

# EMERALD CITY #133

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A monthly science fiction and fantasy review magazine edited by Cheryl Morgan and available from her at [cheryl@emcit.com](mailto:cheryl@emcit.com) or online at <http://www.emcit.com>

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## Life on the Run

By Cheryl Morgan

I guess there will have been some surprise expressed around the SF&F community when Haruki Murakami's *Kafka on the Shore* appeared on the short list for this year's World Fantasy Award. I did, however, have the book on my "to read" pile. I'd bought it on the recommendation of John Clute, who had been reading it

when I visited him one day. He obviously liked it, and it takes quite a lot for Clute to recommend a book that contains talking cats. So what exactly is so good about it?

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*On my fifteenth birthday I'll run away from home, journey to a far-off town, and live in a corner of a small library.*

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Thus speaks Kafka Tamura, the hero of the book. As you might guess, his real name isn't Kafka. He chose it, from a multitude of names he might have adopted from books he had read. That in itself gives us a clue to what the book is going to be like. What is more, Kafka has an imaginary friend, a boy his age who talks to him and helps give him courage for the great step he is going to take in life. The imaginary boy is called Crow; a word we later learn is rendered 'Kafka' in Czech.

OK, so the book is full of literary references and allusions. That's going to make it popular with mainstream critics. A teenage boy with an imaginary friend is hardly the sort of thing that is going to classify a book as fantasy, is it? Of course not, but what about Nakata?

The other main viewpoint character of the book is a mentally retarded man who lost his wits in what might have been an episode of alien abduction during WWII. Up until then he had been an exceptionally bright boy. His two brothers have successful careers. But after an extended period in a coma he no longer knew who he was and lost the ability to read and write. Nakata is not as dumb as he seems, however. He does, after all, have the ability to talk to cats. Not many people can do that. And when he is in real trouble he can cause strange things to

happen, some of them so odd that they make the newspapers. These are not the sort of things that normally happen in mainstream novels, as Kafka and his friend, Oshima, are well aware.

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*"Maybe it's a metaphor?" I venture.*

*"Maybe... But sardines and mackerel falling from the sky? What kind of metaphor is that?"*

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Then there is the reason why Kafka is running away from home. It is all about a prophecy, which happens to come true even though there's no rational way it could have done so. Things do get very odd.

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*"But I'm not talking about science or law here."*

*"What you are talking about, Kafka," Oshima says, "is just a theory. A bold, surrealistic theory, to be sure, but one that belongs in a science fiction novel."*

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In other words, says Murakami, I know exactly what I am doing here, and you, dear reader, can take it or leave it.

Now one of the usual complaints leveled at mainstream writers who slum around in genre fiction is that they don't actually have much idea what they are doing. Unless they are steeped in the genre themselves, they tend to produce something amateurish and embarrassing that would not get past the slush pile in any reputable genre publishing house unless they noticed the name on the manuscript. Murakami, on the other hand, has a definite feel for fantasy. Here Kafka enters an enchanted forest.

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*I mean, the only plants I've ever really seen or touched till now are the city kind – neatly trimmed and cared-for bushes and trees. But the ones here – the ones living here – are totally different. They have a physical power, their breath grazing any humans who might chance by, their gaze zeroing in on the intruder as though they've spotted their prey. As though they have some dark, prehistoric, magical powers. Just as deep-sea creatures rule the ocean depths, in the forest trees reign supreme. If it wanted to, the forest could reject me – or swallow me up whole. A healthy amount of respect and fear might be a good idea.*

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There are ghosts living in the forest. Or maybe not. Maybe they are just men caught in a time warp generated by the aliens who may or may not have visited Japan. Genre-bending? Yeah, Murakami can do that.

You see, what Murakami is concerned with (and why young Tamura chooses to call himself Kafka rather than, say, Dickens or Tolstoy) is imagination. And fantasy, of course, is imagination run riot. Fantasy is the sort of writing that not only imagines new stories in the existing world, but also imagines stories that take place in worlds where strange things can happen, where people can be entirely other than they are. It is written by people who think that perhaps the world could be a better place, or at least a more caring one. Oshima explains:

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*"I've experienced all kinds of discrimination," Oshima says. "Only people who've been discriminated against can really know how much it hurts. Each person feels the pain in his own way, each has his own scars. So I think*

*I'm as concerned about fairness and justice as anybody. But what disgusts me even more are people who have no imagination. The kind T.S. Elliot calls 'hollow men'. People who fill up that lack of imagination with heartless bits of straw, not even aware what they are doing. Callous people who throw a lot of empty words at you, trying to force you to do what you don't want to do. Like that lovely pair we just met."*

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Oshima, by the way, is a woman who chooses to live as a gay man. And the "lovely pair" is two feminist campaigners who have been complaining that shelving the books in the library by author in alphabetical order is phallogocentric. Sorry about giving away that minor plot point, but hopefully it will encourage a whole new group of people to read this rather excellent book.

If I have one reservation about the book it is that I found parts of the translation rather stilted. I'm sure that an author as prominent as Murakami is going to get a very highly qualified translator, but that doesn't mean to say that the job is easy. There are cultural issues to deal with. What I really like about the translations of Zoran Živković's work is that they read just like the books were written by an English-speaking author. Alice Copple-Tošić does a fabulous job. But then, Serbia is a European country, so maybe Živković writes books that are easier to translate into English.

Where Philip Gabriel's translation appears to flounder occasionally is in the rendering of conversation (both character-character and character-reader) into English. It sometimes seems stilted and artificial. Can you imagine, for example, a 15-year-old American boy describing a woman he fancies as having "excellent posture"?

Now I know nothing about the Japanese language. Maybe conversation in it is more stilted than English. Maybe Gabriel translated the speech patterns more literally in order to give the impression of Japanese people speaking rather than of, say, Americans speaking. If so he has probably achieved the effect he wanted. But he may also have made the book slightly less approachable to a Western audience. There's a whole convention panel in this debate.

That small niggle aside, however, I very much enjoyed *Kafka on the Shore*. I'm delighted that it has got a World Fantasy Award nomination, and I'm going to find the time to read more books by Murakami. He might not be everyone's definition of what "fantasy" is all about, but I'd much rather read him than another 10-volume trilogy about a young farm boy who discovers that he is a Lost Prince destined to save The Land from an Evil Overlord.

Oh, wait a minute, I haven't told you what the book is all about. My mistake. The book is about a 15-year-old boy who runs away from home and an old man who talks to cats. You don't need any more than that, do you?

*Kafka on the Shore* - Haruki Murakami - Harvill  
- hardcover

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## Hav or Hav Not

By Cheryl Morgan

At Worldcon I found myself on a panel about Cities in Science Fiction. We had a very successful discussion - it was one of the easiest moderating jobs I have ever had - but one thing I never quite got the panel round to talking about was just how

you bring a city to life. Science fiction writers, in general, are good at talking about technology. Some of them are good with characters. But when they do sense of place they tend to do it more on the dramatic scale. Fantasy writers tend to be rather better with cities. Indeed, my first thought on being allocated the panel was that it should have been called Cities in Fantasy. And indeed we did talk about places such as New Crobuzon and Ambergris. Suppose, however, that you want to write about a city, but don't quite know how. Sure, you can study Miéville and VanderMeer. But you might be better off reading a top class travel writer.

Jan Morris' new book, *Hav*, was reviewed in *The Guardian* by Ursula Le Guin. I suspect that Morris' publisher, Faber, would have been horrified. Morris, I hope, would have been flattered. But the book is about an imaginary place, so it does class as SF of a sort. Besides, someone at Waterstones obviously saw the review. I can think of no other explanation for the book turning up in the massive 3 for 2 sale of SF books that Waterstones have been running over the summer. And because it was in that sale I ended up buying it.

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*There can be few people now who do not know the whereabouts of Hav...*

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Morris is, of course, being coy when she starts her preface with an assertion that most people know the location of a place that she made up. It is fairly obvious that Hav is somewhere in the Eastern Mediterranean, but it isn't until you are well into the book that Morris pins it down as being somewhere in Anatolia. (The early comment that Schliemann once considered it to be the site of Troy is a

massive clue.) On the other hand, Morris did first write about Hav in 1985, in the book *Last Letters from Hav*, so perhaps she expects we have all read of it there. The new book, *Hav*, combines the earlier book with a newly written segment, *Hav of the Myrmidons*, which relates what happened to Hav after the coup that ended Morris's earlier study of the city. If you already have *Last Letters from Hav* then the new book will be a poor bargain, because the new material is much the shorter part, but for new readers such as me the whole is a very satisfying read.

Hav, then, is a peninsula on the coast of Anatolia. Separated from Turkey by a massive escarpment, it has managed to maintain a modicum of political separation from the Ottoman Empire and its successor state. It has, however, been occupied by various colonial powers down the ages. The most recent occupiers were the Russians, whose nobility delighted in having a seaside resort on the Mediterranean. Hav was to Tsarist Russia what Monaco now is to Western Europe. Admiral Kolchak was supposedly the final governor of the city. *Last Letters from Hav*, therefore, is a delightful meditation on the decline of colonialism in post-WWII Europe. It is easy to imagine Jon Courtenay Grimwood setting a Raf novel in a future version of Hav where the Russians still hold sway.

The reason that *Last Letters from Hav* works so well is that Morris is a very fine travel writer. True to her genre, Morris frames the novel as a travel book that she herself has written following a professional visit to the city. She talks about arriving on the railroad that the Russians built, including a massive tunnel through the escarpment, about the local bureaucracy that a visitor must negotiate, about bars in which foreign visitors are made welcome. She

tells us of the Kretevs, the tribal people who live in the escarpment and about the snow raspberry, the hugely expensive local delicacy that grows only in those mountains. There is the local custom of a dawn trumpet call dating back to the eviction of the Crusaders from the city by Saladin. And of course there is the Iron Dog, the giant bronze statue guarding the entrance to Hav's harbor that was supposedly erected by the Spartans when they controlled the city.

Like any good travel writer, Morris talks about the local characters that she has met. Armand Sauvignon arrived as a young diplomat with the French administration in 1928 but has since built a successful career as a novelist. Mario Biancheri is the head chef of the Chinese-owned casino located in a small cove up the coast from the main city. Anna Novochka is an aged Russian aristocrat with tales of the glory days of Tsarist Hav. Perhaps the most famous resident is Nadik Abdulhamid, the 125th Caliph, heir to the Ottoman Sultanate and religious leader of the Sunni Muslims, a man who lives in perpetual fear of assassination.

Nor should we forget local customs. In Hav the foremost is the legendary roof race. This strenuous and often deadly contest involves the young men of the city racing across the roofs of the city, supposedly echoing a tradition dating back to a populist uprising against the Ottoman occupation of the city.

New Hav, the political entity that succeeded the Russian occupation, was a creation of the League of Nations. Somehow it survived the coming of the Nazis, though one Hav resident is, according to local rumor, still hunted by Mossad. However, Morris occasionally hears rumors of political unrest. Some of

the local people are plotting revolution, and their secret society may date all the way back to the time of the Crusades. Morris finds herself ushered out of the city in secret, just in time to see warplanes flash across the city.

In the new book, *Hav of the Myrmidons*, Morris returns to Hav twenty years after her initial visit. The new political entity is an entirely different sort of beast. Hav is now a thoroughly modern tourist resort. Most visitors never leave the artificial island resort, now managed by Mario Biancheri, built in the center of the old harbor. The city has a new “history”, supposedly discovered in the ruins created during the coup. Hav, it transpires, was founded by the Myrmidon host after the death of Achilles at Troy. The city has a new logo of a Myrmidonic helmet, and a giant M dominates the city (a symbol that many claim actually stands for Monsanto whose genetically modified snow raspberries are the city’s major export).

Once again Morris is making comment on the political changes she has seen in the world during her travels. The post-colonial world of New Hav is long gone. Hav of the Myrmidons is thoroughly modern, thoroughly commercial, as artificial as Disneyland, and 100% guaranteed safe for nervous Western tourists. The latter part of the book is a lament for a real world vanishing under a flood of tourist destinations.

I think *Hav* will appeal most to lovers of alternate history. Morris mines the millennia of European tradition in order to sculpt her world. Everyone from Marco Polo to Sigmund Freud appears to have visited Hav at one time or another. But the book also provides a magnificent sense of place and would, I think, provide useful

inspiration for anyone who needs to create a small city.

*Hav* – Jan Morris – Faber – hardcover

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## Programmable Fashion

By Cheryl Morgan

Whenever anyone complains that American science fiction is dying, one of the first names I tend to mention is Mark Budz. The sort of SF that Budz produces is more in the mold of the interesting story with the futuristic background, as produced by Jon Courtenay Grimwood, than the hard science of the likes of Bear, Benford and Brin, but that doesn’t mean to say that his science is in any way trivial. He also thinks quite hard about the social implications of the technologies he uses. His heroes tend to be fairly ordinary people caught up in nefarious schemes, rather than heroic and brilliant types. And finally, he makes good use of the Bay Area setting that he knows well from living there. Just like the Bay Area population, Budz heroes are by no means likely to be white.

The latest Budz novel, *Idolon*, does not appear to be related to his earlier works, *Crache* and *Clade*. Whereas those books took a biotech view of the future, with the electronic technologies of cyberpunk replaced by pheromones and other clever molecules, *Idolon* has an even more adventurous technology.

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*The majority of the e-skin out there was grainy, relatively low-res. Most philmheads could only afford secondhand, street cheap, or black-market celluloid. Thin membranes of*

*programmable graphene – fabricated out of nanoscopic semiconductor threads – that were capable of displaying not only graphics but texture. As a result, Pelayo saw a lot of monochromatics cruising the streets – stripped down black-and-white pseudoselves that people hoped to colorize later.*

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Yes, that's right, the programmable matter that Wil McCarthy tended to use building materials has been co-opted by Budz and turned into a fashion accessory. So you can have your house themed to reflect your favorite movie or historical period, and your clothes themed to reflect that setting. When you visit somewhere else it is polite to theme yourself to fit in with the local ambience. If you can afford good enough clothing to do so, of course.

Pelayo, the viewpoint character mentioned in the quote, is by no means a rugged hero. He works as a test subject for IBT, an e-skin manufacturer. His job is to wear new models of e-skin to check them out. It means that he always gets to dress in the latest styles, but if something he's testing goes wrong, well, he's getting paid to take risks.

But how does this clever stuff work, exactly? The clue is in the word "graphene".

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*"Artificial atoms," Pelayo said.*

*Lagrante nodded. "Now the term applies to fullerenes and nanotube threads that can be woven together into a bulk material. But originally it was a thin coating, used strictly for military apps. Everything from camouflage and stealth to field-mutable armor. It didn't go civilian – architecture, fashion, entertainment – until later. Took years to figure out how to power the 'skin using bioelectrics. How to wire*

*wetronics into graphene and integrate the nanoware.*

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I'll leave it to the likes to McCarthy to tell me whether all that is actually feasible, but it sure sounds good.

We are, of course, basically in cyberpunk territory here. We have programmable stuff. We have a rich mega-corp peddling it. And we have streetwise punks who want to hack the stuff. Indeed, IBT are not above a little viral marketing – letting versions of new ideas into the black market to see how they play before launching something similar for sale.

And because this is California, we have to have some religious loonies. In this case, the Transcendental Vibrationists:

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*The man's lips moved again, a barely audible hiss of burn-in-hell vitriol. "Salvation is near."*

*Pelayo flipped off the TV. Knee-jerk response. Most TV's didn't hemorrhage goodwill. They couldn't give a rat's ass what people thought of them. They knew, deep down in their sanctimonious hearts, that they were ascending to the Omega point while everyone else rotted in this pisshole of a life.*

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Of course *Idolon* wouldn't be a proper cyberpunk novel without a crime of some sort, and Budz has at least two. Firstly there's Nadice, an indentured worker at a local hotel who has come in from Africa and is being paid to smuggle something illegal inside her body. We encounter her because Pelayo's sister, Marta, is part of an underground group that helps indentured workers run away from their owners. And finally there is the corpse. Detective Kasuo van Dijk of the SFPD is trying to identify the body of a young woman found dead in

a cheap apartment. She was wearing an unregistered, experimental e-skin, and her DNA is not on record. It looks like it was the 'skin that killed her.

