays on the Writer, the Reader, and the Imagination, Ursula K. Le Guin (Shambhala); *The Annotated Brothers Grimm*, Maria Tatar, ed. (Norton); *Dancing Naked: The Unexpurgated William Tenn*, William Tenn (NESFA).

Best Art Book: Alan M. Clark, *The Paint in My Blood: Illustration and Fine Art* (IFD); *Spectrum 11: The Best in Contemporary Fantastic Art*, Cathy & Arnie Fenner, eds. (Underwood); Paul Kidby, *The Art of Discworld*, Terry Pratchett (Gollancz; HarperCollins); Luis Royo, *Fantastic Art: The Best of Luis Royo* (NBM); Gahan Wilson, *The Best of Gahan Wilson* (Underwood).

A few comments follow.

All but one of the Hugo novel nominees appear, though scattered about various novel categories. This is probably not good news for Ian McDonald who is doubtless suffering from lack of US publication and name recognition.

Congratulations to my good friends Steph Swainston and Karen Traviss for making it onto the Best First Novel list. I will get round to reading the Jennifer Stevenson, honest.

The short fiction lists seem to me to be rather better than those for the Hugos.

How come Baen have once again made it into the top 5 publishers when they once again don't have a single book in the top 5 for anything? DAW only has one book listed, where as Eos, who have three books listed (and are the publishers of Dan Simmons and Lois McMaster Bujold, amongst others), are not in the best publisher list. Heck, even Night Shade has two books listed.

Niggles aside, however, I still think that the Locus Poll is the current best indicator of quality in F&SF. There are

some very good books and people in the above lists.

Fountain Award

Here is a bit of happy news. My favorite short story of the year, Jeffrey Ford's "The Annals of Eelin-Ok", has won the Speculative Literature Foundation's Fountain Award. Well done the judges! Well done Jeff, and all the team behind *The Faery Reel*. There are a lot of very good stories in the Honorable Mentions too. You can find the full list at: <http://www.speculativeliterature.org/Awards/SLFFountainAward/2004.php>.

Mythopoeic Award

Adult Literature: Kage Baker, *The Anvil of the World* (Tor); Susanna Clarke, *Jonathan Strange & Mr. Norrell* (Bloomsbury USA); Elizabeth Hand, *Mortal Love* (HarperCollins); Patricia A. McKillip, *Alphabet of Thorn* (Ace); Gene Wolfe, *The Wizard Knight*, consisting of *The Knight* and *The Wizard* (Tor).

Children's Literature: Kevin Crossley-Holland, Arthur Trilogy, consisting of *The Seeing Stone*, *At the Crossing Places*, and *King of the Middle March* (Scholastic/Arthur A. Levine Books); Nancy Farmer, *Sea of Trolls* (Atheneum); Monica Furlong, Trilogy consisting of *Wise Child*, *Juniper*, and *Colman* (Random House); Garth Nix, The Abhorsen Trilogy, consisting of *Sabriel*, *Lirael: Daughter of the Clayr*, and *Abhorsen* (Eos); Terry Pratchett, *A Hat Full of Sky* (HarperCollins).

Scholarship Award for Inklings Studies: Jane Chance, ed, *Tolkien the Medievalist* (Routledge, 2003); Janet Brennan Croft, *War and the Works of J.R.R. Tolkien* (Praeger Publishers, 2004); Matthew Dickerson, *Following Gandalf: Epic Battles and Moral Victory in The Lord*

of the Rings (Brazos Press, 2003); Doris T. Myers, *Bareface: A Guide to C.S. Lewis's Last Novel* (University of Missouri Press, 2004); Anne C. Petty, *Tolkien in the Land of Heroes* (Cold Spring Press, 2003).

Scholarship Award for Myth and Fantasy Studies: William Patrick Day, *Vampire Legends in Contemporary American Culture: What Becomes a Legend Most* (University Press of Kentucky, 2002); Jerry Griswold, *The Meanings of Beauty and the Beast* (Broadview Press, 2004); Stephen Thomas Knight, *Robin Hood: A Mythic Biography* (Cornell University Press, 2003); Teya Rosenberg, ed, *Diana Wynne Jones: An Exciting and Exacting Wisdom* (Lang, 2002).

That's a very competitive novel short list. The Clarke, Hand and Wolfe are all great books. I haven't read the McKillip yet, but I've liked everything of hers I have read. And the Kage Baker has been getting very good reviews too.

This year's Mythcon is being held in conjunction with the Tolkien 2005 convention in Birmingham the weekend following Worldcon.

Sidewise Awards

This year's nominees for the best in alternate history writing are as follows.

Long-Form: Philip Roth, *The Plot Against America*, Houghton Mifflin.

Short-Form: L. Timmel Duchamp, "The Heloise Archive" In *Love's Body, Dancing in Time*, Aqueduct Press; Warren Ellis, Chris Weston, and Laura DuPuy Martin. *Ministry of Space*, Image Comics 2001/2004 (reprinted 2005); Sean Klein, "Five Guys Named Moe," *SciFiction* Feb. 23, 2004; John McDaid "The Ashbazu Effect," *ReVisions* (Czerneda and Szpindel, eds.), DAW Books; Chris Roberson, "Red Hands, Black Hands," *Asimov's* December 2004; Lois Tilton,

"The Gladiator's War: A Dialogue," *Asimov's* June 2004.

It seems a little odd to have just one nominee for Long Form, but I guess the judges can always vote for dear old No Award.

It is good to see a comic in the Short Form category. None of the silliness about comics not being fiction here. Also good to see Chris Roberson getting a chance to defend his title. If this year's story is as good as "O One" he'll be the hot favorite, though I've also heard lots of good things about Lois Tilton's story.

Footnote

Next issue's line-up should include new novels by John Crowley, Tricia Sullivan, Jeffrey Ford and Wil McCarthy. But before we get that far you should see a bonus issue intended for all those lucky people who are visiting Glasgow this summer. *The Emerald City Guide to Glasgow* will take you on a tour of the Worldcon location courtesy of a number of famous local residents (and a little bit from me). It will be online sometime early in June.

And if you are wondering what has happened to the reviews of novels such as Hal Duncan's *Vellum* and Mike Cobley's *Shadowmasque*, they are all going to be included in the special "Who Are All These Scottish People Anyway?" July issue of *Emerald City*, online just in time for Worldcon. And not a trace of tartan tat will be included.

Somewhere in amongst all this I'm also helping run a few divisions for Interaction and working in the In Flight Magazine for the *WSFS Armadillo*. If you are not yet familiar with the latest and best cruise liner in the White Star fleet,

boy have Captain Standlee and I got a surprise for you. We have some galaxy-sized talents lined up to contribute. Watch this space.

Ciao,

Love 'n' hugs,

Cheryl