

EMERALD CITY

Issue 57

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Introduction

Hello Wiscon!

This issue is being published to coincide with the fabulous feminist science fiction convention in Madison, Wisconsin. Wiscon is my favourite convention. It lures me away from the San Francisco Bay Area even though Baycon is on at the same weekend. This year it may end up being the only convention that I attend.

If you happen to pick up this magazine at Wiscon, welcome. Hopefully you will find it interesting. Also please look out for issue #56 which should be lying around the convention somewhere and which features a whole load of British authors that you may not be familiar with.

I'll be around the con all weekend. I'm on some panels so I won't be hard to find. Please come and say hello.

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Trading Places

Two men wake up one morning and find themselves in different bodies. One is an honest, hardworking chap, the other a wastrel and con man. Will the good guy get his body and life back before the bad guy ruins everything for him? Sounds like a Hollywood plot, doesn't it? Indeed, whilst I don't know a lot about movies, I'm sure I remember one something like that a year or so back. John Travolta and Nick Cage?

Of course if this were Hollywood there would be lots of frantic chases in cars and across rooftops and the story would end with a dramatic fight between the two men. But it isn't, it is a Charles De Lint novel, and

therefore there is nothing so crude, though not necessarily nothing formulaic.

Instead what we have is a finely crafted novel with some absolutely fabulous characters. In *Trader* De Lint surrounds the two body-swapped men with a fascinating array of not-quite-ordinary people (because no one is quite ordinary); each of whom has lessons to learn in their lives. Most of them are women, and he writes them very well. One is a teenager, one a lesbian; again De Lint seems comfortable with both characters. It really is very impressive.

But in the end I was dissatisfied for two reasons: both to do with De Lint's trademark use of fantasy in an urban setting.

My first complaint is with regard to the moral structure of the story. Fantasy novels, as we all know, pit Good against Evil. Real world novels, on the other hand, recognise that most of us inhabit the grey zone in between. So wither Urban Fantasy?

It seems to me that whilst De Lint is aware of the real world setting of his story, he lets the fantasy side run away with him. Here is his description of his villain, Johnny Devlin.

It's probably not entirely his fault that he is the way he is. And he's not truly a bad person; I don't think he's evil. He's just so caught up in himself - the whole world revolves around Johnny Devlin - and that selfishness blinds him to what he's doing to the people around him. And himself. We're all born self-centred. Babies only have one thing on their minds - themselves. Feed me, warm me, soothe me. They learn to expand their world as they grow older, learn to take other people into account, learn to share. Devlin was just never taught that, or he didn't absorb it when he was.

Now it so happens that I know someone like that. She's utterly selfish, hopelessly manipulative, and completely incapable of looking after herself except by manipulating people into doing it for her. Whilst De Lint admits that Devlin is not intrinsically evil, nevertheless he is still cast as the bad guy and he still comes to a nasty end. But could you let that happen to him in the real world? What would happen if you were his mother? When you know someone who is, in many ways, effectively still three years old even though they are an adult, it is hard to condemn them out of hand.

My other concern is with the ending. Every De Lint book I've read ends with some of the protagonists travelling to the spirit world. This one was no exception. But it seemed to add nothing whatsoever to the story. It seemed like it was there just because De Lint's fans would expect it. Which is a shame, because it was a very good book indeed without it.

Trader - Charles De Lint - Pan - softcover

Playing with Needles

*And as the song and dance begins
The children play at home
With needles...*

OK, OK, I'm sure that Jeff Noon would not be entirely pleased with me opening a review of his new novel with a Genesis quote. Shows what a boring old fart I am, doesn't it. Then again I suspect that most people these days think Genesis = Phil Collins = MOR soft rock, and will never have heard of *Lamb*, let alone Peter Gabriel.

In the meantime, of course, Peter has been doing sterling work bringing third world rhythms to the attention of a wider public through the WOMAD festival. And I'm sure that some of those rhythms will have found their way into the heartbeat of the Manchester club scene. There's the drug trail for you: manufactured in Africa, purified and synthesised in Bath, let seep into the cultural underworld, and injected into the nervous systems of Manchester's youth through the needles of record decks.

