EMERALD CITY

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Introduction

Oh dear, this has been a bad month. Suffice it to say that I have been very busy doing lots of things and that reading books hasn't been one of them. Thank goodness for the Thanksgiving weekend, without which I would probably not have got this issue out. Oh well, in a couple of days I get to go on a business trip to the UK, which should mean lots of time on planes and trains, so hopefully next issue won't feel quite so thin.

This is especially embarrassing because I got a lot of new subscriptions this month. Which is strange because I have been far too busy to do any promotion of the site in ages. I can only assume that someone has reviewed *Emerald City* somewhere and has been very complimentary about it. If that is the case, whoever you are, thank you!

In This Issue

The Master Returns

Ray Bradbury, it seems, has been about forever. Why only a few months back he was a potential candidate for some of the Retro Hugo Awards for work published in 1950. And now here he is with a new book. It is perhaps only fitting that it should be called *From the Dust Returned*, and that it should be about a family whose longevity dwarfs that of Bradbury.

All stories have their own stories – the tales of how they came to be. It is perhaps only fair that stories as good as those Bradbury writes should, in turn, have great stories of their own. *From the Dust Returned* is a collection of short stories, loosely knitted into a novel, which have been published over many decades. The cover of the American edition reproduces the magazine cover especially commissioned for one of the earliest of the stories in 1946. *Homecoming* is a story about the Halloween reunion of a very strange family at a very strange mansion. The signature on the cover reads “Charles Addams”. And that’s all I’ll tell you. If you want to know the full story, Bradbury explains all in his afterword.

Sadly Bradbury’s UK publishers appear to have chosen to dispense with the Addams cover – or at least something very different is displayed on Amazon.co.uk. Presumably someone thought that no one in the UK would ever have heard of the Addams Family. Sigh. I guess it is some small consolation that it isn’t only Americans who can be painfully insular.

But what of the book? I hear you ask. Well, like I said, there’s this house, and this family. There are a mother and father; there is A Thousand Times Great Grandmère, still clad in her funerary wraps put upon her by her daughter, Nefertiti. There is giant Uncle Einar with his vast wings; there is beautiful Cecy who sleeps all day in the attic while her thoughts roam abroad, seeking sensation in the lives and minds of others. And there is Timothy, the mundane child abandoned on their doorstep with a note on his blouse that read simply, “historian”: Timothy, without whom none of this would be known. And of course we must not forget the House.

The House was a puzzle inside an enigma inside a mystery, for it encompassed silences, each one different, and beds, each a different size, some having lids. Some ceilings were high enough to allow flights with rests where shadows might hang upside down. The dining room nested thirteen chairs, each numbered thirteen so no one would feel left out of the distinctions such numbers implied. The chandeliers above were shaped from the tears of souls in torment at sea five hundred years lost, and the basement cellar kept five hundred vintage-year bins and strange names on the wine tucked therein and empty cubbies for future visitors who disliked beds or high ceiling perches.

It is not for nothing that the cover blurb describes Bradbury as “one of the most celebrated fiction writers of our time, or that the mainstream literary world has heaped him with honours, despite the fact that most of his work has been in genres that they normally regard as beneath contempt. Reading his prose is enough to make an amateur scribbler like me want to go and hide in a cupboard and never write another line again. Whatever “it” is, Bradbury has it. The guy can write, OK?

If I have a criticism of the book it is that it is perhaps too loosely knitted. Quite rightly, the original short stories appear to have been left, with one exception, as they were. Linking material has been added, but the end product does not have a cohesive story line. Those who like their novels to be complete stories may be disappointed. But those of us who are content to enjoy Bradbury’s writing for what it is, namely brilliant, are in for a treat.

