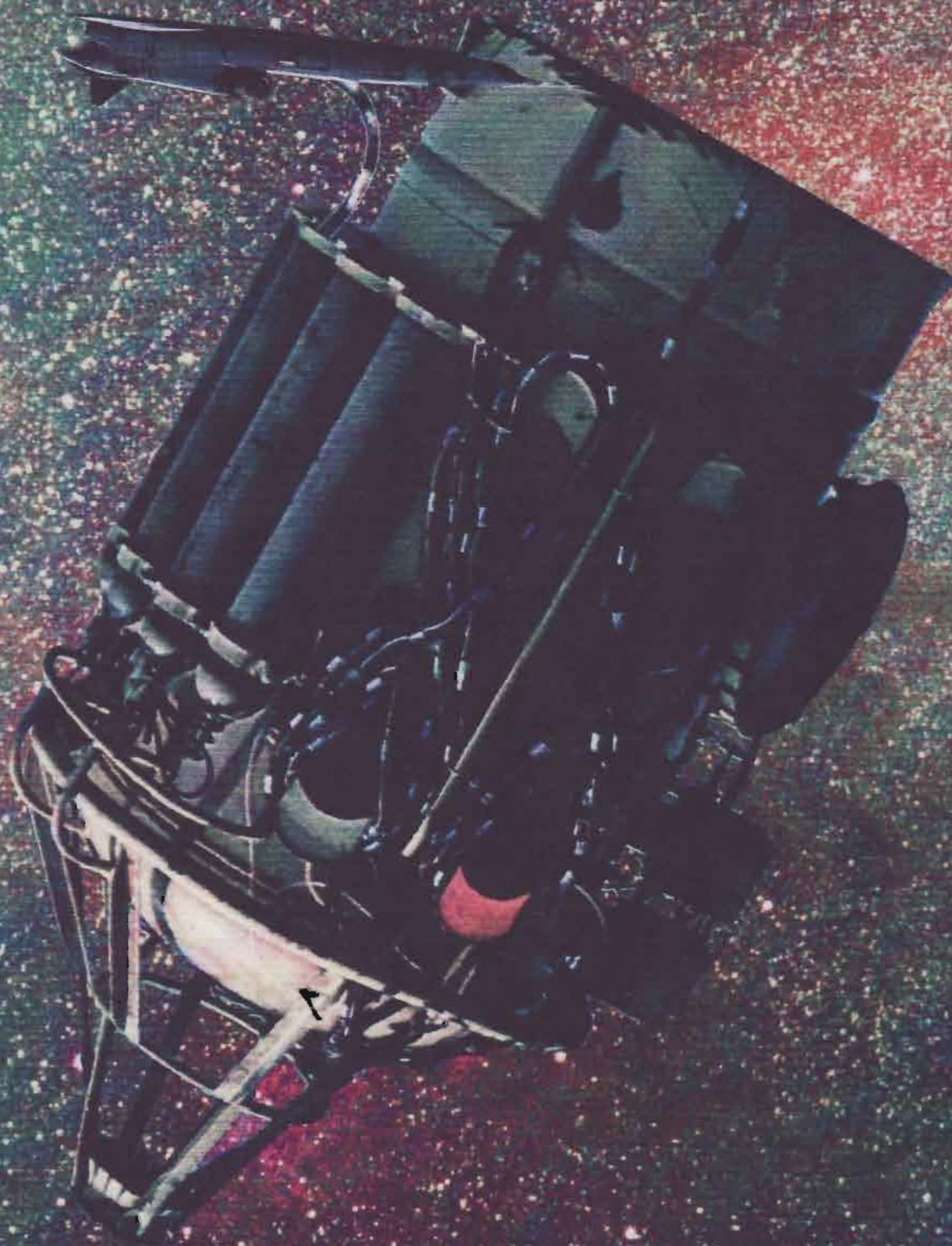


# The Reluctant Famulus

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# *The Reluctant Famulus* Late Spring, 2008 #65

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# The Reluctant Famulus

## Introduction

### Some Thoughts While Driving on I-75 (aka, the Michigan-Florida corridor)—and Elsewhere

Okay, folks: no genealogy crap this time around; not even mentions of strange traveling preachers or whatever. Nor will I inflict on you complaints about movies made from books. I'm feeling merciful and am sparing you, kind readers, from one of my several obsessions. I'll pause a moment to let the cheers die down.

I think I could hear some of those cheers even here in the wilds of north-eastern Kentucky.

As I think many others are doing, I find myself thinking about the cost of gasoline (among other things) and wondering how high it will go and when it will end. With the cost of fuel going up I find myself feeling sorry for the minimum (and certain sub-minimum) wage earners who for one reason or another rely on automobiles to get them to and from work. Gas prices must be very hard on them, forcing them to make some difficult choices. There are times that I, as I'm sure do many others, wish fuel prices would go down to a more reasonable level.

But I am realistic enough to know that's never going to happen. America has been fortunate in having had fuel prices lower than those in other countries for a long time. Inevitably that had to come to an end, for many reasons. We Americans can't escape that. With the quantity of available crude oil allegedly decreasing and eventually running out, the cost of gas will become even more dear. And, it seems, the big oil companies intend to milk that for all it's worth until the very end.

Judging from the the speeds I've seen the majority of drivers zoom along I-71, I-75, and I-65 and especially around major urban areas such as Cincinnati/Covington/Florence and Louisville, Dayton, Nashville, and Huntsville, and so on, those drivers seem to be unconcerned with the rising gas prices and the dwindling resources. Very few drive at the maximum posted speed and certainly not at

more reasonable, gas-saving speeds. They appear to feel those signs mean nothing at all, don't apply to them, or is one more thing to ignore. When I see that I can't help thinking that maybe that's the best way. Let these people drive in irresponsible, gas wasting way and hasten both the rise in gas prices and the end of crude oil from which to refine the gasoline. Let's reach the inevitable end and get it over with.

But then what will all these millions of drivers do? What will take the place of gasoline? I there are those working on alternative fuels but the end results seem so expensive and so far off and I don't recall seeing much in the way of news about the progress or success of any sort of replacement.



I know one of the alternatives already in use in a small way is gasoline mixed with ethanol in the proportion of 15% gasoline to 85% ethanol. The gasoline-ethanol mix is having a widespread effect that may not have been anticipated.

Ethanol manufactured from corn has driven up the price of corn, the price of milk and other dairy products (and other items, I suspect) by being diverted to the making of ethanol. I don't know how many ethanol-fueled vehicles there are on the roads but just imagine the impact if vehicles ran on pure ethanol and if millions (or even only hundreds of thousands) more people purchased and drove them. A bad situation made even worse. But even the use of 85% ethanol/gasoline probably hasn't really had that great an impact on slowing the decline of crude oil reserves.

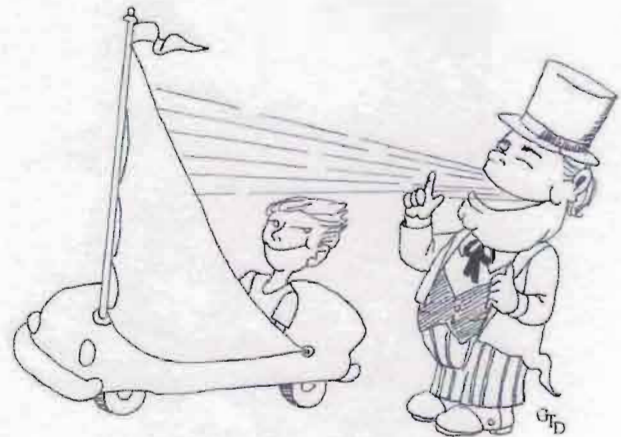


There are other possibilities, of course. Liquid hydrogen-powered vehicles. As soon as a simple and an economical way can be found to liquefy the hydrogen and safely store it in bulk and in tanks on vehicles. But if that ever happened it wouldn't surprise me a bit to find that somehow the increased use of hydrogen converted to a liquid would cause some sort of impact on the economy and prices of some sorts of other products. As well as on the environment in some way even if hydrogen is supposedly the most abundant element in the universe.

Gas/electric hybrid cars? Sure—as soon as better, more efficient storage batteries can be devised. Even then it seems unlikely that will slow down the vanishing of oil supplies to any major extent.

Electric cars that can be plugged in between uses? Sure—again, as soon as better, more efficient storage batteries can be devised. But then, think about it. With possibly millions of that sort of vehicle needing to be plugged in there is bound to be an impact on the electrical power supply and an increase in electricity rates. Probably more electric power plants will have to be built. But then how will they be powered to produce the electricity needed? That's got to have some sort of **really big** impact on the environment—wouldn't you think? Of course the former oil companies could become electric companies and still manage to make outrageous profits especially if their plants were devoted solely to producing electricity for vehicles.

emergency backups. But I imagine such vehicles are impossible.



The one alternative I think I favor is the solar powered vehicle with a battery backup for times there isn't enough sunlight to power the vehicle (on cloudy or rainy days or if someone wanted to drive somewhere at night). The big, obvious drawback here is the same as with the gas/electric and the electric cars: better, more efficient storage batteries. If that obstacle could be overcome and solar/battery-backup cars became the main form of transportation, I think the oil companies **might** be in big trouble after they no longer had petroleum supplies. I say "**might**" because noting is absolutely certain.

But it seems to me that with solar powered vehicles drivers should have a free, unlimited power source. Well, not truly unlimited in cosmic terms; eventually the sun will go nova and collapse and grow cold, according to astronomers. But in human terms it would be unlimited for as long as our species exists and how determined we are to exterminate ourselves. I could be mistaken but I can't see how the oil companies—or anyone else for that matter—could meter and charge for solar energy to power vehicles. But perhaps someone with greater intelligence than I possess might be able to answer that. At any rate, I'd like to think that solar-powered vehicles—if they ever became a reality—could spell the end of the big oil companies and their almost robber baron-like profits.

Of course, when the world does finally run out of petroleum as has been predicted, civilization could revert a hundred years or so to the use of horse-drawn vehicles. But then considering some scientist or expert claimed that the flatulence from cows was

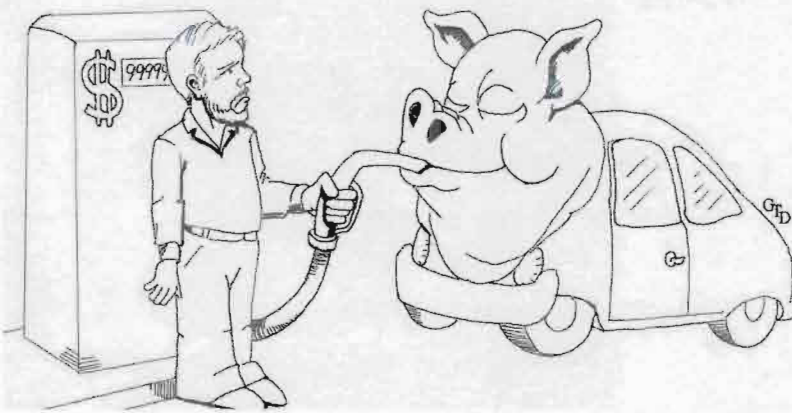


If it were possible to build vehicles that ran on—pardon the crude language—bullshit and empty promises then the politicians in Washington DC alone would provide and endless supply and those legislatures in the fifty states could provide



contributing to pollution and and a rise in greenhouse gases, what would the claim be with millions more horses taking the place of internal combustion engines?

