

The Devniad
Book 59d
un zine de Bob Devney
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For APA:NESFA #357 February 2000
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The Ties That Bind

No matter how low our Western working world descends into the slough of "office casual," I won't do it. Never. Uh-uh. Forget it.

I'll wear khakis and bluejean shirts, all right. But ... you'll have to pry my tie from around my cold, dead neck.

It so happens that I LIKE wearing a tie to the office. Heresy, I know. A badge of blatant decrepitude. And one that's rapidly becoming untenable even among my own cohort of geezerbound boomers.

Nevertheless, I like it. A tie presents a chance to brighten up my dull ad man's habiliment of purple, black, green, babypuke yellow, and bright denim blue shirts. Also, it takes your mind off how fat I really am. And like a urine trail on a baboon branch, it marks my place in the agencyboy hierarchy. (Account executive, slick tie. Copywriter, creative tie. Art director, no tie. Designer, no shirt. Web designer, no pants.)

Plus it keeps my neck warm.

Far be it from me to do any actual research for this piece, but I think I heard somewhere that it all started with Beau. If I've got this right, the Regency dandy George Bryan "Beau" Brummell -- OK, just a little research here: 1778-1840 -- popularized the use of the tie for gentlemen in the English-speaking world.

Apparently, before that, the tie was French. Score one for the other side there. And uh-oh: turns out tie-haters will be pleased to know that Brummell died, quite untiedily, in a French lunatic asylum for paupers.

That's quite enough research, thank you. I'll just state my opinion: ties have been a positive force for decorum and restraint in our civilization. If for no other reason, because the placement of their ties forces men to be less messy eaters.

Think about it. We put forty bucks' worth of practically uncleanable silk in a line straight down gravity's path of least resistance from our major organ of ingestion. Hell, we'd be at less risk of collateral damage if we just wore our ties wrapped stylishly around the soles of our shoes! Even to our dim little brains, this perilous proximity suggests we ease up on the slurps, snorts 'n' slobbers that would otherwise routinely deposit half of lunch in the little clearing around our troughs.

And again, a good tie is damned decorative. I'm not telling you guys that a tie will actually get a girl. But from an anthropological point of view, I wonder if a tie isn't some kind of boastful exclamation point. You know, a not-so-subtle dingbat pointing to one's genitals?

Much like women's use of lipstick. After all, this latter practice (which uses upper lips to suggest lower ones) originally advertised the willingness of Phoenician prostitutes to perform fellatio. Honest. (Did I read that in a Revlon ad once? Maybe not.)

Alas, though, it seems the tie's days may be numbered. For instance, take a fast scan of science fiction TV, movies, or artwork depicting future cultures. Not many ties in Tomorrowland, are there?

Come to think of it, you never catch futuristic dudes sporting zippers, seams, or any other visible provision for eliminatory egress either. In the, you know, crotchoid modalities of their syntholeggings. It's as if the men of the future have no -- say, maybe Rush Limbaugh was (REALLY hate to say this) right after all about what women's liberation is doing to us.

Well, never mind that now.

Hold it while I riffle through my new copy of SPECTRUM 6, latest in that superb series of annuals displaying THE BEST IN CONTEMPORARY FANTASTIC ART.

Well, as expected, the tie tidings are not good. Of several hundred shots, only 15 feature men wearing any kind of recognizably tie-like devices. And I say "men" here only by courtesy. The count actually includes a werewolf and a leprechaun wearing bowties, plus a coupla duded-up aliens in a James Warhola oil depicting a slow night at Callahan's Bar. Oh, and several obvious historical renderings that include really old-style ties on guys. Plus one breastfront-explosion-in-a-lace-factory adorning what Jerry Seinfeld termed a "puffy shirt."

Even more to the point -- there are little shots of ten editors and jury members in the book's front matter. But NONE of these trendsetters are wearing ties either.

Not one of the eight males shown (OK, that's another essay, dolls), while spiffing up to get immortalized for the photographer, opted for neckware.

In fact, three evidently felt a shirt that buttoned all the way up the front was too much trouble altogether. Doubtless they were preoccupied instead with weighty considerations of style, content, negative yet interpenetrating spaces, and their chances of boffing a model after -- or, being artists, during -- lunch.

