



Brought to you by: K.D. Wentworth, Uncle Guido, Warren Brown & Chris Merle

**Special "Come On All of You Big Strong Men" Issue**

• **September 2002**

**\*\*\* HELLO, OSFW \*\*\***

The September meeting will be held on Friday, Sept. 13th, 7:00 P.M. at the Wentworth/Kearns residence. Address: 5916 South New Haven. Tulsa, OK. Phone: 523-9729. Members are invited to bring snacks and drinks.

**\*\*\*CONTINUUM\*\*\***

**By M. T. Reiten**

After a long hiatus, I have returned to take back the yoke of writing the Continuum column for the GPIC. I will gladly return the squishy yellow bits of the egg to whoever had it during my truancy. Anyway, after the typical apologies, let's continue with the, er, Continuum for the August meeting of OSFW. [Glad you're back -Ed]

Randy Farran good rejection from Illustrators of the future with a personal note written by one of the judges. Dana Patillo got a rejection from Exquisite Corpse, but the online magazine had published his poems previously without his knowledge. Brad Sinor published In The Shadows a chapbook from Yaddo Press.

Chris Merle read the second half of "The Adventures of the Green Warrior and the

Robot Nanny." I had managed to come into the second half of a short story finishing a grand lie where the robot nanny becomes the human Laura. At least to the Martians. I found it a straightforward story of peace completely in the vein of Edgar Rice Burroughs. The Barsoomian feel to the story would have been problematic if it had been unintentional, but judging from the reaction of the audience who had eagerly anticipated the concluding half, it was a deliberate tribute piece. While I felt Udor's motivations could have been brought out more, I found the underlying message, picking up in the middle of things as I was, refreshing in seeking an end to conflict.

Elspeth Bloodgood presented the concluding half of "Wings," a dark and tense play on the most recent social issues of body modification with the definite science fiction aspect of stem cell research. Again I have taken the concept of *in medias res* to absurd lengths and have no idea how the story managed to begin. I will reference the previous Continuums for both this and the preceding piece by Chris Merle. I was immediately struck by the elegantly presented conflict between the artist and the doctor. Elspeth also managed to bring out a throwaway line regarding "pocket debris" that will doubtlessly be stolen in the near future (and this is not an admission of guilt.) The balancing of an almost objective author's voice keeps this from becoming simple horror or pandering to the neogothic circles. Some of the darker aspects arise

from the study of the main characters controlled doling out of pity and the questions that are asked, in Elspeth's particular whisper, about the nature of control and the control of nature.

M. T. Reiten read the first three chapters (all short!) of *A Gathering of Heroes*, a post apocalyptic novel set in an unidentified portion of the southwest. The manuscript started as a script for a now defunct comic book company called Storm Productions. It centered on a healthy wanderer in a world of allergies who stumbles into a town that only wants him to fight in gladiator games, but the wanderer only wants to compete in games. Questions as to the exact nature of the world came up, though most of the audience conceded that there was time enough to have the setting fleshed out in future chapters. Paul Batteiger brought up a very observant question regarding a little known Rutger Hauer movie *Blood of Heroes* regarding a post apocalyptic lacrosse/football/rollerball competition. While I admit to having seen the movie many years ago, I must also confess the influences of Brin's *Postman*, Anthony's Blue Adept series, the Nexus comic books by Baron and Rude, any Ennio Moriconne spaghetti western, Hemingway's war novels, and probably the Doc Savage, the Man of Bronze series (though I've never read them.) My hope is to eventually squeeze enough influences into the story to have it appear creative.

