

The Devniad Book 72a

un zine de Bob Devney
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Kids Say the Damnedest Things

Queen Maureen and I recently received the following charming postcard from our 18-year-old niece Erin Easterbrooks. Once again, clear proof that no good deed goes unmortified.

The actual text, honest:

"Dear Maureen and Bob,

"Thanks for the birthday card and \$.

Hope we can get together soon and you can see my gruesome new tongue piercing that I got with the money."

The Lady's Not for Burning

In late March I attended a Christmas (don't ask) party on Cape Cod at a beautifully restored old house. Its gracefully appointed parlor features two beehive-shaped ovens set into the brick beside the main hearth.

Our hosts (Brian Bierig, an art director/illustrator from my office, and his wife Gail) explain that the placement of the beehives helps date the house. Before the early 1700s, this kind of warming oven would have been set instead into the back wall of the hearth. However, this arrangement forced the New England goodwife who did all the cooking to keep leaning over the hearthfire wearing her cotton dress with hanging sleeves ...

As Brian puts it, "The old story goes that they moved the oven 'because in those days, wives were expensive."

Orbita Dicta Heard in the Halls of Corflu 18 The MidTown Hotel Boston, Massachusetts, U.S.A. March 30-April 1, 2001

So the usual deal is, I go to a science fiction con, listen to what people say, take mostly illegible notes, and fake them I mean write them up for you. *[With my comments on each quote in brackets a lot like these.]*

This time, it's a little different. Corflu New England has only 40 or 50 attendees, and perhaps 4 or 5 panels. It's a relaxacon by, for, of, and about fanzine writers. So naturally it's even crazier than the average SF con (or shithouse rat), without for-pay writers and editors to deposit a veneer of professionalism, however thin. And it's a lot harder to notate a hundred freeform conversations than a score or two of panels. But I somehow manage to enjoy myself anyway.

Corflu is another country. They do things differently there.

The event's name alludes to correction fluid, a standby of fan editors and writers in the old days. (Perhaps they should modernize it to Deletekey or Backspace?)

Corfluvians hold a random drawing Friday night to elect a Guest of Honor, who's then forced at fanpoint to give a GOH speech at the banquet Sunday afternoon. They also cherish a tradition of unopposed bids for next year's location. This seems to be accomplished by a mixture of gentle, almost Japanese consensus-building and the more familiar fannish sport of competitive backpedalling. ("I don't WANNA put on

Corflu 19, why don't YOU put on Corflu 19?" etc., etc.)

These people also use more fan jargon than Great Ghu His/Herself. Not sure I'd ever heard "minac" [minimum activity for contributors to a given periodical] and "focal point zine" [the zeitgeistiest zine of a particular epoch] in the same sentence before. Or would want to again.

Finally, this is the only con I've ever attended with, in effect, duelling con suites. You see, a bunch of Corfluvians hail from Britain or Seattle, so they've GOT to have a smoking con suite, whereas we clean-living Americans ...

Some would say that a gathering consisting of science fiction fanzine writers talking, not about SF, but almost exclusively about fanzines themselves is the purfling province of self-infatuated omphalopterists. I resemble that. Fie upon it, Corflu was fun.

[At registration, Australian fans (and GUFF delegates) Eric Lindsay and his wife Jean Weber are showing off unforgivably attractive pictures of their home in Airlie Beach, Queensland; here's Eric's description of one snap showing him out on a deck in shorts and shirt, sprawled lizardlike above a tropical pool with a laptop PC lying neglected in his lap]

This is me at the office.

[The good news in the con suite is that Bay Area fan Tom Becker has tips about my upcoming vacation in San Francisco]

You ought to go to Mount Lassen. There's a dormant volcano up there, the place is spectacular ...

[Then there's the bad news]

... It's only about a 6-hour drive north.

[Of the night in 1994 we brought my Aunt Ann Paterson to the Readercon banquet to meet her old Radcliffe classmate Ursula Le Guin, and we three sat at table for the entire evening conviviating with him and his companion Spike Parson, Tom has at least one clear memory]

No, I don't really remember you or your brother — Michael? — at all. Sorry.

But that was your *aunt*? Oh yeah, that was so great. What a *wonderful lady*!

[When I approach at first sight and speak tremblingly of my admiration for his writing and for the late great Hooper/Gonzalez/juarez zine Apparatchik, Seattle fan Andy Hooper dispenses graciousness, and hope]

Those days may come again ... We're talking about doing something online, perhaps something like Mike Scott's Plokta News Network, with some more interactivity.

[Famous fan rich brown talks of writers, riches, and niches]

Donald E. Westlake told me once that he's proudest of his science fiction! He has made his millions with thrillers and crime stories ... Things like the Parker novels, writing as Richard Stark ...

Parker has been played in different movies, under different names, by Lee Marvin in *Point Blank* and George C. Scott in *The Bank Shot*. And then even Mel Gibson a while back, *Payback*. And by who's that guy [*Peter Coyote*] in *Slayground*, which is a terrific movie that few people have seen. And of course Robert Redford played Westlake's hero Dortmund, who's a funnier guy, in *The Hot Rock*.

... But his SF is early stuff like *Anarchaos*, a novel published under the name of Curt Clark. Frankly, he's wrong — his crime stuff is brilliant, but the SF is mediocre.

[My letter-suffix version system for this zine is based entirely on which stage of proofreading an ish has attained (abominable, awful, just shamefully lax, etc.); veteran California fan Art Widner struggles with the unhappy consequences for a completely imaginary class of Devniad reader]

But suppose some serious collector wanted to know how many issues come between 70C and 71A?