Kasuo, of course, is a typical square-jawed police hero, but this being San Francisco he's half Japanese, half Dutch.

And that, I think, should be enough for anyone. All that Budz needs now is to keep the plot moving at a rapid pace, and to get us to care about his viewpoint characters. These tasks he performs admirably. He's not (yet) in Grimwood's league for style, but he has time yet. Budz produces good, solid, entertaining and very American science fiction. He doesn't seem dead to me.

*Idolon* - Mark Budz - Bantam - mass market paperback

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## Birth of an Epic

By Cheryl Morgan

One of the favorite catch phrases of the entertainment business is "more like this". So when a new movie does well, Hollywood is suddenly clamoring for more like it. And when a new author becomes popular, publishers want more like what he writes. Right now UK publishers seem quite keen on getting more like the works of George Martin and Steven Erikson. That means fat fantasy novels with large casts and a fair amount of blood and gore. Gollancz weighed in a few months ago with Tom Lloyd's *Stormcaller*. Now it is Orbit's turn, with *Winterbirth* by Brian Ruckley.

The book begins slightly cheesily with the Thermopylae-like moment, but it soon

becomes obvious that these are not brave Spartans protecting their home from conquest; they are religious fundamentalists sacrificing their own (already Saved) lives so that their fellow believers can flee to safety. Not that these defenders of a pass are any less brave or willing to give up their lives for their friends, but they do so in order that their cult can hide itself away, grow, and one day come back in impose its beliefs on the rest of the world in blood and fire.

"Winterbirth" is the name of a mid-winter festival as well as the name of the book. It is over 150 years since the cultists of the Black Road were expelled from civilized lands. The people of the Glas Valley have perhaps gotten soft and over-fond of festivals in that time. In addition most of their fighting men are away in the south, quelling a rebellion at the bequest of their overlord. The true believers have not gotten soft. And the people of the Glas Valley won't be soft for much longer, if only because most of them won't be alive.

So far, so much a mediaeval tale. There are feuding lordlings, there are castles, there are religious fanatics trained for battle. What makes *Winterbirth* a fantasy? Well to start with there are the elves.

Well, OK, they are not called elves, they are called kyrinin, but elves they are. They have that fine-featured look, they live in the woods, they are very good with arrows, and so on. They also have a fair bit in common with Native Americans in terms of living in tents, and having a warrior-culture, and being divided into tribes named after animals, which makes them rather more believable elves than most.

The one thing the elves, sorry kyrinin, don't have is magic. That is the sole provenance of the na'kyrim - human-



kyrinin halfbreeds. There used to be a lot of them, but rather unwisely they used their powers to dominate both humans and kyrinin. Now there are a lot less of them, most of them hide away in remote places for safety, and they have a lot less magic. Every so often, however, genetics will throw up something interesting, and that is how the Black Road came to the Glas Valley.

So, on the one side standard pseudo-mediaeval humans, complete with spunky young lordling, and on the other religious nutters, elves and an evil sorcerer. Oh, and lots of difficult-to-pronounce names full of apostrophes. It shouldn't work, but it does.

The first thing that Ruckley gets right is his politics. The racism between the human and kyrinin is very believable and evidenced on both sides. Their joint detestation of the na'kyrim is also entirely believable, and has the inevitable consequences. Better still, both sides feud between themselves as much if not more than they fight each other. The Lannis clan (or "blood" as Ruckley has it) hate their Haig blood overlords as much, if not more than they hate the kyrinin. The Fox tribe and the White Owl tribe would be merrily slaughtering each other were it not for the human settlements in between their lands. And the fanatics of the Black Road, as all good fanatics do, hate everyone.

Ruckley is also reasonably good with his characters. A lot of them are easily recognizable as stock figures out of the fantasy formula, but their personalities are more than one-dimensional and they behave as if motivated by thoughts and feelings rather than by the needs of the author to drive the plot. Even when the bad guys do stupid things, it is because of pride and arrogance that has been

established rather than because the Evil Overlord always does daft things.

The military side is OK. Ruckley doesn't have Erikson's talent for strategy, but his hand-to-hand combat is well done. In particular, no one has Conan-like abilities. People keep getting injured and have to live with those injuries afterwards. Soldiers in armies get tired and hungry and fall sick. This is all good stuff.

The plot does take a little while to get going. It is also fairly predictable if you have read enough books of this type. But then if the author has done a good job of giving his character convincing motivations you should, to some extent, be able to predict what will happen. My only real complaint was the point where the elite Black Road soldiers proved about as good with crossbows as Imperial Stormtroopers are with their blasters.

I don't think that Ruckley is quite star quality yet. He doesn't have the magnificent characters of George Martin, the wonderful combination of utter bleakness and humor of Steven Erikson, or the strong philosophical background of R. Scott Bakker. But he has produced a very solid first novel in an interesting, if not terribly innovative, world. There are, of course, two more books to come, and there is plenty of potential material left hanging for Ruckley to develop. If you are into big, bloodthirsty fantasy sagas, this one is well worth checking out.

*Winterbirth* - Brian Ruckley - Orbit - publisher's proof

## Short Fiction

By Nic Clarke

There was much rejoicing this month as not one but two new issues of Prime's *Fantasy* magazine found their way to me. While it didn't quite bring me to the raptures of the debut issue, #2 (I haven't had chance to read #3, yet, but it looks equally juicy) proved to be a strong selection of excellent story-telling. My personal favorite was, unsurprisingly, "Lessons with Miss Gray" by Theodora Goss, set in late nineteenth-century North Carolina. It follows five young girls from the various strata of Southern society through a summer of secret witchcraft classes with the eponymous, mysterious lady. The tone may be a little more lighthearted than certain other Goss stories, but the subject matter is just as wistful, at least by implication: the imaginative clarity of childhood slowly giving way to the harsher and more mundane facts of adult life.

Not, of course, that things are blissful even when viewed from within a child's flight of fancy; rather, the fantastical trappings are simply a different means of seeing, and modulating understanding of, the world around them. Each girl nurtures her fondest hopes and her deepest insecurities in a greater or lesser degree of secrecy: Justina struggles with her grandmother's madness, and fears that it may be hereditary; Melody, having learned of a college that admits black women, spends all her free time working to save money for her escape; 'Mouse' lives an itinerant, outcast life with her alcoholic father; and both Emma and Rose exist in the shadow of impossible parental expectations and consequent disappointments. The narration flits between characters, letting each girl express herself through the

interplay of fantasy and reality in the way they perceive their lives:

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*In Boston, her mother had told her, it snowed all winter long. Rose imagined it as a city of perpetual silence, where the snow muffled all sounds except for the tinkling of bells and the bells of churches built from blocks of ice. Within the houses, also built of ice, sat ladies and gentlemen, calm, serene, with noses like icicles, conversing politely – probably about the weather. And none of them were as polite or precise as her mother or her aunt Catherine, the daughters of the Snow Queen. When they drove in their sleigh, drawn by a yak, they wore caps of egret feathers. If she were more like them, more like a Snow Princess, instead of – sunburnt and ungainly – would she, Rose wondered, love me then?*

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In the course of their lessons, Miss Gray offers them the chance to attain their hearts' desires. A brief glimpse into the future, coupled with the abrupt ending of the witchcrafty summer, demonstrates the joys and the pains of this – while leaving much open-ended about the girls' fates.

Also notable in this issue are Yoon Ha Lee's "Nine Tales, Hundred Hearts" – about a hunter and his prey, drawing on Chinese fox folklore – and Paul Tremblay's "It's Against the Law to Feed the Ducks". The latter sees four-year-old Danny on holiday with his parents and baby sister in the backwoods of New Hampshire. While Danny enjoys the lake and the beautiful weather, and wonders why he may not feed the ducks and why fewer and fewer people come to the lake each day, his parents become increasingly distracted and alarmed by reports on the television, which he is not allowed to watch. Tremblay maintains his child's-

eye-view on events throughout (with very occasional slips, like the comment about “renegade feeders” which, while funny, didn’t ring true for the narrative voice), leaving the reader to imagine what world-shattering catastrophe might have taken place while Danny’s parents were trying their best to protect him from the news. It’s a very effective and disquieting ploy, although by definition there is no pay-off, as such.

Over at *Strange Horizons*, Amanda Downum’s “Flotsam” (14/8) is an evocative story of an artist with terminal cancer, torn between two ways to approach her death. The different paths are symbolized by two lovers in her life. On the one hand there is young, vibrant Siobhan, an admirer on the cusp of her own artistic career – a fleeting pleasure, perhaps, but well suited to celebrating the final months of her life. On the other there is Aoife, long-lost childhood sweetheart who also happens to be a mermaid, a siren – and who offers immortality beneath the waves. The choice and what it represents are dealt with starkly but sensitively, and I found that it resonated long after the first reading. In addition, Downum has a gift for description, and her mermaid is pleasingly earthy (or watery, perhaps):

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*Her hair is a coppery tangle, streaked with verdigris, snarled with sea wrack. Skin like moonlight, like nacre, luminous, iridescent. But as she moves closer, Rebecca can see the shimmer of scales, the mud and blood and mildew streaking the white dress. The smell of moss and brine fills her nose.*

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The October issue of *Fantasy and Science Fiction* carries a number of substantial pieces. Some are hit-and-miss, but there

are two stand-outs. In “Pol Pot’s Beautiful Daughter (Fantasy)” Geoff Ryman imagines Sith, a surviving child of the titular dictator. Living in bored luxury amid her father’s ill-gotten gains, she is selfish, petty, and starved of human contact, and tells herself she prefers it that way:

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*Sith liked tiny shiny things that had no memory. She hated politics. She refused to listen to the news. Pol Pot’s beautiful daughter wished the current leadership would behave decently, like her dad always did. To her. [...]*

*Sith shopped. Her driver was paid by the government and always carried an AK-47, but his wife, the housekeeper, had no idea who Sith was. The house was full of swept marble, polished teak furniture, iPods, Xboxes, and plasma screens.*

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Sith’s comfortable, sheltered, contentedly-ignorant world is rocked by the sudden appearance – or, perhaps, her belated awareness – of the ghosts of her father’s victims. Their photographs turn up in her printer tray, their sobbing voices call to her from her mobile phones, demanding her attention. Although she resists them at first, she can no longer hide from the murky truths underlying her life, and that of the shiny, modern Cambodia around her. Her own redemption, she finds, can only be found by making amends; the dead must be remembered and honored, not ignored in the pursuit of progress, if there is to be any peace with the past.

In the same issue, “Pop Squad”, by Paolo Bacigalupi, presents a starkly dystopic future in which anti-aging “rejuv” treatments have brought effective immortality to the human race. The flip side of a death rate of almost zero, of

course, is the specter of overpopulation in a world already struggling for resources; rejoy drugs are therefore formulated to cause sterility in their subjects. Fertility is still possible, if one stops taking the drugs, but it is a crime, punishable by labor camp for the parent(s) – usually a mother – and immediate execution for the offspring. As a result, children are no longer legally born, and parenting is an underground lifestyle clearly analogous to extreme drug addiction in our own world: a squalid, hidden existence cut off from all social support, including any access to rejoy, with a backdrop of constant fear.

Our narrator is a cop responsible for investigating and putting a stop to illegal breeding; a man firmly committed to the system and utterly ruthless in upholding the law. In a world of universal immortality, finite lives are futile, without value; our narrator cannot understand why anyone would wish to give birth to and raise children who will never get rejoy, who can only, one day, die. Fecundity is something terrifying; he sees only horror and filth in the lives of the mothers:

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*Night time. More dark-of-night encounters with illicit motherhood. The babies are everywhere, popping up like toadstools after rain. I can't keep up with them. I had to leave my last call before the cleanup crew came. Broke the chain of evidence, but what can you do? Everywhere I go, the baby world is ripping open around me, melons and seedpods and fertile wombs splitting open and vomiting babies onto the ground. We're drowning in babies. The jungle seems to seethe with them, the hidden women down in the suburb swelter, and as I shoot along the maglines on my way to bloody errands, the jungle's tendrils curl up from below, reaching out to me.*

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The tone is noirish, the setting is rich and pungent – Bacigalupi really makes his reader *smell* the results of desperate people trying to raise children in secret – and the central idea is both hard-hitting and haunting. The only question is whether the pay-off is quite daring enough to match the brilliance of the set-up; the ending is not a let-down, precisely, but it does seem a little tame compared to what comes before.

(But then, perhaps that's a relief...!)

*Interzone* #205 looks as gorgeous as ever, although the golden alien lady on the cover did raise a few eyebrows among my friends. Several enjoyable stories here, although nothing to match Jay Lake's and Elizabeth Bear's contributions to the last issue I reviewed here (#203). "The Measure of Eternity" by Sean McMullen is a historically-flavored fantasy about the introduction of zero to mathematics, framed by a series of encounters between a courtesan's attendant and a marketplace beggar. Central character Mei is a little too enigmatic to truly warm to, but the story is well done, if a little longer than necessary. Steven Mills' "Blue Glass Pebbles" conjures a future where water shortages dictate geopolitics, and the sort-of First Family of a separatist West Canadian state become embroiled in a potential Armageddon. Mills' story rests as much on the inner lives of its characters as it does on plot; all emerge as damaged but well-realized individuals, linked by a pleasingly complex and dysfunctional backstory. The only downside is that we're told what has happened much more frequently than we are shown it; at times it feels as if most of the significant events took place before the story began. The

ending, however, leaves open plenty of possibilities without being inconclusive.

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*Fantasy* magazine #2 - Sean Wallace (ed.) - Prime Books - letter magazine

*Strange Horizons* - Susan Marie Groppi (ed.) - Strange Horizons - web site

*The Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction* (October 2006) - Gordon Van Gelder (ed.) - Spilogale Inc. - MS Word proof

*Interzone* #205 - Andy Cox (ed.) - TTA Press - A4 magazine

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## The Art of Un-Becoming

By Mario Guslandi

Prior to 2004 I knew next to nothing about Mike O'Driscoll except that, like me, he was a regular contributor to *The Alien Online*. I hadn't realized that, like most reviewers and columnists, he was a writer himself. So when I first read, in the Ellen Datlow's anthology *The Dark*, his outstanding tale "The silence of the fallen stars", I was surprised and spellbound. Written in beautiful prose the story, set in the Death Valley, is an extraordinary example of psychological horror featuring a lonely ranger, a family of British tourists and some mysterious rocks. The uneasy atmosphere of this remarkable piece of fiction is imbued with silence, dread and heat.

Since then I've tried to trace new material by O'Driscoll, but managed only to enjoy his fine contribution to *Poe's Progeny*, "The Hurting House", a cryptic but effective tale about two friends in love with the same woman and their deep suffering after her sudden disappearance.

So, as you can guess, I was looking forward to the present, long awaited collection from the excellent Elastic Press, which gathers O'Driscoll's short fiction under the enigmatic title *Unbecoming*. According to the Oxford Thesaurus the word 'unbecoming' is an adjective synonymous of 'unsuitable, unflattering, unsuited, improper etc.' but, as I understand it, the meaning here is different. The title story is a Kafkaesque, solid piece portraying a writer suffering a progressive loss of identity. Among other things, the novel he's writing, called "Becoming", unaccountably gets re-titled "Unbecoming", that is the opposite of what he intended. In other words what the story describes and what the whole collection is about is the 'un-becoming', meaning the process by which identities shatter and lives fall apart. This is the common ground underlying O'Driscoll's stories, proving that horror lies within our souls and any outer menace is but the projection of our inner fears.

