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isions of Paradise *#113: Halcyon Days*

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Ned Brooks

Nov 16, 2006

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I read the "planetary romance" and enjoyed it. The "her weapon was"/"his weapon was" element seemed a little comic-strippy to me. I thought the business of the feline being offended at the offer of a pair of underpants to get the child's scent was very improbable in the context.

I opened the zine with the Foxit Reader, which loads much faster than the Abode Reader (which in turn loads much faster than Adobe Acrobat, the slowest software to load I have ever seen—Windows itself loads faster). When I first got Foxit, it wouldn't print—then they issued an update and it would—now it won't again! I have asked them why.

[I'm glad you liked the story. I thought about the use of "her/his weapon" for awhile, but could not think of a better way to do it, so I let it stay. You're right though, it does sound more comic-bookish than I really liked.]

John Thiel
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Nov 16, 2006

It's rather wondrous that you decided to publish your own work of fiction in your online fanzine, considering that you disclaimed the reading of works of amateur fiction. I did read your disclaimer relevant to the story where you say that it is not fan-fiction, but I think we have two different definitions. Fiction published in a fanzine is fan fiction. Now I am wondering how you define fan fiction?

Anyway, I think "Starflame" added considerably to your contents, although I have always appreciated your reviews. I'll look forward to more of it, both your own and other works you say you'll receive.

[I have nothing against fan fiction philosophically; it is merely a matter of "too many books, too little time" for me to spend any of it on amateur fiction when there is so much professional fiction I cannot possibly read. But that does not stop me from writing fiction, professional-level or not.

[What is my definition of fan fiction? Fiction intended for amateur publications rather than intended for professional publication. Everything I write is intended to be submitted to an editor. Does that make my fiction better than fiction intended for a non-paying fanzine? Probably not, but it is only published in **VoP** either for critiquing purposes or because it has not sold previously (and probably never will).]

John Purcell
Nov 17, 2006
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Good gravy, Robert, your new publishing schedule is making you into yet another **Chris Garcia!** Now I have to comment on three subsequent issues of **VoP**. This is getting dangerous.

#107 == Loved the **Alan White** cover. Not only does this remind me of that old rhetorical question, "Do fat babies fart?", but this serves to remind me to ask Alan for some artwork for my zines. I have always loved his style. He did a cover for one of my old zines, **Bangweulu #3**, back in 1987, come to think of it.

Your reasoning for leaving print mailings behind rings resoundingly true in my ears. Going purely on-line has distinct advantages, plus disadvantages. In the next issue of **In A Prior Lifetime** my editorial musings run along this track, but at least here I can tell you that the financial burden of mailing zines can be quite high nowadays. What I've done is taken to making a dozen copies or so to mail out as needed to those who prefer receiving a hard copy in the mail. That minimizes both printing and postal costs.

You wonder if you will "pick up a few more readers in exchange." Probably. Ask **Bill Burns** to place a counter on your zine. It is very interesting to see not only how many visits and views your zines get, but also to see where visitors/viewers are located. The problem is how many will actually respond; just like dead-tree versions, you're lucky to get a 10% return in the form of e-locs. Still, e-zines are much quicker and easier to produce, and the financial savings are substantial.

My "Books to Read" shelf has about 16 items on it, ranging from sf and f novels and magazines, to non-fiction, to mysteries and historical fiction. I don't bother to try to wipe them all out; it's a given that there will always be something to read on that shelf. (Actually, it's the right side on the top of my dresser, but it serves the same purpose.)

#108 == Well... I tried the multiple choice quiz and completely bombed out. This kind of stuff is for those who actually read science fiction and remember what they've read. Some of these books I haven't read for ages and simply forgot character names for their accompanying titles. A bit humbling, this. So I have a suggestion for you, Robert: stop running quizzes in your fanzines!!! They make my brain hurt.

Great listing of titles by Michael Bishop, with a lot of agreement on its contents. There are some really awesome stories here. Some year after I'm retired from teaching and have a whole lot of extra time on my hands, I may get to some of these.

Your "Wondrous Stories" section has a main premise that is very true: there are so many talented writers out there who don't have the name recognition of some of the less-talented writers. This is too bad. I love the stories of Poul Anderson. One of my favorite stories of his is **Tau Zero**, and meeting him years and years ago at Minicons was one of the highlights of my early con-going years.

Thanks for the word on Alastair Reynolds. One of the things that I love about reading zines is when their faneds and contributors review and recommend books and authors that I've never heard of before, or have only a cursory knowledge of. **Revelation Space** sounds really fun, so here's another title to back-burner for future reference.

