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SUMMATION: 2007

The publishing world proved not to be immune to the deepening recession, and the genre suffered several major losses in 2008. About the best spin that can be put on it is to say that things could have been worse. (And things may yet still *get* worse, of course. The rumoured possible bankruptcy of the Borders bookstore chain, which has been buzzed about for months now, would, if it happens, likely have an adverse effect on many publishers.)

Much of 2008's bad news was delivered on 3 December, what has come to be called Black Wednesday in the publishing industry, when Random House announced major restructuring and layoffs, making Bantam Dell part of Random House instead of an independent operation; Houghton Mifflin Harcourt saw resignations and firings even at the highest levels of the company (and caused a furore by announcing a "buying freeze" on new titles); and Simon & Schuster also announced significant staff cuts. Earlier, many people had been let go by Doubleday, and later there were huge layoffs at Macmillan, Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, and elsewhere. Random House, the largest publisher in the United States, was the most strongly affected, undergoing sweeping changes, with many divisions being consolidated. The Random House Publishing Group swallowed the adult imprints of the Bantam Dell Publishing Group, including Bantam Spectra and Del Rey. The Knopf Publishing Group will absorb Doubleday as well as imprint Nan A. Talese. Senior Bantam Spectra editor Juliet Ulman was let go, as was Bantam Dell publisher Irwyn Applebaum and Doubleday publisher Steve Rubin; Houghton Mifflin Harcourt publisher and senior vice-president Rebecca Saletan resigned and executive editor Ann Patty was fired; Simon & Schuster Children's president Rick Richter and senior vice-president and publisher Rubin Pfeffer; Farrar, Straus, and Giroux lost publisher Linda Rosenber, the heads of production and sub rights, a senior editor, and several assistants---and scores of people in lesser positions lost their jobs throughout the industry. The slaughter continued into the early months of 2009, with Del Rey editor Liz Scheier and Ballantine editor Anika Streitfeld being fired, along with Pantheon Books publisher Janice Goldklang.

German media conglomerate Bertelsmann, which had bought BookSpan, publisher of numerous book clubs, including the Science Fiction Book Club, just last year, turned around and sold their Direct Group North America in 2008, including BookSpan, to private investment firm Najafi Companies. What effect this will ultimately have on the Science Fiction Book Club is as yet uncertain although at the moment they seem to be continuing to function pretty much as normal. Small press Wheatland Press went on "hiatus", usually a bad sign, as far as issuing new titles is concerned, and may or may not be back, although they're continuing to make already-released titles available for order. Several other small presses are rumoured to be teetering on the edge (while others seem to be doing okay).

Horrendous as all this is, it could have been worse. It was possible to see much of the restructuring of Random House coming a year or so back, even before the economic downturn had really taken hold as a result of corporate mergers, and to date the party line is that Del Rey and Spectra will be kept as separate imprints. Most of the major SF lines are still in business, and a few, like the Hachette Book

Group, which includes Orbit, even registered modest gains.

Of course, as the recession continues to deepen, there may be — and probably *will* be — lots of hard times left ahead.

Historically, books, magazines, and movies do well during recessions, as hard economic times make people search for cheap entertainment to distract themselves from their financial woes. The question for this particular recession is, Do books, magazines, and movies qualify as “cheap” entertainment anymore? These days, many hardcover books are in the \$25 to \$30 range, even a mass-market paperback can cost eight bucks, and in many places a single movie ticket can cost over \$13 (for a family of five, once you throw in the eight-bucks-a-shot boxes of stale popcorn, you’re edging perilously close to having had to spend \$100 to go to the movies). Even adjusting for inflation, it seems to me that this doesn’t really qualify as “cheap”. Ironically, the one form of entertainment in the genre that *is* still reasonably cheap, the digest-sized SF magazines, are being put out of business because they can no longer easily reach the customers; most people, even most regular SF readers, may go for years without ever laying eyes on an SF magazine, many don’t even know they exist, and even those who do may not be able to find one even if they go to a newsstand specifically searching for it. Perhaps the Kindle and the iPod and other similar text readers (and there are new and improved generations of them coming along all the time) will save the magazines by making them easily accessible to readers once again.

Considering the problems that have lately plagued Borders and other brick-and-mortar bookstores, they may save the publishing industry too, if anything can. Certainly everything in the publishing world is going to look very different ten years from now, and in twenty years it may be completely unrecognizable. Even today, many people are as likely or more likely to read a book on their iPod while commuting to work as they are to walk into a bookstore and buy a book. It’s worth noting that online bookseller Amazon was one of the very few businesses in the entire country to actually turn a profit in the fourth quarter of 2008.

The print magazines had a good year creatively, in terms of the quality of the material published, although circulation continued its slow decline. *Asimov’s* and *Analog* changed their trim size, getting larger although dropping pages, losing about 4,000 words’ worth of content in the process, and *The Magazine of Fantasy & Science Fiction* changed from their decades-long monthly format to a bi-monthly format of larger but fewer issues, losing about 10 per cent of their overall content in the process. Opinion among industry insiders was divided as to whether these were sensible money-saving measures that will help the magazines survive or bad ideas, risky last-ditch attempts to save the magazines that could backfire; time will tell, I guess. With another big postal hike looming on the horizon in 2009, rising printing costs, and some major magazine distributors (including two of the nation’s biggest) beginning to charge a seven-cent-per-copy surcharge for all the magazines they distribute, a surcharge many magazines just can’t afford, things are looking precarious, and if the cost-cutting moves that *Asimov’s*, *Analog*, and *F&SF* are taking turn out to be ineffective in offsetting rising costs, all of these magazines could be in serious trouble. (Just as I was finishing work on this Summation, word came in that Anderson News, the huge magazine wholesaler and distributor who has been one of the distributors demanding a seven-cent-per-copy surcharge for every copy of the magazines they handle had been forced to suspend operations because many publishers had balked at paying the surcharge and stopped shipping them product. The CEO there says that the company is working “towards an amicable solution” with the publishers, and it remains to be seen how this situation will ultimately play out.)