From the Dust Returned - Ray Bradbury – Morrow - hardcover

Mystery Cruise

Now let’s see, this is a book by Pat Murphy. It features Max Merriwell who is a pseudonym of Pat Murphy, Weldon Merrimax and Mary Maxwell, who are both pseudonyms of Max Merriwell, and no less than three separate characters called Pat Murphy. No, dear reader, Pat has not come down with a bad case of megalomania, but rather a heavy dose of literary quantum absurdity.

OK, let's try to make some sense of all this. Susan Galina, A recently divorced librarian from San Francisco, wins a trip for two on the cruise liner, *Odyssey*. With her she takes her best friend, Pat Murphy, author of the Bad Grrlz Guide to Physics (www.badgrrlzguide.com – yes, it does exist). On board giving a writer's workshop is the famous science fiction writer, Max Merriwell, author of *There and Back Again*. Merriwell also writes romance novels such as *Wild Angel* under the name of Mary Maxwell, and mystery novels under the name of Weldon Merrimax. Merriwell has spent much care and attention on developing the characters of his pseudonyms, just as he would with a character in one of his books. Mary is a cheerful and resourceful adventuress, never lost for a practical solution to a sticky problem. Weldon, on the other hand, is a former carnival con man with a criminal record far shorter than the list of his crimes and a bitter outlook on life.

As the *Odyssey* leaves New York for Europe it passes into the infamous Bermuda Triangle where all sorts of odd things can happen. Max begins to get mysterious notes based on the *I Ching* stuck under his door. Tom Clayton, the ship's security officer, gets reports of a suspicious man apparently cheating passengers of hundreds of dollars at poker. Susan is befriended by a kindly, middle-aged woman called Mary. And Pat waxes lyrical on her web site on the subject of quantum physics and things that can both exist and not exist at the same time.

When I came to the Exploratorium, I assumed (like most people) that the world I see around me is the real world. After working at the Exploratorium I no longer believe that to be true.

Pat Murphy

Like *There and Back Again* and *Wild Angel*, *Adventures in Time and Space with Max Merriwell* is a young adult book that can also be enjoyed by adults who are not afraid of a little strangeness. The language is very approachable, the morality is straightforward without being narrow, and the weird ideas are very clearly explained. Reviews of the previous books in the series have described them using terms like "light hearted", "delightful romp" and "a joy to read". The same is true of the new volume. And yet Pat never sacrifices truth for simplicity. From her discussions of physics to the inter-personal relationships in the book, Pat never shirks from describing what is. If you want books that kids can read that do not reduce the world to the black and white morality of a mass market fantasy novel you cannot do better than introduce them to Pat Murphy.

As for the book itself, it is probably best avoided by persons of an extreme male disposition who cannot abide stories in which characters do icky, girly things like fall in love and have happy endings. You might also wish to avoid it if you happen to believe that there is but one reality and that it was created and made immutable by the god in which you happen to believe. But then if you have views like that, what are you doing reading this 'zine in the first place? Everyone else should find it enjoyable, intriguing and delightfully silly without at any point being childish.

We are all science fiction writers; we are all liars. Without knowing it, we make up stories about our world. And then we believe that our stories are true and ignore our own roles in creating the version of the world in which we live.

Pat Murphy

Somewhere along the way, Pat also manages to have a bunch of profound things to say about the nature of reality, not just in the realm of fundamental physics, but in the realm of fiction, and all points in between, including daily life. Susan begins the book mildly depressed and with a deep sense of lack of self-worth, a product of years of living with a control-freak who has just divorced her for failing to live up to his expectations. By the end of the book she realises that this is just a story that her ex-husband wrote for her, and that she has no need to play that role any more. She can be someone else, someone she can create herself.

It is no great new insight to describe fiction writing as a form of lying. Oscar Wilde wrote a famous essay on the subject. But Pat has done the best job I have ever seen of relating that truth both to daily life and to the nature of the universe. Chaos happens. Indeed, everything in the universe tends that way. The only way to live is to roll with the dice and take change as it comes. It is no accident, I suspect, that the deeply disturbed and socially maladjusted Weldon Merrimax is listed as the author of a book called *Tell me no lies*. It is, of course, a good title for a crime thriller, which is what Merrimax writes. But it is also the cry of someone who wants life to be just so, just as he wants it, and who blames the rest of the universe when things do not go as required.