#109 == So how many things has **Shelby Vick** been blamed for over the years? Having one's interest in good, old-fashioned Space Operas sparked is something that sounds fine by me. There are much worse things in life to be blamed for, y'know. I love reading ShelVy's *Planetary Stories* and hope that he doesn't stop producing it. Planetary Romances are fun to read, and maybe I will try my hand at producing one for you. Sounds like a fun challenge, and I could use the fiction- writing exercise anyway. You Have Been Warned.

[I also print a dozen or so hardcopies of **VoP** for readers who do not have email, as well as artists who deserve to receive a hard copy of their artwork besides seeing it online.

[I have no intention of wiping out my *Books to be Read* list, but I would like to cut it back somewhat from its current size. That is why I am really trying to cut back my buying nowadays. Last year I still bought more books than I read, which was not good.

[**Tau Zero** is my favorite Poul Anderson novel, which is ironic since I am not particularly a “hard science” person. I guess that just proves how good a writer Anderson actually was that he could write a novel in one of my less-favored sub-genres and still make it shine for me!

[Definitely send me a piece of fiction. I have been trying to alter my writing style more towards the less-serious planetary adventures for several years, with little success. No matter how a story begins, it drifts towards serious character studies, which has proven fatal to me over the years considering my lesser ability in this area. So posting an occasional story online is partly intended to force me to write in an area where I might have more possibility of success (not just professionally, but artistically as well).]

Terry Jeeves
Nov 28, 2006
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Many thanks for the latest double issue of **VoP** with two unusual cover illos.

I enjoyed the lists, especially the quiz—until I realized it was for a younger market than I. What, no Heinlein, Campbell, vanVogt, Smith, Russell and others I loved in their heyday?

As per usual I enjoyed hearing what you have been doing and I got a kick out of *Lighter Side*.

[The quiz was indeed based on “my” post-1960 era of sf, but maybe I will do a “Golden Age” quiz sometime in the future. Then you’ll have no excuse not to get them right. ☺]

Lloyd Penney
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December 3, 2006

VoP #108...I've seen so many lists of what's good and what's not, and I have given up lists as being largely subjective. I honestly cannot remember much of what I've read, except to say that when I read them, I very much enjoyed them, and kept them on my shelves until Yvonne and I have built up a good-sized SF library, one that I am proud of. I know that Michael Bishop's list has some SF in it, and some have some intriguing titles, but I think I shall stick to what I know, and what I can afford.

Poul Anderson is an author I have always enjoyed, especially his Polesotechnic League/Nicholas van Rijn and David Falkayn books. I have never really liked war-oriented or even military-oriented SF, but such a structure of military or para-military origin runs through a great deal of hard SF, and I found the Anderson books hit a comfortable balance between military/aggressive

and explorational forces. That's why I enjoyed **The Earth Book of Stormgate**, and why a relatively new copy of that book sits on my shelves.

VoP #109... I agree with you, I prefer the older space-oriented SF, but I think I may wind up reading only the authors I remember from my personal Golden Age. At least I know what I'll be getting. I find I have less interest in those newer authors, even those I know personally. Maybe what I enjoyed the most about that older science fiction was the adventure and exploration aspects to it. We live in a world where all major discoveries about the land on the planet are long done. We find a lost tribe of natives or two, a major fossil, and even a species or two of fish we've never seen before, but that obviously pales in comparison to the discovery of a new land or a new planet or new civilization. (May be this ideal is what drew me to *Star Trek* originally; perhaps the change in direction for SF is why *Trek's* popularity is now fading.)

Starflame reads well; an interesting tale of conflict between one's religion and another's culture, between a human society and another non-human, and yet a third and lower level of civilization is introduced to put the others in perspective, that of the native apes who care for a missing child. I think it worth continuing to polish, and eventual submission. I have had my own years of writing short stories and submitting them, but I had no success at all. I even tried fanfic zines, and they rejected them, too. I'll never be a commercial writer, so what writing I do is for my own pleasure and achievement.

[I share your dislike of purely military fiction, sf or otherwise, but both Poul Anderson and Gordon R. Dickson seem able to write good stories around what might in other hands be purely military stories.

[I'm not certain I "prefer" the older space-oriented SF so much as enjoying fiction the most when it incorporates traditional tropes and sense of wonder with modern post-New Wave writing sensibilities. Stephen Baxter succeeded in doing that in his collection **Resplendent**, and I have read lots of reviews of other contemporary sf authors who seemingly do so as well, such as Iain M. Banks and Colin Greenland (whom I am currently reading for the first time with a novella in **The Space Opera Renaissance**). But when authors such as Jack McDevitt write traditional-type stories so well I really don't miss some of the literary values at all. Sometimes good story-telling trumps all other weaknesses in a story.