Realms of Fantasy magazine threw in the towel early in 2009, citing disastrously plummeting newsstand sales (although the declining advertising revenue due to the recession — ROF was always

heavily dependent on advertising – may also have been a factor). The magazine would die after the April 2009 issue, a sad loss to the field.

The good news, such as it is, for the so-called Big Three magazines is that sales were nearly flat this year, with only minuscule declines from 2007. *Asimov's Science Fiction* registered only a 2.7 per cent loss in overall circulation, from 17,581 to 17,102, not bad when compared to last year's 5.2 per cent loss, 2006's 13.6 per cent loss, or 2005's disastrous 23.0 per cent; it seems that declines in circulation here are at least beginning to slow, even if they haven't yet turned around. Subscriptions dropped from 14,084 to 13,842, and newsstand sales dropped from 3,497 to 3,260; sell-through rose from 30 per cent to 31 per cent. One encouraging note is that digital sales of the magazine through Fictionwise and Kindle were on the rise, although that rise is not yet reflected in these circulation figures. *Asimov's* published good stories this year by James Alan Gardner, Mary Rosenblum, Michael Swanwick, Nancy Kress, Elizabeth Bear, Kristine Kathryn Rusch, Stephen Baxter, and others. Sheila Williams completed her fourth year as *Asimov's* editor. *Analog Science Fiction & Fact* registered a 5.1 per cent loss in overall circulation, from 27,399 to 25,999, with subscriptions dropping from 22,972 to 21,880 and newsstand sales dropping from 4,427 to 4,119; sell-through remained steady at 34 per cent. *Analog* published good work this year by Dean McLaughlin, Geoffrey A. Landis, Michael F. Flynn, Robert R. Chase, Ben Bova, and others. Stanley Schmidt has been editor there for twenty-nine years. *The Magazine of Fantasy & Science Fiction* registered a small 2.7 per cent loss in overall circulation from 16,489 to 16,044, with subscriptions dropping from 12,831 to 12,374 but newsstand sales actually rising slightly from 3,658 to 3,670; sell-through rose from 33 per cent to 35 per cent. *F&SF* published good work this year by Charles Coleman Finlay, Ted Kostmatka, Albert E. Cowdrey, Carolyn Ives Gilman, Michael Swanwick, Steven Utley, John Kessel, and others. Gordon Van Gelder is in his twelfth year as editor and eighth year as owner and publisher. In its last full year, *Realms of Fantasy* published good stuff by Liz Williams, Carrie Vaughn, Greg Frost, Richard Parks, Tanith Lee, Eugie Foster, Aliette de Bodard, and others. Shawna McCarthy was the editor of the magazine from its launch in 1994 to its death in 2009.

Interzone doesn't really qualify as a professional magazine by the definition of *The Science Fiction Writers of America* (SFWA) because of its low rates and circulation – in the 2,000 to 3,000 copy range – but it's thoroughly professional in the calibre of writers that it attracts and in the quality of the fiction it produces, so we're going to list it with the other professional magazines anyway. *Interzone* had another strong year creatively, in 2008 publishing good stories by Greg Egan, Hannu Rajaniemi, Paul McAuley, Aliette de Bodard, Mercurio D. Rivera, Jamie Barras, Jason Sanford, and others. The ever-shifting editorial staff includes publisher Andy Cox, assisted by Peter Tennant. TTA Press, *Interzone's* publisher, also publishes straight horror or dark suspense magazine *Black Static*.

The survival of these magazines is essential if you'd like to see lots of good SF and fantasy published every year – and you can help them survive by *subscribing* to them! It's never been easier to subscribe to most of the genre magazines, since you can now do it electronically online with the click of a few buttons, without even a trip to the mailbox. In the Internet age, you can also subscribe from overseas just as easily as you can from the United States, something formerly difficult-to-impossible. Furthermore, Internet sites such as *Fictionwise* (fictionwise.com), *magazines.com* (magazines.com), and even Amazon.com sell subscriptions online, as well as electronic downloadable versions of many of the magazines to be read on your Kindle or PDA or home computer, something becoming increasingly popular with the computer-savvy set. And, of course, you can still subscribe the old-fashioned way, by mail.

