

TRUE **Review**

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Dicky The Blogger

Blogs. I don't know about blogs.

I've spoken to several "information technologists" (we used to call these guys "computer programmers" in the good old days) recently about this thing call "Web logs" or "blogs." Apparently there are additional protections with blogs - you can maim someone's character or say anything you want about them, like they have sex with dogs, or something, because it affords the same kind of protection you get - sue me if I'm wrong - as a typical phone conversation.

Say what? I keep asking them that - say what?

Doesn't this thing called "blogging" scare you?

What the hell is going on with this country? You can apparently post just about anything you want to on a blog nowadays. Now it's not so much about depth of character or moral uprightness as it is "come catch me if you can," or sue me, I'm dirt poor and have nothing to lose, or I can get away with it because I have the FIRST amendment standing behind me! Hah!

I don't believe it. I believe there are grounds for suing - after all, if it can be printed, in my book it's libelous.

I learned in journalism school (Temple University, 1982) a definition of libel. It's when someone has their character so damaged they cannot make a living. They can't get a job. They can't function in their career.

I was going to call this editorial "Cloakroom Riots, Or, How I Learned Freedom

Of Speech Doesn't Mean Yelling 'Fire' In A Crowded Theater." I had a friend, Dicky (no, I'm not telling you his last name), in school who was as bored as I was. So bored with school in fact that it was a thrill, before lunch, after we came in from "exercise class," to exercise his first amendment non-protection and yell "riot" in the cloakroom. At the time, it was funny as can be, pushing and shoving and knocking coats off the racks and trying to pick yourself up from the mayhem that would ensue after he was calling out "Riot! Riot!" (This was in the late 1960s, when big-city riots were popular; the days of civil rights protests, and Dicky was an impressionable young man.) Dicky would make an excellent blogger, because he simply wanted to stir the pot at every opportunity. Yes, as a kid, he was a troublemaker - yet great fun to be with. I was just as bored as Dicky, and just as guilty, so I helped create the mayhem for some reason, God knows why, and the teacher back then (in the days when corporal punishment was approved - even cherished) would grab us both by the ears, wing us to the front of the class, and paddle us right there, right then, take no prisoners, ma'am.

(Dicky was quick to let me know that when I got my butt cracked with the four-foot stick, blunt end engaged, to yell, really loud-like, how much it hurt, even and especially if it didn't.)

I think the very idea of a blog doesn't go far enough. There ought to be a blog called "therapy" where people could post

all their heart-aches, longings, and disappointments. All the people that make them happy as well as piss them off. Truly.

There ought to be a blog called "powers" where you can prove that all the problems of the world are not caused by murderous movie stars but by the CEO of a major multinational who makes, and I quote, "856 times more money per hour than the average worker," which, in my bible, is the root of all evil in the world today. Paying someone 856 times more than what someone else is trying to make a living on is Crime of the Highest Order.

If you want to check out my favorite blogs, these are pretty cool. I am in no way, shape, or form, compensated by the people here nor do I intentionally actually promote them, I just thought you should check them out at your own peril:

http://bdr.typepad.com/blckdgrd/2006/12/post_1.html

<http://www.crooksandliars.com/>

<http://lefarkins.blogspot.com/>

Happy Feet

This is my third title for this, my own True Review blog entry. This is the second time True Review is published online only. The newsletter has new, happy feet. I'm still doing this review newsletter dance. La-la-lee.

-- Andrew Andrews
Publisher

This Ain't The Internet

Book Reviews By Andrew Andrews

SAGRAMANDA, by Alan Dean Foster. Pyr/Prometheus Books, 2006, 287 pp., \$25.00. ISBN 159102488-9

What's the fascination with India these days? Many SF writers believe India may be the "proving ground" for many of the finest SFnal, near-future speculations: a city teaming with 100 million people, technologically elite, a seeming maelstrom of possibilities: just what the doctor ordered.

There are a series of "interlocking wheel" stories going here. The "wheel-within-wheel" is as familiar to us as a Clarke's Rama or as the "wheel" narrative of Stephen King's THE SHINING: there are multiple characters in their own stories, each interacting in ways . . . well, you have to read SAGRAMANDA to see what I mean.

Of all the interlocking narratives, I found the one about Jena Chalmette, a French woman who believes she was appointed by Kali to exact a toll on lives

in this city, to be frightening. Chalmette plots to kill, kills, then plots some more – all the way delighting in what she does. Chalmette, like several others, come together in this ark in the middle of a jungle reserve that has just been trespassed by a unworldly, massive man-eating tiger . . . and who will win this battle? And will Chief Inspector Keshu Singh and his colleagues be able to stop her?

This is Foster's most speculative novel yet.

BLACK POCKETS And Other Dark Thoughts, by George Zebrowski. Golden Gryphon Press, 2006, 276 pp., \$24.95. ISBN 1-930846-40-1

There's real pleasure to be had from picking up a small-press collection that is THIS good, filled to capacity with everything you expect from small press, which is a capacity for collections that are more bold, more real, and more unexpected.