And so this natty trio posed in what are called "fatigue" jackets or sweaters. Older readers may recognize this as the style the artists' grandfathers donned to lug oilcan honeybuckets full of GI sewage around the beach at Anzio.

Turning from artists to writers, the tie tidings are still pretty grim. And even when the leading literary lights of Our Thing wear ties, their fashion choices can be ... questionable. For instance, there's the venerable science fiction writer Jack Williamson, first published in 1928 and still going strong. He appears from his bookjacket photos to favor those Western-style bolo or shoestring ties.

Williamson is from New Mexico, so perhaps he gets a Pecos pass. However, the late great SF/science writer Isaac Asimov was from Brooklyn. But in his later years he also wore those silly string things, for some goddamned reason.

Maybe, while rat-a-tat-tatting nine books a week through his smoking typewriter, he feared a necktie of decent length would get caught in the roller and subject him to death a la Duncan.

Let's wrap this up with a look at ties on SF characters. Again, examples are underwhelming.

In fact, the only substantial science-fictional-future fan of ties I can come up with right now is in Alexei Panshin's delightful interstellar comedies of manners. Remember -- STAR WELL, THE THURB REVOLUTION, and MASQUE WORLD? Anthony Villiers was the stylish hero in those elegant little books. Now THERE'S an intergalactic dude who paid long and thoughtful attention to his cravat.

And that's all I can think of to say, as the deadline slips its silken knot about my neck ...

Ego Scanners
(Shall Not) Live in Vain

Mike Scott of Britain's famed PLOKTA Cabal writes to warn us off using Microsoft Word to grate cheese, trim Christmas trees, or try to build Web page text:

"Nooooo! Don't do it! Word is the worst HTML editor every written, and the HTML it produces is so abominably vile that a whole industry has sprung up devoted to producing tools designed solely to clean up some of its most pustulent features.

"Fortunately, every Windows PC also comes with quite a good HTML editor, which doesn't need a modern or powerful PC. It's called Notepad."

Whew! That was close. Thanks, Mike.

Film critic **Dan Kimmel** thinks the SF flick SUPERNOVA was, if not super, at least un-sub.

"I'll spare you my ten best list, but I have to agree that SUPERNOVA isn't half-bad. Apparently it was supposed to be a 'major motion picture' but MGM and director Walter Hill had a falling out over the effects budget and he walked off the picture. MGM board member Francis Coppola (rumor has it he's also made a few films) reportedly stepped in during post-production to help edit the film although he remains uncredited."

Dan also weighs in on my statement that most anti-Semites of recent times hate the Jewish culture or race, not the religion.

"In fact, persecution of the Jews has historically been based on religion not 'race' as shown by the fact that one could convert his or her way out of persecution. For Christians (and, I suppose Muslims) a group that predated the majority faith and refused to accept it was an affront ..."

Dan, thanks for the thoughts, and for not biting my head off on this sensitive topic. (No, not SUPERNOVA, silly ...)

I was careful to say this was "MOST Western persecution of Jews in RECENT times" [my new caps]. Absolutely a matter of official Church persecution of nonbelievers right through until at least early modern times, as your example of escaping execution through abjuration illustrates. But lately, think our society is too secularized to explain most instances of continuing at least casual anti-Semitism.

Last note: after more nagging, Dan chucked his modesty and agreed to share his ten best list. (His stuff appears in the WORCESTER TELEGRAM AND GAZETTE, and online at www.telegram.com.)

"Well, if you insist ...

1. "America Beauty" (Dreamworks)
2. "Being John Malkovich" (USA Pictures)
3. "South Park: Bigger, Longer, and Uncut" (Paramount)
4. "Three Kings" (Warner Bros.)
5. "Eyes Wide Shut" (Warner Bros.)
6. "Toy Story 2" (Disney)
7. "The Winslow Boy" (Sony Pictures Classics)
8. "Titus" (Fox Searchlight)
9. "Analyze This" (Warner Bros.)
10. "Fight Club" (20th Century Fox)"

From Brandeis University, **Judith Tabron** notes a cool movie allusion in my rave review of AFTER LIFE, whose Japanese title was given as WANDAFURU RAIFU.

"As a struggling student of the Japanese language, let me be one of the first to point out that WANDAFURU RAIFU is an obvious Japanization of WONDERFUL LIFE. I wonder what the connection was for the director to the Capra classic, if any."

I'd give Zazu's petals to find out, Judith.

