

# The Devniad Book 65e

un zine de Bob Devney  
25 Johnson Street, North Attleboro, MA 02760 U.S.A.  
e-mail: bobdevney@aol.com  
For APA: NESFA #363 August 2000  
*copyright 2000 by Robert E. Devney*

## **Orbita Dicta** **Heard in the Halls of** **Readercon 12 at the (curiously named)** **Burlington Marriot Burlington** **(guess where?) Burlington,** **Massachusetts, U.S.A.** **July 21-21, 3000**

*You know the drill. Here's where I delve into what was said over a long weekend at a recent and most distinguished science fiction readers/writers convention.*

*For those Devniad readers drawn here more by friendship than science fiction, better luck next month. Unless you've got a shred of scientific interest in your heads, in which case dive in and observe the interactions of that strange and wonderful species H. fantasticus. Or is that fanaticus?*

*Many thanks to faithful spies like my sister Darcy Devney, Dan Kimmel, Paula Lieberman, and perhaps others I'm too discreet or forgetful to mention. Note: if they, I, or our Presidential candidates aren't all hung up on the accuracy thing, why should you be?*

*[Friday afternoon in my office as I escape to the con, designer Steve Rebello explains my weekend speculative fiction conference plans to a colleague]*

*Hey, I saw Galaxy Quest ... He's going to go where they wear these big pointy ears.*

*[A few minutes later, at a bank kiosk in Norwood, Massachusetts, fan Mark Bartlett, also Rcon-bound, confuses me with some dazzling star of the SF firmament]*

*Aren't you Bob Devney?*

*[At dinner in the hotel restaurant, Toronto fan Hope Leibowitz dishes diets]*

*I just heard about a new one. The all-you-can-afford sushi diet.*

*[Hope has hot news from Fanzineconalanda]*

*Corflu will be in the Boston or Providence area in March or May 2001. Bob Webber hasn't decided which yet.*

*[At her reading, vastly underrated fantasist Elizabeth Willey gives a glimpse of things to come]*

*I'll read from something not published yet, *The Scholar's Pursuit*. It's a fantasy set in the early 19th century, but emphatically *not* a Regency ... Perhaps a Regency without beaus.*

*[In the panel on genre ghettoization in the U.S. vs. the U.K., co-guest of honor Michael Moorcock, like many pros, blames the pros]*

*Writers of imaginative literature get increasingly ghettoized as a result of politics — because academics, to hang onto their jobs, need John Updike to the top guy rather than Thomas M. Disch's being the top guy.*

*[Writer Robert Sawyer just flew in from the North Coast with some sad and surprising tidings]*

*None of Canada's SF writers are published by the major publishers in Canada ... we're published either by small presses, or in the U.S.*

*[Is Tor editor Jim Minz spouting the *partei* line?]*

*Luckily at Tor we work for the good Germans. They don't micromanage what we do, for the most part.*

*[An audience member wants out]*

*I'm asking you to define what science fiction would be if it wasn't ghettoized —*

*[But writer Barry Malzberg drags us all back in]*  
— It wouldn't be science fiction.

*[Moorcock contributes a sign of the times — the Times of London, that is]*

Some time ago the Sunday *Times* called me to ask which science fiction author to interview, and I said, how about Terry Pratchett. And she asked, "Who's that?"

Well, I told her, if you look in the back of your book section, at the top of the list you'll see Terry Pratchett has the top three slots ...

He's getting a little better known now.

*[Minz minces words]*

Ghettoization is really a term I take issue with ... It's really all about trying to find the people who are looking for these books.

*[Moorcock blames the media]*

What happened was, essentially, George Lucas ... It's knocked out the likes of John Sladek.

*[Malzberg sees giant statues toppled in the sands]*

The most disturbing thing I've encountered recently was that Robert Sheckley has a novel that he cannot get published ... If Robert Sheckley cannot sell a novel at age 72, after having been a working science fiction writer at the top of the field since 1952 ...

*[Minz tries to make a case for "in with the new"]*

The field is still receptive to newer writers of quality, like Mary Doria Russell

—

*[Which Malzberg won't buy]*

— The publishing logic is, Robert Sheckley is a proven failure. Mary Doria Russell is the Robert Sheckley of tomorrow. She's three books away from being a proven failure too.

*[In the bookshop, dealer Michael Walsh hefts over a trade paperback of the hot new Brit space opera Revelation Space — plus news of its author]*

Alistair Reynolds will be coming to Worldcon next year, in Philadelphia.

*[Writer/fan Brett Cox teases your ever-flirting-with-danger reporter]*

I want that calendar you thought up: The Babes of Science Fiction.

*[In the middle of grandmaster Samuel R. Delany's 18-minute reading of a paper on "definitions" vs. "descriptions" to introduce (and I fear contradict) the panel on The Pleasures of Pedagogy — when Delany utters the phrase "Gothic or post-Gothic," fellow grandmaster Hal Clement wrinkles his brow several times; eloquently ... There's no quote here, just thought you might enjoy the moment]*

*[Later, when the discussion finally begins, Clement marks out verbal boundaries]*

The trouble with definitions is, there are far more physical objects in the universe than there are short noise packets ... *[And later, when someone attempts yet another cryptic definition]* I need more noise.

*[Delany has a horrifying historical note from Analog in the supposedly enlightened 60s]*

John Campbell rejected *Nova*. He said his audience could not relate to a black central character.

*[Co-guest of honor Suzy McKee Charnas has been there, been done to like that]*

When you write science fiction that asks questions that people don't want to deal with, you get defined out of the form ... You get told, that's not SF, it's a polemic, it's radical feminism, and so on.

*[Editor Patrick Nielsen Hayden demonstrates definitions can deflate]*

A lot of supposedly "hard science fiction" is just talking tough about engineering.

*[When I ask from the audience if it's ever decent for a work of fiction to contain equations, Nielsen Hayden is equal to the task]*

The equations in *Cryptonomicon* work because they're charming equations.

*[As a schoolboy, writer Allen Steele found incalculable value in Delany's 1966 trilogy The Fall of the Towers]*

You had characters speaking to each other by means of sine waves, just when I had to study the damn things in school. I passed that course because of your book.

*[Nielsen Hayden recalls Damon Knight's famous definition/description of SF, which goes something like "Science fiction is what I point at when I say science fiction"]*

Thousands of people are worrying how we're going to define science fiction after Damon dies.

*[After the panel, fan James Daly talks to Steele re Hugo Gernsback's word for it, "scientification"]*

The field would be called "sty-fi"—

*[Steele, delightedly]*

— No, "stiffy"! We'd all be stiffy fiction writers! Of course, some of us have written a little porno already ...

*[In the lobby, Nielsen Hayden points out a new MacLeod on the horizon]*

Ken MacLeod has a fifth novel, *Cosmonaut Keep*, not part of any other series. It's coming out from Orbit in Britain in November. I'm trying to buy it right now for Tor; we'd probably come out in May next year.

*[At the Meet the Pros party, magnificent yet modest fantasist Patrick O'Leary has more great news]*

Gene Wolfe told me this morning he's agreed to write the introduction. *Gene Wolfe* has agreed to write the introduction! Of my book of poems and stories and essays, coming out from Fairwood Press in October. And you, sir, are the first to know!

It's called *Other Voices, Other Doors* ...

*[— Oh, like a twist on your terrific first novel Doorway Number Three with a nod to Truman Capote's Other Voices, Other Rooms?]*

... Damn! You're the third person here to get that.