Jeff does like a good pun.

Cut...

To a basement studio in a dance club in Manchester. A band is recording: a singer, a drummer, a bass man, and, given that this is dance, the obligatory DJ. The music is liquid, malleable, and under the DJ's skilful hands it is both shaken and stirred, rattled and rolled. There is no more record, but a performance of what was recorded.

Music for the moment,
Knowing the now, the DJ
Is wrapping up the rapping,
A present for the present,
All tied up with chords.

Other writers are happy to stand still, redeveloping already tired themes for a predictable, unimaginative audience (and a steady pay cheque). Jeff Noon cannot help but dance. Everything he does stretches the boundaries of what he has done before. *Needle in the Groove*, the jacket blurb tells us, is written in liquid dub poetics. In places it is as harsh as a sudden scratch. In places it does indeed look as if it has been remixed at random. But the bass line is a beautiful story of musical generations, stabbed through the heart by the flashing knife of a screaming punk guitar.

Noon has a boundless love for sound and rhythm. From skiffle through beat and flower power and glam, he cares. When his guts are ripped out, impaled on a safety pin, he weeps, but he still cares. And now everything is in the mix. Fill the pot with samples, give it a stir, and listen to the past become the present.

The music, he left it for me / everything.

He made this music, says 2spot / it'll be here for ever.

Is it a Vurt book? Yes and no. The publishers have listed it under fiction/literature, not SF. Noon has moved from Manchester to Brighton. Is this moving up market, or just organic growth? I don't know. Does anyone know if he was at Eastercon?

But it is recognisably a Vurt book in many ways. No feathers, just liquid music: shot up, not inhaled. And it takes place in a dream Manchester where the roads are named after bands and the rain plays a melody of tears. If you loved *Vurt* for its wild experimentation, you will love this as well.

On the front cover someone has asked, "if music were a drug, where would it take you?"

Idiots. What do they think they are saying?

"If!"

Scorched out for love: the reviewmix

That's the way of the world my friend
When the words come to an end
We throw it all away
To start again.

At the dark of the Noon
In a tiny room
In Manchester
A boy puts a feather
Into his mouth.

Needle in the Groove - Jeff Noon - Anchor -
hardcover

Kids' Stuff

Well, you know the rest of the world has gone crazy over J.K. Rowling, so it was only a matter of time before she got featured here. What really spurred me on, however, was seeing discussion of the Harry Potter phenomenon listed in the Wiscon provisional program. I do like to make convention issues of *Emerald City* vaguely relevant, so here we go.

Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone is entertaining enough. It bubbles along merrily. The text is very clear and simple, perhaps a little overly so, though one thing I wasn't able to find out was what age group the book was aimed at. If I had been looking for something on which to hang a sign that said "mostly harmless" this would be it. If I had been looking for something that would cause a major publishing phenomenon I probably would not have given it a second glance. And I don't think that is cast iron proof that I can't spot a good book. I think there's something else going on here.

One of the things that is always said in British circles about Rowling is that her success is so unfair because Diana Wynne Jones has been doing the same sort of thing much better for ages, without any great deal of recognition. So I said to myself, why

not compare the two? It might make the review more interesting. And with a little help from the excellent Jane Routley I picked out *Witch Week* from the *Worlds of Chrestomanci* series. It turned out to be an inspired choice.

To start with, going from Rowling to Wynne Jones is like going from a glass of fizzy grape juice to a glass of vintage claret. The quality of the characterisation is the most obvious difference. Rowling's characters barely make it out of the two-dimensional, where as Wynne Jones fills her book with thoroughly believable people with complex motivations.

Second, Wynne Jones has immensely more respect for her readers than Rowling. In the Harry Potter book the children go happily to a well-organised and supportive school for wizards where their only dangers are the school bullies and the somewhat scary but rather cartoonish Voldemort. In *Witch Week* the kids are all in a special school for disturbed children. In particular children whose parents have been burnt for witchcraft. As magical talent is genetic, many of them are likely to develop sorcerous powers, and therefore they need to be closely watched so that any potential witches can be identified and executed. Now that is seriously scary, but Wynne Jones expects her readers to be able to cope with it, and I think she's right. I also think she expects them to recognise the persecution of witches in the book as a parallel for persecution of people on the grounds of their religion or race. *Witch Week* is a book that asks its young readers to think.

