

EMERALD CITY #120

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

Introduction

Well, here we are again. Worldcon has come and gone. Not such exciting news this time. Out of three Hugo nominations we picked up two 2nd places and one 3rd place. That's an absurdly good result, and I should not let the lack of actually rocketry worry me. On behalf of myself, Anne, Kevin and Tony, thank you very much, everyone who voted for us.

Traditionally, of course, this is the issue in which I provide an in-depth examination of the good and bad points of the recent Worldcon. However, as I wasn't there that is a little problematical. There are links to a number of other people's reports on the blog. Thus far Kevin and I are delighted with the feedback that Events has been getting. However, there's been very little analysis of the convention (as opposed to individual panels) so I'm going to try to do an overview of what appears to have happened.

What I was very pleased with was the number of people who tuned in to my not-quite-live coverage of Worldcon through my blog. I think I did rather well given that I wasn't there. Though of course I could not have done such a good job without the help of Niall Harrison and Nicholas Whyte blogging the Hugo results from their mobiles.

So the blog is going up in the world. And continues to do so. In the month of September it will be one of the two Featured Blogs on the web sites of *Asimov's* and *Analog* magazines. So, if you are a writer, publisher, convention organizer, or anyone else with news to get out, September would be a good time to send it to me.

In the meantime, it has not escaped my notice that 120 issues means that *Emerald City* is just completing its 10th year of publication. That seems to be viewed as some sort of major landmark, so I have been doing a bit of thinking about the future direction of the magazine. Things are going to change a little round here. More of that below.

One thing that will not change, however, is the presence of reviews of very good books. We have a whole pile of them here. Enjoy!

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Ten Years On

Where we are now?

As I mentioned in the Introduction, this issue marks the end of ten years of publication for *Emerald City*. That's enough to cause anyone to pause and reflect, but in my case I have a rather more pressing reason for doing so. All of the time and money I have spent over the past year helping make Interaction a successful Worldcon has put me in a position where my financial state is best described as "near terminal". Unlike Kevin I don't have a full-time job that I can use to buffer the debts incurred in having a senior job on a Worldcon committee. I have to make money now, otherwise I don't eat. And that means that I can no longer afford to spend money on a hobby such as running *Emerald City*.

Possibly the smart thing to do at this juncture is to fold before I embarrass myself. But I don't particularly like quitting, and I know a lot of people out there enjoy this magazine, so I'm going to try the alternative, which is to make *Emerald City* self-supporting.

The magazine already earns a small amount of money from book sales via Amazon, but that isn't enough to pay the web hosting bills, let alone any other costs. Therefore I need to be a bit more aggressive about getting money. I'll talk about how I intend to do that later, but first I have to face up to the fact that what I'll be doing is essentially commercial, and therefore un-fannish. Which is why I said last month that from now on I want *Emerald City* classed as a semiprozine.

Fanzines and Semiprozines

When I first started *Emerald City* the idea was to keep in touch with various friends in the UK and USA after having started a job in Australia. At that time it was very much a traditional fanzine. But it very quickly evolved. I stopped talking so much about life Down Under, and started talking about the great writers I had found there. Very quickly, *Emerald City* became a book review magazine. What it didn't do was acquire any pretensions to professionalism. That's about to change.

Does this matter? Quite possibly not. Obviously I'll never win another Best Fanzine Hugo. From now on I'll be in the Best *Locus* category and get quite justly thumped by Charles Brown every year. But the purpose of *Emerald City* is not to win awards for Cheryl Morgan, it is to encourage people to buy and read good books. That's what I enjoy doing most. That's what keeps me putting this magazine out each month.

Getting away from the "fanzine" tag may also have some other benefits. One of the things that I learned from working on Interaction is that, as far as selling SF books goes, fandom, especially in the UK, is not terribly relevant. Here's a useful statistic. Ottakars, one of the three big bookstore chains in the UK, has a regular newsletter aimed solely at SF&F readers. It has an email circulation of around 200,000. All of those people must be SF&F book buyers, and yet Eastercon struggles to attract much more than 500 members. There's a potential audience out there that I want to reach.

Right now I am not reaching it. One reason for that might be the "fanzine" tag. Something I'm seeing more and more often of late is people listing online book review sites, but either not mentioning

Emerald City at all, or having a separate category of "fan sites", with *Emerald City* in the latter. In the last couple of months I have seen the magazine described as "fan oriented" and "for fanatics", as opposed to sites like *TAO*, *SF Revu*, *The Agony Column* and so on, which are described as professional. In addition I've recently been getting people writing to me asking for information about "my club" and journalists wanting to know which TV characters I like to dress up as. This is not good marketing.

It is ironic really. I have spent 10 years fighting within fandom for the right for a fanzine to be allowed to talk seriously about SF, and now I find that people outside fandom won't take me seriously because "everyone knows" fanzines are for nut cases. Sigh.

Broadening Horizons

Something else that going "semipro" will allow me to do is get more contributors. This is something I have wanted to do for a long time. There are certain areas of the SF/F/H field that I'm just not comfortable reviewing because I don't like those kinds of books very much. *Emerald City* will be a much better magazine if each sub-genre is reviewed by someone who is an expert in the field. I'm very happy to have Mario specializing in Horror short fiction. I have an offer from someone to do "sex-and-vampires" stories, and so on. And I would like to run some more serious articles by professional critics. But if there's one thing I have learned about Internet publishing it is that you can't get a good stable of writers unless you pay them.

In some ways it is sad that the old fanzine ethic is going away. But it is also understandable. Publishing is now

ludicrously easy. Why should you write for anyone else when you can write for your own blog? And with a few quick mouse clicks you can send the same article to lots of people. The only way an online magazine can get good, exclusive content is to pay people and ask for a short period of exclusivity in return. *Strange Horizons* does this, so does *The Internet Review of Science Fiction*. I need to do the same.

So, hopefully, if some money comes in, you'll see more guest articles, and a much broader coverage of the genre field. That, I think, has to be good.

Where do we go from here?

The starting point is that I'm going to ask each one of you to contribute \$12 a year as a "subscription". I put that in quotes because I can't enforce this. The web site will remain wholly open and free for now. I don't have the software skills to create a password system, and knowing fandom if I did people would very quickly start posting their login information on their LiveJournals and on Trufen.net so that others didn't have to pay to access the site.

As a voluntary subscription, however, it works out as \$1 per issue, which I think is a reasonable charge. It also happens to be what *The Internet Review of Science Fiction* charges, so there is precedent. All of that money will go towards the running of the magazine.

The next question is how you get me the money. The easy thing to do is send me money by PayPal. You can do that online here

<<http://www.emcit.com/subscribe.shtml>>. If you don't have a PayPal account, the same screen will accept credit cards.

For the benefit of those of you who don't trust PayPal, I'm happy to accept checks (or cheques) in US dollars, British Pounds or Australian dollars. I'm working on Canadian dollars and Euros. The snail mail address is:

PO Box 64128
Sunnyvale, CA 94088-4128
USA.

I also intend to take commercial advertising. This will be mainly small and unobtrusive (for example Google ads, which many fannish blogs already feature). I promise you there will be nothing flashing or otherwise animated. I've seen the research on Internet advertising and I know how much people hate blinking things.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, I want you to buy more books. I do sell a few through Amazon, but I know a lot of you prefer to give your money to specialist dealers. That is why this issue sees the start of a relationship between *Emerald City* and The Aust Gate, run by UK fan and dealer, Iain Emsley. This should provide you with a much more personal and specialist buying experience. I'm also hoping it will make it much easier for you to buy the small press books I keep plugging. Iain's business is UK-based, but we'll do our best to expand it internationally as fast as we can. Iain can, of course, ship internationally now, but we are looking at ways to make it easier for overseas customers to buy. You'll see links for buying from The Aust Gate after reviews of all books that Iain carries. And yes, *Emerald City* does get commission, but just like with Amazon, you don't pay any more.

Please note that the one thing I do not intend to do is take income from *Emerald City*. I want to cover costs, and pay

contributors, but I'm well aware that you can't make a living from Internet publishing and I'm not trying to do so. Because I'm legally based in the UK rather than the US I can't set up one of those convenient non-Profit corporations. I'll have to declare the magazine's revenue as income, but as it should all go out again in costs I don't suppose I'll be paying any tax on it.

Doubtless there will be questions about the direction of the magazine. I'm certainly not planning to compete head-on with *Locus*. I have no intention of carrying exhaustive lists of new books or anything like that. If I have news, it will go mainly on the blog. I'm also not intending to compete with *Strange Horizons*. *Emerald City* has never carried fiction or poetry, and I don't plan to change that. If anything I guess I'm competing with *The Internet Review of Science Fiction*. Not that I have anything against them. They are nice folks. But I was here first so the way I see it is that they are competing with me.

There will also be questions about what people get for their money. Right now, of course, it is not much more than a warm and fuzzy feeling. In the longer term you'll be getting more and better content (although of course people who don't pay will too.) But I'm certainly intending to see what I can do in terms of getting benefits for subscribers. One of the long term plans on that will be that you should eventually get more in discounts on books and the like that you pay in subscriptions.

Obviously all of this is somewhat experimental. I may end up with egg on my face. I may find that my current ideas don't work but others do. I guess that the next few months will be interesting times.

Sons of God

One of the characters in *American Gods* was a fellow called Mr. Nancy. Like most of those characters, he was a god who had come to America with his people and largely been forgotten. Mr. Nancy, or Anansi as he was called in the old days, came from Africa. He was a bit of a trickster, a master storyteller, and a musician, and having eight legs he could probably do all of those things at once. Spider gods, of course, do not go down terribly well in America, and these days most of Anansi's stories are told about a rabbit instead. Anansi doesn't mind: he's quite happy just hanging out by the river and fishing, or crooning in bars to pick up pretty ladies. He knows the stories are really still his. But they haven't always been. Before Anansi stole them, they belonged to Tiger, and Tiger has never forgotten this.

Having not a lot to do with his life in the absence of worshippers, Anansi decided to experiment with life. Once he even got married. This proved to be something of a mistake, and it was not long before his wife got fed up with his philandering and practical jokes, and went off home to England, taking their young son, Charles, with her.

Yet perhaps that wasn't soon enough. Little Charlie had already spent enough time with his father to be scarred for life. For example, everyone called him Fat Charlie, because his father did so once and everything that Mr. Nancy said had a habit of coming true. So Fat Charlie became an accountant, and never played practical jokes on anyone. When he got the news that his father had died he was overjoyed, because that meant he did not have to invite the mischievous old prankster to his forthcoming wedding to

the delightful Rosie Noah. But in attending the funeral Fat Charlie discovered that he had a brother called Spider, and after that things got very weird and very bad very quickly.

It was sort of like Macbeth, thought Fat Charlie, an hour later; in fact, if the witches in Macbeth had been four little old ladies, and if instead of stirring cauldrons and intoning dread incantations they had just welcomed Macbeth in and fed him on turkey, and rice and peas, spread out on white china plates on a red-and-white patterned plastic table cloth, not to mention sweet potato pudding and spicy cabbage, and encouraged him to take second helpings, and thirds, and then, when Macbeth had declaimed that nay, he was stuffed nigh unto bursting and on his oath could truly eat no more, the witches had pressed upon him their own special island rice pudding and a large slice of Mrs Bustamonte's famous pineapple upside-down cake, it would have been exactly like Macbeth.

Fans of *American Gods* who are expecting the new book to be another journey into the dark corners of the American soul are likely to be disappointed. Gaiman's Acknowledgments include references to Tex Avery and P.G. Wodehouse. While there are dark corners in *Anansi Boys*, they are more than compensated for by a light touch and plenty of humor. As a hardened arachnophobe I find it hard to imagine my reading an entire book about a spider god, let alone coming away thinking that such a fellow might be charming and amusing. Neil Gaiman, however, has the ability to make even spiders enjoyable and entertaining. What is more, he has a wonderfully wry sense of humor that somehow magically translates across the

Atlantic even though it seems very British to me.

Daisy looked up at him with the kind of expression that Jesus might have given someone who had just explained that he was probably allergic to bread and fishes, so could He possibly do him a quick chicken salad.

So there we have it. A delightfully amusing little book from a hugely popular writer that will sell in quantities that turn everyone except J.K. Rowling and Terry Pratchett green with envy. There will apparently be an audio book narrated by Gaiman's friend, Lenny Henry. This will probably be utterly fabulous because many of the characters in the story are Afro-American and West Indian. The book will doubtless be optioned for a movie, which Gaiman will turn down because the studio wants to relocate the action from London to New York and make all of the black characters white. And of course *Anansi Boys* will be nominated for heaps of awards. Gaiman will then go off and do something completely different and fabulously successful. Again. I really have no idea how he does it.

Anansi Boys - Neil Gaiman - Morrow - manuscript

Looking for London

Not very many authors these days are big enough names to have a major publisher put out a collection of their short fiction. China Miéville is, of course, one of those who qualify. He is also one who needs it more than most, because his work tends to appear in unusual venues. The appearance

of *Looking for Jake* at Worldcon is thus welcome in many ways.

It means, for example, that Miéville fans now have easy access to "Foundation", his brilliant story about atrocities in the Iraq War, which was previously only available in a newspaper Sunday supplement. His charming take on rescuing Christmas from commercialism, "'Tis The Season", originally appeared in *Socialist Review*, though it was available online. "Familiar" appeared in *Conjunctions* #39 which, while highly praised by folks like me, was quite hard to get hold of, and so on.

There are other well-known stories too. "Reports of Certain Events in London" was in a recent McSweeney's anthology. "The Tain" has been published in two formats, though both low distribution. And of course there is an extract from a certain medical encyclopedia to which Dr. Miéville was a contributor. A few other stories have been published before, though I had managed to miss them. The title story, "Looking for Jake", dates back to 1998 and was in *The Time Out Book of New Writing*.