Pat says in her afterword that this book forms the end of her experiment with alternate selves. That's fine by me. They are her books, after all. But I can't help but feel a bit sad at the thought that we might never see a book with the irrepressible Mary Maxwell as the lead character, flaming rum monkeys and all (and you have to read the book to find out what that is all about). Maybe Pat will come back to her one day. In the meantime I look forward to whatever Pat should choose to write next. It is bound to be good.

Adventures in Space and Time with Max Merriwell – Pat Murphy – Tor – hardcover

Need to Know Only

There are some things that only the security services need to know. Even amongst themselves, spies hoard information like diamonds. And, of course, if they hear of some new secret, they go after it like a greyhound out of a trap. But there are some things that mankind was not meant to know at all. Secrets can be dangerous.

On the face of it, Tim Power's latest book, which has just become the joint recipient of the World Fantasy Award for Best Novel, is a straightforward spy story. Powers is a big fan of John le Carré, and *Declare* is a book borne of that love. It treats of the cold war, of secret circles within secret circles in the intelligence agencies. One of the major characters is the famous Soviet double agent, Kim Philby. But this is Tim Powers we are talking about here, and that means that the supernatural cannot be far away.

The story wends back and fore in time using flashbacks to fill us in on the lives and careers of the main characters. Philby, of course, is world famous, although the eccentricities of his father are known only to aficionados of the spying game. Andrew

Hale is Powers' hero. Another member of British intelligence, and potential Soviet double agent, his life parallels that of Philby in mysterious ways. It is Hale who lead the disastrous British expedition to Mount Ararat in 1948 which resulted in the deaths of all of the British and Soviet soldiers involved. Elena Theresa Ceniza-Bendiga is the official love interest. She and Hale worked together for Soviet intelligence as teenagers during WWII. Their lives, and that of Philby, cross repeatedly in the coming years. The thread that holds them together is Operation Declare, a long-running project of which the 1948 Ararat mission was merely a chapter.

So what is it, exactly, that Hale went to Ararat for? Why were the Soviets there and what were they trying to do? How does this connect with the construction of the Berlin Wall in 1945, or the long-term survival of the Soviet State? Why, in both Ararat and Berlin, did Hale seek to protect himself by carrying an ankh? What was the role of T.E. Lawrence in the early phases of the operation? Is Hale really Lawrence's illegitimate son, and if so why does that matter? Why does Powers keep slipping in comments about tentacles and unearthly piping noises as if they were some secret code that anyone familiar with a certain type of weird fiction should instantly recognise?

There is little doubt that Powers is one of the finest writers of this sort of strangeness in the world today. His excursion into spy fiction suggests, though I am no expert in that genre, that he would be well at home there too. The only question is how successful the meld has been. Do the two worlds fit comfortably with each other? In the end I was not sure. The spy novel side of things appeared to work very well, at least to my inexpert eye. The supernatural element was also, for the most part, well done. Where the book stumbled slightly (and this is, I think, a fairly small complaint) is that Powers tried too hard to rationalise everything in order to fit it into the spy story mould.

What I mean is this. The central nature of any Lovecraftian story is the alien ineffability of the Great Old Ones and their ilk. We cannot comprehend how they think, or the powers that they wield. We are powerless against them. Powers does a good job of making his monsters believably alien in thought patterns. I particularly liked their obsession with geometry – another quiet nod to the master. But in the end, if military intelligence is involved, there will be scientific analysis, and there will be men with machine guns and helicopter gunships. And at that point the book ceases to be Lovecraftian and becomes just another adventure story.