[Commuting back to my brother's apartment in Cambridge, I find Michael's generously set me up in his spare room with all the comforts of home — and more]

I know you country folk like fresh air, so all three ionizers are in your room.

[Next morning in the con suite, manned by a NESFA/MCFI shock brigade that parachuted into Corflu with snacks to combat widespread starvation, Mass. fan Deb Geisler displays the gruff good humor that have made her a legend amongst the troops]

Coffee is my only friend. It's hot, it's sweet, and it wakes me up without talking to me.

[Shortly afterward, designated wild man Nic Farey — a transplanted Brit lately terrorizing Maryland who's the con's biggest talker, biggest drinker, and patently the possessor of its biggest heart —tries on a bit of the old epter les fanoisie]

I'm the fucker in the room who's done the most time. Unless Ted White is here.

[Deb disagrees, saying she's got Nic's measly 8 days for DUI beat; we should explain that Deb teaches graduate courses in First Amendment law]

Actually, I've spent more time in assorted jails than anyone you've ever met ... I trained every parole officer in the state of Massachusetts.

[I'm still wondering about the Ted White prison thing, since I know his rep only as a pro editor going back to Amazing in the 60s, and an even longtime fanwriter and flamewarrior; someone clears it up for me]

Ted was in jail for marijuana in the good bad old days. It's kind of a badge of honor ...

[Later, Nic discusses a brand preference; I'm envisaging a whole new TV ad campaign here]

I'll drink Guinness 'til it comes out of my ass ...

[While Eric Lindsay stands up for Down Under] "Foster's" is Australian for "crap."

[Continuing this elevated theme, did Linda Bushyager pull her choice of e-mail address out of her, well, never mind]

I got it because I'm a woman and I'm fond of gambling, but a lot of pretty weird people seem to take it the wrong way. It's misscraps@aol.com.

[Rhode Island fan Mike Blake once again discovers that fans are family]

I had to read your *Devniad* last night to realize that you're Darcy Devney's brother. I was in the SCA for 20 years.

[Idly ego-scanning The Devniad in the con suite, Leah Smith is jolted by her quote from Boskone pronouncing Corflu perhaps just the teensiest bit, well, elitist]

Oh. Maybe this isn't quite what I'd want you to bring here.

[Perhaps hoping never to see me again, bid winner Nic Farey has scheduled next year's zinedevous, Corflu Valentine, for Feb 14-17 at the Radisson Hotel Annapolis in Maryland]

I know it's the weekend of Boskone, but you can't please everybody.

[Toronto fan Hope Leibowitz has bigger catfish to fry]

I have a question. The Cajun banquet at noon tomorrow — is it breakfast or lunch?

[Wisely, this year's Corflu sucker I mean organizer, Mass. fan Bob Webber, is cautious about getting between a fan and his or her food]
— That depends on your definition of breakfast —

[Hope knows what comes first]
— It's only breakfast if there are eggs —

[Bob bites]
— Then it's lunch.

[Ted White takes the Cajun thing too far]
— Unless there are blackened eggs?

[The panel on the intersection of fannish and professional life gets off to a ragged start, until Bob Webber declares a fannish quorum]

We seem to have more audience than panelists at this point, so that's a good time to start.

[For Ted White, the pro world and the fan world have coexisted since the beginning]

If you were in the fan milieu in New York City from 1959 to 1970, you were where things were happening ... Avram Davidson would drop in ... I'd run into Phil Klass, who calls himself William Tenn, in Washington Square Park and we'd spend half the afternoon talking ...

I knew I wanted to write and edit science fiction because I wrote and edited science fiction fanzines.

[For Deb Geisler, her fan life and her day job intersect whenever possible]

I've been teaching a graduate course in special events planning, so of course I use SF cons as good examples ... My students ask me, "How does Ben Yalow *get* those incredibly low hotel rates? Who does he sleep with?"

[When Deb remarks that she's an expert in First Amendment law, Bob alludes to Ted White's controversialist rep]

I have the feeling that you and Ted might both know something about libel ...

[Which segues smoothly into Ted's discussing Libel Cases He Has Known; the following excerpt has been elided on advice of counsel]

... Gary Groth is kind of the Harlan Ellison of comics fandom.

[NESFAn Sharon Sbarsky recalls worldcon bids gone by (or in this case, bye-bye: the Boston in 2001 Worldcon bid)]

When they were gathering fans for Boston in 2001, they said something about wanting to know what your skills or background were, and they used this certain phrase for it ... I thought they were *serious*, so I went ahead and *submitted* my "fannish resume." In actual resume form ...

[In the panel on FAPA, fan preservationist Joe Siclari tells a long, wonderful story about the time he stocked an exhibit with a fanzining mimeograph that long before had belonged to a certain young fan who became a famous pro; he begins with the climax, as a wondering Robert

Silverberg reverently approaches this fossil from his own dawn age]

I once caught Silverberg trying to touch his own mimeo —

[Sensitively, Bob Webber goes for the gag]
— You go blind if you do that.

[Leah Smith checks a point in question, providing kind of a perfect Corflu 2001 moment]

Hold on, I have the *Fancylopedia* on my Palm Pilot.

[Somebody or other said this, to a chorus of agreement from several points in the audience, so it must be true, although then nobody talked any more about it ...]

John Foyster is a longtime Australian fan, and one of the really good fanzine writers. We should talk more about him.