Miéville fans will want to know if there is a New Crobuzon story in the book. Of course there is. "Jack" is a story about the fRemade outlaw, Jack Half-a-Prayer. It is told from the point of view of someone who had a small part in Jack's career. I can't tell you more than that.

Other new material includes "The Ball Room", co-written with Emma Bircham and Max Schaefer, which is a very creepy story about a ghost in the crèche of a department store. It works so well because initially all of the horror comes from the staff not understanding how they allowed harm to come to the poor kids. It isn't until much later that we find out what is really happening.

If I have one small disappointment, it is "On the Way to the Front", illustrated by Liam Sharp. This is entirely my fault. I had it in my head that Sharp was doing illustrations for the book, and I was really looking forward to seeing him do scenes from New Crobuzon, or "The Tain". In fact what he and Miéville have done is produce a short comic strip. It is an OK job, but it takes Sharp away from the heroes and monsters he's so good at, and shows that Miéville is not Alan Moore, no more than Moore is China Miéville. Nice idea, didn't quite work. But with a bit of practice, who knows?

Collections, of course, can be quite disjointed. *Looking for Jake*, however, is held together by a common vision of London. Even in those stories where the location is not mentioned, or is specifically given as new Crobuzon, you can see London peeking through. This is, of course, a very different vision of London than you get from, say, a Sherlock Holmes story, or a Dickens novel, but it is an authentic view of the city nonetheless. These days Miéville colors how I see London whenever I visit it. Creepy.

Looking for Jake - China Miéville - Pan Macmillan - hardcover

All in the Mind

Paul McAuley's last novel, *White Devils*, did a superb job of taking the traditional Science Thriller (a.k.a. "the Michael Crichton novel") and turning it into Science Fiction. Rather than treat science as an unwelcome intrusion to the world that Must Be Destroyed (as if it were a vampire or werewolf) it engaged the issue seriously. It talked very sensibly about

issues like genetic engineering. I thought it was a very good book. But I have a sneaking suspicion that someone told McAuley that it was too complicated to sell well. Too many long words, too many things to think about, and the ending wasn't at all obvious. Certainly his latest offering, *Mind's Eye*, is much more in the Crichton mould.

It is also worth noting that the subject matter of *Mind's Eye* would have classed as science fiction a few years either side of 1970, but is not the sort of thing SF writers tend to talk about today. Entoptics are patterns generated by the human neural system that you see when you close your eyes, or when under the influence of drugs such as LSD. They are quite common in cave paintings, presumably because those paintings were made by people familiar with shamanic trances. The SF idea is that exposure to certain entoptic forms, especially if the subject is under the influence of psychotropic drugs, can impose specific mental states on human beings. One glyph makes you fearful; another makes you brave, as Grace Slick might have said. It is a sort of caveman version of subliminal advertising, and just the sort of thing that gives the CIA wet dreams.

Let us suppose, then, that some curious archaeologists discovered a cave full of particularly potent entoptic forms, and a psychoactive plant growing in the neighborhood of the cave system that greatly enhanced the effectiveness of those forms. That would certainly be something that unscrupulous governments and greedy corporations would want to get their hands on. And, if you think in Crichton mode, then it also becomes something that Must Be Destroyed in order to Save the World from Evil Science.

You now have the necessary ingredients of a science thriller.

Well, not quite, you need to enthusiastic but talented amateur hero, the pretty girl, the evil genius: all the usual stuff. McAuley has thankfully foregone all the bits about flowing romance whilst in deadly danger, rescuing girl from evil genius and so on. Instead the setting is one in which morally upstanding but somewhat incompetent British heroes defeat Evil Americans. It is something of an updated Thrilling Adventure in which the girls are tougher and the bad guys come from a different country.

The action in the latter half of the book derives largely from the fact that McAuley has located the sought-after cave system in the cradle of civilization: Iraq. This allows him to put his heroes in the way of Extreme Danger very easily. It also allows him to work with a scenario in which Americans are the natural bad guys in the world. If something wicked is happening, why then it must be the fault of greedy, sadistic Americans, covertly backed by their corrupt and evil government. It is the same role filled by the Russians and Chinese a decade or two back, and by the Germans and Japanese after WWII. The Evil Genius cackles merrily about imposing "freedom and democracy" on the world in much the same way as a Communist villain would talk about the coming workers' revolution, or a Nazi scientist would gloat about the glories of the Third Reich. I guess that's what happens to your country when you get to be the world's only superpower.

On the other hand, McAuley has tried to be fair (and therefore may end up offending everyone). The action takes place in that part of the world that the majority of its inhabitants would like to be

known as Kurdistan, and the Kurds, in general, are very happy with the Americans. They have escaped from Saddam's brutal oppression, and they are not caught up in the sectarian warfare that is plaguing Baghdad. Also McAuley is happy to let the American army be soldiers and not get judgmental about it:

"We're the army, ma'am. We're not trained in the finer points of justice. We're trained to kill people and blow things up."

So, all of this rattles on at a tremendous pace and in a largely predictable manner. Pretty much the whole plot is revealed in the first few chapters. It is very easy reading. It isn't the sort of thing that will excite science fiction readers, but it is the sort of thing that might just sell in large quantities at airports. I'm not going to worry though. If there is one thing that is predictable about McAuley it is that he is unpredictable. He has written books in all sorts of styles. Unless *Mind's Eye* happens to gift him Dan Brown like notoriety, I'm pretty sure his next book will be different again.

Mind's Eye - Paul McAuley - Simon & Schuster - hardcover

An Otherworldly Princess

It was, thought Baroness Nicola Ceausescu, quite insufferable. That her enemies should try to hide the young princess from her was understandable. That they should do so by creating an imaginary world and sending young Miranda to it bespoke of a certain degree of creativity. That this strange world

should contain all sorts of odd changes in history, such as Britain not having been sunk like Atlantis, or the savages of the New World creating a vast empire and bizarre new technologies, is perhaps indicative of a certain degree of insanity. But that the Roumania of that imaginary world should be portrayed as a backward, peasant society ruled over by a fat, red-faced pig of a dictator given her name was really quite insufferable. There was no other word for it.

Or look upon it from Miranda Popescu's point of view. You have vague memories of once having been a happy child in Romania, with a mother and an aunt who cared for you. Then there was the orphanage. And then you were rescued by an American couple, taken to their home, and brought up as an ordinary American kid. Now you are in High School, and you have all of the usual teenage problems. Lots of girls dream of finding out that they are secretly a princess. For you that dream came true. And as a result you found yourself in the middle of a fierce dynastic struggle. You found yourself a pawn in a war between sorcerers in some otherworldly Roumania that you never knew existed. And worst of all you discover that everything you knew about your life – your home in Massachusetts, your foster parents, your school friends – all of this was a story made up by your aunt as a means of hiding you from the people who would use you for their own political ends.

"You know, when I was a kid, I used to love those books where the girl feels she doesn't belong, and she's having some kind of problems and she wakes up in a different country – just like this. And she fits into that place like a key into a lock, and everything that made no sense

suddenly makes sense. There are the good guys and the bad guys, the wise king and the shining prince. But I get the feeling we won't find any of that here."

No, Miranda dear, you won't. Because Paul Park has taken the basic premise of the teen girl fantasy romance and turned it on its head. *A Princess of Roumania* is a dark and disturbing vision of what might really happen if three American teenagers were suddenly plunged into a fantasy world in which one of them is a long-lost princess.

There are no dragons or unicorns in Roumania. There are no handsome princes or friendly talking animals. There are wizards, or at least conjurers, but they are mainly obsessed, secretive practitioners of an illegal art, desperately trying to improve their lot in the world. It is a grim and terrifying place in which Miranda finds herself. And what little help she can find is clearly far from competent.

Still, not everything is grim. Park is not above the occasional joke. Guess what Nicola uses to communicate with the spirit of her dead husband.

She pressed the coordinates into the ansible, an iron box fifty centimeters long, ornately painted with a pattern of exploding stars. Typewriter keys protruded from one side, and her stained fingers played on them. The she waited. Her husband didn't sleep now, didn't eat, didn't rest, so he was always at her service.

Although Miranda Popescu is, in theory, the lead character of the book, as is so often in fiction it is the bad guy who gets all the best lines. Nicola Ceausescu is a quite magnificent character. A young

beggar whose beauty and talent led her to fame on the stage, she married an aging baron only to discover that he had wasted most of his money on alchemical experiments. When he died, mastering his black arts proved to be her only chance of avoiding a return to penury. And yet, with conjuring being illegal, her only hope of advancement was to throw her lot in with the Germans who were seeking to annex Roumania. And that meant potentially becoming a pawn of the odious Elector of Ratisbon. That is not a happy prospect for a fiercely patriotic Roumanian. And yet, Nicola refuses to sink back into the gutter. She will keep her head above water, even if it means handing Miranda Popescu over to the Germans. Even if it means stooping to theft and murder.

If you don't believe me, note that the cover of *A Princess of Roumania* is adorned with enthusiastic recommendations from the likes of Ursula Le Guin, Elizabeth Hand and John Crowley. It is also edited by David Hartwell, which is almost always a sign of high quality. About the only thing wrong with this novel is that it is yet another one of those books that Tor has chosen to cut in half and publish in two installments. We'll have to wait for *The Tourmaline*, due out sometime next year, to read the end of the tale. Regardless of that, however, *A Princess of Roumania* is still one of the best fantasy novels of 2005. Highly recommended.

A Princess of Roumania - Paul Park - Tor - hardcover

Non-Consensual Realities

The only other Karl Schroeder novel I have read is *Permanence*. It is in many

ways a classic SF story with a bit of First Contact, a bit of long-lost alien civilization, and its own tweak on FTL and the galactic economy. But it was very good, and had some interesting excursions into copyright law. I was impressed, and I've been waiting for the next book. I sort of expected more of the same. So here is *Lady of Mazes*, and it has a front cover blurb from Charlie Stross. Hang onto your seats, people.

"That's not the way the world really works anymore [...] when we act, we create our own reality"

White House aide quoted on William Gibson's blog

Dubya and his aides, of course, live mainly in a fantasy of their own imagining, one that is slowly crumbling around them. They don't quite have the technology that they think they do. But with virtual reality...

Livia Kodaly lives in Westerhaven, one of the larger and more successful manifolds on the coronal, Teven. Her reality is the one that the people of Westerhaven have chosen for themselves. One that they prefer to live in. She spends much of her life interacting with her "Society", a sort of highly developed LiveJournal Friends list, where most of the people are represented by software agents most of the time, unless anything important comes up. If Livia needs a bit of peace and quiet, she can simply tune her Society out and vanish from the world.

There are other manifolds on Teven. Some of them are very different in culture and lifestyle. What is more, some of them are geographically co-located with

Westerhaven. It becomes obvious very quickly that Livia is not in Kansas, because Kansas would be another manifold that some other group of people had set up. After all, if Toontown exists on Teven, why not Kansas? This is VR. Reality is pliable.

She had been here many times; the Romanal boathouse should be right over... there... Where the boathouse should be, a jagged mound of boulders thrust up out of the ground.

Of course, that was the boathouse – or how it appeared from within Raven's country.

The interesting thing about the people of Westerhaven is that they are fascinated by other manifolds. They like to travel, and are adept at the mental tricks necessary to disengage from one view of reality and check into another. Unfortunately they are also rather insensitive. They have a habit of finding manifolds that are failing, colonizing them, absorbing them, and shutting them down. Less multi-cultural, more reality imperialism. Is Schroeder making a point here? I think he is.

"Everyone says that Westerhaven is the most cosmopolitan place in Teven. We visit other manifolds, sure – but how many of them? What you were saying earlier about us being butterfly collectors... I know what you mean. We see the world only from our own narrow perspective. We're tourists in other people's realities."

Memo to readers: Schroeder is Canadian, not American. He lives in Toronto, which claims to be the most multi-cultural city in the world.

Livia and her friend Aaron are special in another way that is going to prove very useful to them. Back in their childhood they were the victims of a horrendous accident. Something went badly wrong with Teven. People died. Others lost their implants. Livia and Aaron are the only people in Teven who have ever had to survive what used to be called "reality". Not that it is a reality that we would recognize.

For the first time in full daylight he could see the edges of the vast oval mirror that slowly spun in the open center of the coronal ring. Teven Coronal rotated at right-angles to the sun, and the oval mirror directed light down onto the ring's inner surface.

And we are still only a third of the way onto the book. There's a lot more to come yet.

Teven is invaded by a group of cunning fanatics known as 3340. They are fanatics because they believe in a single reality, and that all other realities are false and should be destroyed. In another world they might be termed "fundamentalists". Is Schroeder making a point? You bet he is.

Livia, Aaron and a warrior from the Raven's World manifold called Qiingi escape from the coronal ring and make their way towards nearby Jupiter. There they discover another civilization known as The Archipelago. Here reality is altogether more plastic.

Livia plucked an orange from the low-hanging branch of a tree as they passed by. It seemed real; she peeled it, and felt the sharp flavor as

she popped a piece into her mouth. "It tastes real," she said. "How is that possible?"

"Are you addressing me?" asked the orange.

In the Archipelago, reality is not consensual. Citizens can tune it to look however they want. One person's drinks dispenser is another person's orange tree is another person's many-flavored fountain is another person's multi-trunked helpful cartoon elephant. Whatever the view, the device will include an AI of sorts. Unfortunately this has consequences.