*[Devoted dealer Chris Logan Edwards chats up two outstanding comix]*

Have you ever read the comic *Cerebus*? It started back in the late 70s, and will end in about 4 years. The guy doing it said from the start that it would be a 300-issue series, and everybody laughed ...

His name is Dave Sim. He's always self-published. Because he says no company will ever pay you enough to sue them.

... You should also take a look at *The League of Extraordinary Gentlemen*. By Alan Moore, who did *Watchmen* and *Swamp Thing*. It's set at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and it has all these fictional characters from books in it, but usually you have to figure out who they are by yourself. There's Captain Nemo and Allan Quatermain and The Invisible Man, and more.

*[Mark Olson recounts the stuff of NESFannish legend in re Tony Lewis and wife Suford]*

There's a good story there. Shortly after Tony and Sue got married, Sue took her car and ran it into a bridge abutment —

*[Churlish wisecrack from this reporter]*

— Who can blame her? —

*[Olson rightly ignores this cheap, anything-for-a-laugh slur on his old friend and valued colleague]*

— And her face got really banged up ... So Tony went to the hospital, and ascertained that she was really OK.

Then he called her parents and asked for a refund.

*[Born-again testimony from fan Joe Petronio]*

Guy Gavriel Kay was the man who got me back into science fiction and fantasy. I'd read it all through the 70s, but by the 80s I read four or five things in a row — all cynical, bitter modernist stuff — that left me cold.

Then after a while, in the early 90s I picked up *Tigana*. A great story, a great fantasy, beautifully written. And for adults, not kids.

Then I picked up something by Dan Simmons. And then a third book that was good — and I was a science fiction reader again.

*[Newish Analog writer Shane Tourtelotte sports a boffo button]*

FOLLOW THE READER

*[Saturday morn, brother fan Michael Devney has a fanfashion inspiration]*

I think we should start a new fannish tradition of everyone going down to breakfast in their hotel robes.

*[While Darcy Devney rakes last night's embers]*  
I was really dull at the party last night,  
did you notice —

*[Husband Bob Kuhn drones dully]*  
— No, I was too busy being really  
boring myself.

*[In the bookshop, film maven Dan Kimmel's agog]*  
I had wonderful news this week. My  
lawyer called and said that my book on the  
Fox network, which I worked on for 2 years,  
won't be published this year!

Why is that good? It means I can take  
the thing back and sell it to some decent  
publisher.

*[When it's suggested that if he doesn't hurry up  
and publish, the recently beleaguered Fox  
network might implode]*

Oh good! A new chapter for the  
paperback.

*[At breakfast, NESFAn Lisa Hertel beams at her  
(and Mark's) new baby]*

Brendan is a product of IVF ... I wanted  
to take a picture of the petri dish. Then,  
later, when he asks where babies come  
from, I could show him!

*[Before a panel, faned Ed Meskys is about to  
climb back in the box]*

The next issue of *Niekas* is finally at the  
typesetter. After 2 years ... It will focus on  
sports and fantasy. That is, fantasy stories  
involving sports.

*[Chris Edwards brandishes a big metal tray of  
pastries in the bookshop]*

You asked what I did when I'm not a  
book dealer? I'm a baker. This is my other  
life.

*[At the panel on the Loss of a Common Culture,  
writer James Patrick Kelly sings with happiness]*

The artistic director of the Memphis  
Opera Company wrote me a fan letter and  
said, I really like your story "Faith." Can I  
write an opera around it? And I said, Sure!

...

Now the worldcon committee is also  
spending quite a bit of money on producing  
it in Chicago next month.

*[Kelly brings up the status quo ante]*  
As a matter of fact, when I started in  
science fiction there were, not a common  
culture but armed camps ...

You had readers saying things like, "If  
they publish fiction like *that* I'm canceling  
my subscription to *F&SF* — I'm just going to  
read *Analog* twice every month."

*[Writer/fan/librarian Fred Lerner utters perhaps  
the bravest words ever said at an SF con]*

I hate to confess this, but of the four  
writers on this panel, I've only read the  
work of one of them, and only a small  
amount at that —

*[Kelly lets him off the hook]*

— That's not a problem. That's an  
embarrassment of riches.

*[Kelly says kids today find Heinlein hard going]*

The science is all wobbly, and the  
futures are all wrong. The roads *did not roll*  
in 1982.

*[Editor Scott Edelman displays uncommon  
knowledge]*

Joe Haldeman wrote *The Forever War* in  
response to Heinlein's *Starship Troopers*. But  
how many people actually recognized that?

*[— And is promptly debunked by writer Jeffrey  
A. Carver]*

Actually, I asked Joe Haldeman that  
about a year ago. And he said, "I read  
*Starship Troopers*, like I read *The Red Badge of  
Courage* and lots of other books. But *The  
Forever War* was in no way a deliberate  
response to Heinlein more than to all the  
others."

*[Edelman says death generates biz buzz]*

Mostly, the ones who get the most out  
of — the ones whom the corporate culture  
has raided from our culture are dead. Phil

Dick is having a wonderful career these days.

*[Kelly points out prospects aren't radiant]*

Science fiction has a half-life, and it's decaying. And the Golden Age stuff has decayed past the point of interesting that 15-year-old today.

*[Writer/prof John Kessel reports from the trenches]*

I've been teaching SF for 18 years. Coming in, the students' knowledge is sketchy and haphazard. They might know Connie Willis, Kim Stanley Robinson, Bruce Sterling, a few others ...

I often assign Heinlein's "Space Jockey." They have to read it like they read Shakespeare ... I spend a great deal of time explaining science fiction's historical context. And I realize that I am old.

*[Discussing the Marriage of True Minds, writer Brenda Clough has read from the book of love]*

I knew we were made for each other, because our book collections dovetailed perfectly. I had no Larry Niven, he had them all. I had some Heinleins, he had the others ... That's the method I recommend for picking who you're going to marry.

*[Editor James Minz, upon hearing of editor Nancy C. Hanger's library (10,000 books on 900 linear feet of bookshelves), addresses Hanger's hubby]*

If you two ever break up, let me know.

*[Writer Daniel Dern anatomizes his daughter]*

She has her mother's nose — always in a book.

*[Beginning the panel on The Career of Mervyn Peake, Darrell Schweitzer sums up]*

Why are we all here? Why do we appreciate him? Except that you'd have to be a stub of wood not to.

*[Artist The Joey Zone describes Peake's peak creation, Gormenghast, as portrayed in the trilogy Titus Groan, Gormenghast, and Titus Alone]*

Picture a Piranesi or Escher strip of a castle, almost infinitely large and strange ... Now populate that with a gallery of Dickensian grotesques ... all influenced by Goya.

*[Michael Moorcock drags in Shakespeare again]*

There have been many books of imaginative power, like Eddison and so on.

But none have had that incredible narrative drive. You're with Steerpike, you're with the villain almost all the way — it's like *Richard III*.

*[Zone agrees, but]*

Yes, the most attractive character is Steerpike ... then he burns a library! What could be worse than that?

*[Schweitzer isn't talking Berle here]*

This is a book for people who want Milton rather than eye candy.

*[Who shot J.R.R.? Probably Moorcock]*

Essentially, Tolkien won't last. He's very popular now, but it's like Marie Corelli, the very popular 19<sup>th</sup> century writer ... Peake wanted to break windows through to reality.

