

Feline Mewsings #48



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#48

May 2012

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Contributions of art, reviews, articles, fiction, letters, even poetry welcome. Publication not guaranteed, but all submissions will be given due consideration. Deadline for next issue: 15 July 2012.

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If you are reading this electronically and would prefer to receive a printed version, please let me know.

* Editorial / Introduction

From this issue onwards, this zine will be distributed in StippleAPA, an APA run from St. Paul, MN. If you are not in StippleAPA and wish to learn more, please e-mail, call, or write me.

I hope to bring back the "Book Reviews" section next time.

* * *

* Local Outings

Aida: Verdi's opera was the penultimate performance of the Arizona Opera's 2011-12 season. Despite the shortcomings of a small stage, I thought they did a creditable job. With only a couple of minor cavils, I thought it was an excellent production. The singer who played Aida (Lisa Daltirus) was really good. The procession included a pair of greyhounds and a camel. There was another camel in the wings, but it could not be persuaded to get on stage.

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The Great Gatsby: I'd forgot how depressing the end of Fitzgerald's book was. The play was faithful to the book and was excellently performed. I found the sets to be quite clever.

#

Red: This was a two-man play about the artist Mark Rothko and covered a period of time toward the end of his life. I presume it is largely speculative, since he did not have an audience viewing his actual life. No one can really know what went on in his mind. I further surmise that the character, Ken, of his assistant is fictional; he had an assistant, but he may not have been the character as depicted in the play. I found no information to confirm that he had an assistant named Ken. Through a dialogue between the two characters, we are given some insight into Rothko's mind. The events around which the play revolve are those related to his last commission. The last works he did were originally done for The Four Seasons Restaurant in the Seagram Building in New York City. The play speculates about his thinking on these works. He eventually concludes that the venue is not right for his paintings. After his suicide in 1970, it took a number of years of litigation to distribute his many works among a number of museums and galleries.

The play was excellently performed by Denis Arndt and Connor Toms. However, it clearly was not everyone's cup of tea. It's not the sort of play that I would call entertaining. I personally enjoy many introspective plays, but a couple near us left only about five or ten minutes into the play.

#

Orfeo Ed Euridice: This opera by Gluck was the last for the Arizona Opera company's season. It is the familiar mythological story, but this one has a happy ending. It's an extremely short opera and was presented with a long intermission. It was done well enough, but I found it somewhat unsatisfying. I didn't care for the happy ending.

* * *

* Trip Back East

This trip was conceived when my British pen pal invited us to her wedding in NYC; we've been corresponding since at least 1992. We met once before when she visited LA with her first husband, who has since died. I had thought to make a big trip out of Chicon, this year's world science fiction convention. When this opportunity came, I ditched Chicon in favour of the wedding. For one thing, it would take us a lot farther east, giving us the opportunity to see a lot of friends and family in the northeast. We drove, as we have on most trips since the Twin Towers incident that made flying an unpleasant experience. This gave us the opportunity to visit people along the way as well.

We started off on Tuesday, 27 March 2012, a sunny and pleasantly warm day. The first day was pretty brutal mileage-wise. For one thing I hadn't taken into account the time changes. Most of the country was

already practicing daylight savings. This meant that just driving into New Mexico meant a time change, since we in Arizona do not practice the silly time change thing. Driving into Texas meant a second time change. I had planned the trip using the AAA Triptik site. I should have paid more attention to the route it had recommended. The Lexus had a mind of its own and started us off on a completely different route that probably lengthened our drive.

Mike does all the driving on these trips. I doze off from time to time. Most of the time, we play old time radio shows stored on our various mp3 devices through the car speakers. On the first leg, we didn't have to stop for lunch; I'd brought lunch with me. Most of the rest of the trip, we stopped at fast food places to get take-out lunch. Mike usually doesn't eat breakfast or lunch. We made two refuelling stops that first day. At one stop in Sedillo Hill, NM, the service area included a sort of kitchenette with a sink where I refilled one of my Brita filter water bottles. I have two such water bottles. They're great; because no matter what kind of water you put in them, the filters make it taste good. As we entered Texas, we saw some pronghorn antelopes. We arrived way past our usual dinner time at the Ambassador Hotel in Amarillo. Fortunately there was a TGI Friday's right in the hotel, so we were able to have a nice dinner there. They offer a gluten-free menu.

The next day I woke up in time to have the free hotel breakfast buffet; I also got a banana for Mike. It was pretty chilly in the morning. At hotels I usually catch up with e-mail and Facebook, but I also managed to keep up with both in the car on my iPhone. As we drove east, the humidity started to increase. On the road in Oklahoma, we saw three dead armadillos, the only ones I've ever seen in the wild. I'm told they are nocturnal, so we were unlikely to see any live ones. This day's drive was of a more reasonable length, and we arrived at the Marriott Residence Inn in North Little Rock at a reasonable time. We found a nearby restaurant that had gluten-free pizza (American Pie Pizza), so we went there for dinner.

Thursday was devoted to sightseeing and meeting a friend. After breakfast we went to the Witt Stephens, Jr., Central Arkansas Nature Center, where friend Ken F___ works. He met us after our arrival and told us about the natural history of Arkansas; there's a large topographical map in the front of the centre. Arkansas has five geological areas. In the northwest are the Ozark Mountains, which is actually a plateau. Just south of that is the Arkansas Valley created by the Arkansas River. South of that are the Ouachita Mountains. South of that is the West Gulf Coastal Plain; this plain extends across the southern portion of the country from Texas to Georgia. It was covered by the waters of the Gulf of Mexico until about fifty million years ago. The entire eastern part of the state is Mississippi River alluvial plan. The wildlife in each of these areas is different. The exhibits show the wildlife in each of the regions. The centre is located on the banks of the Arkansas River, and you can see some wildlife outside as well. After looking over the exhibits there and saying good-bye to Ken, we went to the nearby Clinton Library. We got there just before a tour started, so went on that. About 13:00, we had lunch at the somewhat pretentious Cafe 42 at the library. After lunch we finished looking at the exhibits. We also looked at a small wetlands nearby. Then we went over to Heifer International, which is also close by. They have a small exhibit building. We also toured their office building, which is LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) certified platinum as is the Clinton Library. After that we went to the Clinton Museum Shop, which is close to the Nature Center.

We met Ken in the evening for dinner at Lilley's Dim Sum. Dinner was good and the company excellent. We had a long and entertaining conversation, but eventually we had to stop and say good-bye.

Friday we got up really early for the next leg of our trip to Louisville, KY. As we approached Louisville, we saw lots of white dogwood and many other flowering trees. In Louisville itself there were pink dogwoods as well. We reached Louisville in plenty of time to meet Joe M___ and Lisa P___ at an Outback Steakhouse for dinner. Afterward we visited their friend and boarder, Grant, at a nursing home. He had eight visitors in all, sort of a mini-convention. Joe took a group photo. We left before the others,



because Mike was getting tired.

The Pittsburgh area was the destination on Saturday, 31 March 2012. The drive was much shorter than any of the previous ones, and we reached Jim and Laurie M____'s home in mid-afternoon. They gave us a tour of their two-story house, which is about the same square footage as ours. Then they drove us to a hill overlooking Pittsburgh where we took photos; it was pretty chilly. After that we had dinner at a restaurant in a converted gas station. From this point on until we were back in warmer territory, I had the liner zipped into my raincoat.

Our hosts treated us to a very nice breakfast the next morning before we had to depart on the next leg of our trip. It was a very chilly 43°F. We saw deer and rabbits as we left Pittsburgh. We arrived in Succasunna, NJ, about 15:45. We stayed with one of Mike's nieces, who lives by herself in a condo. Mike's older brother, Harold, lives nearby. As Linda was still at work, we had dinner with Harold at Mario's Famous Pizza. Their gluten-free pizza was the best I have had anywhere.

Monday, 2 April 2012, was the day for us to visit a friend in Pennsylvania. We hadn't seen Stella N____ since she and her husband had moved away from California several years ago. She lives in the Poconos, and we had a pleasant drive there. The weather felt like late winter or very early spring, although they'd had much warmer temperatures about a week or more before. We reached Stella's place in late morning. After she gave us a tour of her house, we went to an Italian restaurant. Unfortunately the meal was ruined for Mike when the waitress spilled Thousand Island dressing all over us, mostly him. He got stains all over his jacket, one with lots of pockets. He was furious and lost his appetite completely. The restaurant offered to pay to clean his jacket and took it to a nearby cleaner, but we had to wait a few hours. We waited in comfort at Stella's place, where we were able to continue our conversation. Mike's jacket got satisfactorily cleaned, so we were on our way back to New Jersey by 16:30.

The next day we treated Linda, Harold, and Marie (Harold's wife) to lunch at Cafe Metro to thank them for their hospitality.

Wednesday, 4 April 2012, was the big day. We took a bus into NYC for my pen pal's wedding. We had booked a room at a hotel to stay at after the wedding. We were able to check in early, but we had time for Mike to shop at the B & H Photo/Video Superstore; he bought a wireless remote control for his camera to help with astrophotography. Our hotel was Element at Times Square West. Our room was small but had everything you could want.

We left the hotel with plenty of time to spare to get to Rockefeller Center for the wedding. We got there more than a half hour before everyone else. Eventually other people trickled in, and we started introducing ourselves and taking photos of each other. There were thirteen in all in the wedding party, including the bride and groom. Trisha the bride, Mike the groom, and Sarah, Mike's daughter from a previous marriage, made their entrance in a limousine. We were then led to the Top of the Rock, an outdoor observation platform, after two elevator rides, for the wedding ceremony and many photos. It was a gorgeous sunny day. The observation platform on the other side of the building was in shade and chilly. The photo session continued at street level outside among flowers in planters. After that we were led to a small room for champagne and toasts. A few people had joke gifts and other small gifts. We sang a song from *Mamma Mia* (her favourite musical) for Trisha. Too soon the allotted hour was over, and we took a minibus to the World Yacht dock on the Hudson River for a ride in the Duchess.

The cruise was quite fabulous. We were served dinner in several courses throughout most of the cruise. Actually we had appetizers before we left the dock. Other passengers trickled in after we started our meal. The food was good and the company better. I got along famously with Mike's daughter, Sarah. She lives in Australia and is on Facebook. During the evening my Mike took lots of photos while I enjoyed chatting with everyone.

The next morning, I washed my hair at the hotel. The shower in our hotel room was very well equipped with two shower heads, one a handheld. Shortly thereafter we checked out from the hotel. We took a cab to the famous Apple store near Central Park. After scouting around the store, we strolled through the southern end of Central Park. Then we strolled to a Five Guys hamburger place a few blocks away for lunch. We still had more than an hour to get to Port Authority to catch our return bus, so we walked there through Times Square. The bus ride back to New Jersey was uneventful.

