

# ARGENTUS

Summer 2003,



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# From the Mine

Steven H Silver

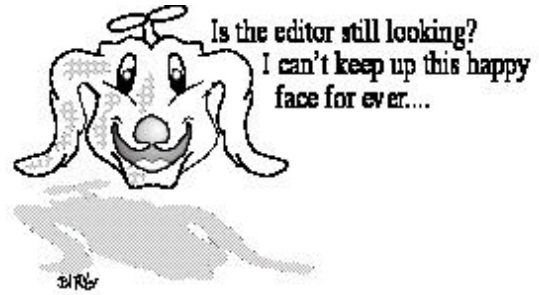
A question that gets debated occasionally is which of your five senses would you least want to lose. In my case, I've always feared the loss of my sight. In an article, Ed Meskys explains that there are plenty of venues for the blind to obtain reading material and that loss of sight does not mean an inability to read the latest and greatest (or even the oldest and golddest) science fiction and fanzines. In the article, he also points out the problem with .pdf files for the blind and I'll be sending him (and anyone else interested) a copy of *Argentus* on disk in a more blind-literate format.

In her letters, Helene Hanff frequently wrote diatribes against those who bowdlerized books by abridging, selecting, and otherwise making editorial decisions to cut text. Fred Lerner now tackles that subject in his own article, beginning with a look at a handsome volume that only whets the appetite.

I could claim that my selection of Toronto to kick off what I hope will be a series of articles on fannish destinations was completely coincidental, and in part it was, since I wanted an article by Lloyd Penney. However, I will admit that I was partly influenced by the fact that this year's Worldcon will be held in Toronto. Does this mean that *Argentus* 4 will feature a travel article on Boston? Maybe, but probably not. I still haven't decided.

Following the letter column, the travel theme continues with imaginary voyages to the lands of science fiction and fantasy as fan writers describe their own journeys into various countries imagined by speculative fiction authors.

|  |    |
|--|----|
| From the Mine.....   | 1  |
| Religion, Science Fiction, and the Real Universe.....                            | 3  |
| Where I Get My Reading Materials.....  | 9  |
| On the Acquiring of Books.....   | 10 |
| On the Acquiring of Books.....   | 11 |
| Mourning the Loss of a Bookstore.....  | 13 |
| Complete and Unabridged.....   | 13 |
| Complete and Unabridged.....   | 14 |
| The Essential Filk Library.....  | 15 |
| 01-02-03.....  | 18 |
| Six Lost Worlds: The Dramatic Adaptations of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's Novel..... | 22 |
| Letter Column.....   | 30 |
| Fanzines Received.....   | 41 |
| Mock Section: Travel Reports.....  | 42 |
| A Weekend in Arbaaz.....   | 42 |
| Worldcon Gotham?.....  | 47 |
| My Arrival in the Dreaming City.....   | 49 |
| Excerpt from "Colombia, Venezuela, and Brazil Travelog".....                     | 52 |



This issue's cover, by multiple Hugo Award-winning artist Bob Eggleton, is a representation of asteroid 13562 Bobeggleton, which was discovered at Kitt Peak Observatory in 1992. Eggleton was honored with the asteroid in April 2003, along with fellow science fiction artist David Hardy, whose asteroid, 13329 Davidhardy, was discovered in 1998, also at Kitt Peak.

*ARGENTUS* is published once a year by Steven H Silver. All submissions, letters or other correspondence should be directed to him at 707 Sapling Lane., Deerfield, IL 60015-3969 or e-mailed to [shsilver@sfsite.com](mailto:shsilver@sfsite.com). Issues of *ARGENTUS* are available for \$5.00 or "the usual." The *Argentus* website can be found at <http://www.sfsite.com/~silverag/argentus.html>

This year, I'll be chairing Windycon for the second year in a row. As numerology would have it, this is also Windycon's thirtieth year. To celebrate the important anniversary, I've invited our founding chairs, Mark and Lynne Aronson, to come back as our Fan guests of honor. Other guests of honor include Gregory Benford, Phyllis Eisenstein, John G. Cramer, Vincent di Fate, and Tom Doherty. I'm bringing in special guests Jim Frenkel, David Hartwell, Kathryn Cramer, Christian Ready, Jeri Smith-Ready, Pamela Sargent, George Zebrowski, and more. Windycon will be held in Schaumburg, IL from November 7-9, 2003 and this will be our final year in this location. The Windycon website is located at [www.windycon.org](http://www.windycon.org)

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## ***Religion, Science Fiction, and the Real Universe***

**Brother Guy Consolmagno SJ, Vatican Observatory**

Everybody has a religion, whether it is Islam or football or fandom. Your religion is the core belief that defines your self identity, the axiom on which you base everything else, the thing that gets you up in the morning excited to meet the day. For me, my religion happens to be my religion. Don't get me wrong; I love fandom (and I enjoy football, for that matter). But I can gafiate and still be me. Fandom is my collection of friends; my religion is my family.

I thought first to be a Jesuit when I was studying history at Boston College, but after following the advice from an older Jesuit to "pray about" my vocation (prayer? I was 18 years old; who prays? So actually getting an answer to that prayer in the form of a strong urge *not* to join the Jesuits at that time came as a real shock) I shifted myself over to MIT where I wound up with a couple of degrees in Earth and Planetary Sciences, followed by a doctorate in the field from Arizona.

The same urges that had made me look at religious life when I was 18 came back to haunt me when I was 30 and a research scientist at MIT. Why waste my time worrying about the moons of Jupiter when there were people starving in the world? At that point I quit my job and joined the Peace Corps. They sent me to Africa, where I went eager to dig ditches or whatever they wanted me to do. What they wanted, was for me to teach astronomy to graduate students at the University of Nairobi.

And they were right. People in Africa may be poor, but they are people. And like people everywhere, they are curious about their world, hungry to know more about where they came from and where we all fit in. And they're hungry with the same sense of adventure that made me read science fiction when I was a kid, and made me want to be part of the space program myself when I was older.

These urges eventually brought me back to considering a life as a Jesuit. In 1989 I left a professorship at a small eastern college to become a Jesuit brother, and in 1993 I was assigned to the Vatican Observatory, where I've worked ever since.

I've dined out regularly on a Jesuit/scientist/fan, and I've published bits and pieces on the topic in many places (most notably my book *Brother Astronomer*). What follows here is loosely adapted from an earlier publication in an obscure journal ("Astronomy, Science Fiction, and the Popular Culture," *Leonardo* vol. 29, pp. 127-132, 1996). In addition, you can hunt down my web page ([http://homepage.mac.com/brother\\_guy](http://homepage.mac.com/brother_guy)) to find other things I have written about science and religion. But what I would like to do here is to give a wholly incomplete pondering on how science and religion both thread their ways through some of my favorite (and not so favorite) science fiction.

My personal story illustrates the first important thing to remember about science, science fiction, and religion:

all are activities of particular human beings. None of them exist outside of the individuals who choose to participate in them. Thus within science fiction, religion must first be discussed in connection with the characters who populate the stories themselves.

Consider *Red Mars*, by Kim Stanley Robinson. In the passage below we follow three characters: John Boone, the usually laid-back hero; Frank Chalmers, his rival and something of a trouble-maker; and Maya Toitovna, one of the leaders of an expedition off to build the first colony on Mars. We see the following scene, on their way to Mars, through her eyes:

One Sunday morning the Christians aboard, numbering a dozen or so, celebrated Easter in the bubble dome... After their service they came down to the dining hall for brunch... and at first only Maya and Frank heard what John was saying to Phyllis Boyle, the geologist who had conducted the Easter service.

"I understand the idea of the universe as a superbeing, and all its energy being the thoughts of this being. It's a nice concept. But the Christ story..." John shook his head.

"Do you really know the story?" Phyllis asked.

"I was brought up Lutheran in Minnesota," John replied shortly. "I went to confirmation class, had the whole thing drilled into me... You must know that the gospels were written decades after the event, by people who never met Christ. And that there are other gospels which reveal a different Christ, gospels that were excluded from the Bible by a political process in the third century. So he's a kind of literary figure really, a political construct. We don't know anything about the man himself."

Phyllis shook her head. "That's not true."

"But it is," John objected. "Look, there's a history to all this stuff. Monotheism is a belief system that you see appearing in early herding societies. The greater their dependence on sheep herding, the more likely their belief in a shepherd god. It's an exact correlation, you can chart it and see. And the god is always male, because those societies were patriarchal. There's a kind of archeology, an anthropology — a sociology of religion, that makes all of this perfectly clear — how it came about, what needs it fulfilled."

Phyllis regarded him with a small smile. "I don't know what to say to that, John. It's not a matter of history, after all. It's a matter of faith... We don't know everything, to pretend we do is arrogance. The creation is mysterious. To give something a name like 'the big bang,' and then think you have an explanation — it's bad logic, bad thinking. Outside your rational scientific thought is an enormous area of consciousness, an area more important than science. Faith in God is a part of that. And I suppose you either have it or you don't." She stood. "I hope it comes to you." She left the room.

After a silence, John sighed. "Sorry, folks. Sometimes it still gets to me."

"You just don't have faith," Frank said, egging him on.

John ignored him. "People who in the lab are as hard-headed as can be — you should see Phyllis grilling the conclusions her colleagues draw from their data! And then suddenly they start using all kinds of debater's tricks, evasions, qualifications, fuzzy thinking of every kind. As if they were an entirely different person."

"You just don't have faith!" Frank repeated.

"Well, I hope I never get it! It's like being hit by a hammer in the head!"

John stood up and took his tray into the kitchen. The rest looked at each other in silence. It must have been, Maya thought, a really bad confirmation class.

(from *Red Mars* pp. 47-49)

There are a lot of interesting issues brought up here... the scientific claims of history and anthropology against faith; the contrast between faith and reason; the ambivalence of the characters, and the author, towards religion. The non-Christians clearly don't understand Christianity, but then they're not supposed to; that's part of their character. Notice how it's the scientist, John Boone, who tries to force his ideas on other people, using faulty logic, debater's tricks, all the things he accuses the Christians of doing. (I'm on an e-mail list of SF fans that samples all religious stripes; the only people who regularly proselytize there are the born-again Pagans, constantly railing against all those pushy born-again Christians.)

But the Phyllis character, the Christian, who seems to be drawn in a very positive way by the author... still, she isn't quite right. This author's best attempt at presenting Christianity just misses the mark.

For one thing, Christianity — or any religion — does not start with faith. It starts with experience. Faith is our reaction to that experience.

For that matter, KSR really didn't get science right, either. Science is neither so rational, nor so black-and-white, as the John Boone character makes out. It's not based on

experiment; it's based on the intuition, the faith if you will, that led us to perform those experiments in the first place.

I find similar problems in many famous science fiction stories that deal overtly with science and religion. In Arthur C. Clarke's "The Star," a Jesuit astronomer discovers that the Star of

Bethlehem was a supernova that wiped out a planet of intelligent, happy, peaceful people; in James Blish's *A Case of Conscience*, a Jesuit scientist encounters an alien race who have their own ideas about religion; in Walter Miller's *A Canticle for Leibowitz*, the Church in a post-nuclear holocaust world preserves ancient technology in its monasteries. They were interesting reads; but their ideas of religion were just a little bit off — about as much off as their idea of science. In the first two stories, the fictional Jesuits (why do they always pick on us?) are guilty of some incredibly shallow moral analysis; the third, written in 1959, equates the Catholic Church with scholastic philosophy and lots of Latin... and worse, the Church is painted as so conventionally sympathetic —

poor, humble, powerless — that it loses all its bite and edge. You don't see the Jesuits really acting like Jesuits; you don't see the Church really acting like a church.

Maybe Arthur C. Clarke and James Blish suffered through some really bad confirmation classes, too.

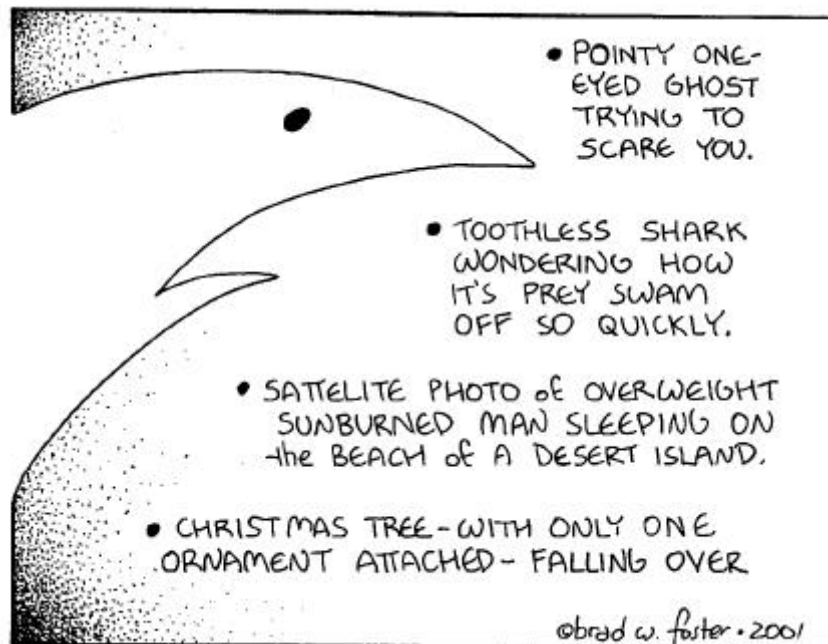
Then, of course, there is the Philip Pullman juvenile trilogy *His Dark Materials*, a sort of Narnia for atheists. There, Religion and Tech are both evil; I'm doubly damned for being a Techie and a Jesuit!

But as that last example reminds us, every individual (real or in a story) exists inside a society that has its own cultural "religions," both the common myths that hold the culture together ("life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness") or the actual religions that function within a society itself.

All fiction makes assumptions about science and religion. A good mystery, for instance, can depend on the physical possibility of certain events and the ethics of the characters involved. Science fiction is special, however, in that these assumptions are often overt, central to the story — and not necessarily what we assume in our everyday lives. Thus the role that religion plays in this universe carries a message about what religion itself is all about.

Religion plays a lot of roles in our own real culture.

For one, it's the activity that deals with Ultimate Questions: where do we come from? Your priest-or-minister-or-rabbi is the person you go to first. Another role for religion is the arbiter of right and wrong, the conscience of society. Unlike the first role, you rarely see this role depicted in SF — at least, not in a positive way. But then, consider how it works in practice, in real life; regardless of your



own views on birth control or the death penalty, just notice your reaction for or against the Pope's views — we don't always like what we hear. And there's a third and completely different role that religion plays: birth, marriage, death, all of them call for a priest or a rabbi. Remember the Disney movie, *The Lion King*? Think of the Baboon. Priests are the people who officiate over the important moments of our life.

There have been other claimants to all these roles: the Ultimate Answerer, the Ethical Guide, the Master of Ceremonies. Science, especially astronomy, has often been called upon to answer the Ultimate Questions... even though virtually all astronomers of my acquaintance, believers or not, feel really uncomfortable filling that role.

Government or other authority figures are called in to register births, record marriages, issue death certificates; and perhaps we look to the science of psychology to give us the rules that will turn guilt into mere guilt-feelings, and free us from sin (or co-dependence, anyway). Finally, even atheists want memorial services, and someone to preside: an orator, a poet, a friend. Granted, no astronomer to my knowledge, not even Carl Sagan, has felt his Ph.D. gave him the authority to perform a wedding, but in general, one can see where in the popular mind it may look like the roles of science and religion can sometimes overlap.

There's another curious parallel between science and religion in the popular culture. In the movies, all preachers are power hungry, money driven hypocrites; all scientists are mad. They're both caricatured by wild hair and a fanatical gleam in the eye.

Of course, like all stereotypes, these terrible pictures of religion, and science, are based on real examples. There have been hypocrites in all religions, and arrogant know-it-all preachers. Science, too, has its arrogant practitioners... people who think a physics degree gives them license to lecture us about everything else in our lives. No wonder both groups can leave a bitter aftertaste.

Yet anyone who's active in a church, or a scientific laboratory, knows that such people are the exceptions, and that it's not fair to let their personal shortcomings poison something that can be a source of so much good and truth in our lives—I'm talking about both science and religion. And the prejudice is often, like most prejudice, rooted in ignorance.

It's the old story. Religious education for most people begins and ends with Sunday school class; past the age of twelve (and those really bad confirmation classes!) who studies religion? No wonder so many people who leave the Church before they're old enough to appreciate it, have a childish view of religion. Of course they do; they only encountered it when they themselves were children.

The same phenomenon holds true with science. Most kids are turned off from science by the time they reach high school. You can blame the teachers; but most grade school teachers don't get a very good grounding themselves in science at any point in their education. They didn't have good teachers, either. In college, science classes for education majors are usually huge lecture courses where hundreds of students are required to memorize many cheerful facts about the square of the hypotenuse. One survey has shown that you have to learn more new vocabulary words in freshman physics than you do in freshman French! But science isn't memorizing facts, any more than religion is quoting verses from the Bible.

So where do adults encounter about religion, and where do they encounter science?

There has been a recent glut of popularized books on modern physics. Some, like the *Tao of Physics* or *The Dancing Wu-Li Masters*, try to connect physics with eastern mysticism in a way that leaves both scientists and eastern mystics scratching their heads. A flock of more recent books are by prominent active scientists; they have catchy titles — *The God Particle*, *The Physics of*

*Immortality* — but too often they present glib expositions whose highest aim is either to fool you into thinking you can understand modern physics in one sitting, or to warn you that it's too hard for little old you — these are Things Man Was Not Meant To Know... without a Ph.D., anyway.

And for every serious book of science in a bookstore, there's a whole shelf of astrology and UFO nonsense also promising to give you the "secret knowledge" of the universe — don't tell your neighbors. In religion, we call this lust for secret knowledge "gnosticism." Science has its gnostics, too. Indeed, the occult is the place today where bad religion meets bad science.

And none of these books are really popular, when you compare them with a phenomenon like *Star Trek*.

Every week on TV... in reruns, every night... we can see a story of people living in the universe, having adventures on planets and around stars, actually dealing with — and being affected by — the strange things the astronomers are finding out there. Like any production wedded to a rigid weekly schedule, it is littered with clichés, easy answers, shallow characterizations. But a few of the shows have been pretty good; enough to keep us watching. And the characters are fun; they become old friends whom you look forward to visiting with, week after week. And slowly, without noticing it, you absorb little nuggets of information... or misinformation... about what astronomers have to tell us about the universe. Planets become places where people we know have adventures.

And with millions of households tuned in every week, probably more people learn more about modern astronomy from this show than from any other single source.

Science fiction has always closely mirrored the scientific advances, and popular culture, of the times when it was written. The dialogue format of Galileo's later books (four friends discussing new ideas over a period of several days) is in fact a fictional style bearing a certain similarity to modern SF novels like Arthur C. Clarke's *Rendezvous With Rama* that are long on exposition, short on plot.

Jules Verne wrote *From the Earth to the Moon*, and later its sequel, *Around the Moon* by quoting extensively from *Der Mond* by Beer and von Mädler, a book published in 1837 that presented the first trigonometrically accurate study of lunar features, including the positions and heights of over 1000 mountains. For the first time, the Moon had been mapped as accurately as any piece of Earth geography; for the first time, a work of fiction described it as a real place that people could go to. Likewise, in 1985 Percival Lowell published a book, *Mars*, where he argued that the linear *canali* on Mars reported by Schiaparelli were indeed canals in the English sense, produced by a dying race of intelligent beings. Three years later, H. G. Wells came out with *The War of the Worlds*.

The Doc Smith *Lensman* series, started in 1938, posited Earth and Earth people as pawns in a grand interstellar battle between two warring alien races, one good, one evil. Aliens were given character and



personality, though it's a hero from Earth, Kimball Kennison, who saves the day. The Lens was a symbol worn by the good guys of all alien strains; it signified their common citizenship in a community that encompassed the entire lens-shaped Milky Way Galaxy. The 1920's, of course, were the time of the great debates by Shapley, Hubble, Eddington, and others on the size, shape, and nature of our galaxy.

One early imitator of Doc Smith was John Campbell. But as an editor, he made the crucial decision: travelogues or panoramas of technological marvels weren't good enough. His magazine had to have real, plotted stories of human protagonists who develop, interact with the marvels, solve problems, and change as a result. Under his guidance, Heinlein and Asimov and others were nurtured and developed into popular SF novelists. Stories were now populated by real people, who could wonder about Ultimate

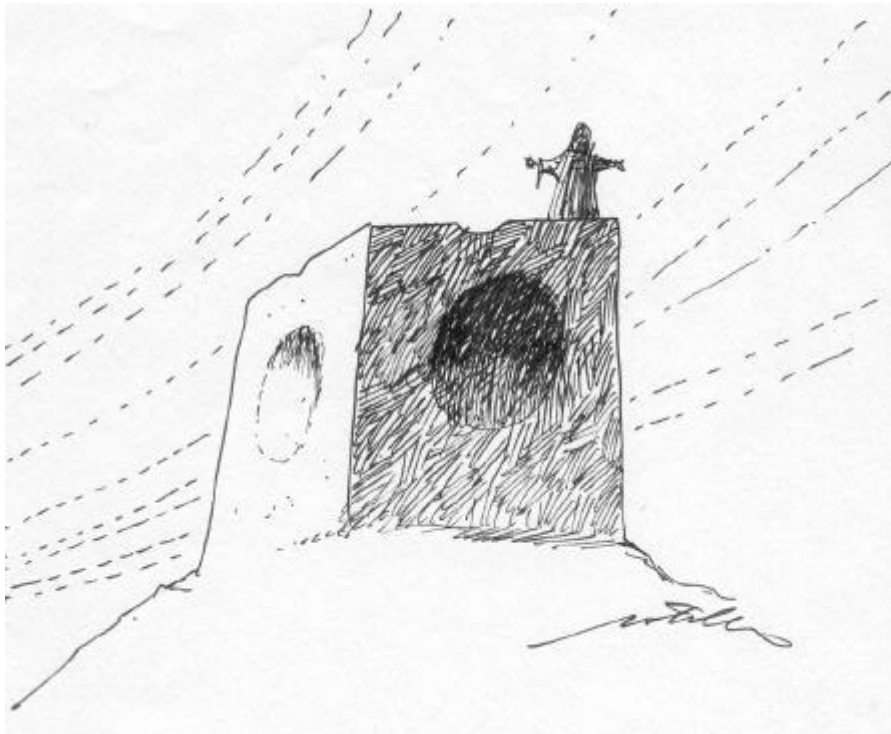
Questions or issues of right and wrong. A writer inventing a new society could think about how religion might look on a different planet or a future world.

For instance, by the 1950's our view of alien races had long progressed past evil-invaders-from-Mars. For one thing, that was old hat; doing it again made for boring stories. Instead, we realized that aliens might be just misunderstood, as in the 1951 film *The Day The Earth Stood Still*. Robert Heinlein's 1954 book *Double Star* dealt with the struggle of non-human Martians for equal status in a society dominated by human beings. Note the obvious connection with the civil rights movement of the 50's and 60's. Paul Linebarger, writing as Cordwainer Smith, took it a step further in his haunting series of Underpeople stories. They discussed the rights, and religious faith, of animals who'd been genetically altered into humanoids to be the workers and servants of men.

In the late 50's and early 60's, popular TV shows like *The Twilight Zone* and *Outer Limits* covered everything from horror to fantasy; they gave us back traditional ghost stories. It's ironic...the medieval age had had spirits, angels and devils, coexisting with people; but "enlightenment" science had taken them away, making human beings the only inhabitants of the universe. Now

fantasy and science fiction brought back the old angels and devils, in a more scientifically correct guise.

Indeed, the whole field of fantasy grew very rapidly in the 1960's, fueled by imitators of J. R. R. Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings* (first published in the US in 1965). By the 1970's the genre had developed its own set of rules and clichés. The general setting of a modern fantasy novel was usually a medieval world of courtly love, with knights and fair maidens, dragons and elves and trolls and dwarves, minstrels and merchants and thieves... the Middle Ages "the way they should have been." The writers were often women, brought into the field by *Star Trek*. Since they weren't bound by historical accuracy, they could explore alternate social structures or retell old myths with modern sensibilities. In many cases, such as the books of Marion Zimmer Bradley, the fair maidens were the knights. Fantasy became a way for women



writers to come to grips with the still unsettled demands of feminism and modern society.

How did fantasy get associated with science fiction? Well, both share the same audience. But there is a more direct connection. The revolutionary advances in physics during the 20th century had blurred the differences between possible and impossible science or technology, at

least in the popular conception: "a sufficiently advanced technology is indistinguishable from magic," to quote Arthur C. Clarke. And furthermore, with the assumed multiplicity of habitable planets, one no longer even had to look to the future for such advances. Fantasy no longer meant "an impossible world that never was" but rather a possible world that just happens to be "a long time ago in a galaxy far, far away..." Anne McCaffrey's Pern novels, starting with *Dragonflight* (1969), have a medieval society with heroes who ride telepathic dragons; but these books by any definition are really science fiction, not fantasy. The people are descendants of Earth colonists, a scientific rationale is given for how and why these dragons were genetically engineered, and the main plot revolves around the celestial mechanics of a neighboring rogue planet.

There is a fascinating twist to the pseudo-medieval world of contemporary fantasy novels, however. To quote Christopher Stasheff: "most medieval fantasies...seldom

mention the Devil, and never God. [But] that wasn't the way medieval Christians really saw the world—they saw God everywhere, in everything, and the Devil always lurking, looking for an opening — and authors really ought to write their fantasies a little closer to reality. Then [I] realized that, being a fantasy author, [I] was stuck with writing [my] next story that way.” As a result, Stasheff has written several series, both straight fantasy and fantasy dressed up as SF, with characters and themes that are explicitly Catholic. They're not great literature, but they're surprisingly popular.

However, it's more often the case that “priests” in a typical fantasy society are trotted out as political players, usually (though not always) as villains. This is especially true of writers who are imitating the 18th-century adventure genre with its anti-clerical, anti-Papist zeitgeist. If you're setting the *Three Musketeers* on Aldebaron IV, you still need a Cardinal Richelieu.

But in most fantasy novels, religion is conspicuously absent. This is true even if the writer is deeply religious himself: witness Tolkien, a devout Catholic. With all the details provided about the universe of *Lord of the Rings* we know nothing about the religious practices of hobbits... any more than we know anything about their sex lives. It's probably for the same reason — to the author, it's a matter too private to talk about.

More curious, and telling, is the absence of religion in the pseudo-medieval world of Anne McCaffrey's Pern novels. There may be no religion, but all the functions of religion are taken up by other players. The role of monks are played by the dragon-riders, who live apart from the rest of society. Ultimate questions are handled by the musicians of the group, the harpers. The harpers are also the ones in charge of teaching morality to the general public. The harpers educate children; the harpers also control the development and advance of higher knowledge, including, science, engineering, and medicine. The harpers solemnify the important rites of passage, like funerals. The harpers also are the only source of news to the common folk. In fact, if you think of it, the harpers have an incredible stranglehold on just about every aspect of life in that culture! In all the stories, the harpers are always the good guys, they're always right... Um, who elected them?

But of course, this concentration of goodness is one of the elements that make these books so appealing. It's religion that doesn't offend anybody.

One way of finessing the don't-offend-the-reader problem is to make future religion an amalgam of all religions: no need to worry, it turns out everyone was right! Two books that do this specifically are Frank Herbert's 1965 novel *Dune*— the first major science fiction novel to include elements of Islamic religion—and Robert Heinlein's *Stranger in a Strange Land*. But these books have a more subtle connection as well.

*Dune* was a breakthrough novel of the 1960's. It too was a mixture of fantasy, a medieval desert society, and hard-core science fiction, where spacecraft pilots need a drug from this primitive desert planet to navigate through other dimensions. *Dune* has often been hailed as a prophetic book of the environmental movement. For the

first time a planet itself became a hero. The planet was seen as a complex ecological system, and understanding its ecology became, for the human protagonists, a source of power ... personal, political, military. *Dune* had plenty of sex and drugs, and a rebellious young mystic out to topple the corrupt establishment... Very 60's. But actually, the plot is basically an old-fashioned fairy tale: the hero is a prince of noble blood fighting to regain a kingdom rightfully his by birth. And its execution is that of a good old-fashioned war novel, as we follow the strategy he uses to win against all odds. How militaristic; how undemocratic.

You find the same contrast in Robert Heinlein. *Stranger in a Strange Land* (1961) describes a universe where every religion is true, and love (or at least sex) is all you need — this, written five years before the hippie movement. But his *Starship Troopers*, which appeared just two years earlier (1959), is a paean to the glories of warfare. And most of Heinlein's books, including *Stranger*, strongly affirm the rugged individualist fighting a misguided, muddling State. So how can we classify the values communicated in these books? Were Frank Herbert or Robert Heinlein proto-hippies, or right-wing reactionaries?

The value system underpinning these books is not really either; rather, it's Libertarian. Libertarianism can be considered right-wing or left-wing depending on how you view it; it champions the individual's rights over society's needs to an extreme. Think of the way people drive in Boston. (Europeans can recognize them as being the polar opposites of the “Greens;” that's why it's so ironic to find Frank Herbert and *Dune* in the Libertarian camp.) Many popular current writers, like Larry Niven, Jerry Pournelle, or Joe Haldeman, are on this part of the political spectrum. In fact even “cyberpunk” displays an anarchist attitude that is really just radical libertarianism. And though most science fiction fans and writers are not libertarians, even writers today who overtly reject it, such as Harlan Ellison, Kim Stanley Robinson, or Orson Scott Card, nevertheless have stories and heroes that reflect many of its ideals.

The reason, I think, is obvious. A good story is ultimately about a person, an individual; and that person must be engaged in a conflict... that implies a bad guy. So, the modern science fiction novel starts by seeing the universe in a good guy/bad guy frame of mind. Next, if you've ruled out Nazis, Commies, or invading aliens as your bad guys, then the handiest bad guy left, one that your readers can easily root against, is the faceless bureaucratic state. (Orson Scott Card's masterpiece novel, *Ender's Game*, really does have faceless evil alien invaders; but they're not the bad guys nearly as much as the system who prepares his hero to fight against them!) And finally, setting your story in a military milieu—be it Star Trek's Star Fleet, or the rebel army of *Star Wars*, or any sort of exploration ship which is almost always a branch of the Navy—gives ready-made opportunities for both the conflict, and the hardware to carry on that conflict.

Even out of uniform, heroes are often military veterans. If the hero is female, all the better from a

feminist point of view to make her a warrior. Thus it is not surprising that today science fiction often carries, even unintentionally, a world view that's seen as either militaristic, or right-wing, or libertarian.

The needs of plot and character development also can get in the way of discussing religious issues. Remember the Phyllis character in the passage of *Red Mars* that began this article? She turns out to be a villain of sorts. Here's how two characters talk about her in the sequel, *Green Mars*:

"Phyllis doesn't seem all that...religious anymore,"  
[said Sax.]