Now, go ahead—tell me I’m indulging in a doomed fantasy. Even so, it’s a somewhat pleasant fantasy to contemplate.



With the way the economy—among other things—is, I worry more and more about how my children and their spouses and my grandchildren (we have 9 now; the youngest a little over a year old) are going to make it in the years ahead and especially what it will be like for them after my wife and I are gone. I hope the best for them but fear a future no better than the present and no more advanced. If our current generations don’t seriously start to change things for the better **now** and not at some indeterminate time in the future we will have done a great injustice and disservice to our grandchildren and their children especially. I’m sure there are many positive things we can be doing now and in the near future to avoid some sort of dystopian civilization that won’t have been their fault because we laid the groundwork for it. But the way we seem to like to bitch about unfair conditions without coming together and working to change them I’m just as afraid that’ll never happen.

Now, to leave that subject for the time being.

Normally I try to avoid any sort of talk of politics since that can lead to acrimony and bitter feelings but I can’t help noting the current—at this writing—presidential candidates. First, though, way back at the beginning, when there were hordes of candidates in both parties, I wasn’t very impressed with any of them on either side.

Now it’s down to McCain for the Republicans and Obama for the Democrats. I’m not convinced

despite all the “popular” support that any of them should be where they are. I have nothing against an African-American candidate or a female candidate had Hillary Clinton overtaken Obama and clinched it but I’m wondering now if Obama or Hilary should be the people to make the breakthrough. Too many voters seem to feel it’s time for a change but I’m not certain they’re fully ready for a change like this. Unfortunately, too many voters also feel that it’s Time there was no Republican president. They may be right. I’m not going to attempt to predict what sort of result there will be but after voting I’ll sit back and watch as events unfold and see exactly what comes to pass during the next president’s term. I really hope something good will result and maybe this country will be better off and maybe our image to the world will be much more respectable. I will say that it would not surprise me a bit if the next president served a single term for various reasons no matter what party he’s from.

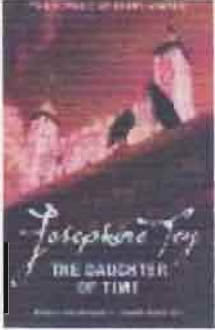
The preceding was pretty damned gloomy, wasn’t it? I need something less serious to talk about. In the meantime, lets get to the meat of this issue. ❁





# The Old Kit Bag #5: It's a Mystery to Me! Part 1

Bob Sabella



While I am not normally a particularly big fan of genre mysteries, I make occasional exceptions when the mystery is actually a small part of a larger framework, whether sfnal or historical fiction. So here are some brief reviews of 5 of my favorite historical mysteries by 3 different authors.

**Daughter of Time**, by Josephine Tey, is the story of a bedridden detective who sees a portrait of the badly-maligned British monarch Richard III and has trouble believing that a man who looks so deep and thoughtful could really have been the cold-hearted murderer who killed his two young nephews imprisoned in the Tower of London.

Thus begins several hundred pages of historical research combined with speculation on the part of the detective and his researcher associate. What they learn is fascinating indeed. Apparently Richard was the last Lancaster king who was killed in battle by Henry VII, the first Tudor king. The first history of Richard was written by Morton, a follower of Henry who was anxious to ingratiate himself to the king by rationalizing his seizing of the throne.

The most influential history of Richard was written by Thomas More shortly thereafter. More, chancellor during the reign of Tudor king Henry VIII, based his facts primarily on Morton's history. As a result, More's description of the horrific Richard became the standard reference for centuries. It also influenced Shakespeare who wrote his plays during the Tudor era, and who too realized the importance of satisfying his monarchs. His villainous image of Richard, based on More's history, has influenced generations even more so than More's history did.

According to Tey, Richard was a well-loved, fair and loving king who cared for the family and supporters of his brother Edward; Henry, however, was a tyrant who tried to kill or eliminate all the remaining Lancasters who were a threat to his legitimacy. While her detective never learns for sure, he considers it much more likely the young princes were killed during Henry's reign, not Richard's.

The evidence in favor of Tey's view of Richard is quite convincing in the book. At the time of Richard's supposed murders, there were so many other

heirs to the throne alive that it made no sense for Richard, a truly rational man, to kill the princes. Plus, upon seizing power, the Tudors issued many public statements intended to discredit Richard, but none of them mentioned anything about his supposed murder of the two young princes. Surely, the detective surmises, if such a horrendous deed did take place, that would have been one of their primary arguments against him.

At the end of the book Tey claims that after the Stuarts came to power, vindications of Richard were written, but Morton's, More's and Shakespeare's images were so ingrained in the public mind the truth was never able to change Richard's popular image. This was a fascinating book which not only sparked lots of thought on my part, but began some research on my own about Richard III, culminating in my writing a historical fantasy about the maligned king.

\*



Iain Pears is primarily known as a writer of genre mysteries about the art world, which are enjoyable but routine. However, several years ago he wrote two historical mysteries which were so good I selected both of them as my Book-of-the-Year in back-to-back years, which put him in the company of Roger Zelazny, Robert Silverberg, and Kim Stanley Robinson. Not bad.

**An Instance of the Fingerpost** has the basic premise that during the late 1600s a young Italian scholar named Marco da Cola travels to England during its post-Civil War Restoration to try to recover his father's business interests which were stolen by an associate. While there, da Cola resides in Oxford where he pursues his medical research into blood circulation under the sponsorship of chemist Robert Boyle, with associates such as a fellow doctor named John Locke who would become famous years later as a leading philosopher.

While at Oxford da Cola finds himself immersed in the typical arguments of that era such as Protestantism vs. Catholicism and ancient medical knowledge (based on Aristotle and Hippocrates) vs. modern scientific methods (as proposed by René Descartes and Francis Bacon). The first quarter of the book contains several philosophical



discussions which were fascinating reading and quite in keeping with the tenor of those late Renaissance times.

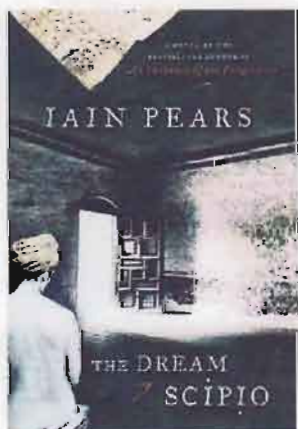
Da Cola also becomes involved in the investigation of a murder, the leading suspect being a young girl named Sarah Blundy whose mother is dying and whom da Cola is trying to save through the unproven and radical method of blood transfusions. As events unfold we are treated to a believable look at 17<sup>th</sup> century Restoration England, including life in a college town, a murder trial and subsequent hanging, and accepted medical practices as da Cola and an associate undergo a brief tour of the countryside where they treat patients as traveling physicians.

And all of this occupies only the first quarter of the book. Each subsequent section of the book is a 150-200 page narration by a different person who was a supporting character in da Cola's narration. People who would otherwise be mere spear-carriers become fully-rounded people themselves telling their version of the same events as in da Cola's tale. This is an aspect which most novels do not have: after we form impressions of those people based on their minor participation in da Cola's narration, we are then introduced to them in depth, as well as seeing their own impressions of da Cola and the other narrators.

**An Instance of the Fingerpost** was a wonderful book, from its intricate plot which unwound slowly in an absorbing and almost circular manner, to its well-rounded and intriguing cast of characters, to Pears' writing itself. While not beautiful writing per se, it was rich and deep, with every sentence adding to the depth of Restoration England. Gradually I felt drawn into the world and its inhabitants and truly understood their attitudes and beliefs.

\*

After reading **An Instance of the Fingerpost**, I anxiously awaited the paperback publication of his new novel **A Dream of Scipio**. The wait was well worthwhile, because this novel was every bit as fascinating and thought-provoking as its predecessor. The novel examines the similarities between three men living in France during particularly-trying times in that country's history:



Manlius is a rich agnostic during the waning years of the Roman Empire when barbarian tribes are invading France. The emperor has failed to halt the tribes' inroads, and people are dismantling many of their wealthy homes

to use the materials to build protective walls against the invading horde. Manlius decides the best way to protect his people is by becoming the area's bishop, since the Catholic Church is one of the few powerful organizations left. So he uses his influence to buy that position and we watch him try to defend France from the barbarians.

Olivier is a poet during the 14<sup>th</sup> century when France is experiencing the first signs of the Black Plague. He is a protégée of Cardinal Ceccani during the Avignon papacy and best friends with Pisano, an artist assigned to work in area churches. We watch Olivier and Ceccani struggle to protect their people against the plague, while Pisano strives to achieve renown as an artist.

Finally, Julien is a scholar during the 1930s when Nazism is sweeping across Europe. His best friend—although definitely not his lover—is a Jewish artist named Julia who is struggling as an impressionist painter. One of the highlights of the novel is a meeting between her and a very self-absorbed Picasso when he is still an unknown and she is a precocious ten-year old.

The connection between the three men, in addition to how each strives to defend France, is that Olivier is studying a philosophical work written by Manlius entitled **A Dream of Scipio**, while one of the historical figures Julien is studying is Olivier who later in his life apparently ran afoul of a rich merchant who ordered his tongue and hands cut off to prevent him from possibly writing or dictating poetry ever again.

Each segment of the novel has similarities to the other two: Manlius is protecting Avignon against the invasion of barbarians in the 4<sup>th</sup> century, Olivier against the Black Plague in the 14<sup>th</sup> century, and Julien against the Nazis in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Both Manlius and Julien are powerful Gaul / Frenchman who use their connections to cooperate with the Burgundians / Nazis, both putting the greater good of all citizens above that of a few. But the connection between the three men is only a small part of the novel's emphasis. Each parallel segment is a rich character study interwoven with a complex plot which races to a thrilling conclusion even as the characters themselves are deepening and becoming fully-revealed to the reader.