From north of the border, Etobicoke's own **Lloyd Penney** may (gasp) be turning into a media fan.

"... The latest movie seen was this past weekend, when I took Yvonne to see FANTASIA 2000. Beautiful to see, and some good laughs and sight gags, too. Wonderful snippets of animation ... many people have criticized the movie for being too concrete, and not as abstract as its predecessor from 60 years ago. Also, the animation style was fairly uniform throughout, while the 1940 version had a wide variety of styles ...

"Now, I want to hear you pronounce Etobicoke ... ee-TOE-bee-coe. The K is silent. If you're wondering why, it's another wonderful Indian name that means 'where the alder trees grow.' ... I was just too, too sarcastic when I alluded to collecting GALAXY QUEST trading cards. However, I am afraid of seeing GALAXY QUEST: THE NEXT GENERATION in about 20 years ..."

Or, Lloyd, how about GALAXY QUEST XXIX: THE REVENGE OF RICKMAN'S SKULLCAP?

Let's raise high the roof beam, carpenters, for newlywed **Andy Duncan** at the University of Alabama. He tears himself away from bride Sydney long enough to emit a stream of consciousness in re *film pissoir*.

"Gary Dryfoos' all-pissing film festival should include, besides THE GREEN MILE, A LEAGUE OF THEIR OWN, AUSTIN POWERS: INTERNATIONAL MAN OF MYSTERY, the following: Linda Blair's party-crashing scene in THE EXORCIST, Belushi's first appearance in ANIMAL HOUSE, John Mahoney's Faulknerian leak in BARTON FINK, and Leslie Nielsen's accidentally miked water Olympiad in one of the NAKED GUN pictures, I forget which. I laughed until I ... well, you know. And didn't Michael Landon do an entire semiautobiographical TV movie about a teen who wets his bed?"

Andy, wasn't that part of Landon's series LITTLE outhouse on the prairie? If not, why not?

Meanwhile, **F. Brett Cox** sends greetings from deep in the heart of the country:

"... I may have said this before, but Monroeville, Alabama has two video stores and no movie theater; the nearest theater is forty miles away, and the nearest decent theaters are in Mobile, 90 miles away. The only movies on your list that I've seen are THE SIXTH SENSE, EXISTENZ, and THE BLAIR WITCH PROJECT, the last two of which I saw before moving to Alabama.

"I liked the first two very much, but I have reservations about BLAIR WITCH. I was one of the unfortunates who got motion sickness watching the movie; I guess I need to take a Dramamine and watch it again. But through my nausea, what I saw did not frighten me at all. Also, while I understand what the filmmakers were doing, I find it hard to believe that the characters, who were supposed to be stone film geeks, would have been so incompetent in handling a camera. On the other hand, the sections that were supposed to be the actual 'documentary' were not nearly as sloppy as the home-movies sections.

"Oh, well. Two thousand points to the filmmakers for trying something different and getting away with it.

"Probably the most memorable movie I've seen recently was HAPPINESS, which I finally watched on video. A remarkable film that does for sex what LEAVING LAS VEGAS did for drinking.

"Jeanne and I went up to Tuscaloosa for Andy [Duncan's] and Sydney's [Sowers's] wedding party on January 22. Even then, a week after the actual ceremony, the evening was sporadically interrupted by distraught suitors throwing

themselves as Sydney's feet and crying, 'Say it ain't so!' My friend Dan Reid (who had come down from Durham, NC with his own bride Beth) had to eject the poor unfortunate bastards one by one. By midnight there were rumors of a lemming-like progression toward the river. Helen, uh, Sydney took it all in stride and continued to pour the champagne."

We assume she was pouring the champagne all night for OTHERS, not herself, Brett. Or are you saying that marriage to Andy isn't all moonlight, roses, and Nebula nods?

Speaking of life-changing experiences, artist **Cortney Skinner** seems to be leaving the life of the limner behind and taking up -- what, digital animation? Movie poster art direction? Car washing to the stars? We need more info, Cort.

"I will be moving to LA in about 30 days to deal with big doings in my career ... I am no longer an illustrator, I have been promoted from the Ghetto of Abuse of low paying SF/F illustration to a place in the sun ... the land of milk and honey (or at least the illusion of it ... which is good enough for me at the LA pay scale.)"