Desmond snorted. "She never was religious, if you ask me. Hers was the religion of business. You visit real Christians like the folks down in Christianopolis ... and you don't find them talking profits at breakfast, and lording it over you with that horrible unctious righteousness they have... they're not like that. They're gnostics, Quakers, Baptists, Baha'i Rastafarians, whatever — the most agreeable people in [on Mars] if you ask me... So helpful. And no airs about being best friends with Jesus... But Phyllis, now, and all those business fundamentalists — using religion to cover extortion, I hate that. Actually, I never heard Phyllis speak in a religious manner after we landed..."

So we were right to feel uncomfortable with the way she had defended Christianity. But that also means, we were cheated out of a good, honest exploration of the science and religion theme. That's the price we've paid for having the need for story to drive science fiction.

But ironically, in many ways science fiction is at its weakest when character and plot get in the way of its roots. After all, astronomy is not about alien civilizations or ultimate questions. It's about stars and planets. And, in spite of John Campbell's efforts to put good storytelling into SF, ultimately some of the most unforgettable moments in SF have had nothing to do with character and plot. *Ringworld*, *Red Mars*, *Rendezvous with Rama* ...in all of them, the plots are pretty pedestrian, the characters are cardboard, the endless philosophizing is awfully shallow; but the settings, ah! So what if I don't like a single character in *Red Mars*? I'll put up with them all, for the chance to walk on their planet with them. Face it: we watch *Star Trek* for the setting and the people, not the story.

Likewise, the good SF stories that deal with religion are the ones that are centered on what religion is really about: not ultimate questions, or ethical behavior, or marriages and funerals. But God.

Orson Scott Card is an active Mormon with a theology degree from Notre Dame. Some of his stories deal with religion in its many roles; some are taken from his Mormon tradition. One of my favorites gets right to the heart of things.

It's called *The Memory of Earth*. We're on a world called Harmony, twenty million years in the future. It was settled by refugees fleeing a war-ravaged Earth, who have engineered themselves and their descendents to respond to a computer in an orbiting satellite called the Oversoul; a computer that lets them remember how to make medicines and refrigerators, and allows them commit to small crimes but which keeps them from building planes,

guns, or other instruments of war. Without being able to remember war, it's hoped, a peaceful society would eventually grow. Well, it hasn't worked out quite that way, and after twenty million years even computers wear out eventually.

The Oversoul is a machine, not God. Everyone knows that... (But it talks to our hero in ways that sound an awful lot like prayer.) It's a little bit less than God. And what would it be like to live in a universe where God were only a human invention, a little bit less than He really is? It's not what Orson Scott Card believes to be essentially true; it's a speculation based on an extrapolation of a hypothesis of a philosophical possibility.

Recently I visited Munich and had a chance to spend an afternoon at the art museum. To see the collected culture of an ancient European city... it was stunning. But the best part was after I left the museum. Walking down the street in the late afternoon, hundred-year-old buildings high-lighted by an ominous gray sky, I suddenly realized I was walking in the middle of one of those paintings. The artists had trained me to see and appreciate my surroundings with new eyes.

That's what good fantasy, good science fiction, ultimately does. Put me on another planet, and I see that I'm already on a planet, Planet Earth, that really is situated somewhere in outer space. Move me to another time, and I see my own time in a new light, as just one now in an inevitable progression of nows. Place me in a fantasy where good must overcome incredible odds to defeat evil, and suddenly the evening news on CNN makes a lot more sense. By contrast, best sellers and modern highbrow literature describe people and places I do not recognize. Instead it's science fiction and fantasy, for all their failings, that show me the real universe.





## Where I Get My Reading Materials

Ed Meskys

The major source of reading material for blind persons is the National Library Service for the Blind and Physically Handicapped (NLS), a division of the Library of Congress. It was established in 1938 to provide Braille books for blind readers. It later expanded to provide recorded books, officially called Talking Books. (The tapes sold to sighted readers in bookstores are officially called "spoken word books.")

A brief word about technology and formats. Before Louis Braille developed in the early 1800s the system of raised dots named after him, only a handful of books had been produced by embossing them a letter at a time on sheets of heavy paper. The letters had to be at least a half inch tall to be readable, and even so they were difficult to interpret. Braille was accepted only slowly, and other competing forms of tactile writing remained competitive for a long time. Most important of the competing systems were New York Point (using dots in a different pattern from that of Braille), Moon Type (named after its inventor, raised fragments of letters, easier to interpret than the whole letters), and other systems of dots or lines. Different schools for the blind taught their students different systems, and students of one school could not read the writing developed for another. In the English language, the version of Braille as developed in England has become standard, with few variations, though a few magazines are still produced in Moon Type in England for elderly readers. Braille has been adapted for most languages, including ones using other alphabets like Russian and Arabic, and even for pictographic languages like Chinese.

Braille symbols use a system of six dots (though 8 dots are used for some advanced math and computer work), in a pattern two across by three high. There are only 64 ( $2^6$ ) possible combinations in this six dot "cell." To save space shorthand abbreviations and contractions are used. For instance, put a dot in the bottom corner of the cell in front of "n" and it means "ation." Uncontracted Braille is "grade one" Braille, but virtually all books and magazines are published in "grade two" Braille, which has about 200

such contractions. There exists a "grade three" Braille which is used by stenographers who have to take rapid dictation, but I know only one person who uses it. There used to be a "grade 1-1/2" Braille using only "one cell" contractions, but it is no longer used.

Individuals use Braille typewriters and portable devices known as "slate & stylus" for writing Braille. The typewriter has only six keys and a space bar, and is played like a piano, several keys at a time. "Paperless" Braille devices use piezoelectric crystals to make plastic pins pop up to write a line of Braille, but these are extremely expensive, about \$100 per cell.

The NLS developed the 33-1/3 record for talking books before the music industry adopted it, and then went on to slow it down to 16-2/3 rpm and finally to 8-1/3 rpm. Ten inch hard records got 90 minutes on a side, throw-away 9 inch flexible records 60 minutes. Books were done on hard records, magazines on flexible. About two years ago NLS distributed its last magazine on record and has switched totally to cassette.

Before adopting the cassette around 1970 they had experimented with open reel and 8-track tape. Currently the C-90 is standard, but recorded at half speed and on four tracks, so a cassette holds six hours of material.

Some foreign governments and private agencies are now using CDs but NLS is developing a totally new digital system which will be on chips the size of a stick of chewing gum, and are designed to be thrown away and not returned after use. It will be another five years before the designs are finalized and enough players are stockpiled to distribute to users for the system to be inaugurated. The reader will be able to bookmark places for return, and do searches for page numbers, words, and phrases.

Talking computers and scanners have opened a new source of reading materials. Ray Kurzweil developed the first OCR-based reading machine in the late 70s, which cost about \$50,000, but now his system and a competing one from Arkenstone/Freedom Scientific sell for \$1000. You can scan a book or magazine into your computer and then have it read it out loud to you, present it in paperless Braille, or print it in Braille. I have scanned several books and fanzines this way though it is

tedious. Blind people who do a lot of scanning have

### For More Information

Choice Magazine Listening  
<http://members.aol.com/CHOICEMAG/>  
(516)883-8280  
85 Channel Drive  
Port Washington, NY 11050

Jewish Braille Institute  
<http://www.jewishbraille.org/>  
Tel: (800) 433-1531  
110 East 30th Street  
New York, NY 10016

Jewish Guild for the Blind  
<http://www.jgb.org/>  
Tel: 800-284-4422  
15 West 65th Street  
New York, NY 10023

Lutheran Library for the Blind  
<http://www.blindmission.org/>  
Tel: 800-433-3954, Extension 1322  
1333 South Kirkwood Road  
St. Louis, MO 63122

Matilda Ziegler Magazine  
<http://www.zieglermag.org/>  
Tel: 212-242-0263  
80 Eighth Avenue, Room 1304  
New York, NY 10011

National Association for the Visually Handicapped  
<http://www.navh.org/>  
Tel: 212-255-2804  
22 West 21st Street 6th Floor  
New York, NY 10010

National Library Services for the Blind and Physically Handicapped  
<http://www.loc.gov/nls/>  
Tel: 707-5100  
TDD: (202) 707-0744  
Regular mail service has been interrupted due to the October 2001 anthrax attacks and it is not known when it will be available.

Recorded Periodicals  
<http://www.asb.org/services/recording.cfm>  
Tel: (215) 627-0600  
919 Walnut Street  
Philadelphia, PA 19107

Recording for the Blind and Dyslexic  
<http://www.rfbd.org/>  
Tel: 866-732-3585  
20 Roszel Road  
Princeton, NJ 08540

Xavier Society for the Blind  
Tel: (212) 473-7800  
154 E 23rd St  
New York, NY 10010

formed a club where they can post the texts of books they have scanned, and other members can download them. I understand they now have about 10,000 titles available. They also own portable machines which will download these files and play them through headphones while the user is on the move.

Most of my reading is on cassette, largely from NLS. There are about 60 local distributing centers, the nearest one in the New Hampshire state capital of Concord. These centers send out requested books by postage-free mail, and the reader returns the book in the same way. Some of these regional libraries also record books and magazines and you can get them through interlibrary loan. I have also read on interlibrary loan from Canada Guy Gavriel Kay's "Fionabar Tapestry" and some Nicholas Stuart Gray and Alan Garner YA novels.

The next largest library is Recording for the Blind and Dyslexic, headquartered in Princeton, NJ. They record books on request, primarily text and scholarly books for students, teachers, and scholars. Since there are SF courses in colleges they have recorded several hundred SF titles, books about SF, and even Harry Warner's *All Our Yesterdays* (but not *Wealth of Fable*). They have several tens of thousands of titles in their catalog. They use the NLS 4-track cassette format, but are experimenting with searchable CDs. However the special CD player costs \$700.

Inmates of three prisons in California, Vacaville, Soledad, and Folsom, have programs where residents record books as requested. At one time I was getting three books a month recorded by Vacaville, but they have cut back to four books a year per client. When their reading was plentiful I even had fanzines like *Habakkuk* done.

Many individuals have recorded books for me, and I got a small grant from the Atlanta worldcon to get a duplicator and circulate these tapes. I now rarely get fan-recorded tapes, and the old ones and duplicator are wearing out. I still circulate a few to other blind fans, but do little with it now.

Mary Lou Lacefield, a blind fan in Kentucky, used to issue a fanzine on tape, *Sci Fi Cee*, but physical disability has caused her to move into a convalescent home and give up the project.

For many years a small non-profit in Seattle, Northwest Foundation, recorded only SF and they had several hundred titles in their catalog. However when the money in their legacy ran out they closed down and discarded all their materials.

Other small private libraries come and go.

In many states the local Association for the Blind or other volunteer agency will record materials on request, usually for a small fee to cover expenses and equipment maintenance. They rarely retain master tapes for more than one year.

There are countless religious organizations which record books and magazines, usually of religious material. The Jewish Braille Institute will record almost anything by Jewish writers, or about Judaism, and I have read from them Asimov's autobiographical volumes and a Jewish cyberpunk novel, *He, She, and It* by Marge Piercy. The Jewish Guild for the Blind tries to record current best-

sellers faster than NLS, on conventionally formatted tapes, and I have read a few SF titles from them. I have also read some SF or fantasy from the Catholic run Xavier Society for the Blind.

NLS records *Analog* and *Asimov*. Recorded Periodicals in Philadelphia issues about 30 magazines but for a hefty fee. I pay \$48/year for *Scientific American* and about \$34 for *Skeptical Inquirer* from them. They used to do *Omni*. Were it not for considerations of reading time and money I would be interested in *Science News*, *Trains*, *Smithsonian*, and *Byte* or another computer mag which has replaced it.

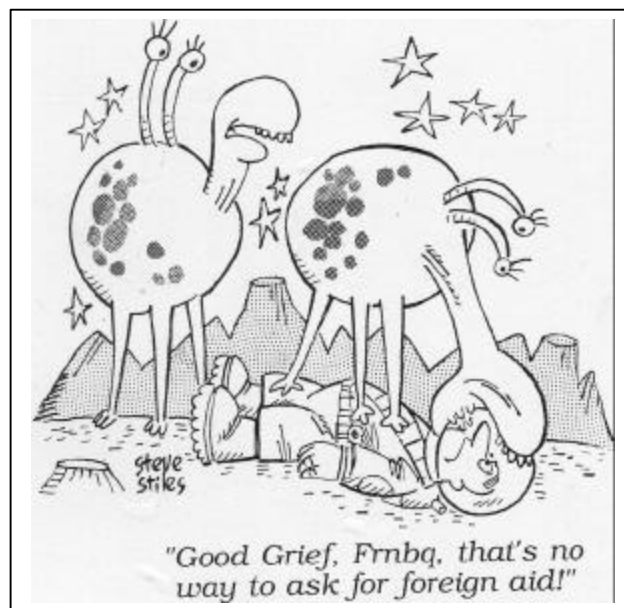
Legacies support the free distribution of other mags for the blind like *Choice Magazine Listening* and *Matilda Ziegler Mag*, which reprint articles from a variety of sources like *Playboy*, *NY Times Mag*, *Saturday Evening Post*, and university literary magazines.

Some regional talking book libraries, like the one in New Hampshire, buy from WGBH in Boston and Narrative TV Network in Oklahoma videos of movies with voice over explanations of the action, and loan them at no cost.

Fanzines I prefer to get on floppy or by e-mail, though I pay high-school kids to read some for me.

The cassette players are variable speed and I listen to most tapes about twice recorded speed to get in more reading. I always have a tape player going, while cooking or washing dishes, sorting laundry, or even showering. The speed I listen at depends on the difficulty of the material, the quality of the tape, and how much of my attention I can concentrate on it. I have my talking computer set at 375 words per minute, and am getting ready to up it to 400.

Incidentally, PDF files are pictures of pages, and my talking computer will not read them. The blind computer users are working with Adobe to make these more accessible, but for now text or Word files are the best. I thank those fans who have made their fanzines available to me by e-mail or on disk, or who have read fanzines onto tape for me.



## ***On the Acquiring of Books***

Steven H Silver

I recently purchased about two-hundred feet of bookshelves from the late and lamented bookstore The Stars Our Destination, run by Chicago fan Alice Bentley. This meant I had the opportunity of emptying some of the many boxes of books I have in the basement. As I sorted through them, the memories of their acquisition came flooding back in a manner which my wife found distinctly odd, but which I trust some of the readers here will more fully understand.

*Alcuin and Beowulf* by W.F. Bolton

*Charlemagne's Cousins* by Allen Cabaniss

*Chronik* by Otto von Freising

*A Concise Anglo-Saxon Dictionary* by James R. Clark Hall

*The Didascalicon of Hugh of St. Victor*

*The Medieval Mind* by Henry Osborn Taylor

*The Murder of Charles the Good, Count of Flanders* by Galbert of Bruges

*Social Chaucer* by Paul Strohm

One of my graduate school professors was a wonderful man named C. Clifford Flanigan. Cliff had an infuriating ability to find himself a month behind the syllabus during the first week of classes, requiring numerous unscheduled evening classes, which he called Sherry Hours. Although these weren't "mandatory," I don't know of any students who missed a single one, and not just because a grade might depend on attending. Cliff loved his area of study, as well as anything which touched on it. More importantly (perhaps), he extended that feeling to his students. At Cliff's Sherry hour, we would digress from the topic as much (if not more) than we had during the scheduled classes. In addition, there would be copious amounts of food to eat. Cliff, it must be said, was a large man with a rubbery face which seemed to engulf the food in front of him more than anything else. I always



associated Cliff with the Medieval figure of Thomas Aquinas, although Cliff never managed to attain Aquinas's legendary girth. During one of those first Sherry Hours, Cliff expounded on the wonders of listserves, in which a person could easily communicate with people of like interests over vast areas almost instantaneously. It was at Cliff's prodding that I actually began to use my first e-mail account in the distant, early days of the 1990s. Alas, Cliff died of an heart attack on a dreary Wednesday evening shortly before a dinner to honor the historian Peter Brown, who had come to the university at Cliff's urgings to give a series of lectures. Surrounded by friends, colleagues and students, Cliff collapsed in the student union. In the stunned weeks that followed, I volunteered my services to helping sort through his vast library. At the end of that time, his books were to go on sales with the funds raised to endow a fund in Cliff's name.

*Festivals of the Jewish Year* by Theodor H. Gaster

*Garlic* by Janet Hazen

*The Life and Times of the Marx Brothers* by Ronald Bergen

*The Lords Jews* by M.J. Rosman

*The Place of Faith & Grace in Judaism* by David R. Blumenthal

*The Russian Jewry Reader* by Evan R. Chesler

*Understanding Jewish Mysticism* by David R. Blumenthal

and many more.

Once again, in graduate school, I made friends with a woman a couple of years older than me, named Valerie Gulick. I don't quite remember when I met Valerie, but I first got to know her when the two of us took an independent study course together with Derek Penslar. Valerie was studying the formation of the Medieval Russian state and I was studying Medieval universities. In this case, we both were looking at Jews in the Middle Ages, although Valerie from an Eastern European perspective and me from a Western European perspective. We quickly learned that we shared a sense of humor, as well as a sense of history. I'll never forget the day that Valerie made a comment to Derek which made him realize that she was not, in fact, Jewish, nor the delight she took in having, however inadvertently, pulled the wool over his eyes. Actually, Valerie was Jewish. She was adopted and had discovered that her birth parents were Jewish, although she had never met them. Valerie had decided that although she wanted to eventually meet her birth parents, she would wait until after the deaths of the good people who raised her so as to spare their feelings. They were, after all, her parents. Valerie and I worked to create a joint mock-paper of the "Bubonic Plaque and the Rise of the Cult of Dentistry." We each presented half the paper at a symposium in Bloomington, Indiana. I spoke of the cult in the west and Valerie handled all the unpronounceable Slavic names. The paper went over so well we planned to present it at the International Medieval Symposium held each year in Kalamazoo, Michigan. Unfortunately, just weeks before

Valerie's 29<sup>th</sup> birthday, and shortly after passing her qualifying exams, Valerie collapsed in her apartment and died. She was a good friend to both my wife and me. I could talk to her about history while she could talk to Elaine about knitting.

In both of these cases, I felt, at the time, like a grave robber. Going into Cliff and Valerie's house and taking the books that I desired. It didn't matter that their families offered these books to me freely. Looking at these books now, a decade or so after their deaths, I find myself remembering the good (and not so good) times I was allowed to spend in their company, something more important than the books themselves.

Fortunately, not all the books in my collection have such funereal memories attached to them.

*Before European Hegemony* by Janet L. Abu-Lughod

*Coronations* by Janos M. Bak

*The Envy of Angels* by C. Stephen Jaeger

*From Lord to Patron* by J.M.W. Bean

*Medieval Frontier Societies* by Robert Bartlett and Angus Mackay

*Towns and Townspeople* by John A.F. Thomsen

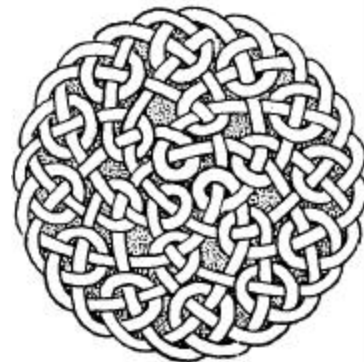
Above, I mentioned the International Medieval Symposium in Kalamazoo, Michigan. This is a week-long event that brings together Medieval scholars from across the world, the worldcon of Medieval studies, if you like. As with a Worldcon, the IMS has a huckster room (actually several in close proximity). These are filled almost entirely by publishers and some used book dealers (one year, a used book dealer was offering extensive titles on philology and linguistics from J.R.R. Tolkien's personal library). On the final day of the conference, nearly all new books are offered to the attendees at a 50% discount. In a field where books frequently cost \$40-80, this is quite an incentive. Scholars line up outside the door waiting for the doors to open and then tear into the rooms, like a sale in Filene's Basement. In the days leading up to the final sale, many of these scholars are determined which books they were interested in and tried to move them to specific spots on the table to ensure they would find them as soon as the doors opened. To make the event more competitive, several of the publishers had taken to re-arranging the books on their tables the night before the mad rush. One year, I had been talking to a colleague and we discovered that we were both interested in getting a copy of Bartlett & Mackay's *Medieval Frontier Societies* (\$89 hardcover, \$62.50 paperback). The doors opened and we flooded in. I quickly found a copy of Abu-Lughod's *Before European Hegemony*, but didn't see the Bartlett & Mackay. I had just about given up hope when my colleague asked from across the table if I had found it. As I looked over to respond, I saw the volume immediately in front of her. As I grabbed it, I said, yes. The only other book acquiring experience which rivals this dash of Medievalists that I've witnessed occurs each year at the BookExpo America (née American Booksellers Association Convention), although there, the publishers present multiple copies of each title and there is no money changing hands.

#### *A Yankee in King Arthur's Court* by Mark Twain

Ah, you say, a book that isn't Medieval. A book which can even be considered part of the science fiction genre. How did this get in here? I acquired my copy (not my reading copy, I assure you) of a first edition of Mark Twain's seminal time travel novel *A Yankee in King Arthur's Court* (as the title then was) in Knoxville, Tennessee while I was in town for a meeting of the (wait for it) Medieval Academy of America. One day, a friend who had traveled to the Conference with me and I wandered into "The Incurable Collector" a used bookstore a couple of blocks from the hotel. It was the first time Julie had ever been to this part of the country and she kept making references to James Dickey's *Deliverance*. While I was looking at a first edition of *A Yankee in King Arthur's Court*, I could hear the sales clerk talking to Julie and offering to show her a first edition of... James Dickey's *Deliverance*. I discussed the Twain book with the owner, who wasn't convinced it was a first edition (it is), and he offered it to me for \$45. Obviously, I grabbed the chance. Only later, when I confirmed that the book was a first edition, did I learn that it was considered to be worth several hundred dollars.

#### *Utopia, Ltd* William S. Gilbert and Arthur Sullivan

In 1987, I was living in England, about 100 miles north of London, when I wandered into a small used bookstore in the nearest town, Grantham. Scanning through the titles on the shelf, I came across a narrow, leather bound volume. On the spine were the words, in gilt, "Utopia, Ltd." The penultimate operetta by Gilbert and Sullivan. Although I already had the text of the show in several books, this volume looked interesting and I took it down. It was a piano score of the comic opera rather than a libretto. The copyright page noted that it was published in 1893 by Chappell & Sons... a first edition. I turned the page and discovered this particular copy was autographed by Arthur Sullivan in purple ink. Knowing there was no chance I could afford the volume, I took it to the front desk and asked the bookman what the price was, as there was none marked. He took a quick glance at it and said, £5. Not being able to believe my ears, I took out a £5 note and placed it on the counter. He wrapped the book in brown paper and passed it back to me.



## ***Mourning the Loss of a Bookstore***

**Steven H Silver**

April would have marked the 15<sup>th</sup> anniversary of “The Stars Our Destination,” a science fiction and fantasy bookstore located in Chicagoland. Unfortunately, a variety of realities have intruded and Alice Bentley, the owner, determined that she would have to close the storefront. 22 February 2003 was the last day the storefront was open for customers.

While I couldn’t claim to remember every visit I’ve made to the store over the last decade and a half, there are several which stand out in my mind. The first time I visited was immediately after taking my GREs. Subsequent visits marked my last day of managing a bakery, or, time to kill before hitting Wrigley Field for a Cubs game.

When Alice first opened, she was located on Clark Street, and that is still the site I think of when I recall the store. Two display windows bulged out on either side of the door, one of which was home to the cash register. Free standing bookshelves held new books with used books on shelves around the walls, particularly a small alcove on the left side. This basic layout remained the same at all three of the store’s locations.

Eventually, rents and space considerations caused Alice to move the store from Clark Street to Belmont. Parking was at a premium, although it could generally be found. Furthermore, the el stopped a block away from the store. This is the location the store was at when I moved back to Chicago in 1995. For several months at the end of 1995 and 1996, I helped out at the store on either Saturdays or Sundays, helping wherever it was needed. I particularly remember working Christmas Eve. I had offered to come in and I was the only person working. I think we did, perhaps, \$200 in business the whole day. I spent much of the time either stocking shelves, or hoping that the person who had boxed in my car (parked directly in front of the store) would leave before I was ready to head home.

By 2000, the neighborhood had changed. Single family homes were being torn down as the area became yupified. Alice was losing walk-in customers and parking was becoming more difficult because suddenly families had more than one car. Alice decided to move north to the suburbs, Evanston, where she was again close to the el.

This final store, on Main Street, never seemed to have the same flavor as the original Clark Street store or the store on Belmont, which eventually won me over. Possibly, it was the result of a change in my own book-buying habits, but I seemed not to find what I was looking for as frequently. Although in the northern suburbs, and theoretically closer to my home than either the Clark Street store or the Belmont location, I found that it took me practically as long to drive to the Evanston store as it had taken to get into the city.

In January, 2003, Alice held a book-signing for the release of my first anthology, *Wondrous Beginnings*. It was an extremely bittersweet moment. The same time

Alice announced the signing, she also announced that the store would be closing. My first signing would be at one of the bookstores where I had worked, but it was also the beginning of the end for “Stars.” The signing went well. In about forty minutes, Alice sold out of all my books that were on hand and she had a larger crowd in the store than she had remembered seeing in quite some time. Of course, there was no chance that this would save the storefront, and 15 February saw a final sale/party as Alice liquidated much of her stock. That day was so busy that Alice didn’t manage to come out from behind the counter.

Even though Alice is staying in business, giving The Stars Our Destination a web presence and continuing to issue a catalogue, I’ll miss being able to drop by the store and browse to see what is new and hard to get. I’ve grabbed numerous used books off the shelves of Alice’s three stores over the years, and that part of her business has now gone the way of the dodo.

To Chicago science fiction fans, Alice’s name was synonymous with the store. Rather than saying “I’m going to The Stars Our Destination,” or even just “I’m going to Stars,” the most common way of describing the store was “I’m going to Alice’s.” It was at Alice’s that I first met (in the flesh) my fellow Sidewise Award judge Evelyn Leeper, numerous authors, and used to stop for a quick book fix following a writers’ group I was briefly involved in.

There is a scene at the end of Helene Hanff’s book *84 Charing Cross Road*, in which the bookstore, Marks & Co., is shuttered and closed following the death of one of the proprietors and the store’s manager, Frank Doel. Doel’s death doesn’t effect me, but I always cry when the bookstore dies. Alice’s store isn’t dying, merely changing form, but the feeling is still the same. There is a difference between browsing a webpage or a catalog and actually taking the book down from the shelf and flipping through it.



NOT ONLY DID SOMEONE LEAVE THE AIRLOCK OPEN, BUT NOW I CAN'T FIND MY LEMMINGS!

## Complete and Unabridged

Fred Lerner

The Folio society's edition of *Captain Cook's Voyages*, 1768-1779 is a handsome volume. It is set in a very readable Monotype Baskerville and laid out nicely on the page. It contains seventeen color plates and thirty-seven engravings in black and white, taken from the original editions of Cook's voyages and other eighteenth-century sources. It has several pages of helpful maps, and footnotes to explain matters that were clearer to Cook and his contemporaries than to modern readers. And its editor has supplied bridging passages to summarise matters covered in the portions omitted from this edition.

For much has been omitted. "The extracts from the published editions of 1773, 1777 and 1784 which follow amount to about one-fifth of the original texts," Glyndwr Williams tells us. His goal was "to provide a continuous narrative for each voyage, while also giving due coverage to the more reflective passages in the journals." I believe that he has succeeded in this endeavor. After reading *Captain Cook's Voyages* I felt that I had learned much about the art and science of discovery in the eighteenth century, and much about the personality and character of Captain James Cook.

I don't usually choose to read abridgements. I've always thought that it would be shirking my duty as a reader to settle for anything less than the full text that the writer meant to appear in print. The unspoken assumption behind that sentiment was that any book worth reading at all should be read in its entirety. And a corollary to that was a distrust of the motives of anyone who would abridge a text.

Often that motive is prudery. The Loeb Classical Library edition of Martial's *Epigrams* renders the racier passages into Italian rather than English. (What's the point of reading Martial with the dirty bits deleted?) In the Everyman's Library edition of *The Saga of Grettir the Strong*, our hero's encounter with a maid in chapter 75 has "two verses and a brief passage concerned with Grettir's sexual powers" deleted. It is unclear whether we owe this omission to translator G.A. Hight or editor Peter Foote. ("Grettir's Saga" is included in volume 2 of the Folio Society's collection, *The Icelandic Sagas*, and Magnus Magnusson includes the verses in question in his translation. The saga is better with than without them.)

But not all editorial abridgement is evil. My faith in the sanctity of the author's intention was greatly shaken by "the original uncut" version of *Stranger in a Strange Land*, issued in 1991 complete with "every word, every turn of phrase, exactly as Heinlein intended it." The earlier edition, the one that burst on the world three decades before, had 160,000 words; the new one 220,000. Were the 60,000 restored words worth thirty years' wait?

Alas, they were not. There was nothing in the 1991 edition that seemed new, nothing to suggest that anything important had been omitted from the version that I had read and reread thirty years before. In her introduction to the new edition, Virginia Heinlein "came to the conclusion that it had been a mistake to cut the book." I

came to the conclusion that back in 1961 G.P. Putnam's Sons had some pretty good editors on their staff. If a contemporary publisher's editor can improve a book by cutting it so drastically, why could not a later editor do the same? Perhaps my distaste for abridgements is too finicky. Perhaps I need to make some subtle distinctions.

I might begin by realising that I have been contenting myself with abridgements of a sort ever since I learned to read. What is a translation but an abridgement, of at least that much of a writer's meaning as can be expressed completely only in his own language? I read Jules Verne as a child (didn't we all?) oblivious to the shabby way his *voyages extraordinaires* had been treated by the men who englished them. Did I enjoy them any the less for it? I think not.

When I undertake to read any book for which a choice of English translations exists, I try to choose the one that most faithfully renders the entirety of its author's intention. I suppose that I might profitably apply the same criterion to evaluating an abridgement. For the question really is, will this abridgement contribute to or detract from what I hope to gain from reading this book? I don't think that I can assume that it would automatically be one or the other. It might well depend upon my purpose for reading the book in the first place.

*The Viking Portable Gibbon* contains those portions of *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* judged to be most relevant to the interests of the modern reader, who is more interested in the Western Empire and little concerned with Byzantium. It serves perfectly well to recount the history of Rome's decline, and to display something of the sweep and roll of Gibbon's prose. But should I want to experience the great historian as a phenomenon in his own right, could I settle for anything less than the six volumes in their entirety?

When I opened *Captain Cook's Voyages* I hoped to gain some sense of the Age of Discovery and some acquaintance with one of its greatest leaders. When I read *Grettir's Saga* I wanted to capture as much as I could of the heroic age of Iceland. And from *Stranger in a Strange Land* I sought a crisply-told story of an outsider's encounter with human civilisation. My expectations differed from book to another, and it is in the light of my varying expectations of any book that I shall have to decide whether I want to read it complete and unabridged.