Besides being successful as both a character study and a well-plotted page-turner, **A Dream of Scipio** is also a strongly-philosophical book in which Pears has gone to great lengths to investigate the nature of civilization and whether the good of the many overrules the rights of the few. Pears' depiction of all three historical eras was wonderful, providing the type of sense of wonder that great historical fiction strives to do, although succeeding all too seldom. I was able to visualize all three eras and felt drawn into them easily, a tribute to Pears' talents as a writer.





## “Too Many Words”

a column  
by Gene Stewart

In a bookstore, I spotted a few books I might like. I picked them up, leafed through them, then put them back down. I'm not going to wade into these, I thought. They'll waste my time.

Oh, the covers worked. Writers whose work I liked had written them. They were within today's steep but average costs. So what did those books have that put me off them?

Too many words.

Admittedly, some readers want to lose themselves in dense prose. I don't. For me, page density counts. I'm old enough to see the cliff's edge coming. Every book I read now means dozens I won't be able to. I don't have the time or patience to drift through a delta of meandering writing. White water rapids, not swamps, draw me.

Think twice, write once. If fiction is information control, presenting that information well improves fiction. Too many ramble toward a point. Others have none. Talk about filler, some pile on details as if to smother the dialogue.

“For the love of god, Montresor.”

“No. For the love of reading, Fortunato.”

Ever heard a person butcher a joke? Almost always it is because they poorly present the information needed to get the punch line or load it with digressions that weakened the impact.

Same with fiction.

So we're not just speaking of rambling sentences, we are also addressing extraneous content. Movies are notorious for offering only a part of the novel they are supposedly based on. That's because they can usually drop various subplots, or extract them, in order to present a

single story line. Reader's Digest Condensed movies, in other words.

And yes, some types of fiction call for a different kind of writing. One size does not fit all.

Stories set in imagined worlds demand more description, for example. But how it is handled determines whether it is static and dull or active and compelling.

It boils down to how well a writer has thought out phrasing and scene. Be concise is not just Strunk & White's greatest hit. It's damned good advice and harder to accomplish than short declarative sentences and lots of dialogue might make it seem.

First, don't bore. Kate Elliot said it well in her Manifesto: Don't Bore Me.

Elmore Leonard advises writers to leave out the parts people skip over. They like dialogue and action and hate description and woolgathering.

Hemingway said, Write simply but don't think that way. Present complex things simply. Be plain and direct.

No fancy stuff, as Mary, Queen of Scots, should perhaps have said.

Heinlein applied mainstream methods to presenting science fiction images. A famous example is: The door irised. Elegant image demonstrated through action, without a lot of explanation.

But it is not just lazy thinking and sloppy writing waving me off.

Publishers cause some over writing. Mss must be 90,000 - 100,000 words. That's between 300 - 350 pp. Why? To fit the right number of books into standard shipping boxes. It's that crass



and that Procrustean.

In shorter forms, it has been observed that the novella is the perfect length for science fiction. It allows for a single subplot, for depth, yet limits one to a single overarching concept. What better model for presenting the literature of ideas? And yet publishers have disdained them. Only a handful can fit into an anthology or collection, they complain. And magazine publishers often dislike trusting so high a percentage of their pages to a single writer or work each issue.

And so the bloat spreads.

Insecurity causes some, too. Writers often hem and haw before beginning a story. They will also use three metaphors, or adjectives, or ways of putting something rather than picking the best and lobbing off the rest.

Just like that, yes.

I'm not advocating outlines. For me, detailed outlines kill the urge to write a story. It's better to discover along the way how things work out. Although it helps to know where you're heading.

Consider a ship's log. It records the main events of a voyage briefly. It mentions the port the ship starts at, the one it is aiming for, and then captures what ever happens along the unpredictable way clearly, simply, concisely. This is even where we get the term plot.

I'm talking about presentation. Some writers use as few words as possible to get their story across. Others seem to use as many as possible. Most fall in between according to skill.

Weeding out repetition, digression, and unfocused passages can only help, though. You needn't cut to the bone all the time; voice and tone count, too. Some stories do better with a certain amount of reader hand-holding. Others work as stark prose poetry. It depends on each story.

At the store I asked myself, Do I want to read this right now? If yes, that's a good sign. It doesn't necessarily mean I will read it at once, but I'd want to every time I pick up the book.

Much better than those huge tomes we buy from the bargain tables just so we have them. Books like Gray's Anatomy, perhaps, or the Malleus Maleficarum.

I've stopped buying such books. Now I buy only those I want to read right now. Only those I know will fascinate me. Only those I can't stop reading as I leaf through.

The ones with just the right number and amount of words. Yes, I've been discussing both quantity and quality of words.

So how many words are too many and how many are just enough?

How long is a piece of rope?





Remove old tub... install new one...  
Whirlpool was/is like a dream...no  
I mean it- it's really all a dream!

# So this is not the way . . .

Stage: the second (see previous issue)

After two years of saving, I finally went ahead and had a whirlpool bath

installed to help relax my back muscles and reduce back pain. I guess I ought to amend that to say *almost* had a whirlpool bath installed. I have had chronic back pain for about 15 years—from the moment I tried to keep from dropping a 96 pound dog when she wiggled (a collie named *Thomasin* if anyone wonders). I had picked her up and was stepping onto a scale to get her weight. My boss was too cheap to buy a walk on scale, but that is another story. *Thoinasin* wiggled and I twisted to keep from dropping her—instant back pain that has not stopped since. Essentially it is similar to have a lot of muscles in spasm all the time.

Over the years I finally managed to get a diagnosis. It happens to be the same one I came up with after some reading, but I had to locate a doctor familiar enough with *fibromyalgia* and its lesser cousin *myo-fascial pain syndrome* to put it in writing acceptable to the medical community. It did not make any difference to be able to label the pain, but I felt it was a small triumph. *Myofascial pain syndrome* it is. Back to the incident at hand. I have found things feel better after soaking in the sauna or a really hot shower, so I figured a nice whirlpool bath . . .

Any construction always takes longer to complete and is more expensive than the original plan. The two day job turned into five days. The existing tiles cracked and there was no way to match them. The existing showerhead broke off and . . . You get the picture. Finally, on the Friday before Christmas, the contractor came by to make the finishing touches. He told me to wait 24 hours before trying it out—so the materials could dry. Enjoy!

Ah yes— I planned it all out: putting aside three hours Saturday afternoon to turn into a prune. I got my 4 months old CD player (I use it when I mow the lawn) and figured I could just

Sheryl Birkhead

close my eyes listen to library books on “tape” as I soaked up the warmth. Just in case, I had a Net-flix DVD and my last year’s Christmas gift to me of a portable player. I thought I was all set. Got out big fluffy towels; re-read the directions; filled the tube as directed, got in—ahhhhhh. Waited until the water was above the jets. Ready, (close eyes, relax) set ... go! Pushed the button—nothing.

Sigh. Pushed the button again, multiple times. I just must not know how to push the button correctly. I kept button pushing until I had to accept the fact that absolutely nothing was going to happen. There went the happy expectations. I grabbed the towel and in getting *out* of the (deep) tub managed to dump, the cd player in.

Agh!! I hauled the player out and tried to drain it dry.... Of course now it wouldn’t work either. The directions say not to get it wet. I guess they meant it. I gave up and looked at the nice warm, deep, *unmoving* water and had a good cry.

Of course crying doesn’t actually solve anything, but I was so blasted frustrated! I did the only thing I knew to do and went down to the basement to check the electric panel to see if it was something simple. Nope. In vain hope I tripped and re-set all the circuit breakers ... nada, zero, zip. Well, it was worth a try.

So today the contractor came back. Sigh. The electrician had installed the electrical outlets (no guide in the booklet as to where; just within 24” of the tub so it is not his fault) directly against the motor so it cannot be plugged in. Even if it could be plugged in, the motor would not work. That was kinda the whole point to the safety circuits. The plumber, following the instruction book, had merely checked that the water drained correctly, so it was not his fault either. If you are keeping count, I have now run out of people to blame. Because this all happened on a Saturday, I had to wait until Monday to make some phone calls.



Now I wait to see what happen\$ next. Of course the original project used up more than the original budget. The contractor also found a leak in one of the jets which had not been caught before this whole thing was considered finished. It appears that the installation book did not direct anyone to actually check.

Right now it looks as if the electrician, the manufacturer, perhaps the plumber, of course the contractor, and maybe a manufacturer's representative will have to get involved. Another sigh. I just hope it can actually be made to work.

They had to chop out the original tub and actually set this new one in concrete... If it has to



come out, I have absolutely no idea how much damage it will cause and how much it will cost!! I will be replacing that cd player too—collateral damage (sic).

*(Update. Contractor just called. The manufacturer will be contacting me in the next few days to set up a time to have a representative come out and take a look. Oh goodie- so this is now going to drag on and on and I have to re-schedule stuff to be here and . . . Would anyone care to place bets about the date or even if the tub works?)*

Okay—you can pinch me now and I'll wake up. I must really be floating and sleeping in this nice warm whirlpool bath. Stay tuned to your local channel for the next episode . . .





# LABORATORY ADVENTURES III. A MOVING EXPERIENCE

by Alfred D. Byrd

Some years ago the professor for whom I work at the University of Kentucky decided to start a service center—a laboratory that runs procedures for other researchers for pay. The service that he decided to provide was DNA sequencing. Thus he founded the Advanced Genetics Technology Center. The manager that he hired chose this name cleverly to use the abbreviations of the four bases that form DNA — A, G, T, and C. Transferred to AGTC, I spent my days for several years on servicing and running different makes and models of DNA analyzers.



DNA sequencing has been an adventure in itself, but today's story is on facilities, not procedures. The laboratory where AGTC set up shop was in an agricultural-research building (Ag North) that had been state of the art in the Sixties, but had not aged well by the new millennium. The lab would have made a respectable-sized living room for a lower middle-class family of four, but was minuscule for four full-sized DNA analyzers, three PCR machines, a desk for the manager, an extra computer bench, a freezer, a refrigerator, shelving for dry chemicals and kits, and wet benches for me and for sometimes four or five clients setting up reactions. Elbows met other elbows; tempers frayed. It astounds me that no one ever threw DNA into someone else's face.

Worse than space, however, was fly ash. Ag North lay downwind of a coal-burning power plant for the university's medical center. The air intakes atop Ag North took in particulates from the power plant and redistributed them throughout Ag North's labs. For many years those of us who worked in them had not noticed the particulates, though who knows what they did to research, not to mention researchers? When the new DNA analyzers came on line, however, fly ash, penetrating their every crevice, insulated what should not have been insulated, so that what should have conducted did not conduct. Analyzers went down, service engineers were called in, results were not reported, and tempers frayed further.