On Friday we visited Roberta R____ in Irvington a short drive away. After we arrived at Roberta's, we visited in her apartment for a while before deciding to have lunch at the Huck Finn Diner. Despite its

name, it's a very nice coffee shop. The day turned out to be pleasantly warm.

That evening Linda had a *soirée* for family. Besides us, there were Harold and Marie, Karla (Harold and Marie's other daughter) and her family, and cousins from Austria.

The next day, we got underway very early for our drive to Massachusetts. It took us about three and a half hours to reach Old Sturbridge Village. The day was cold but sunny. Spring flowers were just starting to come up. The place is sort of like Williamsburg but much smaller. We were there until about 14:30.

After that we drove to Marblehead, MA, where I lived with my family from 1959 through early 1965. The drive was uneventful, but Mike didn't like driving on the narrow and windy old New England streets filled with crazy Massachusetts drivers. During our stay there, I drove around town except when we were being driven around by friends. We stayed at a bed and breakfast called the Marblehead Inn.

On Easter Sunday, Kendra B____, an old friend from back in my elementary school days, and her husband, Jerry, picked us up at the Inn. They drove us around the town visiting different places I remembered until it was time for our lunch reservations at Landings, which is right on the water. They treated us to a great meal and better company. Afterward they drove us to Marblehead Neck. Marblehead is a peninsula connected to the mainland by a fairly narrow stretch of land. The Neck is another peninsula just barely connected to the rest of Marblehead. Since the whole town is landlocked, the roads were the same as when I lived there. However, now every piece of land that can be built on has been built on. The Neck is the expensive part of town, and it used to be mainly summer homes; now that is also all built up.

In the evening we had dinner with another friend, Aiko R____. Aiko and her husband, Bunny, were friends of the family when we lived in Marblehead. Bunny has been having health problems and was in a nursing home. However, we had a pleasant dinner with Aiko at a restaurant in nearby Swampscott. On the way we stopped briefly at her son Kenny's for a short visit; I babysat Kenny and his brother, Alan, when they were very young. After dinner we stopped at Aiko's house for a while before returning to the Inn.

Easter Monday saw us on the road early again. We drove first to Merrimack, NH, where we got together over a late breakfast/brunch with Ken W____. Mike and Ken have been corresponding by e-mail and talking on the phone since the early 1980s, but they'd never met in person before. Ken showed us around his house, which is in a nice wooded area. Then we went to eat at Joe's Diner.

We had more driving afterward to get to Rochester, NY, where I lived for many years. It was becoming clear that the estimated travel times from the AAA Triptik site were way on the optimistic side, especially east of the Mississippi, where the speed limits are much lower than in the West--top speed of 65 mph as opposed to 75. We were scheduled to have dinner with the friends with whom we were staying. John and Joanne H____ were very gracious and waited for our late arrival. Dinner fixed by Joanne was delicious.

We had been informed about the illness of another friend in Rochester, so on Tuesday we drove down to Canandaigua to visit Deborah K____ at the hospital. She had recently suffered from a bad stroke and was now suffering from a *C. difficile* infection. As I write she is still recovering.

Wednesday, 11 April 2012, was an open day. I had tried to contact a couple of other friends in the Rochester area, but my efforts had been unsuccessful. We decided to go to the Museum of Play. Joanne works there, and she kindly gave us free passes to get in. The ground floor was full of hands on things for kids and exhibits interspersed among them. The place was filled with kids, so we didn't do any playing. The second floor was mostly exhibits and a couple of play areas. The exhibits have toys from many eras. There are large collections of dolls. There was also a fair sized butterfly exhibit. I was exhausted by the time we saw everything. I needed re-energizing and made a lunch of a strawberry fudge sundae. We returned to the H____ house about 14:00. After the H____s arrived home, we took them out for dinner at a Thai restaurant in Webster.

The next day was a busy one. For lunch we met Mary M____ for lunch at the Back Nine Grill in Pittsford. Lunch was satisfactory and the conversation more so.

For dinner there was a much larger gathering of several friends. Joanne drove the three of us to P. F. Chang's. There were four others in our group. Dinner went well but all too quickly, and I didn't have adequate time to talk with everyone.

Friday we got up really early for our long drive to St. Louis. At least we were driving west and would gain time rather than lose it. Still we arrived somewhat later than we'd intended. We were staying with Candace O____, a childhood friend, and her husband, Bob W____. Because of our late arrival, we had

dinner, graciously prepared by Candace, almost immediately after we got there. Mike retired before the delicious dessert. He was really tired from all the driving. Candace and I talked way too long, but catching up was fun. Candace is also gluten intolerant, so I had no problems with food at her house. From this point on, the weather was much milder; and the lining came out of my coat. Things were lush and green in Missouri.

On Saturday, 14 April 2012, we had lunch with Dave K____ and Nila T____ at a nearby restaurant. Because of rain we drove, even though it was only a short distance away. We met at a place called Blueberry Hill. While we ate, the sun came out, and it became quite muggy. I met Dave while living in LA; but he had moved away years before and settled down with Nila, whom I met for the first time.

Back at Candace's we spent more time talking. It was really nice to talk with her. We hadn't done so since the mid-70s or so. In fact we had lost touch for a while. I only found her through her sister, whom I heard on a quiz show on NPR, and the help of the Internet.

Candace and I talked more the next morning. Fortunately we had a relatively short drive to Independence, on the other side of Missouri. We ran into some heavy rain on the way. We arrived in Independence about 14:00 and checked into the Comfort Inn. Then we drove to the D____ home in Blue Springs. We spent a couple of hours there chatting. Then we decided to have dinner at Zio's Italian Restaurant. Dan and Danise's son, Ian, joined us there. Dinner was lively and enjoyable.

On Monday we drove to Colorado Springs, which we reached before 16:00. After settling into the room, I called Jeff D____, a friend I made when we were both living in Rochester. Carol D____, unfortunately, was not feeling well. We met Jeff for an early dinner at Flatiron's American Bar and Grill. Dinner was fine, as was the company. Jeff gave me a review copy of a new book.

The next day we made the long drive back home. We arrived there about 19:15. Wednesday was a busy catch-up day. It took me more than a week to be fully caught up with most things and back to a normal schedule.

By the way apps available for the iPhone to help find gluten-free restaurants were very helpful.

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Amy's Motley Media Musings

Reviews by Amy Harlib



Message from Amy: For the foreseeable future, "Amy's Motley Media Musings" will resurrect all the reviews in my files in alphabetical order, for they are not readily found anywhere else any more. I hope these will contain some interesting perspectives to amuse and enlighten on various genre and popular culture offerings in the past several years—opinions from a curious, feminist, inquiring, and, I'd like to think, culturally educated, mind. I hope *Feline Mewsings* readers find what I have to say worthwhile. Thank you very much for your attention.

***Buffy My Love: A Remembrance in Words and Photographs* by Philip Dattilo (Wordfarer Books, Ann Arbor, NY, 2002, \$19.95, hardcover, ISBN#: 0971866856).**

Professional photographer Philip Dattilo reminisces in text and his own camera work about the very special eponymous cat that eventually became his beloved companion until the natural end of her twenty-one year life span. Printed on quality glossy stock in a pleasing eight-inch square hardcover format, this small book of only seventy-seven pages packs in volumes of heartfelt anecdotes, each page of narrative graced with one of the author's expert and beautiful black and white or full colour photos.

Buffy My Love begins by recounting the story of the titular feline's early years, which Dattilo would later learn. In 1978, a tiny, separated from her mother, lost kitten got rescued by six year old schoolgirl Tristana AKA Tana. She and Vanessa, her four year old sister, and their parents took the little stray into their suburban home in America's heartland and raised her. Christened Buffy by her saviour, the

foundling lived and thrived, growing into adulthood to become a gorgeous long-haired white cat with tabby patches.

When in 1984, Dattilo moved into the house next door, it wasn't long before the neighbour's affectionate, strikingly lovely cat caught his eye and won his heart too. The author soon became so friendly with Buffy's humans that the two households practically became co-caregivers until a combination of circumstances caused a significant change. Dattilo's relationship with his girlfriend, gradually growing more estranged, finally ended and Tana's asthma worsened to such a degree that for health reasons, she could no longer keep a furry creature in her home.

In 1988, Dattilo adopted Buffy, who then became the photographer/writer's full-time companion, assuaging his loneliness in a joyous life together that would last until 1999. Dattilo recalls those years with warmth and passion, portraying Buffy's complex, beguiling, and quirky feline nature with perception and insight. Her beauty and sweet nature won the hearts of many clients and visitors and enhanced greatly Dattilo's quality of life. The author also effectively conveys how Buffy's affection for him and vice versa had important spiritual meaning for him – God's all-encompassing love for creation embodied in the bond between man and cat and the resulting benefits. As above, so below – the large, writ small.

When, the inevitable end came – how it happens and the way Dattilo describes how he copes will resound poignantly with and bring tears to the eyes of every reader blessed by the love for and of a furry friend. Here the prose waxes eloquently poetic, intensifying the vivid writing that characterized the story from the beginning. Dattilo's words and his superb portraits of the truly exquisite Buffy represent a tribute that memorably serves to enshrine their special relationship in a way that will universally echo in the hearts of everyone fortunate enough to have experienced the joys, antics, and pains of cherishing the unique felines in their lives. *Buffy My Love*, a lovely book in every way – text, photos, and physical presentation – would be an aesthetically pleasing, emotionally rewarding, and thus valuable addition to any cat lover's or animal lover's library.

-- Amy Harlib

* * *



Jonathan's Science Corner

by Jonathan Vos Post



HYPERPUBLISHING: THE EDGE OF SUPERPRODUCTIVITY

Part Two (of two)

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Poetry and the Web

The example of John Keats is interesting in our context. Why? Because poets are both the paradigm of the creative writer and the most associated with madness of all writers.

“How, specifically, does motivation affect creativity, both the generation and editing of ideas?” asks Flaherty. “Hypergraphia doesn't guarantee writing skill; its products can range from the simple (for instance, an epileptic patient whose copious journal was endless repetition of the thought ‘Thank GOD, no seizures’ in variously coloured ink) to the sublime (the novels of Dostoevsky or Flaubert, also temporal-lobe epileptics). But a compulsive need to write may indirectly make good writing more likely by increasing the time the writer spends practicing. This may be one factor in the very high incidence of manic-depressive writers. Kay Redfield Jamison calculates that poets are up to 40 times more likely than the general population to have had manic episodes.”

