

The Devniad Book 74a

un zine de Bob Devney

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Sadly, We've Arrived

Poul Anderson made the Milestones page of *Time* Magazine in its August 13, 2001 ish. He shared that celebrated spot with, among other, Prince Charles, who was HOSPITALIZED. (After a polo mishap.) And also a one-legged Bosnian Serb General, who was CONVICTED. (Of genocide.) Anderson, as most fans have already heard, merited his mention on the page because he DIED. (At 74, of prostate cancer.)

Time took good advice in highlighting among Anderson's later books *Tau Zero* (1970) and *The Boat of a Million Years* (1989). In younger years I had a special fondness also for the rollicking Nicholas Van Rijn star trader tales stories, the exciting galactic empire spy stories about Dominic Flandry, and two books from my own Golden Age (you know, around 15?): stand-alone fixup novel *The Star Fox* (1965) and collection *The Horn of Time* (1968). As well as early masterworks such as *Brain Wave* (1954), *Three Hearts and Three Lions* (1961), short story "The Man Who Came Early" (1956), and knights-in-space adventure *The High Crusade* (1960); the last two are the works I hear fans bring up most in fond reminiscence these days.

In *The Encyclopedia of Science Fiction*, John Clute declares Anderson "perhaps SF's most prolific writer of any consistent quality." Meaning that his output was huge, and much (though not all) of it damned good. But what I remember best was a strong, sweet, wild note of lyric romanticism — not what you usually get from a writer also famous for a story entitled "A Bicycle Built for Brew."

In any case, at the end, he made *Time*. And provided one more evidence for the status of science fiction and fantasy in the popular culture: ARRIVED.

You Might Learn Something by Ann Paterson

[From time to time, my father's sister — Ann Devney Paterson — graces me with little bits of her witwisdom; I style that as one word, because with her they're kind of indistinguishable. Below are two examples.

I've learned it behooves me to listen. After all, she was Ursula Kroeber Le Guin's classmate at Radcliffe but studied Japanese instead of French; has visited almost as many countries as Robert A. Heinlein but is much better-natured; saw a lot in her long career as a nurse; earned the love of a gifted engineer and kept it until the day he died; and was already hip to the Beatles by 1963.

Maybe you should pay attention too.]

Last year I drew my daily inspiration from a Shakespeare desk calendar, the kind you tear a page off every day. This year it's a Winnie-the-Pooh calendar, which I find even more uplifting.

Quote: "I don't hold with all this washing," grumbled Eeyore. ""This modern behind-the ears nonsense."

I find that starts the day better than Shakespeare's "Friendship's full of dregs."

Want to tell you about an interesting correspondence I had last week. As you know, I'm very fond of old movies. (Horried last week in the library to learn that a "classic" movie is one made pre-1980. *Nothing* after 1960 is a classic, in my view.)

Anyhow, with help of Yahoo I found a company in California — Eddie Brandt's

Saturday Matinee — that will try to find any movie you want. I wrote and asked them for three movies.

My letter returned with a bracket around my little list. Written beside it: "Not available." And — a sad little face drawn beneath. You know what I mean; the little circle with downturned mouth.

I was so impressed I wrote back again at once, to the effect that I wished government offices had a correspondence department like theirs. And that their letter was direct, informative, expressing regret with no wasted paper, language, ink or time.

Another answer came almost immediately. They had never received a thank-you note in all their 32 years on the job, and incidentally, they might be able to find those movies in a private source ...

Now you know why your mother brought you up to write thank-you letters.

**Wherever You Go,
There You Are**
by Ernest R. Lilley

[SFRevu editor and good friend Ern Lilley is currently taking a long, strange trip from East to West that we can follow via his Web diary. Below is one excerpt (from the 7/14/01 entry at www.e357.net/66/07-14/Page.html) that holds up a mirror for us ... Read his rambling, blissed-out, typo-haunted, countrystruck narrative (complete with photos of roads, ruins, and pretty waitresses) at — well, you can figure it out, right?]

Dawn asked if I was on my way to the Pow Wow, which I hadn't heard anything about, so I asked for details (it's the largest Native American gathering in the world) and directions, and eventually found it after driving around the OK countryside ...

The powwow was somewhat disappointing. There was an announcer vainly trying to rally enthusiasm among the crowd and traditional dancers, numerous heats of costume competitions and a few

fast food concessions, though with a slight Indian flavor.

All in all, it reminded me of a Science Fiction convention. The population has trouble with weight gain, belongs to an outmoded culture, and the core group is aging.

Orbita Dicta
Heard in the Halls of
Readercon 13 at the
Burlington Marriott Burlington in (natch)
Burlington, Massachusetts, U.S.A.
July 13-15, 2001

As usual, below is a verbal mosaic of this particularly serious-minded (but, we insist, fun) speculative fiction convention, assembled from bits of what I noted or recalled or was told that people said. *[Plus my own comments in brackets, like this.]* Since there were approximately 556 writers, editors, and fans in attendance, each and every one among the smartest talkers in town, the effect can be a little ... fragmentary. Which, I aver, mirrors fairly accurately the actual con experience.

Let us go then, you and I, while the con is spread out against the sky like an author etherized upon an exegesis...

[When I complain because nobody at my office has provided a traditional "clueless quote" to see me off, merciful Megan Cassidy comes through]
Well, then, live long and prosper.

[The con starts well, as 3 minutes in, guy in the elevator mistakes me for John Crowley; when I protest I'm much taller, heavier, and less talented]

Sorry. Only know him from book jackets.

[However, I arrive too late for the first few panels; merciless NESFAn Davey Snyder rubs it in as she exits the panel on Surfing the Ether]

Well, you certainly missed the start of the quoting season.

[Writer Guest of Honor Michael Swanwick brings, not quotes, but praise for a Surfing buddy]

When the scheduled moderator didn't show, Michael Burstein took over on no notice whatsoever and *ex tempore* proved to be astonishingly good in the role. If I hadn't been one of the people muttering, "No, *you* do it," I'd've sworn he had his questions pre-scripted. A very good show.

[In the bookshop, writer Patrick O'Leary lets me live when I screw up his forthcoming book's name]

The Impossible Bird. It's all right, dude, you don't have to get all my titles down. I'm correcting proofs now for David Hartwell; it should be out from Tor in January.

... I saw Gene *[Wolfe]* 2 weeks; my wife and I had him over to our new house. He had laser surgery on his eyes; doing well ... But he missed coming here, and doesn't think he'll make Worldcon or World Fantasy either — which are basically the cons he goes to.

[Ex-nurse Becky Henderson generously wraps my new Richard Powers art book, which I just bought from a more harried bookseller, Larry Smith]

Here. This is only primary prophylaxis, but it should get you home.

[Agog, I add elusive SF legend Tomas M. Disch to my life list at his kaffeeklatsch; lounging on his couch wearing a Hawaiian shirt festooned with rows of pineapples, he looks like John Malkovich only even smarter and more eccentric; discussion starts with the art of criticism]

A lot of the very best stuff — the only thing you can say about it is, read that book.

[Like every perceptive reader I know except Mark Olson, Disch is an admirer of Patrick O'Brian's Aubrey/Maturin sea stories]

He has a formula ... but I eat his books like popcorn. There's a passage about a voyage through the space around Cape Horn that, if I were teaching a writing class, I'd use as an example of perfectly sustained narrative ... The geometry is lovely. His sea

battles are kind of dramatized billiard games.

[Seeing my Powers book leads Disch into a whole rap on painting; he admits he admired some of Powers's work, but]

I didn't like the Powers cover I got, on *The Genocides*.

... My theory of painting is that I can't afford the paintings I like, so I'll just do my own forgeries ... I do a mean Matisse.

... Painting is just so much more fun than writing, physically. Of course, the most expressive of all arts is dance ... The painter Alex Katz told me that for him, painting is like dancing with a brush. There's a whole gestural language involved.

... I'm gay, but I still like to paint the *[female]* nude. It makes you feel good.

[On becoming a Readercon guest at long last]

I fucked coming here 10 years ago, when I was to be Guest of Honor, at a time when my life was in such a mess ... I suppose this is my atonement.