In her treatment of the school environment Wynne Jones is also superior. In Rowling's book the bad kids are clearly bad and the teachers are generally fair. School isn't like that. Wynne Jones's nasty kids are the sort that will probably grow up to be politicians

because they ferment all the trouble but somehow manage to divert the blame onto the unpopular kids. The teachers, as is generally the case in real life, side with the gang leaders against their victims, because it is easier to let the kids enforce discipline than do it themselves.

OK, but here I have a problem. Rowling's books sell in container-loads whilst Wynne Jones's sales are steady but unimpressive. Rowling gets showered with awards. What am I missing? The answer, I think, is that Rowling writes the sort of books that parents want their children to read. And that, of course, is a stroke of marketing genius.

Take the depth for starters. Rowling tugs just enough at the emotions to create interest, but no more. There is no lasting impression. A parent reading *Witch Week*, on the other hand, might easily decide that it was too scary for her little dears. Parents don't like the idea of children's literature being challenging.

Also, Harry Potter is very old-fashioned. If it wasn't for the occasional reference to video games or reggae you could quite easily assume that it was set in the 1950s, not the present day. Indeed Hogwarts has all the trappings of a classic British public school. There is an argument for saying that in taking her children to Hogwarts Rowling is actually transporting them back into that earlier, simpler time that grown-ups fondly fantasise their childhood to have been. There is a definite air of Enid Blyton about Rowling's writing, and I'm sure that parents all over Britain love it.

Something else I noticed about *Harry Potter* is that the book was not written for children, it was written for boys. To be precise it was written for boys at that stage of development at which they detest all things female. There isn't a single sympathetic female character in the book. I

guess it is possible that Hermione Granger gets better in the later books, but in the first one she is an odious prig who is only allowed to join the good guys once her life has been saved by Harry and his friend Ron. The message for girl readers is plain and obvious.

Finally, of course, there is the question of the real life witch-hunt that has been waged against the Potter books. This again might have been a very clever piece of marketing, but I suspect that it was actually a naïve mistake on Rowling's part. To understand why it happened you have to understand how Christian Fundamentalists think.

You see these people are not stupid. They know that there are books like Wynne Jones's out there. They know that Tolkein books are full of magic. But they don't go after them. Why not? The obvious answer is that Rowling is simply a big target. That is certainly true, but having now read the book I think there is more to it than that.

What you have to remember about Christian Fundamentalists is that they believe that magic, demons and so on really exist. Given that, they tend to assume that anyone in history who was famous for being a magician probably actually was one. And they study these people to learn the signs: know thy enemy and all that.

Now it so happens that Nicholas Flamel, the alchemist mentioned in the Harry Potter book, is a real person. He lived in France during the 14th Century and his claims to have succeeded in making the Philosopher's Stone were given credence by the substantial donations to charity that he made in later life. Legend has it that he was seen at an opera in Paris in 1761. Furthermore, the description that Rowling gives of the Philosopher's Stone could have come straight out of a text book on

alchemy. Quite possibly out of Flamel's book.

Rowling probably thought that she was just doing her research properly. But you average Fundamentalist Witch Hunter is well aware of the difference between made up nonsense, like Hobbits, and Real Magic. Tolkein wrote fluff, which could safely be ignored, but Rowling is writing about the real thing, and that would be seen by the Fundamentalists as very dangerous indeed.

To sum up, I think it is wonderful that Rowling is such a phenomenon because it is causing a great deal of interest in children's literature. Hopefully it will lead people on to the really good stuff like Wynne Jones and Philip Pullman. But her success is not because she is writing good books. It is because she is writing the sort of vacuous nonsense that adults, in their wisdom, think kids ought to be reading. And heaping her with prizes for literature seems quite bizarre. Aleister Crowley once said that the fundamental law of magic was "everything I say three times is true". He should have been alive today. He would have made a fortune in marketing.