#### \*\*\*Local News\*\*\*

Writer, *bon vivant*, and charter OSFW member Brad Sinor spent several days in the hospital in August. We're happy he's out, and hope to see him at this month's meeting in good health. From Brad: *Aug 27: Hi folks! Just wanted to drop you all a note to let you know that despite rumors to the contrary I have not been kidnapped by extra dimensional aliens, nor have I been*

*recruited by the men in black (Just look at the light and ignore the black helicopters that are approaching..) I came home from the hospital this afternoon (Had the doctor said anything about spending another night in that place I would have probably been ready for a padded cell.)*

Warren and Lana Brown's story, *Sifting Out the Hearts of Men*, in the anthology *The Book of All Flesh* received an honorable mention in the 15th annual Datlow & Windling Year's Best Fantasy and Horror anthology, in bookstores now. They also garnered a five out of five review on the RPGnet gaming page:

*Another of my favorites . . . The author [sic] makes excellent use of atmosphere . . . redoubling the sense of isolation and dread inherent in the subgenre.* (Reviews of all stories available at:

[http://www.rpg.net/news+reviews/reviews/rev\\_6839.html](http://www.rpg.net/news+reviews/reviews/rev_6839.html))

#### \*\*\*Unlocal News \*\*\*

Highlights of the 2002 Hugo Awards:

##### NOVEL

*American Gods*, Neil Gaiman (Morrow)

DRAMATIC PRESENTATION (surprise, surprise) *The Lord of the Rings: The Fellowship of the Ring* (New Line Cinema/The Saul Zaentz

Company/WingNut Films; Directed by Peter Jackson; Screenplay by Fran Walsh & Phillipa Boyens & PJ, Barrie M. Osborne and Tim Sanders, Producers)

And

**R. A. Lafferty** was this year's recipient of the Cordwainer Smith Rediscovery Award. The rest of the awards and winners can be found at:

<http://www.locusmag.com/2002/News/News09Log1.html> -- CM

**\*\*\*Reviews of Works and Happenings\*\*\***

**A Brief Report from Armadillocon  
by Melissa Tatum**

I ventured out to Austin, Texas the weekend of August 16-18 to attend the 24th annual Armadillocon, where I had a marvelous time. I started off the weekend by spending all day Friday in the writers' workshop, which was very well handled. We had a few large group plenary sessions (the workshop had 36 students and 10 teachers), but we spent most of the time in small group sessions with 7 students and 2 teachers each. The groups spent about 40 minutes critiquing each student's manuscript. It was a tremendous learning experience and I highly recommend it.

Many of the guests had also attended Conestoga 6, and there was a very gratifying positive buzz about our local con. It is certainly gaining a great reputation -- thanks to all of you who made that possible!

Next year's Armadillocon will be their Silver Jubilee, and it will be held August 8-10, 2003 at the Austin Hilton North. The Guest of Honor is Kage Baker; Willie Siros is Fan Guest; Toastmaster is Aaron Allston, and Special Guest is Vernor Vinge. For more information, see their website at [www.fact.org/dillo](http://www.fact.org/dillo)

I also learned about the NESFA (I think that's New England Science Fiction Association, but I'm not sure, might be Northeastern) 2003 Science Fiction and Fantasy Short Story Contest. The contest is open to all amateur writers, defined as anyone who has NOT sold a story of any length to a professional publication before November 15, 2002. All entries must be received by November 15, 2002. Full contest rules can be found on their website, [www.nesfa.org/storycon.html](http://www.nesfa.org/storycon.html)

Finally, just FYI, ConDFW had flyers out. They will hold their con February 21-23, 2003 at the Radisson Hotel Dallas North in Richardson, Texas. Guest of Honor will be David Drake.

**Picking Up the Torch  
By M. T. Reiten**

DNA Publications has a whole slew of titles that it puts out. These include Weird Tales, Dreams of Decadence, Fantastic Stories, and Absolute Magnitude Science Fiction. As the number of paying markets seems to be constantly shrinking (see <http://www.spicygreeniguana.com/deadzines.asp> for a very complete litany of the dead), I bought subscriptions to two of the titles that I would possibly submit stories to. I also must include Science Fiction Chronicle, but this is a "professional genre news and trade magazine" so wouldn't be a market I am interested in especially after my review of the Chronicle's sister periodicals.