[On correct kaffeeklatsch protocol]

You say exactly what you think to perfect strangers ... I don't drink, but it's psychologically as if you were drunk: the *vino veritas* part.

[As I dog him into the hall with a final question, about the design tattooed on his right arm, a snake wrapped around a panther: "Is that early American?"]

It's early Disch. I was about 25.

[Fan and Devniad lettermeister Gary Dryfoos sums up the whole schmeer from the Jewish Science Fiction panel]

All science fiction is a subset of Jewish fiction.

[Aptly scheduled next, the panel on And I Alone Escaped the Ghetto features corrosively honest writer Barry N. Malzberg's bowing to our genre's most famous recent lamster, Jonathan Lethem]

Jonathan and I came in with the same ideas and ambitions. He did it. I didn't. He's a better man and a better writer than I am ...

In terms of my writing, I think I turned out a pretty good family of work. In terms of where I wanted to go, I failed conclusively. Can I please shut up now?

[Writer Kelly Link's pretty honest, too, about what she was trying to accomplish with her writing]

Once I was published, I was trying to be published *again*.

[For Malzberg, genre ghettoization is not simply the fault of Gerald Jonas, SF book reviewer for a certain well-know New York fanzine]

My novel *[presumably The Remaking of Sigmund Freud]* came out in 1985, and his *[Jonas's]* review was a writer's wet dream ... So my science fiction novel had been reviewed favorably by the *New York Times*. It was nominated for the Nebula and the Philip K. Dick awards ... It sold 1,300 copies of a 20,000 print run. It failed to earn out its advance ... The total income from the novel has been \$5,330.30 to date.

[And perhaps success within the genre is the most honeyed trap of all, according to Malzberg]

Ray Bradbury failed upward ... He tried over and over to sell to Campbell ... If he had succeeded in his career ambitions, Ray Bradbury could have been Henry Kuttner.

[Lethem didn't exactly expect to see his first novel published in gilt, gold, and leather]

I sincerely believed that because the writing I most liked was in paperback originals, I should publish *Gun, With Occasional Music* as a paperback original. To follow people like Philip K. Dick and Barry Malzberg, and Cornell Woolrich, Jim Thompson, Charles Willeford.

[From the audience, I bring up something fan rich tan told me at Corflu: that famous thriller writer Donald E. Westlake believes his best work was the 1967 SF novel Anarchaos he wrote as Curt Clark; turns out Malzberg knows the

backstory of why Westlake eschewed SF thereafter]

Westlake wrote an article that venomously attacked science fiction editors, and he could never sell in science fiction again ... for at least a generation and a half.

[Also from the audience, writer/editor Scot Edelman makes a complimentary comparison]

I've been following your career, Jonathan, and seeing you as the first person to replicate Kurt Vonnegut's career.

[But for Lethem, the ghetto wall still stands tall]

There is a reluctance *[in the reviewing establishment and the public]* to the materials of science fiction ... I had a tremendous dip in sales for the book that precedes *Motherless Brooklyn — Girl in Landscape*. I think it may be my best-written book: but the cover image is a science fiction image, and there's one word on the cover blurb — in the phrase "the *planet* of the Archbuilders." And that *one* word ...

[For Link, it's simple]

It's luck. The right smart people with money find your book.

[In the hall, writer/fan Fred Lerner and wife Sheryl show off a J-card photo on a new CD by folk-rockers The Nields; it's already a hit for Fred]

See the people at the stage door? That attractive young woman to the right: that's our daughter Elizabeth! She just happened to be in the right line at the right time.

[During a lavish dinner at Cafe Escadrille (where, sad to say, my duckling l'orange was more like duckling sucee) with NESFans Priscilla and Mark Olson, Leslie Turek, and Alex Layton, Priscilla recalls a phrase from an old science text]

"In isolated desert streams, fish tend to lose their pelvic fins." It's poetry, when you really listen to it.

[As we drive back, Leslie gives verbal indication that she is very, very tired; from his response, can you tell Alex works with computers?]

We're hearing signs of imminent Leslie failure.

[Fan David Nicklas recalls grandmaster Hal Clement's averring this in the panel on how to stop defining SF, although proof came there none]

"I used to irritate the members of the English department by pointing out that the main difference between science fiction and mainstream fiction is science fiction's higher standard of realism. I could prove it too."

[Rhode Island author Dan Pearlman is clear on the concept here]

My book *[The Best-Known Man in the World and Other Misfits]* is the first one from this brand-new publisher, Aardwolf Press. So it's kind of a responsibility for me, even beyond my own interest. I've got to figure out how to sell as many as I can.

[At the Meet the Prose Party, I perversely talk mostly to fans, such as superSMOF Janice Gelb]

The best tour guide I ever had was at NASA ... He was a retired engineer, but he was still deeply pissed off. He'd be showing us a rocket, and then bitterly bring up what Congress did to that program in 1958 ... For that guy, no way the Cold War was over.

[Fan Dan Reid aw-shucksedly adumbrates an upcoming Oktober fanfest in Durham, NC]

At Trinoc*coN, our first year last year, our guest was some nobody named, you know, Michael Swanstick or something. And this year, we've got somebody from the West Coast named Bingeey or Stingey *[that would be fabulous space opera author Vernor Vinge]*.

[As I warn Canadian writer Yves Menard and editor/writer Glenn Grant about the tradition of clusterfrig mass signings at the World Fantasy Convention, upcoming this November in Montreal, Menard glances meaningfully at Grant; some painful shared memory, evidently]

Yes, sometimes group signings can be disastrous. Such as when, say, you have six Northern Stars writers and nobody from the public shows up!

[In the hall at midnight, we're bewitched by writers Liz Hand and John Clute; John utters a warning most dire]

Did you see the trap they set with the bottled water in your room? Merely touch it and they'll have you for four dollars!

[A couple doors down, editor/trapdoor spider Andy Porter pops out of his room with an unplugged room phone in his hand and thrusts it at an innocent passerby]

It's for you.

[In our room, my cynical brother Michael gently breaks to me one reason so many booksellers seem to think I'm so swell; say it isn't so, bibliopoles!]

Remember, you're a major element on their balance sheets.

[At breakfast Saturday, NESFAn Mark Hertel enthuses re this new book he's reading about the FBI's most horrific cases]

... Then there was the scientist who poisoned his wife's eye shadow with plutonium!

[In the panel on The Career of David G. Hartwell, fellow editor John Douglas reveals why the Sage of Pleasantville doesn't write fiction himself]

He told me once he was waiting until he was ready. That was 20 years ago.

[As Hartwell's wife and co-editor, Kathryn Cramer should know]

He feels strongly about genre boundaries. He believes that there is a difference between fantasy and science fiction. And a difference between science fiction and speculative fiction. And that these differences matter.

[Given Hartwell's justly maligned genius for "matching" pulsating paisley plaids with strobing stripes, this by Cramer may be the most fantastic thought of the weekend]

He was at one point asked to consult on a book on men's fashion ...

[Davey Snyder recalls that in the Stage Magic panel, writer Sarah Smith conjured a thought on the Jurassic Park series and Steven Spielberg]

His genetics will not stand up to scrutiny. He knows that. He knows you don't care about that, you're looking at the scantily clad velociraptor.

[Scott Edelman has a revealing early comment in the panel on Asterisks/sex scenes]

In a movie, when Sigourney Weaver gets naked, you say, "Hey, that's Sigourney Weaver naked!" And completely lose track of the story.

[Whereas writer Barry Longyear longs to lose himself in his work]

When I'm writing a sex scene, I want to get in there — hip waders, whipped cream, the whole thing!

[While Delia Sherman's more of a head case]

I write historical fiction, so Asterisks 'R' Us ... But bad metaphysical sex scenes are just as bad as bad anatomical sex scenes.

... What's sexy to me is what's going on in your head while you're doing what you're doing with your body.

[Writer/publisher Cecilia Tan sure can promote her short story collection, Black Feathers]

There's not a page in there without sex, except maybe the introduction.