So I'm going to list both the Internet sites where you can subscribe online and the street addresses where you can subscribe by mail for each magazine: *Asimov's* site is at asimovs.com; its subscription address is *Asimov's Science Fiction*, Dell Magazines, 6 Prowitt Street, Norwalk, CT 06855 – \$55.90

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The print semi-prozine market is subject to the same pressures in terms of rising postage rates and production costs as the professional magazines are, and such pressures have already driven two of the most prominent fiction semi-prozines, *Subterranean* and *Fantasy Magazine*, from print into electronic-only online formats, with *Apex* following this year (see a review of the *Apex* site in the online section below), and I suspect that more will eventually follow. Print semi-prozines such as *Argosy Magazine*, *Absolute Magnitude*, *The Magazine of Science Fiction Adventures*, *Dreams of Decadence*, *Fantastic Stories of the Imagination*, *Artemis Magazine: Science and Fiction for a Space Faring Society*, *Century*, *Orb*, *Altair*, *Terra Incognita*, *Eidolon*, *Spectrum SF*, *All Possible Worlds*, *Farthing*, *Yog's Notebook*, and the newszine *Chronicle* have died in the last couple of years, and I won't be listing subscription addresses for any of them any more. Tim Pratt and Heather Shaw's *Flytrap*, "a little 'zine with teeth," produced two issues in 2008 and then died as well. It looks like *Scifi* . . . and *Full Unit Hookup* may also be dead, or at least on hiatus, since I haven't seen them for a couple of years. *Weird Tales* survives in a new incarnation from a different publisher, and thanks at least in part to some clever promotional ploys, seems even to be thriving. Another refuge from the collapse of Warren Lapine's DNA Publishing empire, *Mythic Delirium*, also still survives, publishing mostly poetry. Neither *H. P. Lovecraft's Magazine of Horror* nor the revived *Thrilling Wonder Stories* published an issue, but considering the erratic schedule on which most semi-prozines get published, with some supposed "quarterlies" unable to manage even one issue per year, it may be premature to declare them dead. Saw two issues of *Fictitious Force*, but since they're not dated, it's hard to tell when they were published, and since no address or subscription information is given anywhere, it's hard to tell you how to order it; try website sciffy.com/dnw.

Warren Lapine and DNA Publications may be returning to the fray this year, with a newly relaunched version of *Fantastic Stories*, due to hit the stands in mid-2009.

Of the surviving print fiction semi-prozines, by far the most professional and the one that publishes the highest per centage of stories of professional quality, is the British magazine *Postscripts*, edited by Peter Crowther and Nick Gevers. They published a huge more-than-double-length issue this year, *Postscripts 15*, which is most usefully considered to be an anthology and which is discussed in the anthology section below, but there was additional good stuff in *Postscripts 14*, *Postscripts 16*, and *Postscripts 17* by Ian R. MacLeod, John Grant, Sarah Monette, Lisa Tuttle, Robert Reed, Vaughn Stanger, Marly Youmans, and others. *Postscripts* has announced that they'll be changing from a magazine to an "anthology" format, mostly by changing the format from two column to full width and upping the word count from 60,000 to about 70,000–75,000 per issue. *Electric Velocipede*, edited by John Kilma, seems to be publishing more science fiction these days, although they also continue to run slipstream and fantasy; they managed two issues in 2008, one of them a double issue, and published good stuff by William Shunn, Aliette de Bodard, Patrick O'Leary, JenniferPELLand, Sandra McDonald, Elissa Malcohn, and others.

One of the longest-running of the fiction semi-prozines is the Canadian *On Spec*, edited by a collective under general editor Diane L. Walton, which once again kept reliably to its publishing

schedule in 2008, bringing out all four scheduled quarterly issues; unfortunately, I don't usually find their fiction to be terribly compelling; best work here was probably by Marissa K. Lingen, Kate Riedel, and Claude Lalumiere. The fiction in Australia's *Andromeda Spaceways In-flight Magazine*, another collective-run magazine, one with a rotating editorial staff, which published its full six issue this year, tends to be somewhat livelier, and there were worthwhile stories there this year by Sarah Totton, Dirk Flinthart, Geoffrey Maloney, Aliette de Bodard, Lyn Battersby, and others. Another Australian magazine *Aurealis*, once thought to be dead, managed one issue this year under new editor Stuart Mayne, with worthwhile work by Stephen Dedman and Lee Battersby. *Talebones*, an SF/horror 'zine edited by Patrick Swenson, after surviving a rough patch last year, managed two issues in 2008 with good work by James Van Pelt, Paul Melko, Edd Vick, and others. *Paradox*, edited by Christophe M. Cevasco, an Alternate History magazine, only managed one issue this year. *Neo-opsis*, a Canadian magazine, edited by Karl Johanson, managed only two out of four scheduled issues in 2008. *Jupiter*, a small British magazine edited by Ian Redman, managed all four of its scheduled issues in 2008; it's devoted exclusively to science fiction, a big plus in my book, but it's a poorly produced and amateurish-looking magazine, and the fiction to date is not yet of reliable professional quality. *Shimmer*, Ireland's *Albedo One*, and *Greatest Common Denominator* managed two issues this year, *Tales of the Unexpected*, *Sybil's Garage*, and the long-running *Space & Time*, back from a close brush with death, one each. Turning to fantasy semi-prozines, *Sword & Sorcery* magazine *Black Gate* managed one issue this year, and there were three issues apiece of glossy fantasy magazines *Zahir*, *Tales of the Talisman*, and *Aoife's Kiss*.

Many of the "minuscule press" slipstream magazines inspired by *Lady Churchill's Rosebud Wristlet* have died or gone on hiatus in the last couple of years, but *Lady Churchill's Rosebud Wristlet* itself seems to be still going strong, producing two issues in 2008. Mostly slipstream, literary fantasy and fabulation here, of course, but there's an occasional SF story, such as Charlie Anders' in issue 22.