[I have spent thirty+ years writing fiction, the first 15 of which I did no fanwriting and no socializing while devoting myself exclusively to writing sf. The end result of that is acceptance of my lesser talent as a fiction writer, but I still enjoy creating my own worlds and writing my own fiction. While I do not know if I will write more stories in the *Starflame* series, I am currently writing a series of stories in another era of the same future history, this series set on a radically-altered Earth. While I still have hopes of publishing some of those stories somewhere, I suspect that eventually I will accept my fate and self-publish them as part of **VoP** as well.

[Would you—or any other **VoP** readers—be interested in critiquing some of the stories for me?]

Richard Dengrove

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Dec 29, 2006

VoP #107 suggested alternate history is a separate genre. I disagree. I suspect it is a sub-genre of several genres. Also, I gather the editor of the Historical Novels Review is wrong: alternate history didn't start out as a sub-genre of science fiction and become a sub-genre of history. No, it started out as a sub-genre of history. I gather people have been writing alternate history as history for over a thousand years. The Uchronia website tells something about it.

Then alternate history went from being history to being literature. At least, O. Henry wrote an alternate history, his "Paths of Destiny" series, where, at one juncture, a person takes one road in one timeline and then another road in another timeline. Even with the coming of science fiction, those sub-genres never disappeared. I remember a work MacKinley Kantor did for **Look** magazine in 1960, where the South wins the Civil War. In addition, I gather Philip Roth's novel about Lindbergh being elected President is more literary than historical. He got his history mixed up.

Of course, after you write an alternate history, or anything else, you have to have a way of publishing it. You mention going to email. I am sure there is a lot less work involved. I don't know whether I am more behind the times, but I have opted for more work. I have been printing out my zine on my home color printer. I don't even have a photocopy place do it anymore. I imagine that while you want to get the text out as easily as possible, I fancy color illustrations in my zines. Maybe when they get universal email with color graphics, my printer will be history.

VoP #108: I think the idea behind Victor Hugo's **Hunchback of Notre-Dame** is that we each exist in separate minds; we know nothing about what goes on in another person's mind. For instance, a great soul can exist in an ugly body, e.g., Quasimodo. That was a complete departure from the traditional view, that ugly equaled bad. Of course, I have met women who have that view when it comes to Quasimodo, and consider him a stalker.

Another way people are separate from one another is that each has his own individual conceptions. Harry Turtledove has his of Atlantis in "Audubon in Atlantis." Harry makes Atlantis a place of legendary fauna. Others follow Plato and make Atlantis more ancient Greek. Some follow Arthur Conan Doyle and make Atlantis a place of futuristic superscience. I have been known to do that. The problem with Harry's Atlantis is that few others are enthusiastic about its flora and fauna. While maybe they hit his soul, they don't hit most people's.

People can be so separate they are considered crazy. That was the case in the movie *Proof*. A famous mathematician had gone mad. In addition, Gwyneth Paltrow, his daughter, is worried she might go mad too. You liked the movie. One person I know didn't like it. I couldn't make a decision. I had the fortune or misfortune to be in a hotel gym when I saw it. The TV screen was perched on top of my treadmill and I couldn't make out the dialogue, which was most of the movie. Just by sight, I could make out what was basically going on, but, beyond that, not much. For a judgment of the movie, I have to defer to you or him. The only judgment I can make is that Gwyneth is certainly a good-looking young lady.

In Alistair Reynold's **Revelation Space**, we have the opposite situation: men's minds are not separate from one another but joined. Nay, human minds are with other beings, and things. They are melding. That is if meld means they are joined; and can consult one another and use each other's strengths? Or does it mean something more frightening: one being's mind replaces another's. Melding is not a totally clear concept.

[While part of me agrees with you that alternate history is “a sub-genre of several genres,” I wonder if that is strong evidence that it is actually a distinct genre of its own rather than belonging to sf or fantasy or history. Where it began seems irrelevant to where it finally settled.

[I'm not sure if Philip Roth “got his history mixed up.” There are so many differences between real history and his imagined past that I am sure it was intentionally intended as alternate history.

[Publishing and all it entails (making copies, collating, mailing, mailing costs, graphics, layout) are not what interests me about fanzine publishing. My concern is the written contents. That's what I read in other zines, printed or online, and that's how I want to spend 95% of my time. It had reached the point where 25% of my time was being spent in non-writing chores, and that was becoming a drain rather than a pleasure.]

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December 31, 2006

The Passing Scene (VoP #107): It may have been a *classy move* by Neil Gaiman to withdraw **Anasazi Boys** from the Hugo nominations (I'm sure John Scalzi, whose **Old Man's War** moved up on to the list as a result, was pleased), but for some there will always be the opinion that **Spin** won the Hugo for “Best Science Fiction Novel Besides **Anasazi Boys**.”

Capri must have been very nice. Did you see Tiberius's villa? Fred Pohl refers to it now and again.