Fortunately it is a very good adventure story. It is also superbly researched. Powers has it all down, from the behaviour of spies to Bedouin culture to the mysteries of Mount Ararat and, most importantly, the life of Kim Philby. The whole story is monstrously believable – far more so that any of the nonsense put out by populist occult writers or tabloid newspapers. It is a pleasure to see an author put so much care and effort into a book. I can't say that I am pleased that the book won the World Fantasy Award, because one of the other contenders was *Perdido Street Station*, but I would be happy to give *Declare* an honourable second place.

Declare – Tim Powers – Morrow – hardcover

Monumental Science

"Before I draw nearer to that stone to which you point", said Scooge, *"answer me one question. Are these the shadows of things that Will be, or are they shadows of things that May be, only?"*

Charles Dickens – *A Christmas Carol*

Fast forward some 180 years or so into the future. The stones we are talking about are not small things in graveyards, but rather vast monuments towering hundreds of feet into the sky. Each monument commemorates a military victory by the great dictator, Kuin. The monuments appear very suddenly, often in the middle of cities causing thousands of deaths. They are impervious to attack or analysis. In each case the appearance of the monument is precisely 20 years and three months prior to the victory that it commemorates. But the question that a frightened world has to ask itself is identical to that which faced Ebenezer Scrooge: are these portents of things that must be, or can the future somehow be averted?

Robert Charles Wilson has a penchant for strange arrivals. The last book of his that I reviewed, *Darwina*, had Europe suddenly vanishing and being replaced by a jungle continent from another age. *The Chronoliths* is much less dramatic in its immediate effects, but the consequences are potentially enormous. Although the book talks cheerfully about tau-turbulence, fermionic decohesion, Calabi-Yau space and other bits of cutting-edge fundamental physics that might make these mysterious "time stones" possible, it is actually a political fable.

The starting point of Wilson's thesis is mankind's desire for certainty. Chaos, for all that it might be the natural state of the universe, is frightening. People want to impose certainty upon their lives. They want to know what is going to happen tomorrow. By showing people the inevitability of his victory, not to mention his awesome technology, Kuin lays the groundwork for his eventual triumph. Before long groups of Kuinists loyal to the future dictator can be found in every corner of the world. Quite simply, they want to be on the winning side, and are sufficiently disaffected to not care that this might mean brining the planet under a dictatorial heel. Elsewhere we find the appeasers, people who are well aware of the dangers that Kuin poses, but who are happy to trade those dangers for the certainty that he brings to their lives. Only the fact that Wilson must have written the book long before September prevents these people from coming out with the favourite new American catch phrase, "anything to be safe".

The struggle between safety and chaos is mirrored in the human-interest side of the book. The hero, Scott Warden, begins the story as something of a beach bum in Thailand. He had gone out there to work on a computer project, but elected to stay when the job ended, exchanging the rat race of America for a culture of sun, sea and cheap drugs. His grand plans to write a book about this world never came to anything, and he soon reduced himself, his wife and young daughter to penury. While Scott is away with a drug-dealer friend examining the first ever Chronolith, his daughter, Kaitlin, becomes dangerously ill and nearly dies. This is all too much for his wife, Janice, who heads for home and the divorce courts.

The rest of the book is taken up with Scott's struggle to redeem himself in the eyes of his daughter, not to mention assuage his own guilt. Through dint of hard work, courage and some luck, including his involvement with the Chronolith phenomenon, he manages this. Meanwhile

Janice starts a new life with a conservative, upwardly mobile and socially respectable man, just the sort of chap that she always wished Scott could be. She embarks on becoming the perfect wife of a perfect husband with a perfect daughter, a perfect home and a lifestyle that is utterly safe and conformist. She learns too late that her new husband is prepared to sacrifice anything, even Kait, to maintain his reputation and position in society.