As William Shakespeare summarized:

The lunatic, the lover, and the poet,
 Are of imagination all compact:
 One sees more devils than vast hell can hold,
 That is, the madman; the lover, all as frantic,
 Sees Helen's beauty in a brow of Egypt:
 The poet's eye, in a fine frenzy rolling,
 Doth glance from heaven to earth, from earth to heaven;
 And, as imagination bodies forth
 The forms of things unknown, the poet's pen
 Turns them to shapes, and gives to airy nothing
 A local habitation and a name.
 Such tricks hath strong imagination,
 That, if it would but apprehend some joy,
 It comprehends some bringer of that joy;
 Or in the night, imagining some fear,
 How easy is a bush supposed a bear!

The writing of hyperpublishing on the world wide web exists in cyberspace – the modern incarnation of airy nothing – and are read on the screens or printed out on the page, thus giving them a local habitation. The URL substitutes for the name.

The Opposite of Writer's Block

The web may not help those with writer's block, but it certainly gives one something to do when unable to write. What sort of people seem to have, if anything, "the opposite of writer's block?"

Lets us examine some cases of extremely prolific book authors, starting with one that you never heard of – unless you are a scholar of Judaism.

God's Rule: The Politics of World Religions, edited by Jacob Neusner (Georgetown University Press; 281 pages; \$29.95). Essays on how political power, and religion's relationship to it, are constructed in Buddhism, Hinduism, ...

See also *New York Times*, 13 April 2005, p.B1, "Scholar of Judaism, Professional Provocateur", by Dinitia Smith. "Jacob Neusner, a mild-seeming grandfatherly man relaxing in his easy chair, might have published more books than anyone alive." "As of this morning, 905," he said recently.... Hold it! ... [he] just called to say that there are 924. And, no, he doesn't count revisions or translations...."

"... *The Chronicle of Higher Education* has called him probably the most prolific scholar in the nation.... Mr. Neusner said that it was impossible to know the total sales figures for all 924 books, though he does receive annual royalties for them ranging "between the high four and low five figures."

Examples of Prolific Authors:

- Samuel Hopkins Adams- Prolific American writer, novelist, journalist
- Steve Allen (1921-2000), comedian, essayist, pioneer TV broadcaster, also was a prolific songwriter, with over eighty-five hundred songs and tunes to his name.
- Timothy Shay Arthur, prolific and voluminous American writer, novelist
- Aphra Behn (ca.1640-xxxx) though not the first female writer, she was the first to do so for money, an action that attracted scorn and even fury. Aphra suffered frequent unfavourable comparisons to prostitutes: they sold their body for money while she sold her mind. This perpetual criticism, however, did nothing to deter Aphra, who became the most prolific playwright and author of her time, writing a total of seventeen plays and thirty works of fiction. Breaking numerous gender barriers, Aphra rebelled against her era. Despite living in a time when women were actively discouraged from having a career, Aphra earned a successful living as a spy, playwright, and author.
 "All Women together ought to let flowers fall on the tomb of Aphra Behn, for it is she who earned them the right to speak their minds. It is she—shady and amorous as she was—who makes it not quite fantastic for me to say to you tonight: Earn five hundred a year by your wits" (As quoted by Virginia

Woolf in *A Room of One's Own*).

- Enid Mary Blyton (1897 – 1968) is probably the most prolific children's author of all time, with over six hundred books to her credit.
- Edgar Rice Burroughs – best known for the Tarzan books
- Dame Barbara Cartland – British author who churned out over seven hundred books (largely interchangeable romance novels), almost entirely dictated. Her output came to an amazing 723 books, selling more than a billion copies worldwide. Cartland put out a novel a week, often dictating to secretaries while reclining on a chaise longue. Her two sons, Ian and Glen, ran the business and researched Cartland's books. In 1991, Queen Elizabeth II made her a Dame.
- G. K. Chesterton – British author
- Agatha Christie – Queen of Crime, prolific Mystery author, with seventy-nine wonderful books and many unforgettable sleuths, including Hercule Poirot and Miss Jane Marple. Her works have been translated into forty-five languages and an estimated billion copies have been sold.
- Diderot and some 17th Century French friends (including Voltaire and Rousseau) took twenty-nine years to create the *Encyclopédie, ou Dictionnaire Raisonné des Sciences, des Arts et des Métiers*.
- Alexandre Dumas Père -- (French writer, one of the most prolific and most popular authors of the 19th century, (1802-1870).
- Harlan Ellison
- Leonhard Euler – the most prolific Mathematician in history
- E. M. Forster
- Thomas Fuller -- British clergyman and writer, one of the most prolific authors of the 17th century. (1608-1661).
- Stephen King
- Jack London
- Paul S. Newman, the world's most prolific comic book writer (according to the *Guinness Book of World Records*)
- Pliny the Elder – Roman historian cranked out a 37-volume encyclopaedia.
- Fred Reinfeld -- world's most prolific chess writer, with more than a hundred book titles.
- Georges Simenon, French author, whose eighty-four Maigret novels were far less than half of his corpus of 166 novels under his own name, adding his pseudonymous work we have roughly four hundred books; it took him only eleven days to write a novel of about two hundred pages and sometimes as few as three days.
- John Updike
- Tu Yu wrote a Chinese encyclopaedia in the ninth century.



Reading the works of these prolific authors, or even measuring their works by shelf-feet, one is led to questions at the intersection of science and the humanities. As Flaherty phrased one question, “How can both neuroscience and literature bear on the question of what makes writers not only able, but want, even need, to write? How can we understand the outpouring of authors like Joyce Carol Oates or Stephen King? Why does John Updike see a blank sheet of paper as radiant, the sun rising in the morning?”

William Pritchard commented on Updike, "He must have had an unpublished thought, but you couldn't tell it."

"This seems -- and is -- an unbelievably complex psychological trait," continues Flaherty, "yet it is not so complex that it cannot be studied. Neurologists have found that changes in a specific area of the brain can produce hypergraphia, the medical term for an overpowering desire to write. Thinking in a counterintuitive, neurological way about what drives and frustrates literary creation can suggest new treatments for hypergraphia's more common and tormenting opposite, writer's block. Both of these conditions arise from complicated abnormalities of the basic biological drive to communicate. Evidence that ranges from Nabokov to neurochemistry, Faulkner to functional brain imaging, shows that thinking about excesses and dearths of writing can also clarify normal literary output and the mechanisms of creativity."

Flaherty suggests that those recent books on creativity that attempt a neuroscientific perspective "have neglected crucial brain regions such as the temporal lobe and limbic system in favour of a still-popular -- but oversimplified -- emphasis on a right brain-left brain dichotomy."

Neurologists neglect the temporal lobe, she believes, "because damage to the temporal lobes does not produce glaring motor or cognitive problems. But the temporal lobes are important for producing literature, in part because they are necessary for understanding semantic meaning and also meaning in its philosophical senses, as in the *Meaning of Life*."

As we have seen, perturbations of the temporal lobes, such as temporal-lobe epilepsy, can generate hypergraphia. "Some people with epilepsy stemming from temporal-lobe damage have hypergraphia so strong," emphasizes Flaherty, "that they will write on toilet paper or use their own blood for ink if nothing else is at hand."

In the Age of the Internet, there is something even cheaper to write upon -- and as ephemeral, and as easily soiled -- as toilet paper. The choices include e-mail, blogs, chat rooms, and web sites of all description. The mainstream media love to poke fun at chat rooms and blogs, in part because these have begun to infringe on the domain of card-carrying journalists. Also, in part, the mainstream media love to emphasize the more disturbed and pathetic users of the Internet, in the same way that local newspapers' coverage of science fiction conventions usually points to the stranger costumes and more cultish behaviours, thereby entirely missing the point of these conventions.

Flaherty also sees a connection. Clinical hypergraphia, she says, "is usually linked to other personality traits, including unstable mood and motivation, and a tendency to ruminate on the philosophical or religious Big Questions." Science fiction and poetry, two genres particularly associated with hypergraphia and hyperpublishing, are also often centred on "Big Questions" and cosmological explorations. "Similar traits," says Flaherty, "are often seen in people with manic-depression during their manic periods. And there is evidence for selective changes in the temporal lobes of people with mania." This leads us to "Pick's Disease."

Pick Your Poison

"The temporal lobes appear to be important for the drive to seek beauty and meaning in nonliterary art forms as well," explains Flaherty. "When Pick's disease, a rare form of dementia, selectively affects the temporal lobes, its victims may gain breathtaking artistic or musical drive, even as their ability to take part in other activities disintegrates."

"The same brain changes that drove the epileptic Vincent van Gogh's hypergraphic letters to his brother Theo seem also to have driven his frenetic painting -- at his peak he produced a new canvas every thirty-six hours. In some respects, hypergraphia and compulsive art-making are special cases of the more general phenomenon of a sense of vocation or of workaholism. They can shed light on how or whether to control these double-edged states. Nearly all of us, artists or not, feel the joy of work, the terrors of work."

A. J. Liebling was one of *New Yorker* magazine's most popular writers. James Thurber once wrote, "Liebling is the only fast-writing fat man I know". About himself, Liebling wrote, "I can write better than

anybody who can write faster, and I can write faster than anybody who can write better".

Prolificacy in other fields:

Lyubov Sokolova — Soviet cinematography's ultimate strong woman with a hard life — played in so many films throughout her career that she earned a spot in the *Guinness Book of World Records*, which put the number of her pictures at 325.

MOST PROLIFIC TV PRODUCER:

Aaron Spelling has produced a total of 3,842 hours of television since 1956, comprising 3,578 hours of TV series and 264 hours of TV movies. His output has included *Charlie's Angels*, *Dynasty*, *7th Heaven*, *Melrose Place*, and *Beverly Hills 90210*, which features his daughter, Tori.

Michael Ashley, author of the Random House Crostics series of original puzzles, is America's most prolific crostician — author of crossword puzzles. His puzzles appear frequently in *Games*, Dell magazines, and numerous other newspapers and magazines, including the *New York Times*.

One can make a distinction between the largest number of works written, works published, and copies of publications sold. The world's most prolific writer might be some obsessive compulsive scribbler who has never been in print, for example. J. K. Rowling's Harry Potter books may turn her into the human with the most books sold and the first billionaire author. J. K. Rowling's *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire*, the fourth book in the acclaimed series, received (according to Guinness's) world record advanced orders of 5.3 million copies from around the world. The book also holds the record for the largest first-run print with 4.8 million copies, of which 3.8 million were printed in the USA (forty times as many as an average best seller) and one million in the UK.