Wondrous Stories (VoP #108): *The biggest names in science fiction are not the most talented writers overall.* Quite. One point, at least for McCaffrey and Herbert, was that their signal works, the ones that made their series, were written under editorial supervision. And now, equally coincidentally (well perhaps not), the series are being continued by their children.

McCaffrey did do the occasional non-Pern work. One weekend, while on a trip, with nothing else to read, I read her **Black Horses for the King**. I didn't have high hopes for it and less so because it was another Arthurian epos. Surprise! It was pretty good.

Paying the bills is a necessity, though.

The Man Who Counts has a certain reader-twisting air about it. Consider: it begins with a pulp

setup; handsome virtuous young hero, beautiful princess, and comical ethnic assistant in dire danger on a crashed and sinking ship. But the *comical ethnic assistant* is in fact the boss and protagonist, indeed hero, while the handsome young guy is his flunky.

Perhaps the reason the novel did not get the recognition it deserved was that it was released in a cut version and the original text and title weren't restored until the seventies. As they say, **NOW you tell me.**

I liked the references in **Spin**: *So, does this make us water brothers?*

Stepping Into Tomorrow (**VoP** #109): Cyberpunk was a dead end. Jack McDevitt, whatever his other flaws, fleshed out his future worlds with a culture of their own, with cultural references that weren't twentieth-century Earth. Or, as was done in *Star Trek*, two twentieth-century Earthians and one other-planet.

But Cyberpunk stories had their morally dead computer hackers listening to the music that the writer liked at the time the story was written. Which sometimes was completely dead by the time the story was published. And their computer knowledge was similarly flimsy.

I wrote a satire for **Guy Lillian** on this: the beginning of a story that was what a Cyberpunk story would have been in the fifties; i.e., the characters drive a hot rod that was originally a 1987 Kaiser-Fraser and listening to a new Elvis Presley record, argue that Buddy Holly's new one is better.

Halcyon Days (**VoP** #110): Lloyd Penney: *I find it difficult to pick up a book, and find it Part 3 of 5. Quite.* Or Part 3 of some interminable saga. See above about the comments on McCaffrey and Herbert.

The Science Fiction Book Club has issued all of Chandler's John Grimes books in six combined volumes. They do that nowadays; Heinlein's juveniles come in four combined volumes, so does Burroughs's Barsoom series. With the longer books they insist on nowadays, such an agglomeration does follow.

Reply to **John Purcell**: Back in the seventies it was possible to have read all the worthwhile SF that had ever been written. As a result, everyone had a common ground from which to work. Now that's no longer possible, and not just because so many of the would-be readers are unable to wrap their minds around anything longer than a YouTube video or more complex than a text message.

E. B. Frohvet: Candy Smith-Foster lost her charm about the time that she piloted a pod without a heat shield to a safe landing. That should have warned us about the promise (so to speak) of **Threshold**.

Reply to me: I've always been righthanded. My older brother and his daughter are left-handed.

Reply to **Brent Kresovich**: So you want to read Samuel Shellabarger. **Captain from Castile** is

another pretty good one. The scene in the cage for example . . .

[Does the fact that **Anasazi Boys** was not on the ballot really mean it was innately superior to **Spin**? Or just that the novel was more popular than **Spin**? Frankly, I considered **American Gods** more a popular adventure than a Hugo-worthy classic novel, and was glad Gaiman did not win another award because of personal popularity trumping quality.

[We did hike all the way up the mountainside to Tiberius's villa, a site definitely worth visiting, both for its own merits and for the view of the surroundings from the top of Capri.

[Both Anne McCaffrey and Frank Herbert are good writers whose works, both in their famous series and otherwise, are generally enjoyable. I was not referring to either of them as lesser talents higher in the sf pantheon than more deserving writers.]

John Purcell

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Jan 4, 2007

First things first, I am very sorry to hear of the loss of your mother last November. My thoughts and prayers are with you and your family. My parents both died right around the holidays, too—dad died on Dec. 4, 1988, and mom on Nov. 27, 1999—so I understand how hard it is to deal with loss during the holiday season. Not many days go by without my thinking of either of them, but I believe they did a good job of raising my brother and I.

I have been a member of the SFBC, the History Book Club, and the Book of the Month Club before, and got some really nifty books over time. But right now being a book club member is not an option: really can't afford it. Besides, I can find better deals at the Half-Price Bookstore in town—which is where a lot of these book club books end up. So I get an even better savings if I just have a little patience. It's my favorite place to find reading material.

I have no real comments about sf books written by children of favorite authors mainly because it's been a long time since I've done any real current science fiction or fantasy reading. As for those tv shows you talk about, they're okay, but my wife and I have really been enjoying *Eureka*, *Dead Like Me*, *The 4400* and *The Dead Zone*. Those are our current favorite science fiction type viewing material on the airwaves. Of course, the classic *Star Trek* episodes on TVLand are always fun.