AGTC's manager waged heroic war on fly ash. He at first covered all of the lab's ventilation ducts with multiple layers of cheesecloth, which darkened alarmingly quickly, then with HEPA filters cut to fit. He also put gaskets around the lab door and arranged with Physical Plant to over-pressurize the room to keep good air in, bad air out. It became a struggle to get into or out of the room. Sealed door, covered ducts, and over-pressurization just increased the lab workers' claustrophobia. Tempers . . .

Thus, AGTC rejoiced at news that the University planned to build a new Plant Sciences building where AGTC could move into enlarged facilities that it could design itself. The professor's main research group would move to the new building, too. I got drafted into measuring equipment, making scale-model cutouts of it, and moving the cutouts around on grids of hypothetical rooms, one set of them for AGTC and another for the research group. Hope grew as it looked as if the new building would have plenty of room for both equipment and personnel. Architects in meetings with researchers made glowing promises to meet researchers' needs. Both AGTC and the research group would enter, as the Captain proclaimed in the immortal episode of Dr. Who, "*The Pirate Planet*," "a new golden age of prosperity!"





The great thing about our new DNA lab is that it's bigger on the inside than it is on the outside!

As construction of Plant Sciences began, researchers learned how much attention architects pay to them. The first sign that the golden age might consist of iron pyrite came when new sidewalks were poured. At the old building researchers had sometimes had to take reagents, glassware, or equipment by cart to other research buildings or greenhouses. Sadly for fragile items, the old building's builders had built its sidewalks of brick. Rattling of items atop carts, and crashes as items fell off of carts, drew ears far around. Those of us helping design the new building begged its architects, "Don't make sidewalks of brick! We need a smooth surface for carts." In fairness to the architects, they heeded our plea not to build sidewalks of brick. Instead, they built sidewalks of aggregate.

(A building contractor to whom I told this story laughed his head off at the word "aggregate." To the constructionally challenged, let me explain that aggregate is coarsely ground stone in a matrix that gives it a raised, durable, stucco-like texture. In terms of our need of sidewalks, we had gone out of the frying pan into the fire.)

Next we learned of the incredible shrinking freight elevator. We had asked for, and the new building's initial blueprints held, an elevator large enough for the largest piece of lab equipment that we foresaw would be installed on the new building's upper floors. Soon came word that as a cost-cutting measure the builders had replaced the requested freight elevator with one barely larger than the passenger elevator and certainly too small to hold

large equipment. Rumors of how we would get the major equipment into place on the upper floors flew. Favorite theories were lifting equipment into the building by crane and sliding equipment up inclined planes made by covering with plywood the large staircase at one end of the building.

(All right, the favorite theory was that graduate students would carry equipment upstairs on their shoulders. OSHA, however, would have had its say on that activity.)

We would wait long to learn the results of the shrinking freight elevator. The move to Plant Sciences, at first planned for September, slipped to February. We had visions of moving in snow or in one of central Kentucky's deadly ice storms. In the end February became May. This has its own set of problems (torrential thunderstorms and a pollen count that makes the Bluegrass the earth's Allergy Central), but at least no snow or ice. It has been said of Kentucky's weather, "If you don't like it, wait five minutes. You won't like it then, either, but at least it'll be different!"

Came May we learned how major equipment would reach upper floors. The builders left open the large staircase and lifted each piece of major equipment on a scissors jack to an appropriate landing. From this, hydraulically powered dollies wheeled the equipment to its destination. It became a treat to watch one's cryogenic freezer or ultraspeed centrifuge ride the scissors jack. Pessimists that we were, however, we wondered how we would get new pieces of major equipment into, or antiquated pieces of major equipment out of, the building, once the staircase's wall was finished. To this day we await an answer to this question.

(Again, OSHA could rain on the parade of the popular solution of cutting outdated equipment into freight-elevator-sized chunks with chainsaws.)

Moving minor equipment and supplies became more of an adventure than moving major equipment had been. To ensure that the move of small items would go smoothly, the professor had his other technician and me go to the new building, measure every inch of cabinet, drawer, and bench space, and allocate every inch to an appropriate person or thing so that everyone would know beforehand where every item went. Having made a plan that could have landed a crew on Mars, the other technician and I presented the plan to the research group. In the lab meeting the post-doctoral and graduate students



changed almost every detail of the plan. "No plan survives contact with the enemy" has nothing on "no plan survives contact with post-docs and grad students." Maybe the saying should go, "No plan survives."

The move let us dispose of the clutter of decades. The other technician and I filled out mounds of paperwork to get rid of antiquated items tagged with University identification numbers, or of chemicals that had a health, flammability, or reactivity warning in their fire diamonds. Untagged items, however, we could just put onto a bench outside the lab's door for other research groups to pick over. We took some items from other research groups' discard benches, but, as things would turn out, it truly was more blessed to give than to receive. I also got to pour or wash down the sink liquids or powders that bore no warnings. Getting too caught up in the joy of discarding, I unwittingly poured down the drain two kilograms of powdered gelatin. It took me most of an afternoon to unclog drains.

Passing over the Mystery of the Unknown Inspector and the Mystery of the Missing Chemicals, tales with no endings, I pass on to moving in. Reaching the new building, we learned that the freight elevator was not the sole item that had changed in size. Somehow, every item measured in the old building had enlarged; every space measured in the new building, shrunk. We had to re-revise on the spot the revised space-allocation plan.

Tempers. . .

At last the move ended. We began to adapt to the new building. Adaptation was not without adventure in itself. Passing over the Case of the Alternately Failing Elevators, the Case of the Weekly Fire Drills, and the Case of the Office That Is Really a Laboratory, I pass on to the Case of the Big-Bang Theory. Every once in a while we heard a big bang towards the building's roof. Whenever we heard the bang, it became a Herculean task to open doors to the outside, as a mighty wind rushing into the building held them shut. Small women had to wait for large persons to come open the doors for them. I myself marveled at my not being crushed in doors after big bangs. These were due to the building's ventilation's reversing, creating an under-pressure indoors that, judge by its effects on my sinuses, was like taking an express elevator from Lexington to Denver.

In time all of the new building's problems were solved, or at least grew tolerable. The new building became home to me and my colleagues. Thus, I trembled when, not long ago, my professor and AGTC's latest manager told me that the University plans to build a new, state-of-the-art research facility whither AGTC and the research group can move. The professor and the manager are taking measurements and meeting with architects . . .

If only luck delays the move until I can take early retirement. ❄





# Pirate Freedom

Gene Wolfe

Tor Books, 2007, 320 pages (including a glossary)

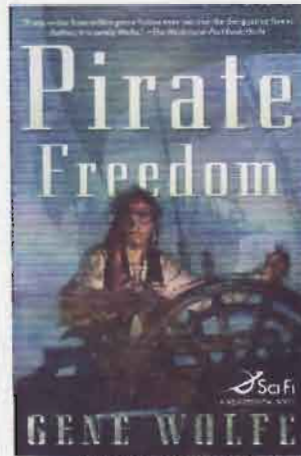
Reviewed by Tom (not a pirate) Sadler

Everything you wanted to know about pirates—and then some. No, seriously, the novel does include some interesting information on real pirates, not the movie kind. An aside before I continue: I must apologize to Gene Wolfe for taking so long to publish a review of this novel. I could plead all sorts of things, none of which would stand up in court or under close scrutiny. But I am sorry about not being timely. Now, on to my impressions of the book.

Father Christopher is a parish priest striving to be good at his vocation and true to his training and faith but he has an unusual past life, one that goes back some three hundred years or so. I imagine some of you who receive this fanzine have already read the book and know what that past is. Father Chris, as he is called, was a pirate centuries before he was born, and a bold, bloodthirsty (Is there any other kind?) one. That Chris is a marked contrast to the pious and humble (or as pious and humble as he can manage, and he tries hard to be) man of God.

The book starts out in the present with Father Chris telling of a conversation he had with a man whose confession he received and to whom he in turn made a confession. Father Chris provides more detail to the man. The confessor desires more details about the events surrounding Father Chris' confession but the priest puts him off with a promise to write it all down and mail it to the man at some time "when it could do no more harm".

After the visitor leaves, Father Chris spends some time thinking about what he told the man. He resolves afterwards to write it all down. And so unfolds the story of Father Chris' other life. His tale begins when he was 10 years old and moved with his father to Havana, Cuba (Neither Chris' last name nor his nationality are mentioned but aren't all that important.) where Chris' father plans to open a casino. Around the same time some monks opened a monastery in which they hoped to operate a boarding school. After a few years, Chris' father sends him there. A few years later the monks gave up the idea and released their charges to the pupils' parents. All, that is, except for Chris, whose father never came to



take him back. And so Chris became a novice. He studied hard and learned all the that the monks had to teach: such as Astronomy, mathematics, and languages, among them Spanish, Latin, French, and Italian. Eventually his novitiate came to an end and he needed to choose whether or not to continue and take his vows.

Chris decides to leave the monastery for a while, visit his father and talk things over. Almost immediately, after informing the Novice Master he leaves the monastery. But after passing through the gate and having gone only a short distance Chris discovers something's not quite right. And this is a part that is vague and never really explained. By the time he reaches Havana he discovers he's no longer in the world and time with which he was familiar. Somehow he has been transported back to the 1600s. This abrupt transition bothered me somewhat. Then I remembered reading allegedly true stories of people mysteriously disappearing in plain sight of others. As, for example, the farmer who purportedly started across his field while his wife and son and a couple of neighbors were watching—and vanished, never to be found. There was never any explanation given as to how it had happened. Remembering those tales I accepted the unexplained crossing into the past, if somewhat reluctantly.

Chris goes in search of his father's house but finds nothing there and comes away puzzled by what has happened. Faced with the unexpected he must cope as best as he can. His most immediate need is to find something to eat and so he steals some bread and later finds a safe hiding place and settles down for the night. The next day he steals a roast chicken. Afterward, he ponders on what to do and where to go. He decides that though the monastery would be a safe and secure place he really had no freedom there compared to the world outside the monastery walls and chooses not to go back.

He spends several days trying to learn about the Havana he once knew and about his father and the casino but with no success. Accepting the fact that what he seeks is not there and knowing he can't continue stealing, even to feed himself, he sets about to find work. His search for work goes no better than



the other for his father. Until he meets a man he refers to only as Señor and who convinces Chris to sign aboard a ship. And that begins his career as a pirate and a privateer despite early on having been sodomized by some of the Spanish sailors aboard the ship on which he first signs.

Chris is a fast learner and, as is the case with most if not all of Gene Wolfe's protagonists, is pragmatic about the conditions in which he finds himself and adapts to the circumstances as best he can. He makes friends easily—as well as enemies. Because of his adaptability and his education in the monastery he quickly rises in the pirate world.