"Livia, these people have lived in a world where their merest whim could be granted with a thought. Reality has always conformed to their desires – never the other way round. Now they find themselves in a world that obstinately refuses to change itself to fit their imaginations. They literally have no idea how to respond."

Well, they could always invade somebody else and pretend that they were winning a new war.

But enough of Schroeder's pointed commentary on our world. We have a science fiction novel to finish. Somehow Livia and her friends have to recruit help, get back to Teven, and save their world from 3340. To do so they have to a) convince the people of the Archipelago that this is a soap opera worth following, and b) work their way past the God-like transcendent entities known as the anecliptics who have apparently forbidden all travel to the nature reserve known as the coronals.

Tor has recently done a very interesting deal with the SciFi Channel. Each month

they choose one book from their output to be featured as a SciFi Essential book of the month. There will be special promotions on scifi.com, and even a special web site: <http://www.scifimonthlypick.com/>. The first book to get this treatment was Cory Doctorow's *Someone Comes To Town, Someone Leaves Town*. Cory, of course, is a natural for web-based promotion. The August book of the month is Karl Schroeder's *Lady of Mazes*. Someone at Tor thinks very highly of this book, and so they should. Karl Schroeder has taken a big leap into post-human SF, and done it very well. I'm impressed. Again.

Lady of Mazes - Karl Schroeder - Tor - hardcover

Thrilling Adventure

Jay Lake has won himself a very impressive reputation as a writer of short fiction. Rightly or wrongly, however, SF&F writers only gain fame in the wider market when they produce top-selling novels. Lake has at last had a novel published. *Rocket Science* is published by Fairwood Press, a small company based in Washington State, so I'm not sure how widely it will get distributed, but it is very promising.

Lake's short fiction has been very varied, so it was fairly hard to guess beforehand what sort of novel he would produce. As it happens he appears to have gone for the "thrilling adventure" type of story; the sort of thing that might appear in one of Michael Chabon's McSweeney's anthologies. It is set immediately after World War II, and manages to be both determinedly retro and to take an amused look back at those simpler times.

The plot is very straightforward. The central character, Vernon Dunham, missed the war because of an injury resulting from a childhood bout of polio. He spent the war years working as an aircraft engineer for Boeing. When his best friend, Floyd Bellamy, returns home to a hero's welcome he brings with him some spoils of war. There are two rather large crates. One contains the half-track launch vehicle for a V2 rocket. The other contains an experimental Nazi aircraft. Floyd wants Vernon's help to figure out how to fly it.

But wait! Vernon, from his 1940s viewpoint, has no reason to suspect anything suspicious. We, however, as 21st Century science fiction fans, will take one look at Lake's description of the fluid, organic lines of the craft and realize immediately that it is an alien spaceship. What is this thing doing in 1940s Kansas? And how did Floyd get it away from the SS and smuggle it from Belgium to America? Finding out involves Vernon in some nasty scrapes with the local police, Nazi agents, the military authorities, Communist spies, and the Mafia. Sometimes all at the same time.

There are two things that stand out about this book. The first one is that Lake is very clearly an obsessive geek when it comes to aircraft, Nazi war vehicles and so on. It is classic boy stuff. Were my father still alive, he and Lake would probably get on very well together. In addition, Lake has an obvious affection for this time period and has put quite a bit of effort into making sure that his characters react to what is going on in a 1940s way. Vernon ends up categorizing his new mechanical friend as a "computational rocket" and worries over how the aliens managed to miniaturize the valves sufficiently to fit the electronics into such a small space. The story ends the way

every good boys' story of the period should. Jolly good show, Jay old chap.

Rocket Science - Jay Lake - Fairwood Press - publisher's proof

Journeys Beyond

I am not particularly fond of horror stories. I'm also not a big fan of short fiction. I've just read *Strange Itineraries*, a collection of ghost stories by Tim Powers, and loved it.

Partly, of course, this is down to the particularly eccentric take on ghosts that Powers has, and which came to the fore in books like *Last Call*, *Expiration Date* and *Earthquake Weather*. I love the way that Powers combines a nutty and superstitious attitude to science with his ghost lore. Maybe you can trap a ghost in a lens by turning it through 45 degrees. Maybe this does have something to do with polarization of light. Who knows? But for Powers it works.

In addition Powers seems to have a lock on just how to get the hairs on the back of my neck to rise. There's no splatter or gore, just the right words at the right time.

"Bless me, Father, " she said, "I have sinned. My last Confession was too long ago to remember. These are my sins - I killed myself on Thursday." She looked at him mournfully. "I know that's very bad."

From "Through and Through"

Another great thing about Powers is that he has a great sympathy for his characters. Many of them are poor, even destitute.

Most of them are a little crazy in some way, as no doubt you would be if you were being haunted. Occasionally he pokes gentle fun at them, like this:

This morning he could surely allow himself to forget about the worms and the ether bunnies.

From "The Better Boy"

Yes, poor Bernard Wilkins is convinced that he can prevent worms eating his tomato plants by channeling the ether through rabbit-shaped crystals. The old fellow has more or less lost touch with the world these days. But in Powers hands he is still a noble character striving to do good in his own eccentric way. And as for those ether bunnies...

"The Better Boy" is one of three of the nine stories in the collection co-written with Powers' friend, James Blaylock, who just happens to be my second favorite ghost story writer (except maybe for Sean Stewart and Peter Straub). For those of you are wondering, William Ashbless does get a mention, though a very brief one.

The worst complaint I can think of to make about this book (other than it being too short) is that in "Pat Moore", which is set in the Bay Area rather than near Los Angeles, Powers betrays his SoCal roots by referring to freeways as "the 101" and "the 280" rather than just "101" and "280". Everything else is just the way it should be. Well done Tachyon. Yet another small press triumph.

Strange Itineraries - Tim Powers - Tachyon Publications - trade paperback

Communication Breakdown

Anyone browsing M.M. Buckner's latest novel, *War Surf*, in a bookstore might think that they are in for a high-octane military adventure. The title of the book is clue enough, and the cover blurb does little to dispel that notion. Anyone who purchases the book on that basis, however, will probably be disappointed, because *War Surf* is a much more intelligent, much deeper book than it seems.

Let's begin with a brief recap of Buckner's future world, as set out in her previous novels, *Hyperthought* and *Neurolink*. Earth has suffered an ecological disaster of tremendous proportions. The land is laid waste, the oceans are toxic, and humanity lives primarily underground in cities clustered around the temperate regions at the poles. The world is run by giant corporations, inefficiently policed by regulators such as the World Trade Organization. And humanity is divided into the fabulously rich "execs", who run the corporations, and the desperately poor workers or "protes", who might not actually be required for the functioning of the economy but are in any case given jobs, homes and food by the execs. The upper classes are not inhuman. They know what the eco-catastrophe did to the world, and they want to look after the rest of mankind. It is just kind of expensive, because there are twelve billion of them, many of whom can't even read.

The narrator of our story is Nasir Deepra, chairman emeritus of Provendia.com, a highly successful manufacturer of processed food. (There is no agriculture any more - nothing will grow on Earth's surface). Deepra is 248 years old, thanks to the best rejuvenation techniques that money can buy, and very bored. He and

his friends spend most of their time in their world's most dramatic version of extreme sports: war surfing. There are a lot of wars in Deepra's world. Most of them are caused by prote agitators stirring up violence against the corporations. (Amusingly the protes call the execs "Commies" because they run the dot coms.) The idea of war surfing is to get yourself into a combat zone, take footage of what is going on (the more spectacularly dead bodies the better) and get out again alive. Basically it is just an advanced version of small boys playing chicken on freeways. Deepra and his pals, the Agonists as they call themselves, are the top-rated war surf team on the Net, with legions of eager fans waiting for their next exploit.

Into Deepra's life comes a twenty-three year-old girl, Sheeba. She's a construct; a human being genetically engineered to be a bored male executive's idea of the perfect physical therapist. She is, of course, very good at her job. She is also outstandingly beautiful. But she is human, not an android, and consequently has a mind of her own.

From reading the cover blurb you might get the impression that *War Surf* is all about how Sheeba goads Deepra and his friends into more and more dangerous dares. Reading the book, however, you quickly learn that you've just been fed part of Deepra's view of the situation, and he doesn't understand Sheeba's motives at all. Nor does she appear to understand him. It isn't clear for a long time whether she's just a hopelessly naïve bimbo with a head stuffed full of absurd New Age ideas, or if she's ruthlessly exploiting the poor old fool who is madly in love with her.

I'm not sure if this is deliberate, but Buckner may be poking fun at the Heinlein-esque idea that rejuvenated old men will be irresistibly attractive to nubile young lovelies. Buckner makes it clear that while Deepra's body might look youthful and handsome, his mind is not, and this is very obvious to Sheeba if not to him.

What is certain is that Sheeba's arrival within their circle is a disaster for the Agonists. Their close-knit and efficient team soon dissolves into jealous bickering. Deepra's concern to protect Sheeba from everything (including the nasty reality of the wars they surf) endangers every mission they undertake. Soon they have lost their top spot in the ratings, and are in danger of becoming a laughing stock. There is only one way to get their reputation back. They have to surf Heaven.

In this particular context, Heaven happens to be a factory space station on which a war has been raging for 9 months. The fact that it is in orbit makes Heaven a hugely dangerous and expensive place to surf. In addition to this, however, the factory's owners have issued a very firm "keep out" notice. They don't want surfers anywhere near the place, and are quite prepared to kill anyone that ignores their warning. Obviously they have something to hide. Deepra is well aware of this, because the owners of Heaven are Provendia.com.

At this point the book very quickly changes from being a tale of daring exploits under fire to a very human tale of communication difficulties. Deepra and Sheeba start to discover how little they understand each other, and both of them begin to realize how little they understand the protes, or what is done by junior managers in the name of trimming

budgets. It is rather predictable, but Buckner manages to make it work.

Buckner's characterization is perhaps not yet on a par with the best writers in the field, and therefore she's not quite able to carry off the story as well as it deserves. You are left with the impression that the characters are slightly more artifacts than people. Also the book is also quite hard going because of the lack of likeable characters with whom to identify. Buckner is well aware of this and even has Deepra comment towards they end that he's not sure anyone will want to read about the life of someone as selfish and unpleasant as he now realizes himself to have been. But *War Surf* is an ambitious and heartfelt novel with a fine ending and is worth persevering with (unless you happen to be a hard-line Republican). So the next time someone tells you that American SF is dead, ask them to add M.M. Buckner to the list of people that they ought to be reading.

War Surf - M.M. Buckner - Ace - publisher's proof

Dreams and Nightmares

Here's something of an oddity. When the publishers asked me to review *The Thin Line Between* by M.A.C. Petty they described it as a "contemporary fantasy novel". There were two strange things about this. The first one is that when women writers use initials to hide their gender these days it is usually to persuade men to read their science fiction (as may be the case with M.M. Buckner, for example). For a fantasy novelist, being female is normally a selling point. So much so that it has been speculated that

male fantasy authors may start adopting female pen names to help sell their work. In addition, when I started reading to the book, it came over much more like horror. Indeed, it sounded very much like what Peter Straub might write if he were a single mother and a historian. Then again, the book does promise that it is the first in a series of four books, so that must make it a fantasy, right?

Meanwhile, back with the horror novel. The reason Petty reminded me of Straub is that she started out with some really good characterization. The central character, Alice Waterston, is the art curator of the Hardison museum that, as far as I can figure out, is somewhere in the Florida panhandle. My knowledge of that part of the world is not good, but I do at least know where the Gulf of Mexico is. (Also the area has woods with wild pigs in them, which ties in with what Jeff Vandermeer tells me about the region.)

Anyway, back to the spooky stuff. The museum is about to take delivery of a prestigious collection of Australian Aboriginal Art. Indeed, it is coming direct to them from the Field Museum in Chicago. Alice is in charge of this, and knows a little about it because her father was an expert in Aboriginal art, though he died in mysterious circumstances in the Outback shortly before she was born. You can see what's coming now, can't you? Yes, mysterious accidents start to plague the exhibit. Spooky pictures of Ancestor spirits peer at Alice from the murals with apparent malicious intent. And it works perfectly because the whole thing is surrounded with a bunch of very ordinary human characters. All the museum staff are described very vividly, as are Alice's 12-year-old daughter, Margaret (a keen anime fan) and Nik, the hunky Swedish mycology postgrad who is Alice's current

boyfriend. This was a very promising start, and it could have made a great novel.

Unfortunately someone got it into their heads that this was not a very fine single-volume horror novel, but a four-volume fantasy novel. And here the book begins to go off the rails. To start with, four volumes needs a lot more plot than one, so Petty starts throwing it a lot more material. There's a local legend about a nasty hellfire preacher and an unjustly lynched Indian. There's the wreck of a Spanish galleon that the museum staff suddenly have to deal with, and which brings into play the museum's raffish underwater archaeology expert, thereby giving Petty the opportunity to turn what was a rather good story about a middle-aged woman with a healthy sex life into a poor attempt at a romance novel.

Possibly the strangest part of the book is where Alice decides to write a novel about the spooky local legend. We are treated to several extracts from this (because the characters from the story start to come to life). Interestingly, Alice Waterston isn't nearly such a good writer as M.A.C. Petty. Being a historian, she can't resist the temptation to info-dump, and her characters are not nearly as well defined. If Petty did this deliberately it is quite a clever piece of writing, but the presence of these chunks of poorer writing amongst the good stuff also slows down the book and discourages the reader.

Finally Petty trips over the line between horror and fantasy by doing what a good horror writer should never do: make it all too real. In fantasy the whole point is that the monsters are real and you can interact with them just as you can with other humans. In good horror stories the monsters are always things that Should

Not Be which you get rid of without much actual confrontation.