[On the question of SF asterisks, Tan votes no]

You can't stop at the bedroom door. Or the spaceship door either.

[Though Sherman (I think 'twas her) wants art to conceal tart I mean art]

Back in 1766, a man named G. E. Lessing wrote an essay called "Laokoon" ... And for about the next 150 years it was accepted that the art that *implies* the most is the art that is the most successful.

[Great SF writer/critic Samuel R. Delany has a more straightforward concern now]

As a gay man, the AIDS epidemic changed the way I regard the morality of writing a sex scene. If you write it in such a way that you cannot tell whether the character is wearing a condom, it's immoral.

... A character doesn't have to wear a condom, but we should be informed — or you are basically promoting death.

[Longyear's been hit by friendly fire]

One of the problems of writing a sex fantasy is that, frankly, I get all cranked up ... It's like sitting at your typewriter all day loading a gun. At the end of the day, what do I *do* with this thing?

[Tan has one sharp suggestion]

You can play doctor and nurse without seducing your actual doctor ... You can have a great knife-wielding bloodletting scene by blindfolding your partner and just using the edge of a credit card.

[After I compliment Delany on the part his 1973 panpornographic novel The Tides of Lust played in my own sexual education, Michael Devney's familiar voice floats from the back of the room]

Why didn't you share those books with your brother?

[My point to Delany was that, straight lad, I'd never read gay porno, and was much informed; he's not sure every straight person feels this way]

I'm very complimented by what you say ... But perhaps Sartre had it wrong when he said, "Hell is other people." Hell is other people's pornography.

[Given one hot new novel, Sherman isn't so sure]

One of the most erotic fantasies I've read recently is *Kushiel's Dart*, by Jacqueline Carey, about a woman who is a masochist ... not something I'm comfortable with ...

But it was wonderfully sexy. You could just dive in and come out blushing.

[Beside me in the audience, fan Marian Walke is apparently a latter-day sceptic]

Did you notice the hotel has kindly provided us all with a fantasy novel in our desk drawers? It's called *The Book of Mormon*.

[In the panel on Your Own Private Schenectady, Hal Clement takes a fairly low-tech approach to organizing works in progress]

When the stacks of 3x5 cards rises high enough, I deal them out on the living room floor — the only place in the house that's big enough ... When the vertical stack becomes a horizontal line, I've got a sort of outline.

This beats trying to have a plot.

[Michael Swanwick takes time to speak of his current work in progress, forthcoming from Harper-Collins in February 2002]

I'm writing *Bones of the Earth*, a time travel novel ... The organization in the notebook is to keep things from happening at the same time. Although when you have a time travel novel, if you think about, *everything* happens at the same time.

[He prefers to surprise himself]

The two things I know about a book before I start it are the beginning and — not so much the end as how I want you to *feel* at the end.

[Clement concurs, speaking of his early masterwork Mission of Gravity]

Even when I was starting the last chapter, I did not know how the *Bree* was going to fly.

[Think Swanwick said this, unless it was Longyear; or else I dreamt it all]

The comedian Red Skelton had a once-in-a-lifetime great idea in the middle of the night, and scribbled it down on the 3x5 cards he kept on the bedside table. He woke up all excited the next morning and read the card. Which said, "WRITE GREAT PLAY."

[Forget in what context writer John Morressy intoned this — but it's beautiful]

"When you set out for Ithaca/Then pray that the road is long/Full of adventure, full of knowledge!" That's from a poem by Constantine Cavafy.

[Swanwick just opens up a vein and lets 'er drip]

I write 30 drafts, but it's pages 1 to 3 written 20 times and pages 4 to 9 written 10 times and so on ... As I write, it all turns to concrete underneath me. It all becomes unchangeable.

[Writer Melissa Scott talks org tech]

The program I use used to be called Corkboard, and is now called Three By Five. It's a screenwriter's tool ... Now I use HTML.

[Out in the main hall, perceptive fan Erwin Strauss moves my flyer for The Devniad to a more prominent position on these literature racks]

I thought it deserved a better place ...

Yes, I make these racks. It's a way of contributing to the con without getting involved in meetings and all that ...

[Back in the dealer's room, bibliobabe Becky Henderson at last unlocks the mystery of husband Art's high-quality contributions to APA:NESFA]

I tell him what to write.

[For bookdealer Chris Logan Edwards, not all Disneyflicks are created equal]

I grew up in the absolute nadir of Disney movies, like *Bedknobs and Broomsticks* and *The Black Cauldron* ... I saw Lloyd Alexander *[writer of the original Cauldron book]* once some years later, and he said, "It wasn't my fault!"

[A panel on Writing Cinematically begins with artist The Joey Zone's bringing a thought experiment from his own private Wilderland]

What if Frank Herbert wrote *The Lord of the Rings*?

[For Connie Hirsch, all the world's a screen]

I'm on the extreme of writing cinematically. I can see the scene. I know what people look like — and I can get bogged down in trying to write all this description that, on the screen, is a single frame.

[Writer Greer Gilman would agree that on the page, the torturer's horse may scratch his innocent behind on a tree; but his tail's in our face, dammit]

You can't put things happening quietly in the background on the page, as you can in a movie.

[For Craig E. Engler of the Sci-Fi Channel, film is not a fixative]

If you see a movie, are you forever tainted by it? We did a *Dune* miniseries. I'd read the book when I was young, I saw the David Lynch movie, and then I started to see dailies ... but I still don't see Paul Atreides as either Kyle MacLachlan or Alec Newman. I have my own picture of Paul in my head.

[Radio vet Jim Freund once worked on a program that involved J. R. R. Tolkien; he has a surprising pronouncement about our old friend Gandalf]

The name of the wizard is "Gan-daff." Rhymes with "half," the way Tolkien said it.

[While Hirsch brings sad news of coming commercialism]

For action figures, apparently Burger King has the rights to *Lord of the Rings* —

[But amid the horrified silence, Freund cheers us right up]

— Lord of the Onion Rings! *[Laughter]*

[Aent George R. R. Martin's Song of Ice and Fire series, Engler says maybe Winter Is Coming, but not to the tube anytime soon]

I was thinking of trying to do them for the Sci-Fi Channel. But George said they wouldn't be possible to do under a 26-part miniseries.

[At one panel, Gary Dryfoos waits to signal with the committee's handy sign: "5 MINUTES" on one side and "STOP" on the other]

This is maybe too much power for one human being to have.

[And on my other side, Greer Gilman recalls her travels in Europe, not with Rick Steeves but writer/critic Faye Ringel]

When Faye and I took a tour of France, by the end of the trip the guide was *terrified* of us. We kept correcting him, and we've developed these loud laughs, you know ... He called us "the learned ladies."

[The panel on Egocentrism and Creativity begins appropriately, as the panelists have nothing to declare but their genius]

My name is Cecilia Tan and I'm the world's greatest erotic science fiction writer ... *[Laughter]*

... I'm John Crowley, and even *[can't read my notes here, but it was funny stuff, believe me]* has heard of me... *[Laughter]*

... I'm Barry Malzberg. *[Biggest laugh of all]*

... I'm Jim Kelly and I'm the Barry Malzberg of the '90's.

... I'm Ellen Kushner, and so boundless is my ego that I have to have several careers to contain it.

... I'm Michael Swanwick, and I'm the most modest person in this room.

[Swanwick learned his lesson during an early encounter with writer Jack Dann]

So I was modestly deprecating my own story, and Jack grabbed me by the lapels and shook me and said, "Michael! *Never* criticize yourself — that's what other people are for!"

[He names names]

Who are the great science fiction authors? There's a good chance Gene Wolfe is. Or Philip K. Dick is. Or R. A. Lafferty is. Or you could look at Ursula K. Le Guin or Joanna Russ ...

[For Malzberg, bitter memories come cheap]

In 1971, I thought I was the greatest writer of my generation. I also was delighted to take \$1250 for an Ace Double.

[Out of the mouths of interviewers, muses Crowley]

A beginning journalist once asked me the really inane question, "Why do you write?"

I answered immediately, "I think I write to win immortal fame." I'd never said that before ...