There's not much left of the critical magazine market except for a few sturdy, long-running stalwarts. As always, your best bet is *Locus: The Magazine of the Science Fiction and Fantasy Field*, multiple Hugo-winner, published by Charles N. Brown and edited by a large staff of editors under the management of Kirsten Gong-Wong and Liza Groen Trombi. For more than thirty years now this has been an indispensable source of information, news, and reviews, and is undoubtedly the most valuable critical maga-zine/newszine in the field. Another long-lived and reliably published critical magazine is *The New York Review of Science Fiction*, edited by David G. Hartwell and a staff of associate editors, which publishes a variety of eclectic and sometimes quirky critical essays on a wide range of topics.

Below this point, most other critical magazines in the field are professional journals aimed more at academics than at the average reader. The most accessible of these is probably the long-running British critical 'zine *Foundation*.

Subscription addresses follow:

Postscripts, PS Publishing, Grosvenor House, 1 New Road, Hornsea, East Yorkshire, HU18 1PG, England, UK, published now as a quarterly anthology, \$18 for one issue, 4 issues for \$100 (***Postscripts*** can also be subscribed to online, perhaps the easiest way, at store.pspublishing.com.uk.); ***Locus, The Magazine of the Science Fiction & Fantasy Field***, Locus Publications, Inc., P.O. Box 13305, Oakland, CA 94661, \$68.00 for a one-year first class subscription, 12 issues; ***The New York Review of Science Fiction***, Dragon Press, P.O. Box 78, Pleasantville, NY, 10570, \$40.00 per year, 12 issues, make checks payable to Dragon Press; ***Foundation***, Science Fiction Foundation, Roger Robinson (SFF), 75 Rossllyn Avenue, Harold Wood, Essex RM3 0RG, UK, \$37.00 for a three-issue subscription in the US; ***Talebones, A Magazine of Science Fiction & Dark Fantasy***, 21528 104th St. Ct. East, Bonney Lake, WA 98390, \$24.00 for four issues; ***Aurealis***, Chimaera Publications, P.O. Box 2149, M

Waverley, VIC 3149, Australia (website: aurealis.com.au), \$50 for a four-issue overseas airmail subscription, checks should be made out to Chimaera Publications in Australian dollars; **On Spec**, *The Canadian Magazine of the Fantastic*, P.O. Box 4727, Edmonton, AB, Canada T6E 5G6, for subscription information, go to website onspec.ca; Neo-Opis Science Fiction Magazine, 4129 Carey Rd., Victoria, BC, V8Z 4G5, \$28.00 Canadian for a four-issue subscription; **Albedo One**, Albedo One Productions, 2 Post Road, Lusk, Co., Dublin, Ireland, \$32.00 for a four-issue airmail subscription, make cheques payable to Albedo One; **Tales of the Unanticipated**, P.O. Box 8036, Lake Street Station, Minneapolis, MN 55408, \$28 for a four-issue subscription (three or four years' worth) in the US, \$31 in Canada, \$34 overseas; **Lady Churchill's Rosebud Wristlet**, Small Beer Press, 150 Pleasant St., #306, Easthampton, MA 01027, \$20.00 for four issues; **Electric Velocipede**, Spilt Milk Press, see website electricvelocipede.com, for subscription information; **Andromeda Spaceways Inflight Magazine**, see website androme-daspaceways.com for subscription information; **Zahir**, Zahir Publishing, 315 South Coast Hwy., 101, Suite U8, Encinitas, CA 92024, \$18.00 for a one-year subscription, subscriptions can also be bought with credit cards and PayPal at zahirtales.com; **Tales of the Talisman**, Hadrosaur Productions, P.O. Box 2194, Mesilla Park, NM 88047-2194, \$24.00 for a four-issue subscription; **Aoife's Kiss**, Sam's Dot Publishing, P.O. Box 782, Cedar Rapids, IA 52406-0782, \$18.00 for a four-issue subscription; **Black Gate**, New Epoch Press, 815 Oak Street, St. Charles, IL 60174, \$29.95 for a one-year (four-issue) subscription; **Paradox**, Paradox Publications, P.O. Box 22897, Brooklyn, NY 11202-2897, \$25.00 for a one year (four-issue) subscription, cheques or US postal money orders should be made payable to *Paradox*, can also be ordered online at paradoxmag.com; **Weird Tales**, Wildside Press, 9710 Traville Gateway Drive, #234, Rockville, MD 20850-7408, annual subscription – four issues – \$24 in the US; **Jupiter**, 19 Bedford Road, Yeovil, Somerset, BA21 5UG, UK, £10 Sterling for four issues; **Greatest Uncommon Denominator**, Greatest Uncommon Denominator Publishing, P.O. Box 1537, Laconia, NH 03247, \$18 for two issues; **Sybil's Garage**, Senses Five Press, 307 Madison Street, No. 3L, Hoboken, NJ 07030-1937, no subscription information available but try website sensesfivepress.com; **Shimmer**, P.O. Box 58591, Salt Lake City, UT 84158-0591, \$22.00 for a four-issue subscription.

As more and more print markets die, emit distressed wobbling noises, or switch to online formats, electronic magazines and websites are becoming increasingly important, and that's not going to change; if anything, it's likely to become even more true as time goes by. Already, if you really want to keep up with all the good short fiction being "published" during a given year, you can't afford to overlook the online markets.