You are not kidding about the rapid passage of time when it comes down to raising a family. We can't get over the fact that our oldest is now 21, and may be considering marriage to her "boyfriend" in a year or two, and that our other two kids are 15 and 11. They certainly grow up in a danged hurry, that's for sure. Jean's father wasn't stretching the truth about how quickly 40 years will pass. What is really amazing is that I am seriously considering joining AARP on their "early membership deal." Granted, I can get discounted rates at restaurants and hotels, but there is a very important question here:

How in the hell did I get here so fast?!? I don't know about you, Robert, or the rest of the Usual Gang of Suspects in your zine, but I sure as heck didn't want to grow up this fast!

Oh, well. Life happens. Deal with it, John.

So as I sign off this time around, I do hope school treats you well this term; Blinn College doesn't start classes for another 11 days (Jan. 15th) so I still have a bit of time off; faculty/staff report back next Monday, though, to get ready for the semester. Don't you just love these meetings? (Don't answer that question!)

Have a good year, and I hope your students are good to you.

[There are no longer any good used bookstores in my vicinity, but I do get two "remaindered book" catalogs which offer some good choices, also a bit later than the book clubs, but when you're as far behind in your reading as I am, that is not a problem. They both have websites too, if you're interested: Daedalus Books (<http://www.daedalusbooks.com/>) and Hamilton Books (<http://www.hamiltonbook.com/>). I recommend both of them highly. <http://www.pandora.ca/> is a good online remaindered-book site which no longer issues a catalog, but is much stronger for f&sf than the other two are.

[I didn't mind growing up fast, it's the growing old fast that bothers me. I still feel exactly like I did 20-25 years ago, and so long as I don't look too far ahead, life is still fine. I hope it stays that way at least awhile longer.]

Alex Slate

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Jan 4, 2007

First, let me add my condolences to the others that you have undoubtedly received by now. I have not yet lost a parent (though my wife has), though we had one big scare with my mother some years back. Reading what you said about your mother, I would say that your mother would just about qualify as a tzaddik (Yiddish for a saint). I just finished reading Rabbi Joseph Telushkin's book **A Code of Jewish Ethics**, Vol. 1. One of the big topics in the book is the commandment against lashon hara (literally 'evil tongue) which is about gossip. The Jewish sages say that adhering to that commandment alone qualifies one as among the blessed. Your description of your mother's attitude toward gossip qualifies her in that regard.

I would also say that you, yourself, have picked that trait up from your mother and cannot remember anything bad being written about anyone in the time that I've read your 'zine. I wish I could be more like you and your mother in that regard.

On the passing scene... My stepson, Josh, graduated from UTSA mid-December with a Bachelors in Psychology. Laurel and one of my daughters, Sarah, drove down from Dayton for

the graduation. A couple days later, Josh drove up with them to Dayton. I flew up on the 24th. My parents, my brother and his family drove down from Detroit the day after Christmas so the whole family was together for part of the holidays. On the 28th, Josh took the bus to Rochester to spend some time with his step-mom before coming back to SA (next week). I stayed through New Years, and flew back on the 3rd.

The other big announcement is I will be moving. Mid-December I had an interview for a position in Washington, DC. After talking to Laurel, I have accepted and expect to move to DC sometime in mid-March, although the exact date is TBD. It's a promotion and a developmental assignment.

So for the next year to two years I will be in DC. We (Laurel and I) decided it's too good an opportunity to pass up, even though I'll still be living remote from the family for longer than we expected. After this job is over, I should basically have my choice of positions, and I'll move to Wright-Pat then.

Even though I buy relatively few books, I do read a lot more than that. I find myself using the library a lot more than I used to. Both the base library and the San Antonio public library. For instance today I am going to the library and returning 3 completed books; the Telushkin book mentioned above, Donaldson's **Lord Foul's Bane**, and Flint's **1824: The Arkansas War**. The last two I finished in about a week. However in addition, I also completed a couple of other books as well over the past 2 weeks (both re-reads of paperbacks I already owned).

The e-mailed versions of the zine seem to be working okay, but it did actually take me a while to get around to reading them. Of course, the same thing happens to me with paper zines. I guess it's me and not the methodology. Oh well, another fault to own up to...

[Thanks for the kind words about my mother, and extending them to me. However, I must confess that while I never say anything bad about another person either publicly or in print, I am extremely opinionated in my head and do not always think good thoughts about other people (hopefully who do not deserve good thoughts, but that is irrelevant in this instance). That certainly disqualifies me from any type of sainthood.