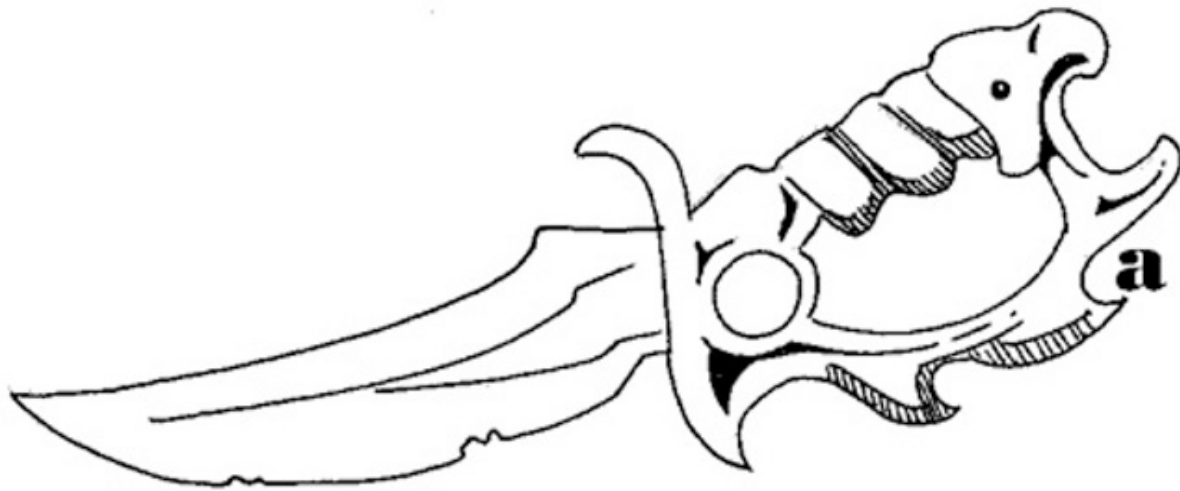
Sidney Sheldon has garnered international praise and recognition in four fields, as winner of an Oscar, a Tony, and an Edgar Allan Poe Award from the Mystery Writers of America. Sheldon has over two hundred television scripts, twenty-five major motion pictures, six Broadway plays, and eighteen novels (which have sold over three hundred million copies) to his credit, ranking him as one of the world's most prolific writers, in terms of book copies sold. With each of his books having hit #1 on the *New York Times* bestseller list, Sheldon is one of the three best-selling authors alive today. According to *The Guinness Book of Records*, "The world's most translated author is Sidney Sheldon, whose books have been distributed in more than one hundred eighty countries in fifty-one languages."

The 18th and 19th century seem filled with people who wrote letters for a major part of most days. E-mail has rather rapidly displaced that activity. Florence Nightingale was one of the world's most prolific letter writers, and the late W. J. Bishop observed that "at least 15,000 original letters . . . are known to exist and the total may be more than 20,000; the exact number will never be known, but the Nightingale correspondence is likely to prove to be the most extensive collection of letters ever written by one person". Such persons sometimes have posthumous multi-volume collections of their correspondence published. It seems unlikely that anyone but scholars would want to read a prolific author's lifetime production of e-mail. But e-mail can be easily "repurposed" into other media, such as blogs, web pages, and (sufficiently edited) articles for newspapers or magazines. The essay that you are reading began a handful of emails that I sent to Cory Doctorow, John Shirley, and other netizens.

As an example of the study of prolific authorship being turned recursively on itself, consider "Scholarly Productivity in Behavior Analysis: The Most Prolific Authors and Institutions from 1992 to 2001", Daniel B. Shabani, et al., *The Behavior Analyst Today*, Vol. 5 (2004) No.3. http://www.ku.edu/~absc/pdfs_docs/bat-5-3_22-30.pdf This study takes a sample of ten scholarly journals and considers which authors and which universities have the most publications in those journals. The University of Florida was the top-ranking of fifty-six institutions, with one hundred thirteen papers in the ten journals for the survey decade. Brian A. Iwata was the most prolific authors in the sample, with seventy-eight publications in the sample journals, plus ten in other journals for the sample years. Eighty-eight scholarly publications in a decade, or 8.8 per year. Is that a big number or just the big fish in a small pool of samples?

As another example of the big fish, small pond, consider Margaret Mahy. In the year she was born, 1936, only four books for children were published in New Zealand. She changed the landscape of children's literature in her New Zealand homeland with over one hundred book titles, poetry, picture books, works

for older children, teenage novels, television scripts, and stories for magazines and newspapers. The psychology of her extreme publishing shares a lot with other hypomanics and hyperpublishers. After seeing Disney's film adaptation of the prolific Rudyard Kipling's *The Jungle Book*, she announced to her astonished seven-year-old classmates that she could talk to animals – "I had to resort to talking a certain gibberish and eating leaves and drinking out of puddles to prove how close I was to the Animal Kingdom." She started writing as a young child and admits to being something of a show-off – "I can remember carrying my notebooks around in an effort to introduce them into the conversation." www.penguin.co.uk/nf/Author/AuthorPage/o,,o_1000020564,oo.html Most of the examples we consider share the show-off aspects, the awareness of the mechanism of writing (notebooks in this pre-computer case), and a conversion experience.



Strategies for Hyperpublishing: Optimizers versus Satisficers

Shakespeare again cuts to the chase [The Merchant of Venice]:

Tell me where is fancy bred,
Or in the heart or in the head?
How begot, how nourished?

Fancy may have a subjective component ("the heart") but clearly follows the rules of neuroscience, as it streams from the writer's brain ("the head").

"It turns out to matter where the drive to write comes from," says Flaherty. "All driven writers focus on their work. But people driven by intrinsic motivations such as curiosity and enjoyment have a different relationship to the product of their work from those moved by extrinsic motivations including praise, money, and the constantly varying world of punishments. Someone who is fascinated by language attends to details and to the overall texture of a writing project more than she will if she is writing simply to satisfy the public. While strong intrinsic motivation increases creativity, surprisingly, adding extrinsic motivations -- even positive ones -- can actually decrease creativity. If that is true, paying a writer may paradoxically make him write less well. (As you might guess, I do not think this means you should not pay writers.)"

Here we encounter the modern conflict between the hacker's Ethic:

"Information wants to be free."

and the Author's Ethic:

"The writer wants to be paid."

Here lurks the lawsuits and debates over copyright, copyleft, downloading, iPods, and I-pirates. But here also is a key to strategy. Flaherty hints:

“Reward may encourage the writer to stop work as soon as she has completed the minimal amount of work necessary for the reward, resulting in what Herbert Simon called ‘satisficing’. Extrinsic motivation may also have a negative effect on creativity by distracting the subject’s attention from the task to thoughts of reward or punishment.”

“Satisficing is the strategy of seeking to obtain an outcome that is good enough. Satisficing action can be contrasted with maximizing action, which seeks the biggest, or with optimizing action, which seeks the best. In recent decades doubts have arisen about the view that in all rational decision-making the agent seeks the best result. Instead, it is argued, it is often rational to seek to satisfy, *i.e.* to get a good result that is good enough although not necessarily the best.” [Mautner] The term *satisficing* was introduced by Herbert A. Simon in 1957, as part of his research that led to his Nobel prize in Economics. Some consider this the first Nobel Prize of Computing, because Herbert A. Simon was one of the pioneers of Artificial Intelligence and a leader of the Computer Science expertise at Carnegie Mellon University.

Motivation, Writing, and Hyperpublishing

The notion that a writer can work best when decoupled from direct reward and punishment leads to an authorial notion of the benefits and perils of freedom. “This implies that the best way to foster creative writing is to give the writer freedom to work on a subject he loves,” says Flaherty. “But the motivation to write may also be infectious, as Plato described in the *Ion*.

“[The Muse] first makes man inspired, and then through these inspired ones others share in the enthusiasm, and a chain is formed, for the epic poets, all the good ones, have their excellence, not from art, but are inspired, possessed, and thus they utter all these admirable poems.”

“There is actually some scientific evidence for Plato’s position,” says Flaherty. “Children shown videos of other children enjoying their work not only enjoy their work more, but seem to escape the negative effect of extrinsic rewards. Reward makes them perform even better.” Are the appearances of writers on Oprah good for other writers? Does it help or hurt a science fiction author to watch the acceptance speech of someone else holding the silver rocket ship of the Hugo Award or the peer-reviewed Nebula Award? Is it correct, as often muttered through clenched teeth, “being nominated is the true prize”?

What matters here is that human beings are social creatures, not solitary. “Social monkeys are much more likely to make expressions of pain than are solitary species,” writes Flaherty, “because for the latter, wincing does not get them any aid; it merely attracts predators. Is it too reductionist to suggest that a major reason for creative writing is an abstracted version of the same biological urge that causes you to cry out in sorrow or anger? Let us call it the need theory of self-expression.”

“It is perhaps a more inclusive formulation of Freud’s description of literature, which he believed was driven only by unexpressed sexual needs.... Such an explanation need not fit all writing. It would not cover technical or impersonal writing -- the medical journal *Prostate*, or the book *How to Talk to Your Cat* come to mind. It would include most autobiographical writing, most fiction, most poetry, and most nonfiction in which the author had a strong personal stake in the subject.”

If writers do not write only for money (Dr. Samuel Johnson’s dictum) or for the increased likelihood of sexual favours (in which case writers would all seek to be rock stars), then what is the biological origin? What need is fulfilled, what itch is scratched when someone posts a poem, an equation, or an insult on the Web?

“If language and writing grow out of a biological system for attempting to fill needs, then the notion of self-expression, so often invoked vaguely to explain the artistic urge, can be better understood,” deduces Flaherty. “Self-expression is not simply a broadcasting of personal characteristics or tastes. It is generally, if subliminally, much more goal-directed than that. Educators often justify art and creative-writing courses on the grounds that self-expression can teach the student more about himself or herself. This may be true to some extent, but many creative writers have been quite capable of powerfully emotive

writing while lacking insight into the internal conflicts that drive their suffering. Nonetheless, while they may not gain insight, they may gain a sense of relief and a sympathetic audience.”

Like a castaway’s message in a bottle, one casts one’s “saucer of loneliness” into the sea of outer space. Like a message in a Klein bottle, one casts one’s hyperpublishing into the seas of inner space. Hyperpublishing is an avenue to gain an audience thousands of times greater than conventional publishing, although it surely cannot display a thousand times the depth of insight.

Playing Dice with the Universe

In an ironic twist of fate, Joyce Carol Oates, one of the world's most prolific authors, has a sister who has never uttered a word because of “a biochemical shake of the dice” – autism.

“Yet to the extent that self-expression does broadcast and reinforce a person's character, it makes clearer one more link between art and, if not mental illness, eccentricity,” writes Flaherty. “Because the more like ourselves we become, the odder we become. Insanity is like sanity, only much, much more so. This is most obvious in situations where society no longer keeps us in line: the eccentricity of the very rich, or of castaways.”