[In the Living With Faneds panel, Catherine Crockett sums up her attitude toward fanwriting and attending this con; it's an even more perfect Corflu moment]

I feel like, *this* is the way life is supposed to be. And all the rest is just distraction.

[Fanwriter Sheila Lightsey lived with famous fanwriter and faned Victor Gonzalez for 2 years]

Victor tends to *mine* his girlfriends for material ... and he's gotten some really good stuff out of me.

[Carrie Root, Andy Hooper's wife, recalls the years when Apparatchik was a (gulp) weekly]

This Friday night thing ... the Apparatchiki would all come over, and run it off, and then we'd all watch *Homicide*.

... It was a very social thing.

[Nic Farey's new wife Bobbie talks about their relationship to a roomful of instantly sympathetic ears]

I'm the sort of person who likes to be entertained. *[BIG LAUGH FROM AUDIENCE.]* So that works for us ... It's not the horror story that people would think it is. *[EVEN BIGGER LAUGH]*

[For Carrie, life imitates fanart]

Life is full of linos.

[In the audience, Nic indicates his approach to fanzine production is strictly workmanlike]

Writing is like painting your house. It's hard work, but you feel good when it's done.

[But Andy Hooper wonders what's this "done" stuff?]

It's not like painting your house, it's like painting the Golden Gate Bridge. Because it never ends ... When it's done, you have to start again on the other side.

[In the item on Corflu's future, Nic talks about the nuts and bolts of his bid for Annapolis next year]

If I can get 50 or 60 heads on 50 or 50 pillows, I'll be OK ... The rate is quite reasonable, 89 bucks per room —

[Andy Hooper has reverse sticker shock]

— I don't think we've had an \$89 hotel rate for Corflu since, maybe, El Paso in the 1980s.

[As a clincher, Nic proudly reminds us of his adopted state's perhaps unofficial motto]

Maryland Is For Crabs.

[What do people talk about at SF fan conventions? Why, other SF fan conventions, of course ... as here from Jean Weber]

Our area has three cons in a row coming up in June next year... The first weekend in June, in New Zealand. The second weekend, in Melbourne, there's Convergence, the national convention. And the third weekend, Eric and I are having our own relaxacon in Airlie Beach in Queensland.

[Sounds like a great place, Jean]

It's absolutely marvelous, June in the tropics ... Pleasantly warm without being hot. And not sticky, because it's the dry season ...

If you get tired of the bar and the swimming pool, we'll take a boat out to the Reef —

[Eric manfully avoids telling us that The Reef Is For Crabs Too]

— That's the Great Barrier Reef ... We're the same distance south of the equator that Honolulu is north.

[Jean namedrops, then pricedrops]

We've had some people say they're coming already. Alice Murray, who distributes *Ansible* ... the Haldemans, a few others.

... Rates? Under \$60 U.S. per night for the good rooms, and of course you can get cheaper than that in the sort of hostel place ... The airfare from here might be \$1200 U.S. round trip.

[Later, in the audience, what Linda Bushyager is asking Hope Leibowitz sounds a lot more interesting than whatever's on the panel]

Who was that fan artist in the 70s who died of, uh, giving himself sexual pleasure with strangulation —

[Hope has the 411 in re autoerotic asphyxiation]
— Vaughn Bode.

[During the auction to raise money for various fan funds, auctioneer Joe Siclari asks Ted White about an offered fanzine from 1962, Void 28]

Ted, would you like to sign it for all the other editors?

[White's agreeable]

— Well, we used to write each other's editorials, so why not?

[Joe hawks a fabled fanzine from Lee Hoffman]

We have perhaps the most famous ish ever of *Quandry*. The first annish ... with plaid ink.

[Andy Hooper is pushing toys from the old Thunderbirds TV series; in the audience, pal Victor Gonzalez helpfully suggests a crowd-pleasing strategy]

Do the little dance —

[Hooper stands stockstill and touches his beard protectively]

— No, there's a limit to what I'll do for the sake of a fan fund. No dancing. And no shaving!

[Ted White heckles an auctioneer]

I want you to know that was a defective copy of *Void* you sold a while ago here, Joe. It contains some missing pages —

[Vic Gonzalez, from audience, accusingly]
— Who collated it, Ted?

[During dinner at the Prudential Center's Marche (perhaps the perfect fan restaurant) with Mike Blake and Ontario fanziner Murray Moore, Murray asks if it would really be safe walking back at the place's closing time of 2:00 a.m.; after my food grows cold during my long, enthusiastic reply/rodomontade re security, routes, and mugger evasion strategies, Murray replies with the faint, amused smile he wears even while eating]

It wasn't really a serious question.

[Back at the con suite, Art Widner has one more avocation besides growing his great white beard and being a tremendously goodhearted mensch]

I make a minor hobby of trying to find the world's best crab cakes. The winner so far? That would be in Joe DiMaggio's hometown, Martinez — on the East Bay, across the Carquinez Straits from San Francisco ...

It's a little place called Connie's Continental Cuisine. Very unprepossessing. It looks like just another hole-in-the-wall diner, but when it comes to crab cakes — let me tell you, it isn't.

[After I attempt to turn on Nic Farey to Tim Powers' books, he returns the favor with someone I'd heard of but never got my teeth into]

Freda Warrington. She does some really good vampire novels. Like *A Taste of Blood Wine*, which is just getting an American publisher.

