



Issue 61

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Are You A Writer?

Our doors have been closed to submissions for some time, but keep an eye out over the next week or so as we reveal TWO ways to submit to Hub, including a great competition (free to enter, naturally!)

Don't send us anything yet – if you're a subscriber you'll get notification by email. If not, well, keep an eye on the website – www.hub-mag.co.uk.

British Fantasy Society Open Night – York, August 30th.

Once again York plays host to an Open Night for the British Fantasy Society. The event will almost certainly be held (again) at York Brewery – a hugely popular venue with the regular Open Night crowd, which includes several award-winning authors.

Details will be confirmed closer to the event at prism.britishfantasysociety.org; probably here, too.

The British Fantasy Awards 2008

The British Fantasy Society is pleased to announce the nominees for the British Fantasy Awards 2008.

In addition to the categories below, the winners of which have been decided by a ballot of the Society and Fantasycon memberships, there will be the announcement of the Karl Edward Wagner Special Award (selected by the BFS committee), presented to someone who has made an outstanding contribution to the genre, and the Sydney J. Bounds Best Newcomer Award, selected by a panel of judges.

(Note: Where the list has more than five nominations, this is due to voting ties for one or more runner-up places. The nominees are listed in alphabetical order.)

Novel: The August Derleth Award

- Ramsey Campbell, *THE GRIN OF THE DARK*, PS Publishing
- Joe Hill, *HEART SHAPED BOX*, Gollancz
- Michael Marshall, *THE INTRUDERS*, HarperCollins Publishers
- Sarah Pinborough, *THE TAKEN*, Dorchester Publishing Co
- Dan Simmons, *THE TERROR*, Little Brown & Co
- Michael Marshall Smith, *THE SERVANTS*, Earthling Publications

Novella

- Eric Brown, *STARSHIP SUMMER*, PS Publishing
- Tim Lebbon, *AFTER THE WAR (DOUBLE NOVELLA)*, Subterranean Press
- Gary McMahon, *ALL YOUR GODS ARE DEAD*, Humdrumming
- Del Stone jr., *BLACK TIDE*, Telos Publishing
- Conrad Williams, *RAIN*, Gray Friar Press
- Conrad Williams, *THE SCALDING ROOMS*, PS Publishing

Short Fiction

- Ramsey Campbell, *DIGGING DEEP*, Phobic: Modern Horror Stories, Comma Press
- Christopher Fowler, *THE SPIDER KISS*, The Mammoth Book of Monsters, Robinson
- Joe Hill, *THUMBPRINT*, Postscripts #10, PS Publishing
- Joel Lane, *MY STONE DESIRE*, Black Static #1, TTA Press
- Tim Lebbon, *DISCOVERING GHOSTS*, Postscripts #10 Spring 2007, PS Publishing

Collection

- Simon Clark, *MIDNIGHT BAZAAR: A SECRET ARCADE OF STRANGE AND EERIE TALES*, Robert Hale
- Paul Finch, *STAINS*, Gray Friar Press
- Christopher Fowler, *OLD DEVIL MOON*, Serpent's Tail
- Stephen Gallagher, *PLOTS AND MISADVENTURES*, Subterranean Press
- Gary McMahon, *DIRTY PRAYERS*, Gray Friar Press
- Tony Richards, *GOING BACK*, Elastic Press

Anthology

- Charles Black, *THE BLACK BOOK OF HORROR*, Mortbury Press
- John Grant, *NEW WRITINGS IN THE FANTASTIC*, Pendragon
- Stephen Jones, *THE MAMMOTH BOOK OF BEST NEW HORROR 18*, Robinson
- D. F. Lewis, *ZENCORE!*, Megazanthus
- Ian Alexander Martin, *THE FIRST HUMDRUMMING BOOK OF HORROR STORIES*, Humdrumming

Small Press

- Andy Cox, *Black Static*
- Peter Crowther, *PS Publishing*
- Peter Crowther, *Postscripts*
- Andrew Hook, *Elastic Press*
- Steve Upham, *Screaming Dreams*

Artist

- Vincent Chong
- Les Edwards (Edward Miller)
- Dave McKean
- Bryan Talbot
- Steve Upham