Of course, as we discussed here at length last year, the problem of how these online publications are going to make enough money to survive continues to be a vexing one, with several formulas being experimented with at the moment. Proving that electronic publication alone is not a guaranteed formula for success, several ezines died in 2007, and this year *Aeon* and *Helix* folded – *Aeon*, oddly, almost immediately after announcing that it was going to raise its rate of payment to professional levels. Both markets produced a lot of good work in their time, and both will be greatly missed. (In their last year, *Helix* published good work by Charlie Anders, Samantha Henderson, James Killus, George S. Walker, Annie Leckie, and others, and *Aeon* published good work by Jay Lake, Bruce McAllister, Lavie Tidhar, and others.)

Now that the late lamented *Sci Fiction* has died, probably the most important ezine on the Internet and certainly the one that features the highest proportion of core science fiction, is *Jim Baen's Universe* (baensuniverse.com), edited by Mike Resnick and Eric Flint, which takes advantage of the freedom from length restrictions offered by the use of pixels instead of print by featuring in each issue an amazingly large selection of science fiction and fantasy stories, stories by beginning writers,

classic reprints, serials, columns, and features, certainly more material than any of the print magazines could afford to offer in a single issue. The best SF story in *Jim Baen's Universe* this year was Nancy Kress's "First Rites", but there were also good SF stories by Ben Bova, Jay Lake, Lou Antonelli, Bud Sparhawk, Marissa Lingen, David Brin, and others. The best fantasy stories here were by Tom Purdom and Pat Cadigan. There was a lot of good solid work in *Jim Baen's Universe* this year but somehow it didn't seem like there was as much first-rate work as last year.

A similar mix per issue of SF stories, fantasy stories, and features, including media and book reviews and a new story by Orson Scott Card, is featured in *Orson Scott Card's Intergalactic Medicine Show* (intergalacticmedicineshow.com), edited by Edmund R. Schubert under the direction of Card himself. There seems to be a greater emphasis on fantasy here than at *Jim Baen's Universe*, and they do better with the fantasy, in terms of literary quality. The best story in *Orson Scott Card's Intergalactic Medicine Show* this year, by a good margin, was Peter S. Beagle's elegant Japanese fantasy "The Tale of Junko and Sayuri", but they also featured good fantasy stories by Dennis Danvers, Stephanie Fray, and others, and good SF stories by Ken Scholes, Aliette de Bodard, Sharon Shinn, and others.

The new Tor Web site, [Tor.com](http://tor.com) (tor.com), a blog/community meeting ground that features lots of commentary and archives of comics and art in addition to original fiction, has quickly established itself as another important Internet destination. The best stories published there this year were excellent works by Cory Doctorow, John Scalzi, Jay Lake, and Geoff Ryman, although there were also good stories by Charles Stross, Elizabeth Bear, Steven Gould, and Brandon Sanderson.

Two former print magazines that have completed a transformation to electronic-only formats, something I think we'll inevitably see more of as time goes by, are *Subterranean* (subterraneanpress.com), edited by William K. Schafer, and *Fantasy* (darkfantasy.org), edited by Sean Wallace and Cat Rambo. *Subterranean* usually leans toward horror and "dark fantasy", although they also run SF, and, in fact, the two best stories featured there this year, stories by Chris Roberson and by Mike Resnick, were both SF, as were other good stories by Beth Bernobich and Mary Robinette Kowal; fantasy was represented by Joe R. Lansdale, Norman Partridge, and others. *Fantasy*, as should be expected from the title, usually sticks to traditional genre fantasy and the occasional mild horror story, sometimes a bit of slipstream, almost never running anything that could be considered SF. The best stories here this year were by Holly Phillips and by Rachel Swirsky, although there were also good stories by Gord Sellar, Peter M. Ball, Ari Goelman, and others.

Strange Horizons (strangehorizons.com), edited by Susan Marie Groppi, assisted by Jed Hartman and Karen Meisner, features more slipstream and less SF than I'd like, but lots of good stuff continues to appear there nevertheless; best stories this year were by Meghan McCarren, Constance Cooper, and Alan Campbell, but there was also good work by A. M. Dellamonica, Bill Kte'pi, Deborah Coates, and others. The best stories this year in *Abyss and Apex: A Magazine of Speculative Fiction* (abyssandapex.com), edited by Wendy S. Delmater in conjunction with fiction editors Rob Campbell and Ilona Gordon, were by Cat Rambo, Mecurio D. Rivera, and Ruth Nestvold, but *Abyss and Apex* also featured good stuff by Alan Smale, Marissa Lingen, Vylar Kaftan, and others. *Clarkesworld Magazine* (clarkesworldmagazine.com), which features elegantly perverse fantasy, slipstream, and even the occasional SF story, was co-edited by Nick Mamatas until July, when Sean Wallace took over as co-editor. My favourite stories here this year were by Jay Lake and Jeff Ford; there were also good stories here by Tim Pratt, Mary Robinette Kowal, Catherynne M. Valente, Stephen Dedmen, Eric M. Witchey, Don Webb, and others. Ironically, for an online magazine that has no real physical existence, the covers are quite striking, some of the best I've seen in a while. I particularly like the cover for Issue 19.