[Writer James Patrick Kelly tries to be honest]

When you start out, you're not a very good writer. Or at least I wasn't —

[Kushner goes for the laugh]

— I was!

[Kelly thinks every career arc has its ups and]

— And often, eventually, you find yourself in competition with yourself at 40.

[From the audience, Paul Di Filippo provides a real genius ending]

I'm surprised the panel has gotten to this point without mentioning the name of Harlan Ellison.

[Though afterward, writer/critic Darrell Schweitzer is still pondering true greatness]

The real question is — the Library of Alexandria is burning down. Whose book do you save, perhaps at the expense of your own?

[Next up: as Schweitzer leads him skillfully through his Guest of Honor interview, Michael Swanwick recalls his hard early days of sponging off friends — and soaking up atmosphere]

In 1973, on 15th street in Philadelphia, I was living next to the Sahara Hotel, where the rooms rented by the hour. I was living on the charity of *art students* — consider that one.

At 3:00 in the morning, I'd be listening to the pimps arguing with whores in the street. By the way, the pimps always lost ... All the fights ended up with them slamming the car door and roaring off.

[From the first, he's been a Readercon kind of guy]

I spent years trying to write like James Joyce, only more complex ... In my mind,

I'm still writing oblique intellectual work for the dozens.

[Almost from the first, anyway]

My first sale was to *Far Frontiers*, a Baen paperback original series. But *[his story]* wasn't that good ... Fortunately, it kept not coming out.

Meanwhile my second and third stories came out, far better than the first one, and both made the Nebula ballot —

[Schweitzer recalls it well]

— I remember that Nebula banquet. Harlan Ellison was announcing, and he said, "Now we have a story by Michael Swanwick ... And now we have a *second* story by Michael Swanwick — Who the hell is Michael Swanwick? He'd better get an agent fast!"

[Swanwick's In the Drift came out in 1984 — an important SF year in more ways than one]

My first novel was published as an Ace Special — as was *Neuromancer*. I was standing right next to this guy *[William Gibson]* when angels came down and lifted him into heaven.

I was only trying to write a novel. He was trying to change the syntax of science fiction. I think we both succeeded ...

Ever since then, I have tried to aim as high as I can.

[How do I love thee? Let me count the benefits]

... My wife likes to say that the secret of being a successful artist is having a spouse with a good medical plan.

[Swanwick talks early influences]

When I was 17, my sister sent me a box of books from nursing school ...

I finished my homework one night, and about 11:00 I picked up *The Lord of the Rings* and thought I would just read a chapter. And I read one chapter and then another, and I stayed up all night. Then I read at breakfast. And I read in the bus on the way to school. And just before school started, I finished the last page ...

I told my sister to send me the other two books in the series or not come home.

[Samuel R. Delany interviews Editor Guest of Honor David G. Hartwell; for Delany, Hartwell's a survivor]

David is now our most senior editor in science fiction.

[Hartwell started late]

I discovered science fiction in the 5th grade. I spent the summer reading Tom Swift, then graduated to the college library, where I discovered the *Best of the Year* anthologies and Groff Conklin's anthologies.

The first three science fiction books I bought, in 7th grade — *Pebble in the Sky* from the SF Book Club, and *Childhood's End* and *More Than Human* in the beautiful Ballantine paperbacks. All with art by Richard Powers.

... In 8th and 9th grade, someone in the Reading, Massachusetts public library had bought all the Gnome Press and Shasta hardcovers, and they were circulating!

[He decided on an editing career early too]

When I was 12, I wanted to grow up to be a science fiction editor. It was obvious from reading the editorials that it was a heroic job with a commanding position in the field.

[A few years later, he'd ascended to the pantheon as a consulting SF editor]

But in those days it was as easy as falling off a log. I got a call from the head of Signet, who said, "We've been offered 10 books from Arthur C. Clarke, his backlist. Do you think we should buy them?"

I said, "Yes."

[The money's gone from a trickle to, well, at least a steady drip]

At the beginning of the 70s, you couldn't make a middle-class living editing science fiction ... My seventh year in publishing, as editor in chief at Berkley, I was being paid \$7,500 a year ... By 1980, at least as the senior editor, you could make a living.

[But keep buying those lottery tickets]

Arbor House would give the authors \$2500 to \$3500 and give me \$2000 for acquiring and editing it. I said OK: I'm going to buy the highest-quality books I can, and publish them well. I'll start careers for new authors and revive careers for old authors.

... Among others, I bought Paul Park's first novel, Ellen Kushner's *Swordspoint*, and Nancy Kress's *An Alien Light*.

[Although speaking of big money]

The position of science fiction editor at most houses has been that of managing a profit center. Managing *Star Trek* novels, etc.

Tor is a kind of wonderful exception ...

[Tor founder] Tom Doherty still reads science fiction for pleasure. And has hired the largest staff of fantasy and science fiction editors in history ... We're all in competition with one another. Not for budgets or slots, but for quality.

[Except for Hartwell, we might not be sitting here]

Readercon was founded partly on a polemical idea I developed: that local conventions based on the Worldcon model were madness. Too many tracks of programming, no focus. That idea was to take one aspect of it and focus on it almost exclusively.

[Delany takes my question from the audience — and let history here record that Samuel R. Delany recognized and addressed me as Bob! (pause to keep my fat fanboy head from exploding vaingloriously) — about the joys and annoy of working with writers; Hartwell answers instantly]

Working with writers is what I do. Everything else is work.

[Hell, let's just let him wax Hartwellian]

... A couple of times in my adult life I've sat down to write fiction. But it has never riveted my attention the way editing does.

... Robert Heinlein did not allow editing on his books during the period when I was his editor ... Charles L. Grant of SFWA says the first time he got a call from Robert A. Heinlein, he stood at attention with the phone in his hand.

... By sometime in the 80s, I decided that there were too many people standing for the breakdown of genre boundaries ... and that science fiction's strength is its opposition to whatever the mainstream is.

[In the hall, I ambush F. Brett Cox about his upcoming book with mutual friend Andy Duncan]

It's to be called *Crossroads: Southern Stories of the Fantastic*, from Invisible Cities Press up in Vermont ... Contemporary work, mostly original stories, from living writers, both genre and otherwise ... One thing: with all the sheer work of getting and reading submissions and doing paperwork with grants and permissions, it's given me a whole new appreciation for editors!

[At dinner, brother Michael and I repair to the terrace of Papa Razzi's for relaxed alfresco dining with new fanfriend Marlin May; unfortunately, a satanically aggressive yellowjacket gets a buzz out of harassing me throughout the meal; fortunately, my continual curses, whimpers, and just plain jumpings up and runnings away don't affect the appetites of my brother or Marlin, who near the end of the ordeal merely observes quietly]

I look forward to reading about this in your report.

[After Michael eggs me into oh-so-casually mentioning the story about my one phone call from Harlan Ellison, to really impress the new guy, said Marlin nods and says enthusiastically]

Hey, have you ever seen Harlan's house? Outside there's this great sculpture, and when you get inside you ... *[can't remember the rest, as my sobbing drowns out remainder of story]*

[At the con's famous Kirk Poland Memorial Bad Prose Competition, moderator Eric Van has praise as the audience actually, for a while at least, seems headed toward a decent score; he thinks we've twigged to the subtle prose stylings of perennial Pasha of Pastiche Geary Gravel]

After all these years, you folks have finally caught on. You're going, "That sounds so right that it *must* be Geary!"

[Although at the end, it's Newbie Night; new contestant Glenn Grant impressively places second, but for Van the story is still in first as last year's surprise winner surprisingly repeats]

Our defending champion and still champ — the first person other than Geary ever to win a second Kirk Poland — Shariann Lewitt!

[Either Readercon isn't much of a room party convention or nobody ever invites me to most of the good ones; but in any case, at the good old reliable Boston in 2004 bid bash, writer Michael Burstein teases NESFAn Sharon Sbarsky]

Are these the kosher shrimp?