Non-Fiction

- Allen Ashley, *PLANET DODO COLUMN*, Midnight Street
- Peter Tennant, *WHISPERS OF WICKEDNESS WEBSITE REVIEWS*
- Stephen Thrower, *NIGHTMARE USA: THE UNTOLD STORY OF THE EXPLOITATION INDEPENDENTS*, FAB Press
- Darren Turpin, *UKSF BOOKNEWS*
- Mark Valentine, *WORMWOOD*, Tartarus Press

The overall winner in each category will be announced at the banquet of this year's British Fantasy Convention, *Fantasycon 2008*. *Fantasycon* is enormous fun – come along and buy the *Hub* editors some drinks – we didn't get nominated for anything, so we'd quite like to drown our sorrows in beer, tea and wine (not mixed)! The convention will be held on 19–21 September 2008 at the Britannia Hotel, Nottingham, UK. More details can be found on the BFS website and at www.fantasycon.org.uk.

TO SOMEONE WHO NEEDS PRAYER

by Barbara A. Barnett

Chuck rummaged through his daily stack of bills and collection agency notices, ignoring the way the trailer's dinette table lurched under the weight of his elbows.

"Can't catch a break," he muttered.

He tossed aside his ex's latest demand for alimony. Beneath it, a thick envelope proclaimed in fancy red script, *Today we prayed as we've never prayed before. For you.*

The envelope was addressed to CURRENT RESIDENT.

Impersonal, sure, but he could use some prayer--especially now that another one of those sure-thing investment opportunities had bottomed out on him. Chuck opened the envelope and pulled out a letter full of Bible quotes and random phrases underlined in red or blown up in strange fonts. *To Someone Who Needs Prayer*, it began.

"Got my number already," Chuck said. His ex had said as much on her way out the door--that she would pray for him.

The Lord is working through this letter, the first paragraph declared. Our ministry has brought people with needs like yours to the Lord. The Lord has rewarded their faith with eternal life. Listen now to the words of Sister Bet and how a letter just like this moved her to give her soul to the Lord.

Sister Bet's testimonial followed. Like Chuck, she had been unemployed and divorced, strapped for money but too dedicated to the bottle to save what little she could find.

I stopped drinking alcohol, Sister Bet wrote, and the Lord blessed me with a new Cadillac.

Chuck glanced out the window to where his pickup had been parked in the days before it was repossessed.

I have never been hungry since dedicating my life to bringing more souls to the Lord.

Chuck read on. The letter may not have addressed him by name, but these people knew who he was. He was someone who needed prayer, whose faith was being tested, like Job in the Bible. He was someone like Sister Bet. Someone who deserved a break. A Cadillac. And if all it took was a little faith, one less drink, a pledge to the Lord . . .

Complete the attached pledge form and place it under your pillow as you sleep tonight. Jesus is going to be knocking at your door after sunset tomorrow, but he will only grant eternal life to those who have pledged their souls to the Lord.

"And there's the catch," Chuck said. "You want money too."

But then he noticed the pledge form attached to the letter. No dollar amount to check off, no space for a credit card number, not even a name to make a check payable to. Just a checklist with a space for his signature:

- () *I pledge my soul to the Lord.*
- () *I welcome Jesus into my home.*
- () *I want the Lord to grant me eternal life.*

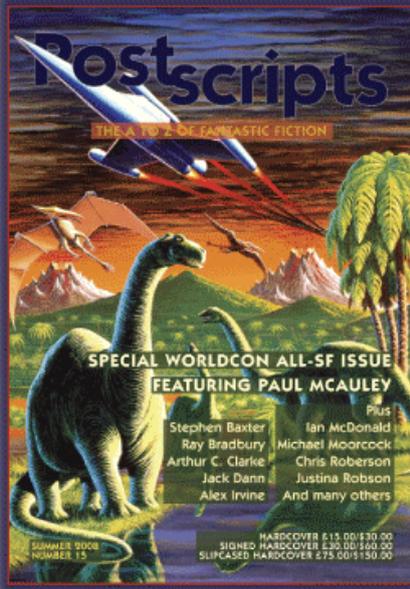
Chuck checked off each line and signed the pledge. Why not? He hadn't been to church in a good many years, but he was an honest guy. The Lord might reward him for that, maybe even bring him a new Cadillac like he had for Sister Bet.