Through the adventures of Father Chris, Gene Wolfe shows us the world of “real” pirates, not the movie and TV kind and the reader learns about the various kinds of sailing ships and rigging, weaponry and battles at sea. We also learn about the way pirates deal with the treasure and loot they acquire. As an aside, by coincidence I had recently read the biography *John Paul Jones, subtitled A Sailor's Biography* by Samuel Eliot Morison (originally published in 1959). It's an interesting book about the life of one of the American Revolution's naval heroes. I learned some of what Gene Wolfe passed along in *Pirate Freedom* about ships and naval warfare and about the way privateers deal with the prizes they acquired along the way. It's a somewhat complicated process of apportionment of the proceeds among the victorious officers and crew and I imagine some of the sailors ended up feeling as if they had been cheated somehow.

But back to *Pirate Freedom*. Chris moves from ship to ship, increasing his reputation and standing along the way. Again, as with so many of Gene Wolfe's protagonists, Chris easily manages to impress and make friends with one particularly important pirate who takes such a liking to Chris that he gives him a ship of his own and makes him a partner of sorts. Which brings up one of the “problems” I have with Gene Wolfe's major characters: the ease with which they impress people, make friends and allies and so on. That and Chris's finding, falling in love with, and marrying a woman who is scary in a way with her extreme possessiveness toward Chris and her willingness to kill anyone who gets between her and him and/or die in the process. There is also the way, after their first sexual encounter and especially after their marriage, they spend as much time as they can making love

anywhere they can. I'm no prude by any means, and love-making is a part of life but I found myself wondering that all their dalliances didn't get in the way of Chris's duties and responsibilities as a pirate.

Then I remind myself that this is fiction, after all—and fantasy at that. To me, fiction (even so-called mainstream) is, by its very nature, about something that isn't real, has never happened before, and may never happen. So, with certain constraints, fiction doesn't have to accurately and faithfully mirror “real life”. Also, fiction—and not just fantasy or science fiction—requires the reader's “suspension of disbelief” and acceptance of what she or he reads. So I shoved my personal disbelief out of the way and simply enjoyed the tale being told.

Chris's story alternates between his “current” life as a priest and his long ago life as a pirate, which profession he willingly embraced and at which he became successful. Those two lives are compared and contrasted and it becomes obvious which “Father” Chris prefers more. The pirate's life, though perhaps undesirable to most people, has its ups and downs, its successes and failures and, to Chris, more attractions than his life as a priest. Most important of all to Chris is the freedom he enjoyed. Though, of course, even a pirate isn't totally free: he is bound by whatever rules and regulations govern pirates in general, their codes of honor and conduct, by his allegiance and obligations to his crew and to his wife, and to whatever personal restrictions he places on himself. But he freely chose to continue on the course of being a pirate and finding love (and sex in, apparently, more than satisfactory quantities) and in spite of the unpleasant aspects to which he desires to return.

My little indiosyncratic quibbles aside, *Pirate Freedom* is a good book and worth reading. It may even be a good introduction to Gene Wolfe's fiction for those unfamiliar with his writing. It has all the usual Wolfe touches but in a smaller package than many of his complicated novels. Some readers may think 320 pages are a lot but for someone like me who enjoys diving into a big, fat novel the “ride” was over before I was ready for it to end. In spite of alternating between the two “worlds” of Father Chris the book is pretty straightforward and moves along easily. I doubt that a competent reader would feel overwhelmed and out of his or her depth. It's a nice addition to my Gene Wolfe collection, anyway, and all in all I'm not disappointed in it. ❁



# The Letters

There are not, unfortunately, many letters of comment this time around. My fault entirely for having failed to do a better job with the past few issues. I have, over the past several years been sadly lax and neglectful of TRF, and with no good reasons. I feel guilty about that and so, with this issue, Number 65, have tried improve the fanzine and maybe make it at least a little like it was before. With your understanding and help, good readers, maybe I can reach the goal of a *Reluctant Famulus* like the ones of the past—though perhaps not on quite a grand scale as some issues had become. I'm going to work hard at it anyway because those faithful readers who have stuck with me through it all deserve better. And maybe some of the others will feel compelled to respond in some small ways at least.

(even peripheral?) experience with the tornado of a few months ago? Ah, Mother Nature can be awesome.

I find *Netflix* really fits my movie going needs. I don't mind it if I do not see a movie just as it is released; or if I do, then I go see that one rare movie and pay full price. With the mail order movies I also have access to quite a few television series—and not just those of the US—so I can see the cable stuff—just a few years late.

Wow—where does *Bob Sabella* find time to write anything for anyone, other than in his own zines?!! He has a busy life and then there is his pubbing schedule and . . . Sigh, makes the rest of us mere mortals a bit envious!

I believe *Branson* is hoping to have orbital flights for the public (well, the **wealthy** public) in a few years. They also are trying to get (west coast I believe, but am not sure) few hour flights directly to *Australia*, go straight up in a hurry, scoot over, and then straight down. Sounds do-able. Might not be the sf world we all envisioned, but . . . Not that the actual technology is totally similar but take a look at *Star Trek* communicators and then at the tiny flip open cell phones (granted, you still have to talk into them and not at them, but . . .). Yeah, sf is in our daily lives in ways that arrived so stealthily that a lot of us never noticed it. Of course there are other far more obvious (but not as much affecting each of us) things such as genetic engineering, cloning, organ transplants . . . But, having said all that, I totally agree with you. What happened to the science fiction world I was promised for the year 2000? Um— depending on which world you envision I hope/fear we'll get there—eventually. Unfortunately, most of what I see shows the negative impact of humanity on our world, solely for our own comfort (so what else is new?) and Mother Nature doesn't always take kindly to our travesties.

I always enjoyed the *Retief* stories, just as I have enjoyed the *Miles V* stories. Humor is under-rated, especially when well done!

Interesting to note that I actually have a *Courier* typewriter font on my computer. The next time I actually “write” a letter (as opposed to a loc), I think I will try that font and see if it really does look like

I'm as happy as a clam  
to be writing to you!

From:  
Sheryl Birkhead  
25509 Jonnie Court  
Gaithersburg, MD 20882

March 22, 2008

Dear tRFers,

Nothing like pushing the envelope for tardiness, but this is the proverbial better late than never. I am guessing that the Hugo nominations will out and about fairly soon, So, in anticipation of that—my heartiest congratulations to all who made the short list!

I am not a critical writer so whenever I have been pushed to actually write something about a book I have read, the compromise has been to call my bit an appreciation. That way readers are forewarned and I feel a bit better about my lack of dissection skills with a book I've read. That's just the way I have handled my personal assessment of a book and readers can take it for what it is worth with the label.

My brother lives in Bardstown, KY, which is “relatively” close to your area. So... did you have any



the ole typer is back. Progress?

Ah, while I am working on this I am also watching *Michael Moore's Sicko*—not that what it has to show will be that much of a surprise. I used to have my health insurance through my professional association. When the premiums—just for me—reached \$11,000 three years ago, I went in search of other insurance. The insurance I have now has uh—er—daily (whaaa?) maximums, quarterly maximums, etc but with the premium being almost 1/3 of the previous coverage, I have to rack up a lot of bills to come out on the short end. I wish I had prescription and dental coverage, but . . . I mention this as I read *Joseph Major's* comments about working as long as there are health problems . . .

Oh, about the surname—yes, my father's family is from Kentucky and there is a Larry—but as a cousin—last name **not** *Birkhead*. Since my last name is not a common one, I would have to speculate we are related, but not in any way I actually know. I tried, several times, to see if I could locate the Larry Birkhead and see if there was any way to back track and locate his family tree. It was far too much like work and I quickly gave up. So, for the time being: probably related, but not so you would notice it!

Ah your moving saga! When I moved from the farm I only moved about 5 miles (solely as the crow flies!). I rented a *POD* or whatever they call them. This was delivered to the farm and then, at my “leisure” I proceeded to fill it from top to bottom. Once filled, I called the rental company and they came and took it back to wherever good little *PODS* go. Then, I called a local moving company and paid them to move the small amount of large items I had (and they still managed to bash in a part of the front door of the new house with one of the two chairs I had them move. When I asked about the “dent” in the wood the owner said, “no problem, just steam it out”. I have never yet figured out how one steams out a dent from a heavy, wooden, painted door. Then, again, at my leisure, I called the *POD* company after a few months rental—and they delivered the full *POD* to the driveway of the new address and I unpacked it. All in all, about the cheapest way I could figure out to move and (for most items) I had no one else to blame if something had been damaged (see previous note about the chair/door incident). I did not have the money (and still don't) to get a riding mower--as some of my writing in *tRF* have shown. I don't, usually, begrudge the 2 1/2 hours it takes to

mow the lawn.

*Congrats on the new digs--may they be enjoyed for a long long time!*

I (as I probably said before) had looked into a modular home, visited two of the construction plants to look at the homes assembled, then found no one with land to sell would allow modular homes! I think I may have mentioned this but anyone in four counties, over the three years I looked, with land to sell refused to sell to me because they refused to allow modular homes and/or they required the plans to be reviewed and that they be for a minimum of 3500 square feet. For quite a few years my brother has told me I need to get out of here and move down there (Bardstown, KY), but he also thinks public school teachers are overpaid and has no use for pets (to be charitable, there are allergy issues, but . . .). So I am not sure we see eye to eye on some things. I look forward to hearing how you like the home. When I was looking, the biggest alteration/criticism I heard was the heating system—many owners actually had additions (modular also), but changed the heating system--curious to see what you have to say.

Yeah, yeah- late-- but I **will** get this at least into an envelope (if not the mailbox!) today—belated start of springtime greetings in your new home—get those plants in the ground!

‘bye,

Sheryl

*[[Maybe I worry too much about offending a writer I know when I write a review that has even mildly negative comments about his or her's work. Professional writers who've been around a long time undoubtedly expect such things from time to time. As long as the review wasn't written with a malicious intent there shouldn't be any injury to the writer's ego.//We've been to Bardstown—once—many years ago when our children were very young. We went to tour "My Old Kentucky Home". An interesting place.//Maybe I should try Netflix sometime. It would be easier and more convenient; no crowds and a more comfortable location.//I'll agree, grudgingly, that we're in a somewhat science fictional world but it's still not the spectacular one of science fiction novels.//A while back I bought through the Science Fiction Book Club a collection of Keith Laumer's stories about the that "diplomat" you mentioned and titles, not surprisingly, RETIEF! Yes, the stories do*



*stretch the bounds of credibility considerably but as humorous entertainment and not to be taken seriously, they work for me. They were a nice escape from reality. Besides which, when it comes to works with much humor in them, I allow the stories somewhat more leeway.//Those PODS you mentioned—Portable On Demand Storage—from the TV ads I've seen to appear very convenient. But what's the cost factor to them? Is it financially worthwhile to use one when moving? When we moved to our Maple Street address back in 1979, we moved only a few blocks and of course didn't have to contend with all the logistics which the move to Kentucky involved. That earlier move was much less stressful.//Oh—regarding steaming a dent out of a wooden door . . . It seems to me I read or heard somewhere that the process involves, believe it or not, the use of one of those steam irons used for pressing clothing. One doesn't exactly run the iron over the door (I think.)but rather directs steam onto the dent and in some "magical" way the dent gradually disappears. I've never tried it, so I can't guarantee the results.]]*

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robertk@cipcug.org

April 12, 2008

Dear Tom,

My thanks for #63

It would be really nice if you could find your way to attend *Denvention 3* in August (August 6 – August 10).