*[Fantasist Yves Menard agrees Peake mastered a difficult mix]*

You get people now who are trying to write something horrible, then crack a joke. It's pathetic. Peake — that's what these people are trying to be, and failing ... The battle between Flay and Swelter is particularly horrific, but completely hilarious.

*[Moorcock knew him when]*

I knew many writers personally while I was growing up, and Peake was the first one who struck me as a genius ...

His war poetry is some of the best there is, out of the Second World War.

*[Zone talks legacies]*

One person influenced by Mervyn Peake is Jeff VanderMeer —

*[Schweitzer pays Peake no small compliment]*  
— And Gene Wolfe.

*[Moorcock states the unobvious]*

— It might not be obvious, but I'm very influenced by Peake.

*[Moorcock sketches yet another side of the man's character]*

He was the first war artist into Belsen, the first concentration camp to be opened [liberated by the Allies] ... If you think of the Holocaust and read *Titus Alone* in that regards, you're seeing the English discovery of evil.

*[In his joint lecture on Baby Boomer Toys, Richard Bowes talks aesthetics]*

The beauty of Mr. Potato Head is that his nose could be on his ear, you know ...

Nowadays, the boxes are more attractive than the toys.

*[While co-chautauquan Mark Rich finds it takes all kinds to make a collector]*

That's kind of fascinating — a nostalgia for plastic hair.

*[Following the Toys panel, Eric Van starts his lecture on Schizophrenia by finding his audience is of two minds]*

Is it my imagination, or did most of the people stay here for this seminar?

Hmm, people interested in toys are also interested in mental illness.

*[As Van sloshes around a glass carboy supposedly holding his own brain, destined for some microcephalic bidder at the upcoming Tiptree Auction, Michael Devney warns the audience]*

Stand back! There's going to be an accident with that brain.

*[In the bookshop, writer Barbara Chepaitis keeps her (rather attractive) eyes on the prize]*

Have I read much Charnas? Don't you remember my quote last year: I don't read. Maybe because I wrote four books this year ... Including *Feeding Christine*, which is actually a mainstream novel. I'm just waiting for Oprah to call.

*[Writer Steve Sawicki, her (OK, handsome) partner, is bitter about directions in the con flyer]*

There is no exit 15 on the Mass Pike!

*[Dealer/bon vivant Art Henderson sells me a Cowper collection, throwing in a mini-bio gratis]*

Richard Cowper's real name was John Middleton Murray Jr., the son of a famous English academic critic ... He had the type of childhood where "babysitting" meant going to Inklings meetings.

*[In the panel titled Welcome to the Future, John Clute was expecting something taller]*

We were inhabiting, as science fiction readers, the wrong story — where that big macro change would occur ... What happened was something else. We went the micro route.

In ancient China, if a steam locomotive or a gun were invented, it didn't matter, because a different story happened in the greater story of ancient Chinese history.

*[Australian phenom Sean McMullen brings us back to the future with a, well, bang]*

I predicted that what would really do it for space travel would be, sex toys ... A couple spends \$40,000 for a Special Day in weightlessness.

*[Canadian writer/editor Marcel Gagne concurs]*

You could have a point. VCRs were a failure until people started to do porn tapes ... Then everybody had to buy a VCR. For their friend, of course.

*[Fellow Canman Robert Sawyer was more expecting someone smarter]*

I miss artificial intelligence. I miss other minds —

*[Somebody interjects]*

— You never had a cat —

*[And Sawyer looks at Gagne]*

— If you're going to tell me that sex drives the pet shop industry too, I'm leaving!

*[McMullen gets serious]*

A fear that has been growing in me ... is watching Earth get rarer and rarer. It's beginning to look like Earth is a very remarkable planet. We'd better start moving industry into space and make some room for parks.

*[After about the fourth long question (speech)  
stating the obvious about irrelevant subjects from  
a blonde audience member a few seats ahead of  
me, Sawyer raises a cheer in our hearts]*

I'm going to bring us back on topic now.

*[Starting off What the New Wave Was, Michael Moorcock recalls that gung-ho young gang at Britain's New Worlds magazine in the 60s]*

Brian Aldiss and company were modernists ... They wanted to make science fiction a respectable modernist literature.

What we were looking for was a form that could reflect our experience ... Ballard grew up in a Japanese prison camp, I lived through the Blitz. My childhood is all in ruins.

... It was Chris Priest who first used the term, and he applied it to a bunch of fanzines ... We all knew what the New Wave was. It was a bunch of Frenchmen making movies!

*[Barry Malzberg I seem to recall here is talking about Darrell Schweitzer]*

In a moment of critical acuity — we've long since made up about this — he referred to your honest correspondent as “the first New Wave hack.”

I never thought of myself as a New Wave Writer. I was doing the best that I could ... Was it James Blish who said that every writer who was ever called New Wave denied it?

*[Malzberg includes Samuel Delany]*

You were not a New Wave writer. But you were happy to be amalgamated in it —

*[Delany, firmly]*

— No, I wasn't. *[Audience laughs.]*

*[Malzberg backs off]*

— What can I say? I should wait until you're safely planted to say things like that.

*[Darrell Schweitzer wonders if the New Wave ever really subsided]*

In the 1990s, the late David R. Bunch liked a story I wrote in *Pulphouse* and wrote me an enthusiastic letter saying, “Welcome to the New Wave!”

... It is an historical term of some use. After that, it is everything to everybody ... To Lester del Rey, as you may know, it was the Devil.

*[In the panel on the Primacy of Story, writer Eleanor Arnason remembers a good one]*

Look at the storytelling contest in Gene Wolfe's *The Book of the New Sun*, where these soldiers are convalescing and this woman will marry whichever one tells the best story ... It's this wonderfully intelligent, almost a folktale — imbedded in this very complicated larger story.

*[Writer Jeffrey Carver looks backwards]*

I imagine story is as old as words. You have the hunt for the sabertooth tiger, and Thag coming back to tell all about it —

*[Writer Melissa Scott embellishes it]*

— I imagine him telling how *big* that sabertooth was that got away —

*[Patrick O'Leary sums up]*

— The first story was a *lie!*

*[Not sure I can swallow this tidbit from Candace Jane Dorsey until she shows us how those survey questions were worded, exactly]*

One woman did a study of bad nursing practices ... Her one unanimous result was that bad nurses could not make narrative of their experiences.

*[O'Leary played Scheherazade young]*

I think I learned storytelling driving up to the Upper Peninsula of Michigan with my Uncle Bob ... who was a drinking man.

I would tell him stories to keep him from going to sleep and driving us off the road. His eyes would go down, and I'd say, “And then the monster *jumped* out of the woods!” and he'd come awake ...

I learned how to tell a story to save my life.

*[In the audience, the great Gene Wolfe thinks a writer owes internal consistency to a reader]*

Our Dead Guest of Honor, Mervyn Peake, has a valet *[in the Gormenghast stories]* whose knees *click* all the time. You can hear him coming, like the crocodile in *Peter Pan*. When he goes to kill Swelter the cook, his enemy, he ties cloth around his knees ...

But then later, when it's convenient,  
Peake just says, his knees *stopped clicking*.  
You want to *kill* the bastard!

*[Arnason ends on a fruitful note]*

I used to get what I call the Banana Rejection Slip. The editor would write back, “This banana is the worst orange I have ever seen. It’s the wrong shape, it’s the wrong color ...”