#

Chuck lay in bed, eyes closed, the pledge beneath his pillow. A tingling sensation ran through him, making him feel lighter, as if the pledge form were shouldering his burdens now. He imagined the tingling was the Lord touching his soul.

He imagined how he would look driving a Cadillac.

And then he opened his eyes to daylight streaming through the trailer's drab windows. The clock read 4:15 p.m. Chuck bolted upright and tossed his pillow aside. The pledge was gone, replaced by a



Postscripts 15

A very special triple-sized issue for Worldcon 2008.

Featuring essays and fiction by Paul McAuley • An introduction by Arthur C. Clarke • And stories by Brian Aldiss • Kelly Barnhill • Stephen Baxter • Beth Bernobich • Terry Bisson • Ray Bradbury • Keith Brooke • Eric Brown • Jack Dann • Paul Di Filippo • Scott Edelman • Matthew Hughes • Alex Irvine • Garry Kilworth • James Lovegrove • Paul McAuley • Ian McDonald • Michael Moorcock • Robert Reed • Chris Roberson • Justina Robson • Brian Stableford • Steven Utley

180,000 words in three limited editions:

- 100 slipcased hardcovers, signed by contributors and artists and featuring a 16-page color gallery from cover artist Al Feldstein @ \$150;
- 300 hardcovers, signed by contributors @ \$60;
- 600 hardcovers, unsigned @ \$30.

Copies of the trade edition will be available in the dealers' room at the convention; copies of the other editions can be ordered direct from the PS Publishing.

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sealed envelope that read, *Do not open this sealed word until after sunset. If you break faith now, Jesus will not be able to bring you to the Lord.*

Chuck's heart raced. It had to be real; he would have heard someone sneaking into his trailer, felt them reaching under his pillow. This wasn't another fast-money scheme. This was the Lord's work.

Chuck dressed in his best--jeans and an old polo shirt--and paced through the trailer.

Jesus is going to knock on my door tonight, just like the letter said.

He clicked on the TV to distract himself, then remembered his cable service had been cut. Chuck laughed. A little more faith and he'd be able to afford one of those digital cable packages.

"But no porn channel this time," he told himself.

Chuck turned his attention to the food-crusted dishes languishing in his sink, scrubbing them till his fingers were raw--anything to pass the time. Just as he rinsed off the last fork, the sun plunged below the horizon, and someone knocked on the door.

Chuck grabbed the sealed envelope and threw the trailer door open. A Cadillac with blackened windows sat parked outside, and a Hispanic man in a black trench coat stood in the doorway.

"I'm Brother Jesús," he said in a thick accent.

"Jesús?"

Jesús pointed to the envelope in Chuck's hand. "From the ministry."

Chuck tore open the envelope.

Dear Sir or Madam, the letter inside read, thank you for pledging your soul to me, Lord Orlok. Without the gullibility and desperation of people like you, our ministry would not be the beacon of eternal suffering that it is today.

Chuck's next breath caught in his throat. Lord Orlok?

As promised, my associate Jesus will be by to grant you eternal life. I apologize for the wait, but please understand that my minions cannot operate during daylight hours.

Jesús smiled, revealing two blood-stained fangs. "They always leave the accent off my name."

Chuck backed away, forming a feeble cross with his forefingers. "I watched that Buffy show. You can't come in. I didn't invite you."

Jesús pulled a piece of paper from his jacket and stepped inside. "Sign here on your pledge that you welcome me into your home."

Chuck whimpered.

"I was like you once." Jesús grabbed him by the collar. "Pledged my soul to the Lord without specifying which one."

He sank his fangs into Chuck's neck. Chuck yelped, one final thought on his mind as Jesús drained his life away:

This better be worth the Cadillac.

If you enjoyed this week's tale, and the non-fiction that follows, please make a donation at www.hub-mag.co.uk.

Your donations help us to pay our writers and to continue to bring you your weekly dash of *Hub*.

