

# The Devniad Book 43c

Bob Devney

25 Johnson Street, North Attleboro, MA 02760 U.S.A.

e-mail: bobdevney@aol.com

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## **How To Make a Million Dollars by Writing A Book (Start With Five Million)**

It's worth taking a glance at *Brill's Content*, the new mag that bills itself as "The Independent Voice of the Information Age." This paragon of periodicals covers, checks, and criticizes print, broadcast, and electronic journalism, plus publishing. (Remember the flap about its first issue, which revealed the cosy little story of how much Whitewater Independent Counsel Kenneth Starr leaked to the press about matters Monican?)

Anyway, *Brill's* ran a great little chart on page 124 of the October issue entitled "BOOKONOMICS 101." It accompanied an article on Bertelsmann A.G., the German media company, 3rd largest in the world. With \$14 billion in annual intake, Bertelsmann owns Bantam Doubleday Dell plus the Literary Guild and Doubleday Book Clubs. Including our own beloved SF Book Club, of course. Oh, and in July it gobbled up a little something called Random House.

Ach du lieber!

But forget the big picture. Just the legends accompanying the little piled-up book graphics in the chart remind us of the sobering story for a mid-list title:

Typical book retail price \$25

Discount to retailer 50% or \$12.50

Printing & bookbinding \$2

Warehouse & distribution \$2

Marketing \$1.50

Overhead [noted as "rents, salaries, expensive lunches"] \$2

Author's take \$2.50 to \$3.75 [The text notes this represents "an upfront payment against royalties of 10 percent to 15 percent of the book's cover price, depending on how many copies are sold ... The author doesn't

have to return the advance if the book fails to match sales expectations."]

[Publisher's] Profit \$1.25 to \$2.50

And the cutline at the bottom: "Why the odds are stacked against serious book publishers: The money left for profit is slim and constantly threatened by unsold returns, poor promotion, and limited shelf space."

Wonder how this compares to the NESFA Press picture? For one thing, we probably leave out the expensive lunches. It's my observation that, while NESFAns may eat big, if at all possible they eat cheap.

From the author's point of view, Hemingway used to talk about the economics this way: "Buy one book and you've bought me one drink."

After thinking about this chart, I believe we could *all* use one.

Make mine Mylanta, please.

## **The Internet Needs Maturin**

The following delicious exchange appeared on the Web site of the huge Internet bookstore amazon.com (if you want the whole interview, it may still be archived at <http://www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/subst/categories/literature/september-1997-patrick-obrian-interview/002-2503592-1286651>). The interviewee was the great Patrick O'Brian, creator of the Aubrey-Maturin series of Royal Navy sea stories that have been literary bestsellers since the 1980s.

A beautifully literate, formally spoken European in his eighties, O'Brian lives in southern France during the Napoleonic wars.

**Amazon.com:** By now Aubrey's exploits have won an enormous audience--including a virtual one. Are you aware of the many

sites on the Internet that are devoted to your work?

**O'Brian:** So I'm told. You know, I went to see my agent in London--a very nice woman who's looked after me for a great while--and she said she would show me the Internet. "Well," she said, "look, here it is." She pointed to a sort of screen, not unlike a television. Then she seized an object, which she called a mouse, and tweaked it in various directions.

Nothing whatsoever happened.

### A Great Leeper Forward

Have you ever hacked your way through a fierce and obdurate jungle, eventually giving up all hope of direction or destination but glorying in a lost, desolate way in your own tracklessness as you blindly follow some instinct, god-gifted or demon-donated, and end up finally covered with sweat, blood, and triumph in some undiscovered precinct where no man has gone before — only to find your next-door neighbor lying there in a hammock sipping cherry tea?

That's happened to me several times on the Internet.

In the latest instance, I was browsing through the vast and invaluable Internet Movie Data Base and came for the first time upon their delightful new Stump the Staff feature.