In view of your comments concerning the movie *The Last Mimzy* I rented the DVD to see for myself. I don't remember reading the book to which you refer. The movie has its moments; but, overall not too good.

*Starship Troopers*—I rate movies on a scale of 1-5. I gave *Starship Troopers* a 0. Several years ago someone said that it was Ken & Barbie Go to War. When I mentioned that to Joe Major he said that it was an insult to Ken & Barbie.

In Bob Sabella's commentary he makes mention of *The Daughter of Time* by Josephine Tey

as good historical fiction. The book was loaned to me years ago by my friend Margaret O'Grady. It is a spellbinder. I'm not sure that I would classify it as historical fiction being that what it's really doing is to solve a real mystery. Thomas B. Costain came to the same conclusion. But, Tey beat him to it and he gave her full credit.

Your commentary on your big move to Kentucky was most interesting. Also, I agree with you that we do not live in a Science fiction World.

By the way, nothing happened to my previous loc. What you printed was the complete short loc that I sent.

*[[I really really would like to attend Denvention and have considered it seriously, especially since, as I suspect, you'll be attending. Meeting you and some others in person for the first time would be great. But then I began estimating the cost to attend for my wife and me. Including 2 memberships, at least a mid-price hotel room, meals at a fast food place or some other inexpensive restaurant, and transportation (whether taking longer and going by car or flying) the cost was pushing close to \$2,000.00. \$2,000.00! (And if we had decided to visit the huckster room . . .) Maybe I'm looking at it the wrong way but to me that's flat out ridiculous. There are other things that much money is better spent on. (I'd be more willing to apply that money toward a decent trip to England—well, Ireland, Scotland, and Wales also, a dream I've had for a long, long time.) Whether someone is still working full-time working or retired. So I guess I'll have to comfort myself with whatever reports I read or hear. And I'm sure there will be many fans there I'd love to meet and visit with. Does it begin to seem to anyone that maybe, just maybe, the cost of attending a Worldcon has gotten a bit out of hand?//The original story, *Mimsy Were the Borogoves*, by Henry Kuttner, was a short story that dealt with transportation back through time of some educational toys that were found by a brother and sister in the "present" day and the effect they had on the children. The movie, it seems to me, had only the usual superficial resemblance to the story. As for *Starships Troopers*—yeah, it didn't deserve more than a 0. I won't comment on the Ken & Barbie comparison.//Guess I'll have to read the Tey novel. I'll see if the Owen County Public Library has a copy. //Regarding your last paragraph. You'll have to pardon my confusion (and I do get confused from time to time). It seemed to me as if there should have*



*been more because the comment about finding a copy of the Declaration of Independence seemed incomplete. I was frustrated because I wanted to know more. I know better now. My thanks and respects to you for having taken the time to Loc. I do appreciate hearing from you and hope you'll continue loccking. I've made it a top priority never to lose any of your locs again.//*

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4817 Dean Lane,  
Lilburn GA 30047-4720  
April 28, 2008

Dear Tom,

Thanks for the Reluctant Famulus 64. Odd paper—more like newsprint than copier—but it seems to work well.

I had never heard of Lorenzo Dow either. Or the “Primitive Methodists”. I suppose I am nominally a Methodist, that was the church my parents took me to, and I had an uncle who after a career in the navy and with one of the big Virginia tobacco companies became a Methodist minister. He was not quite as crazy as Lorenzo!b

I am surprised that Dow found it effective to announce that he would preach somewhere “exactly one year later”; there must have been more calendars and more attention paid to them than I would have imagined for the era. And how did he preach to 10,000 at once without electronic amplification? If this was done in the open air and the listeners surrounded him, the edge of the crowd would be 50 feet away if they were standing packed like sardines, and 2-3 times that if they were seated in any sort of comfort.

You and Sabella were always linked in my mind, as you started publishing about the same time. And here Sabena turns up with a column in your zinc. He's right about the three *ansible* novels that Ursula LeGuin wrote. I remember likening them a lot at the time, but the “space opera” that I remember best are the four *Neverness* books by David Zindell : **Neverness, The Broken God, The Wild, and War in Heaven**. The characters and plots are almost Wagnerian; fortunately they do not sing.

Sheryl's Tale of the Tub Quest seems to lack a happy ending . . . I hope it all worked out, and the thing really is good for a had back. They say we all have a bad back eventually; mine is not that bad yet

(at 70) and I haven't been in a tub in years—I use a shower.

The only fan that I know is younger than 45 does not publish a fanzine. And if he felt the urge, he would probably do a blog. Odd, when it's so much easier with current cyber-vooodoo than when I was doing one bi-monthly with an electric typewriter and a mimeo machine. On the other hand, I'm not sure why I did all that work. I enjoyed doing it, but there are lots of things I might enjoy that I wouldn't spend that much money on. Fannish glory? Zines sent in trade? There are seldom unmixed motives!

I never did any genealogy myself, but I did put my mother's research into the “Family Ties” software given away by the LDS. This was back in the '90s and it only runs in DOS. It still runs—but if I try to print from it I just get an error message. I'm not sure why. I have two other DOS-based programs of the same vintage (this typesetter and the BASIC math program) and they both print to the LaserJet. I have Googled around to see if there is any current substitute that could import the old data, but have found nothing.

Interesting about “Gustave Anjou” and his forgeries. But he must not have been the only one, and without DNA there is generally no certainty in paternity data. The further back you go, the more like fantasy it is! My mother only got as far back as a “William Brooks” who apparently came to Georgia from Virginia, back before there was much in the way of public records, and the name is too common to make a search easy.

I was just reading the new expanded edition of Arthur Machen's **Dreads and Drolls**, a collection of newspaper columns he did in the 1920s, and he mentions Sadler's Wells, in a column about how much more restrictive the laws about entertainment and festivities were in what he referred to as the “Georgian” period that he was stuck in (King George VI) as compared to the Victorian era of the 1800s. And yet, he says, the Georgians looked on the Victorians as timid fuddy-duddies.

I suppose the surname Sadler may be based in the profession of making horse-gear and so must go back over 1,000 years just in England—or have you found something else, such as a spelling change from French? I seem to recall seeing “Sadlier” and “Saddlier” somewhere.

Ned



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*[[I can't remember just now exactly what kind of paper I used. It might have been a cheaper brand. I hope the paper on which this issue is printed looks better.//Both the Primitive Methodists and Lorenzo Dow were unfamiliar to me, too, as were "Primitive Baptists" and "Campbellites". We learn something new all the time.//We probably should take some of those stories about Lorenzo Dow with a large grain of salt, especially the claims of such huge crowds. If he really did preach to that many people at one time he must have had one hell of a set of lungs and a powerful larynx!//Actually, I believe Bob started publishing a few years before I did—at least that's what my admittedly capricious memory tells me.//As you will have seen in the second installment, Sheryl's travails continue but she's not done yet. As far as bad backs go, that's one of the few "health" problems I have and it goes back a long time to when I was working for the City of Adrian in what was then called the Parks and Trees Department sometimes hand shoveling snow, other times operating chainsaws, some heavy lifting, etc. All that bending over and then straightening up—or trying to straighten up—I'd get a sharp pain all across my lower back. As long as I don't do much bending over for long periods of time I'm all right. Thankfully what little sense I have serves to make me more careful of that.//The genealogy software of the LDS that I've heard of was called PAF—Personal Ancestry File. I wonder if that's the same thing as the "Family Ties" software you mention. I'm not sure but I think there are other genealogy programs that allow the user to import PAF, among other formats. But then you'd have to be involved enough in genealogy to want to buy one of them; although there are, I think, a couple of free genealogy programs. And your comment, "The further back you go, the more like fantasy it is!" is on the mark. How anybody can accurately and reliably trace their ancestry back to, say, some one born in 500-something (or earlier) is beyond me.//The surname Sadler/Saddler does refer to the occupation of a craftsman in leather and particularly that of harness-making. Some people try to claim that the surname is German in origin, pointing to the word Sattler, apparently forgetting that other countries with different languages just*

*might have people of the same profession being named after that profession. But then English became a conglomeration of languages resulting from the presence of various raiders'/conquerors' influence and certainly German and French were among those since some of the English kings and queens were tied in with those nationalities through marriage and so on. Then too, as mentioned, back from sometime in the 18th century on back spelling wasn't standardized which led to variations according to how people heard the words and/or thought they sounded. Remember: Sir Walter Scott claimed to have found at least 13 variations on the spelling of Sadler; other names, I'm sure, shared the same fate.//*

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Benjamin P. Indick  
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4-30-08

Dear Tom:

Thank you for TRF 64, a nice issue which is like being across a table having coffee and some san or other. Just friendly, and isn't that enough? I enjoyed the history of Lorenzo Dow, who really cared for his subject. You have ably encapsulated his long and variedcolored life, and doggone if you did not make him come alive. Comparing him to those shady televangelists is, however, unfair to him. He sought no personal gain and no female admirers. I presume this was a little gag on your part, and an admonition to phonies.

I wish I knew more about my antecedents. I know very little, for my parents, immigrants, were loathe to talk about their past. I do not even know the names of my mother's people. They were unable to come with their children to America. (They lost one son in Russian wars.) My mother left Europe as a girl of 15, with an older brother and sister. In Paris, she was very pretty and narrowly escaped, a tale she loved to tell over and over again, being put into a whore's life, as her brother rescued her. I could not persuade her either to write or to narrate it on to a tape, as well as her life story. She had become a citizen here, and was very proud of it, and although she wrote haltingly, she spoke English without accent. Many of us must have interesting historical family stories. You will end up with a fanzine filled



with them yet!

My own history has not appreciably changed since the letter you printed, with one exception. I have come to realize that I was fading myself out. It is unfair to myself and certainly to my wife. I must go on as though I am living forever. (I am not that original. I got that from Zorba the Greek.)