The Australian science magazine *Cosmos* publishes an SF story monthly, but they also frequently

feature stories available as unique content on the *Cosmos* website (cosmosmagazine.com), all selected by fiction editor Damien Broderick; good stuff appeared in *Cosmos* this year, both online and in print, by Brendan DuBois, Steven Utley, Vylar Kaftan, Christopher East, and others. A similar mix of science fact articles and fiction is available from the ezine *Futurismic* (futurismic.com) and from new publication *Escape Velocity* (escapevelocitymagazine.com), issues of which can be downloaded to your computer.

Apex Digest is another former print magazine that has shifted completely to electronic online-only format and can now be found as *Apex Online* (apexbook-company.com/apex-online), still being edited by Jason Sizemore; good SF work by Steven Francis Murphy, Mary Robinette Kowal, Lavie Tidhar, and others appeared there, and they publish fantasy and critical articles as well.

Beneath Ceaseless Skies (beneath-ceaseless-skies) is a new ezine devoted to “literary adventure fantasy” that to date has published good work by David D. Levine, Charles Coleman Finlay and Rae Carson Finlay, and others.

Shadow Unit (shadowunit.org) is a website devoted to publishing stories drawn from an imaginary TV show, which in spite of the unlikeliness of the premise has attracted some top talent such as Elizabeth Bear, Sarah Monette, Emma Bull, Will Shetterly, and others.

Book View Café (bookviewcafe.com) is a “consortium of over twenty professional authors”, including Vonda N. McIntyre, Laura Ann Gilman, Sarah Zittel, Brenda Clough, and others, who have created a new website where work by them is made available for free – mostly reprints for the moment, although new work is promised, and the site also contains novel excerpts.

Flurb (flurb.net), edited by Rudy Rucker, publishes as much strange Really Weird stuff as it does SF, but there were good stories there this year by Bruce Sterling, Michael Blumlein, Lavie Tidhar, Terry Bisson, and others.

Below *Flurb*, science fiction and even genre fantasy become harder to find, although there are a number of ezines that publish slipstream/postmodern stories, often ones of good literary quality (and even the occasional SF story). They include: *Revolution SF* (revolutionsf.com), which also features book and media reviews; *Coyote Wild* (coyotewildmag.com); *Ideomancer Speculative Fiction* (ideomancer.com); *Lone Star Stories* (literary.erictmarin.com); *Heliotrope* (heliotropemag.com); *Farrago's Wainscot* (farragoswainscot.com); and Sybil's Garage (www.sensefive.com); and the somewhat less slipstreamish *Bewildering Stories* (bewilderingstories.com).

Chiaroscuro and *New Ceres* seem to have died; at least, I'm no longer able to get to them. Last year I reported that quirky little ezine *Spacesuits and Six Guns* (spacesuitsandsixguns.com) was dead, but reports of its death seem to have been exaggerated, since it's still there.

There's also a website dedicated to YA fantasy and SF, *Shiny* (shinymag.blogspot.com).

Many good reprint SF and fantasy stories can also be found on the Internet, perhaps in greater numbers than the original ones, usually accessible for free. The long-running British *Infinity Plus* (users.zetnet.co.uk/iplus) has ceased to be an active site, but their archive of quality reprint-stories is still accessible on the net, as is their archive of biographical and bibliographical information, book reviews, interviews, and critical essays. *The Infinite Matrix* (infinitematrix.net) is also no longer an active site, but their substantial archives of past material are still available to be accessed online. Most of the sites that are associated with existent print magazines, such as *Asimov's*, *Analog*, *Weird Tales*, and *The Magazine of Fantasy & Science Fiction*, make previously published fiction and nonfiction available for access on their sites, and also regularly run teaser excerpts from stories coming up in forthcoming issues. On all of the sites that make their fiction available for free, *Fantasy*, *Subterranean*, *Abyss and Apex*, *Strange Horizon*, you can also access large archives of previously published material as well as stuff from the “current issue”. A large selection of novels and a few collections can also be accessed for free, to be either downloaded or read on-screen, at the *Baen Free*

Library (baen.com/library). Hundreds of out-of-print titles, both genre and mainstream, are also available for free download from *Project Gutenberg* (promo.net/pc/).

If you're willing to pay a small fee for them, though, an even greater range of reprint stories becomes available. The best and the longest-established such site is *Fictionwise* (fictionwise.com), where you can buy downloadable e-books and stories to read on your PDA or home computer, in addition to individual stories; you can also buy "fiction bundles" here, which amount to electronic collections, as well as a selection of novels in several different genres; and you can subscribe to downloadable versions of several of the SF magazines here, including *Asimov's*, *Analog*, *F&SF*, and *Interzone*, in a number of different formats. A similar site is *ElectricStory* (electricstory.com); in addition to the downloadable stuff for sale here (both stories and novels), you can also access free movie reviews by Lucius Shepard, articles by Howard Waldrop, and other critical material.