[Eric Lindsay gives me the true meaning of GUFF]

Well, like it says here *[points to button on his chest proclaiming Get Up & over Fan Fund / Going Under Fan Fund]*. One time it's for Aussie fans going to Britain — like Jean and I this year, going on from here to Eastercon — and the next it's a British fan going to Australia.

[So after Corflu and then on to Britain for Eastercon and a 4-week driving tour, it's finally back to Ozzieland, Eric?]

Oh no. Back here, to Chicago, then Seattle — Jean's mother lives near Chicago. Then Madison, Wisconsin for Wisconsin ... Then to make things nice and complicated, I go home but Jean goes back to her mother's for a month.

Then, as soon as we get home, we get the motor home organized and go on a 2 1/2 month trip across bits of Australia ... Then in October I'm thinking of going to Ditto.

[While we're talking travel, fellow Corflu newbie Zen Green, resplendent in red coat, has a hip packing tip]

The cool thing is to roll up the clothes so you can see the ends in your suitcase. Harder to wrinkle that way, too.

[Hope Leibowitz may soon hit the road again herself]

There's an anime convention I'd like to go to this summer. Only it's the same weekend as MikeCon. That's where Mike Glicksohn and Mike Harper have birthdays the same week, so they have a shared party or parties and it's kind of a little con —

[Murray Moore's been there, done that]

— He *[Mike, presumably]* has a whole pig roasted in his backyard.

[Apropos of something else that's disappeared from my notes, rich brown has a good 'un]

In the Irish Parliament once they were speaking about absentee landlords. A member began shouting, "Treason! Treason!" To which the speaker replied, "Yes, but in Ireland treason is reason because of the absent T."

[rich reads a fanzine article — from the 50s or early 60s, I think — by Calvin "Biff" Demmon]

"Ski notes: It is absolutely insane to stand on something slippery with something slippery on my feet."

[Andy Hooper has created an entire genre-saturated script as homage to his old favorite TV show, so the gang puts on the world premiere of the amazingly apt, almost note-perfect pastiche Homicide: Book of the Fugghead; there are no quotes from it here because I was enjoying it way too much]

[As everybody sits around filling out last-minute ballots for the FAAn awards, Sheila Lightsey taunts Ian Sorensen]

Too bad there isn't a category for Best Washed-Up Fan so we could vote for you, Ian.

[Yvonne Rowse sits next to me in a pensive funk, staring uselessly at her ballot with all those accusingly empty spaces for fanwriter and fanzine votes; it's immediately obvious she's never read my honeyed prose]

I'm trying to think of *someone* who's not British.

[Ian tortures Yvonne about his vote]

Let me see, how many "R's" in your name? ... But I couldn't vote for you, I really couldn't.

[Ian and Yvonne lead me through a hilariously weary survey of British fandom; culminating in Ian's moan]

There's just nobody. No fan writer where you get the stuff and you say, "Oh, great!" and are all excited ...

[Ian's lament lingers]

... Unlike in America, there isn't anybody in Britain anymore who really cares about fan history or any of that —

[Gently protesting, I murmur the name of Brit fan history preservationist Rob Hansen]

— Even Rob Hansen doesn't care. He just has, sort of done his duty.

[Initially, I'd been drawn to Ian by the title of his fanzine; he explains its origin in his tortured psychosexual history]

If you grow up and your name is Ian, you never really get any decent nicknames. It's already short enough. What are people going to call you, "Eee?"

That's why I liked calling the zine *Bob*.

[Helpfully, I suggest we could always work up some sort of affectionate sobriquet like, say, "Skidmark"]

Well, no.

[At 2 minutes to midnight, I rush into the smoking con suite and hand Andy Hooper a bunch of last-minute votes from the nonpolluting suite downstairs; he does his best Katherine Harris invitation]

Hey, great! Maybe we can break 45.

[Deb Geisler greets Sunday morn with a smoke break on the sidewalk outside as she regales me with notes from the Corflu kitchen]

I was wrapping those grape leaves with Joe Siclari, and I realized, my *sous-chef* is a Worldcon chair. And he reminded me that if we win the bid, I'll be one too ...

[Ian Sorensen has a fresh take on Daylight Savings Time]

What did you miss last night? Well, our practical time travel workshop for one. At 2:00 a.m. we all joined hands and shifted forward an hour into the future ...

[At the banquet — which features the best con feast food I've ever had (Cajun grub from Dixie Kitchen on Mass Ave & St. Germain Street) — lovely lawyer, fan, and first-time Corflu attendee Zen Smith talks about her own Southron roots]

I was born in San Antonio, but it was like Latin America ... My first two words were "flores" and "mariposa" [*flowers and butterfly — muy muy poetical!*] They wanted my first language to be English, you know, so my parents said, "We're moving!" I grew up in Dallas.

[Bob Webber is still a tad tender about having to organize this thing]

As I've said a couple of times this weekend, if I had to do this over I'd call it not Corflu but Murphlu — you know, for Murphy's Law? ... Except for Tom Becker, none of the people that got me into this are here.

[For the Guest of Honor speech, I'm sitting behind a mirrored pillar, so I'm looking at Yvonne Rowse's fetching face while hearing Nic Farey's voice, adding a nicely hallucinatory note; Nic's thesis is that what holds fanzine fandom together is good old ego boost, or "egoboo"]

It all comes down to the boo, doesn't it?
We just want to be told we're brilliant ...

But even if they tell you you sucked,
you say, "So you read it then."

It's ... all ... about ... the boo.

... You're wondering why I haven't said
"fuck" yet, aren't you?