One final point. For some strange reason the name of Rowling's villain, Voldemort, brings to my mind the name of John Hertz's fanzine, *Vanamonde*. As a consequence I spent the entire book imagining Potter's arch enemy as a slight, earnest fellow wearing a propeller beanie under the hood of his voluminous black cloak. I do hope that John will forgive me.

Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone - J.K. Rowling - Bloomsbury - softcover

Witch Week - Diana Wynne Jones - Collins - softcover

Dark and Cold

This is the Maureen McHugh novel that isn't famous, and it is easy to see why. *Half the Day is Night* has all the usual McHugh trademarks, but compared to *China Mountain Zhang* and *Mission Child* it is limp and lifeless. The reason is very simple: McHugh has tried to write an adventure story.

Now hang on just a minute there. One of the primary identifying features of a Maureen McHugh novel is that it doesn't have a plot. The characters are introduced. They drift through the narrative. Things happen to them. And then the book stops. All of the important stuff is in what happens to them and what we are encouraged to think about by watching them. There is no resolution of events to speak of. And the person who writes books like this is trying to produce an adventure story? It doesn't work, does it? No.

Which is a shame really because McHugh can be very good. I like the way she makes the reader sit up and think about things. And I kept looking for the big issue around which this novel was centred. But it didn't seem to be there. There was a time when I thought the book was going to be about corruption in Third World countries. It is set in the Caribbean and the hero, who is French, is continually amazed and disgusted at how nothing can get done. But if there is a lesson in the book McHugh has made it sufficiently obscure that I couldn't find it. In the end the hero escapes to the US, but I doubt that we are really expected to decide that the Third World should be left to stew in a morass of its own making.

I should of course have mentioned that the book is set in an underwater city in the Caribbean. This, of course, is the alienation part of the book. Quite why McHugh has to always write about alienated characters I

do not know, but I can quite see that a surface dweller would as deeply disturbed by living deep under the sea as by living in space.

Other facets of the book seem to have been manufactured to no apparent purpose as well. The hero is French. Why? There is some suspicion that it will allow him to communicate with native Haitians, but it never comes to anything. Besides, he isn't really French, he is of Vietnamese extraction. But he was born in France and loves France dearly. Except he orders "a Chardonnay" to drink with Coq au Vin. With any other author I would be happy to accept the explanation that she knew nothing about wine. With McHugh I now always look for political correctness as an explanation. Doubtless having a French hero who knew something about wine would mean he was a stereotype.

Did I mention Haiti? Yes, there is mention of Voodoo. Yes, the heroine manages to get mixed up in it briefly and attends a Voodoo ceremony. There is much talk about Loas for a chapter or two. Then it is over and it doesn't get used again. No plot, you see.

Overall the book struck me as having been manufactured rather than written. It was if a whole bunch of essential elements of a McHugh book and a book about the Caribbean were welded together and then just left to drop off the end of the production line with no further thought. McHugh can do much better than this. I don't think it is an experiment she will repeat.

Half the Day is Night - Maureen McHugh - Orbit
- softcover

Past Perfect

As the actinic glare of his vessel's destruction faded from his retinae Captain Harrison found himself slumped on a bed in a grimy little bedsit, somewhere in the past. *The Pastel City* had broken up under the staccato hail of a myriad fragments of metal pounded into her golden hull by the reaction guns of the Philistine Federation fleet. But that had not destroyed her.

The command deck was still pressurised when the reality storm triggered by the detonation of the Centauri Device had struck. And the cat's cradle of probability vectors that had sprung into life on Harrison's strategy console was still visible on the screen of the small television that he now found at the foot of his bed. Somewhere a transistor radio blared out *Blockbuster* by The Sweet. "Early to mid 1970's", Harrison muttered to himself, "I wonder if Malcolm McLaren exists in this continuum."

"Art", thought Harrison later, having discovered he was in Glasgow on Earth and had fortified his howling stomach with a plastic, take-away bowl of curry, chips and grease. "The answer has to be in art." That much the anarchist, Sinclair-Patel, had taught him. The spaces between the galaxies, he now knew, were structured upon a skeleton of emotion: The Love Equation, as the android John Keats might have said. The future might be dead, but it could be recreated in art.