As in the macrocosm, so in the microcosm. On both levels Wilson shows us the dangers of surrendering liberty and freedom of choice for the illusory safety of a certainty imposed by someone else. It is a well-crafted and powerful fable, with just enough intriguing science to make you want to read Brian Greene’s *The Elegant Universe* all over again to see if this time travel stuff is really feasible. My only complaint about the book is that, despite its obvious strong emotional content, it doesn’t hit you in the guts. Wilson describes the events of the story with a scientific detachment that manages to preclude involvement of the reader in what is going on. It is all there. You can see the drama of events. But you are not part of it. This is a shame, because it prevents a very good book from becoming a truly great one.

The Chronoliths - Robert Charles Wilson -Tor - hardcover

Tabula Rasa

There are very many first contact novels, and almost as many approaches to the sub-genre. Some books focus on the difficulties of communication, others on the strangeness of the alien beings, and yet others on the war that their authors see as inevitable between mankind and anyone who is at all different. Some of the best books of this kind, however, use the idea of first contact to take a close look at mankind, using the unique viewpoint of the aliens to see ourselves in a new light. *A Paradigm of Earth*, by Candas Jane Dorsey, is one such novel.

The book begins normally enough. The aliens arrive out of the blue, and they are blue: humanoid, but with blue skin and dark blue hair. "We are here to learn about your world", they say. And then, in true *Mission Impossible* style, "this recording will be erased shortly. Take care of the beings. Teach them. We will collect them in due course." And then the blue visitors collapse. When they wake, they have the minds of small babies.

As far as the UN can ascertain, at least twelve aliens were delivered to Earth, each to a different country. Some governments will not admit to having one. Others keep theirs incommunicado and refuse to share research data. Each country, as much as its governmental paranoia will allow it, tries to teach the blue visitors about its own culture, portraying itself in a good light. Who knows what the aliens will find worthy when they return?

Meanwhile, in Canada, Constance Morgan Shelby is wallowing in self-pity and recrimination. Her father has just died; her mother committed suicide rather than live without him; a disabled child in her care at the hospital where she works died in surgery. For Morgan, as she calls herself, there can be only one explanation: it is all her fault. She must detach herself from all emotional commitments, and work hard at serving others to redeem herself. Yet unexpectedly her mother's will bequeaths her a large house, one where she has to take in lodgers to make ends meet. And having quit her job at the hospital she applies for a seemingly simple child-minding post, only to discover that the child in question has blue skin. In Morgan the alien seems to recognise a kindred spirit, a being as empty and lonely as itself. It takes to her, and she gets the job.

And so it is that Canada's alien ends up living in a communal household full of artistic people with unconventional lifestyles and radical political opinions. There are many places in the book where I found this quite unbelievable. I don't think that today's Canadian government would allow it, let alone the future one of the book, which is sufficiently right wing to have raised the age of consent for gay and lesbian sex to 25. But it makes for a great story. It also gives the alien, "Blue" as it decides to call itself, a very different perspective on humanity. Or rather, it gives it a view of humanity, whereas one raised in a government research establishment would almost certainly gain nothing but a view of Earth. I mean, would any government be foolish enough to let the aliens know what a bunch of cunning, deceitful, manipulative bastards we humans are?

Blue, however, learns how to be human from inside an unconventional extended family, a group with a variety of sexual tastes, and almost as many sexual jealousies as there are possible pairings. Most importantly, Blue learns about love and hope and openness, and how closed minds breed hatred. It learns what mankind is, and what it can be at its best.

Commenting on the book, Candas says it is not really about first contact, it is about love. It is certainly very heavy on the emotional content. As such, it is probably condemned to be seen as a girly book. The dealing with politics gets better as the book goes on, but you never lose the feeling that the actions of the politicians and the amazingly incompetent secret service agents are fitted to the needs of the novel rather than worked out. I suspect also that because the book is really about people, not about aliens, that many SF fans will be disappointed at the paths that are not followed.

Those comments apart, however, I found it a very fine book indeed. Its treatment of relationships and the age-old fundamental question of "how shall we live in a cruel world?" is excellent. In an issue full of good books, I found this one the most thoughtful. Its treatment of gay lifestyles will, I suspect, make it a front runner for next year's Tiptree. If it doesn't get other awards, that will also probably be because of the gay themes. Sad but, as Blue came to learn, it is a tough old world that we live in.