[Later, Leah Smith pitches the competition]

The other fanzine con, Ditto, will be held
this year from October 12 through the 14th in
Bloomington, Illinois ...

That's about halfway between Chicago
and St. Louis. You know, about a mile from
where Tucker lives ...

*[They announce the FAAn Awards results in
here someplace; congratulations to Geri, Victor,
Steve, Sheila, Robert L., etc., and if you don't
know who these people are you almost certainly
don't care about the awards anyway]*

*[Afterwards, out on the smoking sidewalk,
Victor Gonzalez talks zinetek]*

Adobe InDesign 1.5 will do a nice crisp
PDF from inside the app ... The whole file
for *Binnacle* is only 1.4 megs — for 22 pages!

*[In the con suite, Art Widner's got going a kind
of fanglorious tontine]*

Ted White and I have been to every
Conflu. It's kind of a race to the death ...

[When he goes, I'll remember Art's wordplay]

My favorite pun I've made is about the
brother of Procrustes the innkeeper. His
brother, Procrastes — he never has a room
ready when you arrive.

*[Deb Geisler is still in withdrawal from last
night's landmark restaurant meal, shared by
eight foodstruck fans at the new Financial
District billburner known as Radius]*

You just *touch* one of these little orange
dots on the plate with your fork, and a *shock*
of pure carrot taste races up your arm and
explodes into your mouth!

*[At the laptop contributing to the con's oneshot
zine, Hope Leibowitz wrestles with an unfamiliar
and unwanted grammar checker]*

This squiggly green line underneath
came up. It says I have a run-on sentence —

[I'm happy for her]

— Congratulations! You're a real fanzine
writer.

*[Leaving, I stop by Room 155, where three
fabulous fanboys who are famously baseball
fanatics, too, make this job easy]*

Boy, you guys have just written the end
of my con report for me. "I left Andy
Hooper, Ted White, and Victor Gonzalez in
the room with the first game of the season
on TV, watching baseball —"

[Andy demands the last word]

— Critically."

Ego Scanners (Shall Not) Live in Vain

*[Writer **Michael A Burstein** caught some slips
in my Boskone coverage]*

Bob, just a few corrections:

Rob said that Kirk would pilot the ship
into an asteroid, not a star.

And it was Keith DeCandido who asked
my student why she still needed me, not
Lawrence Shoen who asked her.

*[Michael, I shall make it so in the Devniad
Centenary Edition]*

*[New Boskone acquaintance **Bonnie Black**
(never known as Bonnie Blair, in case you were
wondering) has to gently remind me that friends
don't get friends' names wrong]*

[B]y the way, the quote from me in
The Devniad was perfect, it was my *name*
that was incorrect (thus, the bold face,
underline and italics on my name in my last
e-mail). However, it's all right. I use several
different names for different things. When
acting it's bonnie-ann black; when writing
it's b. lynch black; when doing artwork, it's
B.L. Black or rivkah bat israel (or Ribbi) or ni
dubh ... So don't worry. I may use bonnie

blair for something else (though I think there may be an actress who won't appreciate that) ...

[Bonnie, of course, moronic me. I remember asking if you were any relation to Sirius Black, not any relation to the Blair Witch ...]

*[Ever-responsive **Lloyd Penney** on the perversity of people, fannish and non-]*

Boskone is a convention I'd like to get to one fine day, when the lottery elves smile on me, and burden me with untold wealth. In the meantime, while fandom buzzes all around me, I shall continue with the fanac I can afford, namely writing letters of comment, much like this one...

A few people in my office know about the Toronto Worldcon coming up in just over two years, but I have emphasized the size and complexity of staging the convention, rather than the content. I've been here just over 2 1/2 years (feels more like 20), and no one's pulled the Trekkie/space cadet garbage on me. At least, not yet. Yvonne is also careful in her office, but she works for a satellite imagine company that has had equipment in each of the last few Mars landers (oops), and there's lots of latent fans there. She's tried to get some of the scientists to Ad Astra, but our local litcon seems a little resistant to science programming. Perhaps the local mediacon would like them better?

There's a huge anime following in Toronto, with a 1000-person con every year on the US Memorial Day weekend. There are clubs at all the universities, and most comic stores sell tons of anime and manga. The biggest problem the annual con has ... more and more hentai and ogenki (the first means anime porn, the second I'm not sure about) creeping into the dealers' room, where shopping is done piranha-style. They also suffered a unscrupulous local dealer sneaking in and grabbing a table for free, and selling spoooge on CD (that's porn for the furies). Isn't it amazing how fandom can expand your vocabulary?

... I know what Claire Anderson *[who mentioned fan feeding frenzies]* is talking about ... We're doing a con suite for the local

filkcon, FilKONtario this coming weekend. Granted, it's about 120 people, and Boskone is nearly 10 times larger, according to figures I saw elsewhere in this issue, but we might as well be sloppin' the hogs for some of them. One Utter Truth of Fandom ... often, the greatest praise you will receive is silence. At least you know that when nothing is said, you didn't screw up. The corollary ... when you do screw up, you never hear the end of it.

... Ah, as Bill Rotsler put it succinctly, "Fandom ... so neat, so nifty. Too bad it's full of fans."

[Lloyd, you old misfanthrope you ...]

*[Far traveler **Leslie Turek** brings the gospel of NESFA to Eastern Europe]*

Bob, I have no idea if this will reach you or what return address it will have if it does, as I am writing to you from an Internet Cafe in Levoca, Slovakia. There are actually two internet cafes here. This one is quite modern (the theme song from *Friends* is playing on the radio). One we visited the other day was a motorcycle parts shop in a 500-year-old building, heated by a wood stove, that had a few computers in the anteroom. They worked, though, so I'm not complaining.