## The Essential Filk Library

Bill Roper

Steven's asked me to discuss this topic in the pages of *Argentus*; I find as I attempt to wrap my arms around the concept that the implied question of what I'd include in it may not be easy to answer. The most difficult part of the problem is that I'd like to refer you to material that's:

1. available on CD
2. actually in print

This turns out to be far more limiting than you might imagine, but gives me the opportunity to delve into recorded filk history in my explanation of why. So let's proceed on our dumpster dive into the past...

The first commercially available filk albums came out in the late 70s and early 80s on vinyl. They included "Solar Sailors" and "Folk Songs for Folk Who Haven't Been Born Yet" by Leslie Fish and the Dehorn Crew on the science-fiction side of the fence and "Captain



Jack and the Mermaid" by Meg Davis on the fantasy side. (It's possible to argue that Meg's album wasn't really filk, but rather traditional Celtic folk music with a fantasy bent. But Meg's been adopted by the filk community and vice-versa, so I'm going to count it here.) These first two of Leslie's albums have just been released together on a single CD from Random Factors, "Folk Songs for Solar Sailors"; Meg's has recently been re-released on CD as well — and, happily, is one of the albums that you **should** have in your Essential Filk Library, if for nothing other than the title track and "Elf Glade".

The problem with filk publishing in those days was that pressing vinyl was expensive and you had to run a lot of copies to make it economical to do at all. With no idea of where or how to sell the albums, it meant a considerable financial gamble and no certainty of getting your money back. There was also the problem that studio time was expensive and getting a good master together cost a lot of money even **before** you got around to the question of how you were going to duplicate and distribute it.

Technology — as it frequently will in this discussion — came to the rescue. Low-cost multitrack recorders hit the market in cassette and reel-to-reel formats and the proliferation of the cassette format for playback meant that there was a way to duplicate your filk album at a lower cost in money, if not in time. We were poised for an explosion in recorded filk and we got one.

Sturgeon's Law, of course, applied here, just as it does in other areas of creative endeavor. Some people engaged in self-publishing; for the most part, their products received limited distribution and are long since out of print and unavailable. A few individuals and groups,

though, set out to publish the filk that others did and created albums that you're more likely to have heard of.

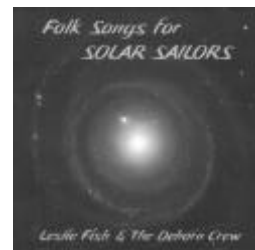
The best-known filk publisher, Off-Centaur Publications, came together around the publication of the first West Coast oriented filk songbook, the Westerfilk Collection. The earlier filk hymnals from NESFA and HOPSFA were collected by East Coast fannish groups. The Westerfilk had, in general, higher production values and included sheet music for the original melodies. While most of the songs in the Westerfilk can't be found in recorded form today, the Westerfilk itself remains in print in an edition from Wail Songs and I recommend it to you as part of your Essential Filk Library, along with the NESFA Hymnal. (The Westerfilk, although technically in print, is currently unavailable due to an editorial problem that has necessitated replacing some of the pages. If the replacement pages had not had an unfortunate encounter with a cat — not ours! — this would be done already.)

Off-Centaur Publications (Teri Lee, Jordin Kare, and Cathy Cook — later Cathy Cook McDonald) became the first dominant force in filk publishing. They, with the aid of their long-time engineer, Jeff Rogers, were responsible for getting dozens of albums out on cassette. The earliest albums were live recordings from conventions; studio albums followed close behind. Off-Centaur was the first to produce a variety of tapes tying in directly to various authors' universes, including "Songs of the Dorsai" from Gordon R. Dickson's series, "Fever Season" from C.J. Cherryh's "Merovingen Nights" series, and a veritable cottage industry of albums based on the works of Mercedes Lackey. They produced albums focused on single artists such as Cynthia McQuillen and Julia Ecklar; they also released themed collections like "Minus Ten and Counting" and "Time Winds Tavern".



With the exception of the Misty Lackey albums, almost everything that Off-Centaur produced is now out of print, largely due to the company's acrimonious breakup in the late 1980s. (It's a long story. If you think of it as a nasty divorce with an argument about the custody of the children, you'll have a fairly accurate picture of the situation.) The Misty Lackey material is available from Firebird Arts and Music of Oregon, run by Teri Lee. The dedicated filk fan will occasionally find copies available on eBay for high prices.

If you'd like to sample two of the old Off-Centaur albums that are still available from Firebird on CD, I recommend Lackey's "Heralds, Harpers, and Havoc", based on the "Arrows of the Queen" trilogy and featuring a number of different performers, including your author;





and Michael Longcor's "Lovers, Heroes, and Rogues", an eclectic collection of folk and filk from a former SCA king and one of the best baritones in filking.

The one thing that quickly became clear was

that having a single dominant filk publisher was an unstable situation, if for no other reason than Off-Centaur having a finite amount of time and money. Off-Centaur was viewed by many as a gate-keeper that was standing between them and fame and fortune through filking. (To the best of my knowledge, **no one** has made a fortune through filking. A few have lost one...)

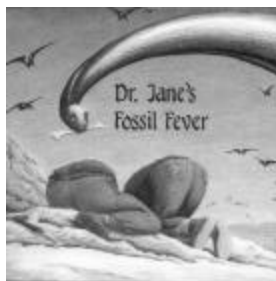
Wail Songs, run by Bob Laurent, was started up in Oakland in the 1980s as a counter to Off-Centaur, concentrating primarily on live convention tapes and producing albums that were perhaps more representative than the Off-Centaur albums, although occasionally at the cost of including a few cuts of lesser vocal and recording quality. Much more than Off-Centaur, Wail Songs performed an archival function, releasing dozens of live albums and a smaller number of studio albums. Unfortunately, changes in Bob's life led to his losing interest in the business and the albums are currently out of print, save for small numbers of tapes that are still in distribution. More happily, his masters are in my basement and – as time allows – we hope to release them in the CD-R format.

(To clarify "we", that refers to Dodeka Records, run by Gretchen and me. More on that later.)

Two other West Coast filk publishers have produced a smaller number of albums; one is still in business. DAG Publications, run by Eric Gerds, is still in business and is in the process of gradually converting their old cassettes to CD releases. One such CD is "Song of the Stars", a collection of space-oriented filk recorded at ConChord 3 back in 1987. If you'd like to get a taste of the older live-convention recordings, this would be a good choice.



Thor Records was a short-lived filk company that produced the first filk CD, "Dr. Jane's Fossil Fever", featuring the music of Dr. Jane Robinson, a paleontologist by training. Remarkably, this CD is still available – although Jane's other two CDs are out of print – and you could do **far** worse than pick up this very funny album.



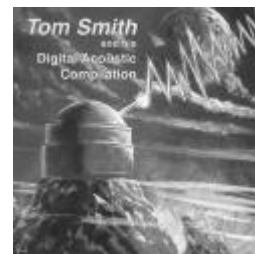
Even before the end of Off-Centaur, various artists stopped recording with the company. One of these artists was Julia Ecklar, one of the best-known filkers of that era. With the help of a number of financial backers and Aircraft Records, she recorded the first filk album engineered in a 24-track studio, "Divine Intervention". This album was heavily orchestrated – and with instruments like French horns as opposed to the usual guitar! As a result, it has been a "love it or hate it" item among much of the filk community, although "love it" is the more common reaction. Out of print for many years, it has just been re-released on CD by Eli Goldberg's Prometheus Music, yet another West Coast filk publisher. You should add it to your essential filk collection and decide how **you** like it.



As you can see, there's been a lot of activity in California. With the exception of Aircraft Records, **every** filk publisher that we've attached a recording project to has been from California. (Firebird started out in the Bay Area and moved to Portland later.) Occasionally, you'd see a person or group issue an album or two, but there wasn't any sustained presence from any other section of the country.

My wife, Gretchen, and I had been selling filk music at various conventions since 1986 as "The Secret Empire". In 1991, we decided that **somebody** needed to do something to get more Midwestern filkers recorded, so we started up Dodeka Records. Right now, we've got twenty five albums in print, a little less than half of them on CD. I'm now going to recommend some items from our own catalog, so you can get your grain of salt ready.

The Midwest's best-known funny filker is Tom Smith. He's written a great many parodies which you can find on Pretzel Productions' "The Debasement Tapes". It turns out that Tom's also written a number of excellent serious songs. You'll find an even mix of his silly and serious material on Dodeka's "Tom Smith and His Digital Acoustic Compilation". You should have at least one of Tom's albums in your collection: pick the one that suits your tastes.



The Black Book Band was a short-lived filk phenomenon (not to be confused with the fanzine with the homonymous name) featuring author Michael Kube-McDowell, Barry and Sally Childs-Helton, Mary Ellen Wessels, and Gwen Zak. They played a mix of



conventional and folk rock that you can find on their album, "First Contact". Sadly, this was their first and only album.



Steve Macdonald is one of the Midwest's most prolific (and loudest) songwriters. His most recent CD, "Crossroads", is an excellent review of his early material.

I promised myself not to recommend more than three of our own CDs, but I'm going to

cheat, because we produced a CD of my favorite filker, Bill Sutton. Bill is one of the finest songwriters in filking and – for the most part – actually writes folk! That is to say, he writes songs that are about science-fiction, and fantasy, and fandom. You should have his album, "Passing Through".

At this point, I've recommended 11 CDs for your Essential Folk Library. I'm going to add two more to make it a filker's dozen.

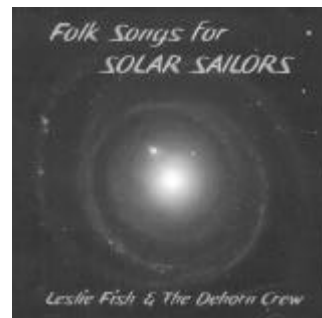
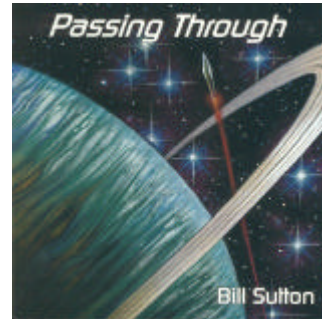
One of the most frequently filked poets is Rudyard Kipling. The best-known folk settings of his poems belong to Leslie Fish; unfortunately, the only Kipling/Folk album in print is "Our Fathers Of Old" which I find it difficult to recommend because of some excessive reverb that crept in during the engineering process. Instead, let me suggest Michael Longcor's "Norman and Saxon" as a substitute.

My last recommendation is an eclectic one. You really should have an album from Ookla the Mok, a group which I can best describe as filking's only garage band. Rand Bellavia and Adam English have a great feel for popular culture and are probably bigger comics geeks than I am (although it may be close). Their first CD, "Less Than Art", contains some of their strongest material, most of which is very funny.

So here's the list again:

1. "Folk Songs for Solar Sailors", Leslie Fish and the Dehorn Crew
2. "Captain Jack and the Mermaid", Meg Davis
3. "Heralds, Harpers, and Havoc", Mercedes Lackey and various artists
4. "Lovers, Heroes, and Rogues", Michael Longcor
5. "Song of the Stars", various artists recorded live at ConChord 3
6. "Dr. Jane's Fossil Fever", Jane Robinson
7. "Divine Intervention", Julia Ecklar
8. "Tom Smith and His Digital Acoustic Compilation", Tom Smith
9. "First Contact", The Black Book Band
10. "Crossroads", Steve Macdonald
11. "Passing Through", Bill Sutton
12. "Norman and Saxon", Michael Longcor
13. "Less Than Art", Ookla the Mok

Enjoy!



**01-02-03**

**Steven H Silver**

On 2 February 2003, my mother-in-law and father-in-law returned to the United States from a week-long trip visiting my brother-in-law's family in Israel. On board their flight was a 79-year-old man named Eliezer Wolferman and his son, Gadi. The day before, Wolferman was giving an interview live on Israeli television when a news break interrupted the interview to announce that the space shuttle Columbia had disappeared in the sky over Texas. That was how Wolferman learned of the death of his other son, Colonel Ilan Ramon.

On that Saturday morning (mourning?), I was having breakfast with my wife and daughters when the doorbell rang. It was a friend who had come to pick up our older daughter, Robin, to take her to religious school. We had lost track of time. While Elaine got Robin ready, I grabbed the car seat from our car and tossed it to our friend to install in his car. When he came back, he spoke those words, both ominous and casual.

"Turn on CNN, they've lost contact with the shuttle." The time was 8:32 Central Time. The shuttle was already overdue.

I turned on the television and watched the incessant replays of a thick white contrail against a brilliant blue sky. I had seen that same blue sky, with the same trepidation, not too long before, on 11 September 2001. Then, as now, I wanted the replays to show something different happening. Unfortunately, now, as then, it was all too clear that a disaster had struck.

It was clear to me upon watching the shuttle break up that this could not have been an act of terrorism, yet I was wondering how long it would be before some terrorist organization, whether a known group or an unknown one, would appear to claim "credit" for the destruction of the Columbia. Today, on 3 February, I'm rather amazed that nobody has claimed credit, as a publicity stunt, more than anything else.

In an interview on 3 February, John Glenn commented that if someone had told him, during the Mercury Project selection process, that the United States would launch 144

missions with loss of life in space on only two of them, he would have thought the speaker was crazy to think the losses would be so low. Glenn, correctly, pointed out that while the losses are understandable, they should not be minimized, nor should the end the program.

On 28 January, I had commented that every time I saw footage of the Challenger disaster, I hoped that it would somehow end differently. At the time, of course, I had no way of knowing I would shortly be witnessing footage which was just as heart-wrenching. I decided I need to watch something more hopeful, so, while my wife was watching the infinite replays on the small television in the kitchen, I popped a twenty-two year old video tape into the VCR and watched the launch of STS-1 on the HDTV.

The stark white spacecraft, including a white-painted external fuel tank, sat on launch pad 39B. The countdown clock noted 2:23 until the launch of America's first space shuttle on 12 April 1981. I watched the launch until the solid rockets separated from the tank and turned it off. As soon as the shuttle had cleared the tower, I found myself choked up and glanced back at my wife, who was watching that single contrail break into two, then four, trails.

We had plans to spend the day up in Lake Geneva, Wisconsin at the National Snow Sculpture Championship and decided to go ahead with those plans. Otherwise, I would have sat in front of the television all day, watching the same images and getting nothing accomplished. We listened to the radio the entire drive up, waiting for the promised Presidential or NASA press conference, neither of which



occurred until we had gotten out of the car.

Normally, I don't much care about what George W. Bush has to say. I expect that he says what he is told to say and I expect that if I agree with him, it won't be followed up by anything substantial. In his speech that day, I found myself agreeing with what he had to say, although I could have done without the inane "The same Creator who names the stars also knows the names of the seven souls we mourn today. ... We can pray that all are safely home" comment. Later in the day, I also found

myself agreeing with statements made by Tom DeLay (R-TX), an even more rare occurrence. In any event, On Monday, 3 February, the Bush administration released its new budget which includes an increase of half-a-billion dollars to NASA's budget, so his rhetoric is tied to action in this case.

For whatever reason, things seemed worse on 2 February. It wasn't just that the disaster had had time to sink in, it was the news. I could deal with the idea that the astronauts had been killed and their bodies vaporized, but the reports of people finding charred remnants was too horrific. Children were coming across the remains and people were finding torsos, including heads, lying in fields. Unlike the survivors of the Challenger victims, the families of the Columbia crew would have pieces of their loved ones to bury and mourn.

It is part of the human psyche to seek coincidences in an attempt to make sense of the universe. Muslim agitator Abu Hamza, sees the fact that the shuttle carried Christians, Jews and Hindus on the eve of a war against Iraq and was destroyed about Palestine, Texas, as a divine message. There is also coincidence in the fact that the first possible cause examined was the loss of the shuttle's heat tiles. Looking back to the Columbia's first launch in 1981, a loss of heat shield tiles made NASA engineers nervous about the chances of the shuttle successfully returning to Earth. On the subject of coincidences, I am always reminded of a comment made by Christopher Chippindale. He noted that given the number of markers at Stonehenge, there should have been hundreds of alignments. The fact that there are as few as there are could indicate a specific attempt to not align the stones with anything.

The Monday after the disaster, an article appeared on Locus Online in which Gary Westfahl declared science fiction

had made people believe that space travel was safe. On Tuesday, a column by Paul Krugman appeared in the *New York Times*

questioning the need for a manned space program. Interestingly, Krugman opened by discussing how "furious" he was when a television network cancelled a science fiction show he enjoyed. In the same column,

Krugman calls for the United States to cancel the real life scientific endeavor that is manned space flight. Just as Westfahl sees the conquering of space as a task for future generations, so, too, does Krugman believe that we should give up until an amorphous future date, as if the technology will suddenly appear without the research and testing that is needed to support it. Westfahl states, and I'm sure Krugman would agree, that "there's a strong case to make that humanity should *eventually* conquer space, but not much of a case that we should be struggling to do so *right now*." Unfortunately, those mythical later generations will make these same arguments, stranding humanity, forever, on the shores of this planet.

In one of the more interesting columns to appear in the wake of the disaster, Charles Krauthammer noted in the *Washington Post* that "That is a fantastic risk. It can be justified—but only for fantastic journeys." He then went on to call for the end of the shuttle program and its

replacement by an even more ambitious program. "Back to the moon. Establish a lunar base. And then on to Mars." In what could have been a direct response to Westfahl and Krugman, Krauthammer noted "The Columbia tragedy will give voice to the troglodytes who want to give up manned space travel altogether. But the problem is not manned flight. The problem is *this kind* of manned flight, shuttling up and down at great risk and to little end."

Other columnists and newspapers took a more positive and supportive approach. The editorial board of *The Chicago Tribune* wrote not about the Challenger explosion or the loss of the Columbia, but about Frederick Hauck and the launch of the space shuttle Discovery on 29 September 1988, the first post-Challenger launch.

It comes down to what Sally Ride, the first American woman in space, pointed out in a column in the *L.A. Times*, "every astronaut has to assess that risk and come to terms with it. There is no astronaut in the nation who is not well aware of the delicate nature of the flight."

Ride also provides an answer to the naysayers like Krugman and Westfahl. "[Children are] fascinated by it, they're motivated by it, it speaks to something that is inside all of us: the human drive to

explore. The human drive to understand. "

*Ad astra in perpetuum*



#### Some Space Websites

- Astronauts Memorial Foundation: [www.amfcse.org/](http://www.amfcse.org/)
- Astronomy Picture of the Day: [antwrp.gsfc.nasa.gov/apod/astropix.html](http://antwrp.gsfc.nasa.gov/apod/astropix.html)
- European Space Agency: [www.esa.int/export/esaCP/index.html](http://www.esa.int/export/esaCP/index.html)
- Mars Society: [www.marssociety.org](http://www.marssociety.org)
- NASA: [www.nasa.gov/home/index.html](http://www.nasa.gov/home/index.html)
- National Space Society: [www.nss.org](http://www.nss.org)
- Planetary Nomenclature: [planetarynames.wr.usgs.gov](http://planetarynames.wr.usgs.gov)
- Russian Space Web: [www.russianspaceweb.com/](http://www.russianspaceweb.com/)
- Space.com: [www.space.com](http://www.space.com)



## ***It's Better to Run to Toronto***

Lloyd Penney

It is now that SFnal year 2003, and I can now say that Torcon 3 is coming this year. (Oooh, scary!) Toronto is a great place to live and explore, and there is so much to see and do around here. As someone who lives here, I tend to not take advantage of these great places. (Can't tell you the last time I was up the CN Tower.) This article will go to a couple of the places you might expect to go to, and some places you might want to go to if you've got time to travel some distance.

### **CASA LOMA**

Some of you may have seen an episode of "America's Castles" on A&E which detailed some of Canada's most impressive buildings. The star of that episode was Casa Loma. This building was the home, and primary building on the estate of Sir Henry Pellatt, who was an important banker, industrialist and soldier. Pellatt was from a rich and influential family, and he achieved full partnership in his father's stock brokerage firm, and married into further wealth all by the age of 23. He invested heavily in the first company to provide electric lighting for the town of Toronto, in the Canadian Pacific Railway, around the time of heavy immigration into the west, and in hydroelectric generation around Niagara Falls. With his vast fortune, he drew up plans for his dream castle in 1911 for Casa Loma, Spanish for "the house on the hill". It was built in three years, and the Pellatt set the trend for social life in Toronto at the time. However the pressures of public ownership of utilities, and the financial drain of World War I, in addition to the upkeep of Casa Loma, drove Pellatt into bankruptcy, and he was forced to auction off most of his prized possessions, including Casa Loma.

There were proposals to turn it into a luxury hotel, and for a while, it was a big band night spot. For some years, the castle was vacant. In 1937, the City of Toronto gave Casa Loma to the Kiwanis Club of West Toronto for operation as a tourist attraction. Right up to today, it is one of Toronto's top tourist attractions. It can be rented for special occasions, and one of those occasions was a grand taping of the BBC's "Antiques Roadshow" during its recent visit to Canada. It is surrounded by beautiful gardens, but the best part of the tour is the castle itself, as you explore the beautifully furnished rooms, the rooms set up as tributes to the Pellatts and some of their special interests, including the Girl Guides, the turrets, the stables, the other outbuildings, and the secret passages constructed to get Sir Henry from one place to another without enduring the cold Toronto winters.

Casa Loma is on the edge of a hill that overlooks much of the southern part of Toronto, and from some places, it can be seen from some distance. For more detailed descriptions of the castle, and how to get there, seeing it is in the midst of a residential section of Toronto, check out [www.casaloma.org](http://www.casaloma.org).

### **TORONTO and BOWMANVILLE ZOOS**

I'm sure some will say that a Worldcon is a zoo, but if you are interested in the real thing, Toronto and area have



two zoos you'd be interested in. In the northeastern corner of Toronto is the Toronto Zoo. It opened in 1974, with goals of exhibition, education and conservation, and in the summertime, is a great place to see a wondrous selection of the world's wildlife and endangered species.

The zoo is divided into indoor, outdoor and even underwater trails, so you can see the biggest (Siberian tigers, elephants, gorillas, polar bears and rhinoceri) to the smallest (scorpions, lizards and butterflies) in their native environments. As you walk or ride through the zoo, you might feel like you're riding from the Sahara, and straight into the northern Canadian tundra. Attention to detail has been paid to provide the animals with the surroundings and weather they are bred for, and to provide the maximum experience for those curious humans who have always wanted to see and meet their favorite animals.

The zoo is open all year long except for Christmas, and contains a tour train, rides for the kids, and even a mini-waterpark inside. For more information, check out [www.torontozoo.com](http://www.torontozoo.com).

Bowmanville is East by Northeast of Toronto, and has its own zoo, Canada's oldest private zoo, which was opened in 1919. The zoo bills itself as the original children's zoo. As with other zoos, the Bowmanville Zoo prides itself on conservation, but for quality of life for the animals who live there.. You might not recognize the names of the animals, but if you've ever seen lions, jaguars or tigers in movies and commercials, chances are they're now residing in Bowmanville. Many animals who performed in circuses and carnivals in past years now live their post-showbiz years here. (A friend of mine from Niagara Falls, New York who spent much of her life with performing dogs and large cats in various circuses comes



up to Bowmanville when she can to see some of the animals she performed with. She's also a fan.)

Bowmanville specializes in large cats, and they are beautiful to see. Rides on camels and elephants are also available. This award-winning zoo also boasts salmon streams and herds of deer on site. Bowmanville itself is a great village to spend part of your day in, too. For more information on the Bowmanville Zoo, go to [www.bowmanvillezoo.com](http://www.bowmanvillezoo.com).

### **ONTARIO SCIENCE CENTRE**

Not far from the Don Valley Parkway is the Ontario Science Centre, one of Toronto's favorite destinations for school field trips. There's always something to learn and do at the OSC, and I went there when I was a kid, too. Exhibits there explore space, the space programme and the solar system, natural sciences, physics, biology, botany, electronics, the Internet/Web, the human body and much, much more. There are shuttle simulators there, a ham radio station, demonstrations of science and chemistry and mini-theatres to show movies on the solar system and relative size between the microscopic and macroscopic.

Best of all, there are lots of hands-on exhibits to not only learn how things work, but to make them work. There's a science arcade with displays and machinery that would make Rube Goldberg proud. If you like science, space and doing things with your hands (I think that covers most of us), check out the OSC. The newest addition to the complex is a new Omnimax theatre. (We saw the Imax film "Space Station" there. Wow. That's probably the best word for it.)

A full day can be spent at the OSC, with lots to do and see. For more information, go to [www.ontariosciencecentre.ca](http://www.ontariosciencecentre.ca).

### **SQUARE ONE SHOPPING CENTRE**

If you're looking for places to go shopping, there's lots of places close by to Worldcon, like the gigantic Eaton Centre to the northeast, and the labyrinth of the PATH underground walkways, but if you're wanting to travel to go to the best place to find things, and the widest range of shopping, you might want to travel just a bit further.

Just west of the City of Toronto is the City of Mississauga, and it's home to the largest shopping mall in Ontario: Square One. It's located at the intersection of Highways 10 and 403, and is home to over 350 stores, including many well-known Canadian and American chains. It is also surrounded by other stand-alone stores, restaurants and movie theatres, plus cultural entities, such

as an opera house, so it is an entertainment centre for the region.

Square One really is downtown Mississauga, and all you need to do can be done in the mall and general area. If you'd like more information on the mall, go to [www.toronto.com/profile/139444/](http://www.toronto.com/profile/139444/).

### **CREEMORE**

The town of Creemore is one of the best-kept secrets in Toronto, mostly because it's a bit of a drive north. It has been declared one of the ten prettiest towns in Ontario, and because tourism makes up a good portion of its income, there's always lots to see and do once you're there.

Creemore is an arts community, so its Purple Hills Arts and Heritage Society is always busy. There is a schedule of festivals, special events and gatherings all year round to celebrate its 160 years of history, and its celebration of its heritage. Many of the stores in its downtown area are filled with antiques, arts and crafts, plus homemade clothing and foods. It's a very hospitable place, and the town itself prides itself on being "a hundred years behind the times". They've kept many of the older buildings from its past in excellent shape; there are many protected buildings in and around the town.

I know fans like a good beer, so one of the attractions in the downtown is the Creemore Springs Brewery, one of the best microbreweries in the province. Sure, it can be purchased at any beer store in Toronto, but a beer straight from the copper kettles, and served at the brewery itself, or any of the local restaurants, just can't be beat.

Creemore is in central Simcoe County, not far from Highway 400, north of Toronto. The website has a map on how to get there, and it's at [www.creemore.com](http://www.creemore.com).

These are just a few of the places to go to inside and outside Toronto. No article in a fanzine can do justice to listing, so I urge you that if you intend to see more than Worldcon around Labour Day, do your research, so here are some websites to explore.

[www.ontariotravel.net](http://www.ontariotravel.net)

[www.tourism.gov.on.ca](http://www.tourism.gov.on.ca)

[www.soto.on.ca](http://www.soto.on.ca)

[www.ontournet.com](http://www.ontournet.com)

[www.travelinx.com](http://www.travelinx.com)

and, of course, for anything in Toronto itself,

[www.toronto.com](http://www.toronto.com)

It is the most comprehensive website and links page to places to see and eat in Toronto.

Check it all out, and after all these years of going to where you are, I look forward to seeing you here.

# ***Six Lost Worlds: The Dramatic Adaptations of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's Novel***

by Mark R. Leeper

Imagine a place so isolated from the world that it was beyond the reach even of the forces of evolution. On one plateau deep in the remote Amazon rain forest there is a land that has withstood the ravages of time. Here dinosaurs and prehistoric ancestors of man still live.

In 1960 I remember being enthralled with the publicity for the upcoming film "The Lost World." I was nine years old and anything that had to do with dinosaurs was okay with me. I had only recently seen the 1959 version of "Journey to the Center of the Earth" and loved it. But only three sequences in the film had dinosaurs. (Okay, to be literal, there are no dinosaurs in that film, but at nine I was not ready to make zoological distinctions.) The Sunday comics had ads telling a little teasing bit of the story of an expedition to a plateau with dinosaurs. I was hooked. I guess I still am.

Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, the author of the Sherlock Holmes series of stories, also had a science fiction and fantasy series featuring short, wide, and blustery Professor George Edward Challenger. The stocky scientist was first introduced in his 1912 novel *The Lost World*. For this tale Doyle saw the dramatic possibilities of humans interacting with live dinosaurs. He told an irresistible story of an Amazon plateau so isolated that evolution had passed it by and where the dragons of the past still reigned supreme. There are two more novels with the same set of adventurers, though they are not nearly as interesting or famous. *The Poison Belt* is about the earth traveling through a field of poisonous ether gas. *The Land of Mist* is a plea for tolerance for a spiritualist church. Two shorter stories have Challenger opposing an inventor who has created a terrible weapon in "The Disintegration Machine," and discovering the Earth is a living organism in "When the Earth Screamed." Doyle is said to have preferred writing Challenger stories to stories about Sherlock Holmes, though the latter undeniably had greater popularity and perhaps were better written.

The publicity I was seeing in 1960 was for the second of what at this writing are six screen adaptations of the novel. In this article I will review each of the six adaptations of Doyle's novel to the screen. In doing so I face certain problems. First, the earliest version is incomplete. I will have to review what is available, a restored version of 92 minutes. A more widespread problem is that in my opinion none of the adaptations has been satisfactorily accurate to the novel. Every one of them takes at least one woman along and Doyle did not have a woman on the plateau in the novel. Each adaptation does a lot of inventing as if there was something wrong with Doyle's story. There really is not. If I like a version, it really is mostly in comparison to the other renditions that may not be as good.

## **The Lost World (1925)**

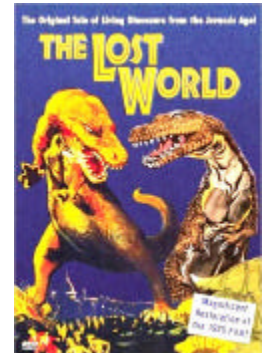
The 1925 version had much of the story more faithful to the novel than any of the later film versions, though some incidents occur out of order. One revision is that in the book Challenger brought back only a pterodactyl, and it escapes

before it is seen by more than a roomful of people. The 1925 silent film version apparently thought it would be more dramatic to have the animal brought back be a brontosaurus and it does quite a bit of damage when it escapes. This would show off imaginatively the stop-motion animation.

The 1925 film version was the first feature-length film to use stop-motion animation to any great degree. The technician who created the effects was a young Willis O'Brien, who would later be in charge of the effects of "King Kong" (1933). In fact, though O'Brien did not contribute the plot to "King Kong", it has strong similarities to "The Lost World", with the animal brought back to civilization being a very large ape.

This first and arguably the best version of Doyle's classic was the first version, a silent film. However, for years it has been nearly impossible to tell with any assurance much about the 1925 version of "The Lost World". There are four or five different versions of this film. Until relatively recently only an edited version a little over an hour has been available. This was much chopped down from the original film. Recently a 93-minute version has become available to the general public on DVD. Reportedly the original release was 104 minutes so only about 11 minutes of the original theatrical release are still missing. However, that is the released version.