A Paradigm of Earth - Candas Jane Dorsey - Tor - hardcover

Hugo Fact and Myth

In the three months since Worldcon a remarkable amount of nonsense has been written about the Hugo Awards. Most of it has been in letters to magazines such as *Locus* or *New York Review of Science Fiction*, and almost all of it has been occasioned by the award of this year’s Best Novel prize to *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire*. Kevin has been fighting a losing battle against the tide of misconception – writing letters pointing out where people have said things that are flat out wrong. But in all such things volume tends to win out, so I figured I ought to do my bit to help stamp out the urban myths that appear so prevalent. I am, after all, the official guardian of the Constitution of the World Science Fiction

Society (WSFS), so hopefully my word counts for something. Here goes.

1. There is no secret committee of the great and good that decides who is to get the Hugo Awards. The mysterious "they" who were responsible for the Harry Potter win were hundreds of members of The Millennium Philcon who voted on the award in a totally democratic process. Anyone can participate in this process simply by joining the current Worldcon. People who object to the results of Hugo voting and who did not participate in that voting have only themselves to blame.

2. The Hugo Awards are not, and have never been, solely reserved for science fiction. The WSFS Constitution states: "*Hugo Awards are given for work in the field of science fiction <u>or fantasy</u>*" (my underling). The primary reason for this is that the dividing line between SF and fantasy is so blurred that no sane Hugo Administrator would want to be responsible for enforcing it. Past winners of Hugos have included two Indiana Jones movies and *Weyr Search* by Anne McCaffrey (Best Novella, 1968). Although the Pern series does have an SF back-story, few people today would argue with its classification as fantasy. When we look at nominees even more borderline cases arise. Many people objected to the inclusion of *Cryptonomicon* in the 2000 Hugo list on the grounds that it was a thriller, not SF. The book that came a distant second to Potter this year was George's Martin's *A Storm of Swords*, also a pure fantasy novel.

3. The ConJosé committee has no authority to change the rules of the Hugo Awards to create separate categories for fantasy, or to ban fantasy books from the Awards. The only body that has the power to change the rules of the Hugos is the WSFS Business Meeting. Once again, that is a democratic institution. To participate you simply have to join ConJosé. Any two persons can introduce a motion, and if, as the letter writers seem to believe, the desire to ban fantasy from the Hugos is universal save for the mysterious and secret "Hugo Committee", then presumably such a motion would pass.

4. The Hugos used to be called the "Science Fiction Achievement Awards", but that description has not been used officially for many years. The term appears only in one place in the WSFS Constitution, and there it is presented as an alternative name, not the official name of the Awards. That usage is in Article 1 of the Constitution, the section that deals with the nature of WSFS. It does not appear at all in Article 3, the section that defines the Hugo Awards.

OK? Got all that? Of course you have. Regular readers of *Emerald City* will know all of this stuff anyway. You will have read my plain English guide to the Hugos on the web site (http://www.emcit.com/hugos_faq.shtml). But there are plenty of people out there who are still confused and you can do your bit to help enlighten them.

The bottom line is as follows. This year's Hugo results are not the fault of Saul Jaffe or Rick Katze (the MilPhil administrators), nor of Todd Dashoff and his committee. They are not the fault of some mysterious WSFS committee, because no much committee exists. There is nothing that I, as WSFS Secretary, or Kevin and John Lorentz (the ConJosé Administrators) or Tom Whitmore (the ConJosé Chairman) can do to change the rules for this year. The 2001 Hugo results are the fault of the hundreds of people who voted, and of the vastly larger body of people who were entitled to vote, or could have become entitled to vote, but chose not to bother. Short answer, if you are unhappy with the way things are, you have to get off your backside and do something yourself, no one else will do it for you.