Anyway, I wanted to tell you that I read *The Devniad* here this morning, and it was great to get a breath of home after 5 days of immersion in Slovak culture. We were all up late last night, drinking with Peter Turek (see "My Cousin, the Boss") so we're setting off a little later today than usual, giving me a chance to read my email.

I recently reread *A Town Like Alice* and realized that our translator, Paula, would love it, so brought my copy to give to her. Turns out that she has read it, many years ago, and did love it, so my assessment was right. We are trying to get a Slovak copy of Harry Potter for her 10-year old granddaughter, but the local shops are out of volume 1 (they are up to volume 3 in translation) ...

Dovidenia,

Leslinka Turekova

[Leslie, who says I don't have worldwide readership?]

[U. S. Navy officer **E. J. McClure** semaphores from the high seas]

Thanks for the first shore-ship *Devniad*. Enjoyed it, as always. After reading it, I added more movies to my "Must watch when I get back from deployment" list on my Palm Pilot.

[E. J., do they restrict your shipboard viewing to things like Top Gun, In Harm's Way, and Hellcats of the Navy?]

[Re the list of my fave flicks of 2000, pro film critic **Dan Kimmel** feels my taste is in my socks]

A Ten Best list is a personal thing. For me it's the movies that stuck with me, that I found myself thinking about, and that I was recommending when people asked what was worth seeing. My own Ten Best below was unusual because 2000 was such a bad year that my first draft only contained seven films. In an ordinary year the last three would have been "honorable mentions." Critics were all over the place because the pickings were so slim that there was little consensus. Of course, box office — or even other critics -- shouldn't count. I had several films (including my top choice) that died ignoble deaths at the hands of the public or my colleagues. These were the films that worked for *me*.

That said, I have to point out that on YOUR ten best list are two movies that I would consider among the very *worst* of the year: *The Contender*, which I referred to as "political pornography" (and a badly made example of such at that) and *Unbreakable*, in which my reaction was 180 degrees to yours. To me it proved that Shayamalan IS a "one hit wonder." Since I know you to be a critic of discernment and refinement, I can only assume that perhaps we saw different movies with the same titles ...

That we only share one title in common, *Traffic*, is not unusual. I liked several of the films you did, including *Chicken Run* and *X Men*, and would have had both on a hypothetical Top 20 list. One thing we can both agree on: *Gladiator* was nowhere near the "best picture" of 2000.

P.S. *Series 7* got decent reviews but nobody went. Catch it on video when it comes out.

TOP TEN FILMS OF 2000

By Daniel M. Kimmel

1. *Love's Labours' Lost*
2. *Almost Famous*
3. *Sunshine*
4. *Dr. T and the Women*
5. *The Girl on the Bridge*
6. *State and Main*
7. *Traffic*
8. *Keeping the Faith*
9. *Waking the Dead*
10. *Erin Brockovich*

[Daniel, I plan to catch at least *Love's Labours'*, *The Girl on the Bridge*, *State and Main*, and *Keeping the Faith* on cable or video; they looked like good bets to me. And the eternal debate goes on ...]

[Writer and critic **Brett Cox** lends his usual thoughtful take, this time on three flicks]

By now I've actually seen a couple of the films you discuss. I loved *Traffic* and *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*.

Although nobody looked at the latter from this angle (as far as I know), I think *Tiger* is, among its many other virtues, one of the best portraits of undifferentiated adolescent rage I've ever seen. As for *Traffic*, Benicio del Toro is my new hero and role model in life.

O Brother, Where Art Thou?: this is not minor-league Coen brothers, but a major-league film, period. The Coens have a perfect intuitive understanding of the changing social landscape of, and technological incursions in, the South in the first half of the twentieth century, as well as a most impressive sense of the metaphoric power of the Tennessee Valley Authority. And, of course, that killer soundtrack. I summarily reject any and all objections to this movie (with the possible exception of Holly Hunter's character, who could have been emailed in). Every native Southerner I know who's seen this movie loved it. So there.

I'll rent all the other movies eventually.

Thanks to Patrick O'Leary for reminding us of the necessity of writing "something that bleeds and matters." That pretty much says it all.

[Brett, we're not that far apart. I called O Brother "a quirky little screen gem" and a "major event," and put it in the Very Good category. At worst, I praised it with faint damns. Guess I'm just waiting for another Fargo.]

FlimFan

As buzz builds toward the release of *The Lord of the Rings* (as of now, first installment *The Fellowship of the Ring* seems to be scheduled to open in the U.K. on Dec. 14, and the U.S. on Dec. 19), famed film director John Boorman casts an eye backwards toward the project's history, longer than a hobbit's toes ... This is taken from an interview on *Salon* at <http://salon.com/people/conv/2001/04/02/boorman/print.html>.

Q: I wanted to ask you about *The Lord of the Rings*. Were you planning to do a live-action version of the trilogy in the '70s?

A: Yes, I spent a year on it ... The rights then were with Saul Zaentz, who produced the animated version. I was authorized to offer him a million dollars for the rights. He wanted more, but Tri-Star wouldn't pay any more.

Q: ... [H]ow do you feel about the Peter Jackson film due out this year?

A: ... I think it was a brilliant idea to make three films. Fundamentally, what had happened for me is that I made *Excalibur*. Everything I learned, the technical problems I had to resolve in planning for *The Lord of the Rings*, I applied to *Excalibur* ... I'm glad *The Lord of the Rings* is being made now, and I'm looking forward to seeing it ...