Here are some stories you won't soon

forget:

In "Jumper," Miss Melita visits Dr. Cheney for her session to explain exactly why, when she sleeps, she "quantum leaps" to another location, a sort of "jaunt" like Gully Foyle in Alfred Bester's THE STARS MY DESTINATION. The doctor, however, does not act quickly enough on a final jaunt.

Zebrowski does not write "go-for-the-jugular" King-type horror, but rather a quiet, more emotionally pervasive horror, like a Charles Grant. His stories are filled with the brutality of relationships: witness stories about relationships, sadness, and loss in "The Wish In The Fear," "Hell Just Over the Hill," and "The Alternate." They are stories about doubles.

In the first, "Wish," a bus with passengers sees its double, and the alternate, a newspaper writer (or would-be novelist) encounters his own double.

There are two vignettes in this collection, "Earth Around His Bones," about a cemetery keeper who, after going to bed, dreams repeatedly of a voice of a soul

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trapped in the earth. Could it, somehow, be his own voice?

"Passing Nights" gives us a seaman, torpedoed and ready to be consumed, adrift, in the ocean, as he recalls his childhood in the moments before certain death. "I Walked With Fidel" gives us a picture of an old, stiff, worn-down Cuban dictator who throws in his hat one day, showing up at the Guantanamo Bay military outpost, ready to call it quits. But one guy takes Fidel on a sort of "freak tour," where people can ask the Cuban dictator all sorts of questions. No matter: classic dictators are tough to rule, or to cajole, or to trick - in this story, they're downright bulletproof and require extra special attention. Really, you can't get rid of them too easily - their very nature is one of a zombie, actually.

In "General Jaruzelski at the Zoo," what do you do when a country like Poland, free of the Soviets, has no means of supporting its own people, let alone its zoo animals? In "The Coming of Christ The Joker," Christ visits the "Larry King Show" with guest Gore Vidal. Larry and Gore have a lot of questions for the son of God - and learn ways that, perhaps, mankind can save itself.

In "A Piano Full of Dead Spiders," a pianist knows there are spiders in the works that give him inspiration, that guide his muse - until one day they are dead. But hope is eternal, and a gift as great as spiders on piano strings cannot leave so easily.

In the title story, "Black Pockets," we see the life of Bruno, a man full of jealousy and rage, especially over Felix, who stole his happiness. Bruno has the ability to open up "black pockets," small prisons in which he casts those who anger him. But this dark kind of power is cruel and relentless, and eventually catches up to Bruno.

The collection includes an author's afterword and comments on the stories.

Order from Golden Gryphon Press, 3002 Perkins Rd., Urbana, IL 61802 or via Web, <http://www.goldengryphon.com/>.

INVISIBLE PLEASURES, by Mary Frances Zambreno. American Fantasy, 2005, 241 pp., \$25.00.

ISBN 0-9610352-4-2

Here's a special collection with a few surprises:

"Fairy Godmothers." If you believe in Cinderella, according to the author, then she is a reluctant heroine. If you don't, then she is simply a delusional, bipolar, psychotic woman who needs mood-stabilizing drugs. And sometimes, especially if you are someone in the hospital for behavior observation, then you HAVE to believe in fairy tales. As the saying goes, better the fantasies that uplift you than 10,000 realities. . . .

"Heavy Breathing." Sometimes a person can receive a direct warning - then there are implied warnings about dangers that are not so obvious. In this, Kelsey Anders inherits her Aunt Judy's china figurines, trying to figure out what to do with them - and managing to deal with an obscene caller. Who is the caller? What does he (or she) want? And what warning is the caller trying to give?

"Watching Goldfish Die." An allegory? Well, maybe, this tale examines what happens when goldfish die, and how an author's career seems to take on the same characteristics of the poor lowly fish as it experiences a slow demise.

There are many more fables about Michigan's Upper Peninsula in this collection.

"The Little Girl In The Picture." Mayra Hernandez and Geraldine Maz-zuchelli attend seventh grade at Our Lady of the Lilies parochial school in Chicago. A local history project in Sister Bernard's third hour history class involves Mayra's discovery of an old picture of a little girl, found on a closet shelf. Who is she? And what of her family, lost during the flu epidemic in 1918 - the photo's origin. Did the girl live? Or die?

Order from American Fantasy, 919 Tappan St., Woodstock, IL 60098 or via Web, <http://www.american-fantasy.com/>.

LOVE HURTS, And Other Short Stories, by Barry Hoffman. Edge Books/Gauntlet, 2006, 84 pp., \$9.95. ISBN 1-8873688-9-2

In the title story, Briana, a spoiled, self-absorbed rich kid, experiences the Stockholm Syndrome firsthand as she is kidnapped. She is addicted to the attention her captors provide. She wants to be

taught a lesson. She wants the love and affection her family didn't provide. Trouble is, you can't always get what you want.

"None Of My Concern." People don't rat on one another in the Projects - even while the innocent fall prey. Tyra is one such individual that has learned to accept things that people living in SAFE neighborhoods will never understand - even when they happen to herself.

"Second Chance." Alya, a middle-class spoiled teenager, pregnant at 16, miscarries her baby. She is brought to jail after trying to dispose of her dead baby. She learns a lesson in punishment . . . and in empathy.