But there are other reasons for SF fans to go on the Internet besides searching for fiction to read. There are also many general genre-related sites of interest to be found, most of which publish reviews of books as well as of movies and TV shows, sometimes comics or computer games or anime, many which also feature interviews, critical articles, and genre-oriented news of various kinds. *Locus Online* (locusmag.com), the online version of the newsmagazine *Locus*, is easily the most valuable genre-oriented general site on the entire Internet, an indispensable site where you can access an incredible amount of information – including book reviews, critical lists, obituary lists, links to reviews and essays appearing outside the genre, and links to extensive database archives such as the Locus Index Science Fiction and the Locus Index to Science Fiction Awards – and which is also often the first place in the genre to reveal fast-breaking news. I usually end up accessing it several times a day. One of the other major general-interest sites, *Science Fiction Weekly*, underwent a significant upheaval at the beginning of 2009, merging with news site *Sci Fi Wire* to form a new site called *Sci Fi Wire* (scifi.com/sfw); the emphasis here is on media-oriented stuff, movie and TV reviews, as well as reviews of anime, games, and music, but they feature book reviews as well. *SF Site* (sfsite.com) features reviews of books, games, movies, TV shows, and magazines, plus a huge archive of past reviews, and *Best SF* (bestsf.net/), which boasts another great archive of reviews and which is one of the few places that makes any attempt to regularly review short fiction venues. Pioneering short-fiction review site *Tangent Online* was inactive throughout 2008, and editor David Truesdale finally announced at the end of the year that, as many of us suspected, it was not going to return; a pity. But new short-fiction review site, *The Fix* (thefix-online.com), launched by a former Tangent Online staffer, is still going strong, and short-fiction reviews can also be accessed on *The Internet Review of Science Fiction* (irosf.com), which also features novel reviews, interviews, opinion pieces, and critical articles. Other good general-interest sites include *SFRevu* (sfsite.com/sfrevu), where you'll find lots of novel and media reviews, as well as interviews and general news; *SFF NET* (sff.net), which features dozens of home pages and "newsgroups" for SF writers; the *Science Fiction Writers of America* page (sfwa.org), where genre news, obituaries, award information, and recommended reading lists can be accessed; *Green Man Review* (greenmanreview.com), another valuable review site; *The Agony Column* (trashotron.com/agony), media and book reviews and interviews; *SFFWorld* (sffworld.com), more literary and media reviews; *SFReader* (sfreader.com), which features reviews of SF books; *SFWatcher* (sfwatcher.com), which features reviews of SF movies; *SFCrownsnest* (sficrownsnest.com); newcomer *SFScope* (sfscope.com), edited by former *Chronicle* news editor Ian Randal Strock, which concentrates on SF and writing business news; *Pat's Fantasy Hotlist* (fantasyhotlist.blogspot.com), *io9* (io9.com); and *SciFiPedia* (scifipedia.scifi.com), a Wiki-style genre-oriented online encyclopedia. One of the most entertaining SF sites on the Internet is *Ansible* (dcs.gla.ac.uk/Ansible), the online version of multiple Hugo-winner David Langford's long-running fanzine *Ansible*. SF-oriented radio plays and podcasts can also be accessed at *Audible* (audi-ble.com), *Escape Pod* (escapepod.org), *Star*

Ship Sofa (starship-sofa.com), and *Pod Castle* (podcastle.org). Long-running writing-advice and market news site *Speculations* has died.

This has been an almost unprecedented year for the number of first-rate original SF anthologies published, at least since the heyday of *Orbit*, *New Dimensions*, and *Universe* in the 1970s. All of the new annual original series launched last year – Lou Anders’s *Fast Forward*, Jonathan Strahan’s *Eclipse*, and George Mann’s *The Solaris Book of New Science Fiction* – produced second volumes stronger than the initial volumes had been, a good sign. Even 2008’s second-tier anthologies – there were a *lot* of anthologies published this year – were often good enough to have been in contention for the title of year’s best anthology in other years.

It may be premature to speak of a renaissance or “New Golden Age” of original anthologies as some have been doing – none of these anthology series have firmly established themselves financially as yet, and, in fact, a few are rumoured to not be selling so well. Still, even if it’s just for this year, it’s nice to have so many good anthologies at hand to choose from.

The best of them was probably *Eclipse Two* (Night Shade Books), edited by Jonathan Strahan, although there was only a whisker’s thickness of difference between it and *Fast Forward 2* (Pyr), edited by Lou Anders. A half-step below them was *The Starry Rift* (Viking), edited by Jonathan Strahan; *Sideways in Time* (Solaris), edited by Lou Anders; *The Solaris Book of Science Fiction: Volume 2* (Solaris), edited by George Mann; and *Dreaming Again: Thirty-Five New Stories Celebrating the Wild Side of Australian Fiction* (Eos), edited by Jack Dann, all of them strong enough to have carried off the prize in a weaker year. *Postscripts 15*, edited by Nick Gevers, a double-issue of the magazine that functioned essentially as an anthology, ought to be in the hunt here somewhere too.

Below these were a number of still-substantial anthologies such as *The Del Rey Book of Science Fiction and Fantasy* (Del Rey), edited by Ellen Datlow; *Extraordinary Engines* (Solaris), edited by Nick Gevers; *Clockwork Phoenix: Tales of Beauty and Strangeness* (Norilana), edited by Mike Allen; *Seeds of Change* (Prime), edited by John Joseph Adams; and *Subterfuge* (Newcon) and *Celebrations* (Newcon), both edited by Ian Whates – with yet more anthologies a couple of steps below them.