The two stories I mentioned above are, of course, included in the collection. So are a bunch of superb tales that previously appeared elsewhere, mainly in the magazine *The Third Alternative*. "Shadows" is the masterful description of the gradual descent into a private hell by a man who, after his best friend's death, sees his job, his family and his own life dissolve into thin air.

"In the Darkening Green" depicts a young girl's struggle to be accepted in the world without losing her identity. In "Rare Promise" a dirty childhood secret casts its dark shadow on the lives of two boys and a girl, with the most tragic consequences. Told in a skilful yet somehow reticent manner the yarn becomes more and more engrossing as the ending approaches.

"The City Calls Her Home", co-written with Christopher Kenworthy, is a distressing tale of urban horror conveying a sense of an unnamed threat in which reality gradually disintegrates. In "Sounds Like" the untimely death of their baby daughter overcomes a mother with despair and a father with the curse of being able to hear sounds such as beads of sweat rolling down his chest or the scuttle of a spider across the ceiling, sounds that nobody else can hear. "Hello Darkness" provides a journey in a world of squalid sex, dope and alienation, described by the author in a detached, restrained fashion.

As an extra bonus the book offers also an unpublished piece of work, "Evelyn is Not Real", a fascinating tale revolving around the complex relationship between a girl and a former actor haunted by the memory of a woman who co-starred with him in an elusive movie.

Endowed with an exceptional talent for producing prose often akin to poetry, O'Driscoll is a natural storyteller with the uncommon ability to probe in depth the abyss of human soul and its capacity of 'un-becoming'...

*Unbecoming* - Mike O'Driscoll - Elastic Press - trade paperback

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## Elements of Hope

By Cheryl Morgan

Yeah, I know, I don't normally review anthologies. But this one I very much wanted to cover. I had tried to arrange for someone else to do it, but circumstances happen and it came down to me this issue or nothing. Which meant it had to be me, because this book is important.

Why is that? Because it is a charity fundraiser. All of the authors and the editors have given their work for free. Michael Whelan has donated the cover art. And Tor will be donating all of their profits on the sale of the book. The money goes to the Save the Children Foundation and is to be used to help the relief efforts for those area shot by the Boxing Day tsunami in south-east Asia in 2004. Yes, it was a while ago now, but believe me these people still need help. More of that later, but first some stories.

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I read this book on the plane over to California for Worldcon. This proved rather ironic, because the lead-off story, and one of the best in the book, is David Gerrold's entertaining tale of a natural disaster on the freeways of Los Angeles. "Report from the Near Future: Crystalization" takes as its premise the idea that L.A.'s roads are so crowded, so complex, and so inter-dependent that total gridlock of the entire region, with consequent economic collapse, is a possibility. Gerrold does a fine job of convincing us that it could happen, especially with the basic stupidities of ordinary people and the simple accidents that build upon one another to turn a traffic problem into a major disaster. Then of course, I had to take the shuttle from the airport to the hotel, in rush hour. Considering that I was sat next to a guy who was telling me about an 8-foot tall cyborg llama, Gerrold's story seemed remarkably plausible.

There are many other stories in the book. Some, but not all, deal with disasters or the aftermath thereof. Jo Haldeman's story, "Expedition, with Recipes", is a post-apocalyptic tale. Brian Aldiss's contribution, "Tiger in the Night", by

contrast is a short piece about a religious fanatic and a wild animal. Brian Herbert and Kevin J. Anderson contribute a Dune story that doesn't have much to do with disasters but is a great selling point for the book. Larry Niven's tale, "The Solipist at Dinner", is one of those things that might be too clever and obscure for most anthologies, but is a great inclusion for a charity book that needs big name writers.

A particular surprise to me was Jacqueline Carey. "In the Matter of Fallen Angels" is a lovely little story about an angel that falls to earth in a small American country town. The angel itself does nothing except eventually regain consciousness and stand up. The people of the town, however, display a wide range of different reactions.

And talking of angels, Adam Roberts, in "Abductio ad Absurdum", gets very silly with the idea of alien abductions, the early days of life on Earth, and a legendary garden.

As with any anthology, there were stories that were of less interest to me. But not everyone's tastes are the same, and those that I disliked may appeal to you, and vice versa. What Steven Savile and Alethea Kontis have done well, however, is the important editorial trick of putting really good stories at the beginning and the end. Those of you who are amused by H.P. Lovecraft's tales of isolated New England seaside towns being over-run by people with bug eyes and webbing between their fingers will probably be amused and delighted by "Sea Air", Nina Kikriki Hoffman's tale of how such things work in Oregon.

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The book has an introduction by Sir Arthur C. Clarke, who lost a diving school that he owned to the tsunami, and quite

likely a friend or two as well though he doesn't mention such things. But it is Savile's tale of how he came to start the project that is the most moving section of the book. Although Savile is British, he teaches at a school in Stockholm. As you may remember, there were a lot of Swedish tourists in the area at the time of the disaster, including children from Savile's school.

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*Six of the children had been there, two were still unaccounted for, and one of my own eleven-year-olds, Nikki, had stood on the beach in the middle of it, surrounded by corpses. She was alright. Her family had returned home with a young boy who had lost his entire family on that beach.*

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When Savile wrote that piece, in June 2005, the raw statistics stood at 170,125 people from 36 countries dead, and another 134,012 unaccounted for. A little over a year later, things will be getting back to normal, but there is still a lot of rebuilding to be done, there are still many orphans needing care.

The science fiction community isn't big enough or famous enough to rake in charity money the way pop musicians and sportsmen so, but every little helps. Savile and Kontis, Tom Docherty and David Hartwell, Michael Whelan, and all of the contributing authors have done their bit. I bought my copy of the book. Now it is your turn, please.

*Elemental: The Tsunami Relief Anthology - Steven Savile and Alethea Kontis (eds.) - Tor - trade paperback*

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## The Furrries Have Taken over the Anthology!

By Stuart Carter

The previous two *Flight* anthologies (the second of which I reviewed here) have been showcases *par excellence* of the state of the art of the comics form; full of some of the most imaginative fiction, albeit in a comics format, that you'll see just about anywhere. *Flight Three* continues that tradition, although with a couple of reservations.

First, however, let's have a quick romp through some of my personal highlights, shall we? I could have picked almost any of the stories, really, but here are some of my favorites.

The penultimate story, "Snow Cap" by Matthew Armstrong, is the archetypal *Flight Three* story, demonstrating some arch comic timing over just five delightful pages: a cute young girl discovers an egg from which hatches an endearingly clingy baby monster, all told in silence.

Israel Sanchez's Kyle-Baker-with-a-touch-of-South-Park artwork perfectly suits "Saturday", the tale of a baby Godzilla (*not* Godzooky, thank goodness!) and his/her endearing attempts to emulate the Japanese icon. Sanchez has a fine grasp of the subtleties of graphic storytelling that is belied by the simplicity of his art and emphasized by the lack of dialogue.

Phil Craven's "The Rescue" would seem to showcase the remarkable friendship between a boy and a Pokemon-esque monster being pursued by hunters, but there's more to it than that. Like most of the stories here, it's fairly slight, but far from stupid or dull.

Kean Soo's "Jellaby - The Tea Party" follows the hilarious faux pas' of poor

Jellaby, a monster, at a children's tea party. It's well observed, visually hilarious and contains dialogue!

And I couldn't review any *Flight* without mentioning Michel Gagné's "Underworld", which continues from *Flight Two* the adventures of an intrepid (and, again, silent) little fox on a fantastical alien world. Gagné's not at all scared to expend a half or even a whole page on just one panel, a single extreme close-up, of his courageous little cub. It's a bold approach, but Gagné's skill as an illustrator means the effect is both startling and enchanting. This is Warren Ellis' often-overused idea of 'widescreen comics' given a fresh lick of ink.

Noticing something of a pattern forming? That's right; there are a lot of cute stories in *Flight Three*: cute kids, cute anthropomorphic animals, cute artwork, and cute storylines. *Flight One* and *Flight Two* both had their share of cuteness, but it wasn't the primary mode of either of them. *Flight Three* really feels dominated by kids' stories for grown-ups, although most of these would certainly be ideal for *actual* kids – unpatronizing, intelligent, thoughtful and short, and with children as heroes. The artwork also eschews conventional 'adult' realism in favor of a more Japanese or Continental iconography, something many comicophobic Western readers may have last seen in – again – children's books.

This preponderance of prettiness may simply be a charming coincidence, as it isn't as though there are *no* adult stories in *Flight Three*. We have Bannister's "So Far, So Close", a disarmingly slight tale of longed-for infidelity; Matthew Forsythe's "Voodoo", a surreal tale of hope against despair – it might even be a religious parable! And then here's Alex Fuentes'



“One Little Miracle for a Hungry Swarm”, a freakish, unsettling tale of the distant future, strongly reminiscent of the work of Cordwainer Smith and, perhaps, Richard Calder.

Just as with *Flight One* and *Two*, what’s not to like in *Flight Three*? There’s some truly remarkable talent on display here, both in the art and in the storytelling; when my daughter is old enough to want bedtime stories then you can bet your bottom dollar I’ll be coming back to *Flight Three* for quite a few of them.

If I have a single wish for *Flight Four* (and at least one story here promises a continuation...) then it’s for a slightly harder edge to the stories, perhaps slightly less whimsy from some of the creators, just to show they can do it...

Flight Three - various writers - Ballantine Books - graphic novel

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## After the Fairy Tale Ended

By Peter Wong

Think of a medieval fantasy world and the first association that usually comes to mind is an exotic backdrop for fantastic adventures. Yet couldn’t the headaches of day-to-day living in such a world be an adventure in itself? Linda Medley’s medieval fantasy comic series, *Castle Waiting*, attempts to tell mundane tales in a fantastic setting.

Jain, accompanied by her half-human and half-canine son Pindar, has abandoned her former life as a noblewoman. To make a fresh start, she has decided to settle down at a distant but somewhat ruined seaside castle. It will not be an isolated existence.

Nearly a dozen people already live within the walls. There’s a nun whose role as a paragon of virtue doesn’t obstruct her greed for caramels or her lusting after a wandering humanoid horse-knight. Doctor Fell, a death-obsessed scientist, seeks ways to harness the power of legendary creatures such as the Basilisk and the Hydra for the benefit of humanity. Leeds (aka Thuribulus) is an agent of the Devil who monitors the castle’s souls on a very relaxed basis.

The castle’s squatters aren’t in serious danger of displacement by the former owners. The Keep’s booby traps have long been dismantled. The treasury no longer houses gold and jewels. The castle buildings have been allowed to fall into slow decay. Rackham, an old humanoid stork, essentially acts as the castle’s custodian and historian. One also senses he appreciates having other people present to bring a touch of life to this lonely place.

Rackham gives Jain, Pindar, and Simon (a simple-minded giant of a man) a grand tour of the castle’s rooms. The light-hearted tour is both orientation and a chance for Jain and Pindar to find a room in which to live. The former noblewoman chooses the old counting house. That room evokes strong memories of her happier childhood days.

Meanwhile, the other residents of the castle go about their daily lives. Dinah still needs to get the laundry washed. Chess, the humanoid horse-knight, develops a cracked hoof and needs to scrounge up repair supplies. The Sister tries to find metal that can be melted to make a cross for Jain. Eventually, all these tasks are accomplished.

*Castle Waiting* fans that have followed the series from the beginning may grumble

that much of this Fantagraphics-published issue is a reprint of two previously published issues. But since this new comic re-starts an uncompleted storyline begun in the reprinted issues, perhaps this transgression can be forgiven. For new readers unfamiliar with Medley's imagined world, this issue provides a good jumping on point. Still, there are moments when one can get lost.

**Rackham:** I've never been able to find a plan of the Tower in any of the archives. I've tried to figure it out myself... The architect was either a genius or a madman. Or **both!**

Medley's plotting can equally be characterized as genius, madness, or both. By the issue's end there seems to be no sense of a large plot payoff lurking somewhere off stage. That quality would drive away readers who equate fantasy tales with a cornucopia of incident and high emotion. On the other hand, the lack of obvious melodramatic moments pushes the patient reader to pay attention to the story's scintillas of information and then mull on their implications. Chess is only mentioned once by name, in the panel preceding his first appearance in the issue. One then sees the character on panel, a humanoid horse-warrior who walks upright. Then Medley's cleverness sinks in. A knight is a chess piece, and is represented on the chessboard as a horse.

Medley's stronger achievement is to use simple or mundane incidents to make telling points about character. A running joke centers on the nun's efforts to find metal to make a cross for Jain. The cross is intended to "keep out evil spirits, and stuff." Yet the Sister doesn't notice that Leeds, a literal Devil's agent, passes easily through a doorway with a cross hanging over it. In other words, the nun is unaware

of how much of her beliefs may be organized superstition.

This depiction of religion should not be surprising. Medley portrays an era where superstition and prejudice are mistaken for scientific knowledge. Doctor Fell thinks a Venus flytrap is a plant-based descendant of the legendary Hydra. Chess, who lacks botanical knowledge, takes the doctor at his word and worries that the small potted plant may eventually grow large enough to pose a danger to the people of the community. One may chuckle at these characters' ignorance. But that bit of humor quickly turns bleak when one remembers the organized efforts of American Christian fundamentalists to foist "intelligent" design on unsuspecting students.

At this point, Jain appears to be the most complex character among the *Castle Waiting* cast. It is not explained why she left the dream life of nobility with little more than her son and whatever she could carry on horseback. The flashbacks to Jain's childhood tantalize the reader, especially with its mention of young Jain's enthusiasm for visiting the Royal Court. Did she eventually feel as unwillingly fenced in as Floramunda the goat?

Only Doctor Fell matches Jain for emotional complexity, as he displays the charming quirk of wearing the medieval equivalent of a hazmat suit. The other characters generally induce minor curiosity about their situation. For example, if Chess is a horse-knight, does he ride other horses to get around and perform heroic deeds? Simon is a possibly cloying exception. He's the simple man who innocently displays bouts of wisdom. Medley barely saves the character from sentimentality by keeping such moments to one or two panels per issue.

A less forgivable aspect of the series is the characters' occasional tendency to utter bits of modern slang. Medley is not trying for camp appeal a la *Xena: Warrior Princess*. Thus, having characters say "and such" and "doofus" appear jarring and undercut the fairy tale revisionism atmosphere.

Yet *Castle Waiting* doesn't kowtow to its time period. Being part of the nobility is not considered an inherent good. Nor is eating off of actual silverware the signifier of earthly paradise that people believe it to be.

The comic's artwork takes a different shift between its reprinted material and its new material. The first two chapters are the product of a lot of careful line work, as seen in the panels depicting every single brick of a castle wall. Was Medley trying to grab readers who judge a comic first by its visual aspects and secondly by its story? In the last chapter, the artwork feels looser and a bit more expressive. There's less attention to the particulars, as not every single brick is drawn in. Instead, the visual focus centers on the characters to good effect.

*Castle Waiting* displays talent and intelligence, but it is obviously not a fantasy comic for everyone. Readers who thrive on spectacular battles and exotic locales will definitely not be interested in a comic depicting a day spent on the process of moving in to a new room. But for readers who feel the small victories of life can contain more emotional meaning than the *strum und drang* of a battle, Medley's comic will indeed be something special.

[Amazon has a hardback collection of Volume 1 of *Castle Waiting*, which is what I've linked to in the sales section - Cheryl]

*Castle Waiting* Volume 2, Number 1 - by Linda Medley - Fantagraphics - comic

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## More Than Meets the Physical Eye

By Peter Wong

Gene Luen Yang's graphic novel, *American Born Chinese*, mixes three distinctly different story-telling genres and various pop and trash culture touchstones to offer a refreshing take on the struggle to find a dignified place in the world.

A loose re-telling of the Monkey King myth represents the outright fantasy strand. The self-proclaimed deity of Flower-Fruit Mountain invites himself to a wonderful dinner party in Heaven. But when his attempted entrance leads to serious public humiliation the Monkey King winds up punching out all the dinner guests.