Interview with William Gibson Part Two (of Two)

Words: Richard Whittaker

In part 1 of this interview, William Gibson discussed the viral nature of technology. In part 2, he discusses what drives him to write, how he chooses what to write about (and vice versa), and why society is in culture shock.

"Would it all be like this, in Alberto's new world of the locative? Would it mean that the untagged, unscripted world would gradually fill with virtual things, as beautiful or ugly or banal as anything one encountered on the web already? Was there any reason to expect it to be any better than that, any worse?" – William Gibson's *Spook Country*



In February 1945, Arthur C. Clarke sent a letter to *Wireless World* magazine entitled "V2 for Ionosphere Research", in which he first suggested the concept of geo-stationary satellites for telecommunication: By May that year, that had become his groundbreaking proposal *The Space-Station: Its Radio Applications*. But it still took another 20 years for him to see the first geosynchronous satellite. In 1965, Intel co-founder Gordon Moore wrote the article "Cramming More Components onto Integrated Circuits": It contained Moore's Law, the idea that computers will double in power every two years. Now that's estimated to be closer to every 18 months. In 2007, Apple launched the revolutionary iPhone: It took less than a year for the iPhone G3 to make it look silly and outmoded.

That's partly why has William Gibson, the man that helped take science fiction out of the 'rocket ship and laser beam' ghetto in the 1980s, stopped talking about the near-future and has taken to writing about a recent past that never happened. "The last two [books] have been deliberately written so that the

narrative action takes place in the year before they were published," he explained. "I'm writing speculative novels of the immediate past, because the present is too brief and too volatile to be examined."

In his latest novel, *Spook Country*, Gibson has dumped the cyberdecks and AI's of his early work for more mundane kit: iPods, cell phones, GPS, meta-tagging. As a novelist who tries to be a social commentator, the impact of this kit was fertile and, to his surprise, virgin ground. "When I wrote *Pattern Recognition*, I'd never read books where people exchanged emails and talked in chat rooms," he said. This everyday equipment, he argues, is still revolutionizing the world, and even literature still seemingly can't keep up with what it's doing right now. That's not just for writers, but readers too: Take the simplest and most ubiquitous of modern electronic communication. "I still don't think we have a convention for the inclusion of email. Do you use quotes or put it into italics or a different font? What margin do we use?" Gibson suggests that, somehow, a standard visual and typographic language for portraying electronic communication on the printed page will and must be found. Otherwise, readers won't know what they're looking at, because it won't be standardized between authors. "It's ultimately a style sheet issue," he said. "There's a grand cultural style sheet that all style sheets must refer to, and the grand cultural style sheet has not caught up. I imagine it would preserve all the eccentricities of spelling and presentation without putting (sic) in parenthesis. I suspect that it might be to do with margins. We might adopt some typographical symbol. We need that very badly, to deal with everyday life."

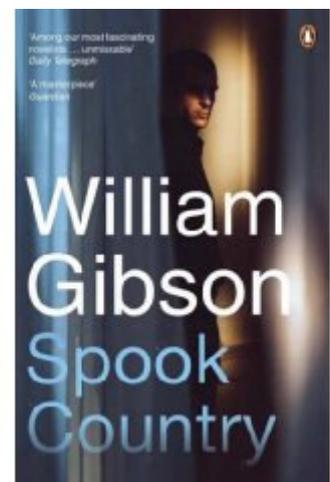
What this deluge of modernity means for the contemporary writer, he suggests, is that near-future science fiction is dead, because it's already nearly history. "When I started to write science fiction in the 1960s, the present seemed to be a longer duration, five years or six months. It wasn't a blink," he said. Looking back at his groundbreaking Sprawl sequence of cyberpunk novels (*Neuromancer*, *Count Zero*, and *Mona Lisa Overdrive*), he had time to create a recognizable fantasy world that he could elaborate on and describe in great detail. "When you've got that long a present, you've got that time to build a future and make a case for it." Now, with technology evolving so fast, writers don't have that luxury any more. "We've long past the tipping point of exponential change," he said.

