

FINAL DAY ... I ran out of space yesterday, so I couldn't list the individual category winners of the new Danish science fiction award, The Niels Klim Award. The winners were: Best novella (tie): Alastair Reynolds for "Skjul" (Hideaway) and "Minlas blomster" (Minla's Flowers) from *Vejen mellem stjernerne* (both translated by Niels Dalgaard). Best novelette: A. Silvestri for "Faderens sønner" from *Faderens sønner*. Best short story (tie): Michael Kamp for "Homo Arachnida" and Lars Ahn Pedersen for "En helt almindelig død", both from *Den nye koloni – Lige under overfladen 5*.

Also I missed telling about the traditional auction on the Saturday. In the month leading up to Fantasticon, different items are donated or arranged for a 50/50 sale, etc. The huge amounts of books inserted into the Fandom Market by Morten "Not MARVEL" mentioned yesterday, has for the past years dominated this auction. Author sets and assortments of paperback books has filled up, along the usual DVDs, comics, etc. This year was no different. As per tradition, Klaus Æ. Mortensen (who informs me that he is a futurist, not a futurologist as I wrote yesterday), lead the auction. And as usual he could (and did) talk about every single title much longer than needed, so people wanting to buy sits frustrated waiting for the opportunity to give a bid... But then again, he probably talks higher prices into us by exactly doing it this way☺ Also let us not forget that such introductions are the very thing that neofans need to secretly learn and understand why this book is a classic worth reading! Naturally we also had a big banquet Saturday evening, but since nothing (except food, drink, and cosy-talk) happens, I have stopped going. Probably I am just getting old, but I do prefer to eat my own food and after a full day of discussing and socializing, I am mostly looking forward to sitting down and reading a book... For some reason, the Filk singing, the dinner speeches and other assorted entertainment never made its way into Danish convention tradition. It is "just" dinner.

As a sharp awakening, the very first panel on the Sunday morning was "Recent Trends in SF Novels" moderated by Danish translator and old timer fan Stig W Jørgensen, and having Swedish fan Carolina Gomez Lagerlöf, and Danish fans Niels Dalgaard & Flemming Rasch presenting – in detail – four new novels, and discussing if/how they might be seen as part of a trend in current SF. The four books were Connie Willis: *Blackout/All Clear*, Mark Hodden: *Springheeled Jack*, Lauren Beukes: *Zoo City*, and China Mieville: *Embassy Town*. Luckily the panel was located in the café, so a bunch of us could eat the café's (nice) breakfast plate while listening to the introductions and presentations.

Blackout/All Clear is 1.000 page long time travel story, written by the new Grand Master of Science Fiction, and author of such important titles as *Doomsday Book*, *To Say Nothing of the Dog*, and *Passage*. This new massive book is

THE CONventional

FANTASTICON 2012,
Copenhagen, Denmark

Knud Larn, June 3rd, 2012

published in two volumes. Naturally such a mammoth book scares most reviewers, and Niels Dalgaard who had been asked to read and comment on it, were not that enthusiastic about it, in his opinion it had two flaws: Too long, and too uneventful in its prose. The time travel part in them described all the problems which have already been discussed in sf. The stories are repetitious with endless chases to find each other. Not to be unfair to Willis, Dalgaard stated that there were other writers he would force to use a pencil for writing their next novel first, as the pc and the printer seems to have made so many writers forget to economize with their words. Wordage seems to be more important today than a clear cut message. Willis' novel should only have been 600 pages – there are much wasted space going nowhere, and in much detail, according to Dalgaard. This collected some approving nods from the audience, but Swedish fan Johan Anglemark raised the point that readers of today wants to immerse themselves into a novel, and wants it to go on for a long time. Escapism is not just the ideas anymore, it is also the process itself, the actual time spent reading.

Carolina Gómez Lagerlöf started the discussion about *The Strange Affair of Spring Heeled Jack* by Mark Hodder. This is a steampunk novel from an alternate London about 1850, based on the legend of a man who assaulted women and then rapidly disappeared by jumping. The story contains gene-manipulated birds, dogs who can deliver letters, flying velocipedes and of course zeppelins. The book is funny and the described London is vivid on the page. The characters are interesting and you don't have to read the sequels. After the short presentation a debate began whether or not we missed

Steampunk. There is a large following now, quite outside conventional fandom. Just like Aminé. Why do they happen outside our circles?