[Good luck on the move to D.C. I hope the distance from your family does not prove to be more of a hardship than you expected. I certainly understand how that can drain much of the pleasure from a move "up" career-wise.]

Lloyd Penney
January 10, 2007

I'm a couple of issues behind already. I still have to get used to the idea that you're going to be putting out **VoP** much more often. Here's comments on issues #110 and #111.

#110...I know people who have worked with elephants, and they are wonderful animals. The little ones (relatively speaking) are very loving, and the big ones love to play with water. Bath

time becomes a water fight just about every time, and they can be mischievous. They know they are large and do take efforts to be gentle and careful.

Je comprend un petit peu de Francais. Ma femme est un Franco-Ontarienne. So are my in-laws, so I've picked up some French along the way, but not enough to get by. We are fortunate that many people around the world care enough to learn and speak English for us, even if we don't care to learn their languages.

My loc...I think my lack of awareness of current C.J. Cherryh books comes from the fact that I no longer purchase copies of **Locus**; that's what kept me current. I had to cut costs everywhere, and seeing I was paying close to \$10 per issue (exchange, import costs, etc.), it had to go.

John Purcell is right, space opera, for all that we laugh at it, provided us with our first goshwow experience, and we secretly want it to return. I've always loved travels out to the Rim, and time travel, and rocket travel. That's what first grabbed me, and I really want something to grab me now, and space opera might as well return and do it to me again.

People seem to love the Olive Garden restaurants...so many American chains have come and gone in Canada. Olive Garden, ChiChi's, Fuddrucker's...all here and gone. Our own chains seem to work well because they know Canadian tastes, instead of simply providing American tastes, and expecting Canadian to adopt them.

I am not intimidated by authors, but I would want to make sure I have something to talk to them about, otherwise, I'd be just another blethering fanboy. I did chat for a few minutes with Forry Ackerman at the LA Worldcon a few months ago, but I think his memory of individuals is slowly going. I got an autograph and a handshake, and some memories to take home.

Our ideals of tolerance, civility and the ideals of compromise...these ideals are under attack from all sides by extremists of all religions and politics. Some of those ideals are under attack by Christian extremists in the White House.

I must get in touch with **Tom Sadler** again to see if I can get back on the mailing list. I know how expensive publishing and postage can be, so I hope he's getting back up to speed. I also know it costs more to mail to Canada, so I understand that added expense, too.

#111...Another book club? I figure that any house that has its walls lined with books will stay warm all year. All that paper must provide some level in insulation. I have not purchased any *Dune* books beyond what Frank Herbert wrote, but son Brian seems to be doing quite well with his father's universe.

All this writing about operations...I thought my eye operation in December was going to be rather painful, but I was heavily sedated...I woke up in the middle of the operation to tell my anesthesiologist that I could feel some discomfort, and he turned up the anesthesia. I woke up in post-op, actually feeling fairly good. I hope I never have an operation as invasive as that one.

I would imagine that posting **VoP** as an e-zine on eFanzines.com has reduced your costs. I

received as both a Word document and a .pdf file. Fewer copies, less postage...I prefer a paperzine, but I understand the economics involved.

My condolences at the death of your mother. My own parents are in their 70s and live by themselves in a house in the country north of Toronto. I call infrequently, but they seem to be doing well. I wonder how I will cope with the death of either...Yvonne has her mother left, but she is in her 80s, and we figure that she has a few years left, given the state of her health and mind.

[I don't believe **Locus** is as necessary for keeping in touch with the sf world as it was a decade ago. There are so many online sites which either publish reviews of f&sf books or discuss f&sf in some other way. For starters, there are two indispensable daily blogs which each publishes a daily list of links to new reviews, articles, and interviews related to sf. I check these site first thing when I log onto the computer each day: <http://thebookblogger.com/sfbc/>, which is the blog of SFBC editor Andrew Wheeler, and <http://www.sfsignal.com/>. <http://www.locusmag.com/> is also a useful site for daily news and links to reviews, etc.

[There are several valuable f&sf review sites which publish new reviews on a regular basis, either weekly or monthly. My favorites are:

[<http://www.sfsite.com/>, which just published its editors' choices as the best sf books of 2006;

[<http://www.scifi.com/sfw/>, which has a lot of media news, but includes a handful of new book reviews each week by the likes of Paul DeFilippo and John Clute;

[<http://www.sffworld.com/aindex.html>;

[<http://www.fantasybookspot.com/>;

[<http://sfrevu.com/>;

[<http://www.sfreviews.net/index.html>;

[<http://www.bestsf.net/reviewsmags.html>, which is devoted entirely to prozines and short fiction

[If you have access to a computer on a daily basis, these sites provide a better way to keep up with current f&sf than any printzine could possibly do. I recommend you visit them, especially the two blogs.