The end result of all this is that a book that I was starting to warm to very much indeed turned into a book that I thought was something of a mistake. Doubtless there will be people out there that like it for what it is, but it seemed to me that Petty was wasting a very fine writing talent on trying too hard to cater to specific genre markets. Who needs to worry about the fantasy and romance markets when you can write like Peter Straub?

Thin Line Between – M.A.C. Petty – Cold Spring Press – trade paperback

The Way the Future Was

Just about everybody knows about Sir Edward Bulwer-Lytton. He has that famous bad writing competition named after him. Many people also know that “It was a dark and stormy night...” – the first line of Snoopy’s much re-written novel – was originally coined by Bulwer-Lytton (in the novel, *Paul Clifford*). Far fewer people, however, know that Bulwer-Lytton was a famous science fiction writer of his time.

Ok, that’s a little controversial, especially if you happen to be one of the people who think that SF began with Hugo Gernsback. It is also not at all obvious if you look at Bulwer-Lytton’s book through 21st Century glasses. However, *The Coming Race* was very much an SF book of its time. Most obviously it is a Hollow Earth Utopia novel. The narrator discovers a civilization living inside the Earth, and goes through the usual tour guide process of looking

round this strange new world and discovering how it is so much better than his own. “Better”, of course, being in the eyes of the author.

The simple fact of the story being set in a hollow Earth is enough to make the book SF of a sort. However, Bulwer-Lytton makes specific attempts to extrapolate scientific (and sociological) ideas of the time, just as a modern SF writer would. The biggest scientific idea of the time was, of course, evolution, and Bulwer-Lytton makes the usual 19th Century mistake of treating the whole idea much too simplistically. Our Victorian forebears spent way too much time worrying about which “race” of men were best suited for evolutionary survival. With hindsight, we all know where that led, but I’m sure that Bulwer-Lytton had little idea when he wrote the book that his ideas would be taken up by such diverse groups as the Theosophists and the Nazis.

One particularly daft idea that Bulwer-Lytton got into his head is that because men are descended from apes, and men are less hairy than apes, hairlessness must be an indicator of evolutionary superiority. Thus he has his underground super-race less hairy than us, and even has some of them believe that they are destined to evolve into frogs, because frogs are completely hairless. Hairlessness may also be the reason why Bulwer-Lytton has women’s rights more developed in his utopia, of which more later.

Other areas of science that Bulwer-Lytton has clearly been thinking about are electricity and hypnotism. He published *The Coming Race* in 1871. Maxwell produced his famous electromagnetic equations in 1860, but it wasn’t until years later that Rutherford split the atom and

we really started to understand what electricity was. All that Bulwer-Lytton knew was that electricity and magnetism were aspects of an invisible and mysterious force that acted on objects at a distance. He also knew that hypnotism (or mesmerism as it was then more generally known) was a force that acted on minds at a distance. So he postulated a life force called vril that, with appropriate scientific development, would allow human beings to have power over each other.

Incidentally, the word “vril” was deliberately used in the name of the beef extract, Bovril, the idea being that it somehow contained the life force of bulls.

Initially our narrator only sees vril used to put him to sleep, and to heal his injuries. Later, however, he sees his captors, who call themselves “Vril-ya”, using vril-power and artificial wings to fly. Eventually he also discovers that vril can be harnessed to produce terrible death rays. In a fascinating anticipation of Mutually Assured Destruction he postulates that this will help usher in a perfect world.

Man was so completely at the mercy of man, each whom he encountered being able, if so willing, to slay him on the instant, that all notions of government by force gradually vanished from political systems and forms of law.

Government is one of the issues that Bulwer-Lytton talks about a lot. His narrator is deliberately chosen to be an American because, as a member of the British upper classes, Bulwer-Lytton wants to pour scorn on the ideas of republicanism and democracy. The Vril-ya have not got where they are today by subjecting themselves to government by

the ignorant masses. Dear me no, they have used their superior scientific wisdom to educate and refine their race, and have chosen to subject themselves to a benevolent autocracy. The idea is rather like the old Roman concept that gave us the word, “dictator”. You go out and find someone with a reputation for wisdom who has no wish to rule and offering him a crown. Except the Romans only did this as a temporary measure in times of military emergency, whereas the Vril-ya appoint their “chief magistrate” for life. And guess what? Yes, he always acts for the good of the community, and never tries to ensure that his sons inherit his position. And no one ever questions his orders, or even his right to give them. I guess that’s the highly evolved wisdom of the Vril-ya at work.

I mentioned earlier that women have greater rights amongst the Vril-ya than in the surface world. However, don’t expect *The Coming Race* to be a feminist novel. As an upper-class Victorian man, Bulwer-Lytton has about as much chance of understanding feminism as a shark does of understanding television: he can’t get out of his environment to see it, and if it came into the water it would probably electrocute him. So all Bulwer-Lytton means by women’s rights is that young women take the lead in courtship and have the right to marry whom they chose (except where it is inconvenient for the plot for them to be allowed to). After that they are expected to be subservient to their husbands, and you never hear talk of a woman becoming chief magistrate.

However, Bulwer-Lytton has done one quite neat thing. He’s very interested in language, and has invented a lot of Vril-ya words. For “man” and “woman” he has taken Greek terms and contracted them. Thus “Man” is “An” (plural “Ana”) and

“Woman” is “Gy” (pronounced “guy”). Whatever other failings he might have had, Bulwer-Lytton obviously had something of a sense of humor.

Although nowhere near as bad as his legend would suggest, Bulwer-Lytton is not a great writer. Utopias, of course, encourage the author to have his characters do lots of preaching. This, combined with the stilted Victorian speech patterns and Bulwer-Lytton’s rather flat prose style, makes the book hard going. It reminds me a lot of the newly discovered Heinlein novel, *For Us The Living*. Both books have the air of being written by daft but highly opinionated old men who like to write themselves into books as characters who are mysteriously attractive to lots of young, beautiful, self-assured women. Nevertheless, *The Coming Race* is a highly significant piece of science fiction history, and a fascinating window onto the thought patterns that gave the world Aryanism. Once again Wesleyan University Press are to be applauded for keeping an important book in print. Thanks also to editor David Seed for his illuminating introduction to Bulwer-Lytton’s world.

The Coming Race - Edward Bulwer-Lytton - Wesleyan University Press - hardcover

Comics Update

Issue #2 of *Albion* carries on in the same excellent vein as the debut issue. We are, of course, in need of a lot of background, and fortunately Bad Penny has a good excuse to explain everything to Danny. What I suspect none of you were expecting, however, was that Shane Oakley would tell Penny’s life story in two

panels of superb Leo Baxendale pastiche. Brilliant. Then there’s the toy collection in Penny’s lair. Sadly most American readers won’t recognize the likes of The Woodentops, or Pinky and Perky, but we know who they are. And if you are one of those people who enjoy studying panels, keep watching Archie as Penny tells her tale.

In contrast *Neverwhere* #2 has few surprises because, of course, we already know the story. And that, of course, is what Gaiman fans the world over will want.

I’ve also received the summer edition of *Spaceship Away*. This Dan Dare comic keeps getting physically more impressive with each issue. It is now up to 36 pages of very splendid thick and glossy paper, and is promising even more pages next time around. It also continues to have interesting background material. What I’m not sure about is the expanding collection of comic strips. Still, I’m sure someone likes them.

Neverwhere #2 - Mike Carey & Glenn Fabry - Vertigo - comic

Albion #2 - Alan Moore et al - Wildstorm - comic

Spaceship Away #6 - Rod Barzilay (Ed.) - Rod Barzilay - comic

The Sound of Thinking

One thing that every magazine wants is a “must read” columnist. For *Interzone* it is Nick Lowe’s film reviews that are deemed essential reading. For *Locus* it is the book reviews of Gary K. Wolfe. Having achieved a notable success (and a Hugo nomination) with John Clute’s review

collection, *Scores*, Becon Publications has opted to try for more of the same with a collection of reviews by Wolfe. It looks as though in *Soundings* they have another winner on their hands.

As a reviewer myself I do, of course, have a particular interest in such books, and the thing that impressed me most about Wolfe was how good he was when he started. The book covers reviews from the period 1992 - 1996 inclusive. Wolfe only started writing for *Locus* regularly at the end of 1991, and yet his work is top quality from the start. Of course he already had a successful career behind him as a literary academic before he became a reviewer, but even so he seems to have been born into the role fully formed, if I can be allowed a brief reference to Greek mythology. I don't suppose anyone will ever publish a collection of my reviews, but if they ask to I'll have to hide the early issues of *Emerald City*, not to mention reviews I wrote for other fanzines many years ago.

Soundings is structured on a year-by-year basis, and within each annual chapter divided into sections derived from monthly issues of *Locus*. There is a good reason for this. Wolfe's review column has always been written as a single piece, not a collection of independent reviews, so an immense amount of work would have been needed to separate out the component parts of each month's columns. Besides, the columns themselves work very well, so who cares that the reviews are not fully individualized?

Each annual chapter is prefaced by Wolfe's review of the year (obviously published at the beginning of the following year). These articles on their own are worth reprinting for the overview that they give of the development of the field. Right from the beginning, Wolfe

seems to have had a keen view of his role in recording the history of SF as it unfolded. Obviously he has no more read every book each year than John Clute has or I have, but he nevertheless manages to sound very authoratitive about the way the industry (or at least the cutting edge thereof) is developing.

For a fellow reviewer, the most interesting thing about reading a colleague's work is seeing how their perception of a book differed from your own. In many cases, Wolfe and I seem to agree on books we have both covered (we share, for example, an admiration for Dan Simmons' *Hyperion*, for Elizabeth Hand's *Waking the Moon*, and for Kathleen Ann Goonan's *Queen City Jazz* and I warmly recommend them all once again). This is a little worrying because it awakens dangerous ideas that we might actually, in some nebulous way, be "right" about these books. On the other hand, there are other areas where we disagree, and Wolfe's insight always proves fascinating. For example, he enjoyed Kim Stanley Robinson's Mars series far more than I did, and he did so at least in part because of its reflections of US history which were largely invisible to me, having never studied the subject.

Although most of the reviews in the book are of novels, Wolfe is often at his most interesting when he reviews works of non-fiction or anthologies which proport to represent the field in some way. He spends rather more space on works such as the Clute/Nicolls *Encyclopedia of Science Fiction* and the now notorious Attebery/Le Guin Norton *Book of Science Fiction*. He takes issue with the fuzziness of the argument in the Hartwell/Cramer *The Ascent of Wonder* and gently chides Edward James for being so polite and reasonable in his *Science Fiction in the 20th Century* that there is little one can take

issue with. In all cases Wolfe's comments are incisive and to the point. Here he is talking about Clute's obsessive attention to detail.

Such is the book's careful attention to detail, however, that I found error checking almost impossible; anything you'd check it against is probably less reliable or comprehensive than the Encyclopedia itself.

That pretty much sums up Clute's whole approach to the project.

It is the reviews of novels, however, for which most people will read *Soundings*. It goes without saying that Wolfe gets very much to the heart of each book he talks about. It is also notable that he rarely needs to include an aside noting that he was wrong in his original review (failing to note the Book of Mormon connection in Orson Scott Card's work early enough is an exception here). While Wolfe may not exhibit the pyrotechnics of language we get from Clute (and may therefore be rather more understandable), that doesn't mean he is any less entertaining. In particular he often exhibits a wry, almost British sense of humor. Here are some examples.

That's the problem with transcendence – it's only a few doors down the street from incoherence, and it's easy to get the wrong address.

From a review of Robert Reed's *Beyond the Veil of Stars*

At first, Paul J. McAuley's Red Dust looks like it's going to be just another novel about Elvis-worshipping Chinese Martians.

From a review of Paul McAuley's *Red Dust*

In one of the most famous hatchet jobs in the history of reviewing, Keats's rambling "poetic romance" Endymion was described by a contemporary reviewer in Blackwood's Magazine as "imperturbable driveling idiocy," a phrase so colorful that modern paperback publishers might even entertain the thought of using it as a blurb (probably would sell books too).

From a review of Dan Simmons's
Endymion

With it being from a British small press, those of you who did not pick up a copy of *Soundings* at the Glasgow Worldcon (and why not?) may find it difficult to find in the shops, but if it is there you won't miss it because of its striking Judith Clute cover. If you can't find it locally, do try to get it by mail order. It is well worth it. I can't imagine anyone who is a regular reader of *Emerald City* not finding this book enjoyable.

Soundings - Gary K. Wolfe - Becon Publications - trade paperback

An Interaction Overview

So, I wasn't at Worldcon this year. What can I possibly do by way of a report? One thing I could do would be to provide an insight into the past year or two of preparing for a Worldcon. That would probably turn into an extended diatribe on why UK fandom really shouldn't try to run another Worldcon until they have got some solid experience of running a large regional (say, 2000+ members). However, the experience of working on Interaction was so unpleasant in so many ways that I really don't want to even think about it, let

alone dissect the whole thing. We made the con work, which is wonderful, but it has completely cured me of my addiction to con-running. I have some responsibilities to fulfill for Concussion, but once they are over you will never see me on a convention committee again.

On the other hand, I've been quite disappointed with the quality of reporting on Interaction. There are good reasons for this. Internet access at the convention was ruinously expensive so there wasn't anywhere near the level of live blogging that there was at Noreascon 4 last year. In addition around half of the convention membership attends Worldcons very infrequently and thus doesn't have the perspective needed to analyze the event the way I normally do. Still, someone has to do the job, so I've tried to pull together some thoughts from the online reports I have seen, and from talking to people. I'm also very grateful to a few people who have contributed comments on specific events.