End of rant.

In the midst of all this nonsense it surprises me that almost no one has bothered to site back and wonder why pure fantasy novels are doing so well in the Hugos. What is certain is that the Potter win is not an isolated incident. As I have already said, the second placed novel this year was also pure fantasy. And if we look at the top fifteen nominees from this year we find the following other fantasy-tinged works.

In 5th place was Nalo Hopkinson's *Midnight Robber* which, while using many SF tropes, also make much use of themes from Trinidadian mythology and is likely to be regarded as "fantasy" by many of the letter-writing zealots. Sixth was *Declare*, reviewed in this issue, which is a spy/horror crossover. Seventh was *In Green's Jungles* by Gene Wolfe. Wolfe's work, while clearly having SF content, is generally marketed as fantasy. Tenth was Terry Pratchett's *The Truth*, a pure fantasy novel, and eleventh Mary Gentle's *Ash* which is a fantasy with an SF twist. Thirteenth was Sean Stewart's *Galveston*, co-winner with *Declare* of the World Fantasy Award. Fourteenth was Philip Pullman's *The Amber Spyglass*, both a fantasy and a children's book.

So is it the case that no decent SF is being written these days? Certainly not, but as I have noted before some of the best stuff is currently coming out of the UK and consequently does not get noticed by the predominantly American Hugo electorate. A 5-way tie for 15th place includes *Revelation Space* by Al Reynolds, a book that I hope to see higher on this list next year thanks to the eligibility extension. But it does seem to be true that little good SF is being written in America. It is also true that writers are abandoning SF. At the Foundation conference in Liverpool earlier this year Gwyneth Jones said very clearly that she had written *Bold as Love* as a fantasy/SF crossover because that was what was selling these days.

Now of course you can argue that it doesn't matter if all of the best genre books around these days are fantasy, we should kick them out anyway. But that seems to be a rather defeatist attitude. There are good SF writers out there, and people who love SF should be looking out for those works and promoting them. Thank goodness for Tor reprinting UK novels in the US, even if they are always a year late.

Having said that, they are trying to get better, but they are about to fall through a hole in the WSFS Constitution. Tor is planning to publish John Clute's *Appleseed* and Ken MacLeod's *Dark Light* next January. Both of these books are already (or are about to be) published in the UK. Due to a quirk of the WSFS Constitution, the eligibility extension only applies to non-US books published in the prior year that are not published in the US until after <u>January 31st</u> of the eligibility year. By choosing to publish in January, Tor are probably killing any chance these two books (one of which is superb and the other of which I expect to be superb) have of getting a Hugo nomination. Someone find Patrick Nielsen Hayden and beat him over the head now. It would be a travesty to see Clute and MacLeod lose out like that. Publish February 1st, guys, please.

Miscellany

File 770

There are few things that Kevin and I ever fight over, but new issues of *File 770* are high on the list. Both of us want to be first to see what fine fannish gossip Mike Glyer has turned up this time. The latest issue contains Mike's MilPhil report, which from the little I have managed to see of it so far is excellent. In particular I am pleased to be able to clear up some confusion regarding the attendance figures for Philadelphia.

To date the only number for attendees that MilPhil had released was 4,600. This is disappointing, and suggests a smaller than average Worldcon. However, Mike has now published a full breakdown of the membership and it turns out that this figure is what we call the "accounting membership". In this method of calculating membership, day members are treated as fractions of a member, because they only pay a fraction of a full membership cost. The "warm body count", that is the number of unique individuals who paid to attend the convention, is always higher. As MilPhil had a greater than usual number of at-the-door members, many of whom only attended for a few days, it is a lot higher: slightly over 5,000, in fact. This is much more encouraging.