Anyway, good luck, Cort. You know, when you think about it, "milk and honey" sounds kind of disgusting. How about, say, Pepsi and honey? Might help cut the phlegm better.

From deep in the wilds of northern Massachusetts, fan **Eric Knight** tries his best to make trouble.

"Your movie ish was interesting and a little thought provoking. [I'm a little flattered, Eric.] I liked the Ebert and \$ by \$ comparisons. You know what else should be there? Maureen's list. I'd really be interested to see if any of your movies end up on her list. You might think of her as the 'control normal' to your experimental subject ... Just a thought."

So I'm sort of the mutant-freaky-geek of the pair, right Eric? And thanks for the put-more-pressure-on-your-already-shaky-marriage suggestion. No, actually, I'd say Queen Maureen's tastes, unlike mine, have not an ounce of pretension in them. Of my top 20 picks this year, she stayed away (in a one-woman drove) for most of them. Loved AMERICAN BEAUTY, ELECTION, THE TALENTED MR. RIPLEY, and THE GREEN MILE. Hated LIFE IS BEAUTIFUL. (Can't abide subtitles; has a slight case of dyslexia, which makes them a chore.) Despises horror, SF, excessively arty stuff ... so I made sure not to let her get within 20 yards of, say, EXISTENZ. And read this ish for her reaction to TOPSY-TURVY.

If you think YOUR job works you like a galley slave, fan **E.J. McClure** will wrest her oar on the thwarts for a mo and, ignoring the lash, once more tell tales about life as the very model of a modern U.S. Naval officer:

"Thanks for another cheerful, irreverent, thought-provoking peep out at the 'real world' in all its infinite diversity.

"I'm heading out to sea tomorrow for ten days of combat systems testing after a hectic and terrible three weeks of engineering and aviation certification inspections. Really been through the wringer. Haven't written email or cleaned house or done anything but work, eat and sleep, and not much of the latter. Back in port on the 18th, back out on the 24th, back in on the 29th; I'll only have 11 days at home this month. Thank God for VCRs, or I'd have missed the entire season of VOYAGER, which, along with ER, comprises my entire entertainment calendar. Way too many 6 am- 9 pm days, trying to find parts and get things fixed. The Navy is in a 'hurt locker' for spare parts, and getting my ship underway on Tuesday means ripping parts from one generator and two main engines of our sister-ship, the VICKSBURG. God forbid we both have to get underway together ... oh, wait, we will have to pull off that feat for the International Naval Review in July. Anybody got a replicator?"

Well, E. J., I really think using one of Lois McMaster Bujold's uterine replicators would take too long to be much of a solution to your problem ... Calm seas, sailor.

FlimFan

EXCELLENT:

MAGNOLIA -- Writer/director/producer Paul Thomas Anderson's first movie, the critical fave BOOGIE NIGHTS, was uneven but showed young promise. This, his second film, is uneven but all grown up. His debt to the great Robert Altman is obvious in the overlapping dialog; oblique, observational storytelling technique; and distinctly un-Hollywood roster of characters that are quirky without being cute. The title apparently refers to a long street in Los Angeles, the stem linking a big bouquet of characters: most seeming lost and lonely, whether or not they're alone. They're portrayed by a phenomenal cast. There's an old man on the point of death (Jason Robards, Jr.) and a corrupted gameshow host who's getting there (Philip Baker Hall). A trophy wife (Julianne Moore) and a cokehead daughter (Melora Walters). A caring male nurse (Philip Seymour Hoffman) and a care-too-much cop (John C. Reilly). A boy genius (Jerry Blackman) and a boy genius has-been (William H. Macy). Plus a loathsome motivational speaker (Tom Cruise) who, in the war between the sexes, is bucking for general. He empowers the men in his

audience with dating advice like "Facing The Past Is An Important Part Of Not Making Progress" and "How To Turn That 'Friend' Into Your Sperm Receptacle." It's absolutely Cruise's best performance since BORN ON THE FOURTH OF JULY, and far braver than all that orgy ogling in EYES WIDE SHUT ... Almost as brave as Jason Robards Jr.'s performance here. Robards delivers the most honest portrayal of an old man's dying days I have ever seen. Here is his character gasping out, in breathy, disconnected bits, the last of a story about his first wife, whom he cheated on and neglected to the end: "And I lost -- THIS is the REGRET. And I'm not there. And she does die ... The goddam regret." "Regret" is a big theme in this flick, rage and regret -- along with love and lust, memory and miracles. And yelling and agonizing too; probably a little too much of both. Oh, and weather. the movie displays what I'd surmise is unusual weather for LA. For one thing, it rains a lot. Look, there's too much here to take in all at once. MAGNOLIA is large, it contains multitudes.