The Internet allows unlimited freedom for eccentricity. One need not be rich to be as self-indulgent as many bloggers. One need not be on a desert island to feel horribly isolated and search the ocean of web sites looking, hoping, yearning for something to bring one back to civilization. The Internet empowers self-expression. What effect does that have on emotions? It depends on how we evaluate self-expression, scientifically.

“Can any of this need theory of self-expression be tested?” asks Flaherty. “One group of studies by Alice Brand provides evidence that writing, at least on personally chosen subjects, has measurable mood effects. In both students and professional writers, the act of writing both intensified positive emotions and blunted negative ones. This was somewhat of a surprise to researchers in the field of composition studies, as the standard view of writing emphasized the anxiety induced in students by writing assignments.”

“The findings were consistent with what has been described by many writers, from hypergraphic patients to Joyce Carol Oates when she said, ‘I have forced myself to begin writing when I’ve been utterly exhausted, when I’ve felt my soul as thin as a playing card ... and somehow the activity of writing changes everything.’”

I find myself writing for my novels less and more on obscure blogs in the wee hours of the morning when I am far too sleepy to do my mathematical hyperpublishing. Yet this, too, fulfils an emotional need. It may not be literature, but it is a flow of words that sometimes brings not only release but explicit messages of empathy and support from people whom I may never meet f2f – face to face.

“Ernest Hemingway saw Oates's half-full glass as half-empty: ‘When I don't write, I feel like shit.’ Some writers, such as the poet Tina Kelley, describe a physical sensation of unease or restlessness that torments them if they haven't written for a few days. For others, it is a sort of headache, a stuffy, swollen brain. Milton described feeling like a cow that needs to be milked. And for many, there is the primal conviction that they should not do anything but write because it is their vocation, in a nearly religious sense. Writing is what they are meant to do, and the headaches and the restlessness are their body rebelling when it is kept from fulfilling its destiny.”

That is the ultimate test of a writer. The writer will write even if it never earns a penny. How else to explain vanity presses? How else to explain academic writers actually paying journals a “page charge” to see a scientific article in print? The academic passes the cost on to their university department or their granting agency. Yet, at a deeper level, the writer writes because the writer cannot NOT write. As Harlan Ellison wrote, “I have no mouth, but I must scream.”

“Reuniting language with the screams and cries of animal communication, looking at it not as vibrations in the ether but as a secretion of one of the spongiest organs in the body,” says Flaherty, “goes against most of traditional linguistics' stress on language as semantics, as a way of making statements about

truth. But the huge popularity of fiction, in which the majority of the 'events' are not true, tells us that there is something more going on with language than the symbolization of truth, at least truth narrowly defined."

What is truth? We know that something cannot be assumed to be true merely because we read it in a newspaper, see it on TV, or find it by a Google search on the Internet. As David Brin points out, the ambiguity of truth is contained in the oxymoron "science fiction". Science is a methodology to empirically find the truth. Fiction means making things up, or, to be blunt, telling lies. So what is science fiction? The truth about lies, or lies about the truth?

"If chimpanzees use utterances for emotional expression, if toddlers compulsively narrate events as they happen," writes Flaherty, "it may be that these are merely the most primitive facets of language. But that is not a reason to neglect them. Their very primitiveness fits with what we feel about language and writing, that it is fundamental to our nature. Emotional meaning is deeper than cognitive meaning, both literarily and literally, anatomically in the heart of the brain. In thinking about language we need to broaden our scope from mastering syntax and constructing tight paragraphs, to look also at gains and losses of significance, the afflictions of writers who write too much or hold back from writing, and our primal desire for our words to mean something to someone else, somewhere."

That is why we have examined the way that perturbations in the limbic system of the brain underlie both writing too much and writing too little. That is why we have drawn the parallels between the neural network, the computer network, and the social network.

Conclusion: Poetry and Science Fiction

This lopsided essay lurches towards a conclusion. This might fall under the category "ethical use of, and privacy issues related to, social, relational and computational data" -- as it gives some semiquantitative support for a hypothesis that online open source text databases "encyclopaedias" are self-assembling into a social network with different parameters than conventional publishing enables.

Which science fiction author produced the most content in the shortest amount of time? Isaac Asimov? Robert Heinlein? Piers Anthony? L. Ron Hubbard? No, it was surely Robert Lionel Fanthorpe. He contractually entered into a publishing deal with Badger Books of England in the early 1950's. Over the next decade and a half, he proceeded to churn out book after book under many different pseudonyms, some shared with other authors, which complicates the counting process, resulting in an estimated 180+ books. Of these books, eighty-nine are known to have been written in a three year period, which averages one 158 page book every twelve days. He dictated into a reel to reel tape recorder, sometimes from beneath a blanket to enhance his concentration. He would then ship those tapes off to a pool of typists for sometimes laughably imperfect transcription. Continuity was also a problem. People die in one chapter, then reappear a chapter later because he simply forgot. One might say that, for Fanthorpe, drive was a profitable substitute for talent. Star-drives may live in pulp fiction, but drives come from the inner parts of the brain.

"Just as creative work requires novelty and value, the creative thinker who produces it requires both talent and drive," says Flaherty. "Here I'll lay down my arms before the question of talent, and take up a different set of weapons to shoot the easier target, drive. Hypergraphia is a window onto the nature of creative drive, and its neurological underpinnings are better understood than those of talent. Drives are largely controlled by the limbic system." And hypergraphia has its new and healthy cousin, hyperpublishing.

As to the father of Dianetics and Scientology, there are only two tests of a life well lived L. Ron Hubbard once remarked: Did one do as one intended? And were people glad one lived? In testament to the first stands the full body of his life's work, including over five thousand writings and three thousand tape-recorded lectures.

What makes it difficult to balance science and art in the analysis of creativity? "Although -- at least in principle -- everyone approves of creativity," concludes Flaherty, "many have been skeptical of attempts to study or enhance it. The artist's view of creativity is often that it should be left alone, that looking too closely could endanger it. Often, the basic scientist's view is also that creativity should be left alone, that it

is by definition too anomalous for controlled study. That has left the study of creativity enhancement to New Age practitioners, inspirational-business seminar leaders, and a few brave social scientists. Even social scientists have been hesitant.”

As William Wordsworth put it so beautifully:

Sweet is the lore which Nature brings;
Our meddling intellect
Mis-shapes the beauteous forms of things:--
We murder to dissect.

Enough of Science and of Art;
Close up those barren leaves;
Come forth, and bring with you a heart
That watches and receives.

What can the future bring, with bot-enhanced humans typing, dictating to language-recognition software, scraping the web for content, and combining their output with that of other humans and machines in nonlinear ways?

Who will be the Shakespeare of the Search Engine? The Wordsworth of the Web? Is there a future L. Ron Hubbard in the blogosphere who will change the world with a Binary Bible? Only time will tell. And that time will be clocked in nanoseconds.

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-- Jonathan Vos Post

* * *

* Kritter Korner

I have a lengthy submission for this column, but I'm going to save it for next issue. In the meantime, please enjoy a photo of Mercury.

* * *

* Letters to the Editor

The text of letters received will be in brown. My replies to the letters will be enclosed in double parentheses and will be in black. I will also routinely make editorial corrections in punctuation, spelling, and the like. Deadline for next issue is 15 July 2012.

Rodney Leighton, Tatamagouche, NS

9 March 2012

As you can see, I did write a bit about *Challenger*. I have had varied thoughts about doing things with writing, which seems to be my curse the past few years. I have pondered about four different possibilities of writing something about that batch of fanzines. God knows what I might do with them.

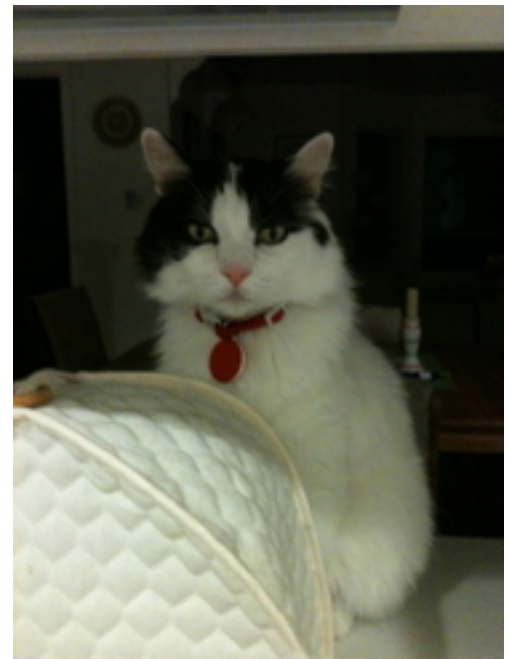
Haven't read the old *Vanamonde* batch; I probably read them before. I guess John is having problems; haven't seen any *Vans* for some time, but he has been sending them for some years.

Of the rest I found it a bit intriguing that my favourites were the largest and the smallest. I read all of *Bento* and enjoyed doing so. Of course, given the size...

One of which was *Challenger* 31 from the winter of 2010. I thought I read that this was on-line. But here it is. Same as when I got each issue years ago: 106 pages. Superb letter column. Reading this I learned that #30 was an issue devoted to religious discussion. And that editor Guy Lillian had been to P.E.I. Hell. There came a time when I was pissed at Guy for some things he wrote in his other zine, and the copies of *Challenger* he mailed to me were stolen or something for four or six issues in a row, and I suggested that he take me off his mailing lists. Religious essays interest me. And it would have been nice to read his take on that infernal bridge. There were about 37 pages of LoCs. The other seventy some pages were a variable mix; that was always a feature of *Challenger*. Well, almost any fanzine of a large size. Some articles are excellent; some suck. Some are of great interest; some are of no interest at all. I enjoyed reading about sixty percent of the non-LoC portion, which is actually quite good. And I found a photo of the editor and Joe Major. I started this with the idea that I would do a full fledged zine review; apparently such things are now beyond me. This is an amazing fanzine. Back when I got it I always read the LoCcol first ...well, I invariably do that with all fanzines... and then started at the front and went through what I wanted. There were always some things that were of no interest and some that were really good and nothing has changed. Guy was writing a lot of negative things about me in *The Zine Dump*, and someone was stealing my copies of *Challenger* or something; he says he mailed me copies, but they never arrived; about four or six issues in a row, and I suggested he remove me from his mailing lists.

Well, memory is really getting bad; I just duplicated, basically, what I wrote on the other side. Sigh. I don't believe I will contact him; it would be nice to read #30; but, well, let's just say I liked most of this; still haven't seen anything by that Garcia guy everyone raves about that I thought was worth reading, but I guess that must be me.