Sadly, it is impossible to see at this point what the released film was really like. Production stills shown on the Turner Classic Movie cable channel seem to indicate that there was a great deal more of Doyle's plot that was shot than could possibly fit into the missing eleven minutes. Some sequences that look like they would have not only lengthened the film but made it more faithful to the published story. The stills include the "stool of penance" scene from the novel, which Challenger used as a most politically incorrect way to punish his wife. Also there is indication that as with the original novel Challenger was not chosen as one of the members of the expedition and he uses trickery to join the party after they are on their way. This plot was in the Doyle and was apparently filmed for the silent version and then probably



edited out. (Of the adaptations covered in this article only the 1992 television version and the “Alien Voices” audio versions are faithful to the book in this regard.) So while even the 93-minute version indicates large liberties taken from the novel, there was probably sequences shot that could have made for a fairly accurate version that perhaps never came together.

I personally recommend this 93-minute version as being more entertaining than the 63-minute version that has been available. The shorter version has just the minimal story needed to connect up the special effects shots. The longer editing makes the expedition seems less slapdash and makes the film feel more like a ripping adventure story. The shorter editing has the background story be little more than a frame for the dinosaur sequences. That audiences would settle for that is a testament to the popularity that the Willis O’Brien’s dinosaur sequences had with audiences.

It is hard to gauge the impact that these sequences must have had since so little like them had been seen on the screen before. Many of the viewers assumed that the dinosaurs were full-scale mechanical creations, and a few were naive enough to believe they were seeing real live dinosaurs. It is hard to believe from the jerky effects, the best possible at the time, that people took them for real. But in fact there were some who did. While the film was in production, Marion Fairfax, who wrote the screenplay, thought she would reassure special effects technician O’Brien and told him that if the effects did not work out, the dinosaurs could easily be removed from her screenplay. It is hard to imagine how popular a film they could have made without the attraction of the dinosaur effects.

The variations in plot from the novel are relatively small changes of little consequence until the travelers arrive at the plateau. Perhaps the biggest change was the addition of a love interest for Malone to go with him on the expedition. This is Paula White, daughter of plateau discoverer Maple White, played by Bessie Love. After the crew gets to the plateau the story diverges somewhat more. The novel talks of two tribes of humans. One are half-human Neanderthal sorts, the others are like modern Indians. Doyle spends much of the plateau story of how the modern Indians beat the half-men, proving the superiority of modern man. Frankly, for me this plot is not as interesting as the dinosaur-related plotting. In this 1925 version of the film the two tribes are reduced to one ape man, played by a man with the unlikely name Bull Montana. Montana specialized in playing apes and half-men in the movies. Without particularly good looks he had found his niche playing ape-men. The filmmakers had only one half-man actor so the story more concentrates on dinosaurs. Probably that is not a bad thing. Even at the time the dinosaurs were more intriguing to audiences than a man in an ape costume, however lurid.

Some additional liberties are taken. The zoological meeting takes place before Malone visits Challenger’s home. The escape route from the plateau is destroyed by a dinosaur rather than by Gomez. The most memorable variation, and one that would inspire other films, is that

instead of bringing back a pterodactyl, Challenger returns with a brontosaurus who then escapes and wreaks havoc in London. This popular sequence probably inspired films like “King Kong”; The Beast from 20,000 Fathoms;” and “Behemoth, the Sea Monster” (a.k.a. “The Giant Behemoth”).

I have read a review that said that Willis O’Brien’s special effects have still rarely been matched. That comment was well-intended but I think that Willis O’Brien would be among the first to deny it himself. While these effects were a big step forward from O’Brien’s previous work, he would do better work for “King Kong” in 1933. O’Brien’s protegee Ray Harryhausen furthered the art a great deal more. O’Brien would probably have been ecstatic to see the “Jurassic Park” films, and perhaps none more than “The Lost World: Jurassic Park II,” which I see as in part a tribute to him and his contributions. Some of the sequences, like a stampede of dinosaurs, are not technically perfect but are ambitious beyond belief for a film this early.

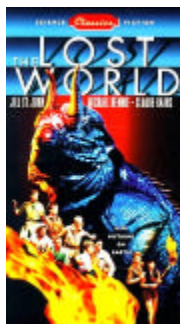
O’Brien was, at the time he made “The Lost World”, still having some problems with the smooth fluid movement of the figures he is animating. He also has a tendency to make the creatures of too large a scale. An example is the pterodactyl that seems much too massive in comparison to the spur of the plateau. O’Brien would similarly exaggerate the size of his stegosaurus in “King Kong”. Some of his matte scenes, static and traveling, combining images of actors and dinosaurs are well ahead of their time. While O’Brien never let the humans get too close to the dinosaurs, they impressively give scale to the giant beasts. There is one scene in which the humans throw a flaming piece of wood in a dinosaur’s mouth. This could not use stop-motion since there is no effective way to animate a flame frame-by-frame. For this effect a hand-puppet seems to have been used.

The acting is sufficient but spotty. Wallace Beery makes the best Challenger of any of the screen versions. He is sufficiently gruff and pushy. Bessie Love as Paula is not so good and her main talent seems to be that she can look frightened well. Arthur Hoyt’s Summerlee is almost unnoticeable. One barely remembers scenes he was in. Lloyd Hughes is bland as Edward Malone and reminds the viewer of Harold Lloyd. Lord John Roxton is played by Lewis Stone, who later would play dignified roles like Captain Smollet in the 1934 “Treasure Island” and Judge Hardy in the Andy Hardy series. Stone makes an imposing Roxton if not a very interesting one. He seems almost too dignified to be the great hunter.

Unless one counts films like “King Kong”, “Unknown Islands” “The Land Unknown,” or “Two Lost Worlds,” all of which arguably took some inspiration from the Doyle, the next real film version of “The Lost World” was released in summer of 1960 with Claude Rains as Challenger.

## “The Lost World” (1960)

The 1960 version of “The Lost World” was the first version I ever saw, not too surprising for anyone of the Baby Boomer generation. Most critics think that it is a totally ugly dog. I can sympathize with that point of view, but do not agree. It certainly is a giant step down from the 1925 version. But in the context of a 1960 film, it comes off a bit better. The 1950s had several gaudy adventure films of much the same style, films like “Run for the Sun.” In years to come the same sort of film would be a special effects extravaganza, but in the 1950s filmmakers would use real settings.



Infusing a little bit of science fiction into that formula is a welcome variation. One can almost reconcile oneself to the film in that context but then one remembers how badly the “dinosaur” effects are created. And there is Frosty the Poodle. The film just has its good and more than its share of bad moments.

The 1960 version of “The Lost World”, directed by Irwin Allen (who also produced and co-wrote the screenplay with Charles Bennett), boasted the name of Willis O’Brien as “effects technician.” Sadly the dinosaur effects were created by the later illegal practice of using live lizards, perhaps enhancing their looks by pasting horns or plates on them, and then having them fight other such lizards. It was cruel to the animals and only the least discerning audiences could suspend disbelief and think of these things as dinosaurs. Part of what makes dinosaurs dinosaurs is that they stand straight upon their legs the way an elephant does. Lizards have legs that go out to the side. Dinosaur bodies can support more weight because their legs are like columns under them for support. The previous year lizards were used to good effect in “Journey to the Center of the Earth” to simulate Dimetrodons. However, Dimetrodons were not lizards and not dinosaurs.

This version is not a very good rendering of the story, in spite of introducing color to the adaptations. It nonetheless was my introduction to Doyle’s story and as such it has fond memories for me. Rains is too thin to play the barrel-chested discoverer, but otherwise he is not too bad at playing Challenger. He has the personality approximately right. His acting is the best thing about this adaptation. On the other hand, choosing comic actor Richard Hayden as Summerlee was a fiasco. His performance grates on one’s nerves whenever he is on the screen. He acts as if he is in some other movie. Michael Rennie makes a decent Roxton. He has the self-assured quality that Doyle would have appreciated. David Hedison is a little old to play Edward Malone and have the sort of boyish enthusiasm and insecurities that Doyle gave that character.

Irwin Allen updates the story to roughly 1960. The film opens with Challenger returning from the Amazon to report his discoveries of live dinosaurs on a plateau of South America. With Challenger’s traditional hatred of reporters he clouts Ed Malone trying to interview him. Malone is pulled from the ground by Jennifer Holmes (Jill St. John), the daughter of his publisher.

At the geographic society Challenger reports having seen dinosaurs. The skeptical audience suggests a return visit to verify his findings. In return for funding, Challenger is saddled with a reporter on the expedition, Malone. He also gets Professor Summerlee and big game hunter Lord John Roxton. At a stop in South America the expedition picks up two local guides, pilot Manuel Gomez (Fernando Lamas) and lackey Costa (Jay Novello). (Manuel and Costa are two different characters in the novel.) Also joining the expedition more or less by blackmail are Jennifer and her brother David (Ray Stricklyn) as well as a poodle named Frosty. The siblings are no invention of Doyle, but the choice of the name Holmes is likely an allusion to Doyle.

The expedition takes helicopter to plateau, getting magnificent views from overhead. They land on the plateau but see no sign of dinosaurs. That night they hear a large beast in their vicinity, terrorizing them. They soon find their helicopter was crushed and kicked over the side of the cliff. We get a glimpse of a large lizard with a neck frill. Challenger identifies it as a brontosaurus, but what we saw did not look anything like a brontosaurus. In any case the explorers find they are now stranded on the plateau. The next day they are menaced by man-eating plants and more dinosaurs. One of the latter splits up the group and Malone and Challenger as one subgroup finds a native girl. Malone follows her and finds her, even at the cost of running through the web of a four-foot-wide tarantula spider.

Malone brings her to camp where only Roxton recognizes that capturing her could mean trouble from the rest of her tribe. Relations are about to degenerate into a fistfight when Roxton finds a strange diary. It was kept by Burton (not Maple) White who discovered the plateau in partnership with Roxton. White’s diary says he is waiting for Roxton to rescue him and that he is looking for legendary diamonds. Roxton was part of that team, but let the others down. He never came to them. Now he has come again with Challenger, but with of motive of looking for the diamonds. Jennifer is deeply disappointed in the man she was hoping to catch.

David tries to comfort the native girl and in the process discovers that she knows how to use a rifle. He is about to tell the others when the group is attacked. The native girl escapes and Malone follows. He loses her and Malone returning through the forest finds Jennifer. The two are returning to camp when they find themselves in the paths of two fighting dinosaurs. They must hide as the two titans fight. This is a rather sadistic piece of footage when one sees that these are live lizards pitted against each other. Eventually they fall over the side of the plateau.

Jennifer and Mallone return to camp finding it empty. They realize that the others have been captured. In

moments they find that they are also prisoners of the natives. Taken to the native city they find drum-beating ceremonies in progress. They are reunited with their fellow explorers.

Just when they realize they are to be eaten the native girl comes along to rescue David. With a little effort she is convinced to help the whole group escape. He takes them to find a blind Burton White (Ian Wolfe). White tells them there is a path through the plateau to the base. How it got there on a volcanic plateau is hard to understand. Why would lava take such a path? But the expedition takes this path past deadly people-grabbing tendrils and a graveyard of dead dinosaurs.

The entire plateau is starting to erupt and explode. Their expedition uses fire to keep back the pursuing natives. They find the diamonds, but also more trouble and another dinosaur. As they leave the plateau blows itself to pieces.

This version invents its own subplots, but which version does not? The script is not great, but it would have made for at least a good adventure film had the dinosaurs looked like dinosaurs.

For those in the audience who would recognize Willis O'Brien's name, in the credits as "effect technician." He was reportedly asked his opinion of the possibility of lizard special effects and told the producers how bad those effects were. They paid him for his opinion, ignored it, and put his name in the credits. That probably was the plan from the beginning. The film had moments, but overall was not very good. The plot is confused with a previous expedition that was bungled, a treasure hunt for diamonds, and a revenge plot. Perhaps the capper of mistakes was to have the woman expedition member bring a poodle. There is no adventure film so exciting that it cannot be ruined by the presence of a poodle. The Disney film "The Island at the Top of the World" made the same grievous error. Perhaps it was supposed to be a counterpoint of Gertrude the Duck of the previous year's far superior "Journey to the Center of the Earth", also from Fox. However, while the duck worked well, Frosty the poodle served only to demonstrate how silly this expedition was. With the exception of the dog, the writing is not really bad—it just fails to be very interesting. It might be best appreciated if one just does not look at the screen once the expedition reaches the plateau.

With all its faults, at least this film does not talk down to its audience and does not have the juvenile feel of the 1992 and 1999 versions. It has a sort of empty, Technicolor, wide-screen, 1950s feel. The plateau never looked so good as seen from above at a distance.

This was a bad and disappointing version of the Doyle, but it would neither be the last such, nor would it be the worst. Irwin Allen was aiming for an adult audience while relying on a teenage crowd (not unlike the soon to begin Bond series). The next version would wait thirty-two years, just three years short of the interval between the silent and first sound version. And the new version was definitely made with a younger audience in mind.

## "The Lost World" (1992)

The 1992 version of "The Lost World", a Canadian production directed by Timothy Bond (who previously directed episodes for the television series "Star Trek: The Next Generation" and "War of the Worlds") and written and co-produced by Harry Alan Towers.



The film is shot in Zimbabwe and apparently was made together or in tandem with a sequel, "Return to the Lost World." To accommodate this location the plateau is moved from South America to Africa. The transplant gives the story a sort of H. Rider Haggard feel that would be okay, but it is not Doyle.

Towers's script starts reasonably faithful to the Doyle but quickly shows its loyalties are more to sending (condescending) politically correct messages than to the text by Doyle. Male chauvinists everywhere are given a come-uppance by a strong female on the expedition. Because the script is already being written on a juvenile level, a boy is added to the expedition to give children someone to identify with.

As in the book, Malone (Edward McCormack) passes himself off to Challenger (John Rhys-Davies) as a scientist, but he does not have the knowledge to maintain the ruse. Malone is, incidentally, made a Canadian to give the Canadian audience one of their own to care about. Challenger attacks Malone, the police intervene, and Malone endears himself to Challenger by choosing not to press charges. The forming of the expedition is pretty much like in the manner of the novel though they end up with woman reporter Jenny Nielson (Tamara Gorsu) and a twelve-ish boy Jim (Darren Peter Mercer). The character of Roxton has been eliminated and there is no equivalent. As in the book but few film versions it is decided that it is Summerlee (David Warner) who will lead the expedition and Challenger will remain behind. Not to worry, Rhys-Davies is too big a star to not be included in the expedition.

More invented characters come along. On the way the expedition is joined by a female Noble Savage in a revealing two-piece outfit. She is Malu (Nathania Stanford) and can be counted on to have politically correct thinking as everybody raised in the bush would have. Also along is the nasty Gomez (Geza Kovacs). One more piece that harks from the book—in the end the expedition brings back to London a pterodactyl, though the story of the pterodactyl is somewhat different from Doyle's tale.

The reporter Jenny Nielson appears inspired by the real person Nellie Bly. She is a slightly aggressive feminist. On the other hand John Rhys-Davies makes a passable Challenger in stature and temperament. He is, after his earliest scenes and though he feuds with Summerlee, less strident and more boyishly likable than in the Doyle.

The choice to do the film in a didactic and juvenile fashion that makes it a very bad disappointment after a



start that is at least decent. The dinosaurs were rubbery and cute with rough edges rounded off and so was the writing. The script looks for every politically correct lesson that can be wrung from the plot. Doyle, of course, had no women on the expedition. The first two film versions each had one woman along. This version has two attractive women and a plucky youngster. Things are going downhill.

I will not say much about the sequel, “Return to the Lost World”. It is not an adaptation of the Doyle, but only inspired by it. The story involves European entrepreneurs who want to exploit the petroleum in the no longer lost world and the team returns to the plateau to protect it. It is not the most original or engaging story and did not really need this particular prehistoric land to tell its story. The sequel certainly underscored that Maple White Land was a noble and wondrous world that needed to be preserved. The 1998 version had a very different attitude toward Maple White’s mysterious land.

**“The Lost World” (1998)  
a.k.a. “Sir Arthur Conan  
Doyle’s The Lost World”**

Six years after the Canadian production of “The Lost World”, the story was again adapted in the United States with some unusual variations. Even the title was modified. Following the films “Bram Stoker’s Dracula” and “Mary Shelley’s Frankenstein”, it became popular to include the original author’s name in the title of films based on classics. It somehow promised that the content fidelity to the original work. “Bram Stoker’s Dracula” added a love interest for Dracula that Bram Stoker would not have recognized, and “Mary Shelley’s Frankenstein” had Victor bringing his bride back from the dead in precisely the way that the character in the book did not. Still, it was popular for a while to put the author’s name in the title. Hence in two years we have two different films titled “Sir Arthur Conan Doyle’s The Lost World”. This is the first. To make things even more confusing the two versions each has the same actor playing Summerlee. It must take a lot of explanation on his resume that these really are different films. This film proves its loyalty (or lack thereof) to the original text by starting in Mongolia, of all places.

The 1998 film opens with Maple White finding a pterodactyl egg and paying for it with his life. He lives long enough to pass his notebook and other interesting evidence to his traveling companion and partner G. E. Challenger (Patrick Bergin, who does not look anything like Doyle’s Challenger). When Challenger returns to London with his claims that dinosaurs exist, showing notebooks as his evidence, as usual in adaptations he is met with skepticism and is offered the means for an expedition. Amanda White (Jayne Heitmeyer) recognizes her father’s notebooks and insists on being part of the expedition. Mr. Summerlee is ambivalent about being



asked to go on the expedition, but after a moment agrees. Unique in this version, Summerlee is actually a fairly decent and interesting character and one the audience cares for. Michael Sinelnikoff makes a very acceptable if not highly memorable Summerlee. He does such a good job that in the unrelated production the following year he repeated the role, though that part was not as well written. He is, I believe, the only actor to repeat a role in two unconnected productions of “The Lost World”. He also plays the role in the “Lost World” television series, of which I will say more later. John Roxton (David Nerman) is demoted from being the book’s English lord to being an obnoxious American hunter who later proves to be of villainous intent. Arthur (!) Malone the reporter also joins the expedition played by an unmemorable Julian Casey. Bergin’s Challenger gets along neither with Summerlee nor Roxton, though the audience likes Roxton considerably less.

Using several conveyances of the period, which seems to be the 1930s or so, the crew makes its way to Mongolia and the plateau out of time. The final step involves a helium balloon to ascend the plateau as a sort of getaway after the team has just rescued Ms. White. In the best traditions of “King Kong” she had been kidnapped by natives and stretched out on a rack. Having just been rescued and ascending to a land of vicious dinosaurs, Amanda White literally found herself between a rack and a hard place. And a hard place, the plateau is. The travelers find their land of dinosaurs—particularly vicious dinosaurs—and two warring tribes. One of the tribes are Neanderthals one more modern. In the end of an uncomfortable stay only Challenger and White make it out alive, though Malone is left behind on plateau like an Edgar Rice Burroughs hero.

We initially see a “brontosaurus” with some features that are wrong for the animal. Perhaps some effect artist tried to get creative. However, it turns out that the inaccuracy is a feature, not a bug. With hundreds of millions of years of evolution. it appears dinosaurs have diverged from those in the fossil record. Other adaptations have implied that once you got to know this plateau it was a groovy place to be. Perhaps one of the best touches of this version is that definitely is **not** the case in this adaptation. This is probably the goriest adaptation, and the plateau is a painful and dangerous place to be. Perhaps inspired by “Jurassic Park” this film has the meanest and most nasty dinosaurs of any version. The dinosaur effects seem to be in large part digital, though perhaps some mechanical effects were used also.

Making up a little for deficiencies in the writing the film has a terrific look. The art direction by Sylvain Gingras has an antique Indiana Jones tone. Several interesting vehicles are used to bring the explorers to Maple White land, especially a sort of half-track bus. While the transplantation from a South American jungle to snowy Mongolia seems all wrong, it is not a bad setting for an adventure story. It is reminiscent RKO setting their “She” (1935) in Tibet rather than Africa.

In the end, with Malone marooned in Maple White Land as a sort of Robinson Crusoe with dinosaurs, it is expected his adventures might continue. No sequel was



made. However, someone in Canada had a very similar idea. Why not have a TV series set on the plateau? So nearly at the same time Canadian producers made their own version of the story, but handled it as a TV pilot and sold an entire TV series on the premise.

**“The Lost World”  
(1999) a.k.a. “Sir  
Arthur Conan Doyle’s  
The Lost World”**



Richard Franklin directed the 1999 version of “The Lost World” as a two-hour (minus commercials) pilot for the Canadian TV series of the same name. In fact the series sold and apparently ran in Canada and the United States. I was less than pleased with the pilot, which was very much of a television quality.

The setup is only vaguely correct and the people never do get off the plateau because then we would not have a continuing television series, would we? The focus is not even on the characters that Doyle created. They are lessened in importance compared to new strong (female) characters.

After an action prolog in which we see a man attacked by something big in a jungle, presumably a dinosaur. He finds tall, handsome explorer Challenger (Peter McCauley, very unlike Doyle’s version). He dies in his camp, but not before he leaves Challenger his journal and photo negatives of pterodactyls. Challenger returns to London with tales of this lost world that he has not visited. He tells the geographic society of his discovery. They are skeptical, but suggest a special expedition. There are the usual three volunteers: Ned Malone (William deVry), Lord John Roxton (William Snow, a Pierce Brosnan look- alike), and Dr. Summerlee (Michael Sinelnikoff). Michael Sinelnikoff, as I said, also played Summerlee in the American version the previous year. In that he was a major character. Here, though he plays the same role, he has a lot less acting to do.

In one more variance from the book, Challenger seems to have no enmity toward Malone. When the question of who will fund the expedition arises a mysterious and beautiful woman steps forward, Marguerite Krux (played by Rachel Blakely) and volunteers on the proviso that she can come on the expedition. Krux irritatingly has attitudes of 1999 and not at all of 1912. She complains about museums of “dead things.” She wears brief outfits in the jungle. They nicely show off her cleavage but would be roughly the equivalent of ringing a flying insect dinner bell. She also seems to like skinny-dipping. The Victorian Doyle would probably have been scandalized by this adaptation of his book.

The group travels to the rain forest. Along the way they survive an attack by headhunters. They also survive the crash landing of the balloon they brought for their ascent onto the plateau. The landing of the balloon is never shown, probably as an economy measure. (The credit sequence shows the splintered piece of plateau that is the way the explorers in the book get onto the main

plateau. The film never actually uses that entrance, choosing a perhaps more visual balloon ascent.)

On the plateau the explorers find Veronica, a Sheena-like jungle girl clad in a brief leather two- piece. She also is an abundant source of cleavage and is the last survivor of a previous expedition that included her parents. She has grown up on the plateau, and she lives in a fantastic tree house beyond anything Tarzan imagined. It even has an elevator.

The characters are not well developed. Roxton proves to be a likable bouncer. The other males are bland and uninteresting. Krux would be a character of some interest if she were a little less 1999 and more 1912.

The special effects are generally indifferently executed and there is not much real interaction between humans and dinosaurs. The large beasts are seen most frequently from distance. The prehistoric animals are an audience attraction, but they are a background detail that rarely fits into the plot. In fact, before the dinosaurs are first seen by the expedition, nobody even thinks to ask Veronica if there are dinosaurs on the plateau or not. The actual purpose of the expedition just never comes up. Now that is really relegates the dinosaurs to the background and concentrates more on the ape-men. Of course, Doyle did much the same. The effects might have been good if seen in Willis O’Brien’s day but are really not up to 1990s standards. The images of the beasts are just never really integrated into scenes with people and frequently there are bad matte lines. When a pterodactyl grabs Roxton and carries him off the lizard undulates in air with the wing-beats, but Roxton remains rigid.

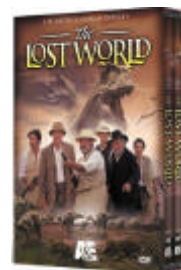
This version is more just a castaway story than a serious adaptation of Doyle’s book. It is reminiscent of the old children’s program “The Land of the Lost.” The pilot is less interested in telling Doyle’s story as in setting up the television series.

This brings us to the television series. Episodes I have seen have not been very interesting and not very faithful to the Doyle. They seem to freely move into the area of fantasy and have a lot of female flesh. Some of the writing is painfully bad. While searching for a way off the plateau the trapped explorers find what Challenger calls an “ocean”—on the plateau. He wants to find a sea route off the plateau. How exactly does he think that would work? How do you have an ocean lapping at the top of a plateau?

But even while this “sci-fi” series was being produced techniques for creating animal images on film improved. And Doyle’s story was, as always, the perfect showcase for the new effects. So two years later the story was filmed a sixth time.

**“The Lost World” (2001)**

It is not like previous decade had not had several adaptations of Arthur Conan Doyle’s *The Lost World*. But after the BBC finished their “Walking with Dinosaurs” with very realistic-looking



effects, I suspected that the next natural thing to do with this technology for creating lifelike dinosaurs was to juxtapose them with humans. No respectable non-fiction presentation could do that. One would have to do a story in which humans interface closely with the dinosaurs. There is only one classic, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's "The Lost World". (Note: "Journey to the Center of the Earth" does have humans in viewing distance of an ichthyosaur fighting a plesiosaur, but these are not really dinosaurs and it is only one sequence.) So once again the Doyle was adapted.

The BBC, in cooperation with the A&E cable network, brought us a new version about 165 minutes long. The special effects combine CGI and full-scale models to give us state of the art visuals and dinosaur images that look realistic and fit our current paleontological knowledge.

This was, at least to my taste, the best version of the story we are likely to get for a while. Willis O'Brien who created the effects for the 1925 "The Lost World" and then was heartbroken when lizards were used in the 1960 version of the film would have been very pleased to see this version. Doyle might have been a little less pleased with the liberties taken with the plot. But still it was done on a relatively intelligent level.

Bob Hoskins takes a turn playing Challenger, a scientist with the reputation for being a crackpot. He outdoes himself when he claims that on his last expedition to South America he found a remote place where dinosaurs still live. The Royal Society is skeptical but fits out an expedition of four led by Challenger and the bland intellectual Summerlee (Edward Fox this time), a skeptic who has no patience for Challenger's claims or eccentricities. There is also game hunter Lord Roxton (Tom Ward) and news reporter Edward Malone (Matthew Rhys). The expedition finds the plateau where Challenger saw the dinosaurs all right, but their means of exit is destroyed in a way closer than usual to the Doyle, though still somewhat revisionist. They have to face the now all-too-real dinosaurs that Challenger reported seeing.

None of the cinematic versions of the novel have been really faithful. The newest version only roughly follows the Doyle and creates two new major characters. Agnes Clooney, raised in the jungle near the site of the plateau has lived in the jungle all her life and will act as a guide at the plateau. Theo Kerr (Peter Falk) is her uncle, a Bible-thumping missionary at odds with Summerlee over the issue of Creationism and Evolution. This is a more intelligent revision than in previous versions, but one wonders why it is always found necessary to revise the Doyle plot.

While the triangle of Challenger, Summerlee, and Kerr contest science, a romantic triangle of Clooney, Roxton, and Malone sprouts. The novel is "revised" throughout. In the novel, Challenger is the most irascible character with a reputation for violence against newspaper reporters like Malone. Hoskins loses this dimension and seems to be the most pleasant and amiable of the expedition members. The story starts as great fun, though in the last hour the writing is disappointingly pedestrian.

Among the modifications from the Doyle is the effort to humanize the sub-human ape men on the plateau. In the book they were cruel killers who entertained themselves dropping their enemies over cliffs. That aspect was considerably toned down for this television version. This is the longest version yet made so there is more emphasis on South American color than there was even in the novel.

The special effects are certainly what sets this version apart from previous cinematic adaptations of the novel. Still, the dinosaurs, while more real-looking than previous version, are not quite integrated with the people. When we see an entire dinosaur, requiring CGI, it cannot quite interact with the people superimposed in the scene. It was much like early Ray Harryhausen rarely had the creatures he created interacting directly with people. When need be, he could have cowboys lasso a dinosaur, but such effects were used sparingly and it showed. In this "Lost World" we see even less such interaction. People will be chased by a dinosaur that looks realistic, but on a different plane from the people. What does that mean? It is hard to describe.

Admittedly, in the 1950s it was very easy to describe what was wrong with the special effects of a film. In the 21st century complaints with the special effects are more abstract and harder to explain. But some limitations are still obvious to the eye.

This is probably the best version of "The Lost World" since the 1925 version. It will probably be a while until a better version of "The Lost World" is made.

## Summary

Sadly after the one reasonably good film version in 1925, there are no satisfying versions of Doyle novel. All versions have been too anxious to introduce new characters, frequently love interests. And some try to make political points. This is just not a novel that has been treated very well in its film adaptations. Ordering them best to worst, identifying them with the person playing Challenger and the year I would say:

1. Wallace Beery 1925
2. Bob Hoskins 2001
3. Patrick Bergin 1998
4. Claude Rains 1960
5. John Rhys-Davies 1992
6. Peter McCauley 1999

It should be noted that the 1997 film "The Lost World: Jurassic Park II" is based on the Michael Crichton novel of the same name. Nothing that I have ever seen has ever connected it with the Doyle's *The Lost World*. I nevertheless notice that there are several plot parallels to film versions of *The Lost World*. One man claims there is an isolated place in South America where dinosaurs can be found. There is an expedition to find the place. After a struggle against the dinosaurs, one is brought back to a modern city where it escapes and goes on a rampage. It is hard for me to not see this as a sort of tribute or homage to the film versions of the Doyle.

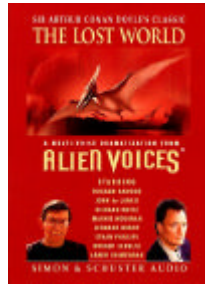
There have also been audio versions of the story. Unfortunately, I do not know of where any but one are available. BBC Radio did productions of the story in 1938, 1944, 1949, 1952, 1958, and 1975. I have not heard these versions, nor would I know even where to

search for them. Any pointers from readers to where to find these or other adaptations would be welcome. I have heard an audio-book abridgment read by James Mason. He was chosen, no doubt, because of his association with two classic films based on more classic science fiction books, "Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea" and "Journey to the Center of the Earth," albeit books by Jules Verne not Arthur Conan Doyle. The one audio dramatization I have heard was not one I had much hope for and it was about what I expected.

**"Alien Voices: The Lost World" (1996)**

"Alien Voices" is an audio theater company specializing in science fiction stories. It is built around three actors associated with three different series of "Star Trek." The actors are Leonard Nimoy (formerly Spock), John de Lancie (Q), and Armin Shimerman (Quark). "Alien Voices" seems frequently also associated with the cable Sci-Fi Channel. The drama group seems to specialize in doing the classic science fiction stories from the likes of H. G. Wells, Jules Verne, and Arthur Conan Doyle.