MANSFIELD PARK -- Like SENSE AND SENSIBILITY meets TRAINSPOTTING. More next month, I hope ...

TOPSY-TURVY -- Richard D'Oyly Carte (Ron Cook), the producer and owner of London's famed Savoy Theatre, enjoys a good pork chop, a sleek suit, and a fat box office take. (Not in that order.) Sir Arthur Sullivan (Allan Corduner), the composer, enjoys a good smoke in a French brothel, an impromptu musical interlude with his mistress, and the belief that he should drop this burlesque stuff and write a grand, serious opera. William Schwenk Gilbert, the librettist and director of the comic operettas that by the time this movie opens in 1884 have made all three rich and he and Sullivan immortal -- Gilbert whom even a lukewarm review for their latest item, the disappointing PRINCESS IDA, proclaims the "monarch of the realm of topsy-turvydom" -- as brilliantly played by Jim Broadbent, Gilbert doesn't really enjoy anything. No, I take it back. In his own lugubrious, magisterial, obsessive way, he enjoys the same task all three are captivated by: the complex, fascinating work of building palaces of delightful theatrical nonsense, brick by bloody brick. Director Mike Leigh has made his reputation with fine dramas of modern British working-class existence such as LIFE IS SWEET (1991) and SECRETS AND LIES (1996). In the course of this period piece, he actually sticks to form. You get a jobsite tour of how Gilbert and Sullivan and their company of actors and technicians mix the mortar for a breakthrough work to be called THE MIKADO. (Which may not be all that different from how Leigh and his actors go about preparing, say, this movie.) Now, you'd better like Gilbert and Sullivan's work: Leigh obviously does, and includes probably one or two too many long musical numbers. Queen Maureen, not a G&S fan, was unamused. "After the first hour, I thought at least I could get a nap in my seat, but that damned MUSIC kept waking me up!" On the other hand, I, although not previously gaga about G&S, love how this movie forces you, throughout its 2 hour 40 minute length, to meet it on its own terms. Leigh gradually builds up a detailed portrait of the characters' lives: cluttered rooms; a strict class system even among artists; newfangled phones, bathrooms, "reservoir pens"; top hats firmly on in the

rehearsal hall. Plus a typically acute picture of people's psychology and motivations, including the universal miseries of collaboration -- Sullivan despairs that his music is "no more than word setting"; Gilbert laments that he's always "subordinated my words to your music." We especially see that Gilbert's work and the formal, cutting aptness of his speech (which delivers most of the film's biggest , best-earned laughs) are all that keep madness, depression, illness, addiction, perhaps death itself at bay. Try to get personal -- as his wife, poor wretch, does several times -- and Broadbent's fried-egg eyes bulge with desperation and stare away. But nobody ever says any of this out loud. There's no catering here to the movie audience, no bento boxes of insights neatly wrapped ... This is beautifully observed filmmaking, even if not for everyone. But come to TOPSY-TURVY prepared with patience and a real affection for the workings of the theater or any collaborative art, and the veriest poobah amongst us may end up saying "yum-yum."

VERY GOOD:

SNOW FALLING ON CEDARS -- You'd think from the reviews of the 1994 novel and the movie itself that this is a sensitive, bittersweet Romeo-and-Juliet thing featuring a Caucasian boy and a Japanese girl, set in the Pacific Northwest and spanning from just before World War II to about a decade after. Well, partly. The scenery, cinematography, and sensibility here are beautifully sensitive enough, God knows. And they've got the right guy in Ethan Hawke as the boy, Ishmael, grown up. His scrunched expression runs the gamut from soulful anguish to vengeful anguish to just plain anguished anguish. Youki Kudoh turns in a more dignified performance as the girl Hatsue, whose mother is none too pleased to discover the romance: "Does THIS explain your eagerness to walk in the woods every day?" But I was pleased to find there's more here than waters the eye. There's a mystery. A courtroom drama. (With Max Von Sydow in a welcome turn as craggy defender Nels Gudmundsson, worthy heir to the movie mantle of Atticus Finch.) A big surprise or two. And an unblinking view of racism, turning on pivotal scenes showing wartime persecution of Japanese-Americans. This section starts with an FBI man's invading a farmer's house to confiscate contraband from the Old Country -- including a set of wind chimes hanging out on the porch. And ends with men, women, and children, civilians all, being sent for interment in American prison camps ... Like the land grab that may be a motive for murder, all this was, in the words of the defendant Kazuo Miyamoto (Rick Yune), "Nothing illegal. Wrong is a different matter." For me, these historically accurate miseries and injustices somewhat overwhelm the made-up problems of the movie's trial and romance. But I bow respectfully in the direction of any movie that includes them at all.