On the other hand, *Fadeaway* #23 was very disappointing. I have been reading LoCs by Mr. Jennings that are great; I like what he writes in *TKK*. But he uses truncated versions of although and enough,



which pisses me off, and I loved the Gilliland piece, and the LoCs were ok, but there was nothing else in this zine. Or perhaps I should say this issue of this zit zine.

Littlebrook 7 was fine; read it all except one article. I liked what I read.

The National Fantasy Fan--why is it mostly science fiction oriented? I think there is a lot of material that is of value only to members and a lot of material that could be eliminated or perhaps printed occasionally, but that is merely my observation. For my purposes I quite enjoyed all five issues you sent. It's cool that each one has a short story; I loved "The God Monologues" (Sept.2009); skipped "For Frozen Bones" (Dec. 2009), but then again I hate space opera stuff, and the other three were very good. I enjoyed the review sections; perhaps strangely for someone who used to do a fair amount of reviewing, I don't read reviews of books I wouldn't read; but I read almost all the reviews in all these issues. Skipped your Star Trek stuff. Some other parts were good; some not of interest.

Thanks again for sending these fanzines. I don't know if I will write any more about them. I expect to continue with these generic things; I get eight copies and ship them out, and I imagine Chuck is putting them on the internet in some form.

#

Jeffrey Boman, Montreal, QC

27 March 2012

I've had issue 12 of my zine to mail you for a long time, but really bad luck has kept me from mailing it. Hopefully I will very soon.

Karma often makes me a liar, so I'll just say that I'll try to send you a LoC.

#

John Hertz, Los Angeles, CA

21 March 2012

Thanks for *Mewsings 47*.

I note Murray Moore's appeal to me, but I decline to answer on the grounds that it might tend to incriminate him. What was it someone was saying a few pages earlier about missing tone of voice in writing?

One does not wish to be a wet blanket, and theatre audiences should freely express their admiration; but if encores are not demanded rarely, and standing ovations given likewise, how gratifying can they be for the performers? It can also be exhilarating to start one. Aptness is much.

I like supertitles in opera. They help communication, and spare translators from agony. Anyone who can follow the original gets even more.

Vaguely I remember the first production I saw with them, perhaps Rossini's *Cenerentola*. At a big laugh I thought how impressive it was people knew the libretto or had good enough Italian to catch the words. Then I looked up. Kelly Freas used to tell how he suddenly found himself working extra hard to keep up with the competition and then learned someone had invented the airbrush.

Electronic folk can see a dozen 1,500-word book notes by me at http://www.collectingsf.com/hertz/a_fans_view_archive.html, some titles older, some newer.

#

Brad Foster, Irving, TX

31 March 2012

Loved the cool-blue cover on this 47th issue, with Sheryl's cat-critter fading out of the misty sky into view. Very nice use of colour printing.

The news of your becoming allergic to your allergy medications sounds like a very, very bad joke. Seems a whole new area of pharmaceuticals is being born these days of things that we have to take to counter-act the effects of the things we are already taking to counter-act the things we eat or breathe...

Liked the photo on page 2. I know it's supposed to be the snow coming down, but my first thought on seeing that page before reading the text was that you could *really* see some *big* stars in the night sky out there in the desert!

Appreciated Amy's review of "Bubba Ho-Tep", one of the unique movies I've seen in years!

Illos on pages 11 and 13 by Miklis and woods wee both amazing and just cry out to have been printed larger. My own little filler-doodles can go small, but I can see so much wonderful detail in those pieces, would have made great covers, maybe in the future...

Jonathan's long posting this issue ended with two notes scrawled in the margin from me when done: I've been working on that idea of trying to get an index of all my published work up on line, too. I titled that section of the website "Works In Print". At this point I have most everything that I know of that is in some sort of magazine/book/zine/webzine format in there. Still have to figure out how to list the posters, decals, logos, and other design work. Used to have all of this written out in a small notebook, which meant it took a lot of time flipping through to find info on old pieces. Has been handy to be able to search that info with it now online, so worth the time to get it all together. Just need to get it complete now. For the morbidly curious, first page for "A" is at <http://www.jabberwockygraphix.com/inprint.html>.

Regarding his notes on "Hypergraphia", the compulsion to write: I wonder if there is a specific term for the compulsion to draw, 'cause I think I've got that for sure. Even if I know something will be thrown away or erased after I have drawn it, I'll still find myself doodling on the oddest things and strangest times. Born to draw, I think. Thank goodness I lucked into sf fandom those long decades ago and found a welcoming home for so many of these odd little images I create every year.

And now I feel the irresistible urge to go draw some more, so I'd better close this LoC!

#

Lloyd Penney, Etobicoke, ON

6 April 2012

It's Good Friday, and it's a quiet day at home, and there is time to write a quick letter, so here's a few words about *Feline Mewsings* 47.

Your Tuscon report sounds like you didn't really enjoy the convention, or it was okay. Our own convention season starts shortly with Ad Astra, and it is our second year of not being on the committee at all. I hope it will be an interesting mix of panels--sf, steampunk, and science/space. Now to see if my expectations will be met. I've been working this con since the early 80s, and I think I've aged right out of the convention's demographic.

((We enjoyed Tuscon just fine. I don't have high expectations for it. The venue is not exactly to my liking.))

I can see a level of hypomania in myself; a day of relaxation is rare (today, for example) and is usually written off as wasted, because so much could have been done. With all the letters I write, is that a version of hyperpublishing? I always wanted to write for a living, and I have a degree in journalism, but I guess I needed to find an audience, and fanzines got me in touch with the fans I wanted to talk to. And, they talk back.

Comment to Leslie David...when correctly prepared, venison and related meats are great. A friend of Yvonne's gave us about thirty pounds of cuts of moose--sausages, steaks... they've all been delicious.

We will soon be recycling our 2 VCRs. Neither one has worked well the last time we used them, and we recently discovered our CD player, which we haven't used for a couple of months, has decided not to work, either. As for the VCRs, we have few tapes left; and it's not worth keeping the machines.

Sheryl, you asked about the chain restaurants up here. I will assume you mean not the fast food giants like McDonald's and such. Off the top of my head...Swiss Chalet (chicken), Baton Rouge (steak), Chez Cora (breakfast), East Side Mario's (NY Italian), Jack Astor's (general), Alice Fazooli's (Italian seafood), The Keg (steak), Kelsey's (pub-style restaurant), the Firkin chain (pub-style), Mandarin (Chinese/buffet), Milestone's (high-end general), Nickel's (50s-style drive-in/diner), Pickle Barrel (deli), Shoeless Joe's

(general), Wild Wing (wings), Montana's (cookhouse). There's probably others I could think of right after sending this letter off in the e-mail.

I've told, probably too many times, my own skunk story, about a family pet on my lap. I've seen articles online about skunk breeders and skunk shows along the same lines as a dog show.

I have finished my assignment with Schawk!, and it's time to look for more employment. I've got a few irons in the fire, and I think I'll be working again in no time at all.

Many thanks for the new zine, and we hope you and Mike have a fine Easter.

#

Rodney Leighton, Tatamagouche, NS

13 April 2012

I liked FM 47 a lot, from the cute cover by fandom's greatest artist to the very interesting article by Dr. vos Post to the many LoCs and more.

I did send a m.o. to Guy Lillian to see if I can get a copy of *Challenger* #30 and perhaps a couple of others. I had a dispute with Guy some years back, and anyway I am not in the place where I would solicit fanzines. Out of the batch you sent, I liked *Challenger* a lot, enough to cough up some money to try to get some more. I think I wrote you something about that package before, but my failing memory refuses to divulge what. If I were going to be active in fandom, I would seriously consider trying to obtain copies of the *National Fantasy Fan*. But given that I doubt there will be many LoCs from me for the next while, I couldn't go Lloyd's route, and I don't know as I want it enough to pay for it

I was going to write that I didn't know what to think of Murray Moore threatening me in the letter column; but then I was thinking about the fact that some people, perhaps Murray, would not know whether I was joking or not. Truth to tell, neither do I. Unlike many folks I have never met a fan in person. Once upon a time, I used to think I might become the Canadian version of Harry Warner, Jr., not that I have ever had a modicum of Mr. Warner's writing ability; and I have never had any desire to usurp Lloyd's place as the premier Canadian LoC hack. But I did do a bitty zine one time entitled *The Nova Scotian Hermit*. I am basically a hermit. Used to be I honestly didn't want any visitors. I talk to people outside. Since my mother passed away nine years and a week ago, with the exception of a couple of brief periods when one of my sisters was here, I don't believe there has been a woman in this house. And other than plumbers and such, only one guy who comes to visit sporadically. No, my current employer has been here twice. Not much wonder I am cranky, huh? Anyway, not that it is liable to happen; but if you happen to come to N.S, Murray, and can get in touch and I am around, we can probably get together. Don't expect me to feed you, though.

I did check out the possibilities of a TV antenna. I was told I would need a converter or a new TV with a built-in converter and an antenna. Cost about two hundred bucks. I would probably get two stations. No, I don't think I will bother. CBC from St. John, N.B., sometimes comes in, albeit somewhat blurrily. NHL playoffs are on; I could watch a hockey game every night. Except now the above-mentioned station is too blurry to watch. Given during the summer I only use a TV for viewing DVDs, I will see what happens this fall.

Just had my roof re-shingled. About \$3000. It's a small house.

#

Trinlay Khadro, Brown Deer, WI

(received) 19 April 2012

Thank you for the lovely zine. I'm managing to mostly keep up with my local APA, but I am way behind on almost all my correspondence.

My felines are doing fine and taking good care of me. Seimei has been out on the leash (Megumi hates going out or having the leash on) with my daughter a couple times.

They hang out in what I have of a kitchen garden where Megumi goes through a session of "must taste all the things"! Since most of them are vegetables or mints, it's safe for him; oddly he's more interested in everything but the catnip, which grows as a huge spreading mass by the door (yay!)

Xander's bio is cute, and I enjoy all the cat photos.

I haven't been doing much drawing for a few years now, but suddenly I'm drooling over a bamboo drawing gizmo for the computer. One of the gals on the local doll forum is selling her old one. (I do have a birthday coming; maybe I should just get it.)

I've also been keeping busy in fibre arts, making things (toys and outfits) for the Asian style ball-jointed dolls as well as fannish stuff. I've got a batch of plush monsters/aliens/fey sent off to Oddcon, and I'm working on a batch that will be going to Gaslight Gathering. I recently had work in the art show at Farpoint. It's keeping me sane when I'm really not up to doing much of anything else.

Made a Dr. Who (11) outfit for one of my dolls and took and his "sister" (dressed that looks like the TARDIS) along to the annual Time Lords dinner at Safe House. They were a big hit, and I took a lot of photos.