There are a number of faults built into any "Alien Voices" production. The first is that the three actors are



overly familiar and overly associated in other roles. They also have characteristic voices. That makes it almost impossible to lose them in their character. Through ego, I suspect, they don't want to be lost in the roles either. One does not have Lord John Roxton as a character so much as John de Lancie **doing** Lord John Roxton as the character. The acting is uniformly weak. They use their own voices rather than using dramatic tricks to change them and at the same time other actors are exaggerating accents unrealistically. Thus the actors and scriptwriter make very clear that they do not take the material seriously and they do not expect the audience to do so either. It is supposed to be all in good fun, but it makes it very hard to appreciate the stories. In any case the length of the stories is on the order of forty-five minutes, which it really not enough time to do justice to the novels they are adapting and too much time is spent on the humor. In addition, what is there is not faithful to the novels. That is not uncommon in dramatic adaptations, but they take particularly large liberties. In the case of "The Lost World", Summerlee is a woman and becomes a love interest for Edward Malone. There are little sexual double entendres and other references that the Victorian Doyle would never have wanted in a novel intended as wholesome entertainment for "the boy who's half man or the man who's half boy." The story is told as the newspaper editor McArdle (Leonard Nimoy with no effort to sound Scottish) reading dispatches from Edward Malone. Just how these dispatches are supposed to get to

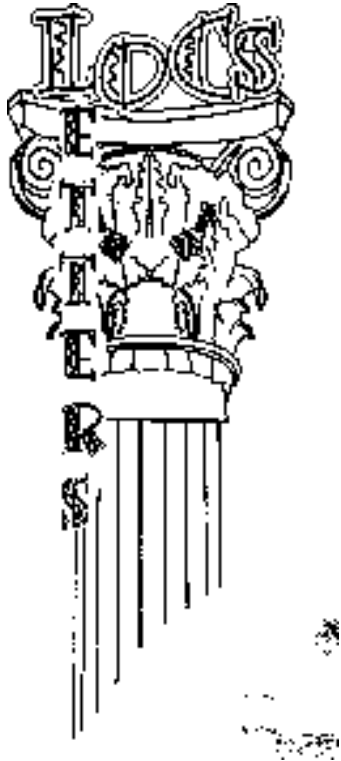
London from the top of the plateau is unclear, but in this version not a lot of time is spent actually on the plateau. That part of the story, what should be the shank, is much abbreviated. In fact, there are only two encounters with dinosaurs on the plateau. While that part has a few of the essentials from the novel, it is the least compelling sequence of the dramatization. That may be because the virtues of that part of the story are mostly visual.

In any case this adaptation is at best half-hearted and of all the versions in covered in this article, it is the one least likely to capture the imagination of a young new-comer.

There has never been a fully satisfying adaptation of Doyle's novel. After a span of ten years in which there were four cinematic versions, it seems unlikely there will be another one for a while. However, that was what I would have thought after three adaptations and we got still one more. As special effect technology improves, the fascination that virtually everybody has with dinosaurs, will lead more people to try to render them realistically on the screen. Then they will want to put them in adventure stories. Some of Edgar Rice Burroughs is a possibility. But really there is only one major classic adventure story with dinosaurs. Sir Arthur Conan Doyle wrote it in 1912. It's *The Lost World*



## Letter Column



HENRY L. WELCH  
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GRAFTON, WI 53024-2017

Steven,

Thanks for *Argentus 2*.

Bart Kemper's article on the openness of fandom was interesting despite the somewhat confusing start. I've seen all sides of the issue. I know that when I migrated from the east coast to Milwaukee it was extremely difficult for me to even find fandom and once we found it it took considerable effort on my part to get integrated. A newcomer would likely never have found the group and not attempted to push. I think this type of experience is echoed in the article. On the other hand I've seen fannish groups (typically conventions) get totally overrun by those with no interest in SF. Both Boskone and to a lesser extent Minicon have had to deal with the large throngs of boors who just showed up for the all the beer you can swill for the price of admission with no care for the hosts or the hotel.

I certainly don't enjoy cons as much as I used to. I've noticed a change in the bid parties over the years so that I don't find them as interesting

and I'm sure my perspective has shifted somewhat. I used to drink more than I do now, but I certainly did not drink to excess in a bad way. Part of it is that those I started in fandom with no longer attend the conventions I do and the other is the three kids in tow having its impact.

I certainly hope that I've been open. When I ran the SF convention in college I got a large number of freshmen interested that persisted even after I'd walked away. I've had a tougher time with non-college cons, but I haven't put nearly the effort into networking and recruiting that I did in college.

The game of Hell's Bridge sounds an awful lot like spades, but with a random trump suit.

I wish you the best of luck with your lower back. I've had exactly one day of lower back discomfort and don't care to repeat the experience. Unrelated to the back problems was some lung surgery I had. The first thing they did was give me a valium and after that I really didn't care what came next. Like you I found it nearly impossible to concentrate in the hospital room, but my roommate simply moaned until they came and gave him some pain medication. Why he didn't just ring the buzzer I'll never know.

I don't know if I'm up to hosting the first Midwest Con. I doubt Milwaukee fandom is up for it in isolation, but something combined between Chicago and Milwaukee might be doable. It all depends on the expectations and attendance. It does occur to me, though, that you have no idea of my con running credentials. I still don't know if I'll make Construction and may not know until the last minute.

BTW: In the zine listings you have me as "Harry".

[*My apologies.*]  
Henry L. Welch  
25 June 2002

TED WHITE  
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Dear Steven,

*Argentus #2* arrived in yesterday's mail and I settled down with it in between a variety of other tasks. My immediate reaction: much cleaner and more attractively designed and presented. You still seem to be caught between the formalism of a *Nova Express* and the looser informality of the more "fannish" fanzines, but I think the trend toward informality is a good one. It comes with the realization that this fanzine is for you to have fun with—it's not an amateur prozine. And generally if the editor is having fun with his fmz, so will the readers.

"The Unwelcoming Face of Fandom" gets your pride of place, leading off the issue, and as such will probably draw most of the attention this time around. That leaves me with mixed feelings, because although this is a far more sensibly written piece than its title suggested it would be, it is still founded on some appalling ignorance.

It starts with the first subheading: "AKICIF." Kemper says "True Fen not only recognize the acronym AKICIF as All Knowledge Is Contained In Fandom, they are likely to believe it." That's wrong.

To begin with, the acronym does not stand for what Kemper says it does. It actually and originally was "All Knowledge Is Contained In Fanzines."

[*It definitely seems to be a term whose definition has changed in much general usage (see gafiate). According to Stet 9: The Old Fan's 2000 Almanac, AKICIF: "All Knowledge is Contained in **Fandom**, a reference to fans' wide-ranging interests and penchant for collecting trivia. The initials are used mainly **in rasff**, where **they first appeared**, and generally indicate that a poster is asking a question that has nothing to do with SF or fandom." (p.69, emphasis mine). I asked Leah about this recently and she indicated that she was incorrect in Stet. She also noted that the fan dictionary in Stet should **not** be taken as gospel, but was intended as a starting point for a discussion. Unfortunately, too many people are taking it as a definitive source.]*

And while there is a (slim) measure of truth in that statement, it was originally uttered sarcastically, as an irony and a comment on the insularity of some fans half a century ago. The corruption this acronym has suffered over the years is a symptom of Kemper's larger problem: he doesn't know what fandom is and he has few clues about where it has been. He stands somewhere on the amorphous fringes of a large and diffuse "fandom" and he has no roadmap.

Consequently, throughout his article Kemper responds to "fandom" as though it was and is comprised primarily of con-runners. Although his piece was written for and published in a fanzine, he seems oblivious to the central role of fanzines in the history of fandom.

Fandom was, historically, a community of fans. Anyone can—and always could—declare him or herself "a fan" of SF, but to be a member of fandom requires an awareness of that community and interaction with it. Traditionally fandom existed primarily via the mails—fans being spread thinly over the world—via correspondence and fanzines. In the late '30s some fans (mostly in the American northeast) began planning the get togethers which were our first conventions. For the first two decades there were very few conventions: the annual Worldcon, and three annual regional conventions, the Phillycon, the Midwestcon and the Westercon. Late in the '50s a fourth was added, Disclave (Washington, D.C.) It was in the '60s that DeepSouthCon, Boskone, and other regional cons joined the fray. And in the '70s the floodgates opened and local cons sprang up everywhere. Also with the '70s we had the phenomenon of for-profit conventions, which usually appealed as much for members outside the SF community as in it. Creationcon was one of the first of these comics/media/SF cons.

The tail began to wag the dog. While once conventions were what brought us fans together to meet and socialize once or twice a year, now conventions have lives of their own and their own communities which are often localized and usually only tenuously connected with the greater fandom which still exists as an

international community via fanzines and (now) the e-lists.

So we have a situation in which "greater fandom" consists of one or two thousand people (at the most), most of them English-speaking, and most of them aware of each other (as you and I are of each other), many with long-lasting friendships which span decades. And against this backdrop exists a balkanized mosaic of local fandoms, clubs, con-running fandoms, etc., made up of 10,000 to 20,000 more people, few of whom are aware of those outside their own immediate circles (except for the con-running "SMOFS" who are more widely known).

It is impossible to speak knowledgeably of "fandom" when discussing that balkanized mosaic of fandoms, since it is made up of large numbers of people with only fractional knowledge or awareness of fandom, about whom it is impossible to generalize. But that is precisely what Kemper is doing.

When he mentions "Kathy Secor, who's [sic] fan name is 'Aiglet', would seem to fit the classic definition of Fan," I know immediately that she does not fit that classic definition. The concept of "fan name" is alien to classic fandom. Kemper quotes Secor: "I aspire to someday join the great community known as fandom. ... Unfortunately, I will forever be debarred from it by certain people because I participate in what are known as the dreaded 'fringe fandoms.'" "

Quite aside from her misuse of "debarred" (for "barred"), what stands out here is both ignorance and its twin, paranoia. Secor "aspires" to "join" "fandom." But she knows "certain people" will hold her at the door and deny her entrance.

What neither Secor nor, apparently, Kemper, have yet figured out is that fandom has no door keepers. The only thing "debarring" Secor from joining fandom is her own reluctance. Fandom is not a closed organization. It is, at bottom, a hobby. As such, it is a purely volunteer activity for all its members; gafia is always an option.

Then we get to attitudes. "If you doubt that fandom can be hostile to 'normal' folk," Kemper quotes David Klecha saying, "just look at the word we use for them. 'Mundane.' It helps

create an unwelcoming elite. The term says, 'You're not welcome unless you're one of us.'" "What total balderdash! "Mundane" means what it says. And the implication is that fans are not mundane.

Kemper lives in an era when SF is no longer despised by the literati and is widely accepted (as "sci-fi") by the general public. But the public is as ignorant of what SF is now as it ever was (witness Steven Spielberg's claim that Minority Report is not "science fiction" because it's "future realism")—and as more and more people decide they're "fans" and clog up the Worldcons, they import their mundane ignorance to fandom.

All communities have ways of defining themselves and there is absolutely nothing wrong with that. The notion that it's somehow insulting or demeaning to call outsiders "mundanes" and that it makes us "unwelcoming" is absurd. (Nor do I see any reason for us to pull strangers in off the street. The urge to proselytize left me somewhere in the late '50s.)

[*Well, I know that my wife, who is not involved in fandom, finds the phrase "mundane" extremely offensive.*]

Kemper must realize this on an unconscious level. Because he decries the loss of "adventurous" costumes at conventions—by which he means women in costumes which expose more than they conceal. "It seems its [sic] not that the traditional conventions have changed because it has [sic] largely the same people who have changed over the years." No, what has happened is that the mundanes—the 'normals'—have moved in and brought with them all of their mundane baggage, including Political Correctness.

More remarkable to me is Kemper's equation of "Sexuality, bleeding-edge technology, non-traditional beliefs and social practices, media-related SF, and activist social commentary." Which one of those concepts doesn't fit with the others? Right: "media-related SF." "Media-related SF" means "sci-fi," or, as we mock it, "skiffy." It means Hollywood values, pap for the people, SF as furniture. It means Star Trek and Star Wars—the devaluation of genuine SF.



It also means for-profit conventions—the kind set up to Soak The Sucker.

In the end, what Kemper has written is the latest in a long run of Neofannish Paranoia pieces. Its assumption is that everyone has the right to be a fan. And it ignores what would occur if everyone did become a fan. But we can already get a glimpse of that awful dystopic future: more widespread ignorance and the total dissolution of any definition of fandom.

“Hi. I’m your new neighbor down the street. We just moved in. Can you tell me where the local SF club meets, and when? Are there any conventions coming up? Do you have the latest Star Wars DVD I could borrow?”

Moving along to other parts of the zine, David Truesdale corrects me on pb magazines by mentioning Baen’s *Destinies*. He’s right; I forgot about it because I have always found Baen such a repellent editor. Why did it fail?

But then David says, “Remember that digest magazines are very cheap to produce (cheaper than a paperback).” I doubt that very much. If you ignore fancy cover treatments on some pbs (mylar, embossing, die-cuts), the production costs should be about the same: same amount and type of paper, same binding. For most of the ‘70s *Amazing* and *Fantastic* were produced by a paperback printer, Dallas Paperbacks, of Dallas, PA. The same company printed both *Galaxy* and *F&SF* for a time. And I’m astonished he thinks subscriptions are SF magazines’ salvation, for reasons clearly spelled out in my last letter. Subscriptions are a delaying action which bring in no new readers, but attempt to hold onto the old. (But some people hate the way magazines arrive in the mail—chewed up, with address-stickers plastered on covers, etc.)

In the letters Milt Stevens refers to the “1952” “decision by American Newspaper Corporation, the distributor for most of the magazines in the United States, to stop distributing pulp magazines led to their demise, even though some of them hung on for another couple of years. Then in 1956-57 there was a flurry of new digest SF magazines.”

This is a confusion of the facts. In fact: a) there were two distribution outlets in most areas, American News

and Independent News, the latter an aggregation of smaller independent distributors (Leader News, Acme, ID, others) set up in competition with American News. b) the pulps died in 1955-56, not 1952. c) American News was put out of business by the U.S. government in 1958, creating a monopoly situation for the “independent” distributors—from which magazine distribution in this country has never recovered. I might add, d) in 1957 American News forced some of its digest magazines into the “bedsheet” format (*Satellite SF*), while forcing others (*Infinity*) out of business by returning their magazines undistributed.

In 1970 ARA (a huge mob-controlled monopoly in local distribution and food services) told us that they would cut *Amazing* and *Fantastic*’s “draw” for the Washington D.C. area from 1,000 copies to 500 copies unless we kicked back a certain amount of money to them. Our national distributor (Hearst) refused, and we promptly lost half our potential sales (and more actual sales, due to spottier distribution) in that area.

Distribution remains the sticking point for magazine publishers and the reason they are seeking subscriptions and any other workarounds they can find.

Well, there was a lot more in this issue of *Argentus*, but I’ll leave off here, in the interests of leaving something for others to comment on.

All best,  
Ted  
25 June 2002

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E.B. FROHVET  
4716 DORSEY HALL DRIVE #506  
ELLCOTT CITY, MD 21042-5988

Dear Mr. Silver:

In consideration of your request for art, I enclose some of those “Celtic knot” things of which the late Ken Cheslin once sent me a bulging envelope full. Don’t know that they have much to do with SF/fandom, but I find them useful for filling odd spaces. An apparently inexhaustible supply of unprinted Rotsler art is available from: Bill Warren. I observe no mention of Trinlay Khadro; send her an issue and

she’ll probably be happy to gift you with a stack of her small pieces.

Obviously I cannot be a True Fan as I failed to recognize the acronym cited by Bart Kemper; nor do I feel it necessarily reflects a true state of affairs. The fact that another article on this same theme just appeared (by Laura Seabrook in *Quasiguote* #4) suggests either the bad news that this is a common problem, or the good news that fandom is finally starting to pay attention to it. Or both... At the risk of (Ghu forbid) defending “the establishment”, I will wearily repeat: It’s not that I myself am not interested in anime, gaming, or bad derivative Trekkie fiction. It’s that people who are interested in these aspects tend to be **only** interested in these aspects. Trekkdom has long since split off from “mainstream” or literary fandom to throw their own conventions; gaming and filking and costuming are more or less in process of doing so. I am receptive to people who want to costume as well as to read; costumers whose only link to fandom is costuming don’t have much in common with me. On the other hand (my afflicting vice, being able to see both sides of the problem—I would never succeed as a preacher), I was forcibly ejected from “true” (Corflu) fanzine fandom for the vice of not being one of the inner cult. Kathy Secor would be welcome at any con I was throwing. Of course, I’m not involved in con running any more, but it’s the thought that counts. Or so they tell me...

As I have run off my mouth far too often elsewhere on the topic, I will note in response to Lloyd Penney’s article on fannish awards only that he says, “Either you’re agreeing with me, or I’m getting you angry.” Will you accept Both of the Above, Lloyd?

I regret that TV game shows do not interest me much. The only one I find watchable is “Jeopardy,” in which you actually have to know something. On average I get about half the answers right, and could probably get a few more with more time.

Likewise, my interest in baseball as a game is minimal. Occasionally my interest in people overrides that. In reading a biography of Ty Cobb,



arguably the most hated man in the history of the game, it was noted that Cobb was not a fan of Babe Ruth. He considered Ruth a sloppy and undisciplined hitter, and too fat and slow to be an effective fielder or base runner, all aspects of the game on which Cobb prided himself. He also was proud of his ability to hit a ball anywhere. Once while taking batting practice, some players bet Cobb \$5 that he could not hit a pitch into the bullpen. Cobb promptly drilled the next pitch into the bullpen. And the next pitch, and the one after that. Of course, this was also a man who was ejected from a hotel for punching out a maid.

It's odd that Mike Glyer should bring up the HELL IS HERE episode from an Ian Fleming novel. I must have read it once long ago, before I graduated beyond comic books. The incident, even if fictional, stuck in my mind; but somehow I identified it with my favorite mystery writer, Dick Francis, and was frustrated at never being able to locate it in re-reading.

Interesting account of your medical adventures. I would guess that some of your pre-operative vagueness was due less to the absence of a clock, and more to the medical staff having given you a hearty tranquilizer, possibly Valium. I've heard that doctors often load patients up to the eyebrows with Valium prior to especially disgusting things like bronchoscopy, as it has the charming effect of wiping the short-term memory for the event.

[Quite possibly it was drug induced. Even without a clock I tend to have a very good sense of time.]

Sherry T.: The best rejection letter I ever got "from" Marion Zimmer Bradley read, "We don't do stories set in bars!!!" Three exclamation points, sic. It was "signed" with Bradley's name, but not in her handwriting (I had a book previously autographed by her for comparison). At this late date, with MZB gone and the magazine folded, I think it's ample time to let go of the imaginative fantasy that MZB personally read every story.

I fear I can't comment on the 1973 Worldcon as I was not in fandom at that time.

If it's any help, I thought #2 was both more coherent, and displayed more personality, than your first issue. Though the need for more art is

apparent, I thought the formatting was improved as well - I see you wisely took Ted White's advice to lose the running header across the top of each page. Interesting choice, to use three-column format in the lettercol but two columns elsewhere. Any particular reason for that? You have already expressed that you do book reviews online but don't plan to include them in *Argentus*. Have you given any thought to a fanzine review column, rather than the mere listing on p. 32, or is that also something you don't want to do on paper?

*[The threecol letter col is to set the letters apart from the rest of the 'zine and also divide the more main zine from the mock section. You don't say if you like the switch or not. Re: reviews, I've added a link from my Argentus page to my review page and also plan on posting zine reviews on the website. These latter may also wind up in future issues of Argentus, but I haven't made up my mind yet. Future issues will certainly include contact information for zines mentioned.]*

E.B. Frohvet  
26 June 2002

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BRAD W. FOSTER  
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IRVING, TX 75016

Greetings Steven-

Great to get issue two of ARGENTUS in the mailbox last week. Once a year is an excellent schedule, though if you should feel the urge to get out an issue more often now and then, I certainly won't complain!

I see you used three of the four pieces of art I sent last time, so I'm going to include three more with this letter, to keep the files full for you to select from.

Right off the bat this issue I've been reminded yet again that, after a couple of decades of playing around in fanzines, I am still very much the little neo in the corner. Or at least far from being one of the "True Fen", since I don't recall every even *seeing* the acronym AKICIF before! Here I am, not even caught up on my own sub-cultures acronyms, and now every other idiot who can whack at a keyboard insists on sprinkling odd letter combinations all over their emails as if I would know what they

were talking about. Sigh .... words folks, just give me the words....

Ah, the joys of re-reading, and the evils of weeding out the bookshelves. I go through the shelves around here once a year or so, deciding what to keep and what to move on to free up a bit of much-needed space.

There are, of course, those books that I have no intention of ever re-reading, but carry such memories, or such touchstones for events, that simply running my fingers over the spine now and then as I walk down the hall can give me a rush. Those stay.

Then there are the books that I do, indeed, plan to re-read at some point. I have one hell of a horrible memory, and have found it helps to write things down for future reference. This can be a pain sometime. However, it also means that I have a number of books that I have re-read once or twice with absolutely no recollection of the plots, just a subtle knowledge that I did indeed enjoy it. And so I can get that same enjoyment over and over. A blessing and a curse in one.

Then there are the books that I liked, but aren't something I feel I'd need as reference, or would feel the urge to re-read. I figure those might find new homes and give new enjoyment for others, and they go into the used book store pile.

Finally the easy ones, the books I read, or in some cases tried to read, and regretted having wasted the time. These also go into the used book store piles, with the hope that there must be *someone* out there other than the author and their editor who will find something of use in them,

So, shelf space is opened, and I can trade for a whole pile of new books to enjoy.

Woo, that image on page 8. Got to admit it's always a shock when I see one of my little fillos enlarged. Suddenly those lines look like I was drawing with a broad-point marker resting on my shoulder!

Oh, so YOU were the folks that the *Insomniac* show hit on! I came into that episode late, and didn't catch what convention it was. Hey, I watch and enjoy a lot of programs on Comedy Central (or did up until we had to cancel our cable connection this month to try and save some money), but I would never let them point a camera at

me! I think you guys might actually have gotten off light.

Ack, it's getting dark and I can here rain starting, so better wrap this up ... always afraid the computer will get zapped during storms, so I'd better get out of here!

stay happy -  
Brad W. Foster

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Dear Steven

You know, it's kind of funny, but it occurred to me just a few weeks back that it was getting to be about time for another what's-wrong-with-the-way-we-treat-newcomers-in-fandom article—and here you have one leading off ARGENTUS #2.

I've seen at least one article like Bart Kemper's "The Unwelcoming Face of Fandom" every half dozen years or so since I wandered into the microcosm in late 1956. Nothing new even then: Walt Willis and Bob Shaw made allusions to the attitudes in THE ENCHANTED DUPLICATOR, which was first published in 1954.

(For on-line people who don't have [and/or may not want to buy] a copy, see:

[http://www.fanac.org/fanzines/Enchanted\\_Duplicator/Enchanted-00.html](http://www.fanac.org/fanzines/Enchanted_Duplicator/Enchanted-00.html) )

No doubt Bart will see this as proof of the pudding—I mean, with all that smoke, there *has* to be a major conflagration going on, right?

Well, actually, I think not—but it happens that I kind of agree with one of his points, so we might as well start there. In my opinion, anyway, the larger microcosm of fandom *has* been plagued with creeping ageism—but it's nothing new, either; I first noticed it sometime in the late '70s. I was 13 when I started writing letters to the prozines, 14 when I began writing for and publishing fanzines, after which I went to my first LASFS meeting, and all of 16 when I attended my first convention, the Solacon, the 1958 worldcon in Los Angeles. Nobody ever suggested to me that I was too young to participate. Well, except for myself. And thereby hangs a tale—and my first real opportunity to digress....

As I began to participate in fandom one of my correspondents, John W.

Thiel, who was two years my junior, convinced me that because we were so young we would *probably* encounter a lot of resistance to our participation, and accordingly maybe the mature thing for us to do was to preempt criticism on that score by starting a couple of "junior" SF fan clubs. We decided to form a kid's version of the National Fantasy Fan Federation, which we would call the Junior International Science Fiction Club (JISFC), and a kid's amateur press association, which we would call the Junior Amateur Science-Fantasy Association of Publishers (JAS-FAP). For the record, I don't believe JAS-FAP ever had a mailing but John *did* publish at least one issue of an Official Organ for JISFC. We were nearly universally laughed at since, unknown to us, the *majority* of the fans in the N3F and active participants in fanzine fandom at the time were between the ages of 14 and 22. Fandom's Elder Statesmen were, for the most part, in their 30s and 40s. Terry Carr, who was only two or three years my senior, writing as "Carl Brandon," did a satirical riff on the JISFC and JAS-FAP in his fannish satire "The Catcher of the Rye," which was appearing in INNUENDO, and to the best of my memory that was the *only* lasting mark these would-be organizations made on fandom.

While I subsequently encountered my share of fans who would criticize and/or disagree with what I said and did, it turned out that it had nothing to do with my age—in every single instance, it was absolutely issue-oriented. This "honest coin" was definitely a two-edge sword, however—if I wasn't disregarded because I was too young, neither was I cut any slack because I was Just A Kid.

So, yeah, it *does* bother me to see Worldcons (and other conventions) setting up tracks of programming just for teenagers—as if they're not adult enough to mingle and converse with us Grown Up Folks. (Adult-oriented conventions in which people explore alternate sexualities probably need to exclude the younger folks for legal reasons, so to my mind it's the only acceptable exception.) Then too, while I don't know that much about what's happening these days at local SF clubs, ageism isn't limited to convention

fandom—I've also seen younger fans being told, in the pages of some fanzines, that they shouldn't disagree with their "elders." This is, not to put too fine a point on it, utter bullshit, and not the attitude of a fandom I wish to be associated with.

But that's pretty much where my agreement with Bart Kemper's piece ends, I'm afraid. I hardly know where to begin expressing points of disagreement, however, so this seems as good a place as any to state my own theory of why so many articles on this theme have appeared in fanzines over the years. Most people—and I include mundanes as well as fans in this generality (subject to the limitations of all generalities)—are a little nuts. Neurotic, however, rather than psychotic. I think everyone has their own psychotic tendency—that is, if we're ever going to wig out completely, it's probably going to be in the direction of our personal psychological bent. And—here's the sticking point—I firmly believe that *most* fans have paranoia as their primary psychotic tendency. Given their life experiences, it's not an unreasonable or illogical psychotic tendency for fans to have.

So. What happens when these paranoid-tending people first come across fandom? Well, these days, that's probably at a club or a convention. Most of the fans they meet will have been there before, and hence are already acclimated, *i.e.*, seemingly speaking in tongues and not inclined to change strong opinions or break off talking about mutual interests with friends just to make neos feel welcome. If some well-meaning but misinformed individual has told the newer people to attend because the microcosm will "accept anyone," they're almost certain to see the use of fan language, the fact that not everyone indiscriminately likes everything labeled SF in any medium, not to mention the lack of people slapping them on the back in welcome, as part of the Plot to Exclude Them. And, hey, if that's the case, it might even be a Conspiracy on the part of the Entrenched Establishment to Maintain the Status Quo.

The earliest use of the term "SMOF" (Secret Master of Fandom) and allusions to the need to "know the Secret Handshake"—both of which are

mentioned in Bart's article—were intended to poke fun at this rather silly notion. When fans whose major activities revolved around running conventions began calling themselves SMOFs, I came up with the SBOFs so that the older function might continue to be served: The Secret Bastards of Fandom, *a.k.a.* the Society of Boring Old Farts, holds "secret" meetings at various locations throughout the world, charts the course of fandom's future, keeps neofans intimidated so they Toe the Line and won't [shudder] Try Something New, and thunders out imperious orders which must be obeyed instantly and to the letter or result in immediate, total and lifelong expulsion from the "inner circle" of fandom. Hey, I'm sure you all know how it is—it's a dirty job, but *somebody* has to do it, right?

Seriously, though, since this notion apparently doesn't strike Bart, or others who've written similar articles, as silly, for once let's try an approach that acknowledges the seriousness of their intent. I promise, if you'll bear with me a bit longer, I'll reward you all by telling the truth about the *real* secret handshake of fandom—the one guaranteed to get you "in" to *any* area of fandom where you desire to participate. Really and truly.

Before that, however, I need to provide a bit more in the way of background.

I think I have a pretty wide range of SF and fannish interests: I'm a long-time SF reader; indeed, written SF is my SF of preference, but I've also been known to discuss Georgette Heyer's regency romances and other writers' mysteries. I've sold a novel and a dozen or so stories in the SF genre. I've been published in hundreds if not thousands of fanzines, which area of the microcosm I've been involved in for most of my life. I've been a founder or a founding member of a couple of apas and a handful of SF clubs (other than JISFC and JAS-FAP); I've chaired a few small conventions and served in a major committee position on a Worldcon and I wrote the final installments of "The Club House" for AMAZING STORIES (which I believe is the last fanzine review column to appear in an SF prozine). I'm a publish fan historian. I also participate in a number of on-line SF groups, have

played D&D and AD&D both on paper and as a computer game, have seen every episode of Star Trek and most ST spinoffs and full-length movies, even though I don't really consider myself a Star Trek fan. While I can't play or sing music, I have friends who've done a lot in the filk singing area, and although I don't care to get dressed up in costumes myself, I don't knock it as a fannish pastime. Within the SF community, I don't think my interests can be described as narrow.

Now, the big question here is whether fandom actually does (and/or believes it should) "accept anyone." I think I have enough in my background to answer that question with a little authority.

If we limit ourselves to a *strictly* yes-or-no answer, I'm afraid it would have to be No. Fandom *doesn't* accept anyone—and only a few segments of the microcosm believe we should. But if you'll accept a bit of weasel-wording, with accompanying explanation, the full answer is more like, "Generally, yes, and yet sometimes no—since it really hinges on what you mean by 'accept'."

I think we would all be better off if we made the more truthful claim that fandom tolerates and encourages a wide variety of independent thought—but not everyone in it needs to accept all points of view as equal. The distinction is that while we don't always totally agree with each other, we respect the rights of others to hold opinions that do that agree with our own. We don't have to believe alternative opinions are right—we can even find them laughable. All we *have* to do is respect the right of others in the larger microcosm to hold opinions we may regard as foolish and/or wrong, including but not limited to liking SF in a form we may not care for ourselves.

The worst religious wars, as you may know, are not between different religions but between different sects of the *same* religion; fandom's support for this level of toleration actually keeps our balkanized microcosm from tearing itself apart.

Now, as a fan historian, I'm aware of only two cases of long-term total exclusion from fandom—and both were achieved by ignoring the individuals involved until they left us

alone. It's important to keep in mind that although the two were probably certifiable nut-cases, both were at least tolerated until they moved beyond what even the most tolerant of fen considered acceptable behavior.

Let me summarize them briefly:

In the 1940s, fandom initially laughed at Claude Degler's notion that fans were slans (after A.E. van Vogt's novel "Slan"), a superior race of mutants destined to rule their mundane brethren—but he wasn't given the cold shoulder until he traveled around the country visiting various fan centers and paid for his continued travels by stealing from the very fans who'd been his hosts. (As I get older, fatter and generally less attractive to the opposite sex, I tend to think we may have missed a bet when we rejected his notion of setting up "love camps" in the Ozarks, where we True Fen would have to go to do our part to breed the race that would rule the sevegram—but I'm digressing again, I see.)