[Tor editor Teresa Nielsen Hayden has been having health problems of unknown origin lately, and wishes her maladies weren't so darned rare and interesting]

I was deliriously happy once when I went to the doctor with a little bald spot on my head and he said, "Oh, that's alopecia areata, it's very common with women your age."

[In the hall, NESFAn Lisa Hertel talks to Fred Lerner and me about fandom, faith, and fatality]

I think religion is really important at certain points in your life. When you're four, and discover that your parents aren't gods. And later in life, when your parents die ...

[Shadowy NESFA Press Czar Tony Lewis has long been the Napoleon of networking]

Cory Seidman, who married Alexei Panshin, was at breakfast in the Catskills long ago when we were all young. And she is telling her parents about MITSFS and how they have this librarian who's really a weird guy — and the waiter leans over and says, "Don't say bad things about Tony Lewis, he has agents everywhere!"

[Canadian writer/editor Glenn Grant learns that famously prolix SF writer Lionel Fanthorpe is now a minister, a divine, a man of the cloth]

I wonder what his sermons are like ...

[Since it's only Saturday night and I've already got 74 pages of quote notes, this news from APA:NESFA Collation Queen Pam Fremon is the worst I've heard all con — and will ultimately contribute to my missing not one but two deadlines]

Remember, the APA:NESFA collation is moved up to only a week from Wednesday.

[As I join a conversation in the hall, NESFAn Mark Olson tries to make me feel welcome]

I've got to go fix the table in about 3 minutes, so I won't be leaving just because you sat down here. Although it's a consideration.

[Somedamnhow I didn't attend any of his panels this time (catch you at Worldcon, RJS), but as he bounds over my feet to enter the party, SF star Robert J. Sawyer twinkles a smile and delivers at least one intelligent, perceptive quote]

Hello, Bob!

[Bestowing a rare and beautiful triple-dipper quote, Michael Burstein relates that Gary Dryfoos says that earlier Paul Dworkin described John Crowley's 1979 classic Engine Summer thusly]

It's like a guy wakes up and goes to the store. Only he's not a guy and it's not a store.

[Writer/editor Faye Ringel retails a pair of political stories, each scary in a completely different way]

I was up in Vancouver and people kept talking to me about what President Bush had said to Prime Minister Chretien. This had happened at a meeting 2 days before, and they were still all frothing. Bush called him "amigo." Repeatedly ...

I was talking to an Israeli politician — we were trying to sell Israel bonds. Everybody naturally was asking, "What do you think is going to happen now in the Middle East?" And he said — this is a guy with high-up connections in his government — he said flatly, "Either there's going to be a Middle East with Israel or there's not going to be a Middle East." Apparently he thinks they can have some sort of limited nuclear war ...

[Sunday morning dawns with the panel on Personal Rediscovery, discussing whether there's a tide in the affairs of SF; Darrell Schweitzer thinks that's bilgewater]

Critics make excuses that certain science fiction "was good for its time." Nobody says that F. Scott Fitzgerald "was good for his time."

[Eternal SF Book Club editor Ellen Asher takes the long view]

Wait 60 years and it's no longer dated, it's historical.

Also, there's the reader's age ... When you were 10 or 12 years old, let's just say that your literary standards were not that high —

[SF Chronicle editor Andrew I. Porter agrees]
— I thought that *Slan* was the greatest thing since sliced bread.

[Is editor Patrick Nielsen Hayden succumbing to ennui?]

For young people, science fiction is an excellent literature for picking apart how life really works ... Later on, some of it begins to look a little *jeune*.

[Speaking of standards, for Asher it's simple]
My standard for putting on a warning label has always been, if it would prompt a mother somewhere to write a letter to the state attorney general.

[In the parking lot, SMOR Michael Matthews (you know, a secret master of Readercon?) realizes that a con runs on its registration desk forms]

I'm going for more pens.

[Inside, bemused SMOR Ellen Brody muses about breakfast]

Cheerios and peanut butter. Well, I've done stranger things in a con suite.

[For con suite habitue Dave Nicklas, fandoms are a way of life, all right]

I've restored antique airplanes — the biggest ones we've done was a B-24. It took 5 years ...

[Jonathan Lethem introduces the panel on the Fiction of Clifford D. Simak]

This is in conjunction with his being the Dead Guest of Honor here, which I'm sure he's enjoying enormously.

[Writer/critic Greg Feeley has actually done some research here]

There are four or five tidy phrases that are always used of Simak ... "pastoral," "aliens as neighbors," "country values." Suggesting always that the science fiction is not tied to the sophistications that trail in the wake of high technology.

... But there of aspects these tidy phrases simply do not cover.

[Lethem hits the high points]

Show of hands: who here has read *City*? Who has read *Way Station*? Who has read anything else?

... He worked at a high level of competence for a very long time, and exceeded it a couple of times.

[For Feeley, Simak stands alone]

All his best stories were 8,000 or 9,000 words long. "Desertion," his best story, was about that long.

I read a handful of them for this panel. It struck me that what his works are all about is loneliness ... His characters are unmarried, and tend not to have a girl back home ... You read "The Thing in the Stone," "The Autumn Land" — *Way Station*, my God!

[Artist Lissane Lake admits that Simak can be lovely, dark, and deep, but]

Everybody goes 10 yards into the woods and then there's a death or a killing.

[Lethem agrees Simak Country isn't everybody's Midwest]

Yes, the countryside that Enoch lives in in *Way Station* is a little bit that old sick slightly weird America ... Where you might fall down in the woods and break a leg and nobody will come.

[In the panel on the Single-Author Collection, Paul Di Filippo deploys his X-ray vision]

In Terry Bisson's new collection, *In the Upper Room* — you have to ask, Why does every story prominently feature women's lingerie? ... Single-author collections can be very revelatory in that way.

[Small press maven Marty Helpert is starstruck]

My favorite older collection would be the Alfred Bester *[here my scribbles say Star something, which seems helpful until I find there are Bester collections named Starburst; Star Light, Star Bright; and Starlight; take your pick]*

... And if I can mention something from Golden Gryphon, the collection by Richard Paul Russo, *Terminal Visions*.

[One little quote from writer Allen Steele and suddenly you're running for the Sturgeon shelf]

I've really been enjoying *The Complete Stories of Theodore Sturgeon*. Including his funniest one, "Pruzy's Pot" — oh, it's a dirty story!

[Writer Kelly Link advises us to consult Fowler]

Karen Joy Fowler's *Black Glass* and then her first one, *Artificial Things*.

[Master editor Gordon Van Gelder is too modest]

NESFA came out recently with the collected works of William Tenn [that would be *Immodest Proposals: The Collected Short Fiction of William Tenn, Vol. 1, available now at better bookstores or from www.nesfa.org/press/Books/Tenn-1.html*] — I'd sort of been angling to do that at St. Martin's, but NESFA does a better job than I could have done.

[In some strange power's employ, Di Filippo moves in a rigorous line to get one last rec in]

Samuel R. Delany's *Driftglass* — essential, essential!

[In the panel on *Amnesia Fiction*, which sprung from Jonathan Lethem's 2000 opus *The Vintage Book of Amnesia: An Anthology*, Tom Disch paints a perfect (and perfectly phrased) frame]

It's the perfect setup for a mystery in which the progress of the story will be the discovery of the backstory ... But the part of it that's more fun is the beauty of forgetfulness. You get to write about the world as it would appear if you were completely intelligent, but a baby ... The woman sitting across from you — hers and every face you see is washed in the dawn light of the first time.

[Lethem penetrates to another layer]

It's more honest. Because every mystery writer is trying to conceal the backstory.

[Reviewer and writer Shira Daemon makes the link to the movies]

As in the recent *Memento*: he doesn't know if she's his lover or a woman who's trying to kill him.

[Is there any critic anywhere more a combination of the analytical and the eloquent than our own John Clute?]

If you translate it back anywhere close to real life, you have a portrait of almost unbearable anguish ... In the guise of a partner who's not recognized ...

As soon as the story is unpacked, it becomes a torment.

[Does Disch have a vision, or a waking dream?]