"Too Late." Muriel continues to undergo ovarian cancer treatment with her devoted husband Saul at her side. (My own mother died horribly of ovarian cancer, so this story brings up a lot of emotions.)

"Spare Parts." U.S. soldiers in Iraq - Mitchell and Madsen - learn there is no "exit strategy" for the war, but persistent military intervention. Minus one worry - soldiers can't be killed as easily in THIS time period.

Order from Gauntlet Publications, 5307 Arroyo St., Colorado Springs, CO 80922.

ALL HALLOWS' EVE, by Vivian Vande Velde. Harcourt, Inc., 2006, 225 pp., \$17.00. ISBN 0-15-205576-2

Thirteen stories here. "Marian" instructs Justin how to drive. Actually, Marian stands for Mobile and Regional Interactive Assisted Navigation, an on-board GPS directional computer, in the car. She is very good at what she does - but is irritating to Justin, just a bad, overly ag-

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gressive teenage driver. Perhaps she is MORE than a simulated computer voice – perhaps she is a ghost with an agenda.

Morgan Roehmar's Boys." Ashley is a seasonal thrill ride operator who believes she is safe from the "pretend" displays at Cristanis Family Farm. But maybe things are not at all the way they seem.

...
"When And How." Teenagers visit a psychic who offers them a strong vision of the future. If they know when they will die, could they prevent it?

A girl's deceased parents come back to haunt her every Halloween in "When My Parents Come To Visit."

STAR TREK: VOYAGES OF IMAGINATION, The Star Trek Fiction Companion, by Jeff Ayers. Pocket, 2006, 790 pp., \$21.00. ISBN 1-4165-0349-8

Along about 1967, even before the Star Trek syndication-resurgence was well under way, Bantam Books spearheaded fiction that was written from the scripts used on the first Trek episodes.

The start of an empire, in other words. This compendium for the compleatist is way past due, and duly received – for all Trek fans.

DARK FURIES: Weird Tales of Beauties and Beasts, ed. by Vincent Sneed. Die Monster Die, 2005, 261 pp., \$14.95. ISBN 0-9759904-1-1

The authors in DARK FURIES – Adam P. Knave, Jan Rukh, Patrick Thomas, Rose Fox, John L. French, and others – could they be the next Stephen King or Peter Straub, or perhaps the next Joe Lansdale or Dean Koontz, all under develop-

ment?

This could be the proving ground for future talent. Order from Die Monster Die! Books, 5082 E. Federal St., Baltimore, MD 21205, or www.diemonsterdie.com.

YEAR'S BEST FANTASY AND HORROR, 19th Annual Collection, ed. by Ellen Datlow and Kelly Link and Gavin J. Grant. St. Martin's/Griffin, 2006, 603 pp., \$19.95. ISBN 0-312-35614-5.

I enjoyed one tale in this book, "American Morons" by Glen Hirshberg. American tourists stranded in Italy await a tow truck – and battle trolls.

"The Scribble Mind" by Jeffrey Ford. Esme is an artist who recognizes those who can Remember – people who can actually recall early memories, as far back as the womb. But a government entity may be out to capture that talent – and lives could be at stake.

YEAR'S BEST FANTASY 6, ed. by David G. Hartwell and Kathryn Cramer. Tachyon, 2006, 357 pp., \$14.95. ISBN 1-892-391-37-6

COUNTING HEADS, by David Marusek. TOR, 2005, 336 pp., \$24.95. ISBN 0-765-31267-0

THE MISLAID MAGICIAN, by Patricia C. Wrede and Caroline Stevermer. Harcourt, Inc., 2006, 328 pp., \$17.00. ISBN 0-15-205548-7

DEAD CITY, by Joe McKinney. Kensington, 2006, 288 pp., \$6.99. ISBN 0-7860-1781-3

ANCIENT AGRICULTURE: Roots and Application of Sustainable Farming, by Gabriel Alonso De Herrera, compiled by Juan Estevan Arellano and illustrated by Bryan Romero. Ancient City Press/Gibbs Smith, 2006, 168 pp., \$24.95. ISBN 1-4236-0120-3

This book harks back to its original edition, in the middle of the 16th century, and many of its precepts hold quite true today.

A Review By
Joyce Frohn

MANHUNT: The 12-Day Chase for Lincoln's Killer, by James Swanson. HarperCollins, 2006, 464 pp., \$26.95. ISBN 10:0-06-051849-9

This book is history at its best, full of the color of the time, with plenty of action and fascinating characters. No matter how much you thought you knew about Lincoln's assassination, you'll learn more, like why Dr. Mudd's name is mud, and how Booth hid during the manhunt. Booth, the most fascinating of all presidential assassins, comes across in all of his romantic, enigmatic, humanity. The other conspirators and the hunters are almost as fascinating and colorful.

For those who love unfinished conspiracies, this book is full of speculation and tantalizing ideas. How many people were scheduled to die that night? What was Mrs. Surratt's role in this affair? What was Booth planning to do with his rifle? Who was Booth trying to get to? Neither James Swanson nor anyone else knows all the answers, but Swanson sure knows how to ask the questions.

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