[Speaking purely for myself, I cannot imagine visiting Canada to eat at American chain restaurants. That was true when we visited England, Scotland, and Italy as well, although Italy seemed to have less American franchises than the British Isles did, even though I visited Italy 20 years after visiting England/Scotland.

[That eye surgery sounds awful indeed (but then again, I have an incredibly low threshold of pain). Hopefully neither of us will experience anything like that in the future.

Chris Garcia

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Jan 13, 2007

How ya doin? Always good to see another issue of **VoP** pop up on eFanzines.com. And who does better sexy robot-enhanced women than **Brad Foster**? The answer: no one.

I didn't much care for **One Million A.D.**, and I thought less of **Down These Dark Spaceways**. I wasn't even a big fan of **Forbidden Planets**, though I must admit that there were some high spots in the mix. I thought that "Rococo" was great thinking SF. There's little better than science fiction that makes you think hard and at times even leaves you wonderin' where your mind will go next. While I love Julie Czerneda (who I once got to introduce to a packed panel room at a con as Judy Tenuda), I wasn't a big fan of "No Place Like Home." It just felt a little flat. It was nowhere near as weak as Foster's "Midworld," though. I genuinely don't like Alan Dean Foster and this is the kind of story that reminds me why. The ending was weak and there was no real imparting of a Sense of Wonder that I could tell he was going for. I've often said that he's a hack, but I think he's slightly better than that.

"Empire Star" is one of those stories that I just love. It was one of the three earliest stories I ever read from Chip. Just great stuff and I'm glad to see it reprinted.

You know, the thing about Stephen Baxter is that he's best when he's getting away from his comfort zone. **Anti-Ice** was great, but his series have left me dry. I wasn't even a fan of his story collections. Individual stories can work much better. I find the same thing true of China Miéville too. Must be something in the British water.

I thought that **The DaVinci Code** was a far better book than a movie, though the movie was a fun watch. I own the DVD and have watched it a few times. As a historian, I like twisted history because I can turn my work mind off and just go with it. I didn't like **DaVinci** as much as Brown's novel **Angels & Demons**, which was very inventive. The scene where Ian McKeller reviews the Last Supper is a great piece of simple present-day science fiction. I've heard about Conclave, but haven't added it to my 93I gotta read that list.

I love the list of zines. Its added at least two to my hopeful reading list.

[It's funny, but I would expect a historian to dislike **The DaVinci Code**, since it was the warped history which scared me away from the book. Like most of my fellow fen, you and I have overlapping taste in science fiction, although you seem more geared towards "cutting edge" than I am.]

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January 18, 2007

My condolences on the passing of your mother.

VoP just keeps coming. This is getting very confusing. Anyway, this is in response to #109, #110, #111, #112, and a bit from #108.

Proof was rented. I have two problems with the movie. 1) The problem with her handwriting looking the same as her father's. It might look the same, but it would not be identical. A handwriting expert could confirm that it is hers. 2) The selling of the house by her sister. No doubt they were both the father's heirs. In that case they would both have to agree to the sale. She says no, then no sale. (At least that is the way it is here in California.) Also, it was too soon after the father's death and the estate would not have been settled. Despite these nitpickings I very much enjoyed the movie and thank you for recommending it in #108.

#109 – Your short work of fiction was enjoyable.

#110 - I first watched *Numb3rs* because they were having a program where an Indian was hiding proof of possible non-Indians having been here first. I was hooked and have watched it ever since, including reruns. I don't understand a lot of the math, but still enjoy it greatly. One of the major character math geniuses on *Numb3rs* (CBS) has taken a ride in the Space Shuttle up to the Space Station. He has now appeared on *24* (FOX) as a major supporting character. Interesting in that he is a very important part of *Numb3rs*. So, we'll just have to see how long he remains missing from the show.

This apparently goes back to #106. **Joseph T Major, Robert Michael Sabella, and Richard Dengrove**: OK—I've read *The Eight* and thoroughly enjoyed it despite the author saying that Thomas Jefferson was a Freemason, which isn't true.

Brant Kresovitch: Rafael Sabatini was one of my favorite authors years ago. A couple of years ago at the Camarillo Public Library I mentioned Sabatini to one of the librarians. She said "who"? I told her that they had several of his books in the library. Still no response. So, then I said **Captain Blood** and **The Sea Hawk**, both of which are in the library. She still didn't know about Rafael Sabatini.

#111 –You belong to 5 book clubs? I have belonged to some book clubs in the past. But, now I do not belong to any book clubs.

#112 – **The High Crusade** is a most enjoyable read. I've ordered **Resplendent** on Interlibrary Loan. I often go through Blockbuster and Hollywood Video and do not find anything on the new releases wall that interests me.