More than a decade later, most fans disagreed with but nonetheless tolerated George Wetzel's outright bigotry; it was writing poison pen letters to the employees of liberal fans who disagreed with him that led the microcosm to ostracize him. This was, you understand, during the McCarthy era, and many fans worked for the government while Wetzel was saying they were actively involved in "Communist cells"—far from harmless stuff.

The SF microcosm *is* utopian—but it's *not* egalitarian. The Worldcon *tries* to be egalitarian within the fan community to the extent that it attempts to program for any interest even remotely associated with science fiction, but that's the extent of it. As a social organism, fandom is an anarchistic meritocracy; nobody really "runs" things (or not for very long, anyway) and any status the participants may derive comes from the merit of their chosen activities as perceived by those in fandom who are capable of appreciating that merit.

Now, a given convention will be "run" by the people who make up its convention committee, a given fan club (including most amateur press associations) will have officers who will govern by the rules set up for that purpose and a given fanzine will have

an editor who, being the one who foots the bills, will publish what s/he likes—you're not being "debarred" if they don't let you come into their territory and start running these things totally to your own liking. If you have ideas about how things should be done, however, you have more than one option: You can join in and "work your way up" until your opinion is respected and your way of doing things might then be tried—or you can start your own convention, club, apa and/or fanzine and do it totally your own way from the start. No one in fandom has the power to keep you from making your own choice between these options.

As long as I'm "explaining" fandom, let me point out one more thing that is not really barring anyone from participation in

the microcosm. It's perfectly acceptable (last I heard) for me to have all those SF- or fandom-related interests that I listed—but I have to accept as given that not everyone in fandom will share those interests with me, and in fact some fans who share an interest in area "a" not only may not have an interest in area "b" but they might even consider an interest in area "b" to be ridiculous. They're neither ostracizing me nor trying to tell me I'm a terrible person when/if they do this.

Let me see if I can get to the nub of what Bart, and many of the people he quotes in his piece, seem to be complaining about—and then see if I can deal with it.

They see what implicitly seems to be a form of snobishness being practiced in the microcosm—there are, you see, demonstrably and undeniably certain groups in core areas of fandom who get together almost exclusively with others who share their own limited, older, narrower interests in SF and in fandom, to the *exclusion* of hanging out with those who have certain other wider and newer interests. Well, I'm sorry, but if spending time with those who share our narrow band of interests (and thereby effectively excluding those who don't) is snobbery, then that's an indictment of the entire microcosm, not just one small segment of it. It means *all* fans are snobs. Even fans like Bart, whose range of sfinal interests may well go off the charts, are implicitly expressing

a preference, when they attend a fan club or convention or contribute to a fanzine, to be with others who like some mode of fandom and/or SF well enough to call themselves fans of it—which specifically *excludes* 99.999999999%+ of the world population.

The Worldcon, as I said earlier, makes the *attempt* to program for all sorts of SF and fannish interests—including some that really are on the outer fringes, like the occasional Georgette Heyer Tea—but it doesn't force attendees to go to them all; indeed, it would be impossible to do so under the present setup, since there are often a dozen or more program items (usually appealing to different interest groups) going on at any one time. If we *wanted* to force everyone to go to them all without deleting anything, if we assume that would help achieve something more to Bart's liking, we'd have to hold the Worldcon over the course of a couple of *months* just to get them all in. The option we've chosen over this forced egalitarianism is to let individuals choose their own options—and it *can* be a bit daunting if you have a variety of interests and a couple of things you might otherwise want to see are programmed opposite each other. But that's a separate matter.

What generally happens at most Worldcons is that the attendees go to the program items that interest them the most and they hang out there with people whose interests they share to the exclusion of those who don't. This is not only true of hard core fans, but of all the fans whose major interests are those "fringe" fandoms Bart mentions—although it's generally just those hard core fans who are criticized for this behavior, in my experience.

When I start to think that we may be justified in losing our patience from time to time, I try to remind myself that maybe there's more to it than simple paranoia. We do talk about, rehash, study, even analyze fandom's past, present and possible future. We may be overheard discussing just which fans are "real fans" and referring to ourselves as Trufandom, so I suppose it can sound like we think we're better than everyone else. (We *are* "better than everyone else"—but in a strictly subjective way. Any interest group that reflects *your* individual interests is

"better" for you than one that does not. If you'd prefer to think that it's actually *worse* for you, and that any interest group that reflects interest other than your own is actually better, of course, that's your prerogative—as I indicated earlier, I'm perfectly willing to respect your right to hold opinions that I may regard as ridiculous or silly on their face.)

As far as that core segment of the microcosm is concerned, we *did* lay claim to the term Trufandom a long time back—but those who understand it realize it's used somewhat tongue-in-cheek, just as they know that when the late Charles Burbee coined the phrase "all knowledge is contained in fanzines," he was being satirical. We generally acknowledge that anyone who claims to be a fan *is* a fan, and that it would indeed be presumptuous for anyone to set up a litmus test that people would have to pass to be allowed into any area of fandom. Fortunately, this *isn't* what's being done in our discussions: We're making distinctions between people who may just read or watch SF ("readers" or "watchers") and those who are somewhat active in the microcosm ("fans"). I really think it should be okay to make these distinctions since what may be true of the larger group might not be true of the smaller, and vice versa. It shouldn't be a Crime Against Humanity for us to discuss—and make it clear that we're discussing—that smaller group. It should also be acceptable to talk about (and make it clear that we're talking about) groups within those groups, *e.g.*, fanzine fans, convention fans, club fans, Star Trek fans, costuming fans, &c., even to make generalities about them (subject to the limitations of all generalities, of course) without constantly having to state the obvious fact that many fans participate in more than one of these areas.

There is one further caveat I'd like to toss out about fandom's tolerances, and that's to say that the generalities I've stated about them are *also* subject to the limitations of all generalities, namely: There are going to be exceptions. If you pick your nose or your ass in public, if you stand so close to people you've just met that your b.o. or bad breath envelopes them in clouds, if you pontificate at length

about your obscure knowledge of the mean annual rainfall in Zimbabwe during the Mesozoic Period, if you interrupt what everyone else is saying because it's interfering with your remaining the center of attention—among other possibilities—then you should be advised that one trait of many fans is the unwillingness to suffer fools gladly just to be what the mundane world may consider “polite,” since it will otherwise come as an unpleasant surprise.

That said, it remains only for me to fulfill that promise I made and give you the “secret handshake” that will allow the vast majority of you entry to virtually any area of the microcosm. The secret handshake is this: Your election to participate in that area of the microcosm. It's just that simple. I'm not guaranteeing that the fans participating there will agree with you or even like you—that's between you and them. They *will* tolerate and accept your right to participation, even if they disagree and/or dislike you.

Subject to the limitations of all generalities.

Regards,  
rich brown

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Dear Steven

What a stuffed solid issue you have produced, and as fannish as all get out - from the “Unwelcoming Face of Fandom” to the WYGT on the back page. It's so stuffed with material that I might have to do letters, like I just did for *Quasiquote*. (I did a quickie, then thought of some other topics I had skimmed or entirely forgotten.)

As a True Fan (or as I like to think of myself, a fan), I recognize the acronym AKICIF as really standing for All Knowledge is Contained in Fanzines. I guess when one is posting to rassff, this had to change. I hope that I also take into account the irony, since “All Knowledge” is as likely to be wrong as right.

Bart is right, though, as have been so many others who have written similar articles before him, both in US fanzines as those of Canada, the UK, Australia and so forth. I think I was much more open and accepting in my

youth than I am now. I have a lot less energy for making new friends and welcoming new people, so I often won't make much of an effort unless I think the person is going to fit in with my interests and tendencies. (Though on the other hand, I've become a little more open to those mostly alien beings, convention runners.)

In my first experiences in fandom, I found myself very welcomed by fanzine publishers, writers, and the general run of people at cons and clubs. However, they were my people, dedicated to writing in one way or another: actually doing it for fan or professional publication, publishing it, reading it, illustrating it, collecting it, debating and analyzing it. Watching it, dressing up like it, playing games derived from it, singing about it - were all very subsidiary to the reading and writing of it.

After all these years, my primary focus is the same. Watching SF in movies or on TV has grown in my estimation and my time budget as more stuff has appeared in these media, but I still don't spend much energy on being a fan (in the fannish sense of taking an active part in relating to the subject), though I did appear on a Buffy Der Vampyre Slayer panel at Orycon. People who do spend fannish energy on these things? Fine folk, can be fun to know, but unless they share some other interest with me, they are not likely to be in my circle of friends.

And that's my truth.

I reread on rare occasions. Like Fred Lerner, I have reread Lord of the Rings several times, most recently last year to prepare for the movie version. (Yes, sometimes I feel a movie is worth “preparing” for.) But mostly I don't have the time to spare because I've got too many new things on the bookshelves. There's at least three years of reading waiting for me there.

Thanks for the new Ghod - same as the old Ghods? Too many “g”s for my taste, almost Swedish in number, but otherwise pretty cute.

Lloyd, of course the awards are all subjective. How can they not be? The Hugo votership is far far larger than the circulation of any fanzine, and for the last few years any zine with a web presence like Ansible has had a numerical advantage. In addition, many fans who do see a good selection of

eligible zines don't join the Worldcon unless they're planing to attend, which I'm sure slews the nominating and voting results.

As for the FAAN awards, they do get voted on by a more knowing selection, but even there - I voted the year before last, at the last minute, and forgetting entirely that the order in which I wrote down my nominations would weight them, even though the second or third thought I had actually seemed better writers or artists than the first name I wrote. So all these awards are very iffy and only indications rather than firmly defensible value judgments.

There's many more interesting things here, including the Twincon stuff, but I'm going to have to get off the computer so Suzie can do some work.

Keep them coming.

Jerry Kaufman

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Steven

I'm afraid that I'm rather typical Finnish male when it comes to meeting new people. I'm somewhat shy, afraid to speak out in case I say something really stupid and make a fool out of myself, uncertain of the value on MY opinions etc. This can and usually does change somewhat after a few pints, I'm afraid. I think that I wasn't too unwelcomed by the US-fans when I had the opportunity to meet “you”. Like with the Prydonians of Prynceton who (especially Tom Beck) took a foreigner in with open arms and a friendly face. Another one who contributed a lot with assimilation into fandom was The Donewitz of the Lunarians who among all the myriad of little things, helped me to find a crashspace at Lunacon'02. Not to mention all the other kind souls there who made that particular con a very worthwhile experience.

But I can see that people can have problems when meeting fandom for the first time. Why should group of old friends be interested what some stranger, possibly a lot younger and possibly even vastly different looking,



comes along and says something surprisingly insipid? Why should I (or someone else care) whether Wings of Honneamise is superior to Urotsukidoji or not? (It is actually way superior and a great movie in general, though personally I don't care that much about anime meself.)

The Finnish meetings (or Mafia's, as we call them) tend to be fairly homogenous bunch of old friends and acquaintances, into which a neophan has a real mountain to climb in order to be a productive and useful member of. When I started to come, after reading about these meetings from various fanzines, to restaurant Kannas, the first time someone asked anything from me (like Who the \*\*\*\* are you and What the (ahem!) are You doing here?) was after my third visit. But I liked the people (after I got to know them) and stayed. Perseverance is a good thing to have. And a friendly face now and then. Few years back when I glimpsed a new face in the crowd I used to go and chat for a while in order to try make the apparent newcomer more at home. Maybe I ought to start doing so again?

I haven't been purchasing new books (nor CD's) for some time now. Basically we've been just about making ends meet after we moved back from the States, especially when I haven't found a new job yet. This has meant that I've been "forced" to start excavating our existing bookshelves for something to read. Gosh, I thought the meaning was to collect those things, not to READ them.

Ghughle sounds like a mighty Big One, but I'm afraid I'll stick with my dualistic belief of both Herbie (one should always respect the One who can pluck thunderbolts from his nose) and Roscoe (mainly for the Promise of Bheer).

Baseball isn't really a sport, now is it? We don't play the game (really) but a variation of it called "pesäpallo" (straight translation is "baseball") and I've always thought that the games, whilst having somewhat different serving techniques and base-positions, gloves and bats etc., were basically very similar. Only after watching a whole game (Yankees vs. something or the other) I realised that truth was not out there. Baseball is... sort of slow, eh?

But after a while I was hooked. The apparent slowness of the game, the almost hypnotic value of the pitching effort, the enigmatic scoresheet, hot dogs... Not bad. As we lived in New Jersey and didn't have a team of our own, my choice of favourite team wasn't as easy as with ice-hockey. I've been following hockey and NHL for 20-odd years, but never really picked a favourite as such. Basically it tended to be the team of the year where most or the best Finnish players used to play, but when we moved to Princeton, I realised that this could be a solid reason for picking up a team ie. New Jersey Devils.

Baseball on the other hand... No NJ team, so what is it then? There's New York, Philadelphia, but why settle for neighbours? How about then Dodgers or Mariners? However, the decision was actually pretty easy to make. I like what I see, therefore it had to be a nearby team that was on the telly quite often. As I have grown up (from a youngster that basically looks up the last years champion or the current Big Thing) a bit, I have started to root for the underdog, hence - Mets.

Sari wasn't too impressed, but she did pick up a name and thus, when ever we're playing a game of Trivial Pursuit (one of our three American Edition's), a baseball question is answered with resounding: "Mike Piazza!". One correct answer so far. (Other regular one is "Jack Dempsey" in boxing.) Her favourite player is however Yogi Berra. Sari even made a small fanzine called "The Immortal Wit and Wisdom of Yogi Berra" for me as a present. You just got to love that woman.

Good to hear (well, read actually) that your operation went well. I've never had a major operation (he said, knocking his head), just a small thumb-surgery way back when I was teen and managed to get my hand stuck at my bicycle spokes. Amazing feat of athleticism, I agree.

Your telling of the episode is lot of fun to read. I was actually looking forward to a ghastly tale of removal. I think I must have helped closer to 30-something of my friends to move their belongings, some of them more than once. On occasion we have had to penalize some with moving restrictions from 6 months to three years. Biggest single factor to the length of the

penalty is usually the missing elevator and the subsequent number of stairs to climb. Maximum goes to whomever moves to the top-floor. Most houses in Helsinki do (of course) have elevators, but some ancient (as in early 19th century) 4-to-5 -floored houses either don't have them or the apparatus in question is the size of a shoebox.

The Mock section was very entertaining, with three best (funniest to me at least) bits first. There seemed to be some mistakes with the bold characters in Rich Horton's list - or then I must be reading something very wrong here.

A good zine. My only real quibble here is the positioning of the pictures in the middle of text, thus complicating the reading experience. It would be OK is there'd be two columns of text, but as such, this is really not very readable. Maybe something to think about?

*[Well, it is two column in the print edition, which is readily available for the asking. Still working to make the on-line version readable. Of course, one of the complaints from the first issue .pdf version was that it was in two columns.]*

Jukka Halme

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Dear Steven,

You may have accomplished a first in Argentus #2. While there are a number of fanzines which appear about once a year, don't think I've ever seen one that states it is an annual.

Despite some of the quotes in Bart Kemper's article, I doubt it is the unfriendly face of fandom that keeps most people from staying after their initial contact. As bad as it may be for our collective egos, I think most people don't stay around fandom because they don't find it interesting. I don't think fandom is much different from other hobby groups or other social situations. You will always encounter a variety of opinions (except maybe in the Ku Klux Klan). It is always a good idea to consider other people's opinions, but don't necessarily accept them. If you always do accept the opinions of others, you will live your life as a yo-yo, and there is no help for you. If you

absolutely have to have a welcoming environment, you can always join a nut cult. I understand they are quite welcoming in the manner a spider is welcoming to a fly.

Fandom began as a small group of hobbyists. Over the years, we have developed a much larger shell of hobby consumers. The difference between the two groups is active versus passive. Even reader-collectors can be pretty darned active. You can always recognize reader-collectors by their distinctive sniffing which comes from years of inhaling the little bits of paper from old pulp magazines. While sniffing through the huckster room for new acquisitions, two reader-collectors may run snout to snout into each other. This is one way of meeting people at a con.

Hobbyists still show up at cons to interact with each other. If you sit quietly and don't do anything, the hobbyists may mistake you for part of the hotel furniture and ignore you. They know you aren't good to eat. If you actively annoy the hobbyists, they may revise their opinion about you being good to eat.

The sole purpose of fandom is the amusement of the people who participate in fandom. Fandom has no divine mission to amuse the entire world. Some suggest we should add more features at cons to increase our body count. I feel that would be counterproductive, since body count is a quantitative issue, and I am more interested in qualitative issues. I would rather attend a 150 person Midwestcon than a 15,000 person Dragoncon. Obviously, there are those people who will go for the big body count, and that is why Dragoncons exist.

Not everyone who wanders into a con will be a desirable addition to fandom. I might mention the Subway Crowd that eventually drove the Lunacons out of New York City and the punks who try to infest the Baycons. While I'm not exactly sure what fans look like, I'm absolutely certain they don't look like punks wandering around giving everyone hate looks.

Again, it's a qualitative issue.

David Truesdale lists a number of current publications which I've never encountered. Of the publications he lists, I consider Analog, Asimov's, F &

SF, and Realms of Fantasy as prozines. Where I have heard of the other publications he lists, I would tend to regard them as semi-pro based on irregular publishing schedules, very small circulations, and probably no newsstand circulation. The last point is the most dubious, since I have trouble even finding newsstands anymore. I have no real opinion of e-publications. I'm not in search of more reading matter, so there isn't any reason for me to look at them.

It appears from Truesdale's list that 3¢ per word is now the minimum payment in the field. That's about three times what it was 50 years ago. Analog is paying 5 to 8¢ a word which is about twice what Astounding was paying 50 years ago. Prozines today are ten times as expensive as they were 50 years ago, and the rest of the economy has inflated by about the same degree. Comparatively, writers selling short fiction today are not making nearly as much as the writers of 50 years ago. Of course, writing fiction never was a reliable way of making a fortune.

Yours truly,  
Milt Stevens

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LLOYD PENNEY  
1706-24 EVA ROAD  
ETOBICOKE, ONTARIO, CANADA  
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Dear Steven:

Many thanks for issue 2 of Argentus. I often find that the first issue of a zine is more introductory, the second issue is where the tone of discussion is set. As I leaf through this issue, it sure looks good. Time to dive in and dogpaddle.

I would like to think that Bart Kemper is wrong, that we're always welcoming to the new person, and looking for new blood, talent and energy. Unfortunately, I think he's exactly right. We're not very welcoming at all; some of us are downright hostile, to neo or fellow fan alike. My very first foray into fandom was on the west coast with a Star Trek club. I'd ready about media fandom and lit fandom, and this club was the first opportunity that presented itself. They were welcoming, and I had a marvelous time. Then, I moved east, and found more welcoming media fans.

And, a handful of snarky litfans (some of whom were fanzine fans) who immediately tagged me as one of Those Damned Media Fans. I was fortunate in that not all lit fans were snarky and distant, and when I showed some interest in their activities, there were many who welcomed me and showed me the ropes. This got me into costuming, convention management, apas and fanzines. I've been one of the lucky ones. I've dabbled in what might be called fringe fandoms, and in mainstream fan interests as well. I am media and literary, and enjoy aspects of both. I think you have to have a slightly thicker skin than normal to not let as said above, snarky litfans, chase you away, and you can find those who share your own interests.

I think there has been some jealousy, and some anger, at how what are considered media SF interests attract so many more than do literary SF events. This year's animé and Star Trek conventions in Toronto attracted 3500 and 3200 attendees respectively. The local SF literary convention got about 750. All the committees work hard, but animé and Star Trek seem to be more easily consumed, so to speak, than SF literature. Fandom is like any other social group; it takes time to be accepted, but we have our own anger, jealousy, covetousness and other insecurities to deal with.

All hail Ghugle!, the fannish god of online fandom. There's a lot to admire in the current fannish pantheon, and Ghu and Roscoe be praised. Ghugle Himself would know that even though there is much knowledge on the Internet, there are myriad times more opinions, error and just plain nonsense, not counting all the porn sites. Ghugle will also know that in the quest for true knowledge, not all fans are gifted with all pure knowledge, as slannish as they think they are. The word of Ghugle is to educate others gently without screaming in person or online, "Get it right!!!" We must follow the example of the patience of Ghugle, without being nasty about it.

I'd be interested to hear about any response to my article on fan funds. Just recently, I wrote an article on American response to 9/11 for Earl Kemp's e-zine eI. To my surprise, it got no response, partially because the whole zine got no response. I'm hoping

for better here. I know what most people think of the Fan Hugos, but I think that any award with some history behind it is a good one. How did you feel about being Hugo nominee, Steven? You know the feeling yourself.

It's good to see David Truesdale's article on short fiction markets...many years ago, I tried my hand at trying to get my short stories published, only to fail miserably. There was only four or five markets I knew of them, and all had a handout you could write for, with details of exactly what they were wanting, and how to get it to them for depositing on the slush pile. I would hope there's a page on the SF(F)WA website to similar information on each publication's site.

A fanzine is the last place I expected to find an article about le Club de Baseball, les Expos. I've been in Montréal plenty, but always for conventions. I've never been to an Expos game. Hell, I've only been to a couple of Blue Jays games. I wouldn't call Olympic Stadium in Montréal a domed stadium...more doomed than domed. The retractable covering isn't very retractable, and pieces seem to be falling off the stadium on a regular basis. I'd heard rumour that the government was going to tear it down and rebuild a decent stadium, and then I heard the stadium was coming down, with no replacement, and then I heard that nothing would be done at all. With this in mind, most Canadian ball fans are expecting that the Expos will become the reborn Washington Senators next year. (Bill, around Toronto, a flashing green traffic light usually means an advance left turn.)

Good to hear that Torontonians are welcome to go to Midwest Construction, and if I were as involved with conventions as I used to be, I would definitely consider going. However, most of the people who do run conventions locally are very much out of the loop, and probably have no awareness that this convention exists. Usually, the only convention they go to is their own, and have no connections to fandom outside of Toronto.

The idea of a roving midwestern regional convention is a good one...the name MidWestCon is already taken, but I'm sure those who are interested will take a shot at it.

Minneapolis in '73...alternate history, maybe, but look at all the parties we would have missed out on! Torcon 2 was just a little before my time, and I'm looking forward to enjoying Torcon 3. I think we'll be working with the LA in '06 bid on site, but beyond that, we'll be having Worldcon in our own backyard. Chicago fandom may be used to that, but this is new for me.

And that's about all for now. Two pages of loc is pretty good, given the fact I'm awfully tired, and work bores me to tears. I guess this is the mental stimulation I'm missing in the workplace. Take care, let me know any reaction to my article, and I'll look for another issue next year.

Yours, Lloyd Penney.

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SHERYL BIRKHEAD  
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GAITHERSBURG, MD 20882-3422

Dear Steven,

*Argentus* looks niiccee. You made a lot of changes! Aha-an annual!!

(Minor creet-the ToC sorta runs into the editorial-I expected "Enough people provided" to run right into "From the Mine"-which, of course, it doesn't.)

The Harvia 'toon on pg 1 is **wunderfilled!**

A bit tardy,-but another *congrats* on the fan writer nomination!

I'd hope that fen are more accepting of others-but (partly-mainly??) I did not feel welcomed many years ago and for a long time I kept butting my head against the same brick wall-my idea of fun is just not the same as the majority of people/fans and I'm not pushy enough to make contact with those I'd like to meet. Misery may love company, but it rarely does-each is miserable alone.

I have found that (for me at least), the warmest, friendliest of times were accidental...that moment just people watching when a well known pro asks if that seat is taken...and sits-asking how you like the con-just a short, light discussion-then is gone (to paraphrase-only the memory lingers). It can happen.

But, I hasten to add that as non-confrontational as I am-and as shy as I am in fan groups I have had very poor experiences with some pros with sharp

(no *not* wit) comments. Um, I may forgive, but I don't forget and there are two pros I don't want to be around. One of them-I've not heard any other comments about-the other, I've only heard "nice" comments-*not* my experience (so I gave a second chance-same type of sharp comments-so, no thank you).

Ah-Kurt Erichson...Stu...Brad...Sue-you sir, must rate! [*Don't know if I rate, but I do ask.*]

Lloyd-the currency (or perhaps lifeblood?) of fandom *should* be egoboo since we all are fans. Heck, as currency goes, egoboo is cheap, in fact, it's free!!! So, it's surprising there isn't more of it around.

[*I've come to the conclusion that in the best case, the amount of egoboo a fan receives is equal to the amount of criticism the fan receives, although the egoboo tends to arrive in more concentrated packets while the criticism is spread out over a longer period of time. Unfortunately, the criticism tends to last longer and feeds itself, while egoboo is notoriously insecure and needs constant reaffirmation.*]

What was the actual diagnosis? Herniation?

[*Yes. A herniated disk between the L4 and L5 (vertebra, not Lagrange points).*]

It is always nice to see a list of zines which include some I don't get. Your list includes 8/18 which I haven't seen.

[*I erred and cut the contact information for the zines, for which I apologize. Future issues of Argentus will include that critical information.*]

*Fosfax* is currently "in limbo" (on sabbatical?)-not sure of the right term. Other faneds will have to pick up the wordage load!

I don't spend much time on the internet and the e-mail notification of making the Hugo ballot (while great) was a bit of a let down. No phone call!!

Let me know what repro you are using. [*Xerox machine*]. The two fillos I've put in here are very simple. I've done some more detailed (etc.) bits, only to have the repro turn all the gradients (etc., again) into almost solid black splotches. Simple is safer, but...

I've tried (obviously, it didn't work) to transmit a file to a faned today, and article with several illos. I simply cannot figure out how to send a file from my DTP software. Sending the illos from my drawing software is easy. The disappointment is that I did the illos in color on the computer (never really done this, since I don't have a color printer) but if it doesn't get sent electronically, anything else is a bit less. Ah, technology.

Keep on pubbing. Interesting to see how *Argentus* is evolving.

Again, let me know if I can help.  
Sheryl Birkhead

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WAHF:

Michael A. Burstein, Steve Green,  
Lee Hoffman, Rodney Leighton,  
Joseph T. Major

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## **Fanzines Received**

### *Alexiad*

Joseph T. Major  
1409 Christy Avenue  
Louisville, KY 40204-2040

### *Burstzine*

Michael & Nomi Burstein  
POB 1713  
Brookline, MA 02446

### *Challenger*

Guy H. Lillian III  
P.O. Box 53092  
New Orleans, LA 70153

### *De Profundis*

Marty Cantor  
11513 Burbank Blvd.  
North Hollywood, CA 91601

### *Derogatory Reference*

Arthur D. Hlavaty  
206 Valentine Street  
Yonkers, NY 10704-1814

### *The Devniad*

Bob Devney  
25 Johnson Street  
North Attleboro, MA 02760

### *Fantasy Commentator*

A. Langley Searles  
48 Highland Circle  
Bronxville, NY 10708-5909

### *File 770*

Mike Glycer  
705 Valley View Avenue  
Monrovia, CA 91016

### *Fosfax*

Tim Lane  
2265 Bradford Drive  
Louisville, KY 40233-7281

### *Knarley Knews*

Henry L. Welch  
1525 16th Avenue  
Grafton, WI 53024-2017

### *Leighton Look*

Rodney Leighton  
R.R. #3  
Tatamagouche, Nova Scotia  
B0K 1V0  
Canada

### *Littlebrook*

Jerry Kaufman & Suzanne Tompkins  
3522 NE 123rd Street  
Seattle, WA 98125-5643

### *Lofgeornost*

Fred Lerner  
81 Worcester Avenue  
White River Junction, VT 05001

### *Midfanzine*

Anne K.G. Murphy  
MFCI  
509 Dartmoor  
Ann Arbor, MI 48103-4511

### *Mimosa*

Nicki & Rich Lynch  
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Gaithersburg, MD 20885

### *Nova Express*

Lawrence Person  
POB 27231  
Austin, TX 78755-2231

### *Pablo Lennis*

John Thiel  
30 N. 18th Street  
Lafayette, IN 47904

### *Peregrine Nations*

Jan Stinson  
POB 430314  
Big Pine Key, FL 33043-0314

### *Rain on Cherry-Blossoms*

Eloise Beltz-Decker  
1519 W. Taylor Street #2  
Chicago, IL 60607-4015

### *Sleight of Hand*

John Teehan  
499 Douglas Avenue  
Providence, RI 02908

### *Southern Fandom Confederation Bulletin*

138 Bibb Drive  
Madison, AL 35758-1064

### *They Made Me Do It*

Max  
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### *Thyme*

Alan Stewart  
PO Box 222 WTC  
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Australia

### *Twink*

E.B. Frohvet  
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Ellicott City, MD 21042

### *Vanamonde*

John Hertz  
236 S. Coronado  
Los Angeles, CA 90057

### *Visions of Paradise*

Robert Sabella  
24 Cedar Manor Ct.  
Budd Lake, NJ 07828-1023

### *Wabe*

Jae Leslie Adams, Tracy Benton, Bill  
Bodden  
621 Spruce St.  
Madison, WI 53715

## Mock Section: Travel Reports

Readers of science fiction and fantasy often travel into strange and distant lands of the imagination. I've asked several fan writers to provide trip reports into some of the lands of authors' imaginations and in return received trips into fantasy worlds, lost realms, comic book cities and . Noted world travelers Mark and Evelyn Leeper journey to the middle eastern land of Arbaaz and the Maple White Plateau in South America in their two pieces. Cheryl Morgan returns from a fact finding tour of Gotham with an analysis of why the Worldcon should be held there. Steven Pitluk takes on the persona of a subject of Argimiliar on a journey to Imrryr before the sack. For *Argentus 4*, I am looking for interviews with characters from SF literature and films.

### A Weekend in Arbaaz

A trip log by Evelyn C. Leeper

One of the advantages of being retired is the ability to take a short vacation without sacrificing the days you want to save up for a long vacation. So we couldn't pass up the chance to see Arbaaz before it got "Westernized." It's true that hardly anyone is familiar with this tiny almost Biblical country, yet one never knows when the forces of modernity may sweep in.

Not that they would have an easy time. Arbaaz is not easy to get to, nor does it have much to attract investors or entrepreneurs. Sandwiched between two tall mountain ranges, it is cut almost in two by the Maraba River, which is almost fjord-like at times. The result is that getting there was not easy, but a bizarre airfare war meant we could fly to Praia for only \$129, and it turned out that from there, the cheapest place to go that wasn't in the midst of a civil war was Arbaaz.

One of the appeals of Arbaaz, it's true, is how backward it really is. It has forbidden any modern devices, not only to its citizens, but to any visitors. You think Singapore is bad because it prohibits the import of chewing gum? Well, when going to Arbaaz, one can bring chewing gum—but not any electrical or battery-operated devices. Only traditional watches are allowed, so I had to dig my old Timex out of the drawer, and all my notes were made paper in pencil. (This also explains why this log is so short.)