Dreams of Decadence carries stories of vampires and Weird Tales contains, well, I'm assuming weird tales within its pages. This left two titles to feed my genre leanings, Absolute Magnitude and Fantastic Stories. Do they measure up to the advertised promises? I can only give my reactions and opinions, so bear that in mind.

Absolute Magnitude "is where the action is," according to their own advertisement on the back cover. One thing that surprised me, Absolute Magnitude absorbed Aboriginal Science Fiction and now shares a crowded symbiotic title line on the glossy cover. How has this enhanced the reading experience? I do not know, though a large star indicates that this magazine is a Hugo Award Nominee. I am too lazy to see if that was what Aboriginal brought to the fusion. I have read recently in the editor's notes, that Absolute Magnitude was paying an excellent

price for fiction, up to \$0.10 per word. It's clear that they must be putting all of their money to the authors, because they are shortchanging typesetting and copyediting.

I will comment on all the fiction published within the pages of the Summer/Fall #19 issue, though I found it difficult. I wonder at the editorial focus or I am amazed at the submission selection. If you are easily offended, I would suggest reading no further. I also want to warn you that I am aware of my own lack of publications, and that may color some of my editorializing. But I really did not enjoy this magazine and am regretting buying a subscription.

The first fiction piece was a novella by Caroline Clowes entitled "Anthem." While the opening line was simple and leading, the main text proved an arduous slog. I am forced to comment on the mechanics of the writing. The story was full of amateurish "saidisms" where the main character frowned, laughed, and sighed lines of dialogue. The author's choice of interwoven flashbacks and flash forwards in the first unwieldy section of the novella wasn't carried through the story. "Anthem" followed a legendary singer and the lyricist who provides the words to her tunes. A nice aspect is the denial of mystical aspects assigned to her by the people of the four planets within the system where the story is set. But then a stranger appears and wants the singer to come to sing to his war-torn world and give them peace. It isn't until the introduction of the peace bringer that the story solidifies and finally generates a miniscule amount of interest in this reader. The ending falls flat, but I won't detail it here in case someone who is a little more forgiving decides to read the story. "Anthem" feels like the results of an inexperienced writer bashing out a first draft and then finding that she has written herself into a melodramatic corner and is just happy to have the storytelling over. At roughly

17,000 words, this was a long piece for little payoff.

"Veil of the Dancer" by Sharon Lee and Steve Miller is touted as a new Liaden story, and perhaps is a selling point for some. The story also has the cover artwork, which is a nice piece of a woman in vaguely Arabic dress surrounded by books with a background of planets and a spaceship. This story weaves a world through its particular evocative style, reminiscent of Scheherazade, but it is a slow build. It follows youngest daughter of a scholar in a society that is repressive of women, mirroring a certain fanatical religious faction in today's world. She pursues the unwomanly arts of reading and reason. The story only finally picks up for this reader when she is gifted a collection of books by her father. All in all an enjoyable story once past the dense and somewhat fragmented establishment of the setting. World building is difficult in longer lengths, so this story does an admirable job in a short section. My complaints on the story once it finally gathers its momentum are that much of the action occurs off stage, giving the whole short story the feel of a strongly edited novella or section of novel pruned down to fit the requirements of a magazine. This shifting of focus from the main character who has finally breathed her own gives the sense that the authors are too lazy to go through the motions of telling a continuous story.

I shouldn't comment on Grandmaster Jack Williamson's short story "Legacy of the Legion," but I will anyway. The premise is interesting, three old men, members of the Legion, alive in a camp controlled by mechanical "goodfellows" who ran off the bugs that had destroyed human civilization. But I was immediately struck by the repetition of the word voice, as if the author couldn't find another way to express himself or perhaps it was a deliberate structure.

Earth, vaporizing it instantly. Before he lost consciousness in all three of his lobes, he thought, *my bad*.