*[Fan Caleb Hanson argues with Michael Devney, who after Joan Slonczewski genomes lecture warns that chimp hybrids may someday take Hanson’s job]*

I believe there will always be a need for people no smarter than I am.

*[In the panel on Pseudonyms, Craig Shaw Gardner is a secret sharer]*

This is a secret I’m going to share only with the people in this room. I write an anonymous humor column for a major small press magazine.

*[Gardner on the proliferating pen names of writer Dean Wesley Smith and company]*

They’ve really embraced this pseudonym business. You know, you call their office and it sounds like a law firm.

*[Well met in the hall, Brett Cox has always been a prodigy]*

Michael Moorcock publicly acknowledged this earlier: It happens that the very first rejection slip I got was from Michael Moorcock. He wrote on it, “Promising.”

Not knowing that I was 13 years old at the time.

It’s taken 18 years to do something about that promise, but I’m working on it now.

*[In the bookshop, dealer Barbara Kuenzig delivers a cheerful marketing report]*

We’ve sold 8 sets of Peake! I could sell 10 more sets of Gormenghast if I had them.

*[Bob Kuhn smears the popular Miles Vorkosigan and his creator Lois McMaster Bujold]*

I don’t buy Miles for a moment. And she’s one of the worst I’ve ever seen for taking an entire planet and smearing one

characteristic all over everybody who comes from it.

*[Some kind soul who (unlike me) came back from dinner in time provides my one measly quote from Michael Moorcock’s co-guest of honor interview]*

Anarchism works very well in rural areas. But you can’t run the sewer system in Kiev that way —

*[Interviewer John Douglas scoops up the Self-Fulfilling Prophecy of the Weekend Award]*

— I’m sure that will appear in the next Devniad!

*[SFRevu Tsar Ernest Lilley chivvies this reporter into Suzy McKee Charnas’s co-guest of honor interview]*

C’mon! We can trade quips ‘n’ quotes.

*[The plugged-in Lilley ends a cell phone call with fleet crispness]*

Kirk out.

*[Interviewer Eleanor Arnason hardballs one of her first questions to Charnas]*

Why did you want to write in this extremely popular and terribly undistinguished genre?

*[Charnas wins our sad, ordinary little hearts]*

— Because I love it, undistinguished though it is.

*[She hears other voices, other ‘shrooms]*

I live in a very dry place ... but we have a lawn. We were overwatering it, and these little fingered mushroom things appeared. I asked my husband what these things were, and he said, “Those are your evil thoughts.” So I knew there was a story there ... A woman whose head turned into a mushroom.

*[On researching The Vampire Tapestry]*

I went to a veterinarian and said, “How could this man be a parasitic predator?” And he said that all he needs to change is the angle of the muscle insertion in his

bones. That's what makes the leopard much stronger than us.

*[Of all the answers to "where do you get your ideas," here's one you haven't heard before]*

I had read about the sex shows they run south of the border in Mexico.

These were lady-and-pony shows.

I wondered if there was a way that it could be taken away from the porn world and turned into a positive thing in this Amazon community ... There are elements that make it, not entertainment for guys, but something semi-sacred for women ...

Little girls and horses — I can make this big powerful thing do what I want by the force of my will and skill. These are the girls who don't get very much of it *[power]* in life.

*[On the terrible trilogy (poisonous pentad?)]*

When I first came into writing science fiction, I thought the whole series thing was a scam. Then I did *Walk to the End of the World* — and then I realized there was another story on the other side of those mountains ... Then it turned into four books ...

I think it's a different thing when one book raises questions that the author wants to answer, and that leads to the next book.

*[Charnas has long been a catcher in the wry]*

We can say two things about career planning and resilience in this field: You can't plan anything and you'd better be resilient.

*[As San Francisco writer and auctioneer extraordinary Ellen Klages starts the Tiptree Awards Auction wearing big lizard feet, Ernest Lilley snaps a picture; but she snaps at him]*

You have stolen the soul of my feet!

*[Klages picks a fresh victim/straight man]*

There has been a request for John Kessel. John, Chip Delany thinks you're cute. If you want to come up on stage with him, your life could be different.

*[Klages on the subsequent Delany/Kessel Kiss]*

Did you get that on film? ... This is a story that's going to rock science fiction!

*[Klages stays with the gay theme]*

So we'll be auctioning off this Vermont Civil Union license —

*[In the audience, I'm feeling pretty cheerful myself]*

— Popularly known as the Ben and Jerry Permit!

*[A fan bids \$80, then a minute later tops her own bid and says \$90; Klages plays along]*

All right, \$90, OK. *Sold!* to the woman who is unclear about how auctions work.

*[Klages reaches the bottom of the donated items barrel or in this case carboy, and finds a dubious donative from a Readercon committeeman]*

Now we have Eric Van's brain —

*[I sedulously suggest a selling point]*

— Hardly been used —

*[Klages quips back]*

— No, of course not, it's a *man's* brain.

... Now, this brain floating in this jar might be a little wet —

*[I proudly perpetrate probably the worst pun of the con, to universal hissing and booing]*

— So use Cortex!

*[As the 15<sup>th</sup> Annual Kirk Poland Memorial Bad Prose Competition embarks on its evil eventfulness, brainless creator Eric Van recalls a critical conversation with Craig Shaw Gardner]*

I think back 15 years to when he said to me, "Is it OK if I write some answers to this that aren't serious?"

*[Van introduces the awesomely good bad writer who's won this sucker just about every year except for when Rosemary Kirstein got lucky]*

I won't say he's confident tonight, but he told me he left the trophy at home: Readercon's own Eternal Champion, Geary Gravel!

*[The faster Gardner blinks, the more fun he's having; so he can barely make out the first words of an exemplarily execrable excerpt supposedly set in "Harvard University, Boston, Massachusetts"]*

Bambi pranced into the doctoral genetics lab ...

*[Historical note: Shariann Lewitt, who after tonight's triumph (and in memory of James H. Schmitz) should henceforth be referred to simply as The Lewitt, WON!!!!]*

*[At the Boskone party, NESFAn Claire Anderson has seen more movies than Ghod, and picks a prime new one]*

I've got to mention a movie Dave and I saw at the MFA — *Peut-être*. That means "Maybe." A great French sci-fi film. A young man time-travels 75 years into the future and meets his children, including his 75-year-old son played by Jean-Paul Belmondo. The Paris of 75 years on is covered with sand up to the upper floors of the buildings ...

*[Erotic publisher Cecilia Tan worries about the recent bust of some S&M acquaintances who frightened the horses — or at least the police — at a private party in Attleboro, Massachusetts]*

If they're convicted, Ben and Stephanie could go to jail for 8 years. And for *what*?

*[Punky-looking, stubble-headed, leather-clad guy slouched against the wall in the party corridor turns out to be Sean McMullen; we talk geography]*

Melbourne is the second largest Greek city, the biggest outside of Athens.

... You may hear my accent as Aussie. But my parents spent a lot of time in India, and to Aussies, my accent sounds Scottish. Because a Scots accents sounds a bit like the Hindustani, in English.

*[Breakfast Sunday: at the next table over, young New Hampshire comics fan Marc Robertson enthuses over a new Japanese classic]*

There's a group called CLAMP that did a manga series called *Rg Veda*. After the Hindu myths, but they gave it their own

twist. It's the most perfect series you've ever seen!