This is where desperate characters write in with vague but urgent questions about some movie they saw when they were 8 years old, and they can't remember anything much about it but there was a school scene they think and later the father kept calling his wife "Me Old Beauty."

And the IMDB's mandarins consider gravely and come back with the answer that this is *How Green Was My Valley* (1941) starring Roddy McDowall as the schoolkid and Donald Crisp as the father.

And they're right!

Well, it turns out that the bull moose answerman so far is someone they identify

as "Mark Leeper, GE." (Apparently that stands for Guest Expert.)

Mark Leeper! You know, fandom's own Mark L. Leeper — Boskone movie panelist; totally insane writing machine behind *MT Void*, the weekly I said weekly Web fanzine; and husband to consummate con reportist and constant Fan Writer Hugo Nominee Evelyn C. Leeper.

The IMDB keeps score of who answers what. So far they've got eight staff experts and one guest expert, Mark. His score this week stands at an awesome 70 [by late-Nov, well over 100] — the other pitiful losers trailing far behind with scores from 5 to 43.

Not surprisingly for a fellow SF nut, Mark's especially good with questions whose answers are something like "This is *Mad Monster Party*," or *From Hell It Came*, or *Invasion of the Saucer Men*.

You can check out his progress yourself at

<http://us.imdb.com/Columns/Stump/>.

And repeat after me, "I knew him when."

### Ego Scanners (Shall Not) Live in Vain

Sometimes nice guys finish first. I notice in the *Locus* on-line site that the 1998 Prix Aurora awards for Canadian SF & fantasy came out a few weeks back at Con\*Cept in Montreal. In the category of short-form work in French, **Yves Menard** won for "Une lettre de ma mère," which appeared in *Solaris 121*.

Yves has been a Readercon stalwart for centuries, and we had a nice chat at Bucconeer in August. How do you say "Congrats, dude" in Quebecois?

Last ish, fanwriter **Tom Jackson** wondered why **Harlan Ellison** flew all the way from California for a 45-minute lightning raid on Readercon this past July. Writer/fan **Michael Burstein** was first at the post with an answer, by the expedient of reading the question and replying while we were still collating APA:NESFA. He avers

that Harlan didn't actually flap his bat wings all the way from the coast. Just down from New Hampshire, where he was spending some time enlightening the masses at Jeanne Cavelos' Odyssey workshop.

OK, not to get Michael in trouble with the contumelious Mr. Ellison — the bat wings bit was mine, all right?

### **A Word of Difference**

Speaking of the Big E — in an online interview archived from September 1997 on the AOL site THE BOOK REPORT, Harlan Ellison demonstrates he's a lot smarter than me. Which we knew already. At one point, he says, "It ain't cryogenic, it's cryonic (look them up, you'll perceive the difference ...)"

I may have known this once. I should have, anyway. But for those sharing my former ignorance, my *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary, Electronic Edition*, says "CRYOGENIC: of or relating to the production of very low temperatures."

While a little later, it gets to "CRYONIC: of or relating to the practice of freezing a dead diseased human in hopes of restoring life at some future time when a cure for the disease has been developed."

Cool.

### **Actual Deep Thought**

In an *Austin City Limits* show filmed sometime in 1997, Gillian Welch tells of a conversation with the late great songwriter Townes Van Zandt.

"He said to me, 'You know, there's only two kinds of music.'

"And I'm thinking, country and western, or what?

"And he says, 'There's the blues ... and there's zippety-doo-dah.'"

### **From "Deep Thoughts"**

**by Jack Handey**

(on TV's old *Saturday Night Live*)

"I bet the one legend that keeps recurring throughout history, in every culture, is the story of Popeye."