The shame of that humiliation leads the simian ruler to take steps to transcend his monkey status. One of these steps, the development of great martial arts skills, comes in handy when the gods of Heaven pronounce a death sentence on the Monkey King for violently disrupting the dinner party. But things soon get out of hand when the transformed Monkey King continually punches out any god mocking his claim to be their equal. In desperation, the heavenly gods appeal to supreme god Tze-Yo-Tzuh to intervene. Can the Maker of All Things give the errant monkey a serious reality check?

Next, there's a slice of life storyline about Jin Wang. The schoolboy's family has moved to an all white California suburb to

obtain a house and better educational opportunities for their son. Jin soon finds his major problem at the school is finding real friends who don't think he's from China or don't believe he's never eaten a dog. Taiwanese transfer student Wei-Chen becomes that friend thanks to a shared love of Transformer robots. Yet that friendship is tainted by cultural differences. Jin's budding crush on white fellow student Amelia helps him dream of a bright loving future. But it doesn't prepare him for the emotional betrayal that follows.

The final storyline is the "sitcom" "Everyone Ruvs Chin-kee." High school student Danny finds the accoutrements of his school social life terminally endangered by cousin Chin-kee's annual visit. Danny is expected to take his Chinese cousin to school with him. Yet Chin-kee has beaver-like front teeth, speaks in a way that mixes his l's and r's like tumbling dice, and eats such alleged Chinese delicacies as crispy fried cat gizzards with noodles. The chaperoning of Chin-kee causes Danny's fellow students to ridicule the American boy and start detecting a negative family resemblance between the two high school students.

These three disparate storylines do eventually merge in a surprising but logical manner. Sharp-eyed readers will grasp the thematic connection among the three stories. But they're likely to miss the hints Yang drops about the plot connections.

**Chinese Herbalist's Wife:** It's easy to become anything you wish... so long as you're willing to **forfeit your soul**.

All three of *American Born Chinese's* storylines deal with various aspects of social transformation and the price of emotional forfeiture. The Monkey King

changes into a bully who earns only the fear of Heaven's gods. Jin's desire to avoid social isolation leads him to continually fear reminders of his Chinese background. Chin-kee's unwillingness to conceal his "Chinese identity" makes him an object of ridicule.

Pro-assimilation advocates regularly put the onus on non-white Americans and immigrants to find ways to fit into American mainstream society. But what happens when so-called mainstream society also erects social toll roads whose entrance fee is the surrender of one's individuality? Yang's graphic novel considers this uncomfortable question and offers an emotionally true if unsentimental answer.

Of the three storylines in *American Born Chinese*, the Jin Wang segment turns out to be the strongest one. It continually manages to maintain a balance of emotional seesawing with visual élan. These qualities are best displayed in the sequence where Jin ultimately works up the nerve to ask Melanie out on a date, which ends with a wonderful final image which could only be done in comics. The depiction of casual racism feels true and honest, even when the reader doesn't know that the racial slurs mentioned in the book are ones the author frequently heard while growing up. So skillfully and thoroughly is this segment's emotional groundwork laid that Yang doesn't need captions to explain why Jin lies to Wei-Chen at their first meeting.

This assessment does not mean the other segments have nothing to offer. The slightly irreverent re-telling of the Monkey King story still manages to convey the core of the ancient tale without fossilizing its relevance. The Christianity spin in Yang's account is not apparent to those

not well versed in the Bible. The Danny and Chin-kee segment reminds the reader anti-Chinese slurs still remain part of American society, whether one speaks of urine-colored skin or the “popularity” of William Hung.

In the end, *American Born Chinese* uses fantasy of various stripes to look at the clash between gaining social acceptance and preserving personal identity. That it does so without resorting to hysteria or over-statement (and yes, that includes the Chin-kee segment) makes Yang’s book a long-needed read.

*American Born Chinese* - Gene Luen Yang - First Second Books - graphic novel

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## Finns of Fantasy

By Cheryl Morgan

British publisher Dedalus has a long-running series of anthologies of fantastic fiction from different European countries. Their latest addition is of tales from Finland, and who better to edit it than that country’s latest hot property, Johanna Sinisalo.

I’ve actually been meaning to get this book for ages, but haven’t got round to it. Imagine my delight, therefore, when I not only got to meet Sinisalo in Helsinki, but she gave me a copy of the book. I’m very pleased to have it in this issue.

Because Dedalus sells to a mainstream audience there is some suggestion that what they are producing is a collection of charming little folk tales written by funny foreigners. In support of this, some of the fiction included is quite old. There is one extract from 1870, and two more from the

1920’s that remind you that Lovecraft wrote in a funny, stilted style in part because in those days that’s what a lot of people did. But the vast majority of the stories that Sinisalo uses are from more modern times, and the majority of the material is by writers who are still alive, some of whom I’ve met. It would therefore be a mistake to think of this as a collection of folk tales, it is mainly a collection of fantastic stories by modern writers.

Leena Krohn is, of course, one of the contributors. The book contains several short extracts from her novel, *Datura*, which I’d love to see translated into English. From the glimpses we are given it appears to be deeply strange (although perhaps no more so than *Tainaron*).

Some of the stories reflect the scars left on Finland by the country’s war with Communist Russia, and from living for so long with the Soviet bear on the doorstep. One of my favorite stories from the collection is “A Zoo from the Heavens” by Pasi Jääskeläinen. It tells the tale of three generations of men from the same family. The grandfather was so mentally disturbed by his time in the war that he subsequent behavior scarred the father for life. Returning to the family home on a trip, the father is unable to tell his young son the truth of what happened to him when he was a boy, so instead he masks the truth in a fable about a container of zoo animals that fell from a Russian plane and landed by the house. It is a wonderfully moving story.

Sinisalo’s own contribution, “Transit”, is equally strange. It is told from the point of view of a young man about to stand trial for murder. He weaves a bizarre take of a drunken night’s escapade with a teenage girl who had seemed merely a little crazy to him at the time but whom we know to

be autistic. The girl's reported actions have been completely out of character, and indeed are well beyond her previously displayed mental capabilities. All that her nurse can offer by way of explanation is that during the day the girl was powerfully affected by a visit to a dolphinarium.

As anthologies go, this one was particularly successful for me. There was only one writer whose contribution I ended up skipping. Most of the material is best described as "weird" rather than the classic swords & sorcery or epic material that these days has taken over the term "fantasy". But, if you like weirdness, the Finns would appear to do it very well.

The book is translated by David Hackston who is a professional translator specializing in adapting Finnish theatre for performance in the UK. He has done a fine job. I hope he works on more books.

*The Dedalus Book of Finnish Fantasy* – Johanna Sinisalo (ed.) – Dedalus – trade paperback

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## Yours, Disgusted

By Cheryl Morgan

Here we have one of those reviews that probably doesn't belong in *Emerald City* but which I am going to include nonetheless. Reviewing Lynne Truss's book, *Eats, Shoots and Leaves*, was reasonably on topic because it dealt with punctuation, a vital topic for anyone with an interest in literature. In contrast, Truss's latest work, *Talk to the Hand*, is about the rudeness of contemporary life (specifically in the UK). This, at first sight, has very little to do with science fiction. It does, however, turn out to have quite a bit to do

with the Internet, and ultimately something to do with Worldcon as well. Bear with me.

There were aspects of *Eats, Shoots and Leaves* that made the book sound as if it was aimed directly at the sort of Englishman who reads the *Daily Telegraph*, believes everything it tells him, and writes angry letters to said paper that he signs, "Yours, Disgusted of Tunbridge Wells". (I have no idea why such people always live in Tunbridge Wells, but British tradition has it that they do, in much the same way as all hippies live in California.) The book was saved by the fact that Truss actually knows rather a lot about grammar and is by no means as doctrinaire about it as her supposed "zero tolerance" approach would suggest.

In contrast, *Talk to the Hand* is very much a book written with the disgusted *Telegraph* reader in mind. It is also a book on a topic (sociology) that Truss knows much less well. In fairness, she does understand that the concept of rudeness is culturally determined and that what offends her may not offend other people, but at the same time her own prejudices are fairly obvious and sometimes quite bizarre. I guess it is a valid option to hate all graffiti regardless of its artistic quality, but personally I often find it much preferable to vast swathes of naked concrete. It is also quite likely that some American waiters are quite rude in demanding answers to confusing questions about how the customer wants her breakfast prepared, but I don't see how giving you the options is rude. Indeed, I would have thought it much more likely that Americans would be offended by the, "You'll bloody well have your breakfast the way we make it" attitude you tend to get in the UK. And as for people who find a waiter saying, "There you go," when delivering your

food to be the height of rudeness, well, it is no wonder that the inhabitants of Tunbridge Wells are so easily roused to furious letter-writing if that is all it takes to get them mad.

Still, Truss has a sociological argument to make, and it behooves me to examine it. The core of the book comprises what she calls, "six reasons to stay at home and bolt the door." These reasons comprise six groups of rude behavior that she claims are all too prevalent in the modern world and contribute to, "the utter bloody rudeness of everyday life."

Reason 1, titled "Was That So Hard To Say?" is all about polite speech. Ostensibly it is about words like "please", "thank you" and "sorry". The chapter has some good stuff in it about the origins of manners, but I found it a little confused. For example, Truss is fiercely critical of what she calls the "aggressive hospitality" of American retailers. So what does she want? She complains that British shops are bad because the staff are rude, yet American shops are bad because the staff have been trained to be polite. The real problem here, it seems to me, is that so much of the "politeness" that we experience in everyday life is so transparently insincere – from the call center staff who tell you how much they value your call while resolutely refusing to accept any responsibility for the issue you are reporting, to the "have a nice day" culture of McDonalds – that being polite has lost its impact. No one believes it any more.

Reason 2 is called "Why am I the One Doing This?", and is all about things like automated call centers and the Internet. Here too there seemed to me to be a lot more to this than Truss was prepared to admit. To start with, one of the reasons

that firms automate their call centers is because no one in their right mind wants to work in one, and that is at least in part because it is so stressful dealing with stupid and abusive customers, an issue Truss doesn't acknowledge. There are other good reasons firms are putting more responsibility onto the customer. Price is one. Making a flight or hotel booking yourself is cheaper (and probably more accurate) than getting someone else to do it for you. Safety from litigation is another. If people are prepared so sue McDonalds because their coffee is hot I can quite see that there would be a temptation to supply it cold and expect the customers to heat it for themselves. The chapter is also suffused with Truss's loathing of all things computer-related, which doesn't help at all.

"My Bubble, My Rules" is mainly about how people behave in public as if there was no one else around. They chatter loudly on mobile phones, or to their friends, about all sorts of private matters, and get offended if other people overhear. This is certainly behavior you see in the blogosphere, for example the fuss over the Tiptree Award this year with people claiming that work posted publicly on blogs was private and should not be quoted without the author's permission. There is, however, a wider aspect to this, one of individuals and small groups defining their own moral standards. I'll come back to this later.

Onwards to reason 4. "The Universal Eff-Off Reflex" is another phenomenon that you can see very clearly in the blogosphere. Having been confronted with something that they have done that annoys others, be it abandoning chewing gum on a bus seat or posting something stupid and abusive in a blog, many people now respond very aggressively.

Sometimes you don't have to do anything beyond exist to provoke this sort of reaction. My favorite personal example was one day when I was on my way to Heathrow laden down with two heavy suitcases. I'd been staying in Wimbledon with Teddy and Tom, and was struggling to the railway station dragging the cases behind me. The sidewalk was almost empty, but in the distance coming towards me was a man in traditional City dress, bowler hat and all. He had plenty of time to see me and what I was doing, and yet when he passed me he let out a stream of abuse about how I was in his way. I was gobsmacked. I guess he expected me to walk in the road so he could have the sidewalk to himself.

"Booing the Judges" is essentially about lack of respect for authority. Or, as Truss puts it, "Authority is largely perceived as a kind of personal insult which must be challenged." And by "authority" she doesn't just mean people like the police, she means anyone who might be due any sort of respect for any reason. Expert opinion is a good example. Indeed, one of the (many) reasons I decided to discontinue *Emerald City* is that it was becoming clear to me that fewer and fewer people valued the idea of an expert review. Leaving aside the question as to whether I have any expertise, if expertise is not valued in any way, there is no point in wasting time trying to provide it.

Finally, and perhaps the crux of the matter, is reason 6: "Someone else will clean it up." This is about the demise of public-spiritedness. Or, as Truss has it, "Who dares be public-spirited these days? The very term 'public-spirited' is so outmoded that it actually took me a couple of days to remember it." Truss, of course, appears to be thinking at least in part of the sort of busy-body who goes

round the neighborhood picking up other people's litter and complaining loudly about having to do it, or stopping schoolchildren and straightening their ties because their mothers couldn't be bothered to do so before letting them out of the house. Personally I'm quite happy to see that sort of thing disappear, but public-spirited can mean many other things as well. In particular it means the giving of one's time to the community on a voluntary basis in order to create something of benefit for the common good. Or, to be very specific, it means running things like Worldcon. Truss is very big on the idea that we are throwing the baby out with the bathwater, and here I think is a very good example of where she is right. Fewer and fewer people seem to be prepared to give their time to such voluntary exercises these days, and those who are not prepared to do so, but take advantage of what is done, are often in no way grateful. Indeed, the assumption frequently is that no one would go through the trouble of putting on a convention for fun, so the people doing it must be raking in profits hand-over-fist.

At this point we come to a rather more serious piece of sociology: *Bowling Alone* by Robert D. Putnam. This is a classic work on the demise of communal activity in American society. I think Kevin has a copy somewhere, but I'm in the UK so I'm going to have to rely on Truss's brief mention of the book. I hope she's got it right, because this, I think, is important.

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*Putnam distinguishes usefully between two basic types of "social capital" – bridging and bonding – to rather sobering effect. Bridging is inclusive; bonding is exclusive. The ultimate bridging group would be the Civil Rights Movement; the ultimate bonding group would*



*be the Ku Klux Klan. Bridging is a lubricant; bonding is an adhesive. Bridging obliges you to adapt and compromise (it generates "broader identities and reciprocity"); bonding confirms you are perfectly all right defining yourself by your existing desires and connections (it "bolsters our narrower selves"). And guess which type is doing quite well at the moment?*

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Now we should be in a position to move beyond there mere outrage that Truss offers and start to ask ourselves why there is so much apparent rudeness in the world. We should probably start from the idea that politeness is a social artifact; it is a system that humans develop to allow them to live more effectively in communities. But that means that it is, at least to some extent, culturally determined. The classic schoolboy example is that in ancient Rome it was apparently polite behavior at a feast to vomit up your meal afterwards so as to demonstrate that your host had given you far more rich food that you could possibly cope with. We don't do that these days. Our standards of polite behavior are different. But are they different because our culture has changed, or because we can no longer identify the culture to which we belong.

It is important to note at this point that the concept of "society" didn't go away just because Margaret Thatcher said that there is no such thing. In any case, the society-free world that Thatcher envisaged was one based heavily on concepts of personal responsibility that are very much missing from the world that Truss describes. Modern Britain may in part be Thatcher's fault, but it certainly wasn't her intention.

Human beings have traditionally formed social groupings based on geography and

ethnicity. They have initially been what Putnam would call bonded groups, mainly because they have been small enough and isolated enough to stifle dissent. But civilization brings with it a requirement for bridge-building. Trade, for example, requires dealing politely with groups other than you own (and I'm talking about real trade here, not just exploitation of ignorant savages). Equally running an empire – as opposed to merely conquering one – requires the political will to get people from different cultures to work together.

Social groupings based on commonality of belief have gone hand-in-hand with this to a greater or lesser extent down through history. Small social groupings find it easy to enforce conformity of belief (ask any LGBT person whether they'd rather live in a city or a small town). Larger groupings, because of the need for bridged social relationships, are less likely to enforce conformity of beliefs. When they do manage to do so it generally ends in disaster – the Crusades, WWII and so on. Social groupings also develop within societies based on class: the wealth that people have and the sort of social roles that they have.