Q: Did you ever meet J.R.R. Tolkien?

A: I didn't meet him; I corresponded with him. He was reluctant to have a film made of it at all. It was only to secure the education of his grandchildren that he agreed to sell the film rights. He wrote to

me and asked me how I was going to make it — live action or animation. And I told him I was going to make it with actors. He wrote back, saying, "I'm so relieved, because I had this nightmare of it being an animated film." And of course, that's what happened. But he was dead by the time an animated film [Ralph Bakshi's 1978 version] was made.

EXCELLENT:

Wit — (on HBO cable) This beautifully filmed and directed (by Mike Nichols) version of Margaret Edson's play about a hyperintelligent English professor whose brains can't cure her cancer is a merciless marvel. In the theater, it must have been one of those events where you don't clap afterwards because you're too thunderstruck. All the bright boys and girls reading this will recognize themselves, and be afraid, but Emma Thompson's performance as Professor Vivian Bearing is fearless. She battles the disease and the doctors with her weapons of wit and loneliness, never letting us up, anymore than she'll let herself off. Watch also for small performances by Harold Pinter as her father and Eileen Atkins as her mentor. Atkins's appearance late in the movie will break whatever pieces of your heart Thompson has spared.

Shrek — Every single reader of *The Devniad* will enjoy this flick when they go, which should be soon. Based on the book by *New Yorker* cartoonist William Steig and directed by Andrew Adamson and Vicky Jenson, it turns many of the usual fairy-tale conventions on their heads for a wonderfully wicked topsy-turvy effect that's still somehow lovable ... Of course, the kind of moral reversal you see in *Shrek* usually means a genre, or perhaps an entire civilization, is well into the period of maximum decadence that comes right before its total collapse. But that's a topic for another symposium ... The animation here is another generation or two beyond either *Toy Story*. We're getting to the point where, visually, fantasyland doesn't have to be a poorly rendered relation of the real world,

but a rich alternate universe with textures and shadows all its own. As the ogre, the donkey, and the princess, the voices of Mike Myers, Eddie Murphy, and Cameron Diaz fully fill the characters their animators have created. Murphy in particular has a marvelous time; we just want to rub his furry little belly, more like a dog's than a donkey's. I don't want to give away all the plot twists and neat quotes here, except — all right, just one. In what other movie could you hear the Gingerbread Man defiantly tell his torturer, "Eat me!"?

GOOD:

The Dish

Enemy at the Gates

Blow

DECENT:

Bridget Jones's Diary

The Mummy Returns

A Knight's Tale

BAD:

Just Visiting — This medieval-goes-modern mess is full of muddy visuals, dim effects, and lots of flailing around hoping (mostly in vain) some of this stuff will end up funny. It's like *The Blues Brothers* meets *Lancelot du Lac* ... and beats him senseless with their shticks. Plot: a hapless sorcerer (Malcolm McDowell with white whiskers) inadvertently magicks a 12 century French knight, played by Jean Reno, and his smelly servant, overplayed by Christian Clavier, through "the tunnels of time" to a museum in present-day Chicago. Luckily, museum babe Christina Applegate is the knight's descendant, her wicked husband is trying to sell off the family's French manor, yadda-yadda. Jean Reno, who's the reason I showed up, initially brings some of his big-man dignity to the role, but soon he's mugging with the other mugs. The one joke is the medievals' reaction to cars, TVs, food processors, toilets, etc.: whatever the servant can't eat, the master broadswords. Our biggest laughs arise from the first car ride — the knight bids the servant "run behind the carriage," assuring his hosts, "He's very fast." The servant's answer to their protest that they'll be going 70 mph: "I have good shoes!" *Just Visiting* is directed by Jean-Marie Poire and written by him and Christian Clavier, apparently based on

1993's *Les Visiteurs*, also with Reno and Clavier, a huge hit in France. But remember, these people also adore Europop, soccer, and Jerry Lewis. In fact, the flick's tag may be its best line: "They're not just from another time, they're from France."

Backchat

**on APA: NESFA #370,
March 2001**

To Claire Anderson or whatever artist did the March opening art

Great cover! A huge expanse of what look like popcorn kernels, with word balloons at intervals saying "munch," "crunch," "gulp," etc., plus two people wading through waist-high saying, "I think we found the Con Suite"! ... We've all heard Mark Olson's contribution to fanthropology, the statement now known as Olson's Observation: "Fans know everything." To this we can now adjoin Anderson's Corollary: "Fans eat everything."

To Tony Lewis

As to my becoming the Susan Lucci of Fan Writers just because some of you wonderful people nominated me for the Hugo the last three years in a row: One, your checks are in the mail. Two, the real Susan Lucci of Fan Writers would have to be the talented Ms. Evelyn C. Leeper, who's been crushed by the Langfordian juggernaut 11 times and perhaps counting ...

I agree that Richard Harter's sorta personal ezine site is really something: quirky and entertaining throughout. Everybody, try www.tiac.net/users/cr/index.html and you'll like it.

Speaking of entertaining, there's also your article on the warning signs to help avert the tragedy of your child's growing up to be an English major. Beautifully written, although not quite in your usual tone, Tony.

Is it yours alone, or did Suford or Alice help?