### **FlimFan**

#### **Antz**

**Cast (Voices):** Z (Woody Allen), Princess Bala (Sharon Stone), Azteca (Jennifer Lopez), General Mandible (Gene Hackman), Weaver (Sylvester Stallone), Colonel Cutter (Christopher Walken), Queen (Anne Bancroft), Barbartus (Danny Glover), Chip (Dan Ackroyd), Muffy (Jane Curtin)

**Directors:** Eric Darnell, Tim Johnson

**Writers:** Todd Alcott, Chris Weitz, Paul Weitz

You'd think a cast this strong could lift 20 times its own weight in dramatic material. And this first, let's call it animated all-computer-graphics feature from DreamWorks Studio does provide a mound of entertainment. But masterpiece? It just ant so. *Antz* is quite good without ever becoming great.

Woody Allen stars as the insectile schlemiel Z, "the middle child in a family of five million." Hanging around in a bar with a buddy sucking down aphids, he meets Sharon Stone's slumming Princess Bala and shows off his individualistic dance stylings. Since ants don't *have* individuality, she's impressed. Later, they both leave the anthill for a trip outside that's no picnic. Or is it?

I particularly liked a sequence where the unsoldierly worker Z gets caught up in an attack (orchestrated by Gene Hackman's power-mad General Mandible) on a threatening termite colony. Z seeks reassurance first: these termites aren't so tough, right? Bad news: "They're five times our size, and squirt acid from their heads."

Eventually Z's exploits stir things up in the hill, and insects start proclaiming things

like "Workers should control the means of production!"

The look of the animation is first-class, with cute Thing Orange ants and grandly intricate interiors. We're not as excited as when total computer animation was brand new, in *Toy Story*. But *Antz* shows this approach can tell a story without *being* the story.

SF fans will enjoy the way the movie worldbuilds on our knowledge of ant life: Ant castes and (like Z) castaways. The queen's quality time with her kids (about 2 seconds each). A dark little glimpse of life after decapitation. The travails of surface tension.

But why not have fun with more esoteric stuff, like the way ants communicate chemosensorially? (Remember T.H. White's totalitarian ants in *The Once and Future King*, and their anthem: "I Pledge to Thee, My Smell"?) Or how about their short-livedness? The fact that all workers are wingless, infertile females? (With an all-girl cast, this could have been the first big-time feminist cartoon.) Or the major differences between ants?

After all, family Formicidae comprises about 2,500 different species. Even for an ant, it's not such a small world after all ...

### ***Practical Magic***

(Warner Bros.)

**Cast:** Sally Owens (Sandra Bullock), Gillian Owens (Nicole Kidman), Aunt Jet (Dianne Wiest), Aunt Frances (Stockard Channing), Gary Hallet (Aidan Quinn), Jimmy (Goran Visnjic)

**Director:** Griffin Dunne

**Writers:** Robin Swicord, Akiva Goldsman, Adam Brooks

There have been Owens women dwelling on this small island off the New England coast since that bother at Salem. In this generation, there's Sally (Sandra Bullock), quiet but strangely ... bewitching. And Gillian (Nicole Kidman), who's more of a hellraiser. The two share a strong sisterly bond — something their batty aunts Frances (Stockard Channing) and Jet (Dianne Wiest), who raised them, fear they'll need.

For one thing, all four are witches. Which keeps the island's townfolk a tad twitchy. For another, there's the curse threatening any man who falls in love with an Owens ...

Many of this movie's first reviews were horrible; I don't have a clue why. In *Practical Magic*, director Griffin Dunne has crafted a relaxed, accomplished slipstream fantasy/comedy/romance. Some shots summon a true enchanting beauty, as when a young girl's spell sends her hopes spiraling up as petals toward the moon. The movie even plays to genre fans' intelligence with a consistent internal belief system. Oh, I doubt that Alice Hoffman, who wrote the novel, spent much time researching wiccan. Just applied a few well-known legends and broomed out a niche for the modern witch.

Mostly these sorcerous suburbanites concern themselves with the more practical magical arts. Love potions. Home remedies — Bullock's Sally accommodates the 90s with a shop selling herbal preparations and bath oils. But when Kidman's Gillian brings home her unpleasant "Dracula cowboy" boyfriend, the conjury cookbook gets opened to instructions like "Insert needles through eyes of corpse."