If you look at Britain today you will see that all of these things that act to form social groups are going away. Sure the geography still exists, but the idea of Britain as a nation has taken a severe pounding from devolution, the EU, and the change in the country's role in the world from globe-spanning empire to compliant lapdog of America. Ethnic groupings are being challenged by immigration both from the former Empire and from Europe. Unlike the USA, the UK is not a religious country, and what political beliefs it had were based on a fast-vanishing class system.

The Internet is an even more stark example. Online there are no nations, no races and no class divisions save for that between corporate and personal web presences. Sure people can lay claim to some of these things, but they don't have to. They can even pretend to be a different age and gender if they want. The only things that people have in common online are interests and beliefs. Are they into UFOs or the environment? Are they fans of a particular TV show or author? Are they a support group for people with a particular disease or with unusual sexual preferences? Online people searching for a place to belong form what Vernor Vinge calls "belief circles". These are bonded social groups based on shared interests and ideas. In LiveJournal terms, they divide the world into "people who are my friends" and "people who are not my friends."

The real world too is under pressure to form bonded groupings. In places like the UK sheer population pressure is a major issue. International competition for natural resources such as energy and water promotes rivalries. The economies of the West are coming under increasing challenge from emerging nations such as Russia, India and China. And hanging over us all is the specter of global warming that could bring our very clever but also very fragile technological civilization crashing down around our ears. It is no wonder that some people want to divide the world into "us" and "them".

Finally social groupings need leaders, and here we have been badly let down. It has probably always been the case that the rich and powerful were corrupt and venal (look at the Medici, for example). But the transparent contempt with which modern

political leaders treat their subjects undoubtedly doesn't help matters.

These, I believe, are the sort of pressures that have led to much of the behavior that Truss complains about. How we find our way back from that situation is another matter. Appealing to bridge-building instincts is all very well, but can that overcome the pressures acting the other way? I have a bad feeling about this.

In the meantime, people are simply going by My Bubble, My Rules. They are defining their own social groups, their own morality, and bonding solely with people who share those ideals. If the rest of the world doesn't like it, tough, you can just ignore them. It isn't just you, Ms. Truss, the entire world is deciding to stay at home and bolt the door.

[All that speculation was, of course, cobbled together with no research and no expert qualifications, but in that it is probably no worse than most 'opinion' columns in newspapers.]

*Talk to the Hand* - Lynne Truss - Profile hardcover

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## Dissecting the Hugos

By Cheryl Morgan

### The Winners

**Best Novel:** *Spin*, Robert Charles Wilson (Tor).

**Best Novella:** "Inside Job", Connie Willis (*Asimov's* January 2005).

**Best Novelette:** "Two Hearts", Peter S. Beagle (*The Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction* October/November 2005).

**Best Short Story:** "Tk'tk'tk", David D. Levine (*Asimov's* March 2005).

**Best Related Book:** *Storyteller: Writing Lessons and More from 27 Years of the Clarion Writers' Workshop*, Kate Wilhelm (Small Beer Press).

**Best Dramatic Presentation, Long Form:** *Serenity* (Universal Pictures/Mutant Enemy, Inc.) Written and Directed by Joss Whedon.

**Best Dramatic Presentation, Short Form:** *Doctor Who* "The Empty Child" & "The Doctor Dances" (BBC Wales/BBC1) Written by Steven Moffat. Directed by James Hawes.

**Best Professional Editor:** David G. Hartwell (Tor Books; *Year's Best SF*).

**Best Professional Artist:** Donato Giancola.

**Best Semiprozine:** *Locus*, edited by Charles N. Brown, Kirsten Gong-Wong, & Liza Groen Trombi.

**Best Fanzine:** *Plokta*, edited by Alison Scott, Steve Davies & Mike Scott.

**Best Fan Writer:** Dave Langford.

**Best Fan Artist:** Frank Wu.

**John W. Campbell Award for Best New Writer of 2004/2005:** John Scalzi.

And a very popular set of winners they were too.

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## Understanding the Results

One of the things that I noticed this year was that a lot of people didn't understand how to read the results. As is now usual, the full nominating and voting figures were released after the ceremony, and a number of people were going round talking about where people placed on the basis of the number of first preference

ballots that they received in the first round of voting. This is completely wrong. The Hugos are not a first-past-the-post ballot, and in any case the person/work that gets the most first place votes is by no means always the eventual winner of the Hugo. For example, "Pegasus" from *Battlestar Galactica* had the most first place votes in BDP, Short Form, but after redistribution of votes it eventually placed fourth. Paul Cornell's "Father's Day" received only the fifth highest number of first place votes, but it eventually finished third.

I know that the information that Administrators hand out does have all of the minor placing run-off information in it, but it appears that people don't know how to read it. For future years it might be useful to state very clearly, away from all the vote redistribution detail, just what the minor placings were.

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## Digging in the Data

There seemed to be a clear absence of fantasy fans voting this year. George Martin's *A Feast for Crows* got the third highest number of first place votes, but slipped down to fifth place as all of the SF books passed preferences between each other.

Margo Lanagan's "Singing My Sister Down" led on first place votes, but received comparatively few preferences compared to "Tk'tk'tk". I still think it is a brilliant story, but apparently a lot of people felt that it wasn't SFnal enough. One of the features of the sort of redistributed voting that the Hugos uses is that it is hard on nominees that are strongly liked by a minority, but strongly disliked by the majority.

*Serenity* was just 3 votes short of an overall majority on first place votes.

I'd like to think that the 1-2-3 result for *Doctor Who* will at last put to rest the urban myth that having multiple episodes in the ballot will kill your chances of winning, but I don't suppose it will.

No, David Hartwell winning Best Professional Editor does not "prove" that the category split was unnecessary.

I have no regrets about finishing second to Dave Langford in Best Fanwriter, even is it was by only 8 votes. I'm slightly miffed about *Emerald City* getting piped for third place in Best Semiprozine by *Ansible* by only 9 votes. I note in passing that we ran third most of the time until votes from *Interzone* were redistributed, at which point more of them went to Dave than to us. Thank you again, UK fandom.



### Those Vanishing Voters

One of the most worrying things about Hugo statistics is the low numbers of people who vote. Yes, I know I've been going on and on about this, but it seems that no matter how hard we try to encourage people to vote, the numbers keep going down. In contrast, according to Mark Kelly's figures, participation in the *Locus* Poll is going up. So what gives? First some numbers.

Year	Novel	BDP(L)
2001	885	972
2002	794	885
2003	660	752
2004	798	979
2005	543	620

2006	567	660
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Those figures show the total number of people voting in the two most popular Hugo categories - Best Novel, and Best Dramatic Presentation (Long Form in later years after the split). It would be nice to compare that with membership figures, but that's rather difficult because the traditional "warm body" count includes day members, who of course are not eligible to vote. Suffice it to say that Torcon 3's membership was well down on the average for recent years, and yet it saw more people participate in the Hugos than L.A.Con IV.

So what of the cause of all this? One thing that is definitely not to blame is "evil SMOFs" deliberately preventing people from voting so that their preferred candidates will win. Worldcons have been trying hard in recent years to increase participation. Voting is now available online whereas you used to have to mail in a ballot. Members of the previous year's Worldcon tend to get reminders to participate in nominations. Nominated works in some categories are freely available online. And with the explosion of blogging all sorts of reminders about voting deadlines are available. There isn't a lot more that could be done to encourage and remind people to vote.

I don't think that the fact that the voting deadline is a month or so before the convention has much impact on this. The vast majority of Worldcon members have bought their memberships in time to meet the voting deadline, and online voting has taken away the need for postal turnaround time so people actually have more time to join/vote these days. I'm also pretty sure that the people who care enough to vote are generally the people

who care enough to buy their memberships early. After all, if it really matters to you that you vote, but you are not sure that you can attend, the thing to do is buy a supporting membership, cast your vote, and then upgrade to attending later if you can. In any case, at least initially what we should be talking about here are not a hypothetical group of people who might vote if it were made possible for them to do so, but the thousands of people who are eligible to vote, do receive reminders, and yet don't bother to participate.

It is likely that at-con voting would increase turn-out. It would also be an additional strain on convention resources, and it would inevitably result in "vote for me" parties. You can see where this would go. After a year or two some fans would be saying that any nominee who couldn't be bothered to spend a few hundred dollars on a party didn't deserve to win. And because voters tend to leave everything to the last minute, almost all votes would be cast at-con, leading to people claiming that the Hugo was generally won by the person with the deepest pockets.

I've pretty much given up hope of persuading Worldcon members to vote. I've come to the conclusion that for the most part those people just don't think it matters who wins. And if winning a Hugo isn't important, why bother to have a say in who does win? I have this awful feeling that the best way to increase interest is to spend a lot of money on PR. If it were the case that photos of the Hugo winners appeared, not only on the cover of *Locus*, but also on the covers of every media-SF fan magazine, people would take notice. If the BBC actually cared that *Doctor Who* won a Hugo and crowed about it the way they crow about the show winning TV

awards, rather than hiding the news on "geeks only" pages deep within their web site, people would take notice. If the list of Hugo winners appeared in the *New York Times* and *Washington Post*, people would take notice. Then Worldcon members might bother to use their votes.

The other option, of course, is to cast the net wider. OK, so maybe only a little over 10% of Worldcon members care enough to vote. But there are millions of SF fans in the world, and if only 1% of them voted we'd get a much higher turnout.

The main hurdle is, of course, having to pay to vote. Why should you have to do so? The obvious answer is that the Hugos are awarded by the members of the World Science Fiction Society, and that you have to be a member of the society in order to vote. That's just the way it is. The Society has no obligation to let non-members have a vote. There is also an argument that having a voting fee discourages ballot stuffing (and yes, even so people have apparently tried to buy themselves a Hugo by paying for memberships for their friends).

What is somewhat more of a problem is that most people perceive the requirement, not as being a member of WSFS, but as being a member of Worldcon. Now it so happens that buying a membership of Worldcon is the only way you can become a member of WSFS, but that technical nicety is not well understood. Nor do people see why they should pay \$40 or more for a supporting membership just to get the right to vote in the Hugos. (Voting in site selection, and getting Worldcon publications, which are the other things you get for your supporting membership, are generally not seen as having much value.)

It would be nice if the cost of a supporting membership was lower. Kevin has calculated that the actual cost to the convention of a supporting member is less than \$25, so why do they have to pay so much? Partly because they are also “supporting” the convention with the membership, not just joining WSFS. And partly for obscure technical reasons.

The WSFS Constitution states that in order to vote in site selection you must purchase at least a supporting membership in the winning convention (whichever it turns out to be). So the bidders all have to agree on a supporting membership fee, and that is also the fee paid to vote. But the Constitution also says that the minimum initial full membership fee that the newly elected Worldcon can charge must be no more than twice the voting fee (and that this cheap rate must be available for at least 90 days). Because of this, Worldcon bids, wanting to get as much money as they can in early, should they win, have a tendency to set the voting fee as high as they dare.

This year a motion was put before the Business Meeting to raise the limit from two times the voting fee to three times that amount. This would have had the dual effects of allowing Worldcons to have a higher initial membership rate, but a lower supporting membership rate (and possibly a lower at-the-door rate as well). But who would suffer from this? The people who regularly buy their Worldcon memberships as soon as site selection is over, because they would end up paying more. And of course there is a fair overlap between those people and the regular attendance at the Business Meeting. I was not in the least bit surprised to see this motion fail. If you want to blame “evil SMOFs” for stopping people from voting on the Hugos, the people who voted

against this motion are perhaps a good place to start. They’d be astonished if you put it to them like that, but it is side-effect of their protecting their cheap memberships.

There is, however, a potential solution. Worldcons are entirely at liberty to invent new forms of membership. There is, Kevin tells me, nothing to stop a Worldcon from creating a “voting membership.” So if you really want to increase participation in the Hugos, here’s a radical proposal. (It isn’t my idea – others have suggested it before, but here it is anyway.)

I’ll start off conservative by saying that I would keep nominations the way they are now. People seem very reluctant to participate in the nominating process, so I’m not sure that widening it would do any good. It also saves us from having to worry about carrying voting memberships through from the nominating to voting stage.

Voting, on the other hand, is comparatively easy. You only have five works/people to consider in each category. It ought to attract a lot more people. So I’d propose a \$20 voting membership, available online by PayPal or credit card when you vote. I think \$20 is big enough to discourage most vote-stuffers, but small enough not to deter people who really care about science fiction from voting.

The money would also be clear profit for the administering Worldcon, so I can’t see any committees complaining about it. Part of it could be used to defray the costs of staging the Hugo ceremony. But I’d also like to see them encouraged to donate some of it to a “Hugo publicity fund.” This could be used to send out free “Hugo winner” stickers to winning publishers, to send “Hugo winners” posters to libraries”,

to take out ads listing the winners in target publications, basically anything to get the Hugos better known, and to encourage yet more people to vote.

Of course, like most of my radical ideas, this one has very little chance of getting through the Business Meeting. The conservatives amongst the SMOFs will react with horror at the idea of people who are “not part of our community” being encouraged to vote. And there will doubtless be someone who’ll say that this is another sneaky move on my part to win Hugos I don’t deserve. But, as I explained earlier, it doesn’t have to go through a Business Meeting. All it needs is one Worldcon with the guts to take a chance and do it. I’d be willing to bet that if it worked, and hundreds of new people voted, no future Worldcon would dare not follow suit. Give it a couple of years and it will be a sacred tradition and people will be lining up to support a Constitutional Amendment to make it mandatory.

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## Best Laid Plans

By Cheryl Morgan

I’m not entirely sure whether there is any point in writing these Worldcon reports any more. L.A.Con IV has already been nitpicked to death in more detail than I could possibly manage in far more blogs than I can be bothered to read. Many of the people making comments seem to have little idea of how a Worldcon is run, but that doesn’t seem to stop them from having opinions. In the blogosphere, facts don’t seem to matter very much as long as you can yell loudly. Besides, as we’ve all learned from Karl Rove, anyone who disagrees with us is obviously lying and

deserves every insult we can throw at them.

Because I was reporting on the convention for *Locus* and *SFX* as well as *Emerald City*, I spent much of Sunday night going round asking people what they had thought of the convention. I found it hard to find anyone with anything negative to say. Everyone I spoke to seemed to have had a great time. And yet a week later if you had taken a look at the blogosphere you might easily have come to the conclusion that L.A.Con IV was at least as big a blot on Worldcon history as Torcon III, possibly even worse than Nolacon. Part of that, of course, is the seemingly inevitable tendency of the Internet to escalate every flame war to the level of the Worst Possible Outrage in the History of the Universe, Ever!!! But equally, after a decade of pointing out ways in which Worldcon committees really ought to try harder, I’m beginning to come to the conclusion that sometimes we don’t deserve Worldcon.

The way it ought to work is this. When you win the right to run a Worldcon you have entered into a contract with the members of the convention. You undertake to do the best job you can, producing something that is enjoyable, has your own innovative stamp on it, and yet is clearly recognizable as a Worldcon. The members, in turn, recognize that all of the committee are volunteers and that the convention is unlikely to be perfect. Ideally they offer to help out themselves.

What we see, of course, is often very different. Over the years I have pointed out numerous instances where some of those running the convention either couldn’t be bothered, refused to listen to advice, or insisted on doing things their way regardless of what the members

wanted. I have, on occasions, been quite rude about this sort of behavior. But the other side isn't holding up its side of the bargain either. More and more we are seeing people with an attitude of, "I paid for my ticket and it is your duty to entertain me the way I want (and only the way I want)." Worldcon attendees are developing what Lynne Truss might describe as a "zero tolerance" approach to convention inadequacies. I suspect it is only a deep-seated sense of tradition that keeps the Worldcon regulars coming back year after year. Clearly the volunteer work that they do is not appreciated (or even recognized) by many of the attendees (and certainly not by those who didn't attend but jump onto blogosphere bandwagons).