GOOD:

PITCH BLACK -- There's nothing like a good spaceship crash to start an SF movie off with a bang. (Oops, maybe I should have said SEMI-SPOILERS HERE, THERE, AND EVERYWHERE.) Here you can take that literally, starting with micrometeors or perhaps comet dandruff punching through the ship -- and crew -- accompanied by big sound effects, followed by all the great banging and crashing FX of a really hairy reentry. Hey, you know you're in trouble when the display on the cryosleep capsule that says "CAPTAIN" now also reads "FLATLINE." Two recently unfreezedried astrocrew try to pull up and fly right as everything goes to hell around them. Then we're down, and the scruffy survivors must cope with a light-blasted desert world. Which, it turns out, features the really unfortunate juxtaposition, every 22 years, of a quite peculiar (OK, flatly impossible) astronomical event and a lifestyle change for a particularly unpleasant predator. And wouldn't you know it? Tonight's the night ... Director David Twohy wrote 1989's WARLOCK (a fantasy sleeper that's one of my favorite video rental suggestions), as well as THE FUGITIVE and WATERWORLD ; he also wrote and directed THE ARRIVAL (1996). Call this one MAD MAX MEETS ALIEN. It's plenty derivative, but done with enough skill to keep us entertained. The dialog particularly has the right swagger. For instance: two of the survivors are a tough guard and his badass prisoner -- the last a memorably showy role for Vin Diesel, who becomes the (dark) star of the picture. The heroine -- a blonde crewmember, played by Aussie Radha Mitchell, who's as attractive and tough but not quite as smart as Ripley of the *Nostramo* -- asks about the con: "Is he really that dangerous?" "Only around humans." Much of the film has a good gritty low-budget look (shoot in Queensland, Australia, and you get plenty of desert for free), and actually some of the effects here are first class. I especially like that impossible ringrise, and the dark flyers (apparently the planet's only lifeforms; pretty unique biosystem they've got there, as DEVNIAD Science Advisor Dr. Stephen Kennedy points out) that come swirling up like smoke, spiraling like iron filings ...

Emerging Attractors

From that invaluable resource the Internet Movie Data Base (www.imdb.com) comes two exciting squibs.

All you mutants will be manic at the news that the long-awaited movie version of the comic book THE X-MEN is on track for a July 2000 release. It's a feature-length, live-action film, directed by Bryan Singer of (wow) THE USUAL SUSPECTS and (uh-oh) APT PUPIL. Stars include Ian McKellan, Anna Paquin, Halle Berry, Famke Janssen, and some newby named Patrick Stewart.

Use your own super browser powers to check out the news with this secret password: www.x-menthemovie.com.

And, in an item of a much more speculative sort, here's another little IMDB gem, entitled "First Space Movie To Film In Space?":

"The abandoned Russian space station Mir is to become the location for a film being brought to the screen by British producer John Daly (THE TERMINATOR, PLATOON), the London TIMES reported ... from its Moscow bureau. The film, titled THE LAST JOURNEY is due to be helmed by Russian director Yuri Kara and include an actual Russian cosmonaut, Vladimir Steklov in the leading role. The TIMES said that Daly also hopes to cast Gary Oldman, Robert De Niro and Catherine Zeta-Jones in the film. It also indicated that the movie is part of an overall deal worth \$206 million in which the Mir station is also to be used as 'a destination for billionaire tourists.'"