And so there was a book. A memory. A dream for generations to come. He could not know that it would work, but neither could he not try. It was unthinkable that the future should not contain wisecracking mindships with names like *Driftwood of Decadence*, *The Melancholia That Transcends All Wit* and *The Liverpool Medici*, adorned with vanes and noses as needle-sharp as

their intellect. Unthinkable that destruction should not be rained down on the deserts of Mars, called from the long throat of an electric guitar that his friend, Tiny Skeffern, would have died to possess. And where would galactic civilisation have been without the Cassini Division to protect the fledgling Earth colonies from the Fast Folk? If Harrison could just plant some ideas in creative minds, perhaps something of the history he had known could be saved.

Of course the publisher's blurb ended up comparing him to E.E. 'Doc' Smith. The Philistine Federation had to have come from somewhere.

Nineteen Seventy Fucking Five. And most of the SF published since then doesn't hold a candle to it. Truly, M. John Harrison is a treasure.

The Centauri Device - M. John Harrison - Panther - softcover

Signs of Ideas

I think that Semiotics has to be the ultimate on philosophical studies. Linguistics has allowed philosophers to argue about the meaning of what they write, but Semiotics allows them to argue about the meaning of the ideas that they are writing about. I can't see how tail-chasing can get any better than that.

All of which means that a book of essays by Umberto Eco, the very Prince of Semiotics, is going to be very confusing, and contain within it some very wonderful ideas. *Serendipities* is sub-titled *Language and Lunacy* and is a short collection of musings on language and ideas. Much of it is about the doomed search for a "perfect" language,

which might mean rediscovering the language spoken by man before Babel, or might mean inventing one. The essays show how this bizarre quest led searchers into much more interesting discoveries quite by accident. They also veer into other areas where mistaken ideas resulted in fortuitous discoveries.

I have to confess that I don't think I understood more than about 20% of it. My knowledge of languages and linguistics is poor, and my chances of matching Eco's awesome erudition are considerably less than my chances of playing quarterback for the 49ers. But Eco is always fascinating reading, and there is always some little nugget there for the inquisitive reader to find. Here's what I picked up.

1. Borges was into language design as well so I really, really must get round to reading that copy of *Collected Fictions* that I've been putting off for ages, except that it doesn't contain *Other Inquisitions* which includes an absolutely hilarious spoof of John Wilkins' attempts at an ideal language.
2. Leibniz was inspired in his work on binary calculus by reading the *I Ching* which, as all of us ageing hippies know, is composed of collections of broken and un-broken lines. Ah, if only they had been octagrams instead of hexagrams.
3. Most mediaeval intellectuals knew full well that the Earth was not flat, but the fact that some did not was inflated out of all proportion as further evidence of religious stupidity during the initial debates over evolution.
4. Way back in 1969, in *Conjectures and Refutations*, Karl Popper surmised that conspiracy theory has always been with us. In ancient times when things went wrong everyone assumed that The

Gods had taken a hand in mortal affairs. These days, as we do not believe in Gods, we blame the Illuminati instead.

OK, so I'm completely crazy, but I'm very happy to wade my way through a book of Eco's essays for little gems like that.

Serendipities - Umberto Eco - Phoenix - softcover

Hugo Nominations

No quite so hot off the press as they appeared just after I had sent out the last issue, here are the nominations for this year's Hugos.

Best Novel

(334 nominations for 183 novels)

A Civil Campaign by Lois McMaster Bujold (Baen); *Cryptonomicon* by Neal Stephenson (Avon); *Darwin's Radio* by Greg Bear (HarperCollins UK; Del Rey); *A Deepness in the Sky* by Vernor Vinge (Tor); *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban* by J.K. Rowling (Bloomsbury; Arthur A. Levine / Scholastic Press).

Best Novella

(191 nominations for 58 novellas)

The Astronaut From Wyoming by Adam-Troy Castro and Jerry Oltion (Analog 7-8/99); *Forty, Counting Down* by Harry Turtledove (Asimov's 12/99); *Hunting the Snark* by Mike Resnick (Asimov's 12/99); *Son Observe the Time* by Kage Baker (Asimov's 5/99); *The Winds of Marble Arch* by Connie Willis (Asimov's 10-11/99).