Services Division

Alice Lawson and her team seem to have done a fine job. Aside from one very odd comment about all members having to produce passports as ID (which Kevin and I are sure is wrong) I have seen no complaints about Registration. There were no lines. Equally areas such as Ops and Gophers must have done a good job, otherwise we'd have heard the complaints. Alice's team were doing very much the sort of job that you only notice if they get it wrong, so they deserve some special praise for having been so invisible.

Site & Facilities

If ever there were people with a thankless task it must have been Ben Yalow's division. The accommodations team, led by TR Smith, had to deal with far more hotels than is usual for a Worldcon, and a membership with a very high percentage of overseas visitors. Complaints were inevitable. We had Andy Porter's error-strewn letter to *Locus*, and other rumors about gouging by hotels. Most of this was a result of people not understanding just how much more expensive (and smaller) hotel rooms are in the UK, and the different pricing strategies that British hotels use. Inevitably, with such a large number of hotels, there was going to be one that would be silly and undercut the con rates in breach of their contract. The local management blamed head office. Head office didn't want to talk. Hopefully we got something out of them in the end.

Meanwhile Mark Meenan, one of our very few Glasgow-based staff, was doing a heroic job dealing with the most red-tape obsessed convention center a Worldcon has ever used. The last couple of months before the convention were spent in a nightmare of form filling and discussions back and fore. At one point I was told that all masquerade contestants would have to provide detailed stage directions and tech requirements well in advance of the event. Thankfully we talked them out of that, but conforming to the SECC's requirements was not easy.

Mark Herrup was in charge of parties. Given the number of party reports I have seen, I think they went very well. The Finns seem to have supplied half of Glasgow with vodka for the week. Well done Irma Hirsjärvi and friends for getting sponsored booze supplies.

I'm not going to say anything about the absurd charges for Internet access except that the SECC and the Moat House lost out on an enormous amount of potential revenue. They had over 4000 geeks in residence, and hardly anyone bought wi-fi access from them because of the price. We told them this would happen, but they refused to budge.

Programme

As a result of Paul Oldroyd being taken very ill last year, both Programme and Events suddenly found themselves without senior management. In addition Pat McMurray had to step down from Exhibits due to personal problems. There was no one left in the UK with the experience and willingness to take on a senior management role.

The Programme job was taken up by Ian Stockdale and Ruth Leibig in California, and by Jim and Laurie Mann on the East Coast. They had to work with a bunch of content creators based in the UK. Communication must have been a nightmare, especially during scheduling process. Thank goodness for the Internet.

That the quality of much of the programme would be exceptional was pretty much a given. Farah Mendlesohn and Claire Brialey did the academic and literary programming. Simon Bradshaw did science. The Plokta Cabal did the fan programme. Giulia de Cesare did costuming (as well as running the Masquerade). Claire Weaver did art. Where we had people in place, the programme was really good.

Unfortunately some areas had much less support. It was hard to find anyone to take charge of media, comics or gaming, for

example. There seemed to be a lot of people prepared to toss out ideas, and to complain about what everyone else did, but no one prepared to do the hard graft. The comics programme was put together by Ian, Jim and I in our (don't laugh) spare time. Thankfully it seemed to go well. I gather some media fans were unhappy. At least the very excellent Jonathan Clements reports good attendance and feedback from his anime panels.

The one thing that really bugged me was our failure to get any input from the big movies. I spent a lot of time talking to movie people. Craig Miller and Dave Lally did too, as did Dragon for the anime side. Despite personal interventions by Joss Whedon and Neil Gaiman, we were unable to get any involvement from *Serenity* or *Mirrormask*. Hayao Miyazaki's Studio Ghilbi wanted us to show *Howl's Moving Castle*, but the UK distributors blocked this even through they were showing the movie at film festivals in the UK. Warner Brothers even tried to prevent us from showing a clip of *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban* at the Hugo ceremony. The only explanation I can come up with for this is that the movie people are terrified of having anything to do with a fan-run event because they think we'll pirate anything they give us.

At the con the quality of the programme (and the lack of sufficient programme space) caused some of the few major complaints Interaction has received. The level of interest in programming was way higher than for a typical American Worldcon, and as a result a number of programme items were so badly over-attended that the SECC took fright and started coming on heavy about health and safety. This in turn resulted in some very insensitive policing of the programme area by SECC staff. I can't imagine the

frustration that Ian and his team would have been going through.

The typical reaction of UK fans to this has, of course, been “reduce the amount of programming and kick out all of the people who are not interested in the same things as me.” I suppose it would work, but the result would not be a Worldcon. And yet the only other conclusion is that the SECC is not big enough for a Worldcon. Indeed, I’ve heard one story that Interaction had only half the programme space that Noreascon 4 had. I know it was a lot less, and that the programme was reduced somewhat accordingly (leading to the usual gripes about special interested being under-represented and people being unable to get on programme). This is scary; because until the Brighton rebuild is finished there is nowhere else in the entire country that is even remotely suitable for a Worldcon.

I think there have been some justified complaints about the programming. The SECC security does appear to have been heavy handed. People were justifiably upset at not being able to get into programme items they wanted to see. Those on over-subscribed programme items who had put a lot of work into their presentations were also justifiably upset. But, as I said earlier, the convention was very short of programme space, and programming was much more popular than was expected. Possibly some on-the-fly adjustments could have been done, but that would only have resulted in upsetting a different collection of people.

There are two other specific complaints about programme I want to mention. The first is the John Brunner memorial panel, at which the panelists reportedly spent much of the time telling embarrassing stories about Brunner. This was not what

there were asked to do, and they seem to have behaved a little badly.

I’ve also heard a few complaints about Chris Priest. I’m not exactly happy about what happened at the Hugo ceremony myself, seeing as it was on my watch, so to speak. But having talked to a number of people who know Chris better than I do I’ve been reassured that he was trying to make jokes. Unfortunately it seems that his particularly dry British sense of humor doesn’t translate very well, and he came over to many people as being deliberately rude.

Events

OK, time to declare an interest. Events was the other area that needed rescuing after Paul Oldroyd had to step down. Kevin and I were the idiots who stepped into the breach. Boy did we work hard on that one. We also came nearer to a fight than we ever have since we’ve known each other. For much of the run-up to the convention it was serious stress.

But, it worked. All five major events ran to time. I’ve heard of a couple of minor technical glitches. One was caused by a scratched Masquerade entry, the other by a camera accidentally focusing on the plaque for the Campbell award before the winner was announced. Of course there was a massive amount of frantic paddling under the surface to get this to happen, but to the membership it all looked very smooth. I cannot begin to say how proud Kevin and I are of the people we recruited to help us.

Getting the Masquerade to run to time was a much more difficult task than it might have seemed. The Clyde Auditorium is a great place from which to

watch shows, but no one in their right minds would chose to stage a Worldcon masquerade there. The backstage area is completely unsuitable. I have no idea how Giulia and co got it to work, but I'm convinced that the best thing I did in working on Interaction was to persuade Sandy Manning to run the Masquerade green room. We also lucked out with the weather. There was nowhere in the Clyde to put the photography area, which is why we were walking people over to the Moat House. If it had rained we would have been screwed.

A particular success was Ready! Steady! Sew! (a.k.a. Iron Costumer), the Masquerade half time show. Generally at least half the audience leaves the Masquerade at half time, and most of the rest leave before the awards are announced. If there was one thing I really wanted to achieve it was to hold that audience in the theatre until the prizes were given out, and we did it.

The idea for the half time show came from discussions at Wardrobe, the UK costume convention, last year. I think that Teddy and Tom Nanson suggested it, having seen something similar at a US CostumeCon. Kevin Roche and Andy Trembley agreed to mastermind the event, and the rest is a piece of Worldcon history. Wow.

The play and the Hugos were also big successes for very different reasons. Ian Sorensen (bless him) can be something of a loose canon at times. He certainly gave us a few scares. But he and Phil Raines and their team delivered on the night. Ian is the Fan Guest of Honour at Concussion, the 2006 Eastercon. I understand that we'll be showing a video of *Lucas Back in Anger* at the convention.

The Hugos are a great social event, but there's one thing that everyone dislikes about them and that is sitting and waiting while people make interminable speeches. We had an additional constraint in that we had to be out of the Clyde Auditorium by midnight or we'd get hit with hefty overtime charges from the SECC. So we were determined to run to time. Mike and Debby Moir, and the show hosts, Kim Newman and Paul McAuley, did such a good job we actually finished almost half an hour early. Everyone is talking about record efficiency. Get the rockets given out; go party. That's the way it should be.

Because I wasn't there (and Captain Standlee was way too busy to deputize) I don't have the traditional *Emerald City* fashion shoot from the Hugos. I've seen a bunch of pictures online, but they don't cover everyone who was there. On the other hand, none of what I have seen comes close to Charlie Stross and his "Goth tartan" kilt. (Well, except perhaps Captain Standlee, but as he's staff he's excluded from the contest.) I'm happy to give Charlie this year's *Emerald City* Best Dressed prize.

By the way, Kim and Paul's hilarious speech about the Prix Victor Hugo is available online here: <http://www.johnnyalucard.com/hugos.html>.

A number of people have already asked whether DVDs of the Masquerade and Hugos will be available. We do have rough cuts saved, and we very much want to produce something. However, this is going to require time and money. Right now we are still investigating matters. Watch this space for further announcements.

One thing that did disappoint me about Events was how little interest some British

fans had in them. Judging by some of the reports I have read, and the relatively low occupation of seats in the Clyde, a significant minority of British fans actively despise any event that involves having people on stage and congratulating them for something. That's very sad.

Reaction to the Opening and Closing ceremonies has been mixed. Many people enjoyed the joke. Others thought that it lowered the tone. I think the whole Spaceport Glasgow theme fell a lot more flat than it needed to have done as a result of the insistence of the Chairs on keeping it secret for so long – even to the extent that a month out they were suddenly asking that we remove themed references from the Convention Guide in case people didn't understand them. Indeed, we kept the theme so secret that we managed to get the name of the ship wrong on the staff t-shirts. – sigh - If you are going to have a theme it has to be worked into all of your publicity from the start, just like LA are doing with their Space Cadets idea.

Still, coming up with all that silly stuff was one of the few bright spots of working on the convention. If you haven't done so yet, take a look at *Ion Trails*, the in-flight magazine of the cruise ship, *WSFS Armadillo*. It has some great material in it, including contributions from Ken MacLeod, Jeff Ford and a bunch of other well-known writers. You can find it online at <http://www.emcit.com/pdf/IonTrails.pdf>.

Oh, and you too can buy your very own Spaceport Glasgow or *WSFS Armadillo* merchandise here: <http://www.cafepress.com/wsfsarmadillo>. We did the shop so that our staff could get into the spirit of the theme, but we are keeping it open for anyone who wants a

souvenir of the convention. All items are being sold at cost price.

Another innovation that Kevin and I introduced was the load-in slide show. We'd been inspired (independently) to do this having seen the slides that Noreascon 4 put up prior to their events. "If they can do that," we thought, "why not sell space." It worked. The slides were technically challenging at times, for example getting the music of the Space Cadet song to synch up with the lyrics on the slides, and it involved a lot of work for Kevin. But the shows went out pretty much as planned, raised a lot of money, and helped a few people who came to us wanting to advertise long after the main publications had gone to print.

One of the things that few people know is that the whole division would have been a disaster without Kevin. His main job was to protect the rest of us from interference by Colin Harris. (I gather Ian and Jim did a similar job in Programme). I'm sure that Colin did genuinely believe that he could do any job on the convention better than the person appointed to do it, and that it was therefore incumbent on him to question everything anyone did in great detail, but actually that's a rookie Worldcon Chair mistake. Thankfully Kevin took most of the flack for us, thereby avoiding any messy resignations.

(Incidentally, Kevin tells me that having done both jobs he thinks that running Events is more difficult than chairing the convention. Indeed, being any sort of division head requires a great deal of specialist knowledge in order to work effectively with your team. Chairs are not expected to be experts in every area of the convention's operation, and can therefore step back more from the detail.)

Finally a quick comment about who takes the credit for all this. I've seen a number of reports praising "British" or "Scottish" fans for the quality of the major events. Certainly our three main show directors are UK-based. Ian Sorensen lives in Glasgow. But quite aside from being run from San Francisco, Events had one of the most international teams at the convention. We had staff from Australia, Canada, Germany, The Netherlands, New Zealand and, of course, the USA. And possibly a few other countries as well. Every one of them deserves a great deal of credit for what they achieved. (Captain Standlee says he wishes to publicly second this sentiment.)

WSFS Affairs

There being no Site Selection at Interaction, the only significant WSFS activity at the convention was the Business Meeting. Not having Site Selection results to approve, it could be cut from three days to two, but there was still plenty of action.

The main piece of business passed on from Noreascon 4 was some tidying up of the wording defining the long form / short form split in Dramatic Presentations. There is no "right" way to do that. Whatever words you choose, some nit-picky fan will be able to complain that it is unfair, or imprecise, or faulty in some other way. The best thing we can say about the wording we have now is that it has been approved by two consecutive Business Meetings, and is backed by some of the fiercest critics of the original split, so hopefully it has reasonably wide support.

Other items of business passed on were further bits of improvement to the wording of the Constitution suggested by the Nit-Picking and Fly-Specking

Committee (yes, there is such a thing). These went through on the nod, though their report for this year did get referred back.

The blanket eligibility extension discussed last issued failed on a vote of 31-16. That's 31 in favor, 16 against. It needed a 3/4 vote to succeed. I'm disappointed, but this was always the likely result. It only needed a small number of "patriotic" Americans to wreck the whole thing. Thankfully an independent motion to extend eligibility for Margo Lanagan's story, "Singing My Sister Down" from the highly acclaimed collection, *Black Juice*, did get passed. This is the work needing an extension that was most likely to get a nomination next year. Good luck, Margo!