Talking of getting things straight, the 'zine also provides a classic example of how we fan editors get to be hated. In my original MilPhil report I commented on the temporary banning of party reporters, Baty and Bobo, from the newsletter, and supplied a rumour that I had heard as to why it happened. I made it clear it was a rumour, and when I received corrections I put things right last issue. Dear Mike, bless him, reported my rumour as if I had printed it as fact. I don't blame him for this. He has a 'zine to produce with time and space constraints. He isn't going to worry too much about being fair to me. I just hold it up as an example as how word gets around that I have said awful things about people whereas in fact I just get misquoted. If you write, it happens.

Anyway, *File 770* is required reading for everyone in fandom. Contact Mike at MGlyer@compuserve.com and ask for subscription details.

SF Commentary

Also in the 'zine pile this month is the latest issue of Bruce Gillespie's awesome *SF Commentary*. As I have probably said before, this is the only fanzine whose content and production values are on a par with, if not above, everything that appears in the semi-prozine category of the Hugos. I am pleased to say that the 'zine is now available as a PDF. Of course you won't get the full glory of the Dick Jensen covers that way, but at least you will get to read it without having to pay postage from Australia. Write to Bruce at gandc@mira.net and beg for a copy. Then, when you have seen it, you will send him money for the printed version.

Online fiction index

Useful new sites turn up on the Internet all the time. One I don't think I have plugged before is *Ahmed Khan's Index of Online Fiction* (http://www.angelfire.com/zine2/fictiononline/). There is a lot of fiction published online these days, and finding the good stuff is hard. Ahmed has taken it upon himself to do that job for you. Amongst other things he chooses sites that pay their authors, which is always a good indicator of quality. If you are into short stories, this site is well worth checking out.

Fantastic Metropolis

Another new site that is well worth checking out is *Fantastic Metropolis* (http://www.sfsite.com/fm/). This is a sub-site of *SF Site* created by Gabe Chouinard whose review site *Dislocated Fictions* (http://www.sfsite.com/gabe01.htm) I hope I have already remembered to plug. The *Fantastic Metropolis* site contains essays and fiction as well as reviews, and with contributors such as Dave Langford, Michael Moorcock and M. John Harrison, how can it fail? Am I impressed? Surely. Am I jealous? You betcha. *Fantastic Metropolis* is doing what I want *Emerald City* to do, only better.

The World Fantasy Awards

As mentioned briefly elsewhere, this year's World Fantasy Awards have been decided. The winners are as follows:

Lifetime Achievement: Frank Frazetta, Philp José Farmer;

Best Novel: *Declare*, Tim Powers (Subterranean Press, Morrow) & *Galveston*, Sean Stewart (Ace);

Best Novella: *The Man on the Ceiling*, Steve Rasnic Tem & Melanie Tem (American Fantasy);

Best Short Fiction: *The Pottawatomie Giant*, Andy Duncan (Sci Fiction, 11.01.00);

Best Anthology: *Dark Matter: A Century of Speculative Fiction from the African Diaspora*, Sheree R. Thomas, ed. (Warner Aspect);

Best Collection: *Beluthahatchie and Other Stories*, Andy Duncan (Golden Gryphon);

Best Artist: Shaun Tan;

Special Award Professional: Tom Shippey (for *J.R.R. Tolkien: Author of the Century* (HarperCollins UK; Houghton Mifflin 2001));

Special Award Non-Professional: Bill Sheehan (for *At The Foot Of The Story Tree: An Inquiry into the Fiction of Peter Straub* (Subterranean Press)).

Special congratulations are due to Andy Duncan who looks set to rival Michael Swanwick as the King of Short Fiction and to Shaun Tan whose work is rarely seen outside his native Australia.

Footnote

Whew! Got it done after all. If this issue is full of typos, that is because Kevin is away for the weekend and I haven't got this done in time to let Anne take a look at it. Sorry.

Next issue, with any luck, I'll be able to get the November releases from the UK. This means that as well as the new Justina Robson I will also have novels from Tom Arden and Ken MacLeod. Should be good.

Ciao,

Love 'n' hugs,

Cheryl