Several reviewers, including me, criticized Jonathan Strahan’s *Eclipse* last year for not having enough real science fiction in it, but this isn’t a complaint that can be levelled at his *Eclipse Two*. There are still a couple of fantasy stories here, and some borderline slipstreamish stuff, but the bulk of the stuff in the book is good solid no foolin’ core science fiction. My favourite stories are by Stephen Baxter, Alastair Reynolds, Karl Schroeder, Ted Chiang, and Daryl Gregory. Also good were stories by David Moles, Tony Daniel, Terry Dowling, Paul Cornell, and others. The best of the fantasy stories here are by Peter S. Beagle, Richard Parks, and Margo Lanagan.

Only a whisker-thickness behind is *Fast Forward 2*, edited by Lou Anders. The best stories here are probably those by Paolo Bacigalupi and Ian McDonald, but the book also contains good work by Benjamin Rosenbaum and Cory Doctorow, Nancy Kress, Jack Skillingstead, Chris Nakashima-Brown, Paul Cornell, Karl Schroeder and Tobias S. Bucknell, Kristine Kathryn Rusch, Kay Kenyon, and others.

Don’t let the fact that it’s being published as a YA anthology put you off – *The Starry Rift*, edited by Jonathan Strahan, is definitely one of the best SF anthologies of the year, everything in it fully of adult quality, and almost all of it centre-core SF as well.

Best stories here are those by Kelly Link and Ian McDonald (his gorgeously colored Future India story, “The Dust Assassin”), but there are also excellent stories by Paul McAuley, Gwyneth Jones, Kathleen Ann Goonan, Walter Jon Williams, and others, including an atypical near-future story by Greg Egan, more openly political than his stuff usually is. The fact that several stories are told in the first person by teenage narrators, usually young girls, may make several of the stories seem a bit

familiar if read one after the other (and is also the only real indication that this is a YA anthology), so space them out over time.

Another excellent anthology is *Sideways in Crime*, edited by Lou Anders. Most Alternate History stories are SF (particularly those that add a timetravel element), but we've already seen a fair amount of Alternate History Fantasy in the last few years (it's an Alternate World, but in it griffins or giants are real, or magic works), and now we've got Alternate History Mystery, producing a book that's a lot of fun; most of the stories would fall under the Alternate History Mystery SF heading, I guess (including one with crosstime travel), rather than the Alternate History Mystery Fantasy heading, since although there's a couple of fairly wild alternate possibilities here, there's none with griffins or where magic works. The best stories in the book is probably by Kristine Kathryn Rusch, but there's also excellent work by Kage Baker, Paul Park, Mary Rosenblum, Theodore Judson, S. M. Stirling, Chris Roberson, and others. The most likely Alternate, as it requires the fewest changes from our own timeline, is Kristine Kathryn Rusch's story; the least likely is probably Mike Resnick and Eric Flint's story, even more so than Chris Roberson's story with its crosstime-travelling zeppelins.

Several of the basic plotlines here are pretty similar – important man found dead under strange, usually politically charged circumstances – although the settings change radically from story to story so I'd recommend that you read these a few at a time rather than all in one sitting.

There are also some good solid stories in *The Solaris Book of Science Fiction II* (Solaris), edited by George Mann, which is more even in quality than the first volume – none of the stories is as bad as the worst of the stories in the first one . . . but then again, none of the stories is as good as the best of the good stories were. The best stories here, in my opinion, are by Peter Watts, Eric Brown, Mary Robinette Kowal, Karl Schroeder, and Dominic Green. If I had to narrow it down to only two picks, it would be the Dominic Green and the Mary Robinette Kowal.

In the past, I've criticized the British magazine *Postscripts* for not running enough core science fiction, and as if to twit me on this, *Postscripts 15*, a huge double-length (or longer) issue that is probably best considered as an anthology rather than a magazine, edited by Nick Gevers, bills itself as "all science fiction issue!" Not that that's true, of course. By my definitions, there's at least six or seven fantasy stories of one sort or another here, a reprinted article by Arthur C. Clarke, a metafictional piece by Brian W. Aldiss about meeting the Queen, and a fascinating autobiographical article by Paul McAuley about growing up in post-World War II England. Nevertheless, there is plenty of core science fiction here, most of it of excellent quality. Many of the best stories here are to be found in the special "Paul McAuley section", which features, in addition to the above-mentioned autobiographical essay, a novel excerpt from McAuley's *The Quiet War*, and four good stories by McAuley, one of which, "City of the Dead," may be the pick of the issue, rivalled only by Ian McDonald's ("A Ghost Samba"), which does almost as good a job of painting an evocative picture of a future Brazil as his Cyberaid stories have done with a future India. There are other good SF stories here by Chris Robertson, Matthew Hughes, Steven Utley, Jay Lake, Robert Reed, Mike Resnick, Beth Bernobich, Brian Stableford, Stephen Baxter, and others. The best of the fantasy stories are by Justina Robson, Jack Dann, and Paul Di Filippo.

American publishers, especially the big trade houses, seem to like their genres segregated – no fantasy in science fiction anthologies, no science fiction in fantasy anthologies, no mystery or mainstream in either. That's not true of Australian publishers, however, where it seems to be okay to jumble different genres together in the same anthology, and it's certainly the rule with *Dreaming Again: Thirty-Five New Stories Celebrating the Wild Side of Australian Fiction*, edited by Jack Dann and the follow-up to 1998's monumental *Dreaming Down Under*, edited by Dann and Janeen Webb, which brings us a similarly rich stew of fiction by Australian authors working in different genres, horror, fantasy, slipstream, science fiction. A wide variety of moods, too, with some stories horrific and grim

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