I suppose my favorite amnesia work is Keats's "Ode to a Nightingale." The fear of darkness, but at the same time there's music coming from that darkness.

[Lethem offers a real-life example]

We should say here that there are lots of amnesiacs in film and fiction, but deep amnesia is not a common experience.

Jill Robinson, who wrote *Perdido* and *Bed/Time/Story* in the 70s — she had an accident 10 years ago. She has to be told over and over again, you can't call your father, he'd dead; this is your husband ...

On the other hand, she says one of the pleasures of getting a good review is that she can read it every day.

[Disch really knows how to start a story]

In my limited experience of prisons and insane asylums, I met a man who was the *beau ideal* of amnesia victims ... This good-looking guy who woke up every day and didn't know that he was a prisoner, or what the charges were ... He was very humorous and despairing

He was also the most sincere and passionate suicide I've ever met. One time he tried to kill himself by drinking a whole can of lead paint. He was only caught because one of the guards found the little trickle of gray paint from his mouth ... He was our hero. He had such style!

[Glenn Grant analyzes another case history]

The man in the Oliver Sacks piece, "The Last Hippie," has Korsakoff Syndrome and is constantly forgetting things from yesterday or the last minute. And every time something happens, like the current

president shows up on television, it's very disturbing for him —

[Till I ambush him from the audience]

— ME TOO! [Liberal laughter, applause]

[In the item on the Fantasy Archipelago, Michael Swanwick explains a key term from his panelgenic essay in the November 1994 Asimov's]

I chose the term "hard fantasy" because it was the most annoying term I could think of.

[Di Filippo buys another term too]

— In Ursula Le Guin's new *Tales from Earthsea*, she coins the term "commodified fantasy." They're not evil. They're commodified.

... Although it's true we do not need a sequel to *Little, Big*.

[Perhaps Yves Menard could be bought]

I aspire to be commodified. It would be nice to be imitated.

[Di Filippo brings up the brilliant and original work on classifying motifs Clute has done in The Encyclopedia of Fantasy and other pieces]

John Clute has this kind of Joseph Campbell thing going —

[Seated next to lucky me in the audience, Liz Hand delightfully invents the con's best play on words]

— The Hero of a Thousand Pages!

[I had to look up "infimal," which it turns out means "of the lowest order," but Menard alludes to a specialized application]

Brian Stableford said there are *infimal* readers. They want to read the same book over and over, but will never read the same book twice.

... Then there's *The Lord of the Rings*. Very readable when you're 14, and you say, "This is so cool!" And when you get older, you say, "This is so sad."

Moonwise [by Greer Gilman], which I love, will never have that kind of success, because it is not accessible. You need to be

commodifiable to have the greatest kind of success.

[Swanwick considers a counterexample]

Hope Mirrlees's *Lud-in-the-Mist* was an incredibly influential book. Elizabeth Hand said it was like The Velvet Underground's first album. It only sold a hundred copies, but everyone who bought one started a band ... *Lud-in-the-Mist* was important for many fantasy writers, from Liz to Neil Gaiman.

[Have I neglected to mention that this panel's theme comes from a Swanwick idea that each major work of fantasy is sui generis and isolate? Although he finds at least one recent exception]

I think *Perdido Street Station* contradicts my essential theory — it is in dialog with other works of fantasy ... You can't tell me China Mieville hasn't read Mary Gentle's *Rats and Gargoyles* or Mike [M. John] Harrison's work.

[But the idea usually applies, says Swanwick]

You look in Tolkien's letters for his praise of E. R. Eddison and you're in for a shock. These people all attempted to create works of art that stood alone. They looked at *Gormenghast*, and said, "No, that's not it." And they tried to write it.

[Somewhere in here the inimitable Clute introduces a cool phrase that's new to me; you?]

Hapax legomenon: a word which is said only once.

[At panel's end, Clute tantalizes us with the possibility of a new edition of the great Encyclopedia of Science Fiction]

Peter [Nicholls] is not well, and he has handed his role on to David Langford. David and I absolutely want to do it, but it's a matter of costing for the publisher.

We'd be relieved to do it: it wouldn't be as much work this time, you see.

[In the panel on Entropy, hot new writer Wil McCarthy, author of *Bloom and The Collapsium*, counts his rivets]

I'm an aerospace engineer ... one of those guys who believe that every solution has a problem. Including that the universe is expanding and will cool down to absolute zero and there's not a damn thing you can do about it, supposedly.

[Nice to know I'm not the only one who learned much of my hard science between soft covers; Hal Clement recalls]

I first found out about entropy in a Jack Williamson serial. Although I learned a little more about it later ...

[Upcoming Canadian writer Peter Watts takes a broad view]

A heartrending mainstream novel about a person dying of cancer is about an increase in entropy.

[Though McCarthy has the hard facts; please note, class, that the last word is, for this Devniad anyway, definitely one a them hapax legomena]

Entropy is only approximately "increasing disorder." It's really a measure of where the heat goes ... The answer actually came out this month, why the sun doesn't produce as many neutrinos as we think it should. Turns out it provides exactly as many as we would expect, but they change state by doing a funny kind of twist through another dimension ... One scientist said that the universe has a slight left-handed chirality.

[Later, McCarthy proffers the perfect Readercon answer to a query]

Can I answer a slightly different question that amuses me more?

[As we steal a golden hour to bask on the patio, Patrick O'Leary shows me a wooden coin (I examine it) he found in the men's room (I hand it back quickly); one side declares READING IS FUN, the other displays a cheery Malzbergian motto]

"Our youth of possibility may be stripped from us, but our failure can remain shining and constant forever." — *Galaxies* 1975

[O'Leary recommends some mind candy comix]

You have to get this; you'll love me for it: *Yummy Fur* by Chester Brown. He's a Toronto artist; the most grotesque and wonderful comix you'll ever read.

He did autobiographical comix: one is *Playboy*. Then he did *The Gospel of Mark*, for instance. Jesus is this annoying guy ...

[Moshe Feder, longtime fan and new Tor editor, is getting feed up]

They used to have trouble with my first name; it's exotic. But now most people know to pronounce the "e." Yet more and more, with my last name, it's "feeder" or something. You wouldn't say "feed-eral government," so why do it in my case? Maybe we're experiencing a new Great Vowel Shift.

[When you think you're out, they drag you back in ... Michael Walsh persuades me once more into the mostly dismantled dealer's room to show me]

I'm publishing a Michael Swanwick, to be called *Being Gardner Dozois*. It's an 80,000-word interview, where Swanwick takes Dozois through his work, story by story.

Here's the great cover, by Omar Rayyan. Nice, huh? ...

[It is indeed a wonderful cover concept, beautifully executed, but you'll have to wait until it comes out at Worldcon next month to see it, friends ... And wait until next year for another Readercon. See you all there?]

Ego Scanners (Shall Not) Live in Vain

Less time and space for running (or certainly replying) to your letters this ish, but here's a sampling:

[Fan Eric Lindsay from deepest Australia]

Many thanks for *The Devniad*, given me at the Boston Corflu, and reporting Boskone ...

Using a cellphone while driving isn't legal in most Australian states. Don't know why they have specific laws against it;

obviously it falls under the inattentive or negligent driving laws in any case.

[From Puerto Rico, writer/friend **James Stevens-Arce**]

Sorry you couldn't make the Nantucket Film Festival. Here's some of what you missed.

They screened some good movies: *Hedwig and the Angry Inch*, my personal favorite and eventually the festival winner; *The Château*, a clever comedy about two brothers, one black (Romany Malco) and one white (Paul Rudd), who inherit a French castle; and *American Rhapsody*, starring Nastassia Kinski and Tony Goldwyn, the tale of a family forced to leave their baby daughter behind for five years when they flee Communist Hungary of the 1950s ...

In addition, we were treated to live readings of three scripts — one an adaptation of Frank Conroy's *Stop-Time* by his son Will — by groups of actors that included the likes of Marisa Tomei, Tate Donovan, Fisher Stevens, Griffin Dunne, and John Shea; panel discussions on distribution, collaboration, and shooting on digital video; and morning interviews with participating directors, producers, and writers, culminating the last morning with an hour-long exchange with Arthur Penn and Walter Bernstein.