Sheryl, who is the veterinarian around here must have some weird creatures as patients, if her cover is an example. However, I appreciate it for its humor rather than its verisimilitude. She is a sweetheart. I have a niece who is also a vet and SHE is a sweetheart too. I guess it goes with the profession.

Be well. Ben

*[[One of the things I've tried to do with TRF was to make it a friendly little fanzine that seems like a conversation between or among friends, a place where people could feel at home. Somehow, though, I seem to have lost that intimacy for which I was striving. I'm hoping to get it back.//Lorenzo Dow was indeed an interesting individual and it was amazing to discover how devoted to his religion he was to the point where when he passed away he was far from being a rich man. You're probably right about the comparison to the current crop of televangelists who, from what I've heard and read, actually been more interested in acquiring wealth than in properly guiding and ministering to their congregations. He definitely had a different outlook and a different set of principles than they. I also must confess that any gag or admonishment on my part was not consciously intentional.//Since I became involved in family genealogy I've come to appreciate my antecedents more and sympathize with those who for reasons beyond their control know little or nothing about their ancestors. As for those who claim no interest in who their ancestors were—I very much pity them their lack of concern about those who came before. It's almost as if those people don't believe that anyone who lived before them were interesting, worthwhile people who in ways great and small made our generations what they are through their care, concern, and sacrifices. Your all too brief account of your mother was, to me, fascinating and I would have liked to hear more. I'd really enjoy hearing from TRF readers with personal stories about their ancestors, providing they'd care to share them. All those people of previous generations were a part of history even if they weren't kings, emperors,*

*generals, presidents, great scientists or philosophers.//I very much hope that you do and can avoid "fading myself out". From what I've experienced so far, you and the other readers of TRF who choose to respond to this fanzine are good, interesting people.//Sheryl is indeed a gem and a good person to know.]]*

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May 1, 2008

Dear Tom:

I too have a relative with the first and middle names "Lorenzo Dow". He was born in 1878 and so isn't likely to have been directly influenced by the Lorenzo Dow.

Ministers of the gospel are a little more common and close. My great-uncle Aleck (John Alexander McCord) was a Southern Baptist minister. Because he was childless, Mother inherited his estate, which included a diamond stickpin. She had the jewel mounted in a ring, and it became Lisa's engagement ring. Which she wants to pass on to my niece.

Also, the cousin of mine whose brother married Lisa's aunt is a minister (Christian Church), the cousin we stayed with on the way down to Pensacola last year is a minister (Episcopal, as was his father and is his son), and so on. With a family containing everything from Bahai to Jews, all flavors of Protestant, Catholic, and even Orthodox, the religion can get interesting.

"New Space Opera": I suspect that the history seen by the humans of Simmons's "Muse of Fire" would be not unfamiliar to SF fans. In *A Midsummer Tempest* Poul Anderson has a world where everything in Shakespeare's plays is true. If the Bard were their only culture, how else would they know anything?

"Water-Works ? or Not": There are hot tub manufacturers at the Kentucky State Fair and the Louisville Flea Market. The prices are a bit less than \$10k but there is installation and the support structure to consider.

Readers? Riposte.: Telescopes. There will be a solar eclipse in August 2017. The path of totality will pass through Kentucky. The parking lot of my cousin Ed's florist greenhouses will have less than one



second less of totality than the maximum. The combination of Google maps and family ties . . .

The Society of the Cincinnati is still going, if you go by their website ([www.thecincinnati.org](http://www.thecincinnati.org)) which describes a vigorous program of scholarship, education, and social work. Thomas Jefferson was the one who took vigorous objection.

There was a French branch, which actually got listed as a noble order before the Revolution. Which may have helped create Tom's ire. And then we had the Grand Army of the Republic, the United Confederate Veterans, and so on. As with the Veterans of World War I, which now apparently has a membership of two, and one of them is post-Armistice at that. (I'm talking US vets, of course.)

Grant got Lisa's computer a new CD drive, so there's that. As for the Horse Park, let us know. We took Grant there back in March but then his allergies started acting up.

Lisa talks about feeling oppressed in flat land. If you want to see where hillbillies come from, go southeast of Lexington.

Banjoes are down in North Carolina. Try hammer dulcimers.

"If you want books filmed faithfully . . ." this evokes the famous *FoxTrot* sequence where Roger is imagining how it would go if his son Jason and Jason's friend Marcus were somehow playing roles in the movie. They are reciting verbatim dialogue from the book and the hard-pressed Peter Jackson explains that the screenplay doesn't have that particular dialogue, if they did the book word for word it would take thirty hours to do each volume. Jason and Marcus regret they were so overexcited by that prospect that they couldn't reply

Meanwhile, it has been announced that Bill Bull, er, Guillermo del Toro will direct the two movies, and already Sir Ian McKellen has been announced as Gandalf. The first movie will be *The Hobbit* and the second one, it says, will fill in the gap between that and LotR. No doubt telling about Arwen and her companion Gabrielle . . .

"Failed to predict the personal computer and calculator . . ." There's always Asimov's "A Feeling of Power". Thorby used a calculator in *Citizen of the Galaxy*

Gustave Anjou and the spurious genealogy. There are a lot of dubious family trees out there. I found one tree that showed the compiler's descent from some seventh-century Italian rulers. When

Leibnitz became court philosopher at the Elector of Hanover's court, he produced a genealogy showing his descent from Welf, a personal friend of Attila the Hun.

Namarie,  
Joseph T Major

*[[Don't be too sure that. In some roundabout way that ancestor might have been named after the original Lorenzo Dow. I guess that in your own genealogical research you've learned about the practice of family naming patterns back in the 1700s and 1800s. It might not have been so a hundred percent of the time but was observed by large enough number of family to be reasonably reliable in determining family relationships. Someone in the family may have had a long enough memory to remember Dow. I could be wrong of course but back then, for the most part, people didn't pick names out of thin air; there was usually a reason for any particular name.//There are hillbillies in several parts of the country; it's just that not all of them actually live up in the hills. I'm sure Tennessee has its share of them as well as Alabama, with which state I am more familiar. I think hillbillism (if there is such a word) is as much a state of mind as anything and just another term for redneck.//Gee . . . I don't remember saying anything about wanting a movie filmed faithfully but—no, wait— See the conclusion.//"Bill Bull"?? Aren't you being a bit disingenuous there? It reminds me of the time, listening to one of Carl Haas's classical music broadcasts, where he referred to the composer "Joe Green"—Giuseppe Verdi. Yeah, that's what his name would translate into English. But seeing as how his was a different nationality, culture, and language the original would seem more appropriate and and respectful not so "cutesy". The same, I think, with Guillermo del Toro. Which is, more properly "of the Bull.//Well Leibnitz wasn't the only one with an inflated family tree. So people, I suspect, knew there's was questionable but smothered any qualms about the matter.//Unfortunately, I have no interest in watching horse races—horses, on the other hand, I find more interesting to look at and watch in ways other than running in a circle while fools—er people bet money on them. We managed to be in Michigan the weekend of the Kentucky Derby, though, because there wasn't much else on, we did*



*watch the Derby on TV. I was more affected by the injury and subsequent euthanizing of the second place horse than Big Brown's win. Horses are beautiful animals that should be admired for their grace and appearance in other ways than running in circles for the entertainment of Human beings. My position is one that would probably upset a lot of horse-racing fans. All I can say is, "deal with it".]]*

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JAKaufman@aol.com  
Thu 05/15/08 10:09 PM

Thanks for the new issue of RF. What's that thing on the cover supposed to be? Has Sheryl Brikhead been reading HP Lovecraft? It looks like the sort of dog Cthulhu would have as a pet. (Pardon me, but I read a bunch of HPL stories last week. I hadn't revisited his work in about twenty years.)

I found your investigation of Lorenzo Dow to be interesting reading. I don't have anyone that interesting in my very short family tree. It's very short because I don't know anything about my ancestors prior to my grandparents' arrival in the US in the early 20th century.

Just as I am boggled by Sheryl's cover illustration, I am also boggled by her tale of watery woe, and glad she survived to tell us all about it. She took infinite pains to get that tub, so I hope the pains were eased when she soaked in it.

Your readers discuss the pros and cons of reviewing books. I think this is a particular problem in the sf field. Everyone who seriously reviews, fan or pro, is likely to know at least some of the authors they review works by. This is true of fans in fanzines, pros in the promags, and even those who review in the larger newspapers. Here in Seattle, I've noticed that every person who's reviewed sf or fantasy books in the *Seattle Times* over the past 30 years has been an aspiring or successful sf writer themselves, and ones who have mixed with pros at sf conventions. This makes objectivity difficult at best.

I had a little trouble in the lettercol telling where one letter left off and the next began, and who had written each letter. In a couple of places you used a dotted line to separate your comment from the next letter. I'd suggest doing something similar after every letter or between your comment and the next letter consistently.

I liked the labels from the Sadler Brewery, and wonder in particular what Sadlers Green Man is like.

Thin Ice also sounds intriguing.

Yours, Jerry Kaufman

*[[I don't know where Sheryl got those strange critters she draws—and maybe it's better that I don't know. Trying to picture the kind of dog Cthulhu might have had as a pet makes me shiver at what it would have looked like. After an interval of twenty years, how do HPL's stories stand up for you? I remember reading all the HPL stories I could and being fascinated by them—this was more than twenty years ago, mind you—and being fascinated by what he had created. I have, unfortunately, only one collection of HPL stories: *At the Mountains of Madness*, purchased several years ago from a used book bookstore. A friend of mine when we were in high school and during our college years had started collecting Arkham House collections of HPL. I'm not sure if it was back when they were first coming out or not; if it was, the books would probably be worth a lot of money. I've lost touch with him and so have no idea if he still owns them. The copy I have says "Third Large Printing!" and is copyright 1964. That would have been around the time my friend began acquiring them, so maybe they aren't particularly valuable after all.//Have you ever thought about trying to learn more about those ancestors prior to the ones who arrived here in the early 20th century? You might find it interesting to try. But you'd need to start by talking to your oldest relatives before it's too late. That is, if you're interested in knowing. It's a huge task and you might rather devote to things you find more productive.// Sheryl's hot tub tale isn't over yet, as you will have noticed earlier on in this issue. She's making progress.//Sorry for the confusion in the letters column. I hope I've managed to make it less confusing in this issue's Loccol with the double line separator between the end of my comments and the following letter.//I'd like to know what those ales are like but after checking the Sadler Brewery site and seeing the prices and converting them to American dollars and estimating overseas shipping . . . I'm not **that** curious—or thirsty! I'm not sure the brewery has ever considered exporting the Sadler Ales. There probably wouldn't be a large enough market to make it feasible. Unfortunately. Unless I knew someone who was going to England and would smuggle a couple of bottles. ;-) ]]*

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June 11, 2008

Dear Tom,

The cover to *Reluctant Famulus* #64 seems to depict a whoozits-whatzits. It may even be a one horned, propeller tailed whoozits-whatzits. That is an increasingly rare breed. There also seems to be an ant, but ants aren't rare at all. They don't even become rare when you spray environment destroying chemicals on them. It's a good thing they don't grow to the size shown in the movie *Them*, or we would be both overrun and stomped on.