*[Ernest Lilley has seen good stuff recently too]*

There's a great little film called *Free Enterprise* ... it starts when some *Star Trek* fans stumble into William Shatner reading a porn magazine at a newsstand.

*[Tablemate Nancy C. Hanger was a teenage exercise girl at an English stable when who should jounce into view but that very Captain Quirk; we'll reserve the story of how he propositioned her, but she will impart to Devniad readers her opinion of his horsemanship]*

Lousy seat. Big butt.

*[In the lobby, the great Gene Wolfe remembers Washington, D. C. fan Joe Mayhew, who died recently; sadly, I recall only the pedestrian part]*

He was a good man. And a great friend.

*[In the panel on Arrested Development, the passions of some other panelists and audience members put good writer (and I'll bet equally good teacher) John Kessel in the uncomfortable position of defending current American "mainstream" lit]*

It's *not* just about people sitting in a cafe in New York drinking latte ... I often think when I hear these tirades that people haven't been reading what's really out there ... Someone like Tobias Wolff, for instance, writes about soldiers, and about priests — about ordinary people.

*[But Wolfe keeps his sights on his enemy, to wit]*

A closed circle of professors in the humanities who are reading and reviewing each other's books and have seized control of the major review outlets.

*[Usually good-humored word wizard Wolfe isn't laughing either about a threat from within]*

I think we have a whole lot of people entering the field now who don't know how a flashlight works. Don't know how to sharpen a knife. Don't know why a sailboat doesn't always sail straight before the wind — and it's hurting the field.

*[Kessel parses the peril]*

— You're saying it's the invasion of the English majors.

*[In the question period, I courageously stand up for my fellow liberal arts wonks versus this mob of bitter science and engineering graduates]*

About English majors, I'd just like to say: I am Spartacus!

*[Dan Kimmel recalls a hallucinatory remark by James Morrow re one mutating modern cityscape]*

Walking through Times Square today is like walking through Bill Gibson's head.

*[Chris Edwards reports a well-known outrage]*

That Michael Swanwick had never won a Hugo until last year was a shame. That Gene Wolfe has *still* never won a Hugo is a crime.

*[In the panel on the Gothic Novel, writer Faye Ringel brings up old — very old — bestseller lists]*

The largest category of books imported into this country in the first 30 years of the new Republic was Gothics.

*[Ringel will always have Paris]*

In Paris, Greer [Gilman] and I went to see Victor Hugo's house ... Wonderful, awful, *ugly* Gothic paintings. Like the worst art you've ever seen at a science fiction art show.

*[And she says so long, Sigmund]*

Freud has been totally discredited ... There are certainly more people out there that believe in vampires than in Freud — and by "out there," I don't mean just this audience.

*[Writer Greer Gilman after the Gothic panel]*

If psychoanalysis really worked, Woody Allen would be Maimonides by now.

*[In the panel on the Funny Obscure Book I Like, editor John Douglas brings up one of my old favorites too, British author Nevil Shute]*

His *Round the Bend* is my favorite book of all ... It starts with the most mundane

story, and becomes a truly transcendent reading experience. I cry every time. It's the only book I've ever read aloud to my wife.

*[Reviewer Don D'Amassa has read too many Spaceman 'n' Indian stories]*

Every spaceship crew in the 21<sup>st</sup> century was required to have one American Indian in the crew. This is because, in case they encounter an alien culture and no one speaks the language, they have someone who knows sign language.

*[Writer Stephen Popkes comes profoundly prepared, with categories and examples]*

There are five kinds of obscure: The Obscure of Time Passes and Things Go Out of Date ... The Obscure of Niche Appeal. Like *Harpoons* by Arthur Rosenfeld, where incest is good ... Genre Obscure. Like Robert F. Jones' *Blood Sport*. *[Apparently a slipstreamer about a hunting trip up a river that runs from upstate New York to China]* ... Odd Obscure, like Jules Feiffer's only novel, *Ackroyd* ... And Deserving Obscure ... *[Speaking of which last, Bryan Cholfin's small press efforts have heroically tried to keep a passed-over master in print]*

Once you get 50 feet outside this hotel, the probability of people's knowing the name of R. A. Lafferty goes way, way down.

... Although his audience is not just in SF. Probably 25 or more percent of the people who have bought my Lafferty books are doing it just because they're Catholic ... Because of the Catholic stuff that's all through his work, like *Past Master*, his novel where the hero is Saint Thomas More.

*[Douglas contributes another category]*

I think one of the more interesting forms of obscurity is, the bestseller lists of 50 years ago.

*[Cholfin has a friend who's crazy for this stuff]*

I wish Jack Womack were here this weekend. He has an entire *apartment* full of books by the insane.

... Like the one by the doctor who believed you could tell everything about a woman by the shape of her breasts. His

book is filled with all these little *pictures*, with captions.

*[In the hall, Scott Edelman sums up the demise of SF Age]*

They basically said, “Scott, the company has grown to the point where we no longer want to publish a magazine that makes a profit of only \$100,000 per year ...”

Now I’m editing *Satellite ORBIT*. It’s the *TV Guide* for people with satellite TV hookups.

*[Nalo Hopkinson leads off the Off Color panel about the debut of major new anthology Dark Matter: A Century of Speculative Fiction from the African Diaspora (joined on the groaning stage by what looks like at least half of the book’s 30-odd contributors)]*

The stories span the years 1887 to 2000.

*[She answers everybody’s first question]*

People who mispronounce it often call it “Nail-oh” ... but someone once said, “No, it’s like ‘marsh-nallo.’”

*[For poet/writer/musician Kalamu Ya Salaam, boundaries are made to be broken]*

The piece I have in *Dark Matter* — “Buddy Bolden” — it was never conceived of as science fiction. It was just some shit I was dreaming.

*[Writer/music man DJ Spooky on his club name]*

There’s a tradition of that in black music. I mean, Howlin’ Wolf was not his real name.

*[Hopkinson once had her doubts about the armamentarium of modern literature]*

Audrey Lord said, “Massa’s tools will never dismantle Massa’s house ...” But I realized, they’re now our tools too. So I relaxed.

*[Delany levels the field]*

A cultural landscape is a landscape of power boundaries. They keep things in and they keep things out ... A science fiction connection is a very good thing, but we also do the same.

*[Hopkinson holds hard to her heritage]*

As a Canadian of Caribbean descent, I obviously have a strong African ancestry — but also English ancestry and French ancestry, and Asian, and Taino, and others. For me, the word “black” is very rich.

*[Emerson college prof Uppinder Mehan knows that lingo masala can make a truly tasty dish]*

Raja Rao, years ago in his novel *Kanthapura*, used English as part of his Indian language. As he might earlier have used Persian or Sanskrit as part of his language.

*[Delany is often — perhaps too often — linked with another popular African-American author]*

There are strong relationships between Octavia Butler and me. For instance, she was one of my students. But this is not why MIT asks us to speak together ... I wonder if she thinks, gee, my honorarium would be twice as high if it weren’t for *this* guy.

*[But Delany stays gay about his multiple roles]*

I am far more frequently cited as, you know, the faggot uncle of cyberpunk.

*[Hopkinson has a fanhistorical note]*

Carl Brandon was the first black science fiction fan. He was created by Terry Carr. He did not exist.

*[When from the audience I question the whole idea of a writer’s collective when good writing seems such a solitary act, Kalamu Ya Salaam is ready with a thoughtful answer]*

The question you ask comes out of a culture that says the rugged individualist is the highest good ... But look at jazz musicians, for example.