Eldritch evil aside, there's considerable comedy in the reactions to the spooky carryings-on — by the townspeople, and especially by Aidan Quinn in a nice turn as an out-of-state investigator. In town a day, he's already going down the street mumbling about *The Twilight Zone*.

I don't want to spoil any surprises on the romantic side. Let's just say that Kidman is effective as a good witch with a wild streak. And this is Bullock's most appealing performance since *While You Were Sleeping* and *Speed*. She gets her dark hair and eyes going in a kind of Cher-but-shy thing, playing demure-and-awkward against enchanting-exotic until a guy needs a breathing spell. Ooo-ooh, witchy woman, she's got the moon in her eye-yi-yi-yiiiiis ...

[The *Antz* and *Practical Magic* bits above appear also in *SFRevu*, 10/98. See them again at the following handy URL:

<http://members.aol.com/sfrevu/index.htm>  
l]

Other movies I've experienced lately:

**EXCELLENT:**

***Pleasantville*** — And you thought it just made fun of 1950s sitcoms. Bzzzt, wrong. Yes, the plot is as advertised — a brother and sister, two teens from the 1990s (Tobey Maguire and Reese Witherspoon), get sucked into their TV ... and into the characters of Bud and Mary Sue in the neat, clean world of a black-and-white 50s show called *Pleasantville*. Their knowing 90s presence, attitudes, and actions change the plots of old familiar episodes. They (literally) color the world with their new ideas. But it turns out that this fine Hollywood fable concerns itself also with the primacy of artistic vision and the transformative power of (especially female) sexuality. It's a meditation on family values, too, and on 50s evils such as conformity, intolerance, racism, sexism ... which, the movie reminds us, haven't exactly been eradicated in our own time. (Although we get credit for ditching the words "keen" and "swell," cardigan sweaters, and poodle skirts.) This movie's own values are sex and freedom and (improbably) good books. As Bud says near the end, "Things that are silly. Sexy. Dangerous. Brief." It will break your heart the first time Bud's boss (Jeff Daniels), a soda shop owner hiding the heart of an artist, looks for the first time at a book containing lush, colorful masterpieces by Titian, Monet, Cezanne, Picasso, saying only, "Gee whiz." *Pleasantville* was written, produced, and directed with beautiful pictures and big ideas by Gary Ross, who wrote 1988's *Big* for Tom Hanks, and the Presidential fantasy *Dave* for Kevin Kline. It's one of the finest movies of the year. *Pleasantville* will change your life. Really. For at least 30 or 40 minutes. Even now, writing this review ... gee my keyboard's wristrest is a swell green. Like one of Cezanne's impossibly simple apples ...

**GOOD:**

***Pi*** — Think too hard about the interconnectedness of numbers and events and you leave mathematics behind for the nether pits of numerology. This may be happening to Max Cohen (Sean Gullette), at the pointy end of this paranoid number theory thriller. Max's got a major mathematical mind, but he's exercising it all alone in his crummy apartment, chasing the tails of number strings around in his homemade rat's-nest computer— when he's not throwing headaches featuring truly insane pain. His old professor (Mark Margolis), worried that Max will burn out or worse, tries to keep him from concentrating so hard by engaging him in games of Go. (Is it just me, or is that a tad counterproductive?) But two more sinister groups — Wall Street numbercrunchers and Hassidic cabalists — start competing for Max's results. It's nice to have a thriller hero using numbers instead of nines or nunchuks. But even li'l ol' innumerate me has heard of all the mathy stuff in this movie — Fibonacci sequences, Hebrew words as numbers, fractals, Go. First-time writer/director Darren Aronofsky did a better job directing. Grainy, grimy black-and-white, full of jump cuts, like Max himself often pretty twitchy — this movie can be unpleasant to watch sometimes, but it's got style. For a taste, check out the slick Web site at [www.pithemovie.com](http://www.pithemovie.com), created by Gullette. Who's great in the flick, by the way, with the right pained brainy look — like John Turturro, only more tightly wound. And sound man Ken Ishii really contributes to the overall feel. I particularly like the awful annoying buzz which signals another killer migraine. Ay yi yi.