Well, when I say that electrical devices are forbidden, that's not entirely accurate. You can bring them in but they won't work. Those two mountain ranges I mentioned earlier are rich in iron and various other metals that interact to generate some electromagnetic radiation that renders such devices useless. (I guess it's a sort of natural EMP.) So the government doesn't have to forbid these—nature already has.

But cameras are also frowned upon, as they are considered to allow the making of graven images. The religion of Arbaaz is based primarily on the Judaism of the Old Testament, but with some post-Biblical additions. While many of its rules may seem similar to those in Arabic countries, there are differences. For example, while women must wear full-length robes and head coverings, men must wear them too. (Lest one confuse the two, however, men's robes tend to have stripes in bright colors such as orange or red stripes, while women's are basically white, possibly with a blue or black border.

And the men's head coverings are more like the cylindrical "kipot" one sees in African dress, while the women's are more scarf-like.

(In case you're wondering, Praia Airport has a shop that sells this clothing for the traveler. It also has a "left luggage" for all those people who either didn't heed the "no electronics" rule, or were including a trip to Arbaaz as part of a longer tour. There was one man who practically had a fit when he was told that, no, he couldn't bring his Palm Pilot even if he promised never to take it out outside his hotel room. Or not that he couldn't, but shouldn't. They should probably have let him bring it in and end up useless, but then he'd be even more upset at them, I suppose.)

But I'm getting ahead of myself.

Wednesday: Our flight was due to leave at 18:30, so naturally we were at the airport three hours early. Luckily, books are not limited, so we had brought a lot of reading material. Since we were going to be gone for only five days, and even for that we wouldn't need as much clothing as usual, bringing extra books wasn't a problem with carry-on luggage.

Thursday: We boarded the plane and after the usual mediocre dinner we got a few hours sleep before landing in Praia at 8:15. We had four hours between flights, which wasn't really enough time to do anything, especially since we had to go over to "Isram's Tailoring" and pick up our *bukiyim* (robes). Considering that they have pretty much a captive audience, the price of US\$50 each didn't seem *too* unreasonable, even though we're talking about what is basically a cheap cotton muumuu. Unfortunately, the stripes-and-borders gender coding means you can't really cobble anything together. Oh, well, it makes an interesting souvenir.) Luckily, pretty much any old shoes are okay—considering how uncomfortable sandals can be, that a good thing, though Mark insists that black Reeboks under the white *bukiya* make me look weird.

At 12:30, we boarded a DC-3 for the flight to Isla do Porto. You can't fly into Arbaaz (given that they have no electricity or electronics, you'd have to do it on a glider), but rather you fly to Isla do Porto, where you switch to a ferry, which takes you to just outside the port of Entrao Ferano, and then you switch to a rowboat (!) to actually enter Arbaaz.

So we got to Isla do Porto, and I took a Bonine before getting on the ferry—just in case—and rode about an hour on fairly choppy seas to Entrao Ferano, by which point I was really glad I had taken the Bonine. Switching to the



rowboats wasn't too bad, though climbing down a ladder in a *bukiya* was a bit tricky. (Luckily the luggage was all swung out into another boat in a net, just like on those cargo ships in the old movies.)

So we docked, got out of the boats, and went into the customs shed to claim our luggage. (I say customs shed, but we had cleared customs before leaving Praia because of the electronics checks.) Now the first order of business anywhere is getting local currency. In most countries this means going to an ATM. But Arbaaz has no ATMs, and no one takes credit cards either. (We had brought one just in case we needed it in Praia and to pay for the airport parking and such, but it was pretty useless here.) So it was back to the old-fashioned way: changing money. One nice thing is that the rate is the same everywhere in Arbaaz, and there is no service fee or anything else to confuse things. We changed US\$400 into 1256.64 arbaatim (AR1256.64). Well actually Arbaaz still uses their old currency, which divides the arbaat into sixty *sesim*, so it was really AR1256.38.

With this done, we went out into Entrao Ferano, or rather the town of Arbaaz itself, which is right next to the port. The next order of business was finding a hotel. Given that Arbaaz doesn't have many tourists, there is really only one hotel, unless you want to stay in a *caravanserai* full of shepherds who have come to town to sell their goats and buy supplies. The Sheba was so named by its builder, an ex-pat Brit who "discovered" Arbaaz during World War II when his ship was torpedoed fifty miles off its coast and he managed to drift in on a piece of the wreckage. He convinced the government that having a place for foreigners to stay would minimize the problems when foreigners did show up, and thought "The Sheba Hotel" sounded sufficiently exotic for the area.

We got to the Sheba by horse cart, by the way. The back seemed to have been used to carry cargo of various sorts, but was fairly clean, and the seat up front was clean, if not enormously comfortable.

The Sheba is a two-story hotel (no elevators, remember?) which does at least have flush toilets—but only on the ground floor. It does not have running water, and (quelle surprise) the water that is available is not safe to drink. But somehow coffee is ubiquitous (it turns out that the hillsides are perfect for growing coffee), and there is also a weak beer everyone drinks. (Even Mark, since there where no bottled drinks or even tea. Had we know we would have brought tea bags.)

(This log is far less organized than if I had had my palmtop there.)

Anyway, the rooms are very Spartan—twin beds with thin mattresses, a table, a chair, and a large window with gauze curtains. (Well, with no electricity, the rooms need all the daylight they can get. At night candles are provided, but there isn't much to stay up for after the sun goes down, so everyone is pretty much on a sunrise-to-sundown schedule.) All this luxury for only AR200/night (about US\$63.66).

By the time we got settled in, it was sundown, and time for dinner. (I brought my watch, but didn't really use it much, since no one else worked by the clock. Breakfast was shortly after sunrise, lunch at midday, and

dinner at sundown.) We ate dinner in the hotel restaurant to make things simple—at least it had someone who spoke English. There was not an extensive menu, but there was some choice. Mark had the grilled meat platter—lamb and chicken with flatbread something like Ethiopian injira, and spicy beans. I had the chicken *marfouz*, a sort of casserole of chicken, vegetables, and thickened broth served with the same flatbread. It was delicious! (And beer, of course. The coffee is very strong, and decaffeinated is not a concept that has arrived in Arbaaz yet.) All this for AR60 for both. (Oh, I suppose I should say that Arbaaz has no sales tax, no restaurant tax, and no tipping.)

Friday: This being our first day in Arbaaz, we did what everyone does on their first day—we visited the Fortress. (Well, there aren't all that many attractions for the tourist in Arbaaz, so the schedule is fairly predictable.)

First, of course, we had breakfast: coffee, eggs, and toast. Nothing exciting here, but there was also fresh fruit juice, which Mark drank a lot of so he wouldn't need too much beer later. The fruit is something like a pomegranate, but more citrusy. (Maybe it's just a pomegranate that's evolved differently.)

The Fortress is on the cliff above the entrance of the harbor and was built around 1100 when the Arbaazians were worried about pirates attacking them. The idea was that everyone would retreat into the Fortress, which was impregnable. They were probably right, because no pirates (or slavers) ever bothered to attack, although one suspects the sheer difficulty of getting into the harbor in the first place, combined with the lack of wealth, served as deterrents as well.

As for the origins of the Arbaazians, no one is really sure. They say they came from "over the mountains" long ago, but since there are mountains all around Arbaaz, that doesn't narrow it down. The best theory that historians have is that their ancestors were chased into the desert, which they somehow managed to cross. When they crossed the mountains, they found themselves in a previously undiscovered sliver of fertile land protected by the mountains on the two sides of the river which joined about fifty miles inland, at the Maraba Falls. Until explorers started passing by the seaward edge, no one suspected Arbaaz's existence. And since those explorers were often even more lost than the original settlers, word never got back to the outside world until very recently.

All this meant that Arbaaz was completely untouched by the modern world until World War II, when ships avoiding the submarine attacks discovered a natural harbor and the people who lived there. After a lot of conflict, an "accommodation" was reached, whereby Arbaaz would allow visitors—usually academics, a few diplomats, and whatever tourists managed to discover this hidden gem.

To get to the Fortress, one hires either a cart or a mule. The mules are recommended, since the steep path means that if you take a cart, you end up walking a lot of the way *up* the steep path. (The mule costs AR15, the cart AR10.)

Because it needed to contain everyone for an indefinite period, the Fortress is like a town in itself.

There are storerooms for food, stables for animals, kitchens, sleeping areas, and just about anything else you could think of. There is even a bath house, fed by rainwater (which also fill the enormous cisterns under the Fortress). But it all looks very empty, and indeed it always was. At times there were a few guards posted there watching the coast, usually after a shipwrecked sailor drifted in, but after a while the menace seemed less likely and they stopped posting a guard until the next time. Being so high up, it hasn't filled up with leaves, and animals tend to ignore it, so it's still fairly clean. But it's a little strange, being never really used and all.

From the Fortress, one can see up and down the coast, even to the neighboring countries, which tells you how narrow Arbaaz is.

We returned to Arbaaz for lunch: grilled meat, flatbread, and yogurt (AR40 for both—I love dealing in round numbers!). There are some restaurants, or rather cafes, but we decided to eat in the hotel for most meals since we're not too clear on the language and hardly anyone speaks English. The language is related to both Arabic and Hebrew, but much changed, so communication is tricky.

After lunch, we took a siesta, that being the custom (and the heat being most oppressive then—around 35 degrees Centigrade). Around 16:00 we decided to go for a walk around the town. Crime is not a problem in Arbaaz, and (maybe because there are so few tourists) there is not the problem of people chasing tourists trying to sell them things. So one gets a chance to walk around and see what life is like, and to smile and say “*Salaa*” (the general purpose greeting) to people without worries. And because there is so little contact with the rest of the world, the people aren't annoyed by, angry at, or irritated with tourists, but smile and say “*Salaa*” right back.

The town is dirty by our standards, but when one considers that all transport is by animal, and all garbage removal by cart, it is only to be expected, and cleaner than many places that have more means of cleaning the streets. Maybe because the pace is slower, people seem friendlier and less stressed out. There are “farms” on the mountain slopes and in the valley areas further inland, and fishing along the shore. Because there is so little contact with “the outside world,” the food is what is grown there: fish, lamb, goat and goats' milk, and bread. The coffee comes from the highland areas. There are some vegetables—mostly beans and greens—and some citrus fruits and dates, but not a huge variety.

As shouldn't surprise anyone familiar with me, we found a bookstore. It was hard to tell what the selection was, however, since the books are very basic, with only the title and author (one presumes—the alphabet is not the Roman one) on the cover. Because of the technical difficulties and religious scruples, there isn't much in the way of illustrations either. I suspect *none* of the books were science fiction. :-)

I later discovered that the hotel maintains a small library for tourists and other foreigners, filled mostly by donations. I left my extra copies of Jorge Luis Borges's *Ficciones* (in English in spite of the title) and Lisa Goldstein's *Tourists*, which elevated their selection in my

opinion—there were a distressing number of John Grishams and tattered self-help books (*How to Run a Company in to the Ground While Collecting a Big Salary* and that sort of thing).

Anyway, we decided that trying to buy souvenir science fiction was not a very practical idea, when what should I see in one corner but a section of books with some Roman alphabet on the cover. This was their “translations” section of foreign works. They were mostly French and Spanish classics (I saw a couple of Victor Hugo novels and *Don Quixote*), but they also had *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes* in Arbaata! (It seems to be abridged, with only six stories instead of the standard twelve, or maybe it's just a generic title of “adventures of Sherlock Holmes” rather than the volume so named here. Who can tell?) Naturally, I had to have it, even though the chances of my even figuring out what stories are in it were nil, and at AR6,50 quite a reasonable souvenir.

We walked along the main street, which was both noisy and quiet at the same time. There were animals braying, barking, and otherwise communicating, and voices calling out, but no mechanical sounds, no automobile horns, no music through loudspeakers, none of the noises we are so used to in a city.

When we got to the edge of town (only about two kilometers) we decided to stop at a coffee shop there and refresh ourselves a bit before returning. Others were sitting there eating, so when the waiter came over we asked for a coffee, a fruit juice, and two pastries, for which we pointed to what the man at the next table was eating. It turned out to be a bit like baklava, but not as sweet. The waiter seemed a bit taken aback at first by us (I guess most tourists don't walk out this far), but when he understood what we wanted, and saw we liked it, he stopped worrying.

The coffee shop had an inside and an outside area, but when we saw that inside was only men, we decided to sit outside. I don't know if women were even permitted inside, but I didn't want to be the only one. I guess that most women in Arbaaz have very little time during the day to sit in coffee shops.

After that, we walked back, picking up some fruit for snacking. There isn't much in the way of snack food available—no boxes of crackers, no bags of candy, etc. Most of what there is, is fairly perishable (I don't think goat cheese keeps well in this heat), so everyone pretty much buys when they're going to eat.

We lay in the room, resting and writing, or at least getting our notes up to date, and reading a bit. At sundown (about 18:00, being as close to the equator as it is), we went down to dinner. There were only three other people staying in the hotel, Mr. Palm Pilot and a couple of students. (Most of the people we had come over with had been on a tour that included one day in Arbaaz and they had left already. We got to talking to the students, George and Mary Ann, who were from Cambridge and were there for a week to do some research on the Arbaazian social structure. They said that Mr. Palm Pilot had caused quite a ruckus that morning. After we had had breakfast and had left, he had come down to breakfast in a

shirt and pants instead of his *bukiya* and the staff almost called the police. Apparently pants are considered pretty much little underwear and so the staff reacted as they would in the United States if someone showed up in the hotel restaurant in his boxer shorts. Luckily the proprietor was able to placate them, and convinced Mr. Palm Pilot to go upstairs and put on “appropriate clothing.” (One reason that the staff wasn’t more adamant was that the female student hadn’t come down yet, so no women actually saw the man in his pants.)

For dinner we decided to try the fish for variety. Mine was grilled, with a pomegranate and almond sauce, while Mark opted for having his fried with malt vinegar that the owner makes himself. However, no chips—potatoes are not a crop here.

We sat up for a while talking with the students. It turned out that the proprietor (whose name he gave as “Roger. Just Roger.”) had been a Cambridge student who came to Arbaaz twenty years earlier to do some field work, and ended up staying on. We finally went to bed around 21:00.

Saturday morning we were up bright and early and after breakfast ready for our excursion to Maraba Falls. There is no tourist industry here, but Roger knows a few men who speak some English and are willing to take tourists up to the Falls and show them the sights along the way. (Usually these are men who used to work in the hotel and picked up English there.) This is done by horse cart as the road rises only gradually along the river.

Our guide’s name was Malash and he seemed to be about thirty, as well as we could tell anyone’s age. His English was actually pretty good, considering how few people he can speak it with.

The tour is by horse cart and, depending on how many people there are, may include stops to drop off or pick up freight. In our case we were the only ones that day, so we shared the ride with sacks of flour, bags of fruit, and a crate of fish (which luckily was dropped off at a farm fairly early). (Coming back, we also had bags of coffee and several sheepskins.)

About halfway out we stopped at a small house where Malash delivered the fruit, and arranged for us to have some fresh goat cheese and coffee. We asked him about paying, but he said that it was partly in return for his bringing the fruit—otherwise they would have had to make a trip into town for it. All we could do was smile and thank them profusely.

We got to the Falls around 13:00. At the base is a large pool churned up by the falling water and the spray was very refreshing. The falls themselves are fairly high, and while there is a path of sorts leading up, it is advised against traveling it. First of all, it difficult to climb because of the steepness and the fact it is covered with wet, slippery vegetation. And second, the other end is not in Arbaaz, but in its neighbor, and there could be problems with visas and such if we were caught there. But honestly, waterfalls look more impressive from the base than from right next to the top anyway.

At the base, we ate our picnic lunch—bread, hard-boiled eggs, smoked sausage (probably made from lamb, as beef is not available and pigs are prohibited for

religious reasons), and beer. At least here one doesn’t worry if anyone drinks and drives.

We came back by way of a coffee plantation, where Malash showed up coffee “on the hoof.” Raw coffee beans are white and look like maggots, but somewhere along the line, people figured out how to roast them. (They figured out they were good in general by seeing goats nibble them and then get very frisky.) The coffee here is very good, but always drunk black, though sweetened with sugar or honey. I don’t think goat’s milk would be all that good in coffee anyway.

Admittedly this doesn’t sound like a very exciting day, but there is something relaxing about riding through nice countryside without worrying about traffic or schedules or anything like that. I’m not saying that life would be idyllic here—people who live here have to work for a living, and without a lot of modern conveniences. But just as going camping is relaxing for a few days even though you wouldn’t necessarily want to live that way all the time, so is Arbaaz a rather peaceful place to go for a while. I know people say that resorts are relaxing, but the ones we’ve been to seem to want to sell you all sorts of extras, have all sorts of social events, and generally not give you time to just enjoy doing nothing.

We got back and talked to Roger a bit about the future of Arbaaz. Given the impossibility of shipping in technology, it seems unlikely that it will ever have a major tourism industry or even much contact with the outside world. Yet people will always be drawn to it. Some will be drawn because of its exoticism—when they tell their friends they went to Arbaaz, they are unlikely to hear back, “Oh, we went there last year!” Others will come as students. Still others will be on a spiritual quest, or a yearning for the “simple life.” Roger says many who do come for that leave after a few months, having discovered that the lack of amenities doesn’t necessarily make life simpler, and certainly doesn’t make it easier. But it would explain the fact that the hotel “library” had *three* copies of James Hilton’s *Lost Horizon*.

Dinner was similar to Thursday’s, though I opted for the grilled chicken. The food, while good, is somewhat monotonous. One doesn’t come to Arbaaz for a varied culinary experience. There are different sauces and seasonings, but meat is either grilled or stewed, and the types of meat are limited.

We weren’t completely sure what we would do on Sunday, but Mary Ann suggested that we join them at a wedding. We were a little hesitant about horning in on two strangers’ wedding, but George said that a wedding here was a much more open affair—probably because there are so few strangers that the people can’t imagine not just inviting everyone who happens to be around. And since we did attend an eel-blessing in Japan, we figured we might as well.

One advantage of the strict dress code is that we didn’t have to worry about whether we had the right clothes or not. About all you can do to “dress up” is to wear new clothes, and ours were still almost new, and George and Mary Ann insisted they would be fine. So about mid-morning, we walked over to the *talat*, or meeting house.

(The *talat* serves both as place of worship and general meeting hall.)

Because we couldn't understand Arbaata, we couldn't really join in the conversations that were taking place as people gathered. But Mary Ann stayed with us while George talked to various people (no doubt gathering material for their study as well as being social). After we were there about a half hour, people started to take seats. The men sat on the right side and the women on the left (though there was no physical barrier between the two), and Mary Ann said that, as outsiders, we all needed to sit towards the back. So I sat with her while Mark sat with George.

After everyone was seated, the High Elder came out. His clothing was similar to everyone else's, but he also wore a special shawl-like over-garment. The congregation stood and he blessed them, and then the bride entered from a door on the right and the groom from one on the left. The bride was veiled, and accompanied by her mother, while the groom was accompanied by his father. When they met, the parents retreated to the congregation. The groom then lifted the bride's veil to see her face and then lowered it again.

The High Elder and the couple then proceeded through what must be the equivalent of marriage vows, punctuated by symbolic acts. For example, at one point the groom poured some wheat into the bride's hand, and the bride then fed the groom some bread from a plate that was there. According to Mary Ann, this was to demonstrate his vow to be a good provider and her vow to be a good cook. Later, the groom picked up a walking stick and the bride picked up a cloth bundle. This was to signify that they would travel together through life, and also refers back to the original migration to Arbaaz.

At the end, the bride and groom turned to face the congregation. The Elder said (in Arbaata), "Do you accept all that marriage holds?" and they replied together, "We accept, completely and gladly." Then the Elder said, "It is done," and everyone cried out, "*Mazov!*" (which means "congratulations", "best wishes", "huzzah", and so on).

All this took maybe a half hour, and was immediately followed by a huge feast outside. Grilled mutton, spiced beans and vegetables, and bread, followed by a huge assortment of sweets and pastries, all washed down with beer, date wine, or mead.

Gifts are not a major part of weddings here. The feeling seems to be that to make them "required" would be to diminish the hospitality being offered in the feast by expecting people to "pay" for it, so no gifts are given at the wedding, or even supposedly because of it. Instead, the families give things to the couple that they might need in their new home, and friends will invite them over to their houses after the marriage and at that time give them a gift as part of *their* hospitality.

There was a lot of music and dancing, mostly line dancing or individuals, with no mixed dancing. There was no rule against socializing between men and women, though, so we could walk around together, and we didn't have to worry about whom we talked to (what little we could talk).

The bride was about sixteen and the groom about twenty, which Mary Ann said is about when people marry here. Although both boys and girls are educated to some extent, girls usually stop going to school around the age of thirteen and it is assumed that in three years they will have honed their housekeeping skills enough to manage their own household. Boys stay in school a couple of years more, but they too spend some time working either in their father's trade or as an apprentice so that they can prove their ability to support a family. There is some talk of sending one or two boys "out" (as they say) to see what might be learned that would be useful, but it is difficult to find someone willing to go for the many years that would be required.

By late afternoon people started drifting away. It is considered rude for the bride and groom to leave before the guests do (quite the reverse of in the United States), so as soon as someone leaves, that's a signal for everyone else. Mary Ann said that the couple spend their wedding night in a room in the meeting house, as a reminder that the marriage has a religious aspect as well as a societal one. (Mary Ann speculated that there was also some echo of a much earlier religion in which a girl's virginity would be offered in a temple as a sacrifice to one of the gods, but said that the Arbaazians would be much offended by this suggestion.)

We definitely didn't need dinner after all that food, so we spent the time writing and packing (though we had little to pack), then sat on the front porch of the hotel and watched the sun set over the ocean. We wondered how long Arbaaz would stay this way. As we said before, it's true that the mountains mean that technology can't come in—yet. But someday someone may figure out how to shield the devices from the radiation. And there are devices that would be possible even in the radiation field which have up until now been kept out by general agreement. But someday that may change, and then what?

And while we think of how idyllic life in Arbaaz is, we need to remember that we are there for only a few days, with other people doing the cooking and cleaning, and living there is a lot harder. The people are relatively healthy, and understand sanitation and hygiene, but accidents are more dangerous with no quick access to a doctor, or to modern surgical techniques.

There are very few "disruptive" influences. We (tourists) are one of them, though even those Arbaazians who can speak English seem to have very little curiosity about or interest in the outside world. We got no questions about what life was like or what devices we had. A few missionaries (of religion or of progress) have come, but after listening politely for a while, the Arbaazians have gone back to their own lives and left the missionaries talking to empty rooms.

And so we also went back to our empty room, where we fell asleep for our last night in a night uninterrupted by the noises of traffic, horns, loudspeakers, television sets, or any of the other curses (and blessings) of progress.

Monday morning after breakfast we said good-bye to Roger, and to George and Mary Ann, then went down to the port, where we got into the rowboat that took us out to

the ferry, anchored outside the area affected by the mountains' magnetic field. the sound of the ferry's motor seemed very jarring after the silence of the last few days—even when one goes camping or such, there is usually something to remind one of the outside world, and the sparseness of the setting is another reminder, but we had been in a complete world without any of these reminders.

The ferry got us to Isla do Porto around 10:00, and we transferred to the DC-? for the flight to Praia at 11:00. At Praia we had just enough time to have a quick snack (ham and cheese sandwiches) before our return flight at 14:00, which got us back to the airport a little after 18:00, and home about 20:00.

Although we enjoyed Arbaaz a lot, and found it fascinating, I'm not sure this is a trip I could recommend to others. For one thing, it's normally fairly pricey to get there. For another, the lack of "modern conveniences" would be a major drawback to many, and most of those who wouldn't mind are usually looking for more of a nature-type vacation rather than a "primitive culture" one. (Though of course the Arbaazian culture is not necessarily more primitive than ours, but only less technological.

The usual financial summary:

|                       |                                 |
|-----------------------|---------------------------------|
| Airfare               | 559                             |
| Hotel                 | 255                             |
| Food                  | 83                              |
| Ground Transportation | 37                              |
| Souvenirs             | 126 (including <i>bukiyim</i> ) |
| Miscellaneous         | 39                              |
| TOTAL                 | US\$1099                        |

## Worldcon Gotham?

Cheryl Morgan

Being a member of the Board of Directors of the World Science Fiction Society isn't all it is cracked up to be. Mostly it means that Kevin spends lots of time talking to lawyers, accountants and so on. But occasionally he does get wined and dined by people who want to bid for a Worldcon. The most memorable example of this was when the Wayne Foundation offered to sponsor a Worldcon in Gotham City. Apparently the reclusive millionaire, Bruce Wayne, had an extensive collection of early pulp magazines that he wanted to offer as an exhibit, which was certainly attractive. Yet many people in fandom had expressed concern about Gotham's reputation for violent crime. Kevin was dispatched to investigate, and I went along to see what tourism opportunities there would be for fans in that famous city.

The proposed convention headquarters hotel was the Gotham City Marriott, which turned out to be a delightful old red brick building whose outside was absolutely covered in ivy. The interiors too were fairly brimming with plant life. The manageress, a tall, elegant redhead called Ms. Isley, seemed to be something of an enthusiast for greenery and took every opportunity to point out the various rare (and often rather belligerent-looking) species that she had installed in the guestrooms. We were far

more worried about her attitude to parties, but thankfully she seemed very accommodating. She said that there would be no problem at all if fans left a bit of a mess. Kevin says that her words were, "our staff are very efficient", but I'm sure she actually said, "our plants are very efficient". We avoided eating anything green in the restaurant that night, just in case any of the attendant foliage noticed.

The following morning we went in search of interesting places that fans might like to visit. Very quickly we came across the perfect establishment: a shop called Kitty Korner, which specialized in all sorts of cat-related merchandize. While I browsed happily, Kevin got talking to the proprietor, Ms. Kyle, who had an obvious penchant for tight, black leather outfits. By the time I had finished looking around the shop (and petting all of the resident felines) she was practically sitting in his lap, and feeding him little crackers covered with homemade salmon pate. It took me quite a while to drag him out of the shop.

Not far away we found another very fannish location. The shop had no name, just a big black question mark on a green background. Below it was the legend, "Proprietor: E. Nygma", which I guess must be a pseudonym of some sort. However, pseudonymous or not, Mr. Nygma, a slim man with thinning dark hair, made us very welcome. It turned out that he had a passion for quizzes and game



shows. He and Kevin spent ages looking through rare videos of old game show programs, not to mention an amazing collection of trophies and prizes from such shows. Nygma was able to show us grateful letters from everyone from Monty Hall to Magnus Magnussen thanking him for his support for the game show business, plus a brief and very rude note from Anne Robinson that he seemed especially proud of.

The guy knew his stuff as well. I managed to catch him out with a few cricket questions, but his knowledge of SF, railways and even Roberts Rules of Order was astonishing. He and Kevin then got into an involved conversation about how to make a game show based on parliamentary practice, and before I knew it they were planning to trial it at the con. The provisional title was "Let's Make a Motion". We could see that Mr. Nygma



(Ed, as he insisted we call him) was a fan at heart. If Worldcon did come to Gotham it looked like Tom Galloway would be able to enjoy a year off running the game show track.

After a busy day shopping we decided to check out the local restaurants. Charles Brown had recommended a place called Antarctica that reputedly served superb fish. And so it proved. Indeed the whole place was fascinating, being decked out with scenes of the Antarctic, stuffed fish, and even a small pool of Fairy Penguins in one corner. While we were eating, a rotund, suited gentleman with a monocle waddled over to our table.

“Er, Oswald Cobblepot, owner,” he muttered. “Hope you having good time, yes? Recommend my establishment to Worldcon people?”

“Yes indeed. Wonderful lobster thermidor, and the scallop appetizers were amazingly succulent,” I replied. “But how did you know who we were?”

“Ah, good friend Ms. Kyle mentioned you to me,” he replied. “Business partners of a sort, we are. She has excellent sideline in gourmet party food. I provide fish, eh?”

“The fish is very good,” mumbled Kevin with his mouth half full of grilled sea bass.

“Best in America,” he preened. “Fresh out of Southern Ocean every day. Have it flown in direct from Hobart on my own private jet. Makes excellent sushi - Neil Gaiman a regular customer, am proud to say.”

We spent a long and happy evening in Mr. Cobblepot’s company, and were impressed with his knowledge of SF and comics, as well as of fish. All in all it had been a very good day. Gotham City was looking better by the minute.

The following morning we had an appointment at the city library where we were to talk about arrangements for the Student Writers’ Contest. It turned out that we had been slightly set-up because the young librarian who was designated to look after us turned out to be the daughter of the city’s Police Commissioner. However, we didn’t object to this rather blatant attempt by the city authorities to keep an eye on our visit because Barbara Gordon turned out to be a delightful young lady and really quite vivacious behind the mousey image that she affected for her job. Kevin was rather taken by her. I suspect he was trying to imagine what she would look like in tight black leather.

After lunch Barbara suggested that we visit the Gotham Museum. That turned out to be an excellent suggestion. It really was very impressive. The art collection was extensive and superb, ranging from Picasso and Warhol to some original comic book covers by Jack Kirby and Gil Kane. There were some fascinating science exhibits (including well-shielded examples of both red and green Kryptonite) and a magnificent collection of archaeological finds. Everywhere we looked, we saw small cards saying, “This exhibit acquired through the kind assistance of the Wayne Foundation.” Clearly Mr. Wayne was a very rich and generous man. I wondered where he got all his money.

The only place I have ever visited that rivaled Gotham is the British Museum in London and, as luck would have

it, a special traveling exhibit of ancient Egyptian artifacts was on loan to Gotham from London when we visited. I was in the process of re-acquainting myself with some beautiful statuary when there was a loud explosion and some sort of gas flooded the exhibit hall. Kevin and I managed to hide behind a statue of Rameses III, from which vantage point we saw a bunch of thugs making off with various items of jewelry and other valuable artifacts. They were led by a fat man in a silly-looking Egyptian outfit that would have drawn laughter in the masquerade of a small regional.

After the villains had gone we hung around to see if we could help the police with their inquiries. Before long we were introduced to the head of the investigation, Police Chief O’Hara, and on hearing our tale he quickly deduced what had happened.

“Ah, I thought as much, ‘tis that felonious pharaoh, King Tut. The Commissioner was sure he’d be after this exhibit, but would the Museum authorities listen to us? Not a chance! Now I guess we’ll have to call Batman in.”

“Does this sort of thing happen often in Gotham?” asked Kevin. You see, we represent an organization that is considering holding a major convention here and...”

“Oh Begorrah! You’ll be the Worldcon people. The Commissioner will have my hide for this! No, ‘tis not like that at all. Saints alive, but we do have a few crazies round here. What city doesn’t? Ah, but with Batman’s help the fiends are always quickly put behind bars where they belong. And we do have an excellent rehabilitation program. Look, I’ll show ya. One of the most nefarious of them is out on parole now and is becoming a real pillar of the community.”