*[In the panel on Kicking the Hobbit, Moorcock relishes the role]*

I’m a well-known disliker of Tolkien ... there’s a certain kind of Englishness that makes Englishmen the best villains of pulp fiction ... You have class in England, you have race here.

*[Yves Menard muses on the corrosive effect of clouds of Tolkien clones]*

Something is cheapened by the repetition of it, until the memory is gone and only the imitation remains.

*[Greer Gilman's heart's still in the Shire]*

You can say all that about Tolkien — My god, where are all the *women*? And want to just set up the Hobbit Socialist League.

... But for me there are the facts that it's a beautiful landscape made of words ... and then, the sense of place.

*[Moorcock knows where that came from]*

Up beyond Keswick there's a lot of drumlins that are really classic soft Shire country.

*[Disdainfully, he brushes off some crumbs of dirt clinging to the grand taproot of high fantasy]*

The *Morte D'Arthur*, which, if you like, was written by a rapist in prison.

*[Moorcock again reminds me why I wish I'd gotten back from dinner Saturday in time to hear his guest of honor interview, dammit]*

Donald Wollheim pirating it started the whole thing. And then he did the same thing with *Princess of Mars* too. He essentially started the entire field of fantasy as we know it by stealing two books.

*[Not that he's a tall dark stranger on Thieves' World himself]*

Elric is pinched straight from Gothic, consciously. Elric is Melmoth the Wanderer with a sword.

*[Faye Ringel reminds us of the success of Sylvia Townsend Warner's subversive 1926 classic]*

The first selection of the Book of the Month Club in America was *Lolly Willowses*. Fantasy was respectable then.

*[Menard first read Tolkien in French]*

The translations were really crappy. Unfortunately, Bilbo Baggins becomes Bilbon Sacquet ...

I never cloned Tolkien ... I was much more influenced by the fantasy of Jack Vance.

*[Moorcock surveys a slice of the field]*

Fritz Leiber is a very, very fine writer. Snobbery has kept him in his place, as it kept Tolkien in *his* place.

And C. L. Moore.

They had a prose to support their themes.

John Crowley? Absolutely. A major fantasist.

*[Menard concurs]*

Yes, Crowley — one of those people who cannot be denatured. You can't make *Little, Big* into some kind of role-playing game.

*[A kid in the audience has lots to learn at this con]*

Don't you read a book just to get a good story? —

*[And Moorcock's just the guy to teach him]*  
— No.

*[Writer Paul Levinson has been thinking about]*

Societal breakthroughs ... Alexander Graham Bell stumbled across the idea of the phonograph, and the first thing he thought was, "This would be a great machine to answer the telephone." So he came up with the first answering machine — just too far ahead of his time.

*[Out in the hall, Sean McMullen says it's not just Down Under SF that's now on top of the world]*

I think the New Zealanders are going to be coming on, too. I judged this competition, and this girl from New Zealand — her pseudonym was Sphinx — won *both* places.

Her name is Miriam Hurst. Really bright. She's going to one of the Clarions right now.

*[NESFAn Paula Lieberman reports a spat of creative differences between partners Lisa A. Barnett and Melissa Scott]*

You don't understand my character —  
— Them's fighting words —  
— And you haven't cleaned out the catbox.

*[At the Readercon Debriefing, Ellen Brody muses about her Recommend Reading List handout]*

I think people were a little shy about putting their names on it. They were afraid other people might recommend cooler books.

*[Brody on why no Readercon banquet this year — or, it sounds like, ever again]*

Selling banquet tickets is like pulling teeth. You have to have a room for it ... You need 70 tickets to break even. In general, we can get maybe 30.

*[Richard Duffy says the music in the hotel's disco inferno hadth no charm to soothe the filthy pro]*

You might be amused to know that one of the pros here — and I'm not going to say who — offered the hotel a thousand dollars to shut the music off in the club.

And they refused.

*[As the con and my memory dims, Duffy (I think) runs the numbers for us]*

Approximately 440 members and about 110 pros ... We approached 600 warm bodies ... Making this the third biggest Readercon.

... Readercon 13 will be on Friday the thirteenth.

*[And as this reporter exits the magic doors for the last time to emerge blinking in the sunlight, he observes a pretty dark-haired woman sitting on the dappled grass; she says nothing, because she is, of all semi-sacred things, reading ...]*

## Ego Scanners (Shall Not) Live in Vain

From poetical **Patrick O’Leary** comes a sublime little note that starts with last issue and moves ruggedly on to Readercon:

“A perfect ish of *Devniad*: /  
Christopher Walken, Wit, Me /  
And only a taste of Chef-Boy-Ardee.

“A new Scott McCloud comic book — hooray! Wonderful review of *X-Men* — ‘a great grasp of comic book physics’ is perfect. And, yeah, *The Patriot* had some great violence. But if I have to see another movie where Mel or Kevin or Whoever suffers nobly *while perfectly lit*, I shall Dorothy Parker.

“Read Martin Amis’s *Experience* — perhaps the most beautiful and funny and moving memoir I’ve ever read.

“About Readercon: Good weekend. Pleasant little meetings and grace notes throughout ... Panels were actually fun and interesting.

“Wonderful dinner with Paul Williams ... we talked Dylan and Cockburn. He’s a good soul, a wandering acid rock and roll saint.

“... Made Eleanor Arnason laugh — she’s Icelandic and they do that about once every other year.

“Read my sex-heavy story ‘Before & After’ which seemed to spook and move people ... [But] felt kinda fringe — no real new book to plug, out of the headlines. Poor Pat! Maybe Gene Wolfe can cheer him up!!

“... But mostly Gene and wistful memories of the late Joe Mayhew and funny stories where we laughed hard and his voice kept getting higher and higher.

“And Rosemary and Gene teasing me at our first breakfast. Last year Rosemary mistook me for John Crowley. Her eyes are very bad, but laser surgery has helped a lot since then. So for the first hour together this year, Rosemary kept calling me ‘John.’

“After a few times I said, ‘Rosemary, are you giving me shit?’ And they laughed heartily. As I walk away from breakfast,

Gene calls out behind me, ‘We loved *Little, Big!*’”

Patrick, thanks for your wonderful note. And so soon after Rcon, you organized nonprocrastinator you. What’s it like?

Reading between the lines, Ontario fan dynamo **Lloyd Penney** thought my Block Island vacation sounded pretty boring — until the lightning struck:

“Yvonne and I also enjoy lightning storms as entertainment. When we’ve got a real donner, blitzen and downpour storm, we sit out on our balcony and watch. Best storm I’ve ever been in took place on the main highway WNW of Ottawa one summer ... no rain, just lightning bolts every three seconds. Some of the bolts appeared to be red- or green-tinged. Great fun, and slightly deafening, too. We compared the Laurentian Mountains in the distance to Mount Olympus, and we were looking for Hercules to descend.

“... I have rejoined the Ad Astra committee this year, and will begin my 19th straight year of working on that committee. And this year, the rest of them listened, and didn’t schedule it on the same weekend as Boskone. Other than that, not much. We were up for some Aurora Awards earlier this month, but got skunked. Better luck next year, I suppose.”

Lloyd, this mean you might fly south for Boskone next Feb? We could spraypaint some snowy pines to look like palms.