Thanks for the zine. We're really enjoying them.

#

Amy Harlib, New York, NY

20 April 2012

Attached is a book review contribution for the next *Feline Mewsings*. This time the volume reviewed is about a cat – really appropriate for *Feline Mewsings*!

Enjoyed #47 greatly. Tuscon: I appreciate con reports since I'll never be able to go to Cons again for financial reasons.

Really liked "Hyperpublishing: The Edge of Superproductivity". I could understand it – my brain shuts down at the sight of too many numbers and equations! I too love the way the Internet is enhancing creativity and communication in truly new and inventive ways yet still following the bio-evolutionary patterns formed by millions of years of adaptation.

Glad other folks out there love the writing of Peter Hamilton. I have all his books with the very latest on my must get ASAP list. As for Bujold, I prefer her fantasy novels and have never been able to get into the Miles series at all.

I totally recommend any fantasy by Diana Wynne Jones, who died recently and left behind a brilliant legacy of novels and stories mostly marketed as YA books; her work is complex and imaginative and witty enough to be appreciated by discerning readers of any age. One of her books was adapted into a very fine animated feature by Hayao Miyazaki: *Howl's Moving Castle*, although the book is quite different from the film and each should be enjoyed as its own separate entity. This is true of every filmed version of literature.

I loved Studio Ghibli's latest animated feature *The Secret World of Arrietty*, which Miyazaki co-scripted, while a younger disciple of his directed. This film is a fine adaptation of the Middle Grade chapter book classic *The Borrowers* by Mary Norton. There were about four or five Borrowers books published in the mid-20th century, and I loved them all.

Recent films I also loved: *The Raid*; *John Carter*; *The Hunger Games*; *Mirror, Mirror*; *Journey 2: The Mysterious Island*; *Wrath of the Titans*; the classic *Children of Paradise* (saw at long last); and the animated Jazz musical romance for adults, *Chico and Rita*. A gut-wrenching documentary is a must-see--*This is Not a Film* by dissident Iranian filmmaker Jafar Panahi (resistor to government oppression).

Lots of great opera and ballet in cinema continues to delight: Met Operas: *Götterdämmerung*, *Manon*, *La Traviata*; opera in cinema: *La Bohème*, *The Magic Flute* (Julie Taymor's Met Opera production is vastly better than this La Scala version); ballet in cinema: Bolshoi's *Le Corsaire*, Paris Opera Ballet's *Caligula*, Royal Ballet's *Romeo and Juliet*, and Royal Ballet's *Matthew Bourne's Swan Lake*.

I loved the story of Xander the Cat! Never get tired of cat stories and photos! And I always enjoy everybody's comments.



Performances included the creation of a couple of new acts:

My website: <http://www.reverbnation.com/amazingamycontortionistuniqueyogadancer#!>

Yoga Contortion Dance Jam with the live music of ReW and Who, and again later with the live music of the band Ripped, rocked out at ReWZ Residency at Otto's w/Amazing Amy, Sat. Feb. 11, 7:30 PM, Otto's Shrunk Head, 538 E. 14th St., NYC. <https://www.facebook.com/rewandwho#!/events/220119628082144/>

Bendy Bacchanalian Contortion Dance Jam with Craig Judelman's live fiddle music, was a fantastic success, in A Bacchanalian Banquet: A Banquet for America Event, Sun. Feb. 12, 6 PM, Flux Factory, 39-31 29th St. Long Island City, Queens, NY. <http://www.fluxfactory.org/events/banquet-for-america-events/>

Yoga Contortion Dance Jam to the live music of ReW StaRR, rocked out in Jurgen's 'Rikki Tikki' Barfday Bash, Thurs. Feb. 16th, doors open 6 PM, my performance 7:30 PM, Otto's Shrunk Head, 538 E. 14th St., NYC. <https://www.facebook.com/events/346429975383503/>

Yoga Contortion Dance Jam with the live music of the band Subject of the Question, rocked out in Future of Rock Presents Fat Monday Swim!, Mon. Feb. 20, show starts at 7:30 PM, my performance at 9 PM, Otto's Shrunk Head, 538 E. 14th St., NYC. <https://www.facebook.com/events/371594349524751/>

Yoga Contortion Dance Jam with the live music of ReW StaRR and The Flack Blamingos rocked out in Frank Wood's Wind Down Sunday: Flack Blamingos at Otto's, Sun. Feb. 26th, 8 PM, Otto's Shrunk Head, 538 East 14th St., NYC. <https://www.facebook.com/events/232223340203320/#!/events/232223340203320/>

Yoga Yenta's Kosher Kontortion for Purim with the live klezmer-style accordion music of Matt Dallow, was a great success, in Garage Performance and Film, Sun. Mar. 4th, 8 PM, Big Sky Works, 29 Wythe Ave., Brooklyn, NY. <https://www.facebook.com/events/239191182837288/>

Yoga Yenta's Kosher Kontortion for Purim with the live klezmer-style accordion music of Matt Dallow, was a real crowd pleaser, in the Bindlestiff Family Cirkus Open Stage Variety Show, Mon., Mar. 5th, 8 PM, Dixon Place, 161a Chrystie St., NYC. <https://www.facebook.com/events/179159095530069/>

NEW! YOGA GO BRAGH! Shamrock Stretch! Celtic Contortion! Leapin' Limber Leprechaun! Riverdance was never like this! Debuted delighting the crowd, at The Gadget Hour: Eire Up! Fri. Mar. 16th, 11 PM, Richmond Shephard Theatre, 309 E. 26th St., NYC. <https://www.facebook.com/events/188689244577067/>

YOGA GO BRAGH! Shamrock Stretch! Celtic Contortion! Leapin' Limber Leprechaun! Riverdance was never like this! was a sensation, in the Cream of the Big Top Spring Circus Cabaret, Sat. Mar. 24th, 8 PM, Big Sky Works, 29 Wythe Ave., Brooklyn, NY. http://www.circusnyc.com/items/Cream_of_the_Big_Top_Mar_2324, <http://bigskyworksbrooklyn.com/>

SPECIAL! Contortion by the Riverside captivated the crowd in - No, We're the Green Preservation Society! A Circadelic Reinterpretation of the Classic Kinks Album, Sat. Mar. 31st, two shows, 5 PM and 8:30 PM at Big Sky Works, 29 Wythe Ave., Brooklyn, NY. <https://www.facebook.com/events/364723060215377/>

Yoga Yenta's Kosher Kontortion for Pesach with the klezmer-style accordion music of Matt Dallow, was a smash, in The Return of Le Squeezebox Cabaret, Wed. April 4th, 10 PM, DROM, 85 Ave. A (bet. 5th and 6th St.), NYC. <https://www.facebook.com/events/139025472892220/>, <http://lesqueezebox.com/>, <http://www.dromnyc.com/events/1634/le-squeezebox-cabaret>

Yoga Yenta's Kosher Kontortion for Pesach with the klezmer-style keyboard music of jolly Jason Trachtenberg, triumphed, in Circus o Burlesque A Mania Insania, Thurs. Apr. 5th, 10:30 PM, Under St. Marks Theatre, 94 St. Marks Place, NYC. <https://www.facebook.com/events/237845292972497/>

TRISKADEKAPHOBIYOGA! Frighteningly Flexible on Friday the 13th! with the live music of Jarvis Earnshaw, blew the audience away, in Bohemian Grove Presents: FRI 13TH FEST W/ RUDE GIRLS BURLESQUE CULT, 5 BANDS AND A CONTORTIONIST, Fri. Apr. 13th, 8 PM, 64-66 Grove St., Brooklyn, NY. <https://www.facebook.com/events/332571320139849/>

TRISKAID EKAPHOBIYOGA! Frighteningly Flexible on Friday the 13th! Contortion Dance Jamming with Robert Sloan's Impostor Band rocked out, Fri. Apr. 13th, 11:30 PM, Connolly's Pub Klub, 3rd Fl., 121 West 45th St., NYC. <https://www.facebook.com/events/347376305301160/>

NEW! 2012: A Yoga Odyssey – Spaced Out Stretch! Cosmic Contortion debuted, delighting the audience, at The Trapeze Loft's Spring Beginner Aerial & Circus Showcase, Sun. Apr. 15th, 8 PM, Big Sky Works, 29 Wythe Ave., Brooklyn, NY. <http://www.circusnyc.com/items/TheTrapezeLoftSpringsBeginnerAerialCircusShowcaseApr1>



The Amazing Amy can be seen in these forthcoming shows:

Yoga Contortion Dance Jam with Generator Ohm Band at King Killer 4/20 @ SRB, Brooklyn (King Killer Recording Studios Sponsor), Fri. Apr. 20th, doors open 8 PM, Generator Ohm 9:50 PM, SRB, 177 2nd Ave., Brooklyn, NY. <https://www.facebook.com/events/281285828623460/>

Yoga Tango: The Dance of Love Like You've Never Seen it Before, performs in Lava Presents: Night of Renegades, Sat. Apr. 21st, 8 PM, Lava Studio, 524 Bergen St. (bet. Carlton and 6th Aves), Brooklyn, NY. <http://lavabrooklyn.org/nightofrenegadesApril2012.html>

SPECIAL! Limber Latina! Flexible Fiesta! Samba With a Stretch with the live music of Joel Chassan is included in Nude Night Out #7 (This is How We Do It) & Sleepy Joe's Birthday Party (shhh), Sat. Apr. 21, 9 PM, event location provided with ticket purchase, midtown, NYC. <https://www.facebook.com/events/386042324763686/>, http://nudistnaturistamerica.org/aieec_event/nude-night-out-7-this-is-how-we-do-it?instance_id=1213

Yoga Contortion Dance Jam with the ukelele music of Jon Braman participates as an Artsy Fartsy Act, in the 2nd Annual WBAI Artsy Fartsy Battle of the Bands (Benefit for WBAI Radio), Sun. Apr. 22, doors

open 5 PM, my performance at 6 PM, 5-9 PM, Arlene's Grocery, 95 Stanton St., NYC. <https://www.facebook.com/events/275932482495129/>, http://wbai.org/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=11539&Itemid=1

Thanks so much and new performance photos also attached.

#

Jerry Kaufman, Seattle, WA

24 April 2012

This issue sparked a few comments and questions; let's see if I remember them all again.

Having a weather station sounds like fun in a geeky way. Does yours measure anything besides temperature and precipitation? Does it do wind speed and direction, barometric pressure, radiation? I suppose most don't do radiation, but I think they should.

((It measures everything you said except radiation, and it also measures humidity. I'm not sure how useful that would be. Pollen count would be useful.))

Does your church choir sing only hymns, or does it attack more ambitious stuff?

((So far we've only done hymns or arrangements of them. We're only about ten to a dozen singers.))