Backchat

mostly on APA:NESFA #356, January 2000

To Elisabeth Carey

Further on your December comments, coincidentally found that Web site (www.theoneion.com) you mentioned that gave Philip K. Dick's VALIS as a movie Disney was going to make. Perhaps the satire here will become clearer if I reprint the entire would-be-Mousiefied list: SILAS MARNER, CRIME AND PUNISHMENT, PERE GORIOT, THE STORY OF O, VALIS, THE ATROCITY EXHIBITION, STEAL THIS BOOK, DIANETICS, ENCYCLOPEDIA BRITANNICA VOL. 24.

Gee, how did they miss THE MEZZANINE, A CRITIQUE OF PURE REASON, and "Day Million"?

To Leslie Turek

About your December ish: so "potok" means "stream" in Slovak. Wonder if that's related to the name of novelist Chaim Potok?

If you're asked to leave any more messages in village chronicle logbooks, maybe you could spice up the usual bland greetings some with a little SF flavor. You know, sign off with "Dirac Angestun Gesept!" Or would that be more a Tony Lewis thing?

On the continuation of your Slovakia trip in the Jan ish, still find it fascinating. There's the feel of visiting a different culture, of course. But also kind of a time travel component. Meeting the rels and looking at old pictures, you're revisiting the history of your family. And seeing remnants of earlier technologies -- like the stream-and-stick model washing machine.

To Art Henderson

Welcome to the APA!

What a heartwarming little memoir of your early reading, romance with the babeacious Becky, and gradual descent into fandom. Have known you now for several year's worth of cons, but never got the whole story before in one piece. (If you'd tried to tell it at our earlier meetings, there would have been too many pesky interruptions like importunate bookbuyers, calls for the next buffet course, or the intervention of involuntary slumber at some late room party.) Wish everybody in the APA would do something like this. Hope you stick around and tell us more, too.

So sorry I missed Boskone and couldn't see you guys, Art, Becky ... Agreed that fans don't talk about "Andre" (Alice Mary) Norton enough these days. Although Heinlein and Clarke (not so much Asimov) were more important in my own early reading than yours, Norton was right up there. My sister Liz was absolutely bats about THE BEAST MASTER (1959) and ORDEAL IN OTHERWHERE (1964). And I think Travis Fox, with his Amerindian background, was my first hint that not every spaceman was a blond guy from the Midwest.

Hey, maybe we should do Norton for a panel topic sometime, Jim Mann? Anti-Technological Bias in Norton for Chicago?

To Joe Ross

Re your December ish: so Senator John McCain attended the MTV awards and is a fan of WEEKEND AT BERNIE'S. Guess the label "conservative Republican" doesn't tell the whole story any more.

Re your Jan comments on TWENTY-ONE and the new quiz shows, thanks for the analysis about how the new show differs from the 1950s original. Great job. Do you just remember this stuff, Joe, or do you look it up?

You quote Robin Williams on Pat Buchanan's recent book: "I liked it better in the original German." Seem to remember Jay Leno or some other comedian using the same gag about a Buchanan speech in I think the 1996 election. Is this one of

those timeless classics that research will show first went, "I liked it better in the original Babylonian"?

To Jim Mann

To channel George Flynn for a mo, I assume in your Hugo shortlist, you meant to update 1994's MIRROR DANCE to 1999's A CIVIL CAMPAIGN, those pesky eligibility rules being so strict and all.

Am in total accord with every single one of your movie recommendations. Which makes for a short, boring APA retort, but perhaps an even better friendship. Anyway, so we'll all be voting BEING JOHN MALKOVICH the Hugo for best dramatic production, agreed?

To Tony Lewis

Major congratulations to Ann Broomhead and Tim Szczesuil; to you and the rest of the NESFA Press Gang, Tony; and to Rick Berry, Gardner Dozois, and that guy Swanwick, on y'all's latest immortal accomplishment, MOON DOGS. (My brother Michael picked one up at Boskone and sent it as a birthday gift; just arrived tonight.) That stunning Berry cover! That beautiful, lavishly lucid type design! And the content isn't so bad either. Certainly one of the two or three most attractive editions NESFA Press has ever midwived.

Now I can only hope Michael bought me the new NESFA Press Hal Clement collection (MUSIC OF MANY SPHERES) as well and is saving it to give me for, say, L. Ron Hubbard's Birthday. (That's March 13; we usually bake a cake, synthesize a religion, and dash off, oh, say, 60,000 words in the evening to celebrate.)