***Ronin*** — It's a silvery metallic case, between a briefcase and a pullman, guarded at all times by a squad of determined men somewhere in southern France. An Irish terrorist cell covets it, and hires a mixed-nationality mercenary group of other hard men to get it. (Thus the title — in feudal Japan, *ronin* were masterless samurai who often worked as swords-for-hire.) Some Russians are also in the field in opposition. Violence ensues, and intricate reversals and

betrayals, with guns and knives and grenade launchers and many car chases of breathtaking unconcern for bystander safety. Look, it's not important what's actually in the case. It's simply the mcguffin, an object that sets and keeps the plot of director John Frankenheimer's dark, intense, fairly stylish thriller in motion. (Although, as Devniad Deputy Movie Critic Dr. Stephen Kennedy observed, "Let's see, the Russians are after it. The Irish are after it. What would both the Irish and the — it's booze!") One joy in this kind of story is discovering the hero's hidden qualities. Which Robert De Niro's character (who becomes leader of the mercs) certainly possesses — by a point late in the plot, to an unbelievable degree. But early on, it's beautiful to watch how De Niro twice uses a coffee cup as a tactical device. He's well partnered by the big, ugly, terrifically likable French actor Jean Reno. In fact, with a cast featuring Natascha McIlhone, Sean Bean, Jonathan Pryce, Stellan Skarsgard, and Michel Lonsdale, you know you're going to enjoy watching this one go by.

**Zero Effect** (video) — Missed this one when it was released to theaters for about a week this January. Too bad, because it's a quirky little sleeper that promises a great future for 23-year-old writer/director Jake Kasdan. (The son of Lawrence Kasdan, who wrote *The Empire Strikes Back* and directed stuff like *The Big Chill* and *The Accidental Tourist*.) It's a very clever young man's movie. Kind of a 90s West Coast Holmes and Watson thing, where Watson (Ben Stiller playing Steve Arlo) is a kvetching yuppie lawyer and Holmes (Bill Pullman as Daryl Zero) is a drug-taking, social misfit private eye, who only really lives when he's on a case. (As Kasdan must know, that description was also pretty accurate for — I was going to say the "real" Sherlock Holmes.) But when Zero's on, he's the best in the world — a self-proclaimed master of observation, disguise, and detection. He meets a smart, attractive suspect (Kim Dickens) and deduces she's a paramedic by the way she smells. Learns the tax code overnight to masquerade as an accountant.

And displays an offhand knowledge of 1970s mattress manufacturing. There are also three prime performances here. Stiller's irritated assistant showcases one of the best comic actors around. Pullman's sly, slitted eyes can look charming and paranoid at the same time. Dickens is a real find: real-woman attractive and quite convincing at playing perhaps the toughest, smartest person in the movie. This flick gets deeper as it goes along. You start by enjoying it as an offbeat comedy. Then you get into some rather sophisticated analyses of the characters' histories and personalities, and end up being affected by them all.