None of which should be taken to suggest that L.A.Con IV didn't make any mistakes. They made a lot less than many Worldcons I have attended, but they did manage one or two howlers, and a number of minor niggles. Most of their problems seem to have boiled down to a lack of communication. I suspect that if your Worldcon is based in a region with such a wealth of con-running talent as the L.A. Basin there is a beguiling temptation to do as much as possible in face-to-face meetings. Last year in Glasgow we had the opposite problem. Our committee was spread to the four corners of the globe. As a result we communicated a lot. So much so, in fact, that some committee members got quite irritated by the flood of emails. But at least everyone knew what was going on. That didn't always seem to be the case with L.A.Con IV. Communication with the members is good too. Count how many times the word "map" appears in what follows.

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## The Site

One of the things that people always forget about Worldcon is that there is no such thing as an ideal site. Every year we get the complaints about how the site is bad because of some obvious flaw, but no one ever seems to remember that the year before the site had been bad for some other reason that this year wasn't a problem at all.

What was good about Anaheim? The hotel rates for a start. And if you don't believe me just go and check how much you'll be paying in Yokohama next year, should you choose to go. The site is also quite compact, and is well served by escalators, ramps and the like. Even the elevators coped passably well. I only noticed one of the eight on offer in the Hilton sulking in the basement all weekend. Certainly there was nothing like the chaos of Chicago 2000.

The party floor at the Hilton also has definite advantages. If the parties get too crowded then they can spill out onto the various decks and enjoy the balmy Los Angeles weather. Unfortunately the place is also something of a maze of passages, and many people complained to me about getting lost. A map of the party floor might have been a very useful addition to the registration packs.

One of the potential advantages of the site is also something of a drawback: there is simply too much space. I never saw a panel room overflow. I never saw a jam in a corridor (except on the party floor). Of course some such events probably did happen, but there was nothing like the crush in Glasgow, or indeed at Finncon the weekend before. The Anaheim Convention Center is so roomy that there were times you could have been forgiven for thinking that you had come to the



wrong place. 5000+ people simply vanished into the program rooms. It seemed like there was no one there.

But the real drawback of Anaheim as a site is that, just like the rest of the L.A. region, it is designed for people with cars. There are a few restaurants within walking distance, but not many, and you can't find them without a map. There are a few shops and banks and the like, but again not many. In L.A., if you want to go somewhere, you drive. Compare this to Philadelphia or Boston where the city center is on the convention's doorstep. I don't think that Anaheim has a city center.

That is, I'm afraid, just one of those things. I'd love Anaheim to have a Boston-style shopping mall next door, but it isn't going to happen. As Worldcon venues go, Anaheim is maybe 80% of what we'd want, but I don't think anywhere else does any better.

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## Registration

There were no queues. That might seem a trite observation, but once it was not so. Worldcon Registration is, it would seem, a solved problem. Well it is if the people running it learn the lessons of what has gone before. Mostly L.A.Con IV did, but they still managed to forget that it is not smart to have an entirely separate registration area for program participants than for ordinary members. It is even less smart to have that area a long way away from main registration, and not open for the same hours. What you do is have a separate table in the main registration area. When the program participants check in the registration staff will see a note on the members' records and tell them to go to the special table as well. Done like that it works well. Done

L.A.Con IV's way it leads to confusion, missed messages, and wastage.

Program participant registration was closed when I arrived. So I went to ordinary registration and was checked in. No one told me I had to do anything else. Fortunately I knew that I did. The next morning I went to the green room to get my schedule, ribbons and Hugo pins. I also got a brand new badge, because I shouldn't have been given one the day before. OK, minor problem. But other people might have not been as savvy as me. And at least one major goof was caused. Mike Glyer, who chaired L.A.Con III, didn't get his invitation to the Past Worldcon Chairs party, apparently because he didn't go to the right registration site at the right time. Oh dear. Poor Christian McGuire will never live that one down. Good job Mike is such a nice, understanding chap.

The one statistic that all SMOFdom was waiting to hear from the convention was how many people took advantage of the so-called "taster memberships". As you may recall, L.A.Con IV adopted a system whereby people could buy a day membership but, if they had seen all they wanted to see after three hours, they could get a refund of all but \$20. So how many people did this? 418.

Of course what that means is very much open to debate. On the one hand people will claim that here were 418 folks who might not have come to the convention otherwise, or would have left highly disgruntled about the waste of money on a \$50-\$75 (depending on the day) day membership. Others will claim that here were 418 people who would have paid \$200 for a full convention membership had it not been for the disgraceful financial mismanagement by the

convention committee, leading to a massive loss of over \$75,000 in revenue. I know which version I prefer to believe, but as no one seems to have through to ask any of the people who claimed the refund what they thought of the convention I guess we'll never know the truth.

The other headline figures are 5913 warm bodies and 919 no shows (the latter includes supporting members). These figures are provisional and may be modified once those in charge of keeping the statistics have checked how they were compiled.

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## Program

There was lots of it. I must admit that looking through the schedule beforehand I found it a little dull. Maybe I have gone to too many of these events, but it seemed to me that the panel selection had involved rather too much looking at what topics had been used before and not enough thinking of new ideas. On the other hand, judging from conversations at the convention, and those people blogging from the con, lots of people really enjoyed lots of panels. There weren't any particular panels that stood out as being talked about more than others, but there appeared to be a high level of satisfaction.

Because of the nearness of Hollywood, more movie people than usual showed up (although some pulled out at the last minute: JMS, where were you?) The 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of *Star Trek* got us the likes of Walter Koenig and Marina Sirtis. It was great to get to meet D.C. Fontana. One of the few panels I attended was about writing for TV. (I was, as usual, too busy most of the time to go to panels.)

Newcomers to the convention might have gone away with the impression that program was in a state of continual chaos, with panels being re-arranged and panelists going missing with alarming regularity. That, however, was not the case. It was an illusion created by the fanatical devotion of Chaz Baden and his newsletter team to getting the word out. This was one area where the convention communicated so well that people were complaining it was too much.

Unfortunately program was also the area in which the con's one major screw-up occurred, and it appears to have been the result of communication problems. Or at least of people not listening.

It isn't entirely stupid to put the kaffeeklatsches in exhibit space. It has been done before, and it can work. Noreascon 4, for example, had some kaffeeklatches in the Broken Drum pub. But if you are going to put kaffeeklatsches in exhibit space you have to put them somewhere quiet. Erecting a pipe and drape "wall" around them does not keep out the sound. Was there no one on the L.A.Con IV committee who remembered Glasgow in 1995? Or who saw the "Once more with ceiling" ads we ran for 2005? Apparently not. Or rather, those with that crucial piece of Worldcon lore at their disposal never spoke to those responsible for siting the kaffeeklatches.

And still with the Glasgow comparison, we communicated. We knew that we had to. People like Ewan Chrystal and Dave Tomkins did a great job drawing up floorplans and distributing them. If someone on the L.A.Con IV committee had done that then surely people would have noticed that the kaffeeklatches, supposedly safe and quiet in their pipe and drape walls, had been located right

next to the filk stage with its enormous sound system.

Alex von Thorne, who was in charge of Kaffleklatsches, claims that he didn't know they'd be next to the filkers until he got to the convention, by which time it was too late. Christian McGuire didn't know either. Presumably neither did Craig Miller, the head of program. He certainly knows all about Glasgow's pipe and drape "rooms". And those, I think, were the only people above von Thorne in the convention hierarchy. If only people had talked to each other a bit more I'm sure this would not have happened.

(There is, of course, a matter of committee culture here. Interaction's staff were very good at cross-departmental communication, at least the divisional level which is where I worked. I recall from ConJosé that attempts to comment on what another department was doing were often greeted with fury by the people responsible for that department.)

The other major criticism leveled at programming was also something of a communication issue. There have been a number of complaints about well known writers not being able to get on program: most notably David Marusek and R. Scott Bakker. The programming staff are reported as having admitted to not knowing who they were. But, as Patrick Nielsen Hayden has pointed out rather forcefully, all they had to do was ask. I got a couple of people on program by being proactive and writing to the programming staff on their behalf. Had someone in that group written back to me, or to Patrick, or to one of many other well-informed people around the industry, they could have got better information as to which program volunteers to pick. They didn't. They needed to communicate more.

(By the way, congratulations to David Marusek for attending anyway. A lot of authors in his position might have got in a huff and blown off the convention, but he asked to be on program, was told "no", and came anyway. I don't know about Bakker — as far as I know he didn't personally ask to be on program, and quite likely he had no plans to attend anyway.)

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### **The Exhibit Area**

The one area where the influence of Hollywood was most clearly felt was in the exhibits. As you entered the main convention hall you were confronted by a collection of robots and similar beings. R2D2 and C3PO were there. A dalek and a cylon shared guard duties, putting aside their Hugo rivalry for the convention. Governor Schwarzenegger had sent along his relative, T2, to welcome visitors to California. Oldsters like Gort turned up as well. As far as I could make out, these were not original props but very impressive replicas made by a local enthusiast.

Further into the exhibit hall were other familiar sights. Is that Spirit or Opportunity? No, they are both still on Mars, that must be a life-size replica. Oh, and there's the Lunar Rover. Indeed, there was an entire car park full of famous vehicles. You could have your photo taken in the Batmobile, or on the bridge of the Enterprise surrounded by waxworks of Kirk & co. There was an exhibition of Star Trek costumes. It was awesome. Whoever put that show together deserves special congratulations. It was just lacking one thing: a decent map.

The exhibit hall was big enough to hold all of that stuff, the Art Show and the Dealers'

Room as well. The Art Show was, I thought, something of a mixed bag. There was some really excellent material in it; Guest of Honor, James Gurney, and John Picacio, being obvious examples. But the exhibit also seemed to be bulked out with rather a lot of rather less competent work. Cats with wings. You know the sort of thing. I suspect that the Art Show at World Fantasy will have a much more even quality to it.

There were lots of dealers. A fair number of them sold books. And what is more, most of them seemed happy. No one was leaping up and down with joy, but everyone I spoke to made at least grudgingly approving noises. In dealer speak that means the convention was well worth attending. The only things they complained about to me were the concrete floor (the smart ones had brought rugs) and the lack of a map to show which stall was where.

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### **The Business Meeting: Editors**

One of the main reasons I had so little time to attend panels was because this year had one of the busiest WSFS Business Meetings in a long time. I'm in the fortunate position that Charles Brown pays me to go to Business Meetings so that he doesn't have to. But that did mean that I had to be there most of the time. I couldn't really cheat and rely on Kevin to tell me what happened afterwards.

We should probably start with the Best Editor Hugo split. That went through as expected, but not without a little drama. Jared Dashoff, who looks set to continue the Dashoff fannish dynasty, noticed at the last minute that the motion as written excluded editors of non-fiction works, whereas previously the editor of, say, a

biography was in theory eligible for the Editor Hugo. Not that such a person would ever have won, I suspect, but in the spirit of fairness it was decided that something had to be done. Thankfully some quick committee work came up with a re-write at the meeting and the amendment was ratified.

So next year we have two Editor Hugos, one for people who edit magazines, anthologies and collections ("Short Form"); and one for people who edit "novel length" books ("Long Form"). If you have no idea who to vote for, John Klima has very helpfully set up an editor wiki. Assuming the editors all register themselves, the data you need will be in there. You can find the wiki at: <http://besteditorhugo.pbwiki.com/>. The last time I looked there were 30 people there, including most of the usual suspects.

Quite how the categories will develop is still an open issue. But here's something to think about. The wording of the Constitutional Amendment very deliberately removed the word "professional" from the category definition. That means that all of those semi-pro fiction 'zine editors are now eligible. And because non-fiction editors have been explicitly included I guess that non-fiction magazine editors are eligible for the Short Form award too. That means Charles Brown. And me. And Dave Langford. Oh dear.

(And it gets even more complex than that, because the mention of a 10,000 copy rule in the old Best professional Editor definition was the only place in the Constitution where the concept of "professional" was explicitly defined. From now on, it would appear, "professional" is purely a matter of *Vox*

*Populi, Vox Dei.* If you think that someone is a “professional” rather than a “fan” then you should nominate appropriately. The area most affected here is presumably artists where there are two very similar categories separated only by the idea of “professional”.)

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### The Business Meeting: Artists

The next major piece of business was the Professional Artist amendment that I talked about last issue. This proved to be a magnificent example of WSFS participatory democracy in action. As I noted last month, some of the ideas that the art community had for ensuring that only people genuinely active in the field got nominated were somewhat extreme and likely to irritate WSFS regulars. It probably didn't help that Irene Gallo bravely signed up for the SMOFs mailing list and was exposed to the full force of SMOFish idiocy as well as the sensible arguments being directed at her. However, once at the convention, she and John Picacio spent a lot of time sat down with experts on the WSFS Constitution and on running the Hugos, and as a result a compromise agreement was prepared. This is a little technical, so please read carefully.

The first thing that was done was to convert the Constitutional Amendment to a Resolution. This has the advantage of coming into force immediately, meaning that we can trial the new system at least once before it gets set in stone (assuming the Japanese decide to take notice of the Resolution – they are at liberty to ignore it if they wish, but I hope they don't). The artists get action immediately, rather than having to wait for ratification in Japan. And because it is only a Resolution, no

one is going to have their nomination taken away, or their vote disqualified, during the trial.

In parallel, a Constitutional Amendment was passed that would give the resolution legal force if it is ratified in Japan. I suspect that having had another year to think about it, WSFS may well vote it down. Here's why.

The system as currently being trialed involves asking each artist nominee to submit at least three “reference works” that can be displayed or linked to on the administering Worldcon's web site. Those works would have to be created in the year of eligibility. There is no obligation to do so, but obviously any nominee who failed to submit those works would look bad in front of the voters and would damage his chances of winning.

Note that there is no requirement whatsoever for nominators to list reference works. The onus is entirely on the nominees, which is where it should be. However, space will be provided on the ballot for nominators to provide the name of a reference work. Hopefully that will encourage some of them to think about what work the person they are nominating has produced recently.

The Constitutional Amendment makes it a **requirement** for the Professional Artist nominees to submit the three reference works. If a nominee does not do so then he or she will lose that nomination and it will go to someone else. This, I think, is a bad idea. Here's why.

At the moment, although nominees are given the opportunity to decline nomination, this is a courtesy only. You are not required to accept nomination. And this is just as well, because if acceptance was required then the

Dramatic Presentation categories would look very strange indeed. Hollywood people don't care about minor details like accepting nominations. They take no notice at all of the awards unless they win.

Now of course we are only talking about artists here, not about movie directors. But the point is that the whole Hugo process is built around the idea that **acceptance is the default**. If it isn't, if failure to respond to a nomination notification in the correct way means you lose the nomination, then suddenly things get a lot more difficult. How much time should the Hugo Administrator allow for a nominee to get back to him? What if he can't find an email address for the nominee? Or a phone number? How hard should he try? These all suddenly become very contentious issues. I really don't think we want to go there. And consequently I very much hope that the voluntary system proves a success.

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### **The Business Meeting: Other Stuff**

There was one other Constitutional Amendment submitted to the meeting. This was the one about the maximum allowable price for initial memberships. I've talked about that in the article on the Hugos, so I won't go there again.

In addition the meeting passed a collection of administrative resolutions. Committees looking into things like Hugo eligibility outside the US, and a possible web site Hugo, got continued. The meeting also gave the Mark Protection Committee the go-ahead to look at strengthening the Hugo service mark. What this will probably mean in practice is the creation of a Hugo logo that bookstores can slap on a book to make it easily recognizable as something special. Other literary awards

do this, I don't see why the Hugos can't do it too.

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### **The Business Meeting: Pluto**

And then the dog wagged the tail, so to speak.

All weekend a few astronomically-inclined fans had been trying to get the Business Meeting to discuss the demotion of Pluto from planet status. For some inexplicable reason, these people thought that the outside world might actually care if WSFS expressed its opinion on this matter.