You ask what have Bizet, Ravel, Klemperer, Monteux, Schumann-Heink etc., in common, besides being connected with music? Uh ... they were all beaten up on the playground for having funny names? They all are NOT thanked in the liner notes for Ricky Martin's "Livin' La Vida Loca"? They're *de*-composing? They've been posthumously converted to Mormonism? They're all planning to vote for machine candidates in this year's Rhode Island elections? (Also posthumously.) (Some of them twice.) They aren't big Robert Jordan fans? None of them understood DHALGREN? They all pre-pre-*PRE*-supported Boston in 2004? I'm reaching here.

To Paul Giguere

Per your December ish: good luck with starting your doctorate in distance learning in March! (Assume the actual doctorate will be more traditional close-up learning, right?) So we'll see you again sometime in 2003? About Robert Parker's Spenser, unlike you I never thought he'd look at all like Robert Urich. Urich was much too pretty and slight. I see Spenser as kind of a big ugly palooka -- say like Parker himself, but younger and 50 pounds lighter.

Your Jan review of Kage Baker's SKY COYOTE finally made me start with her, beginning with IN THE GARDEN OF IDEN. Really very entertaining -- thanks much! Went right out and ordered her next two as well.

Very useful lineup of your Hugo picks for best novel. Diverge from you a little, though. Bujold's A CIVIL CAMPAIGN was one of the top fun reads of the year, but I think the Hugo winner should bring more to the table.

However, loved Vinge's A DEEPNESS IN THE SKY as much as you and most of the rest of NESFA did. Great, simply great.

The real match-up this year should be between DEEPNESS and Neal Stephenson's CRYPTONOMICON. I thought the latter was an even slightly better novel (while being at least as much fun as the Bujold, by the way); the real question will be, is it science fiction? I vote yes, in a tight decision. (It's set probably in the slightly near future, is saturated with thought about the consequences of technology on history and on people, and presents a secret history of codebreaking in WWII with contrafactual content.) Which means it's my Hugo pick. What d'yall think?

To Tom Endrey

So first I think you're moving to Charlotte, North Carolina. Then, a few weeks later, the same area practically disappears in a deluge of almost Biblical proportions. Coincidence? As the controversial Dr. E. V. might say, I think not ... Your report on the move and resettlement should be interesting.

Although I believe I also noticed a slightly later change-of-address notice for you to just somewhere else in greater New York. Do I have any of these details right, or is this all just some fever dream?

To George Flynn

I loved the 3rd-party newspaper article proving you were a prodigy of prophecy in 1938, at the age of 3 reading about Goddard and predicting the first Moon landing 25 years later, with an error of only 5 years. Nice bit where the woman

reminiscing states that (Little) Boy George was, "as we would say today, very gifted" ... whereas later in the article her father puts it in more authentic 1938 terms: "This kid's really weird ..."

Nice catch of my "LE Femme Nikita." Well, Bridget Fonda *is* a bit boyish ...

To Mark Olson

You're right, PROTECTOR may have been Larry Niven's best solo novel. Must go read it again now, damn you!

About the Boston Museum of Fine Arts, you're right on most counts of criticism. But keep trying, and you'll find at least 10 things there that really speak to your head and your heart ... Re the parking, don't fatten those expensive lots -- drive around and around the big museum block itself until you can pounce on a street meter space. Bring 16 quarters. There's a handy 3- or 4-hour interval on the meters right around the museum ... And for the best price break of all, chances are your local public library (or maybe your company's employee activities department) has lend-out museum membership tickets that get you general admission (not specials, but hey) for FREE! Reserve weekends in advance, of course ... When the rest of the museum's open, hit the mummies. Everybody's gotta get mummified. Then get away from the crowds by fleeing to the Asian halls. There's lots of cool Japanese, Chinese, and Indian stuff that few ever visit ... Do you know what *netsuke* are? I love those little bastards ... Yes, the MFA definitely lets too many people in at a time to special exhibitions. Only remedy I've found, when they let in a clump at once, is to skip ahead of that crowd and jump around to any part of the exhibit that looks less crowded. Then go back to the start between clumps. Of course, this kinda destroys the flow if, for instance, there's a chronology to the presentation. Hey, thank ghod you're tall and can peer over people's shoulders. If really desperate to see, would you consider downing a few bulbs of garlic beforehand? Or a quart of chili, I suppose ...