Another Hugo-related piece of business was the setting up of a committee to look into making the Hugos more accessible to online works. I fail to see the need for this. The Hugos are already fully open to online works, and have been for some time. I was very disappointed at the outright lies being told by some of the proponents of this motion. I'm also very concerned at what might come of it. I think its backers want extra Hugo categories so that they can get nominated without having to compete with paper-based works. To do so they are having to argue that online work is somehow "different" from paper work, which is of course the argument that people have been using to try to get *Emerald City* banned from the Hugos for years.

Finally we come to the big debate. Patrick Nielsen Hayden and Chris Barkley proposed a motion to try to do something about the problematic Best Professional Editor category. As you doubtless know, the same people have been getting nominated for this year after year. The

same two people keep winning. This suggests a rather uncompetitive category.

The big idea was to somehow separate out magazine editors and book editors. But, as was pointed out, the same people who edit magazines are also generally the big name anthology editors, and anthologies are books. After some discussion at the convention the proposal was modified to create a split between "short fiction" editors and "long fiction" editors. The dividing line between "long" and "short" would be the 40,000-word definition of a "novel" already enshrined in the Hugos. This proposal was approved, 51-6. It has been passed to L.A. Con IV for ratification.

It is possible that, with a year to think about it, SMOFdom may decide to change things a bit, but assuming that it passes unaltered, what will the effect be?

Well, we can reasonably expect that Gardner Dozois, Ellen Datlow, Gordon van Gelder and Stan Schmidt will continue to be nominated for their short fiction work. David Hartwell, the other member of the "gang of five" is also a noted anthology editor, so he might continue to snap up the fifth slot. Much as David deserves a Hugo, I hope not. I want to see some new blood.

The problem with the long form category is that very few books have the editor's name printed on them. David Hartwell is the only really well known book editor. So this Hugo might turn into a one-man show. David surely deserves a pile of Hugos, but it won't be good for the category if he does keep winning easily.

What we need, therefore, is information. We have to know who is editing what books. That's a job for people like me. Assuming the change is ratified in LA, I'll do my best to get the information out of

the publishers and put on the Hugo Recommendation List. I'm also thinking of doing a series of interviews with prominent editors.

Publications

Steve Cooper and his team did an exemplary job with publications throughout the life of the convention. There have been a few deadline slippages, and one or two desperate calls for people in the US to proofread a document overnight because it has to go out tomorrow, UK time. But the end result has been superb.

Well, except the web site, which suffered badly from the fact that the only person allowed to update it was also a co-chair of the convention. And it was all hand-coded as well. It made the web designer in me wince every time I thought of the effort involved. It did an OK job, but it could have been so much better. Some things took a very long time to get online.

I shouldn't really comment on the at-con publications, because Kevin and I edited three of them, but we were very pleased with the results.

As for the other two, Jim Burns' cover for the Souvenir Book is just fabulous. As far as I know (thank you Kevin for another midnight proofing session) there are no awful mistakes in the WSFS material. The less said about the article about web sites the better, however. I am not happy.

One of the most predictable things about any Worldcon is that, within an hour or so of registering, people are complaining about the layout and content of the Convention Guide. Thus far I have only heard a single complaint. It was a good one: every page of the programme grid

should have had the day printed on it. I know we proofread the document. I also know that by that time I didn't have enough brain cells to spare to do the job properly. Still, if that was the only mistake, job well done Steve.

In fact if I have any complaint about Publications I think it is that we aimed too high. Setting the bar lower would not have harmed the convention experience overmuch, would have saved a lot of money, and would have considerably reduced the stress on the staff. The trouble with a country only getting a Worldcon once a decade is that people get obsessed with making a mark.

Promotions

The pre-con publicity and sponsorship work, most of which was down to me, was a screaming disaster. I hate cold calling, and I'm not good at it, but the lack of response I got from company after company was just heartbreaking. All I had to do was mention the words "science fiction" and I was dead in the water. No one wanted to know. Not even companies who sold to fans. It was horrible.

I was quite pleased with the articles in *Interzone* and in *FPI Magazine*, and the interview Charlie Stross did with the *Scottish Sunday Times*, but most of this was preaching to the converted, or too late to help sell memberships.

Thankfully Dave Stewart got some superb coverage in the media during the convention. We were in most of the local papers, in the *Times* and the *Guardian*. I gather that we were on radio and TV as well. And there was very little of the ridicule we got from the tabloids and from Craig Charles on Channel 4 in 1995.

Indeed, if anything the coverage we got went too far the other way. The *Times* article suggested that media fans were not welcome at Worldcon, which I'm sure went down badly in some quarters.

Dealers and Artists

Frank Wu has some comments on the Art Show and Art Programme in a following article, so I'll concentrate on the Dealers' Room, run by Tim and Marcia Illingworth. Apparently it was quite sparse. This does not surprise me. Specialist SF&F dealers are a dying breed in the UK. Ken Slater and Rog Peyton are in various stages of retirement. Iain Emsley couldn't afford to bring his store. Thank goodness for Forbidden Planet. They were not intending to bring books – only comics and toys – but they were contacted by a few desperate publishers and did very well as a result.

One of the things that prevented us from getting more dealers is the traditional financial structure of Worldcon dealers' rooms. The theory is that anyone who comes to Worldcon as a dealer is also a fan attending the convention and therefore needs a full membership. Obviously that's true of a whole range of people from Larry Smith to Scott & Jane Dennis to Justin Ackroyd and so on. It isn't true of shop employees. Some of the potential UK dealers I spoke to could not believe we'd be so stupid as to drive people away with such policies. It is very hard to persuade the manager of a chain bookstore that every member of staff he wants to bring in has to pay \$200 to "attend" a convention that they have no interest in, and which they can't go to most of anyway as they are working the table. Media and comics conventions do not treat dealer staff in this

way. If Worldcons want to continue to attract dealers they have to change their policies. There should be dealer-only memberships, and they should be transferable so that the same people don't have to be dragged in for all five days. I know this is more hassle to administer, but it is the only way dealer rooms will continue to be well populated.

Just to give an example of how hard dealers work, consider Interaction's panel on bookselling. In order for dealers to be able to attend, it had to be scheduled for 9:00pm. Yet when it came time for it to start, Mark Plummer, who was moderating, found himself without a panel. Rog Peyton had dropped out because he was too busy. Two other panelists arrived very rushed later on. Mike Walsh had gone back to his hotel room and was so tired he fell asleep and missed the panel.

It is also worth noting that many of the booksellers at Interaction were American. Mike Walsh, of Old Earth Books, has been to five Worldcons in the UK and says it is much easier for an American dealer to bring goods into Europe than to get them into Canada, though there is a serious time/cost trade-off decision to be made. You can save a lot of money if you are prepared to ship your stock more slowly, but while it is in transit it can't be sold. European fans certainly seemed to relish the opportunity to pick up US small press publications, because at least two of the US dealers are muttering about possibly coming to Concession.

I gather that some authors, particularly the local guys, were very upset that their books were not in the dealers' room. I can understand this. But I don't blame the publishers. Possibly some of the dealers could have paid more attention to

industry buzz, or read *Emerald City* #119, to find out what was going to be in demand. But the main culprit is a British fan who had taken a dealer table (because you are not allowed to sell merchandise from the free fan tables). Having done so, he then proceeded to behave in such a stupid, selfish and petty manner that the convention committee was terrified of saying anything to dealers in case it sparked another of his abusive public rants. We should have been helping book dealers and publishers work together to get the right stock. That we didn't is entirely this guy's fault. His was quite the worst behavior I can remember seeing from anyone in fandom.

Concourse

At Noreascon 4 everyone was talking about the fabulous concourse. Ewan Chrystal, who ended up being a Division Head just for this area after Pat McMurray stepped down, put a lot of effort into doing something similar for Interaction, but his work has received hardly any comment. I've seen pictures of people by the Stargate and the TARDIS, but everyone seems to have taken the exhibits for granted. I don't know why. Is it more evidence of British fans being boring? Have we all raised the bar of expectations after Boston? It is all very mysterious. Ewan and his team deserve more credit.

Summary

The warm body count was approximately 4,100. The convention will not lose money, but won't pay reimbursements. This was only to be expected. Putting on a Worldcon in the UK is fantastically expensive, and not only for the attendees.

The hire costs of the SECC were around three times what Noreascon 4 paid for the Hynes last year, and about 30 times what Conadian paid in Winnipeg in 1994. The only reason the convention happened at all was because of a subsidy of around \$100,000 from the local tourist authority, the Glasgow City Marketing Bureau. Any profit that Interaction makes has to go to paying them back first.

(Note to Worldcon regulars: Interaction will pay Passalong Funds because the money they received from the scheme was contingent on their paying forward themselves if able. As such it takes priority over repaying the city subsidy.)

Overall I think the convention did remarkably well, especially given the intense hostility it faced from some parts of UK fandom, the general unwillingness of British fans to take senior management positions, and the disasters of the dollar exchange rate crash and the London bombings. I understand that the number of no-shows amongst US-based members was in the hundreds. But then, given the overcrowding of parts of the facility, perhaps this was just as well.

Something I should say about Interaction is that for the most part it had the friendliest committee I've seen for a Worldcon. There was none of the backbiting that characterized the ConJosé committee, nor the resentment of help from non-local staff that characterized Toronto. Possibly this was a result of the hostility we faced from British fandom. Possibly we were all united in dreading the next email from Colin Harris telling us how disappointed he was in the work we were doing. But somehow we all managed to pull together at the right time and put in superhuman effort to get the job done

with way too few staff. I think now everyone deserves a rest. A very long rest.

Art at Interaction

By Frank Wu

The art-related activities at Interaction went really well, with one disastrous exception. First we discuss the art show and the panel discussions, then the fiasco.

There was much pre-con anxiety about getting American artists' work to the art show. This was resolved by Jannie Shea, President of ASFA (the Association of SF & F Artists), who arranged group-rate shipping across the ocean. Other artists brought work in their luggage. In the end, the distance, difficulty and expense worked in our favor, as they sifted out the more amateurish art that crops up at Worldcons. Very little anime art was seen. Also noticeably absent were cartoons of skinny girls with fox heads and tails. Nor were there many winged kittens. (Now mind you, I find some winged kitten art, like that of Teresa Mather and Elissa Mitchell, quite agreeable, but an art show half-filled with their imitators is a bit much).

The most notable absences were two of the Pro Artist Hugo nominees, Bob Eggleton and Donato Giancola. That was a shame, but it was expected that we would lose some.

More importantly, what we gained was a powerful representation of European artists, noticeably UK folks. Jim Burns displayed the spectacular piece that graced the cover of the convention program book. It shows an enormous spaceport, with the *WSFS Armadillo*

launching in the foreground. The spaceport is sinuous and organic and the painting - like much of Burns' work - seems to shape-shift before your very eyes. In the background, we see a hidden image of a Hugo rocket (like the ones Mr. Burns won in 1987, 1995 and again this year). We also got to see spectacular space art from David Hardy, Dominic Harman, John Harris and Austrian Franz Miklis. Harris' work - seldom seen stateside - features huge alien spaceship constructs which spill over the edges of the canvas; these are often reduced to jagged blocks of color which really brought home the idea that space art is the new Abstract. Wonderful fantasy art - such as the lovely, delicate pastels of Anne Sudworth and Alan Lee's work on *The Lord of the Rings* films - was also present, but overall the show had a stronger hardware/science fiction element than most stateside Worldcons.

The art-related panel discussions went well, though, as is usual for Worldcons, were sparsely attended compared to science or lit panels. The art panel that got the most positive feedback was "Can Art Change the World?" Herein we - Fangorn, Lisa Konrad, Feòrag NicBhrìde and this author - pondered whether art could be more than just pretty pictures. As Fangorn and I were two of the few non-whites at the con, we discussed the portrayal of minorities (or lack thereof). Why are there so few blacks on book covers - even when they are the main characters? Lisa noted that her husband - who's black - feels uncomfortable coming to the all-white sea that is a sci-fi con. We also discussed the abundance of bimbos, but relative absence of beefcake. And we noted how art could be used for propaganda; by Nazis, communists and evil corporations. However, art could also

be used to enlighten. Examples were shown of Joe Chemo (a cancer-ridden spoof of Joe Camel); an art group that sawed geometric patterns into abandoned buildings to create beauty from ugliness; and buckets of red and white carnations dumped on a Los Angeles police car.

Other art panels brought up some interesting ideas. Oisín McGann emphasized that artists are also businessmen who are worth their wages. If necessary, he will sit outside the homes of those who delay paying him. At another panel, it was suggested that artists should have nicknames, like baseball players (e.g., Babe Ruth was "The Sultan of Swat"). A fan once called me "The Frank Zappa of the art world." But Fangorn said that I might more accurately be described as one of The Spice Girls of the Art World, specifically Scary Spice.

The singular disaster of the art-related activities was the Chesley Award ceremony. This was an embarrassing tragedy, as the Chesleys are given by artists to artists; thus they are the art-world equivalent of the Nebulas.

The Chesley Award ceremony is traditionally plagued by two problems: a late start and slides not showing up on cue. This year was particularly bad, as the ceremony began an hour and a half late (the length of the entire Hugo ceremony). The problem with the slides of the nominees' work was that the images were spread over three disks in non-logical order. Thus various presenters were left in the awkward position of announcing nominees, then pausing uncomfortably for artwork that might or might not eventually appear on the Big Screen. In addition, almost none of the winners were present.