[I'm glad that you enjoyed some of my recommendations/ Perhaps I should watch *Numb3rs* in return. But then if I enjoyed it, how would I find the time to actually watch it? So maybe not.]

John Purcell

Jan 20, 2007

Again, an interesting issue of **VoP**: *Wondrous Stories*. Brad Foster continues to amaze with his wondrous artwork. Fun stuff.

I remember reading **The High Crusade** many years ago, and enjoyed it a great deal. My 11-year old son, who enjoys stories of knights, dragons, and sword-play type of fiction, would probably like it, too. While the novel may be a bit simplistic and predictable in plot-line, it most certainly has a message that is very relevant to today: "simpler does not necessarily mean stupid." This is terribly true.

Speaking of fun books to read, one of my Christmas gifts was the latest paperback version of **The Da Vinci Code**. Two days ago I started reading it, and already I'm fast approaching page 200 out of a 485-page novel. It may be categorized as a thriller, with all the attendant chase scenes and such, but it really is a lot of fun to read if you simply take it on the level of entertaining reading. I am not really interested in how Brown has twisted history, but he readily admits that this is a work of fiction based on historical facts. Whether some of these "facts" are verifiable or not is questionable, but I am not much of a stickler for details when I'm reading for enjoyment. All of which means to say that I am enjoying reading the book. As far as the movie goes, we'll see. I have never been one to enjoy a movie after I've read and enjoyed the book it was based on. I like historical fiction–mystery, especially–and **The Da Vinci Code** fits that bill nicely.

Great listing of future history science fiction novels. I just re-read **The Stars My Destination**, and you have a batch of really great books and series listed. Loved the *Gateway* series, **City**, and the entire *Ender Saga*. Some of these I am unfamiliar with, so now I get to add even MORE books to my "to read" list. Thanks a heap, Robert.

Fun jokes, especially the first one; I haven't heard that one before.

[I too rarely enjoy a movie after having read the book, although that might have been different had I read **2001** prior to seeing the movie, since I felt the book was inferior to the movie. That was a rare exception though.]

Brad Foster

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Feb 7, 2007

Got in the new trio set of issues of "Visions of Paradise" this weekend. Nifty to see you were able to make use of my pin-up rocket gal on the cover there.

Sometimes I'm blown away by the amount of reading you get done along with the rest of an incredibly full life. I manage to get to the post office once a week, I figure I'm walking the edge of the wild life!

I've been trying to use my spare time this winter to work some more on getting my website into shape. Getting there, getting there. Once I get all the biz part of it done, then gonna get into the fun stuff, like pics of toy robots and posting some of my more fannish things. Check it out now and then and it might even have something worth looking at down the line!

www.jabberwockygraphix.com

[Thanks so much for the cover. It's people like you that make so many fanzines the visual treats they could not possibly be otherwise. I can't wait to see your completed website, although it looks pretty inviting already.]

Lloyd Penney
February 6, 2007

Many thanks for **VoP** #112. I'm writing this in the prospective juror lounge at the Toronto Court House on University Avenue in downtown Toronto. I've been called for jury duty, and no matter what they say, it's a pain to do. I did it when I lived in Brampton, and never thought I'd have to do it again. However, there's a lot of waiting to do, so why not tackle some zines as I wait, and get caught up a little bit.

I'm quite sure that Robert Reed is as good an author as you say he is, but I've never read any of his works. In fact, I'd never heard of him until you mentioned him in these pages. That might be part of his problem. Julie Czerneda is an old friend...she used to live in Mississauga, just west of Toronto, but now she and her husband Roger live in Orillia, Ontario, where I grew up. I have read some of her works, but they aren't really to my tastes. Then again, I don't get to read modern books, so my knowledge of modern writings is very scanty, and Julie has her legion of fans. Perhaps my own tastes include space opera, and adventures out to the Rim. If this sub-genre is being revived, I'd like to see some of it, and see how it measures up to the original.

Ah, so much to read, so much to miss out on. I liked the idea of future history when I read Asimov's *Foundation trilogy*, and I might like it again when created by more modern hands. I've read most of the list you provide, and there's some good memories connected with each one. I have liked some alternate history books, but as with you, I dislike military SF, and much of alternate history SF is military in nature.

I see some zines I don't get, and while I'd like to see them, I might not be too heart-broken if I

don't. I receive plenty of them all the time, and I download almost everything that comes through eFanzines.com.

[Robert Reed has written some very wondrous stuff, particularly his series of stories about the "Great Ship." There are two novels in the series, **Marrow** and **Well of Stars**, as well as a connecting novella "Mere," which is probably not in a local library since it was published by PS Publishing; I have not read it myself. If you have never read Jack McDevitt though, he is the type of very good traditional sf writer you might like, especially his *Alex Benedict* series.]