I gave away copies of *Soulsaver* to a number of directors, actors, and producers, got requests from several prodco reps for a read of my script that semifinaled at the New York Latino International Film Festival ...

Wish you'd been with us. Are you going to be a no-show at WorldCon, too?

[Jim: no, no, no! See you there!]

[Writer **Patrick O'Leary** from near Detroit]

... *The Mummy Returns* sucks beyond sucking.

Shrek drove me bugfuck. Maybe because I cried. A billion people working on every frame and the best they can come up with is a dragon with lipstick? This wasn't a movie, it was a gigantic gag machine. I felt like someone was next to me poking me in the

ribs every 2 seconds. I know I know — I'm a curmudgeon. But it could have been great, a real freshly imagined fantasy. Instead it was a Saturday morning Vegas standup comic routine with an infinite budget, an overload of pixels, and no idea. See *Mulan* or *Beauty and the Beast* for a real story and real fantasy.

[Constant responder **Gary Dryfoos** starts with comments in re Groucho's dancing on Hitler's grave]

Y'know, I've never understood that expression. I wonder whence it originates? It seems that going to someone's grave and dancing on it (and maybe having a little picnic) would be a NICE thing to do. I think if you wanted to express disdain or animosity towards the departed, you'd piss on their grave, no? And if enough people pissed on the grave, then no one would want to dance on it, would they?

[Also about the 1970s death by autoerotic asphyxiation of artist Vaughn Bode]

Ohmigod, I actually remember that. I never knew him but we shared a birthday, which I thought was cool, being a big fan of Cheech Wizard.

One afternoon in the summer of 1975, July, while I was living (as houseboy) in what might have been the weirdest house in Philadelphia, the mistress of the house got a phone call. When she hung up, all she said was "Vaughn's dead." Later she passed along what facts and rumors she'd gotten from some unnamed mutual friend. Everywhere I travelled for the rest of the summer, there usually seemed to be at least a few full-figured young women with oddly-painted faces. Not too many lizardy-lookin' guys in giant hats though.

[Fan **Michael Matthew** from somewhere around here]

I enjoy reading *The Devniad*. However, I received 23 copies of Pt 2 [of the *Corflu ish*], here. I have received multiple copies of several of the last few *Devniads*, but usually only one or two extra. I only got one copy of Pt 1; it's the later parts of a letter that seem to multiply.

Have other people had this problem?
Can you do anything? Now 23 is something
I can still handle, but if this multiplication
ever really runs away, it could overwhelm
my dial-up connection.

[Michael: TWENTY-THREE copies?! My God!
I'm so sorry.

*My prose style can be aggravating enough
without this added burden ... No, nobody else
has ever reported anything like that. Have you,
friends?]*

[From Ontario, **Lloyd Penney** comments on my
Corflu ish]

... Re Sharon Sbarsky's quote ... Many
people liked the idea of the fannish resume,
and I know that in my role of HR director
early in the Torcon bid, I asked for fannish
resumes or summaries from the committee,
and they were put in the Big Binder of
Bidder on the bid table. Other bid members
liked it, as it seemed business-like and
formal, and we wanted to look business-like
as we bid. I constructed a fannish resume
along the lines of your regular job-hunting
resume, and listed 23 years of convention
management, fanzine writing, masquerade
work and club management, plus other
service-oriented, written and on-line
activities.

Leah Smith should make available to
anyone who wants the *Fancylopedia* for the
Palm. As long as it's smaller than 1.3 MB, I
can carry it on my Palm m100. Hope and
Murray Moore are absolutely right about
Mikecon ... the roasted pig was delicious, as
were the myriad of hot and cold dishes
brought in from the Glicksohn or Harper
homes or elsewhere, such as the jambalaya
from our own kitchen.

Last minute voting for the FAAn
Awards? Hmmm! Hope told me I came in a
very respectable second for Best Letterhack
this year ...

The big anime convention in Toronto
that gets about 1000 attendees every year?
They were ready for some expansion, but
not for the 1800 people who came this year.
They are now looking at the largest hotel
near the airport, and plan to be ready for
2000 people next year ...

I want to see *Shrek*, especially for the
exquisite typecasting of Eddie Murphy as a
jackass ... I have heard recently that the film
Manhunter will be remade to give Anthony
Hopkins one last stab at playing Hannibal
Lector.

I must claim a revision to Olson's
Observation ["Fans know everything"] ...
Make it "Fans know a lot about a lot of
things. They claim they know everything.
They assume you don't." Penney's
Perception of the Populace ... perhaps.

[From Ontario also, fanziner **Murray Moore** —
and looking at Lloyd's and Murray's finishes, is
all they care about the mighty (Canadian)
dollar?]

... My current reading is the Golden
Gryphon Press collection of James Patrick
Kelly narratives entitled *Think Like a
Dinosaur*. Yowsa! I rarely buy hard cover at
full price — I'm more a remainder/used
book hunter — but I am getting my money's
worth.

[From New Jersey, fan (and merciless Fan
Writer Hugo rival) **Evelyn Leeper**]

Having collected 20,00 books and 2,000
movies, I have decided that there is
only one course left to me. I'm retiring.

Well, the fact that Lucent made me an
offer that I couldn't refuse — even
without the horse head — had something to
do with it.

What will I do now? Well, I have 20,000
books and 2,000 movies...

It's possible that in six months or so, I
might look for another job, but
that's very up in the air.

... And to answer the obvious "what is
Mark doing?" he's retiring as well, although
he hasn't gotten the official offer letter yet,
since he's in Avaya and they're two weeks
behind Lucent in dumping the old folks via
retirement enhancement offers. Hope this
doesn't jinx that!)

[From next door to Eric Lindsay (hey, how big
can Australia be?), fan **Erika Maria Lacey**]

"Deletekey" or "Backspace" [to replace the
con name "Corflu"]. I don't know ... it doesn't

have the same ring as "Corflu." Not many people know what that means these days, anyway; especially those who are more familiar with the electronic age. I had no idea what it meant until I came across it on some faanish website.

Shrek, strangely enough, has not had much press here at all — the only way I have heard of it is through word of mouth. Those friends of mine who have seen it are all gung-ho ...

[From farthest Brookline, Massachusetts, film critic and friend Dan Kimmel]

Someday we'll sit down and I'll try to convince you that *A.I.* was a travesty.

I do agree with you on the HBO movie *Conspiracy* but I wish they had acknowledged that it was a remake of a German film (quite good, quite chilling) called *The Wannsee Conference*.

Won't be at Readercon, but I will be at Worldcon, hoping to cheer you to an upset victory at the Hugos (unless Evelyn Leeper wins, in which case I'll be cheering *her* onto an upset victory).

[From northern Massachusetts, fan and family friend Eric Knight]

Loved the guest reporting by Darcy. Her tart (and somewhat dry) sense of humor came through her writing transparently and I could see both Bob and Darcy having those conversations. A pleasant interlude but I don't know how those who don't know them will respond. Suggest you add her as a regular "roving" reporter or "commentator without portfolio."

Tomb Raider — It's a Comic Book ferkrisake!!! I found it no more or less stupid than any of the comic books I read in my youth. I went expecting a comic book, I got a comic book — and it was a pretty good comic book at that. None of this in any way changes any of the film's weaknesses, which you accurately document, but it wasn't trying to be a great "mellerdrama," it was trying to be a live-action comic book. In that, it succeeded well (stupid fight scenes 'way out of weight class, etc. aside).

[From metro New York, new friend and fan Bonnie Black]

I *knew* I should have written down some of the better exchanges between John Norman and Maryann *[Johanson, the Flick Philosopher]*. In all the cons where I've seen him, he manages to turn every panel on *any* topic into a diatribe against "feminists editors" and "gay sensibilities" that have pushed his books off of publisher's lists after 25 years of selling (insert number here) copies for them.

My own exasperated commentary to him came down to: Everything has its day. If you sold 500,000 copies of a dress last year and you don't sell any copies of that dress this year — they drop the line! It's the same with books. The appetite for big-he-man with sword, muscles and woman at his feet fantasies have gone by the wayside.