It’s hard to get literary thriller writer Thomas Harris (*Red Dragon*, *The Silence of the Lambs*, *Hannibal*) out of your mind. Witness this chunk from an extended [warning: and spoiler-packed] brain-dump by writer **Andy Duncan**, who knows how to hand you a fine frisson himself.

“I pick up *Hannibal*, already fortified by some appalled reviews, by Jodie Foster’s refusal to have anything to do with the film version, by the recollection that Harris pounded this one out in a publisher-rented hotel suite hours before the Very Last Deadline, and by several horror authors of my acquaintance who surmised that in

writing *Hannibal*, Harris might have had in mind an over-the-top *parody* of the very subgenre he has exploited so successfully.

“In short, I didn't expect much, in fact expected to be grossed out early on, and kicked out of the book.

“Given my mind-set going in, I found the book surprisingly readable, engrossing, and, yes, serious in intent: The whole sordid business of Starling's fall from grace within the FBI bureaucracy is plausible and gets the reader rooting for her, and Lecter's incognito adventures as a renowned Renaissance scholar in Florence are a lot of fun, although, granted, somewhat implausible — I love the fact that the Gypsies hired to get the goods on Lecter immediately sense that he's Ultimate Bad News, to the point of a Gypsy mama bathing her baby in holy water just 'cause Lecter *looks* at the child in a crowd.

“Once Lecter falls into the clutches of his only living victim, the monstrous Mason Verger, with Starling his only likely *rescuer*, the stage seems set for a really gung-ho rah-rah, if kinky, ending.

“Instead, Harris rather muffs the climax, leaving both Starling *and* Lecter largely irrelevant to the bloody goings-on — and then follows the climax by an extended denouement (40 pages or so) which contains not only a gross-out scene so over-the-top that I genuinely *did* laugh out loud throughout (it's Monty Pythonesque, really), but also a conclusion to the Lecter-Starling story that I think is a case of Harris lunging, however cynically, for the shock effect and throwing characterization, plausibility, etc., right out the window. (I picture the copy editors waiting impatiently in the next room of the hotel suite, and Harris, at the keyboard, thinking, “They want an ending so badly, OK, *I'll* give 'em an ending!’)

“I suspect it's this denouement to which Foster objected, and not to the FBI/Verger/Florence derring-do that occupies the bulk of the novel — not even to the already infamous man-eating hogs (Verger's pet research project) that seemed to make so many reviewers run screaming. (The fearsome hogs don't actually *do* much,

although I love the fact that even *they* are scared of Lecter.)

“So what's my verdict? I enjoyed the novel, for all its flaws, but distinctly felt Harris was both yanking my chain and cashing the check. It's the least of the three [Lecter] novels, and more importantly, I cannot imagine him ever writing another Lecter novel — perhaps not another novel ever, at least in serial-killer mode. The end of *Hannibal* is the work of an author (and, perhaps, a genre) at the point of exhaustion.”

Andy, right now I'm pretty tired myself ...

Cambridge, Mass fan **Charles Sumner** knows just how to wash the taste out of our mouths, with some good clean rocket fuel:

“I've just finished *Back to the Moon* by Homer Hickam (author of *Rocket Boys*, which was made into the movie *October Sky*). My quick review is that it's a good, enjoyable MacGuyver-esque yarn. The story centers around an ex-NASA engineer (which Hickam actually is) hijacking the Space Shuttle for a private mission to the moon.

“The science behind the book comes from Hickam's days at NASA, when some engineer friends of his worked out a way to reconfigure the shuttle to be able to make the trip out ... The desire behind the story comes from the depression that he says many NASA engineers feel today at the fact that the agency never *goes* anywhere anymore.

“Not a great book, but a fun adventure story about space exploration and lost love. Some of the characters are a bit weak and the plot is a little too formulaic at times, but I had a good time reading it nonetheless. Having recently finished [Andrew Chaikin's] *A Man on the Moon* (a great account of the Apollo missions — highly recommended), I really enjoyed the way Hickam tied elements of his story into the real history of the earlier lunar missions. I give this one a thumbs-up as a fun summertime book for space buffs.”

And at an unimaginably further distance from Dr. Lecter, *Fantasy and Science Fiction* editor **Gordon Van Gelder** shares one of my earliest influences:

“*The Shy Stegosaurus of Cricket Creek* is one of my beloved books, although for sentimental reasons it has to take a back seat to *The Enormous Egg*.”

Gordon, glad to find another *Shy Steg* fan. Presume that, like me, you were imprinted early ... *The Enormous Egg* rings only a faint bell. Oliver Butterworth, first printing 1956, says Bookfinder. Seems like I *should* have read it as a kid, but guess not. Who knows how my life might have changed as a result?

Speaking of fine editors, **Ernest Lilley** of *SFRevu* also reveals his great taste (and age):

“Dev, once again, our common geologic stratum is revealed. *The Shy Stegosaurus of Cricket Creek* remains a fond memory to this day. I never fail to think of the poor beastie clogging his water hole in a fit of tail thrashing whenever I see stego bones in a museum.

“*Mushroom Planet* ... were those the Mr. Bass stories? How old do you have to be to read *A Wrinkle in Time*? Can you ever be the wrong age for *Have Space Suit Will Travel*?”

Ern: yes, nine, no.

And former co-worker **Denise Falbo** displays more great taste in influences:

“The immortal Freddy the Pig, recently reissued, comes to mind for your friend's kid when a bit older (maybe 6-8 years old).

“Or for more subversive kid's reading ... Try anything at all by Daniel Pinkwater.”

Denise, to my shame, haven't read any Pinkwater. But Freddy, the smart yet all too fallible talking pig featured by Walter R. Brooks in sublime little books from 1928-1958: yes, yes, yes! In the SF line, I'd suggest *Freddy and the Flying Saucer Plans* and of course *Freddy and the Baseball Team from Mars*.

Before my friendly rival **Evelyn C. Leeper** heads to Chicago for the worldcon

and another Long March toward that elusive Fan Writer Hugo, she suggests we:

“Check out [http://members.xoom.com/Galen\\_Tripp/list.HTML](http://members.xoom.com/Galen_Tripp/list.HTML) for children's SF.

“*X-Men* a top contender for the Hugo? I think Dan Kimmel's been working too hard. My problem in naming my choices, though, is that the two films I've liked the best are *Space Cowboys* and *Chicken Run*, and are those actually SF? I guess they'd get in on the 'related' clause.

“*Titan A.E.* had great visuals, but a weak story line. *The Cell* has gotten a lot of good press so far (ask me in a week), and I'm looking forward to *Shadow of the Vampire*. My 'guilty pleasure' would be *The Ninth Gate*. Not much from TV or radio (yes, kiddies, radio — it's like television with a broken picture tube) this year. (I think *Ruby 5* and *Midnight at the Casa Luna* were both 1999.) On the other hand, there are some previously unreleased songs on the new Tom Lehrer collection — wonder if those count?

“I have started a web page of differences between the British and American editions of *Harry Potter 1*, though I haven't gotten very far. See <http://www.geocities.com/evelynleeper/potter.htm>.

Later: “Forget *The Cell* (at least for me — Mark liked it). On the other hand, the Big G is getting a nomination from me. (That's *Godzilla 2000* for you folks who, having attended Boskone, *still* don't know who he is.)”

Evelyn, I kinda loved *The Cell* myself.

Local fan/friend **Eric Knight** says the spelling in my review of *The X-Men* contains a slight mutation:

“Re: the 'big round room,' the computer is called Cerebro ... Otherwise, they stayed fairly true to the mythos. Pretty good for a movie based on a comic book.”