But Gibson rejects the idea that this is new and unprecedented. "The Victorians must have lived in a degree of post-traumatic shock," he said. "If you read journalists writing about how they travelled 16 miles an hour, and how that inhuman velocity affects visual perspective, you've got the idea that they were like us. In hind sight, we're smoothed that into a nice curve, but I don't think it's a curve for the people who are experiencing it." Part of that smoothing process, he suggests, may be a good healthy dose of denial. "We tend to believe we know more than we do. I think it's necessary for a degree of psychological comfort."

This may be the new subtext in Gibson's books. His earlier novels were about controlling or subverting technology. In *Spook Country*, the characters are trying to simply understand it, hanging on to events as they unfold. That's very much how Gibson describes the process of writing of his books, although he's pretty clear about why he starts. "I always need to write another book," he said. "It's an economic pressure, and it always happens before I have a driving desire to write about anything in particular. I just start whatever awful, painful process of transferring this stuff out of my conscious and onto the page."

This starts what he calls "a process of discovery." He also refutes any suggestion that he has deliberately tried to take the mantle of visionary. "It's never about any philosophy or attempt at didacticism," he said. "It's entirely exploratory. It's my attempt to take my temperature of how I'm responding to the zeitgeist. A lot of technique, such as it is, emerges almost accidentally out of some fairly naive attempt at literary naturalism."

This is not to say that Gibson just lets the ink flow. One of the central characters in *Spook Country* is ex-rock star Hollis Henry, formerly of fictitious band The Curfew. Like with much of his writing, her character and background came out of his own curiosity. Unlike fellow sometime genre author Ian Banks, who recorded real music as the fake band Frozen Gold for his rock novel *Espedair Street*, Gibson wasn't interested in writing a love letter to a particular form of music (When asked to describe The Curfew's music, he admitted "I had no idea of what they sounded like.") Instead, he wanted to write about his real experience in talking to music industry survivors. "They don't talk about it in creative terms," he said, "They tell the war stories of the music business, and they tend to be ghastly. I was interested in Hollis' experiences in post-celebrity, and how the body of her recorded work has a life of its own."



Just as his non-interest in technology sometimes becomes a near-obsessive description down to the nano-circuit, Gibson created a history of indie rock, and *The Curfew's* place in it, that only exists in his background notes. "I wound up, through the course of writing the book, with a very detailed gallery of their business career. I was calling up a record collector dealer friend of mine in New York, and he knew which labels they had been with - one of their records came out on Factory records."

This may be bringing his literary life full circle. While copies of *Burning Chrome* may have become prophetic works amongst a generation of IT innovators (see part 1 of this interview for more on that), Gibson's hard-edged, chaotic, sometimes violent early works were also standard reading for many Goths and indie rock kids: Exactly the kind of social outsiders he had always wanted to reach. "One of the things that encouraged me when I published *Neuromancer* was that I started getting letters from musicians I listened to and architects, and they would begin with 'I never read science fiction BUT'. I kept those for years, to prove that I was reaching the audience I wanted, who read all literature as speculative fiction."

While he's counts himself as part of the sci-fi community and has close friends there ("I think Bruce [Sterling] and I are very much natives of science fiction, but he's much more a nationalist than I am"), he's also careful to not be pigeonholed as the guy that writes sci-fi for people that don't read sci-fi. Instead, he tries to transcend, and that's also something he admires in other authors. "I've always had a big soft spot for Michael Moorcock," he said, "because he's consistently articulated that since I was 15, that he could be shamelessly part of any number of genres, and at the same time be a hugely influential literary figure."

That may be a significant part of what drives Gibson to push and redefine what science fiction is. "Because I was from a very small provincial town in south-west Virginia, I never wanted anything to do with anything that was very small or provincial," he said. "I'm convinced that genre science fiction is a very small or provincial place. Great things can come from there, but you have to leave." And again, a musical note - "If the people who invented the Delta blues had stayed there, we wouldn't have had most of twentieth century pop."

Next Week

Our review section is back, including a review of *Spooks Code 9* – the new series from the BBC (the first episode airs this coming Sunday). Seen the adverts? Let's hope the episode is better!

Hub – we watch things so you don't have to!

If you have enjoyed this week's issue, please consider making a small donation at www.hub-mag.co.uk. We pay our writers, and your support is appreciated.