With that, Chief O’Hara let his men to clean up after King Tut and escorted us off to Mr. Freeze’s Ice Cream Parlor. The place was staffed by exactly the sort of thugs that might have found employment with the would-be pharaoh, but they were all very courteous, and with good reason. The shop was full of police officers, all of whom were enthusiastic fans of Freeze’s product. Chief O’Hara seemed to know all of his men by name and gently chided a few lads who should have been on duty at the time. Then he turned his attention to the staff.

“And would Vic be about?” he asked, “I have some good folks here I would like him to meet.”

The shop’s owner, Victor Fries, looked even more villainous than his staff, but he clearly knew the Chief well and was obviously working hard at his parole.

“Good to see you again, Chief. As usual, this one’s on me. Will it be the double-chocolate mocha with whipped cream and nuts again?”

“Has to be, I’m afraid, Vic. Can’t have the Irish Whiskey flavor when I’m on duty. And ‘tis a sad day for Gotham today. That monster King Tut robbed the city museum right under the noses of these here visiting dignitaries. I’ll be right in it with the Commissioner when I get back to the office.”

“Terrible, t-t-terrible,” muttered Fries, desperately trying to restrain a hysterical giggle.

“Ah well, at least we can count on Batman to apprehend the fiend.”

At the mention of Batman's name, Fries's face rapidly turned from mirth to hatred. "Why that meddling fink, I'll kill him, I'll..." he began to snarl, but one of his staff alertly noticed what was happening and guided him away. Luckily for them, O'Hara was by then too immersed in his sundae to notice. However, it seemed obvious to us that, master ice cream maker or not, Victor Fries was a homicidal maniac who really ought not to be out on the streets. We wondered how many other such criminals were at loose in Gotham.

That evening we had been invited to a reception at the city library to be hosted by Bruce Wayne himself. His famous collection of pulp magazines was to be on show, along with the usual collection of civic dignitaries. Kevin had rented a tux for the occasion, and just as well too. He spent most of the evening being polite to boring businessmen and their pearl-encrusted wives. Thankfully I was able to find Barbara Gordon and spent much of the evening talking to her, her father, and the still mortified Chief O'Hara.

We did, however, have to be introduced to the host and his entourage. The catering was being managed by Mr. Wayne's personal butler who clearly knew his job and made of point of keeping Kevin and I well fed. I picked up a cracker covered with salmon pate.

"Haven't I seen one of these before?"

"Betcha you have," commented a young man strolling past. "Best food in Gotham! Am I right, Alfred?"

"Perfectly deduced as ever, Master Dick. Ms. Kyle did indeed provide the consumables for this evening's entertainment."

"Holy *Hors d'Oeuvres*, she's just ace! I remember that spread she put on for the diamond merchants' convention!"

"Ahem!" A tall, handsome man had come up behind Dick and was gazing meaningfully at him.

"Er, sorry Bruce, I forgot. That was when Catwoman, er... Never did recover..."

Wayne was quick to cover up the young man's embarrassment.

"Ms. Morgan, Mr. Standlee, welcome to my little soiree. I see that you have already met my ward, Dick Grayson. May I take you on a tour of the exhibit? I've always wanted to have a good opportunity to display it, and my good friend Jon Singer recommended your convention. Come and see what you think of it."

Wayne was as good as his word, and twice as charming. I was very impressed with the exhibit too. He had everything. First editions of just about every pulp magazine there was. Letters from Hugo Gernsback to his contributors. Hand-written early drafts of Asimov stories. It was, as the pulp editors might have said, Amazing! Astounding! Fantastic!

Indeed, it was rather too good to be true. For as the evening was winding down there was a sudden "crunch, zap, kapow" and a group of armed thugs burst into the room, followed by a crazed-looking fellow in a purple suit. Chief O'Hara buried his face in his hands.

"Ha! Wayne! I have them at last!" cackled the villain. "A signed first edition of Lionel Fanthorpe's 'March of the Robots;' the original hand-written draft of *The Eye of*

*Argon*. It's some of the funniest material ever written. Did you really think you could keep them from me forever?"

"You won't get away with this, Joker!" said Wayne, more in bluff than anything else I think.

"Excuse me, Mr. Joker," piped up Barbara. "I seem to have laddered my stockings. Might I visit the restroom to replace them? Your men have already searched me for valuables."

"You won't fool me like that," screeched the Joker. "I let you out of my sight and you'll be on the phone before I can say 'Batman'. And you, young Grayson, stop trying to sneak behind O'Hara. None of you leaves here before I get away with my loot."

Suddenly the lights went out.

"Thump! Pop! Kazamm!"

When illumination was restored, three more costumed characters had entered the room and The Joker's thugs were disarmed and held captive by a new group of muscled hirelings. The Joker himself was suspended from a chandelier, wrapped up in a cat-o-nine-tails. The newcomers were not unknown to the authorities.

"The Riddler!" gasped O'Hara.

"The P-penguin!" shuddered Commissioner Gordon.

"Catwoman," smiled Wayne, courteous as ever.

"How very astute of you, Chief." The Riddler bowed.

"Kwaak! Glad to see you remember me, Commissioner," sneered the Penguin.

"I'm charmed, Mr. Wayne," simpered Catwoman.

"B-but why are you here," stammered the Commissioner, "and what have you done with the Joker?"

"I'll give you a clue," said the Riddler. He fished a propeller beanie out of his pocket and slapped it on his head. "We want our Worldcon!"

"Big fan myself too, actually", muttered the Penguin, shuffling his feet. "Very fond of Sean McMullen. All that stuff in his 'Mirrorsun' series about super-humans with bird genes. Might be able to find someone who could fly him in from Australia for free. Make him guest of honor? Kwaak?"

Catwoman sidled sinuously up to Kevin. "Could I volunteer to help run the con suite? Please?"

## ***My Arrival in the Dreaming City***

**Steven Pitluk**

As a child, I made my one and only visit to the Dragon Isle in the company of my father, who was a trade delegate for Argimiliar. Melniboné was only just beginning to exhibit any interest in trading with the Young Kingdoms rather than trying to resubjugate the "wayward" lands of humans. Despite its allegiance to the unruly lords of Chaos, the King of Argimiliar elected to put economics ahead of philosophy and appointed my father, Targred Oorn, to represent a consortium of Argimiliaran merchants in the erstwhile capital of the Melnibonéan empire. My father's portfolio also permitted him to represent the monarchy's own interests and, I later discovered, to undertake espionage. I was but twelve, however, and knew little of this except that I was to go on a grand adventure to the heart of Chaos, for

Argimiliaran mothers had always threatened their children with stories of Melnibonéan cannibals and bogeymen.

My father and I set sail on a commercial vessel bound for distant Shazaar. For a fee, the captain agreed to transfer us to a Melnibonéan ship as we approached the Dragon Isle. I will admit that my first view of Melniboné was one of disenchantment. I had expected to see the skies filled with the wheeling bulks of the fabled Melnibonéan dragons, instead, I saw a rocky prominence jutting from the sea, no different from a first approach to the Isle of Purple Towns. It was at this point that we transferred ship and I saw my first Melnibonéan.

Rather than being the ten foot tall demons I had been raised to fear, the crew appeared almost human. They were more dainty in appearance than the hearty men of Argimiliar, but I could see, even at that age, that their daintiness covered a sinuous strength that would make them fearful in combat. There was a casual cruelty in their expressions no matter what tasks they were undertaking. The ship was only crewed by eight of the Melnibonéans, with the vast majority of its complement slaves, easily identifiable by the blank stare and lack of expression on their faces.

The ship carried us around the Dragon Isle and I caught my first “sight” of Imrryr. I suppose I had expected to see the tall, scintillating towers, but that expectation was to be met in the same way as the image of dragons above the island. Instead, I saw only the massive walls of Imrryr’s sea maze, its first line of defense against the upstart human kingdoms. Above the walls, where I would have expected to see the tips of the towers, were only uncountable numbers of birds, apparently trained to block any glimpse of the majestic city from the eyes of unworthy humans. One of the Melnibonéan sailors told me that the birds were the result of an ancient agreement with Fileet, Lady of the Birds. Although I had long known that the Melnibonéans had alliances with the great lords and ladies of the beasts, seeing the results of those alliances was something else entirely.

Outside the Sea Maze, our ship was accosted by a small scow and a Melnibonéan nobleman came aboard. He glanced, sneeringly, at my father and me and barked an order. Parchments were thrust into our hands and we were made to read, and memorize, the Harbour Edict which would govern our activities while we sojourned on the island. Immediately, we were blindfolded and I feared that Melnibonéans had decided to send us to their fabled torture chamber. However, my father calmed me by explaining that all visitors to the Dragon Isle were blindfolded before entering the Sea Maze and when the scarves were removed, we should see the fabled splendor of the city. All I know of the Sea Maze is that it took us several hours of the day to successfully navigate it, and when the blindfolds were finally removed, I founded myself at dock in the most incredible city I had seen to that time, or since.

We were greeted on the dock by a Melnibonéan nobleman who, I gather, was also a leading member of what passes for a merchant guild among these people. His name was Lahnik Gyre and he would serve as my

father’s guide and handler for the duration of our stay in Imrryr. Lahnik Gyre showed us to the townhouse in which we would be residing. He had taken care to stock it for us in a manner which would suit out Argimiliaran sensibilities while still introducing us to some of the exoticism of Melniboné. Upon arrival at the house, I also met Neslok Pruk, who would serve as a tutor to me during my stay.

My father almost immediately set off for the palace, where he and Lahnik Gyre were to meet with a functionary of Emperor Sadric LXXXVI. I understood that the emperor had a nephew and niece near my own age, Yyrkoon and Cymoril. Perhaps I would have a chance to meet them during our stay. In the meantime, Neslok Pruk had arranged an outing for me so I could see Imrryr and learn about the city I would call home for the next several months.

Apart from the palace and other halls of state, Cadsandria, the capital of Argimiliar, which I call home, is a collection of half-timber, wattle and daub buildings, mostly two storeys tall, although a few are known to reach as high as three storeys. The upper levels lean over the streets to give the impression that one is walking in a hallway or, perhaps, and arbor. Imrryr is completely different.

Even the basest buildings in Imrryr are built of magnificently colored stone, polished smooth to appear as if they have grown from the rocky earth of the island. They tower above the human, or rather Melnibonéan inhabitants of the city as my own house in Cadsandria would tower over an ant. Their colors are a panoply of pinks, jades, purples and every other color under the sun. While this may sound garish, the colors were understated enough and in such accord that they only complemented those which stood near them. From within the city, there was no opportunity to fully appreciate the scope of the city.

Our townhouse, which was provided by Emperor Sadric, himself, although paid for by the King of Argimiliar. Naturally, the Emperor never set foot in the house, located in the Foreign Quarter. The house did come staffed with a butler and maid, both slaves with the blank, drug-induced look so common to slaves in Imrryr. I knew my father did not desire to keep them drugged, yet they remained in that state for our entire visit. Perhaps Neslok Pruk or Lahnik Gyre, who was a relatively frequent visitor to our home, administered the drugs to these servants. In any event, they were the best trained, most well-behaved servants I had ever had. There was no question of them arguing or dawdling. They only had enough free will, it seemed, that they could take some initiative to provide what my father and I required.

The next day, my tutor took me on an excursion, allowing me to see more of the Dreaming City, although I was still relegated to the Foreign Quarter. Exiting Imrryr through a gate in the north wall, the only way for an human to leave the Dreaming City except by boat, my tutor took me for a ride on the Plains of Imrryr, which encircle the island side of the Dreaming City, and it was from this vantage that I was first able to understand the size and beauty of Imrryr. It was also at this point, when I

gazed upon its towering spires, that I fell in love with the city which surely has no equal in all the world, not even Hwamgaarl, from which the Theocrat aims to emulate Melniboné at the height of its empire.

Despite the colors of the towers of Imrryr, the city, as seen from the Plains, could easily have been a collection of enormous stalagmites reaching for the heavens. Behind them, the flocks of gulls and other seabirds formed a moving backdrop which hid the sky and sea from where we sat on the Plains. We ate a picnic provided by an entourage of slaves while Neslok Pruk began my lessons in the history of the empire, all the while making sure I was well aware of my subservience to the great race of Melniboné. The slaves, I noticed, were human, not Melnibonéan, and had the same vacant stare as the rowers aboard the ship.

Following our repast, we returned to the Foreign Quarter of Imrryr, which is the only part of the city which may host humans. Although this may be seen as a punishment, it actually works to the humans benefit since there are few Melnibonéans who will venture into the Foreign Quarter, thereby decreasing the number of times a human must perform a prostration. I thought Neslok Pruk would take me back to our townhouse, but instead he took me to a massive tower, which he informed me was the Tower of Monshanjik.

The name was familiar to me as the border of the Foreign Quarter, past which I was not permitted except with an imperial escort. Beyond that, I did not know anything of the Tower of Monshanjik. After having been taken into the thick, foreboding walls of the tower, I wish I could still say I knew nothing of it, for the Tower of Monshanjik is the site of torture for those humans (and, to be fair, Melnibonéans) who run afoul of his most glorious emperor, Sadric LXXXVI.

Upon entering the tower, there is a display of the most gruesome instruments of torture the mind could ever imagine. Many of these tools are beyond the meager imagination to determine what function they might have, yet Neslok Pruk assured me that each was delicately crafted and designed to elicit the maximum amount of information with the least amount of pain. I was afraid Neslok Pruk would take me deeper into the tower to show me a demonstration of the techniques used by the Melnibonéans, but instead he informed me that the only people who were permitted in the building were those who performed the Emperor's business or those who needed to speak to those who performed the Emperor's business. Those who do enter into the tower are blindfolded, as I was upon entering into the Sea Maze.

This main hallway also served as a marketplace for the Quarter, in which foreign merchants would haggle with each other and Melnibonéan officials. The clamor filled the hall, and helped distract attention away from the torture instruments which were so prominently featured. Tariffs could be paid on merchandise here, and Melnibonéans could be hired to represent traders within Imrryr proper and the rest of the Empire, such as it remains.

Despite the magnificent, and gargantuan, architecture, the Foreign Quarter of Imrryr had a distinctly mundane

feel to it. The stores and restaurants clearly catered to foreigners. The shopkeepers were the dregs of Melnibonéan society, unable to find any sort of work which would not make them sully themselves by associating with foreign riff-raff. Furthermore, very few Melnibonéan goods were sold in the quarter. The area seemed to be entirely comprised of dealers in foreign merchandise which could be recycled out of Melniboné at the earliest possible convenience.

I had never really thought of the Melnibonéan people as particularly religious, but everywhere we turned there were reminders of the Gods of Chaos. Fanes to Arioch or temples to Xiombarg stood in nearly every street, it seemed. Idols to Checkalakh, Balo the Jester, Haborym, and others sit guard over many houses and shops. The eight pointed arrows of Chaos were also ubiquitous. Normally, this wouldn't have bothered me (if I had even noticed), but, unlike in Cadsandria, where these temples, statues and symbols would have been balanced by similar representations of the forces of Law, in Imrryr, there was no sign of Law, only Chaos.

Melnibonéan cuisine is, perhaps, the highest achievement in that art that the world has ever seen. The delicately spiced dishes bring together a mélange of flavours which the tongue can not separate into their original components. Heavily reliant on fish, I did not savor a single dish which only incorporated the flesh of a single animal. Perhaps my most memorable meal included an entrée that included fresh octopus, lobster, bass, and an unidentified meat with a slightly pork-like taste. It was all served in a lightly herbed wine sauce which managed to accent the various flavours. Amazingly, this dish came from a small sidewalk café near the harbour which seemed typical of such places, not one of Imrryr's finer restaurants.

That evening, my father managed to take me to a performance of the Imperial Ballet. The troupe was formed during the reign of Emperor Charid XXII, nearly nine hundred years ago, and exists solely for the entertainment of the emperor. About four hundred years ago, they were allowed to perform for the Melnibonéan nobility as long as the emperor granted permission for a specific performance. My father and I were among the few foreigners who were ever permitted to see one of their performances. They performed the ballet "The Legend of Emperor Hanolic and the Summoning of Haaashastaak" about the legendary emperor who first bound the Lord of Lizards to the Melnibonéan people. The ballet was danced by Melnibonéan slaves, who were quite proficient in their movements despite the drugs which must have been coursing through their bodies. The ballet ended with a syncopated slaughter of the company before Emperor Hanolic was able to force Haaashastaak to return to his home. Although I would normally have become violently ill by the smell of so much blood and the site of the eviscerations, the violence seemed so much in place in Imrryr and was done in such a casual manner, that I was able to accept it and put from my mind the deaths of real people.

Now might be as good a time as any to comment on the nature of the Melnibonéan people. They appear cold

and aloof, especially to humans, but I could tell that there is a restrained passion underneath the layers of protocol which seem to surround all of their interpersonal relationships, whether with a lover, a sibling, or a stranger.

Being a foreigner, I was not permitted to strike up a conversation with a Melnibonéan (although Neslok Pruk gave me permission to institute conversation when we were alone), and so I only had limited chances to get to know the subjects of Melniboné. Many, if not all of my conversations, were with merchants and vendors who only deigned stoop to speak to me because they saw an opportunity to part me from the silver I carried in my purse.

That almost makes them sound like the merchants of the Purple Towns, but while the Purple Towners see everyone as a potential payday, the Melnibonéans simply don't view humans as people. Given the choice between dealing with a Purple Town merchant and a Melnibonéan, you know that the merchant merely wants your money. He isn't considering how you would taste on his dinner table.

In fact, while Melnibonéans have been known to eat human flesh, which I suppose is not cannibalism as they are of a different race, they do so only under certain circumstances, although one of those circumstances is a high state dinner. Criminals whose deaths have been achieved by torture are not considered suitable for eating so the Melnibonéans keep farms of slaves for use when the need arrives. Apparently, slaves captured in combat are considered more desirable for this purpose than slaves bred in captivity or purchased on the slave market.

I do have some regrets about my stay in Imrryr. I never did get to meet Prince Yyrkoon or Princess Cymoril. At the time I was there, nobody outside of Melniboné knew of the existence of Emperor Sadric's son, at least not officially. I was also restrained in my explorations by the harsh Melnibonéan laws regarding the movement of foreigners in Imrryr. My vision of the city, while majestic, is based on the small area between the harbour and the Tower of Monshanjik, as well as the picnic on the Plains of Imrryr that Neslok Pruk had managed to arrange, a feat which I did not, at the time, fully appreciate.

Of course, now the Dreaming City is no more, just the ruins of those magnificent spires, destroyed by an army of humans led by Sadric's own son and successor. Although there was a great cruelty to the Melnibonéan people and empire, they were also capable of achieving great works of art and culture. Even long after the dissolution of their empire, they maintained a stabilizing influence on the Young Kingdoms, an influence which has now been destroyed and has allowed such upstarts as the Theocrat to impose his will on countries which were trying to exist in the world and build a new order. I have heard that Emperor Elric VIII was killed in the raid on Imrryr, and I have heard that he died shortly after in shame. I have also heard that he wanders the world, attempting to redeem himself for the act of destruction against his own people. I do not know which of these rumours is true, or if the truth lies somewhere else entirely, but every time I think

of the time I spent in Imrryr, I lament the destruction he wrought with so many subjects of the Young Kingdom, for nothing the like of Imrryr will ever rise again.

## ***Excerpt from "Colombia, Venezuela, and Brazil Travelog"***

**Mark Leeper**

2/17/01 Roxton Camp, Maple White Plateau

I woke up early as usual. I have had a hard time sleeping since we got to Brazil. I guess I like it cool at night and it is hot and humid. Back at the lodge they have air conditioning, but of course you cannot air condition a tent. Evelyn was still sleeping and I heard something that must have come to the river to drink in the morning. It sounded big and heavy. I pulled on my shirt, pants, and sandals and grabbed by camera but by the time I got to the water there was nothing to film. I am not sure what kind of animals we would get coming to drink. The Orinoco is slow and particularly muddy on this stretch and I am a little surprised that any animal can drink from it.

The Plateau is still about two hour's drive by jeep over what they call roads here. It probably would have taken the Challenger expedition something like three days to travel the distance, but they were on foot for this last part. Even so it is going to take a while. And the trip through the jungle on that road, though not really boring, is lacking in a lot of variety. Any animal who hears the jeep engine is long gone by the time we drive by so the best we can hope for is seeing a few birds, and then we have to look really quick. I imagine back in Challenger's time there was a lot more to see.

A lot of nasty things come out of this jungle. We are just a little way east of the Rio Negro. Ever read "Leiningen versus the Ants" by Carl Stephenson? I haven't seen any big ants, actually, but you do see smaller ones swarming over trees. I don't know if they ever really get army ant swarms like the ones Stephenson wrote about. Also the mosquitoes can be pretty bad.

Breakfast was scrambled eggs and fruit. There were a few pieces of toast, but they were burnt. They eggs were watery. Even the fruit which was good the last few days seemed a little overripe and mushy. But still I was looking forward to the day. I mean this is really the centerpiece of the whole trip. It doesn't matter how many times you have seen pictures and films of live dinosaurs, it is nothing like seeing the real things in front of you. And we get only one day. Actually with the jeep ride to and from the plateau and the cable ride up and down half the day is taken up with that. Evelyn was saying that the Brazilian government was going to build a small dormitory for travelers on the top of the plateau, but the conservation people decided to protest and the plans were quickly cancelled. Probably for the best. There is only one Maple White Plateau. Only one place that we can really see dinosaurs in their natural habitat left alive. I don't want to see anything happen to them. We were done and ready to go at 8:00, but the jeeps were late. Gil won't be going with us. I guess he has seen the top and

he doesn't want to pay the ticket for a ride up and down. We pay only one fee for the whole trip so do not see how much of it goes for the trip up the plateau, but I take it the Brazilian government gets a hefty chunk of change for everyone who goes up to the plateau.

At about 8:20 the two jeeps pulled up and Gil packed three of us in the back of each. There is a seat next to the driver, but I guess they don't want to share the front with a tourist. Evelyn and I got one jeep and Jim joined us. One of the couples has to be split up for the trip. I guess Jim doesn't mind. Actually since I will be working on my log it wouldn't bother me too much to be split up from Evelyn. You might wonder how I can write in my log on these—I hate to use the word “road”—wet sand traps. With a palmtop the shaking doesn't stop my typing.

Anyway, we have an Indian driving. We sit in the back. It is not really comfortable, but we didn't come to Brazil for comfort. I am going to see dinosaurs. Jeez. Just the thought of it. Actually it shouldn't be so hard to see them. I mean if the Brazil government would cooperate, they could clone them or something. Of course that would end their monopoly. I guess when you discover something like the Maple White Plateau in your own country you want to milk as much from it as you can. Brazil does not have that many big moneymaker industries. I guess let them benefit as much as they can from the one thing they have that nobody else in the world has.

The drive through the jungle was long and hot and dull. It was about 10:15 when Evelyn tapped my leg. Just over the trees you could see the Maple White Plateau. It looked like a lot of rock and not much green at the top. I was hoping to see a pterodactyl or two flying over. No such luck. It just looked like a lot of rock. I have to try and find out why this rock is like this. I mean geologically. It all looked like it was one piece from here. Actually it was all one piece at one time in its past. The Summerlee Column broke off as cleavage at one point. It looks like the only place that the rock was climbable and it broke off. That was how Challenger got up. He climbed Summerlee Column and used a tree to cross over to the main part of the plateau. That was also how he got stuck up there. I guess it is kind of pointless looking for where the tree fell. Everything is just so big.

I asked the driver if we would be seeing *Curupuri*. He thought that it was very funny that I used that word and he didn't tell me anything. Everybody back home knows the dinosaurs are called *Curupuri* and that is what the Indians call them. This guy had never even heard of the name. If the Indians don't call them *Curupuri*, who does? Where did we get that name for them? It is hard to know how much of this is publicity and how much is real. Anyway now the driver thinks that I am some sort of a jerk.

Honestly, *Curupuri* is supposed to be the Indian name for the dinosaurs. I don't think the drivers think very much of the tourists.

There is a road around the base of the plateau. The jungle ends as you get near the plateau and then it is sandy up to the rock. There is a road around the base of the plateau. None of this is paved, you understand, but it is marginally easier to drive on than to go straight across country. We got on the road and drove around. I got a better look at the Summerlee column. Somehow from a distance I could not get a good picture because the jungle was in the way. Now if I take a picture, I cannot get enough in the frame to make it look interesting. We pass a marker for James Colver Point. I don't know what it is or why they labeled it. Nobody is telling us about it, but somebody thought it was worth labeling. Evelyn says Colver doesn't sound like a Portuguese or Indian name.

As we drove around the base we start to see a little camp. Actually it looks like one tent and one shack. And there is a wooden structure that is the base of the cable car. The jeeps go around to the wooden structure. The drivers get out and talk to someone from the shack.

Evelyn, Jim and I get out to stretch our legs. Jim goes over to talk to Ellen. The two Toms seem to have come through the trip OK. Now the six of us are standing around talking. I am writing some notes into my palmtop. OK, now I am caught up to where we are. It is now just a minute after 11.

OK, it is now almost 9PM. We are back at Roxton Camp. So what was it like?

The guy who runs the cable car came over to us and told us to go ahead to the cable structure. A car takes four people and we can split up any way we want over two cars.

The two Toms come with Evelyn and me. Ellen and Jim got the other car to themselves. We got in. We talked and watched the ground drop away under us. I suppose I am a little afraid of heights. Particularly when you just have that cable holding you up and the ground is so far beneath. If you fall you just hit the side of the plateau a long way down. We talked to the Toms about Broadway plays of all things. Here we are in Brazil about to see dinosaurs and we are talking about Peter Schaffer and Bob Fosse and “The Phantom of the Opera.”

It seemed like a long time we were going up, but it probably wasn't more than 25 minutes. As long as we were talking I could keep my mind off of how high we really were. When the wind came up the car swung a little and I could feel it in my stomach. Anyway we got to the top. There are three men up at the top. If there were more I didn't see them. All of the people running the lift were Brazilian. I mean Portuguese-Brazilian. I was expecting to see some of the aborigines still working in this area, but I have seen none. I think all of them, or what is left of them, are in Rio. Maybe we will see some when we get there. We get there in about eight days.





We had to wait around at the top for about 15 minutes before the guide could take us around. While we waited I talked to Tom Harris about where we had been and where the two Toms had been. They said we would like Italy when we get there. I told them we are going to wait until we are old and tired before we see too many places with plumbing. Actually we are getting old and tired already.

The guide came to take us around. Some guide. She looked to be 18. Maybe 19. But she spoke English. A sort of English, I guess. We were going to walk around on the path and see dinosaurs. We were supposed to stay on the path. We were supposed to keep an eye on the jungle because some things do come out. I wish. She was selling caramel corn, of all things. Before we set out she wanted to know if any of us wanted to buy some. Somehow selling caramel corn seems a little strange when you are in dinosaur territory. It smelled good, or maybe a little cloying, but it was not what we would have wanted.

We followed the path and our first stop was the pterodactyl rookery. We saw it at a distance ahead. It looked almost like a tent made of chain-link fence. There was a sort of double door we went through to get inside. The smell was overpowering and had been since we could first see the rookery. I don't know if that is the smell of the animals themselves or excreta, but it really smelled bad. The biggest pterodactyls were pretty big. Maybe it was as big as a man and a wingspan maybe three times as long as a man. They didn't look very happy. The wings had slits cut in them, which must be a lot like clipping a bird's wings. There were smaller ones and several chicks. I would have expected the young ones to be a little cuter. I guess they are a little too thin and boney to be cute. They seemed a bit lethargic. I suppose they could have been drugged. To me they just looked depressed. One does not ask a pterodactyl why the long face? They are just born with long faces.

We left by the same double doors we came in by. Next on the tour was a microsoftus. Or is it two microsofti? (microsoftuses?) I was anxious to see this since it was one of the rarer and lesser known dinosaurs in Maple White Plateau. It was in a caged area with grass and they had walls around him. I guess he couldn't come out. This was one of the reasons we were supposed to watch the jungle. This little fellow wasn't known until maybe six years ago. Nobody had ever found fossils of them. I don't even know if they had found theropods this small. (A theropod walks on two legs like a tyrannosaurus.) He is a greenish color so he blended in with the jungle leaves and he was somewhat shy of people. They eat mostly insects and rodents our guide told us. He has like six boney fins coming out of his face. There are two rows of three going from the eyebrows to the snout. The nature programs show them very active, but these two animals sort of stood around dazed. These dinosaurs are all warm-blooded animals, so they should be active. We have tapes of them in the wild showing they are active. But these microsofti in the zoo mostly just stand around.

The pen with the apatosaurus was equally discouraging. At least here I could see and understand why. Hadn't noticed on the dinosaurs previously but this

one actually was hobbled. There were manacles chaining the front legs together. The disposition seems to be mild enough, but they are taking no chances that this thing is going to walk out on them. I think they do more than that. I think they drug them. Certainly the dinosaurs seemed to take very little interest in the people coming by. The films I had seen did not show them being so sedentary. It probably has something to do with their captivity.

The last we saw was the tyrannosaurus. I think this is their big attraction and they have only the one. Here too it did not move as I was expecting. It just sort of stood around. Thank goodness. Those teeth were as long as water glasses. He (she?) I could see had a manacle around his foot and a chain that acted like a tether. There was dried blood on the metal band. He looked kind of glassy-eyed. Each of the animals had a different smell and each was smelled disgusting in its own way. The pen needed a cleaning. The skin looks almost like army camouflage. It is green and brown. I guess it serves about the same purpose. If you looked at the head there was like a cloud of some small flying insect. The dinosaur didn't seem to notice. If it didn't blink its eyes every minute or so and breathe you would not have known it wasn't mechanical. He just seemed to be waiting or bored.

I wish they had some way for us to go into the jungle and see the dinosaurs that are not captive. That is probably too dangerous. They probably stay away from this end of the plateau anyway. They are a little shy of anything people do. This zoo is kind of a pitiful way of seeing these dinosaurs in captivity. These things were the Lords of the Earth. As big and as powerful as they look, they sort of evoke pity. Somehow this was not the emotion I was expecting from this part of the trip.

It was now about 3:50 and we had to start heading back. I think we were all kind of hungry, but caramel corn, which was all they had for sale, was not what we were in the mood for. The cable cars took the same 25 minutes to get down. Evelyn and I were in the lead car and Jim and Ellen and the two Toms were in the other. OK, so we had seen dinosaurs now with our own eyes. Somehow I felt a little ashamed.

Gil had packed some sandwiches in the jeeps. The same meat that we had for lunch yesterday. The grease had soaked into the bread. There were some bottles of warm Coke. The Coke was more welcome after standing around in the heat with only our canteens. The bottles were not easy to drink from as we went over those rocky, bumpy roads. The trip back might have been a little faster. We were going downhill more of the way. I think traveling a path you have already traveled just make it seem shorter. We got back to Roxton Camp about 6:30. We got washed up and the Indians laid a table for us. Roast chicken for dinner. Gil didn't even join us for dinner. I think he has his own food packed and frequently opts for that. Back at the tent we packed most of our stuff so we could get an early start in the morning. Evelyn read and I worked on my log. I still feel kind of down.

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