#### **BARELY DECENT:**

**One Tough Cop** — Let's start at the end. The credits say something like "All characters and events in this film are fictional except Bo Dietl." What the hell does that mean? That all this stuff is from the real-life story of former New York City cop Bo Dietl, but he doesn't want to get sued for it? Stephen Baldwin (*Threesome*, *The Usual Suspects*) plays Bo with the right street-tough intensity. He's got some great moments, as when he requests information from a burly citizen by beating him to the ground with a garbage can lid — then offers a hand up and a straight look to signify it wasn't personal. Christopher Penn has perhaps his best role, as Bo's partner Duke: self-destructive, alcoholic, and dumb as a box of rocks, but a good friend. Mike McGlone has a thankless job as Bo's best boyhood chum Richie, perhaps the least threatening Mafia underboss in movie history. Gina Gershon does a standard number as the woman both Bo and friend Richie love. On the other hand, Paul Guilfoyle — the bland bureaucrat or hateful little boss of mucho movies and TV shows — gets to pull out all the slimy stops as a cocky bookie. And let's not forget a completely unrecognizable Amy Irving as the memorably foul-mouthed FBI agent. Brazilian director Bruno Barreto of the 1978 classic *Dona Flor and Her Two Husbands* and last year's *Four Days in September* gets plenty of conviction from his actors, and the settings are properly gritty.

But in the end, there's very little here we haven't seen before. Call it *Just One More Tough Cop*.

### **BAD, BUT NOT UGLY:**

**Snake Eyes** — Brian De Palma's films have a visual intensity and a swirling, manic feel, like they're shot in a fever dream. Unfortunately, this particular movie apparently was written in one too. Nicholas Cage stars as a hyped-up vice cop and shakedown artist who's right at home in one of the world's more corrupt settings: a prizefight in a casino in Atlantic City, New Jersey. In the opening, a single-shot extravaganza maybe 10 minutes long — certainly the best thing in the movie — he strides around the exhibition hall like he owns it, talking into his cell phone and doing all sorts of exuberantly slimy stuff like beating and robbing a minor crook and sweet-talking in turn his girlfriend *and* his wife. We also meet an old buddy, a Navy intel officer (Gary Sinese) who's handling security for a government VIP in the audience tonight. Cage even manages to start chatting up a mystery bimbo in the next seat. Then the fight starts. It's just getting good when a shot rings out, and all the screaming and running around begins ... No matter how much De Palma's characters strut with hollow energy or protest their empty rectitude, they all show bruised, desperate circles under the eyes, like they're carrying really bad consciences. And even his most brightly lit interiors seem to have dark shadows clotting at their edges. This delightful decadence is all that sustains us when, as here, the story soon goes down like a paid-off palooka too punchy to make it look real ...

### **Backchat**

**on APA:NESFA #340, September 1998**

### **To Anna Hillier**

Nice to see you at the last Other Meeting! Since neither of us exactly shows up at the clubhouse weekly, such

encounters are as rare and welcome as the sighting of some long-period comet. (If that's the correct astronomical lingo.)

Hey, sounds like you'll be at Readercon in July 1999 too. See you there ...

### **To Joe Ross**

Thanks for the bit on the Clinton/Jones imbroglio. We've heard from many lawyers on the tube, of course. But you weren't actually screaming at anyone. Refreshing.

Had no idea that discovery was "a relatively recent invention in our legal system." Thought it had been around forever and I'd recently become aware of it. Through such respected legal educational forums as that Joe Pesci movie *My Cousin Vinny*.

My wife Maureen was devastated to hear (I read her the good parts of your piece) that young Princess Summerfall Winterspring of the old *Howdy Doody* show "apparently slept with most of the cast during her two years on the show." You have now blighted forever one of her last remaining memories of childhood innocence.

### **To Paul Giguere**

Quite enjoyed Nancy Kress' *Oaths and Miracles*; glad to hear that the sequel *Stinger* is as good.

Didn't personally need your review to persuade me to get Jacobs' *American Goliath*, since you bent my ear about it so hard at the last meeting that I went out then and bought it. You and Mark Olson between you have a great deal to do with setting my reading agenda for the year, you know, Paul. Now, don't let this grave responsibility weigh so heavily that it reduces you to a quivering heap of indecisive imbecility ...

So, again, Vernor Vinge's *A Deepness in the Sky* will be published in February 1999. (The title was first announced as *Zones of Thought*, right?) I'm with you — after its extraordinary (since *Deepness* is a prequel, sequel?) *A Fire Upon the Deep*, I'm looking forward to this one with bated breath and fast-beating heart. Thanks for apprising us.