From another loyal local fan/friend, **Gary L. Dryfoos**, comes numerous notes re last ish:

“English? I'd thought the batter-fried Mars bar was Scottish. (The Scots weren't

just *given* the top spot on the Overweight and Bad Cholesterol lists by European Union health surveys, they *earned* it!”

And about *The Patriot's* villain's being based on British Colonel Banastre Tarleton:

“Not *the* Col. Tarleton, known as The Green Dragoon? He makes an appearance, sort of, in at least one other movie. For 10 points, name it.”

Eric, as editors always say when completely clueless, we'll leave that as an exercise for the reader.

Fan **Dan Reid** can spot a news hole when he sees one:

“I have many thoughts to think about ‘extreme,’ now that I know its root. [Last ish, children, we learned that “treme” is derived from the Greek for “hole.”] It appears that ‘extreme sex’ and ‘extreme caving’ etc. are now oxymorons.

“I don't think I got to mention it to you at Readercon, but I'm involved with a new con that's taking place this fall in Durham, NC, called Trinoc\*con (after Larry Niven's Known Space alien Trinocs, and referencing the Research TRIangle of North Carolina). Check out our web site at [www.trinoc-con.org](http://www.trinoc-con.org). Much more information about the literary programming (my demesne) is supposed to be posted within the next few days ... I hope you'll be impressed enough to come down, or at least give us a blurb in the next zine!”

Dan, travel off the reservation is tough for me, but consider yourself blurbed, boy.

And copy czarina **Elizabeth Stone** sends us a flash from the powder room:

“*X-Men* was a feature story in *Makeup Artist Magazine*. (Talk about niche publications! See [www.makeupmag.com](http://www.makeupmag.com).) Yes, it's true: Mystique's costume really was mostly paint. Yikes.”

Elizabeth: yikes, yes. But for some of us, also yahoo!

**on APA: NESFA #362, July 2000**

#### **To the cover artist(s)**

Love the Harry Potter cover and comments, and the Howdy Doody identity crisis on back. On the front, particularly liked how easy it is to distract Homer Simpson: “Most importantly, he — are those *donuts*?” After all, who among us has not neglected some important pronouncement or duty in favor of baked goods?

#### **To George Flynn**

Interesting tidbit on the middle-1990s rape trial of Block Island's mayor and his barroom buddies. Kind of puts my idyllic island vacation in perspective.

Thanks, George, for reminding me to see the world through toad-colored glasses.

#### **To Tony Lewis**

Intriguing thought — that Europe continued to progress fairly smoothly in technology, agriculture, etc. after the Romans, and that the only reason writers mention the “Dark Ages” is because writers alone didn't get to join in the fun around then. Sounds like suspiciously easy revisionism, though. But would have to spend 20 hours rooting around in my *Timelines of History* refs to disprove it, so I'll wait for a really quiet weekend.

No, never been to Fisher's Island off Long Island. What's it like?

#### **To Pam Fremon**

Sincerely glad you found more to like in *The Adventures of Rocky and Bullwinkle* than I. Wanted to love it, really I did. And you're right about one thing I should have mentioned in my review: Rene Russo as Natasha. I haven't been impressed by her before except in *Tin Cup*, but she was completely charming here. And funny. Even affecting: there's a little scene where she wistfully imagines marriage with Boris that actually moistened my tear ducts, dahling.

#### **To Paul Giguere**

**Backchat**

You realize that your plan for having NESFA publish a Gerald Kersh collection is a political masterstroke fanworldwise.

Why? Because, as he continually stated at Readercon last year, Harlan Ellison worships Kersh and believes his neglect is a disgrace. (As you remember, Kersh was Dead Guest of Honor and Harlan was Live (Ammunition) Guest of Honor.) So our next move would be to disarmingly ask Harlan, who frankly loathes NESFA, to write the forward.

I say he'd do it.

### To Anna Hillier

Guess I've missed the Royal Lipizzaner horse show for this summer, but do I gather from your squib that they perform in North Hero, Vermont, *every* summer? So maybe next year, I could make my sister Liz's *life* and get her up there. Have you gone, Anna? What'd you think?

### To Tom Endrey

Loved your line about *The Patriot*: "I don't think it's going to be a box office hit in England ..." As for Mel Gibson's not liking the British, you may have something there. You mentioned the Brit-bashing in his *The Patriot* and *Braveheart*; I'd add *The Bounty* and, most definitely, *Gallipoli* ...

Thanks for the usual jam-packed report on Atlanta's DragonCon. Item that most piqued my interest: the talk from people making the *Lord of the Rings* movie. I'm really starting to get impatient for this one; any fascinating details?

### To Leslie Turek

Another charming account of your European trip last year, with its final days in Vienna. As usual I called up the net version (<http://people.ne.mediaone.net/lesliet/trip16.html>) to see your rich color photos.

Spent a long time gazing at the last picture, little yellow florist shop with its cobbled courtyard and stone bench, garden wall and aching graceful arched entry. So many centuries, so much toil and trouble to establish Western civilization. Suddenly it seems worth it.

### To Nomi Burstein

So in your new office, you listen to music on headphones while busily documenting away. So give with the details: Bizet? Ben Folds Five? Shaggy? Shack? Katrina and the Waves? The Blue Nile? Koto? The Tallis Scholars? Archie Roach? Orbit? Orbison?

### To Art Henderson

Again, a lovely, lovely job on the exhaustive review of Science Fiction Book Club releases. Everybody who reads it should order complete sets from you ...

Your unexpected use of my *Topsy-Turvy* blurb in the midst of your discussion of the DVD brought a rare blush to my raddled cheeks. Thanks for remembering, my friend.

I always hope for sunshine, but went into *Battlefield Earth* fully prepared for a moonlit stream of bat piss. OK by me too. Savaging something awfully deserving brings a warm glow to one's artificial little heart.

### To Michael A. Burstein

About *The Tipping Point*: of course you're a Maven. Teachers are Mavens *ex officio*.

Yes, I quite liked *The 1900 House* TV show too. They could take the gruel, they could take the outhouse, they could even take that miserable excuse for a stove — but homemade egg-based shampoo totally broke their nerve ... And if that's what housework has been like until lately, no wonder guys long ago decided to invent the concept of work. Anything to get out of the house.

### To Mark Olson

Those Eric Flint rewrites of James H. Schmitz stories sound terrifying. The whole concept seems so obviously wrong from the start: rewrite a dead author's stories, supposedly for more appeal to us moderns.

Not that this is a *new* bad idea. Even Charles Lamb (1775-1834), a pretty good essayist in his day, perpetrated something called ... I can hardly write this ... "Tales

from Shakespeare.” OK, for kids, but even so ... Of course, we’ve refined this evil in our own day with the movie novelization. My favorite famously bad example: when in 1975 the director John Huston released a pretty good film of Rudyard Kipling’s fine story “The Man Who Would Be King,” instead of printing the original Kipling classic with perhaps a few other Kipling India tales, the studio released a novelization instead ...

**To Joseph Ross**

Great quotations as usual, Joe. You should be entering into your glory season for political quotes, with the election nearing.

My favorite slam so far:

There’s *plenty* of diversity on the Republican ticket. Sure it’s composed of two rich white conservative oil company guys.

But hey, *different* oil companies ...

**That’s it for this ish! See you next time ...**