Now, because the meeting had a lot of important business to get through, this potential piece of light entertainment kept getting put to the back of the agenda. I thought that was entirely reasonable. After all, most people attending the convention do like to see some of it. They don't like to be stuck in the Business Meeting all day.

(There is another point here in that if you care about WSFS democracy you can't leave. If a pointless debate about Pluto had caused enough people to give up and go, a determined group of radicals could have forced through some highly contentious resolutions. Trotskyists know all about this sort of meeting manipulation.)

Anyway, the meeting kept postponing discussion of Pluto, and the people to whom that discussion was important got steadily more and more angry about it. Finally we got to the end of the last meeting of the weekend. That should have been the point at which we spent 15 minutes or so talking about poor old Pluto, making a few silly points, and getting it over with. Except that by this

point some of the attendees had got so carried away with parliamentary procedures that they decided they would try to prevent any debate on the subject at all. Naturally the Pluto camp was incandescent with fury. On the one side people were yelling at Kevin that he was denying them their democratic rights, when in fact all he was doing was trying to follow the rules fairly. On the other people were coming up with more and more obscure points of order because, well, there were some angry people in the room and it was fun to bait them. (Or perhaps because they held equally bizarre and equally passionate views that it would be a major disaster for the Society if WSFS debated the issue of Pluto.) The debate sounded very much like a flame war.

The whole debacle was really quite depressing. I have no idea how Kevin and the rest of the Business Meeting staff managed to keep their tempers. And after all the good work that was done with the Editor and Artist motions, people could be forgiven for going away thinking that the Business Meeting really was a bunch of idiots arguing arcane points about trivial matters just like everyone had always said. It was a very sad end to what had actually been a very successful meeting.

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### **Site Selection**

As you probably know by now, the 2008 Worldcon will be held in Denver. The current Guests of Honor are Lois McMaster Bujold and Tom Whitmore, with more to be added later. Wil McCarthy is the Toastmaster. The dates of the convention are early: August 6-10. More information is available at <http://denver2008.com>.

The voting was very close indeed. The spread between Denver, Chicago and Columbus was only 61 on the first round of counting. In the end Denver won out over Chicago by just 12 votes.

Many reasons have been put forward as to why Chicago, the pre-convention favorite, failed to win. I've heard people talk about the Chicago bid being too arrogant, about it being too soon (only 8 years) after the last Chicago Worldcon, and about the proposed site being a poor selection of those on offer in the city. I even had one person tell me that she wouldn't vote for any bid that had Alex von Thorne on the committee. In the end I suspect that a multitude of small reasons stacked up against Chicago, and that was why they lost.

As for Columbus, considering how utterly inept their campaign was, I keep thinking that if only they had tried they could have won easily.

Montreal and Kansas City are still slugging it out for 2009, and I'm delighted to see the two bids getting on very well together. The Australia in 2010 bid is now official and will probably be unopposed (except for the entertaining XERPS folks). Washington has withdrawn its proposed bid for 2011 due to lack of suitable facilities, but Seattle has launched a bid for that year.

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### **Masquerade**

As usual I spent one evening of the convention backstage at the Masquerade. It was a very strange experience. L.A.Con IV had apparently been unable to find a willing and experienced masquerade director from amongst the usual Worldcon community, so they brought in a team of

people who have successfully run masquerades for many years at the San Diego Comicon. The show itself actually ran very well, save for one contestant whose costume never quite got as far as the stage, but backstage all was not well.

It was a communication issue again. All of the costumers, all of the volunteers, were expecting a normal Worldcon masquerade run in the usual way. The people in charge were going to run the event their own way. That apparently meant not bothering with nonsense about den moms and the like. It meant giving the contestants orders and expecting them to be obeyed. Or at least that's the way it seemed to me.

Of course had we done that things would have gone badly wrong. At Worldcon masquerades some of the contestants need help. Having met him on the shuttle from the airport, I knew that Jeff Daniels was one such person. His costume was going to be very hot inside, and hard to walk in. Heck, Jeff had deliberately built pockets inside the costume into which he could put ice to help keep him cool. The assistant he brought with him was a doctor, though I don't think that was a consideration in the choice. All of which is why I spent the evening looking after an eight-foot-tall cyborg llama. I did a lot of queue jumping: "my llama needs to get his photo taken now, so he can go sit down in front of a fan again." I suspect the masquerade management had me marked down as a major troublemaker, but we got Jeff through the evening without any medical emergencies (he was wearing stilts to get the llama legs right, and I still remember Dave Wake's Alien costume). What's more he won Best in Show for Workmanship, which he thoroughly deserved.

A classic example of how communication between the convention and the masquerade team simply didn't happen was provided by the Japanese prize. Our friends from Nippon 2007 had decided to donate a special prize to be given to the entry that won the overall Best in Show. I knew this in advance. I had helped Kevin proof-read the announcement in one of the Progress Reports (an announcement which, thanks to a less than perfect translation from Japanese, could have been interpreted as saying that the Japanese were going to choose who won Best in Show, so it is a good job I did see it). But, when the Japanese delegation arrived backstage at half time, no one in the masquerade management team was expecting them.

At this point Worldcon connections click into gear. Glenn Glazer was shepherding the Japanese. He spotted me and knew that I'd be able to find the right people to talk to. And so I did. I talked to the backstage manager, and to Martin Jaquish, the masquerade director. We agreed that what would happen was that the Japanese would come on at the start of the prize-giving to show off what they had brought (a stunningly beautiful wedding kimono). They would then go away, but someone would come back at the end of the show to give the prize to the winners. And that should have been that.

But it wasn't. Come the start of prize-giving, a whole load of other things happened first. Glenn and I had no idea what was going on, or what to tell the Japanese. Then they were called up, but no one had told Phil Foglio what to expect. Thankfully Phil is a master at extemporizing and got through it. Come the end of the prize-giving, the Japanese were forgotten again. It was embarrassing.



There were other backstage problems too. Some people didn't get their workmanship judging done, apparently because, entirely unexpectedly, the workmanship judges were summoned to help judge presentations during the show. As for the contestant who scratched, he hadn't managed to get his costume to work in rehearsal either. He probably shouldn't have been allowed to compete. But so it goes, the audience didn't notice most of the panic, which is the important thing.

The half time show also kept the crowds in, which is always good news. It was apparently quite funny. Hopefully it was more tuneful in the auditorium as well. Backstage it often sounded like a pack of wolves howling in pain. Sounds systems can do horrible things at times.

Best in Show was won by a group of four wearing costumes from the anime series, *Trinity Blood*. They were well deserved winners.

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## The Hugo Ceremony

No records for brevity were going to be set this year, not with Connie Willis as writer Guest of Honor. Connie needs time to do her thing, but it is well worth it, especially when she enlists Robert Silverberg to help out. So we were a little late starting and we maybe ran a little long, but with one notable exception it all went very smoothly. It was wonderful to see Betty Ballantine presenting one of the Hugos, many of the winners were very popular, and it would have been a triumphant night had it not been for Harlan.

Far too many words have already been expended on Gropegate for me to want to add to them, but I guess people will be

expecting me to say something, the starting point for which will be that it was clear right from the start that Harlan was planning to behave badly. It was just that no one quite realized that behaving badly would include trying to swallow the microphone and groping one of Connie's breasts during the ceremony. Harlan, I suspect thought it would be funny.

The next thing to say is that reaction in the auditorium to the grope was fairly muted for some obvious reasons. Some people had already tuned Harlan out and didn't even notice. Others probably couldn't believe what they had seen, especially as Connie behaved so professionally as if nothing had happened. And I for one was prepared to let Connie take the lead on any action rather than initiate it myself. Perhaps more to the point, I suspect that if some of us had disrupted the ceremony in protest we would have been quietly asked to leave the arena, and we would have been the ones getting pilloried in the blogosphere for days afterwards. Public opinion can be very fickle like that. Apparently some people have since claimed that the audience in Anaheim, because we didn't leap to our feet shouting in protest, or immediately rush to our keyboards and vent our fury to the online world, are somehow complicit in Harlan's offence. I guess they are honestly outraged, but I refuse accept guilt for this. I'd like to see what they would have done if they were there.

I also want to say that I completely support Connie's right to deal with the event in whatever way she sees fit. That should always be the case with sexual assault. Those people who have been demanding that Connie should sue Harlan, or even more bizarrely that she should sue the convention, don't seem to

me to necessarily have Connie's best interests in mind.

And finally, to those people who have been saying that they didn't believe that a man could get away with this sort of dreadful behavior in this day and age, for goodness sake come out of your little boxes and look at the world around you. Violence against women happens. It happens down the street from where you live. And it isn't just groping, it is beating and rape and murder. So yes, Harlan behaved like an idiot, and we'll be reminding him just how much of an idiot he was for the rest of his life. But if you want to show outrage, please do so evenly. Celebrities are not the only people in the world who matter, and making them behave properly won't make the problem go away. It is much more deep-seated than that.

Naturally the convention has come in for a lot of criticism, but it is easy to be wise after the event. If Harlan had stopped at the microphone swallowing then it is likely that there would have been very little fuss indeed. Many people would have written about how funny he was. Others would have congratulated the convention for getting such a prestigious author as a presenter. When you invite a known trouble-maker like Harlan you are always taking a bit of a risk. I have no idea what discussions went on amongst the committee regarding the invitation to Harlan. What I do know for sure, however, is that every time Harlan's name comes up in a convention committee discussion, any convention committee discussion, in the future, people will remember what he did in Anaheim and, if they have any sense at all, will not want anything to do with him.

One more quick comment on the Hugo ceremony. Last year Kevin and I made certain that the photographers got good shots of the winners. This year the whole post-ceremony photo shoot degenerated into a shambles once again. Some of us were being paid to take those photos. We'd appreciate a little more organization, please.

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### Press Coverage

Hint: if you want good press coverage of your convention, do not hide your press office away so thoroughly that even experienced Worldcon attendees like me have trouble finding it. It is not the Treasury office; it is a place people need to be able to get to.

Having said that, the *Orange County Register* did give us some pretty good coverage. Unlike most local newspapers, it mainly eschewed the "sci-fi geeks beam down" angle and instead mentioned things like the enormous contribution that science fiction movies make to the local economy. They could have done better. When not tending Jeff in his llama suit I spent a fair amount of time looking after a *Register* reporter. I found her some good stories, but I don't think any of it got used.

*National Geographic* had a film crew at the masquerade. I have no idea if anything they did has been aired.

*Wired* had a couple of short pieces about the convention, in which they tried very hard to out-do the mainstream press in looking down on fandom. That should be enough to fix *Wired* journalists firmly below Furrries in the fan hierarchy.

Aside from that I've seen very little. John Scalzi, who took the trouble to tell his local paper about his Campbell win, and a

group of kids who had put a lot of effort into the younger writers' competition, managed to get at least as good coverage for the convention as the con did itself. Could try harder?

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## Conclusions

At this point I am going to assume that you have all read the review of the Lynne Truss book and that you are familiar with Robert Putnam's division of social networking into 'bonding' and 'bridging'.

As I said in the introduction, L.A.Con IV was a successful convention. It is above average in terms of Worldcons I have attended, and if it didn't manage anything particularly spectacular then at least it didn't do too many things badly wrong. And yet it still got horribly panned in the blogosphere.

There's little doubt that Worldcon started out as a bonded group. Back in the 1940s, science fiction fans were a much more lonely and despised group than they are today. But in the 1970s things changed. The advent of *Star Trek* in particular, not to mention the first moon landing, caused a massive surge in interest in science fiction. Noreascon 1, in 1971, attracted 1,600 people. Noreascon Two, in the same city nine years later, attracted 5,850.

This vastly increased membership forced Worldcon to change from a tightly focused group in a by-then self-imposed ghetto to the 'big tent' event that we see today. Inevitably the convention is much more of a bridged community. At least in theory, it welcomes anime fans, media fans, comics fans, gamers and goodness knows what else alongside the traditional book readers. I'm convinced that it could have grown much bigger if not for its

commitment to internationalism and its determined avoidance of any sort of formal organization.

There has, of course, always been a segment of fandom that has wanted to keep Worldcon a small, bonded group. These are the sort of people who claim that potential newcomers are "not part of our community" and must be turned away. I've spend much of the last eleven years railing against these folks. But now I have given up. Why? Because I no longer believe that the barbarians at the gate want to get in, or that they would be any happier if they did.

As I noted in the Lynne Truss review, interest in and respect for volunteer communities is declining rapidly. So yes, fandom is graying because there are those in fandom who don't want to see any new blood admitted. But it is also graying because the new blood doesn't care. An increasing number of people (and not just young people) don't want to work on conventions, and if they do they'll only do so if they "get something out of it" (by which they do not mean the satisfaction of a job well done). Perhaps more importantly, those who actually put a lot of effort into running such events are inevitably seen as authority figures whose mere existence is seen as "an insult which must be challenged." No matter how hard we try to get new people involved, it doesn't seem to be acceptable. We get told that we didn't try hard enough, and that such lack of effort is evidence that we are secretly trying to keep new people out. And if we protest at such treatment, why, we are told to "Eff-Off!"

This sort of thing isn't restricted to Worldcon either. There was all of the abuse hurled at the Tiptree jury earlier this year. John Scalzi recently tried to raise the

standard of commenting on his blog, and was of course flamed for it. In responding to complaints about Clarion East moving to San Diego, Walter John Williams wrote, "The Clarion Board is not some shadowy 'Them' who make decisions based on arcane, incomprehensible formulae. We are your friends, teachers, and colleagues, and we based our decision on what we felt were the best interests of the workshop. We have been discussing all these issues for months."

That is, of course, how most people who do volunteer work feel. They are trying very hard to do good for the community. But as soon as anyone steps up to the plate to offer their services it seems that they become part of the mysterious 'Them' — people who have a bounden duty to work every hour of the day to provide nothing less than a perfect service for those who are too important to do the work for themselves. And of course you should expect no reward for this service other than perhaps to be accused of idiocy, incompetence, total lack of ethics, and lining your own pockets at the expense of the people you are supposed to be working for.

Fortunately for Worldcon, there are people who have thick enough skins, or who are sufficiently oblivious to what goes on around them, that they are still prepared to carry on running the event. And doubtless the "not part of our community" crowd are delighted at any evidence that the barbarians are indeed barbarian. How much longer this will continue I don't know.

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## Coming of the Hordes

By Cheryl Morgan

Helsinki has a population of around 500,000. At least 1% of those people attended this year's Finncon. Can you imagine what would happen if 1% of the population of London attended an Eastercon? Or if 1% of the population of Los Angeles had come to Worldcon?

But, as usual, I am getting ahead of myself. Like all storms, Finncon 2006 started slowly and quietly. I will gloss over my arrival in Helsinki on Wednesday night, because Irma made the foolish mistake of taking me to a sushi bar when I was starving. That's not something she'll do again in a hurry. Thankfully salmon is in plentiful supply in Finland so the bill was only of galactic proportions.

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### Thursday

We began with a press conference, held in the very splendid Pullman Bar at the main railway station. Part of the purpose of this was to introduce the various visiting writers to the Finnish media. Jeff VanderMeer, Justina Robson and Stepan Chapman duly turned up and faced the cameras. However, the meeting was more notable for two other points of interest.

Firstly I discovered, somewhat to my astonishment, that *Doctor Who* had never been screened on Finnish television. The critical success of the Christopher Eccleston series had finally persuaded the Finns that daleks were not that dangerous after all, and the series was due to start real soon now. As a PR stunt, the TV company had arranged to screen the first two episodes at Finncon, and they were keen to tell the assembled journalists all

about it. The Finnish fans, of course, all had collections of videos and DVDs stretching all the way back, in some cases to William Hartnell, but we all listened politely and the Brits amongst us enthused merrily. Paul Gravett, a guest of Animecon, added his voice to Justina's and mine, and even Jeff chimed in. Like most Americans, he was introduced to the Doctor through Tom Baker. Presumably by next year's convention all of Finland will be dalek-crazy, and Clute and I will be asked to pronounce learnedly on the series.