**To George Flynn**

Given that the South Florida Science Fiction Society is imitating NESFA in naming their copy machine, I'd have to say they did a better job. "Mr. Gestetner" may rate a smile, but "Johnny Ricoh" gets a laugh.

Let's see, my ad agency has a Konica — Veronica Konica? Or the tray that sticks out is the Konica Projection?

**To Tony Lewis**

The panel at Worldcon had quite a discussion on the point you raise — that, if we're to propose an SF mensch for a U.S. postage stamp, our best bet is Isaac Asimov because he's the best-known outside fandom. Fair enough. However, it was pointed out that a series, not just a single stamp, was well within the range of possibility. And that such series often feature individuals only known to those pretty knowledgeable in the genre. The official criteria are "stamp subjects that will stand the test of time, be consistent with public sentiment, and have broad national appeal." Guess that rules out my proposed Piers Anthony/John Norman/[fill in name of your choice here] "Soreheads of SF" series.

But the example the artist Stephen Hickman cited was Robert Johnson, who was in a blues legend stamp series recently. Or, to pick some other recent subjects, how about Phoebes Yates Levy Pember, Madame C. J. Walker, Sonny Terry, Raphael Semmes, and Clara Ward? I'll give a chocolate dollar to anyone who knows who all these people are without looking them up.

**To Tom Endrey**

Thanks again for indicating your choice for the fan writer Hugo was li'l ol' me. My blushes, sir.

And thanks once more this year for a report on DragonCon. You always make it sound so *eventful*. Would especially like to have seen Brad Linaweaver's dramatic adaptation of Robert A. Heinlein's "The Man Who Traveled in Elephants," with Harlan (Ellison, I presume) as the Ringmaster. (Not quite sure from your

description if this was an on-stage skit with actors, or a radio play that, what, they just played a tape of?) I seem to remember from Spider Robinson's "Rah Rah RAH" that this was Heinlein's favorite story.

Yes, I'd certainly second your recommendation to Paul Giguere of Randall Garrett's Lord Darcy books. They're not really about "Victorian magic," though. More an alternate 20th century setting, stemming from King Richard's having made it back from the Crusades alive and starting to solidify an Angevin Empire which is still in power, with working magic coexistent with less advanced technology. People mention this series in the APA fairly often; an oldie but goodie. Paul, I have the three-volumes-in-one collection *Lord Darcy* and could lend it if you're interested.

**To Mark Olson**

OK, you talked me into getting the Aldrin/Barnes *Encounter with Tiber*. It's always so disarming — and convincing — when a reviewer goes into a book thinking it couldn't possibly be good ... and turns out completely wrong.

Your disappointed slam at Baker's *In the Garden of Iden* was a model of how a negative review can be as or more interesting than a rave. Tough-mindedness on parade.

Glad you finally got to *Kim*, although that's probably the last book I'd read that you hadn't and you're now way ahead of me for life. Your comparison with Heinlein's *Citizen of the Galaxy* sounded right on. The little joke Heinlein played using Col. Creighton's name was news to me; good detective work. Fred Lerner is a huge Kipling buff — wonder if he knows that one?

**To Elisabeth Carey**

Any stories or impressions of meeting Jack Williamson and Charles Harness at Worldcon? I missed them both, in Harness's case by about 5 minutes. Drat!



I know what you mean about Americans being ignorant of geography, especially for countries like India. Why, just the other day I referred to the capital of Arunachal Pradesh as Imphal before I caught myself and made it Itanagar, and we all had a good laugh.

And like you say, kids today! I'll bet not one in five of those little tongue-piercing snowboarding snots knows the difference between Chandigarh the capital of Haryana and Chandigarh the capital of the Punjab.

Praise Vishnu that at least we NESFAns are so smart ...