Thoughtful, complex character fantasies (a la Guy Gavriel Kaye, Peter S. Beagle, or Robert Jordan or even a Steven Brust or R. A. Salvatore) are far more demanded today — especially because S/F and F have a larger female readership. JN is living in the past — the mainly white male dominated past at that.

Several other panelist then commented coldly that the publishing industry did not owe him a living — and that it was well-known he had recently been signed with a new publisher. Of course, then his complaint was that it was not at his "usual" compensation.

OYE! what a whining pain he is.

Speaking of terrific fantasy writers -- I'm glad someone mentioned Pullman's "His Dark Materials" trilogy. Simply wonderful and very thought provoking. Far more subversive than Harry Potter — but also far less "popular" and so less subject to "Moral Majority" pressures.

[Bonnie, about your comment that "[t]he appetite for big-he-man with sword, muscles and woman at his feet fantasies have gone by the wayside." Actually, that audience may have grown, not diminished — but it's not reading John Norman, it's watching WWF Smackdown ...]

FlimFan

EXCELLENT:

Sexy Beast — Perhaps my favorite film of the year so far, this dark, jazzed-up thriller (and in a way, far darker comedy) will demand we pay attention to anything director Jonathan Glazer and writers Louis Mellis and David Scinto ever do again. Along with 1999's *Lock, Stock, and Two Smoking Barrels*, it's absolutely the best Brit crime flick since 1979's *The Long Good Friday*, the movie that gave us Bob Hoskins ... *Sexy Beast* gives us lower-class English crook "Gal" Dove (Ray Winstone), who's retired with a friend and their two demimondish girlfriends to lie in sunny Spain by the pool and grow fat and happy — while thanking God every effing second for their escape from lives of grimy, rainy, dangerous crime. Until word comes from London that old associates want Gal back in for one more job. And they're sending Don Logan out to persuade him ... Don joins Frank, Dennis Hopper's glue-sniffing psycho from *Blue Velvet*, on the shortlist of movie characters you'd most *not* like to meet in a dark alley. He's ten times dumber than Anthony Hopkins's merely adequate Hannibal Lecter, but eleven times scarier. And Don's dark soul is inhabited by — wait for it — Ben Kingsley ... in the role that will make you absolutely forget all about Gandhi, friend.

Memento — Leonard Shelby is living a modern literary motif: his own *mind* is an unreliable narrator. Since some serious head trauma, he can't form new memories. So he wakes up every day or even every hour, and can't recall where he is, how he got there, who's he met (*The Matrix*'s Joe Pantoliano as edgy friend and Carrie-Anne Moss as an even more enigmatic acquaintance), or what's happened since that trauma, how long ago? He can't remember. All this somewhat hampers Leonard's mission in life, which is chasing down a dangerous killer. But he copes in

some extremely cool ways ... What Leonard calls "my condition" gives very good cinema. It's made *Memento*, an indie feature written by brothers Christopher and Jonathan Nolan, directed by Christopher, and starring Guy Pearce of *Ravenous* and *L. A. Confidential* (he was the ambitious cop) a considerable art house hit since its 2000 release. There's pure, headlong joy here. Like when Leonard is running frantically down an alley, says "OK, what am I doing?," another man hurtles around a corner, "Oh, I'm chasing this guy," runs after, gets close, guy turns, sees Leonard, shoots, starts toward him, "Nope — he's chasing *me*," Leonard turns, runs away. This is Kafka meets Keaton, everything you go to the movies for in this new decade of the Uh-Ohs. Look, this script could use more doublings and correspondences, and could be cleverer at planting clues whose meaning explodes on us later; plus the ending exceeds the limit of what you'd actually do for friendship. But the fun here far outweighs a few fumbles. *Memento* is one movie you'll remember with pleasure.

GOOD:

Jurassic Park III — A lean, mean, boredom-eating machine.

DECENT:

Final Fantasy: The Spirits Within — The story's weak, but the computer-generated animation is so good it trembles on the cusp of reality. Turn your head fast while you're watching the movie and you'll swear those faces up there are *real*.

Osmosis Jones — You know going in this was directed by the Farrelly Brothers (Peter and Bob) of *Kingpin* and *There's Something About Mary* infamy, and giving the Warner Brothers logo an animated paramecium look is pretty funny, so the first 15 seconds of this movie make you think it might be great. It's not. It's OK, though. Sort of an animated *Fantastic Voyage*, but through Bill Murray instead of that 1966 patient guy. Murray's character Frank sports a diet as bad and an exercise regiment as nonexistent as me and quite a few of my friends, though

on him somehow it's all kind of charming. Bill Murray is great as often, and Chris Rock is fine as the lone-wolf-cop-type white blood cell fighting off the insidious invasion of a villainous virus (Laurence Fishburne, who voices a terrific bad guy). The comic show is stolen, though, by William Shatner as the fatuous, cowardly mayor (listen for his quote from Murray Hamilton's archetype sleazebag mayor from *Jaws*) and David Hyde Pierce (Fraser's brother Niles on TV), who was born to play a finickily self-righteous cold capsule ... The movie shows the consequences of Frank's unhealthy lifestyle with an animation style that's barely adequate. No *Toy Story* or *Final Fantasy* advances here. It's more like the apotheosis of the health-and-biology film strip you watched in grade school. Though I'd say without *quite* as much (OK, any) attention paid to realistic science ...

BAD:

Planet of the Apes — Formerly gifted director Tim Burton (remember the brilliant *Batman* and the transcendent *Edward Scissorhands*?) stumbles badly (again) with this one. Trying for a smart reimagining of the 1968 original, he gets a silly retread instead. The only grace note: Tim Roth as the general has got some good ape moves, and they've given him a genuinely scary demon-mask face. You wake up and jump gibbering for your cage bars every time he glares out of the screen.

Backchat
on *APA: NESFA #374*,
July 2001

To Elisabeth Carey

That asthma attack sounded nasty; hope you're feeling better. But I'm intrigued by the device you bought, the Nebulizer. If you spray it on an SF author, does she win an award?

To Tom Endrey

While Bonnie Black is a longtime SF reader, don't think she's been around fandom much. So we can't demand she automatically know Marty Gear (not being a costume fan, wouldn't know him if I met him myself) or Robert Sacks or Joe Mayhew.

You recommend *Yahoo! Internet Life* magazine? Thought for sure, with you interested in it, Tom, it must be free. But the Web says \$15 a year. I'll buy one at the newsstand, though, and take a look. Thanks!

To Joe Ross

A nicely written review of a book (*The Neptune File*, by Tom Standage) on an astronomical subject, the review highlighted by a beautiful little capsule history of the subject, which is who gets credit for discovering the planet Neptune? I had to look twice to make sure I wasn't reading Mark Olson's APazine instead. You should do more of these, Joe. Don't think I even have to add the book to my tottering stack, because you've given me the gist.

To Paul Giguere

So sorry you missed Readercon; another good one. We'll all close our eyes and mightily pray that Oct 2002 comes on quickly, with your doctorate done. Remember, it's considered bad form to stand upon the platform on Diploma Day and scream, "I'm KING of the WORLD!"

To Mark Olson

I daren't show your APA to Queen Maureen. It would assassinate her. We thought going up to Point Reyes from San Francisco (when we were out there in June) and gazing worshipfully at a beachful of elephant seals through binocs — from 200 yards away — was such a supreme nature experience. But here are you and Priscilla, north of Santa Cruz, practically licking fishbits off their whiskers!

To Tony Lewis

By my count, you covered 9,765 interesting topics last ish. To pick two:

It's comforting to know planetoid Arthurdent hurtles through space still. I

propose fans with a pipeline to the
International Astronomical Union's Small
Bodies Names committee routinely lobby
for a suitably named heavenly body
whenever a major SF/F figure dies; right
now, I suggest PoulAnderson,
dominicflandry, Hoka, or Tauzero.

Who is Bill Desmond and why do your
words about him seem to smoke gently
when their page is opened?