Also at the press conference was the presentation of this year's Tähtivaetaja Award. Unusually the prize went to a Finnish author, Risto Isomäki. His book, *Sarasoatin Hiekaa*, is an ecological SF novel in a similar vein to the latest Kim Stanley Robinson series. The basic premise is that the release of pressure resulting from the melting of ice caps could result in some pretty spectacular tsunami. From a geological point of view, this is highly plausible. The book is currently only available in Finnish, but there are plenty of competent English-speakers in Finland so I'm hoping to see something I can read soon.

After the press conference the Finns whisked their guests off on a sightseeing tour. I, however, wandered up to the academic conference that Irma had organized. The afternoon session was to be conducted in English and I was looking forward to some interesting papers. And I'm very glad I went, because one of the papers was by a visitor from Russia, Vadim Chupasov. To my surprise and delight, I discovered that in Russia between 250 and 400 science fiction novels are published each year. That must be in the same league as the UK's output, and

yet we English-speakers see nothing of these books.

Vadim is doing his PhD on Russian alternate history and cryptohistory novels. It doesn't take much thought to work out why this type of fiction is popular in Russia right now. Some parts of the population are hankering for fantasies about a lost Imperial past, while others are eager to be told the secret history of the Soviet era. Not to mention the fact that the 'history' taught in Russian schools has undergone significant re-writes over the past decade or two.

Other papers covered topics such as the presence of 'manifest destiny' themes in Asimov's Foundation series, and themes of age and gender transformation in the fiction of Diana Wynne Jones. It was a good afternoon.

As the afternoon was winding down, Otto Makela (at whose apartment I was staying) came and whisked Irma and I off to rejoin the guest party for a visit to the sauna. As usual, there was some confusion amongst the foreigners. Stepan Chapman's wife, Kia, had brought her bathing costume, and Jeff had managed to convince Ann that men and women went into the sauna together. Eventually we got everyone straight. And after a while sweating away no one seemed in the slightest bit inhibited about skinny-dipping in the nearby "lake". A magical thing, sauna.

A short comment on Helsinki geography is in order here. Finland, like Minnesota, is very much a land of lakes. Helsinki, on the other hand, is a harbor city. It looks from a map like it is full of lakes and rivers, but actually these are all parts of the Baltic Sea. The city is built on a collection of islands and peninsulas.

Having spent the late afternoon in a state of deep moral depravity (or at least nakedness), we compounded our sins by heading off to a pub. Helsinki fandom is keen on its beer. Indeed, if you had taken a photo of the evening and edited out the signs in Finnish, you would not have known that the meeting was in Helsinki rather than London or Melbourne. Fans are fans, the world over.

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### Friday

I spent much of Friday morning exploring the city. Helsinki is not that big, so I quickly learned my way around. Visiting tourists should be wary of the sidewalks. Firstly there are still a lot of cobbles around Helsinki. It is not a place to be wandering around in heels. Also you need to pay close attention to the markings at your feet. Helsinki is criss-crossed with cycle paths, but they are on the sidewalks, not on the road. If you don't watch where you are walking you are in danger of being run over.

Walking dangers asides, it is beautiful city. I didn't have time to take in tourist attractions, but I did get to ride on the trams. They looked very familiar in their green and yellow livery. Melbourne people would be instantly at home.

I spent the afternoon at a meeting of the Finnish science fiction writers' association. It began with a fascinating paper on definitions of "genre" by Bo Pettersson of The University of Helsinki. Jeff and Justina then both gave presentations (during which I gained a much better understanding of why Justina has suddenly produced a book like *Keeping It Real*). The afternoon was rounded off by a presentation of a lifetime achievement award to Liisa Rantalaiho, a lovely lady

who has been a leading light of Finnish study of SF for decades.

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### Saturday

The weekend arrived, and so did the anime hordes. At times it seemed like every teenager in Helsinki was present at the convention, most of them (of both sexes) wearing cat ears and dressed as French maids or magical girls. The convention center, Paasitorni, has a fire safety capacity of 3500. The convention management had staff on the doors counting people in and out. At 3:30pm they had to close the doors and only let new people in when someone else had gone out. At one point there were over 1000 people queued in the street outside.

It is easy to dismiss this impressive attendance by noting that entrance to the convention was free. But I suspect that even if Eastercon was free it would not attract that many people. There are several other factors that contribute to the massive attendance.

To start with anime is very popular in Finland. This may have something to do with the fact that the westernized style that manga and anime artists use to draw their characters makes them look very like Finns. Finnish teenagers look like anime characters in a way that your average over-tall, overweight American cannot.

Next up is the fact that Finnish fans don't have the same sense of entitlement as Brits or Americans — they have a different one. In Britain fans expect a cheap bar and free drinks for panel participants; in America fans expect a con suite. On both sides of the Atlantic they expect printed progress reports. In Finland fans expect their conventions to be free, and they are

prepared to sacrifice much of what British and American fans regard as essential in order to achieve that.

Finally the Finns are superb at getting sponsorship. Nokia had loaned us a bunch of phones for the guests (even I rated one). The local McDonalds was offering cheap Big Macs to convention members and provided €800 worth of free food for the gophers. Money poured in from all over the place. I have no idea how they manage it.

My first panel of the weekend was on foreign conventions. We had an audience of maybe 50 people. Hopefully we persuaded some of them to take a chance of a convention in Sweden (from what I hear Swedish cons need to loosen up a bit) or next year's Eurocon in Copenhagen. Sadly there did not appear to be many anime fans in the audience, so talking about Yokohama would not have achieved much. In any case most of them are kids and would not have been able to afford a trip to Japan.

I was pleased to see that we had a few foreign visitors. A couple from New York who were on vacation in Helsinki had seen some of the publicity for the convention and had dropped in to check us out. They had been to Wiscon, so were able to back up my enthusiastic recommendation. There was also a young man from Vancouver in the audience. Who would have thought it?

Jeff VanderMeer premiered *Shriek: The Movie* to an enthusiastic reception. As movies go, of course, it is odd and arty. It was also made in a hurry on a shoestring budget. Bearing those facts in mind, it was actually very good indeed. I think the primary reason for its success is that Jeff did not try to cover anywhere near the whole book. Instead he focused almost

exclusively on the short section (one chapter?) dealing with the war. That gave him plenty of dramatic action – something for which VanderMeer books are not normally noted – to work with. Unfortunately the sound system in the hall didn't perform up to expectations, but that aside it all went very well.

The afternoon saw one of those communication SNAFUs that conventions always throw up. Con Chair, Jukka Halme, and I had talked about putting me on a panel about SF concepts becoming reality, but when my schedule turned up that panel wasn't on it. I thought I'd been dropped, Jukka thought I knew I was on it. The previous evening Ahrvid Engholm had tried to tell me I was on it, but I was convinced I wasn't. It wasn't until Hannu Rajaniemi stuffed a program under my nose that it occurred to me that something had gone wrong. Thankfully Ahrvid, Hannu and J. Pekka Mäkelä got me through the panel. As moderator all I had to do was keep throwing ideas at them.

Next up was a panel on Deadly Sins of Science Fiction and Fantasy. This time I was blessed with the company of Jeff, Justina and Stepan. We decided to play it for laughs. It worked brilliantly.

As with last year, the masquerade and cos-play were run as separate competitions, but this time they followed one another in the main hall. Having got stuck in the Deadly Sins panel talking to people, I wasn't able to follow the guest party into the show and got stuck behind a vast horde of teenagers. Later on Otto got me into the tech balcony, but I missed most of the show. What I did catch was the end of the cos-play. I understand that such things now have standard rules, but I really don't understand them. For something like 64 entries they gave out only 6 prizes. That's

an awful lot of disappointed people who may not have got enough encouragement to try again next time (and believe me they need encouragement – most of them are like frightened rabbits on stage). There was also one entry that we all agreed was head and shoulders above just about everything except the winner, but it didn't get a prize at all. Very odd.

Thus entertained and in a good mood, the guest party went off for dinner. We were told that we were expected back for some sort of convention get-together in the evening. It turned out that what was meant was some sort of amateur cabaret. Our new pal, Eemeli, who was chief guest liaison, did a fabulous impersonation of Steve Irwin investigating the natural history of fandom. There were filkers. The version of Teddy Bear's Picnic using the Ambergris Festival of the Great Freshwater Squid was very funny. Ann took a video, so you can watch it here: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=getP0QcB0AQ>. The lyrics, for any other filkers who want to try this one, are here: <http://www.spektre.fi/filkit.php?filk=festival>.

The best part of the evening, however, was the Mad Scientist Laugh Competition. This was very funny indeed. I'm not sure how well it would work as a standalone, but as part of an evening of entertainment it was just fabulous. Jeff, Stepan and I all tried out luck, but we were well out-laughed by some of the Finns. The minute I saw Mari-Pilvi Junikka enter I knew we had no chance – the girl has superb stage presence, as evidenced by her masquerade win at the last Finncon. But even she was outdone by Timo-Jussi Hamalainen's superb impression of Dr. Strangelove. Once again Ann had the video camera out. You can see us all make fools of ourselves here:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ribalmj7WaU>.

Other conventions should try this.

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## Sunday

The day kicked off with a panel on non-Anglo science fiction, which included Ann VanderMeer, Stepan and myself. It went fairly well, although we tended to wander a bit. The highlight was having Pedro Garcia Balboa turn up with sample copies of *The Tales of the Unicorn*, an anthology of Spanish-language science fiction translated into English.

Next up was a panel on SF and the Mainstream, featuring Jeff, Justina and Stepan. It also featured what for many was the star event of the convention: a guest appearance by top Finnish novelist, Leena Krohn. To put this in perspective, it was rather as if Margaret Atwood had turned up at Torcon 3 and given a speech about how important giving a free rein to the imagination is to fiction. I'm hoping that Krohn's speech will be made available to a wider public at some point (Merja – any luck?).

The café at Paasitorni sold alcohol and was consequently out of bounds to persons, cat-beings, transformer robots and magical girls under the age of 18. That made it a pleasant haven to which we could all retire to have lunch with Leena. After that, I spent the afternoon getting *Emerald City* #132 online (thank you, convention staff, for the connection and place to work). Finally there was a dead dog, at which Jeff tried to kill us all with Romanian moonshine, I fell in love with Finnish tar liqueur, and the convention presented the guests with some fabulous presents. Eemeli, having been talked out



of bidding for a Worldcon, announced a literary relaxacon instead and was astounded when we funny foreigners started throwing €20 notes at him. (It is an ancient Worldcon tradition, Eemeli, and like many things in life it is all Stephen Boucher's fault.) A grand time had been had by all. Jukka was allowed to collapse with exhaustion.

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## Looking Back

I continue to be astounded as how well the Finns run conventions. Paasitorni wasn't really big enough for a convention of that size, but I'm told that the only alternative was an aircraft hanger style exhibition center that would, of course, have been a programming disaster of Intersection proportions. This is doubtless saving Finland from having to run a Worldcon. Helsinki just doesn't have the facilities.

But I think that if they put their minds to it they could do it. They dealt with the crush remarkably well, and the only major mistake I saw them make was have the program book list panels by room rather than by time. It was a very smoothly run con.

Having said that, I don't think it can go on the way it has. The anime crowds are just too vast, and in many ways they want a very different type of convention to what we are used to. A lot of them would be much more comfortable with the sort of commercial media convention you get in the US. And while I'd like to see them lured away from that sort of attitude, I'm not sure that a classical SF convention is the right way to do it.

What I'm hoping is that the anime fans in Finland can learn from the fan-run anime convention in the US. That way they'll be

able to wean their people onto a more panel-based style of convention, and hopefully get more guests. In the meantime Finncon should probably go its own way, but should still have some anime programming in the hope of keeping hold of some of the people who attended the joint event. It isn't easy to split up a convention like this, but people managed it in the Bay Area with BayCon and Fanimecon. Here's hoping that the Finns can do it too.

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## Postscript: A Recommendation

One final thing before I leave Finncon. On our last day there we made one of those discoveries that are all too rare these days thanks to the globalization of foodstuffs. We found a great new beer. It is called Saku and it is brewed in Estonia. It is apparently unavailable in the US. The company's web site <http://www.saku.com/> refers mysteriously to "regulations imposed by the Department of Homeland Security." I've also seen complaints online that the quality is highly variable. But what we had we liked. Jeff and Ann are much more serious beer connoisseurs than I am, and Justina probably drinks more beer than me too. We all liked it. Recommended.

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## Miscellany

By Cheryl Morgan

Here are all of those other awards that get announced at Worldcon.

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## Golden Ducks

**Picture Book Award:** *Captain Raptor and the Moon Mystery*, Kevin O'Malley and Patrick O'Brien, Walker, 2005.

**Eleanor Cameron Award (children):** Tie - *Fran That Time Forget* (Franny K. Stein, *Mad Scientist*), Jim Benton, Simon & Schuster Children, 2005 - and - *Whales on Stilts*, M. T. Anderson, Harcourt Children's Books, 2005.

**Hal Clement Award (YA):** *Uglies*, Scott Westerfeld, Simon Pulse, 2005.

A Special Award was given to Bruce Coville and the Full Cast Audio Family for the audio production of "Rolling Stones" by Robert A. Heinlein.

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## Sidewise Awards

For alternate history:

**Long Form:** *The Summer Isles*, Ian R. MacLeod.

**Short Form:** "Pericles the Tyrant", Lois Tilton.

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## Prometheus Awards

For "Libertarian" SF:

**Novel:** *Learning the World*, Ken MacLeod

**Classic Fiction:** *V for Vendetta*, Alan Moore & David Lloyd

**Special Award:** *Serenity*, Joss Whedon

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## Chesley Awards

The Chesley results are still not on the ASFA web site as I finish off this issue, but John Picacio posted them on his blog and I'm sure he'll have them right.

**Hardcover:** Stephan Martiniere for *Elantris* by Brandon Sanderson.

**Paperback:** Tom Kidd for *The Enchanter Completed* edited by Harry Turtledove.

**Magazine:** Donato Giancola for "Prometheus" on *Asimov's*.

**Interior:** Brom for "The Plucker" by Brom.

**3D:** James Christensen for "Sleeper Lost in Dreams".

**Unpublished Color:** Charles Vess for "Companions to the Moon".

**Unpublished Monochromatic:** Paul Bielaczyc for "Nightmare".

**Product:** Justin Sweet production design for *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*.

**Gaming Related:** Gabor Szikszai & Zoltan Boros for Blazing Archon, Magic The Gathering card for Ravnica: City of Guilds.

**Art Director:** Irene Gallo.

**Contribution to ASFA:** Julie Faith Rigby.

**Artistic Achievement:** John Picacio.

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## Editorial Matters

By Cheryl Morgan

That just about wraps it up. As I mentioned on the blog, there are a few books that I had promised I would review that did not arrive in time for this issue. Consequently there will have to be a "post-ultimate", which is really sloppy use of language but hey, this is a science fiction magazine, so we can have life after death. I'm not sure when it will be out. Hopefully the end of October just like it was a normal issue, but it may be a little

late as I want to make sure I wrap up all of my obligations in that issue. If you are on one of the mailing lists you'll know when it comes out.

Talking of life after death, this past month as been a bit like reading your own obituary. Some people have been saying very nice things about *Emerald City*, for which I am very grateful. Other people have been saying how it won't be missed and how the community is well rid of me, which I guess they mean just as sincerely. You do, after all, have to take the good reviews with the bad.

All that remains for me to do is to say a huge THANK YOU! once again to all of the people who helped make this possible, and to all of you for reading it.

Best wishes,

Cheryl

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*Emerald City* is no longer accepting books for review or advertising. If you have any enquiries about the magazine please contact Cheryl Morgan:

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