It sounds like Tuscon has nothing but science programming; is that just an impression based on what you and Mike like to see, or does it reflect the true nature of the convention?

((It has the usual mix of programming. We just tend to like the science programming when it's available. The fan guest of honour was a scientist.))

I enjoyed *Mission Impossible: Ghost Protocol*, even though I didn't understand the point of the elaborate charades at its heart. I thought it would have been easier to allow the two groups of baddies to really meet and then take the stuff the MI group wanted. (Although it's only been four or five months since I saw it, the film has faded from memory, and I can't remember the plot details.)

((I have a short memory for detail of books and movies. Mike is buying the movie on DVD. Normally I don't watch them with him, but I think I'll watch this one.))

I've meant to see *Bubba Ho-Tep* for a decade - Amy Harlib has encouraged me to get active and rent it sometime soon. I've enjoyed Bruce Campbell in many of his films and TV projects (currently *Burn Notice*) but can't explain why *Bubba Ho-Tep* hasn't hit our local silverish screen (by which I mean the TV in our living room).

((Some movies don't seem to get shown on TV or so rarely that it's almost impossible to find. I also discovered that the search function on our DVR rented from DirecTV doesn't always succeed in finding things it should. I've discovered that the DirecTV app for the iPad does better.))

I must admit I quickly started skimming through "Jonathan's Science Corner." I'm sure it was essential to the point Jonathan was making that he list all his many accomplishments, but this made me skim all the faster. I ended up just reading the quotes from or about Alice Flaherty, as I read *The Midnight Disease* a couple of years ago, and found it quite interesting. I now wonder what is left for Jonathan to cover in Part 2, and perhaps I'll make a second attempt at reading Part 1.

So take care; if you went to Corflu, I hope you had a good time.

((We skipped Corflu, mostly because it was the weekend after we returned from a three-week trip Back East in need of lots of rest. Will you be at Westercon?))

#

Murray Moore, Mississauga, ON

2 May 2012

I learn from you of the existence of the Oro Valley SF Book Club. I am cheered that such a thing exists, that Oro Valley contains among its multitudes sufficient readers of SF with an interest in regular meetings and discussion. I would not be surprised at the existence of the Oro Valley SF Book Club if Oracle Arizona was the headquarters of Oracle the corporation. I do not believe that the community and the corporation are in the same location. But I am not an expert on either Oracle.

((I actually learned about the Oro Valley SF Book Club from Rob Sawyer, who mentioned it a couple of years ago on Facebook, because they were about to discuss one of his books. That was the first meeting I attended, and I've been attending ever since whenever I could. The members of the book club are from all around the Tucson area. Oracle is north northeast of Tucson and in another county, but Oro Valley is only about a half hour's drive away. The town of Oracle has nothing to do with the corporation and predates it by a long period of time. It has been around since 1880.))

I am dismayed that your iPhone died. In March I contributed to Apple's bottom line by buying my first Apple product, an iPad. I did not pay for an extended warranty because A) I am cheap and B) my impression is that Apple products are well made.

Tuscon 38 by your description was almost an all-science-program convention. Your and Mike's interest in science is greater than mine.

I share your interest in theatre and I take advantage of the smorgasbord of live theatre in adjacent Toronto. Toronto reportedly is the third city in the U.S. and Canada in terms of quantity of live theatre.

Amy Harlib, in her review of *Bubba Ho-Tep*, had me at Joe R. Lansdale. If I should ever get the chance to see a screening in a theatre, I will do so.

Having read "Hyperpublishing: The Edge of Superproductivity," I am confident that I am not hypergraphic.

#

Sheryl Birkhead, Gaithersburg, MD

4 May 2012

Hi- this is ridiculously late- and I have two issues sitting right here. I decided that one way or another, I would get something typed. Of course have now found that the laptop has somehow lost the software that I use- so will neEd to make a generic file and then locate everything on the desktop and move it (AGAIN) over to the laptop.. ..at least that is the plan.

But, back to *FM*. Okay- here we have #46 and 47--onward!

Ah, front cover by Steve Stiles-- far too infrequent pleasure-- and always enjoyable!

When one of the three apple trees (literally) went toes up, I replaced it with a dwarf apple tree. My rationale was that I could easily access the fruit. I forgot that this also meant the deer could also access the fruit. At the same time, I put in a dwarf sweet cherry tree. The first one never did anything at all. When I talked with the nursery, they informed me that none of the trees in the batch were viable. Great- would have been nice to know that a while back. So, I took the credit and went to a different nursery. That tree has hung in there. First year total crop- one cherry; second year total crop four cherries (well, to be fair that is what I ate as I mowed the lawn. I suspect the birds had done in a few more). Each year I feel worse since in that very first year, there was a small split in the trunk and I hoped that, whatever the cause, it would heal. I toyed with figuring out some ways to "bandage" the area loosely in case simple protection of the area would work. I never carried it out- afraid I might make things worse. So, the tree has come back to life again- and I can hope!!!

((I've been concerned about my new persimmon trees. They are still without leaves. I did a little research on the Internet. Persimmons are originally high altitude trees, so they should be fine here. In case my current ones fail, though, I have more information on exactly what varieties to get if I need replacements. I might also try to get them from nurseries that are located at higher altitudes.))

The dentist (and now the endodontist) cannot figure out why I have jaw/muscle pain that appeared after the marathon crown replacement of a lower crown.. .but the spin is on the opposing tooth on the upper jaw. Neither of them can find any reason for the discomfort. The latest rule out is a (for lack of a better term) night guard-- he calls it a dental de-programmer. He said his cost would be \$400. If I was referred to a TMJ (etc.) specialist, he would try the same thing at about \$800-\$900. I went with the \$400. He took the impressions and made the device. I went in and got it fitted--joking as it snapped over the front centre incisors that those were crowns. The dentist laughed too. By the time I got home, there was a message on the answering machine. Don't use the de-programmer--Murphy's law being what it is. So, I had to go back and have the upper impression taken again and just got the new one fitted- it actually snaps onto the two lateral incisors--so I hope the crowns are safe. I wore it last night and was hoping there would be a magic cure-- there was not. So, I guess I just wait and see over time. With no insurance to cover any of the dental stuff, I thought I had a cheaper solution- asked the physician whom she recommended (thinking she would have a physician who specialized in..)-- she said to ask my dentist. So, the dentist's referral is to another dentist-- just a specialty practice. So, we shall see. The discomfort is unpredictable and not often-- but totally surprising and in the exact same spot. I broached one other possibility with the dentist-- I have one remaining un-erupted wisdom tooth--right behind the tooth with the issue.. . It doesn't make sense to me that this is the problem-- if it were, I would expect it to hurt all the time--ah well--- speculation running rampant!

((Dental pain can be elusive. I recently had a root canal myself. The endodontist could see nothing on the x-ray but did the root canal at my insistence. I'm glad I insisted. He discovered an infection. It's the most painful root canal I've ever undergone, and it's still somewhat sore.

((Are you old enough to get insurance through AARP? I think they may offer something affordable. I know that the dental insurance we get through the Northrop Grumman credit union is eminently affordable.))

PBS ran *Historic Barns of Maryland*, and I was surprised to be watching it and hear about quilt designs on barns. There is a driving tour that is on the Internet that looked like it might be fun. (One of the barns in the documentary--not a quilt one--was actually converted to a home--- and up in the top of the silo, they had their observatory- quite interesting).

The second "series" of the British Sherlock is due to start in a few weeks here. Interesting and different.

I try to tailor donations in the names of cats I have helped go to the Rainbow Bridge. This past week was a tough one-but the owner and i knew it was coming (this was the most difficult, but she has lost five in six months- she still has four others- but they are all of the same age.. .). Pony was the longest survivor at the local specialty practice with nasal lymphoma-- that was in remission, but then adenocarcinoma occurred at the same spot- anyway---I was looking for a fund that was specifically for research into feline cancers and found one--Angelo's Fund- a brand new fund out of the University of Colorado (which already has Frankie's Fund--specifically into research for feline kidney disease). The woman who spoke with me said she is in charge of buying the books given to owners who lose their pets to cancer and said it runs about 10:1 dogs to cats. The question is, are we missing cancer, or is it less common in cats???

Yeah, losing a family member (two or four footed) creates a painful hole--often it is just too painful to take on another member---and I can respect that. But, my house was just so empty---I did wait more than three years. It was amazing how alive the house became overnight.

((When Fluffy died, I decided not to replace him. However, after almost a year, Mercury still feels his absence. Mercury has never been a lone cat. I've decided to adopt another adult cat in July after we return from a trip to Seattle.))

Wow- you certainly had a lot of very nice wildlife (plant and animal) photos!



Ah, seeing Nate Bucklin's comment about Bob Sabella is quite a shock-- still difficult to get used to his being gone.

I am tickled at how nicely my cat-cross came out. Thank you.

Bear in mind that I have no idea what I am talking about (not an uncommon occurrence)--but, since it would not do any active harm- have you ever considered homeopathy for the allergies? I think my sister (in Utah) goes to an osteopath --not specifically for allergies, but for food sensitivities and such. Just a thought.

((Allergy injections themselves are considered by many to be a homeopathic remedy.))

Is the Franz Miklis fillo on page 11 a recent one? I haven't heard/seen/or read much (any) thing about him in a long time. Nice to see it!

((Before Franz Miklis dropped out of sight, he sent me a whole bunch of illos. They are reprints, but I'm happy to use them.))

Granted I can do most of the routine veterinary care myself for Kamere- but at \$23 a month for his insurance-- I feel there won't be any nasty surprises, financially. The insurance pays 90% of the bills once there has been an initial visit and is only for non-routine care. Interestingly, the policy says it covers per diagnosis and has no maximum either per year or for lifetime. Now that Kam has become friends with the veterinary cardiologist--the insurance will pay for itself at the next visit (luckily that is almost eighteen months in the future as long as my frequent checks on his heart sounds etc. at home at rest remain in the normal range). I had to do some thinking, long and hard, about bills before getting another cat. I know what veterinary bills can be (and had to pay off Pudge's \$8000 when she died from the specialist's treatment) and could not conscience needing to consider euthanasia just because I could not afford the care. So, insurance it was--as soon as I did my research.

((What insurance company are you using? I should probably look at the question again, since things may have changed since the last time I looked.))

Well, the Hugo nominations are out...ahem...interesting is all I can say about the fan categories (don't feel informed enough to comment on the pro categories).

Time to get this onto a letterhead, printed, and mailed! Thanks!

* * *

*** Closing Remarks**

Next issue is intended for August and is expected to contain a trip report of our planned trip to Seattle to attend Westercon and visit friends and family.

Laurraine

11 May 2012