One notable exception was John Picacio. His last name is pronounced like Picass-ee-o, but it came out of presenter Dave Mattingly's mouth sounding like "Picardio," as if he were the Captain of the *Enterprise* doing heavy exercise. When John ascended to the lectern, he thanked Mr. "Meaningly."

It was funny, but underlined the lack of advice the presenters were given.

Many names and titles were mispronounced during the ceremony and though, yes, some of us are flakey artists, we're better than that. John's presence also emphasized the absence of most of the other winners; pinch acceptors were selected, but one was woefully under-dressed and no one seemed to know who was accepting for whom. The fault lies with ASFA (and I accept part of the blame, since I am an ASFA member and did not step up to the plate). What ASFA needs is one organized person whose sole responsibility is to handle all aspects of the Chesley ceremony, from writing the script (with phonetic hints), to assigning presenting and accepting duties, to putting the slides in the order that the nominations would be read. Will someone step up to the plate? In many ways, the poor execution of the Chesleys — which was the only real disaster at the con this author saw — marred an otherwise well-run art program.

[Note: Pat McMurray and Julie Faith Rigby, who ran the art show, report that all space was sold. The total sales are in the region of £39,000, though as the accounts are still being processed this number is not firm. — Cheryl]

Hugo Analysis

Another year, another set of Hugo voting figures to pore over. Here we go...

Votes for No Award

I'd like to start out by making a few comments on the subject of finishing below No Award on first place votes. This happened to three nominees this year, and there has been some discussion online about how this might be indicative of people who only got onto the ballot because they got all of their friends to nominate them. This is by no means necessarily the case. Here's what you need to look for.

Firstly you want to look to see if the nominee in question got more nominations than first place votes. If they did so, that's clear evidence of a broader base of support. It is perfectly OK to someone to be generally perceived as a worthy nominee, but not a winner.

Secondly you should see what happens to their preferences when they get eliminated from the ballot. If those preferences are redistributed this is evidence that the nominee's supporters have a general interest in the process. If they don't get redistributed then the nominee's votes are probably from people who participated only to vote for that person. None of the three nominees that finished below No Award this year looked at all suspicious to me.

The problem is that when people see someone finish below No Award they assume that lots of people voted A-B-C-D, then No Award, and finally E. Obviously some ballots of that style are cast. Given the love-it-or-hate-it voting patterns for

Emerald City it may get quite a lot of that type of vote, but it gets way too many first place votes for that to be noticed. However, a significant number of the votes for No Award are by people who place it first in order to protest against a category. Some people always vote No Award first in the fan categories, because they think it wrong that fannish work should be rewarded on the same basis as professional work. Others vote No Award first in the dramatic presentation categories, because they believe the Hugos should only be for written work. Some may also vote No Award first in the Campbell because it isn't a Hugo and they don't want it included in the process. Whatever the reason, it is this type of voting pattern, rather than particular dislike of an individual nominee, that I believe it most responsible for nominees finishing below No Award.

Turnout and voting method

In the nomination stage there were 546 forms submitted, of which 436 were electronic. In the final ballot 684 forms were submitted, of which 552 were electronic.

These turnout figures are, I believe, a little on the low side. I'd love to know why. In the past many British fans have said to me that there's no point in voting in the Hugos because American voters always dominate the ballot. This year has seen a much higher than average UK membership for the convention, and indeed probably a much higher than average number of members who are not Worldcon regulars. Both of those observations would tend to suggest that the turnout was low because British and European fans don't normally vote. And

yet anyone looking at the results with the assumption that people vote "nationalistically" will come to the conclusion that the ballot was dominated by British fans, even though the membership figures show more Americans eligible to vote than Brits. All of this tends to confirm my assumption that this year many American voters deliberately choose to vote for British nominees where possible, though of course I have no way to prove that.

It is also noticeable that by far the majority of the votes now come in electronically. This is a good thing. Electronic voting, for those who have access to it, is cheaper, easier and allows the voters more time to read the nominees. It should enable people from all around the world to participate in the voting process. But sadly, of course, they don't.

Fan Categories

Despite Frank Wu's knockout victory last year, Sue Mason dominated this year's ballot. She had the most nominations, and lead the voting all the way through, though Frank wasn't that far behind for much of the process.

Fanzine voting followed the usual pattern of being divided into people who wanted *Emerald City* to win and those who wanted anything but *Emerald City* to win. We topped the nominations by a substantial margin, and led on the first place ballot all the way through to the final round. At that point we had a 14 vote lead. Then 77 votes for *Banana Wings* were redistributed. 57 of them went to *Plokta* and only 5 to *Emerald City*. So much for any supposed "home field advantage."

On the other hand, I'm absolutely delighted to see *Plokta* win at last. The Cabal has deserved a Hugo for a very long time and should have won ages ago. Now they have, and with *Emerald City* out of the way, next year they might even win again. Good luck to them!

Sadly *Chunga* didn't do at all well in the final ballot. I was sorry to see that Pete Young's *Zoo Nation* missed getting a nomination by only 2 votes. I suspect it would have done much better than *Chunga* had it made the final ballot. Next year, Pete...

Dave Langford dominated Fan Writer once again. It was good to see Claire Brialey put in a very respectable showing. I only just edged her into third place. It was also interesting to see a good showing for Matt Cheney in the "also rans".

Pro and SemiPro

So, the Langford juggernaut steams on. *Ansible* wins Semi-Prozine. I really don't know what to say about that, except that to note that with two wins this year Dave has now tied Charles Brown for the most career Hugo wins.

I note also that *Interzone* came a clear second, with *Locus* down in third. Charles has been predicting he'd get beaten by *Interzone* for some time, and he was right.

Next year is another matter. I'm pretty sure Charles will win again, and quite easily. But if the same number of people nominate *Emerald City* in Semiprozine as did so this year in Fanzine we'll get on the ballot easily.

Professional Artist was a fairly close contest. Donato Giancola topped nominations by a long way, and ran Jim

Burns close for most of the voting. In the end, however, the local boy made good, as he generally does at UK Worldcons. I really hope Jim puts up a good showing next year though. One of the pieces of work that he should be judged on next year is "Spaceport Glasgow", the Souvenir Book cover.

Ellen Datlow dominated Professional Editor and will probably do so again next year. All of the interest in this category is focused on what will happen if the proposed split is approved. I expect Ellen to dominate the short fiction half of the split.

Poor Mark Kelly lost Web Site to Ellen Datlow by just one vote. While I feel very sorry for him, I think he was right when he said on his blog that the long-term future of the category is best served by this result. It proves that the category is genuinely competitive.

I would be happier, however, if the award had gone to scifi.com as a whole. There's a lot of other good stuff on the site as well as Ellen's fiction section; in particular John Clute's "Excessive Candour" review column. Giving the award just to *Sci Fiction* suggests that the voters are not really interested in the web site, but are concentrating on written fiction. There's no point in having a web site category if it just becomes a category for online fiction magazines.

Talking of which, I was utterly boggled, and quite depressed, to see *Emerald City* finish third, ahead of *Strange Horizons*. That's also bad for the category. But hopefully by the time Web Site is next included on the ballot the *Emerald City* site will be more worthy of nomination.

The Campbell voting was quite interesting. K.J. Bishop and David Moles

topped the nominations. Yet Bishop was a distant third in the final ballot, and poor Moles finished below No Award on first place votes. Elizabeth Bear led the final ballot fairly comfortably from Steph Swainston. Rather oddly, Susanna Clarke failed to get on the final ballot (by just two votes) despite winning Best Novel. All of this goes to reinforce my suspicion that the Campbell is mainly about how hard an author works at creating an online presence through venues such as LiveJournal.

I note that Elizabeth Bear is the only American this year to have beaten a British candidate in a straight fight.

Dramatic Presentations

Everyone was expecting "Smile Time" from *Angel* to walk away with Short Form. It certainly topped the nominations. But in the final ballot *Battlestar Galactica* was a clear winner. Clearly the series has been gathering fans through the year. I also note that in latest *Bento* David Levine was enthusing about the quality of the scriptwriting.

Interesting the two *Angel* nominees between them had more first place votes than the *Battlestar Galactica* episode. However, when the votes for "Not Fade Away" were redistributed only 42 of 67 went to "Smile Time". Seven of them actually went to *Battlestar Galactica*. Those 25 votes would have made all of the difference to the result.

Lost was rather unlucky. It finished below No Award on first ballot, but the series launched in the UK a week or so after Worldcon and now UK fans are all enthusing about it.

Next year I confidently expect at least one *Dr. Who* episode to feature on the ballot. Thus far my vote is for "Dalek".

Sparks wants everyone to know that the Closing Ceremonies show he did at Noreascon 4 missed the final ballot by just 6 votes. He's hoping for better luck next year with the Interaction Opening Ceremonies. My money, however, is on Ready! Steady! Sew! / Iron Costumer, our masquerade half-time show. That went down really well with the audience, getting a lot more coverage on blogs than the Masquerade itself. As Kevin is the executive producer of both shows (and has a script-writing credit on the Opening Ceremonies) I expect he'll maintain a diplomatic silence.

The Long Form category was a straight fight between the fan favorite, *The Incredibles*, and the favorite of the movie cognoscenti, *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind*. *The Incredibles* won fairly easily, but I was delighted to see what is apparently a very good movie finish second.

Harry Potter fandom seems to be on the wane, with *Prisoner of Azkaban* finishing dead last. Indeed, it only just scraped onto the ballot, just 2 votes ahead of *Farscape: The Peacekeeper Wars*.

Next year promises a real heavyweight contest. We have offerings from Steven Spielberg (*War of the Worlds*), George Lucas (*Revenge of the Sith*), Joss Whedon (*Serenity*) and Hiroya Miyazaki (*Howl's Moving Castle*). We have what is generally agreed to have been a very fine Batman movie (*Batman Begins*) and a Neil Gaiman-scripted film (*Mirrormask*). And to top it all Worldcon is in Los Angeles, so there's a real chance that the movie industry might take an interest in proceedings. I do hope so.

Books and Stories

Well, would you credit it? A book of academic criticism beats out an art book in Related Book. Am I over the moon or what? Obviously I'm very happy for Farah and Edward, who are good friends, but I'm much more happy for the statement this makes about the place of academic criticism in the Hugos. I have no objection to art books per se, but I never buy them. Non-fiction works about SF, on the other hand, are of great interest to me. And that pretty much encapsulates the absurdity of having these two types of book competing against each other in a single Hugo category. They are way too different to be sensibly compared. And up until now the art book fans have dominated the category. So I'm really pleased that a book of criticism won, and I really hope to see Gary Wolfe win next year.

Given that Peter Weston's book about UK fandom finished a clear second, also ahead of Dave Hardy's art book, I think that may say something about UK fandom's preference for words over pictures.

The "also rans" for this category are really scary. *The Art of Discworld*, by Paul Kidby, missed nomination by one vote. I bet it would have won had it been on the ballot. Except, of course, if *Up Through an Empty House of Stars* had got 2 more nominations, in which case Dave Langford would have got his third Hugo of the night.

About the only thing that can be said about the Short Story category is that the spread of nominations was once again really wide. I'm sure that some much better stories are in the "also ran" list than were on the final ballot. I mean, just look at who's there: Howard Waldrop, Neil Gaiman, Jay Lake, Joe Haldeman, Gene

Wolfe, M. John Harrison. We have to do better by short stories next year, folks. Send me recommendations. (Yes, I know, Margo Lanagan.)

The quality of the field for Novelette was generally held to be much higher, but here again the spread of voting was quite wide. Writers such as Stephen Baxter, China Miéville, Peter Beagle and Michael Swanwick all came close to getting on the ballot. However, Kelly Link's "The Faery Handbag" is a wonderful story and I'm delighted to see it win.

I just cannot believe that Jeffrey Ford's "The Annals of Eelin-Ok" did not even make the "also ran" list. It was by far the best piece of short fiction I read last year.

The Bujold juggernaut failed to show in Novella. Indeed, "Winterfair Gifts" barely made it onto the ballot. It was just one vote ahead of "Mayflower II" by Stephen Baxter. That might have given Charlie Stross a run for his money. However, I'm absolutely delighted to see a Cthulhu Mythos story featuring the concrete cows from Milton Keynes win a Hugo. I think the good burghers of Milton Keynes should make Charlie a Freeman of the City. I'm also really pleased for the folks at Golden Gryphon. Here's hoping this does them a lot of good.

And so to what George Martin has famously named "The Big One". I don't think that anyone was surprised that the Bloomsbury publicity juggernaut helped Susanna Clarke to victory. All five books on the ballot were very good, so no complaints about the result at all, aside from its apparent inevitability.

I was really pleased, however, to see *River of Gods* finish second. I do hope that this does a lot of good for Ian McDonald's career, and I'm very much looking

forward to his next book which I understand is set in Brazil.

The big talking point in Best Novel is that Terry Pratchett declined nomination for *Going Postal*. Pratchett put a post on one of his fan discussion lists saying that he wanted to be able to enjoy the convention rather than be worrying over whether he'd win or not. That's the worst case of Hugo nerves I've ever heard of. I hope he feels able to compete another year.

Also of note is that Iain Banks' *The Algebraist* beat out Ken MacLeod's *Newton's Wake* to fifth place on the ballot by just one vote. I'll bet a few beers and whiskies were sunk in Scotland over that on the Sunday night.

Possibly the biggest surprise is that Neal Stephenson who, let us not forget, won the Locus Award for Best SF Novel, wasn't even in the "also ran" list. The only non-British authors to make the list were Joe Haldeman, Sean Stewart, Geoff Ryman and Guy Gavriel Kay. I note also that Charlie Stross and Terry Pratchett both had two novels in the list.