Ensign Grax could only look on in horror as he realized he was going to have to clean up the mess. As he cogitated on what to do, two of his five eyestalks caught a glimpse of the Italian cookbook they also picked up on Earth. It was open to a page on a recipe for deep fried Calamari. Well, it wouldn't be cannibalism exactly. After all, Feengor was a Visgali and he was a Dentician. He dragged the carcass to the galley and sharpened the knives with his other free pseudopods.

It was only after dinner the crew suspected that the tasty repast might have something to do with the appearance of Feengor. Captain Brizzletine noted a small piece of aerogel on his plate. His great purple frame towered over Grax as he asked him if that was the aerogel Feengor had picked up on Earth. Grax stared into Brizzletine's immense eye with all five of his eyestalks and told him, "Oh that's where that got off to. Thanks, I'll take care of it." And he plucked it from the plate and stuffed it into his vestigial left sphincter.

Meanwhile...

### \*\*\*About Writing\*\*\*

#### Seven-Point Plot Outline for Structuring a Genre Short Story

From the Milford Workshops/Clarion  
As explained by Wendy Wheeler

##### The Beginning

1. Character -- someone the reader can experience the story through
2. Conflict/problem (the "collision idea") -- the presenting problem in the story is not always the true conflict of the story, but it works best

if it's related somehow.

3. Setting (where most newbie writers are very weak)

##### The Middle

4. Character tries to solve the problem
5. Character must fail (not for stupid reasons, though) and things must get worse (even better if the well-meaning actions of the character make it worse)--this is the most common plot development that beginners miss.

##### The End

6. Climax - character tries to solve the problem again (and either fails or succeeds--either outcome is valid)

7. Validation (shows that the story is over)

Lessons in craft and structure like this are for analyzing and rewriting after you've written. First get your words down on paper whatever way works best for you, then analyze how successful your manuscript is at relaying the story inside you. What I like about this outline is that it's simple yet powerful, and it identifies some areas where beginning writers typically have problems. I hear from editors that only one out of ten writers in the slushpile seems to understand what constitutes a real story. The manuscripts may have a strong conflict set up that goes nowhere. Maybe they're only a slice-of-life character study. or maybe there are extended pages of whimsical dialog, without plot or setting or tension. Conflicts, characterization and dialog are parts of a story, but not enough in themselves. A good genre story should have a beginning, a middle, and an end. As the outline above



However, with five repetitions of the word voice, almost the only descriptive of the scene, in the first column of the story, it stood out and detracted. Again the typesetting and copyediting was shortchanged. Putting the mechanical aspects aside, the story is full of the bluster and remembrances of old men, until they decide to escape the clutches of the goodfellows and put an end to the dread bugs once and for all. I will not reveal the end, but the resolution was obviously teleported in from a different story, as there was no logical structure in this one to support it. (Now the lightning will strike me for speaking ill of a Grandmaster's published work.)

Scott Edelman, the former editor of Science Fiction Age, authored the next novella. "The Only Thing That Mattered" begins with the main character suffering from the loss of his partner and lover, despondent in his self-pity and alone on a cemetery planetoid abandoned a lost alien civilization. This is certainly a good way to start off a story with a depressing, wretched crypt robber. The story does resurrect itself when an intruder to his private mausoleum appears, and then a blue-skinned alien love story erupts from the crematorium floor. Complete with a universal translator and several lapses of reason, the story has some inspired phrases and powerful moments, but most shining moments are soon jarred loose by the unpremeditated plot. In some ways this piece is a many headed monster, each idea interesting unto itself, but not hung as it was on a story that had many apparent solutions to problems presented as insurmountable.

"No Heroes in Inner Space" is Chris Bunch's contribution and the last story in the magazine. This is a mercifully short piece which is actually its most redeeming quality. Following a lone USAF astronaut in Earth orbit who comes across a satellite armed with an ICBM. It's in the execution of this

premise that Bunch goes out on an artistic limb. Or in many ways, I would say, autistic in the stream of consciousness, single sentence paragraph, one-sided testosterone fueled banter kind of way. It was more of a vignette than a short story and my only hope was that it was purchased for its length to fill out the pages.