To Elisabeth Carey

Liked your review of Janet Gleeson's *Millionaire*, about the Scots mountebank (get it?) who revolutionized the French financial system in the early 1700s. (Yet another law of fandom: NESFAns read everything.) I remember encountering his story briefly in a college history course and thinking to go back and delve further. Maybe now's my chance. Always think of him when I'm reading about the American West and someone refers to a sheriff as a "John Law," although I doubt there's really a connection.

To Mark Olson

A nice set of book reviews, as always. Pellucid is the word. For instance, your 2/3 page review of Jammer's *Concepts of Mass in Contemporary Physics and Philosophy* taught me more about the subject than I remember from all the other reading I've ever encountered on the subject.

So Julian May has a new Rampart Worlds novel titled *Sagittarius Whorl*. This only a few months after Gene Wolfe's *Return to the Whorl*. Two or three years might go by between instances of my encountering that word anywhere, and now it's on the cover of two books in close succession. Is there a tide in the affairs of titles?

To Joe Ross

Loved your quote from Stalin. Reminds me of something, last few months, can't quite put my finger on it: "Those who cast the votes decide nothing. Those who count the votes decide everything."

Great to hear about Robert Dwan's *As Long As They're Laughing*. Can't believe that no one had previously done a book on Groucho Marx and *You Bet Your Life*.

Your review deserves at least a small prize itself, as a perfectly intriguing short summary. Leading up to the climactic excerpt, with its surprisingly quite serious final image from the comic's 1958 European trip: Groucho Marx literally dancing on Hitler's grave ...

To Tom Endrey

Great to see you at Boskone again! To your well-taken list of commandments for panelists, I'd add something I learned this time while moderating a panel for the first time (actually, the first three times): know thy audience. If there's any doubt about why they came, ask. For our Nevil Shute panel I spent two or three speaking turns spoonfeeding plot summaries and begging the audience to read Shute. Halfway through, light dawns on marblehead, I poll, and it turns out just about everyone in the room *has* already ... Maybe most attendees at a Forgotten Author panel are veterans, not virgins.

About Darrell Schweitzer: sure his take-no-prisoners bookselling style can grate sometimes. But see him in a panel on the right subject and his deep and wide historical knowledge of our field really shines through.

To Lisa Hertel

Thanks for the story of the Heroic Hertels vs. The Storm. Especially struck by the incident where you picked up your phone during the power failure, then realized it was a cordless: no broadcast power.

I quickly did a mental census of our phones. With two cells, still two corded antiques, and only one newfangled cordless, we'd be OK through at least a short outage. It's the sump pump that worries me. Maybe if we rigged up sort of a giant hamster wheel for Maureen ...

To Brad Ackerman

Glad you're back from that posting in Hong Kong, though sad it was more or less at the cost of your job. Somebody as young, energetic, cynical, and technically gifted as you obviously are shouldn't have too much trouble getting hooked up to another 90-hour-a-week coffle, right?

Many of your Chinese, Japanese, and Tekkinese references elude me, but I can tell quality zineing when I see it anyway.

Looking forward to the rest of your Tokyo report.

To Art Henderson

Super to see you at Boskone! And thanks again to you and von Becky for getting me a choice seat for the Iron Author show.

Another beautifully phrased, entertaining, informative report, Art. Becky said you were beginning to be horrified at the effort required to do something worthy every month. Let us bind you to the wheel with praise unstinting ...

I second your raves for *The Sopranos*, of course. And, a lot less famously, for the first Hannibal Lector film, *Manhunter*. Ever since the day I saw *Silence of the Lambs*, I've remained convinced that Scottish actor Brian Cox's performance in the former was better than that of Anthony Hopkins in the latter. Guess I'll never forgive Hopkins for that vulgar tongue-fluttering after the line about "I ate his liver with some fava beans and a nice Chianti." The Bad Doctor would never do that.

Cox has also been great in a few other juicy parts: as the only honest and thus quite tortured British cop in Northern Ireland in *Hidden Agenda* (1990), and last year on the *Nuremberg* TV miniseries as Herman Goering. Plus there are other show-stopping smaller parts: the one-eyed uncle in *Braveheart*, the venal steward in *Rob Roy*, the long-suffering headmaster in *Rushmore*, to name a few. For droll, dark, and beefy, Brian's your boy.

To Pam Fremon

Always love your reports on traveling in Sweden. *Tack Gud*, you seem to go about every 2 months ...

So Swedish phone books are alphabetized by first name. Funny, that's the second time in the last week or so I've heard that about another culture: think it was also in Evelyn or Mark Leeper's reports about Vietnam. (See www.geocities.com/Athens/4824/vietnam.htm and www.geocities.com/Hollywood/6960/vietnam.htm respectively.) Suppose

this would work best where there were lots of different first names but a small set of common surnames.

To Chris Logan Edwards

Lovely to see you at Boskone!

OK, after a bunch of other glowing reports, yours finally sold me on Philip Pullman's "His Dark Materials" fantasy series. Went out and bought the first two of the three published so far. They do look great. But surely the first volume is *The Golden Compass*, not *Northern Lights* as you had it.

I mention this, Chris, not to put NESFA's beloved George Flynn, the Dark Prince of Proofreaders, out of business — but purely in the spirit of vindictive payback for February. You remember, when I imbecilically mixed up Verne's book *From the Earth to the Moon* with Melies' flick *Voyage to the Moon*? Plus, as you also mercilessly point out, making the movie's date 1905 instead of the correct 1902.

Merde et merde encore. One is of course instantly reminded of Melies' 1903 hit, *Un Malheur n'arrive jamais*, or *Misfortune Never Comes Alone* ...