I would really be shocked if I turned up an evangelist in my family tree. My father and I used to joke about finding a horse thief in our ancestry, but an evangelist would be Something Else. I usually think of evangelist as a synonym for scoundrel. In spite of all the evidence to support that view, there always seems to be an adequate supply of sheep. I guess there is such a thing as compulsive victims. If the sheep weren't victimized by evangelists, they would be victimized by someone else.

Missionaries are a special class of evangelists. Occasionally, a missionary supplements the protein in the diet of some remote tribe of cannibals, so it can't be said that they don't do any good at all. If they only peddled their wares to truly primitive people, it might seem almost reasonable. It isn't so reasonable when they go into countries like India and China that have thousands of years of very sophisticated religious thinking.

Then there are the evangelicals. They're sort of like missionaries without the dietary value. Awhile back, I read about evangelicals going to Utah to convert the Mormons. While Mormons don't usually eat people, they might make an exception for these people.

I don't have an informed opinion on *The New Space Opera*. I think of space opera as the sort of sword and blaster adventure like they used to publish in *Planet Stories*. *Star Wars* was the same stuff in Technicolor. Steely eyed heroes and damsels in distress are also essential elements of space opera. When you start injecting ideas it dilutes the purity of the space opera.

I've heard of faking genealogies before. I suppose a fake genealogy is something for the man who has everything. If you think about it, you really should want to be better than your ancestors. It

doesn't seem like a good thing to be worse than your ancestors.

Yours truly, Milt Stevens

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*[[Ants aren't the only "pests" unaffected by environment-destroying chemicals; sow bugs also seem to have a high tolerance to pesticides. Although sow bugs seem relatively harmless.//Rating an evangelist lower than a horse-thief is pretty severe—but I think I agree with that. There undoubtedly were evangelists who were scoundrels, as there are in other occupations. And there are definitely a good supply of sheep willing to be fleeced and compulsive victims.// Your comments on missionaries and evangelists are funny—and true. Missionaries as a dietary supplement for tribes of cannibals—what a bizarre concept. I can remember those cartoons and some movie shorts showing a missionary or two in a large stewpot or cauldron over a big fire while the cannibals danced around in anticipation of a hearty meal. Cannibalism still seems to be one of the more unpleasant human taboos. But then humans have been known to eat just about anything they can get into their mouths. (See, for example Andrew Zimmerman's show on the Food Channel, I believe.)//There is a certain amount of conceit and arrogance to those missionaries who go to countries like India and China to convert the population. Why they seem to presume people in countries with their own well-established religion with which the people have been very satisfied for centuries would happily embrace someone else's religion is beyond me. That's a whole lot of hubris.//There is a place for serious, thoughtful science fiction and one for Space Opera. Sometimes we need pure and simple, almost unbelievable Space Opera just to relax our minds for a while. A steady diet of any one thing does become boring.//From what I've read in my own pursuit of genealogy, parents of earlier generations always hoped their children would grow up to be better and more successful than they were and often sacrificed a lot for that goal. The fake genealogies were more to enhance someone's standing and feed their ego and, for the one who faked the genealogies, a way to make money off the sheep.]]* ❁



# Conclusion

## Much ado over nothing

I find myself somewhat bemused by the impression I get that some folks seem to think I expect that a movie made from a novel should be completely faithful to the novel. How anyone could come to such a conclusion is a mystery to me. (Or perhaps I never made myself clear on the matter.) I am aware of the differences between movies and novels and never expected one should scrupulously follow the other. All I really ask of a movie made from a novel is that the main character of the movie be the same race as the novel's protagonist and, in certain instances, the same gender. Is that really such a foolish idea? It doesn't seem so to me.

Beyond that, as long as the movie is recognizable as having been taken from a novel, I have no other issues with such movies. I am well aware that movies and novels are two different forms of entertainment. Novels present an **internal** view of the world; movies an **external** one. That is, with a novel the reader sees the unfolding of events in the story through the eyes of the protagonist and is privy to the protagonist's thoughts and emotions, his or her innermost feelings and reasonings. People, places, and things are presented to the reader as the main character sees them. We readers, in a sense, **become** the protagonist.

In movies, however, everything is viewed from a point outside the protagonist's sphere. The reader now becomes a mere spectator to all the action, an observer as opposed to a participant, as would be a novel reader. With a movie, all the descriptions of people, scenery, and so on which may take up paragraphs if not pages are replaced by the actual, viewable physical counterparts. Nothing has to be visualized; it's all there for the eyes with which we see rather than the mind's eyes with which we visualize what the protagonist sees. With a movie no one actually becomes the hero; we're all bystanders watching in fascination all that's going on before our eyes and ears. Although there are movies which strive to make people think, for the most part it's all action, violence, and excitement. The hero jumps right in, beats the hell out of the bad guy—and then it's over. Until the next time.

Books are up close and personal, they require more of the reader in using brainpower and concentration. Movies are a thrill ride, a roller-coaster trip requiring only that the viewer hang on tightly until the end. After that, the moviegoer leaves the theater happy and satisfied and not the least bit challenged intellectually. A good novel, however, leaves the reader happy, satisfied, thinking and wondering, and maybe even remembering for a long time after. Books and movies each serve its own particular purpose and when the former is turned into the latter necessary sacrifices have to be made because of their different natures. But I **still** (stubborn me) say the protagonist of a book made into a movie should not change race or gender because the novel was written to portray the life, adventures, or tribulations of a certain certain person—an **individual** with an individual's quirks, peculiarities and, and attitudes—not some generic being. Even though fiction, a novel, when turned into a movie, should reflect the author's original vision of the person, not some Hollywood actor's or producer's conceited notions.

But I guess I shouldn't complain knowing how useless it is and realizing there are precedents for such changes. Take the author Earl Derr Biggers for example. He wrote a short series of novels about a detective who was Chinese—Charlie Chan was his name. Then the Hollywood "geniuses" (way back in the silent movies era at that) decided to make some movies about Charlie Chan. Nothing wrong with that. Except that from the silents through the talkies and into the 1940s the majority of actors portraying Charlie Chan were Caucasians made to look oriental. Among them were Warner Oland (who, I think I read somewhere, was Swedish) Sidney Toler, Roland Winters, J. Carroll Naish—and even Ed Begley Senior, for heaven's sake. **Ed Begley, Sr.** Fortunately, however, it was on the radio and so only his voice. Apparently Keye Luke, who played Number One son opposite Warner Oland, was the only true Chinese to portray Charlie Chan—and then only as the voice of the detective on a TV cartoon series.



By some strange set of thoughts of Hollywood producers and casting agents it was all right to make a movie about a Chinese detective—and in a favorable light at that—but as far as casting went there was a reluctance to hire a real, actual Chinese for the part. So it was: cast a white man in the role and plaster makeup on him instead, to make him look oriental. That's Hollywood for you.

And such casting occurred in movies and television in even relatively small parts. How many Caucasians were cast as American Indians over the years (for example, J. Carroll Naish who was predominately Irish, and Sal Mineo of Sicilian parentage)? And what about good old John Wayne in the role of Genghis (Jenghis—whatever) Khan (*The Conqueror*, 1956). Yeah—that's Hollywood for you.

To modify a phrase from another source: just as a map is not the territory, neither is a movie made from a book the book. The only thing is, at least with a map one doesn't encounter a valley where there should be a mountain or a desert where a lake should be. A map may not be the territory but it strives to resemble the territory more than some movies do books.

But maybe I'd be better off just ignoring that aspect of moviemaking especially since I'd never go to see such movies anyway because of my personal, crotchety bias.

So let's drop the subject of books to movies and agree to disagree. There are much better subjects to discuss anyway.

Taglines to some news stories and my reactions to them—

Solar-powered iPhones. Except on a heavily cloudy day, in a violent thunderstorm, inside a car, house, building or at night. A real blessing to people in the Amazon rain forest or war-torn, poverty and famine stricken African countries. (Though, presumably, they would have battery backups . . .)

Increased sales of Segways due to high gas prices. A real benefit to people in the Amazon rain forest, war-torn, poverty and famine stricken African countries, extremely remote farms and such in China, Russia, and so on. I can just imagine my wife and me on a pair of Segways putting along U.S. 127 on the way to the grocery store. Keep your car, use good sense, and avoid unnecessary trips.

Solar-powered speed boats. Wow. What a market item. Great for use in places where there are lakes and along the coastline. Not much use to people

in desert areas or who have more urgent needs—such as food, clothing, and shelter or can't afford such luxuries.

Hydrogen fuel cell Honda cars. (And GMC.) The fuel cells are expensive, there aren't many fueling stations. Honda's giving them a limited trial in California (Of course—with its pollution problems.) in certain areas only. Like where there's a hydrogen fueling station. Not much use to the general public at this point due to limited numbers and cost and people with more urgent needs—such as food, clothing, and shelter or can't afford such luxuries.

IBM unveils world's fastest computer. Yeah. A real benefit. (See comments to preceding taglines.) Who'd have access to the computer. You can't use it as a food supple or an inexpensive means to getting to and from work.

Garbage-eating bugs (microbes) that excrete crude oil. A source of oil to replace the kind we're already using. But right now only in the experimental stage and so unavailable to just about everybody. But then, how large a facility would be required to produce the oil for consumption—and how many such facilities would be needed. How much space would be taken up with those facilities?

Tropical fruit—new source of biofuel. As with the immediately preceding item pretty much in the experimental stage. The fruit is a non-food item and so wouldn't compete with what people need for food. Doesn't require much water or fertilizer and is, of course, renewable. But how much acreage would a farm require to grow enough of the plants to begin production of the fuel? And how many farms (taking up land that could be used for food crops) would be required for even a small percentage of our fuel needs?

The preceding items were just a few I saw in the news online and wasn't actually looking for such things. They're all good in their ways and maybe in some small way even science fictional. But as something beneficial and useful to a large majority of the world's population . . . It would be nice of some of these :brains would devote their energies to something other than "niche markets" The fuel-oriented products at least should have been experimented on and perfected at least thirty years earlier.

Well enough of this nonsense; it's time to go for now. So until next issue—Full thrusters . . .



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# WINDS MAGAZINE