Best Novelette

(168 nominations for 130 novelettes, six nominees due to a tie)

Border Guards by Greg Egan (Interzone 10/99); *The Chop Girl* by Ian R. MacLeod (Asimov's 12/99); *Fossil Games* by Tom Purdom (Asimov's 2/99); *The Secret History of the Ornithopter* by Jan Lars Jensen (F&SF 6/99); *Stellar Harvest* by Eleanor Arnason (Asimov's 4/99); *1016 to 1* by James Patrick Kelly (Asimov's 6/99).

Best Short Story

(189 nominations for 158 short stories)

Ancient Engines by Michael Swanwick (Asimov's 2/99); *Hothouse Flowers* by Mike Resnick (Asimov's 10-11/99); *macs* by Terry Bisson (F&SF 10-11/99); *Sarajevo* by Nick DiChario (F&SF 3/99); *Scherzo with Tyrannosaur* by Michael Swanwick (Asimov's 7/99).

Best Related Book

(167 nominations for 74 related books)

Minicon 34 Restaurant Guide by Karen Cooper and Bruce Schneier (Rune Press); *The Sandman: The Dream Hunters* by Neil Gaiman and Yoshitaka Amano (DC Comics/Vertigo); *Science Fiction of the 20th Century* by Frank M. Robinson (Collectors Press); *The Science of Discworld* by Terry Pratchett, Ian Stewart, and Jack Cohen (Ebury Press) Spectrum 6: *The Best in Contemporary Fantastic Art* edited by Cathy and Arnie Fenner (Underwood).

Best Dramatic Presentation

(304 nominations for 106 dramatic presentations)

Being John Malkovich (Single Cell Pictures / Gramercy Pictures / Propaganda Films); *Galaxy Quest* (DreamWorks SKG); *The Iron Giant* (Warner Bros. Animation); *The Matrix* (Village Roadshow Productions / Groucho II Film Partnership/Silver Pictures); *The Sixth Sense* (Spyglass Entertainment / Hollywood Pictures).

Best Professional Editor

(203 nominations for 66 editors)

Gardner Dozois (Asimov's Science Fiction); David G. Hartwell (Tor/Forge; Year's Best SF); Patrick Nielsen Hayden (Tor Books; Starlight); Stanley Schmidt (Analog Science Fiction and Fact); Gordon Van Gelder (St. Martin's Press; Fantasy & Science Fiction).

Best Professional Artist

(196 nominations for 103 artists)

Jim Burns; Bob Eggleton; Donato Giancola; Don Maitz; Michael Whelan.

Best Semiprozine

(168 nominations for 38 semiprozines)

Interzone edited by David Pringle; *Locus* edited by Charles N. Brown; *The New York Review of Science Fiction* edited by Kathryn Cramer, Ariel Hamion, David G. Hartwell, and Kevin Maroney; *Science Fiction Chronicle* edited by Andrew I. Porter; *Speculations* edited by Kent Brewster.

Best Fanzine

(195 nominations for 94 fanzines)

Ansible edited by Dave Langford; *Challenger* edited by Guy H. Lillian III; *File 770* edited by Mike Glycer; *Mimosa* edited by Nicki and Richard Lynch; *Plokta* edited by Alison Scott, Steve Davies, and Mike Scott.

Best Fan Writer

(191 nominations for 147 fan writers)

Bob Devney; Mike Glycer; Dave Langford; Evelyn C. Leeper; Steven H Silver.

Best Fan Artist

(164 nominations for 101 fan artists)

Freddie Baer; Brad Foster; Teddy Harvia; Joe Mayhew; Taral Wayne.

John W. Campbell Award for Best New Writer

(110 nominations for 72 writers)

Cory Doctorow (2nd year of eligibility); Thomas Harlan (1st year of eligibility); Ellen Klages (2nd year of eligibility); Kristine Smith (1st year of eligibility); Shane Tourtellotte (2nd year of eligibility).

Not a lot to comment on there. Best Novel, I suspect, will depend heavily on whether Bujold can get a first count victory. If she can't then votes redistributed from two of Vinge, Bear and Stephenson may scupper it for her.