Summary

Aside from the clear domination by British works and people, Terry Pratchett declining nomination from Best Novel, and Dave Langford winning Best Semiprozine, this year's Hugos were pretty unexciting and predictable. There were no knockout wins, and only one notable come-from-behind victory. Lack of controversy is, I suppose, a good thing. But it does leave me thinking about next year almost immediately. I'll put the Recommendation List up soon.

Out of Synch

Books issued in the US in September which have already been published in the UK and reviewed here include works by Iain M. Banks, Jon Courtenay Grimwood and Martin Sketchley.

Night Shade books have done a fine job in rushing out their edition of *The Algebraist*, Banksie's Hugo-nominated novel, so quickly. I hope they'll have copies available at NASFiC.

Meanwhile Bantam has produced a US edition of one of my all-time favorite novels, *Effendi* by Jon Courtenay Grimwood. Some people, of course, don't like to be told about the awful things that are happening in Africa today, even disguised in the sugar-coating of one of Grimwood's alternate future novels. But there are water wars, and there are child soldiers. Read this book, people. You won't be able to forget it in a hurry.

Finally Pyr are producing their edition of Martin Sketchley's *The Affinity Trap*. This is sort of New Flash Gordon space opera. You have to be patient to begin with, because you'll start off thinking that you can't stomach anything this corny. But it does get better, promise.

The Algebraist - Iain M. Banks - Night Shade Books - hardcover

Effendi - Jon Courtenay Grimwood - Bantam Spectra - paperback

The Affinity Trap - Martin Sketchley - Pyr - paperback

Miscellany

The Hugo Winners

Novel: *Jonathan Strange & Mr Norrell* by Susanna Clarke (Bloomsbury);

Novella: "The Concrete Jungle" by Charles Stross (*The Atrocity Archives*, Golden Gryphon Press);

Novellette: "The Faery Handbag" by Kelly Link (*The Faery Reel*, Viking);

Short Story: "Travels with My Cats" by Mike Resnick (*Asimov's* 02/04);

Related Book: *The Cambridge Companion to Science Fiction* Edward James and Farah Mendlesohn (eds.) (Cambridge University Press);

Dramatic Presentation (Long Form): *The Incredibles* (Walt Disney Pictures / Pixar Animation Studios) Written & Directed by Brad Bird;

Dramatic Presentation (Short Form): "33" - *Battlestar Galactica* (NBC Universal Television / The Sci Fi Channel / Sky One) Written by Ronald D. Moore; Directed by Michael Rymer;

Professional Editor: Ellen Datlow;

Professional Artist: Jim Burns;

Semi-prozine: *Ansible* David Langford (ed.);

Web Site: *Sci Fiction* Ellen Datlow (ed.), Craig Engler (general manager);

Fanzine: *Plokta* Alison Scott, Steve Davies and Mike Scott (eds.);

Fan Writer: Dave Langford;

Fan Artist: Sue Mason;

John W. Campbell Award for Best New Writer: (Not a Hugo) Elizabeth Bear.

World Fantasy Award Nominees

The nominees for this year's World Fantasy Awards are:

Novel: Susanna Clarke, *Jonathan Strange & Mr Norrell* (Bloomsbury); Stephen R. Donaldson, *The Runes Of the Earth* (Putnam; Gollancz); China Miéville, *Iron Council* (Del Rey; Pan Macmillan UK); Sean Stewart, *Perfect Circle* (Small Beer Press); Gene Wolfe, *The Wizard Knight* (Tor, two volumes).

Novella: Leena Krohn, *Tainaron: Mail from Another City* (Prime Books); Kim Newman, "Soho Golem" (*Sci Fiction*); Michael Shea, "The Growlimb" (*F&SF*, 1/2004); Lisa Tuttle, *My Death* (PS Publishing); Gene Wolfe, "Golden City Far" (*Flights: Extreme Visions of Fantasy*, Roc).

Short Fiction: Theodora Goss, "The Wings of Meister Wilhelm" (*Polyphony* 4, Wheatland Press); Margo Lanagan, "Singing My Sister Down" (*Black Juice*, Allen & Unwin Australia); Kelly Link, "The Faery Handbag" (*The Faery Reel: Tales from the Twilight Realm*, Viking); China Miéville, "Reports of Certain Events in London" (*McSweeney's Enchanted Chamber of Astonishing Stories*, Vintage); Barbara Roden, "Northwest Passage" (*Acquainted With The Night*, Ash Tree Press).

Anthology: *The Faery Reel: Tales from the Twilight Realm* Ellen Datlow & Terri Windling (eds.) (Viking); *Polyphony* 4 Deborah Layne & Jay Lake (eds.) (Wheatland Press); *Acquainted With The Night* Barbara & Christopher Roden (eds.) (Ash Tree Press); *Dark Matter: Reading The Bones* Sheree R. Thomas (ed.) (Warner Aspect); *The First Heroes: New Tales of the Bronze Age* Harry Turtledove & Noreen Doyle (eds.) (Tor).

Collection: *Songs Of Leaving*, Peter Crowther (Subterranean Press); *Heat Of Fusion and Other Stories*, John M. Ford (Tor); *Stable Strategies And Others*, Eileen Gunn (Tachyon Publications); *Black Juice*, Margo Lanagan (Allen & Unwin Australia); *Mad Dog Summer and Other Stories*, Joe R. Lansdale (Subterranean Press); *Breathmoss and Other Exhalations*, Ian R. MacLeod (Golden Gryphon); *Trujillo*, Lucius Shepard (PS Publishing).

Artist: Caniglia; Kinuko Y. Craft; John Jude Palencar; John Picacio; Charles Vess.

Special Award: Professional: Gavin Grant & Kelly Link (for Small Beer Press); S. T. Joshi (for scholarship); Sharyn November (for editing); Gordon Van Gelder (for F&SF); Terri Windling (for editing).

Special Award: Non-Professional: Sandy Auden and Ariel (for thealienonline.net); Matthew Cheney (for mumpsimus.blogspot.com); Robert Morgan (for Sarob Press); Barbara & Christopher Roden (for All Hallows magazine); Michael Walsh (for Old Earth Books).

The judges are Alis Rasmussen (Kate Elliott), Jeffrey Ford, Tim Lebbon, Patrick Nielsen Hayden, Jessica Amanda Salmonson.

The awards will be presented at World Fantasy Con in Madison, which takes place at November 3-6.

Quill Awards Short-List

Well, the judges have deliberated and have whittled a list of 75 or so SF, Fantasy and Horror books, many of them very good, down to the following short list of 5:

The Dark Tower VII: The Dark Tower, Stephen King, Scribner/Grant; *Going*

Postal, Terry Pratchett, HarperCollins; *Jonathan Strange & Mr. Norrell: A Novel*, Susanna Clarke, Bloomsbury; *Shadow of the Giant*, Orson Scott Card, Tor Books; *The Stupidest Angel: A Heartwarming Tale of Christmas Terror*, Christopher Moore, William Morrow & Co.

Yes, this is what happens when you let a bunch of booksellers and librarians vote on the best SF&F of the year - you get best sellers as much as quality. Still, the final ballot is by popular vote. You have until September 15th to vote. The ballot form is available [here:](http://www.wnbc.com/quills/index.html) <http://www.wnbc.com/quills/index.html>. Note that there are genre authors in some of the other categories, for example the children's categories and graphic novel.

Sidewise Awards

The Sidewise Awards were announced at Worldcon. No surprises about Philip Roth's *The Plot Against America* winning Long Form, seeing as it was the only nominee. Huge congratulations to Warren Ellis for winning Short Form with a graphic novel, *The Ministry of Space*. That really shows up the Hugos, which have been strongly biased against any form of illustration in a story for years.

Chesley Awards

Award for Artistic Achievement: Omar Rayyan.

Best Cover Illustrations - Hardback Books: (3-way Tie) Rick Berry for *Queen of the Amazons* by Judith Tarr (Tor, March 2004), Tony DiTerlizzi for *The Wrath of Mulgarath: The Spiderwick Chronicles Book 5* by Holly Black & Tony DiTerlizzi (Simon

& Schuster, September 2004), Donato Giancola for *The Nameless Day* by Sara Douglas (Tor, July 2004).

Best Cover Illustrations - Paperback Books: John Picacio for *Her Smoke Rose Up Forever* by James Tiptree Jr. (Tachyon Publications, 2004).

Best Cover Illustrations - Magazine: Omar Rayyan for *Spider Magazine*, October 2004.

Best Interior Illustration: Charles Vess for *Medicine Road* by Charles de Lint (Subterranean Press, 2004).

Best Color Work - Unpublished: Marc Fishman for "Water Nymph", oil.

Best Monochrome Work - Unpublished: Robert Elneskog for "The Halls of Valhalla", pencil.

Best Three-Dimensional Art: Lawrence Northey for *AF-Z4 The Duke an' Blinky*, metal & glass.

Best Gaming-Related Illustration: Mark Zug cover for Monte Cook's *Arcana Unearthed*, a Variant players handbook (Malhavoc Press).

Best Product Illustration: Dean Morrissey for *Celtic King* fine art print, Greenwich Workshop.

Award for Best Art Director: Irene Gallo for Tor Books.

Award for Contribution to ASFA: Kat Angeli for production & printing of 2004 Chesley brochure.

British Fantasy Awards

Best Novel (The August Derleth Fantasy Award): *Abarat: Days of Magic, Nights of War*, Clive Barker (Voyager); *The Queen of Sinister*, Mark Chadbourn (Gollancz);

Jonathan Strange & Mr Norrell, Susanna Clarke (Bloomsbury); *The Water Room*, Christopher Fowler (Doubleday); *The Dark Tower VII: The Dark Tower*, Stephen King (Hodder & Stoughton).

Best Novella: *Breathe*, Christopher Fowler (Telos Publications); *Dead Man's Hand*, Tim Lebbon (Necessary Evil Press); *The Ice Maiden*, Steve Lockley & Paul Lewis (Pendragon Press); *My Death*, Lisa Tuttle (PS Publishing); *The Twisted Root of Jaarfindor*, Sean Wright (Crowswing Books).

Best Short Fiction: "The Problem of Susan", Neil Gaiman (*Flights: Extreme Visions of Fantasy*, Roc); "The Black Phone", Joe Hill (*The Third Alternative* #39); "You Will Hear the Locust Sing", Joe Hill (*The Third Alternative* #37); "Black Static", Paul Meloy (*The Third Alternative* #40); "Roads Were Burning", Adam Roberts (*Postscripts* #1).

Best Anthology: *The Year's Best Fantasy & Horror: Seventeenth Annual Collection*, Ellen Datlow and Kelly Link & Gavin J. Grant (eds.), (St Martin's Press); *The Alsico Project*, Andrew Hook, (ed.), (Elastic Press); *The Mammoth Book of Best New Horror: Volume 15*, Stephen Jones, (ed.), (Robinson/Carroll & Graf); *Acquainted with the Night*, Barbara & Christopher Roden, (eds.), (Ash Tree Press); *The Thackery T. Lambshead Pocket Guide to Eccentric and Discredited Diseases*, Jeff Vandermeer & Mark Roberts, (eds.), (Tor UK).

Best Collection: *Somnambulists*, Allen Ashley (Elastic Press); *Darker Ages*, Paul Finch (Sarob Press); *Out of His Mind*, Stephen Gallagher (PS Publishing); *Things That Never Happen*, M. John Harrison (Gollancz); *Trujillo and Other Stories*, Lucius Shepard (PS Publishing).

Best Artist: John Coulthart; Allen Koszowski; Les Edwards/Edward Miller; Richard Marchand; David Magitis; Ian Simmons.

Best Small Press: *The Alien Online*, Ariel; Elastic Press, Andrew Hook; Pendragon Press, Christopher Teague; *Postscripts*, Peter Crowther; *PS Publishing*, Peter Crowther; *Scheherazade*, Elizabeth Counihan; *The Third Alternative*, Andy Cox; *Telos Publications*, David J. Howe & Stephen James Walker.

The Karl Edward Wagner Award (Special Award) will be awarded by the BFS Committee and announced at the awards ceremony.

Some categories have more than five nominees due to ties in the voting. The winners will be announced at the British Fantasy Convention on 2 October 2005 at the Quality Hotel, Walsall.

I find the small press category somewhat odd. Some of the nominees are magazines and others publishers. *Postscripts* is a publication of PS Publishing. And surely TTA Press is more worthy of an award than one of its publications. Very strange.

Mythopoeic Awards

The winners were announced at the Tolkien 2005 convention in Birmingham.

Mythopoeic Fantasy Award for Adult Literature: *Jonathan Strange & Mr. Norrell*, Susanna Clarke (Bloomsbury USA).

Mythopoeic Fantasy Award for Children's Literature: *A Hat Full of Sky*, Terry Pratchett (HarperCollins).

Mythopoeic Scholarship Award in Inklings Studies: *War and the Works of J.R.R. Tolkien*, Janet Brennan Croft (Praeger Publishers, 2004).

Mythopoeic Scholarship Award in Myth and Fantasy Studies: *Robin Hood: A Mythic Biography*, Stephen Thomas Knight (Cornell University Press, 2003).

Oh look, another win for Susanna, and two more nominations in the previous sections. She may soon be asking Dave Langford for advice on building trophy cabinets.

Footnote

Next issue will hopefully see something of a new look for the magazine's second decade. It should also see the new Kim Stanley Robinson, which I'd been hoping would turn up in time for this issue. There are suggestions of new books from Justina Robson, Jon Courtenay Grimwood and Al Reynolds, though I may not get them all in time. I'm also expecting articles from two new guest reviewers. And I'll be looking at a few lesser-known names from Canada and Australia. Until then,

Ciao,

Love 'n' hugs,

Cheryl