Flemming Rasch had been assigned Lauren Beukes' *Zoo City* which reads like a cyberpunk novel. It is a crime story with a cyberpunk girl and animals as familiars, but has no real sf elements. Since it is set in South Africa it can be said to be part of a trend where the story takes place in other countries, like in many of Ian McDonald's books. It is a mixture of urban fantasy, cyberpunk and new weird, and reads like Tim Powers. The animals are used as punishment for criminals; you cannot survive if the animal dies.

Stig W. Jørgensen had read China Miéville's *Embassytown*, which was not New Weird but traditional, space operatic sf with FTL and life on other planets. The setting is used to discuss the philosophy of language, and the main protagonist is the language. The aliens have a concrete language and cannot lie, but with the aid of the humans they develop a symbolic use of words. Apparently it is a fun read, and I think I would like to read it.

As for trends, well the talk went in all directions here, but I do not mind, it is always interesting when good readers present - in detail - some new genre titles...

Then came the panel "The Fairy Tale in Modern Fiction", with GoH Ellen Datlow, Danish Film-buff Nicolas Barbano and Danish writer Lars Ahn Pedersen to moderate. They quickly shifted focus to just films, and began discussing all the various films that have incorporated or paraphrased the fairy tale / the folk tale in the past 100 years. Of the recent trends, they talked about the spreading of feminism to this area, with more able women in the lead roles of the old tales (Like Red Riding Hood). Lars clinged to the Hero's Journey Model, Datlow claimed that structure is overrated, and Barbano listed 4 pages of movies up, showing how each decennium had an significant increase in the sheer number of films with folk tale themes. It was an entertaining panel, though examples from the films (and fewer of them in more depth) would have been nice.

As a high point in the program came the GoH Interview. Danish fan Niels Dalgaard put very good questions to Alastair Reynolds, always remembering to build up to them by enlighten us with his thoughts on Reynolds' fiction, life story, and reception. I certainly wanted to get hold of more of his books (I mostly read him in Pringle's Interzone), as they sound very interesting (as opposed to much of the New Space Opera filling up the bookshelves in the shops). This interview will be published in PROXIMA later so there is no need to go into all the

details and stories unfolded in the course of the interview.

A surprising event was the appearance of Bjørn Larsen at the con. He is the chairman of the Danish Jules Verne Society, and I usually never see him at a con, only at our specific Jules Verne events. But he had decided to come and tell us all WHY Jules Verne is such a bad writer! Very systematically Larsen went through the 10 standard steps Verne used for all his novels, and showed just how alike they all really are, whether they take place on a boat, on the back of an elephant, under the sea, or in space. Naturally we end up claiming that he cannot be THAT bad, the books are remembered by most of us as FUN. For in spite of this clear formula, the books grip us. Why? We do not know. A very entertaining talk!

I have known Henrik Harksen for quite awhile now. He is our expert in things horror, and has his own fan-publishing house where he publishes books in Danish and English in that genre. Quite interesting titles too. Finally I was able to attend a talk by him on "The Cthulhu at the End of the World", in other words all things Cthulhu and the Apocalypse. In a very clear manner, Harksen divided our perception of Cthulhu into two main sources: Lovecraft himself (as expressed in the works themselves and in his letters etc), and that presented by his publisher August Derleth of Arkham Press. It struck me how much the publisher can influence the perception of a work, even without changing anything in the work themselves, just by adding introductions and writing about the work. I also, as expected, learnt a lot I didn't know about Cthulhu, Lovecraft, Arkham House, Derleth, and all the fans surrounding them. Now I need to find Lovecraft's letters....

All in all, I found this Fantasticon very VERY good, and much better than the previous ones. There were things that ~~didn't function~~ surprised me, but mostly I really enjoyed this con. The Guests of Honour and all the other contributors were well chosen. And it was nice to meet everybody again! What happens next I do not know. Flemming has mumbled something about not doing another con next year, OH THE HORROR !!, but hopefully a fannish miracle will happen and there will be another Fantaticon next year...



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