The thing I was scratching my head over is what *The Dream Hunters* is doing in Best Related Book. My first thought was that someone had confused it with *The Sandman Companion*. But no, the administrators say that this is the category in which it got most votes. The rationale, apparently, is that because it is so profusely illustrated it counts as an art book, not as fiction.

In Neil's place I would probably be rather insulted that someone had deemed my fiction unworthy of being allowed to compete. Neil, however, is much more phlegmatic. When I asked for his opinion he said:

"I wrote a letter to Terry Pratchett telling him how happy I was to be nominated for my first Hugo, how downcast I was to see I was up against HIS first Hugo, and then how I noticed we were up against the *Minicon 34 Restaurant Guide*, which rather put the whole thing into perspective. (It's a very good restaurant guide, and I really liked the stuff about eggs and tipping, but it still put it all into perspective.)"

I gather that the fannish newsgroups have been full of the usual vituperation over the fannish awards. Prime target this year has been Steven Silver who has committed the cardinal sins of a) spamming all and sundry begging for votes before the ballot,

and b) crowing about it loudly afterwards. Given that spam campaigns normally have a negative effect of people's chances, I suspect that Silver's self-promotion didn't have much effect other than to stir people's ire. He's in there because he's a Chicago local so lots of people with memberships will know him.

The real problem though, is that not enough people vote. Don't take any note of the figures by each category. Remember that each voter is allowed up to six nominations, so 195 nominations for Best Fanzine probably means less than 40 voters. Which is why I keep encouraging you to vote. And which is why things like campaigning and local popularity can have a strong effect on the result.

I haven't decided how I'm voting in all of the categories yet, but I think that the following can count on my votes: *Cryptonomicon*, *Galaxy Quest*, *Interzone*, *Plokta*, Bob Devney and Freddie Baer. Profuse apologies to Mr. Langford and Mr. Glycer, but they have won Hugos before and I'd like to see the rockets shared around a bit more.

Full nomination figures are not released until after the awards have been made, but obviously I didn't improve on my sixth place of last year. This is a shame for Kevin who tried really hard to get me a nomination, but I'm not really surprised. After all, most of the voters in the fannish categories are going to be fanzine editors, and if I believed everything that was written about me in fanzines I would have folded *Emerald City* in despair years ago, and probably topped myself as a service to humanity into the bargain.

Next year, I suspect, I won't be eligible. I've always been uneasy about the fanzine category. By one definition *Emerald City*

clearly is a fanzine because it is a very personal take on SF. On the other hand the SF fanzine community has made it abundantly clear that it does not want me as a member, and given how some of them behave that doesn't worry me in the slightest. Now that this year's Hugos are out of the way I'll be doing things to the web site that will probably incite further ire and waves of condemnation in certain quarters. If people want to bump me into the semi-prozine category that's fine by me.

As for fan writer, the rules say that it is for people who write regularly for fannish publications. Dave Langford is eligible though he is a full time writer and a column of *Ansible* extracts appears every month in *Interzone*. Any of the professional authors who write regularly for *Nova Express* and *Tangent* would be eligible. And any fan publication will do, be it fanzine, convention program book, on line newsgroup, or restaurant guide.

However, the vast majority of my writing appears, and will continue to appear, in *Emerald City*, and if EmCit is someday deemed no longer a fanzine, that means I will no longer be a fan writer.

Getting an award would be good. In particular it would be great to be able to thumb my nose at certain fanzine editors who believe that quality of writing is wholly dependent on the layout of the magazine, or on the manner in which the material is sent to readers. But as long as I'm enjoying writing the 'zine, and people occasionally tell me they enjoy reading it, I'm happy.

Footnote

That's it for another month. Next issue we will have more of Michaela Roessner's Medici cookery, Guy Gavriel Kay's Byzantine mosaic, and Jeff Ryman's life of Dorothy. Plus there will be a report on the goings on in Madison and any further progress towards the downfall of Patriarchy. With any luck there should also be the long-promised survey of web-based publishing. Guess I'd better stop wittering and get on with it.

Ciao,

Love 'n' hugs,

Cheryl