The only connection that I see for all of these stories is the inclusion of at least one act of violence. In Edelman's piece, the physical conflict was only the grabbing of arms, but escalated to a small nuclear explosion in Bunch's two pager. Perhaps this is filled by people who know editors or who have long publishing credits, but I am astounded at the lack of quality. Then again, it is a paying market, so I will (and already have) submitted to them. I would recommend everyone who has a short story that Analog or F&SF rejected to try and sweeten Absolute Magnitude's slush pile. I will also gladly share the magazines with anyone who wants to read the stories firsthand and welcome any rebuttal.

Fantastic Stories (or Fantastic: Stories of the Imagination) proclaims itself as the best of it all, science fiction, fantasy, and mystery stories in one magazine. But that's for another column.

### \*\*\*Meeting the Aerogel Challenge\*\*\*

#### Aerogel By Christopher Merle

*Note Dana posted a challenge to use aerogel in a story. It's not his fault.*

First Officer Feengor choked to death on a small piece of aerogel. He'd recently picked it up on his recent foray to Earth. In his death spasms, his tentacles lashed out at anything they could grasp. He slapped the red button on his control console of the spaceship firing the disintegrator ray at the

shows, certain elements are expected in each section. What newbie writers most often leave out are: a) the setting the physical environment and the culture and b) the character failing or being told no or otherwise falling into desperate straits. Good fiction writers craft really tough problems for their characters. --courtesy M.T

**\*\*\*Tom Corbitt's View Master Adventure\*\*\***

Due to this issue's being well-contributed-to [thanks contributors], Tom Corbitt will be continued in some future issue [maybe].

**\*\*\* MANY THANKS TO \*\*\***

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Melissa Tatum

**\*\*\* SUBSCRIPTION INFORMATION \*\*\***

A subscription to Son of GPIC, the official newsletter of the Oklahoma Science Fiction Writers, may be obtained online or by mail. \$13 for the hard copy of the newsletter, \$15 for a family membership, \$7 for the electronic-only version of the newsletter. Mail a check or money order in the correct amount, prorated by quarter, to:

K.D. Wentworth, Treasurer  
6915 New Haven  
Tulsa, OK 74136-2844  
(Checks should be made out to K.D. Wentworth)

**\*\*\* OSFW INFORMATION \*\*\***

The OSFW meets at members' homes the second Friday of every month to read, critique, and promote in general SF, Fantasy, and Horror writing. All willing to contribute and (after a couple of trial meetings) pay their dues are welcome. **There is no age limit but parents**

**should understand that material with adult themes and language is read and discussed.**

**\*\*\* GPIC NEWS AND ARTICLES \*\*\***

GPIC solicits news and articles from OSFW members. We prefer they be on disk or sent via e-mail. Pseudonyms are OK. We accept files on either a 3-inch Mac [well, maybe] or PC disk. We like RTF files but we can convert most Word and Word Perfect [well, maybe] files; always include a separate ASCII file just in case. Send any email to Warren at [underland@aol.com](mailto:underland@aol.com), with "For the GPIC" in the subject line.

You retain copyright on material. If this is of special concern you might let us know who you really are along with your pseudonym. We reserve the right to edit (although we try not to).

**\*\*\* NEXT GPIC DEADLINE \*\*\***

Pesky deadline for July issue: September 30.

**Situation Wanted**

**Experienced system administrator** seeks place with firm in or near Tulsa where his skills in some or all of Unix, storage, web, Usenet news, NOS and desktop administration can help the bottom line. Suggested possible venues: computer graphics rendering farms, telecommunications, energy, government. Send all communications to [samsara@tulsaconnect.com](mailto:samsara@tulsaconnect.com).

**OSFW 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary**

**1977 – 2002**

**Twenty-five years of making it up as we go along.**

**Heaven's Wasteland**

Last year towers fell  
Hate creates nothing but dust  
Courage does not kill

– W B.