

REVENANT #18

Revenant #18, May 2003 produced for SFPA mailing #233 by Sheila Strickland
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Well, I've made it through another semester of Library School. I'll sit out the summer semester and go back in the fall, which means you won't have to read me complaining about my horrible time at school for a while. This was a rough semester; the work was tough and I had trouble focusing on my assignments the way I should have. Too many times, I sat up half the night writing papers. We had a five-page paper on the Patriot Act, then a 10-pager on the Library Code of Ethics plus a complicated library literature assignment that I didn't understand until a few weeks after I had turned it in. I managed to make a "B" for the semester, for which I should be very grateful--I won't even worry about the Graduate School possibly trying to give me a hard time over it. I said "should be grateful" because I was just a couple of points short of an "A". I wish I could have gotten those few extra points; but I'll try not to fret about it.

The only "fun" part of the semester was the library service project---10 hours working in a library of our choice. I choose to work in the Technical Services Division at the Main Branch of our library system. This is the part that "processes" the books and other materials the libraries own. I got to help look up OCLC numbers and enter information into the MARC record. (As a short explanation, the OCLC is a nation-wide system for libraries to enter information about materials they own that are available for interlibrary loan; and the MARC record is used in the local systems to give bibliographic information about the book. And that's not completely right, but it gives you an idea.) I also saw how call numbers are assigned as the woman I was working with selected one particular call number for a pamphlet. She then checked what other types of items had a similar call number; and what call numbers other items with similar subjects had; and ended up deciding to change the number. Interesting work; and I now want to take the course in cataloging.

In the fall, I'll take two classes; both on Monday. It means I'll be off work all day; and I feel a little sorry for my co-workers. Mondays are usually extremely busy; and my only hope is that we may get our new staff member this fall instead of having to wait longer. With a schedule of taking two classes in the fall and spring semester, I should graduate in the spring of '06. Actually I hope to finish before that by taking a summer course or two; but that depends on what's offered and how I can fit it in. LSU doesn't have a very big Library Science School, so not everything is offered every semester or even every year.

With no class work to worry about, I now have time to read and go see movies. I have two books to recommend. The first one, *Lost in a Good Book*, by Jasper Fforde, is a sequel to *The Eyre Affair*, that some of us talked about last year. Thursday Next is back, married to her former boyfriend, but not allowed to settle down to marital bliss. The Goliath Corporation is still out there running things and wanting Thursday to do their evil bidding. She meets up with the Cheshire Cat and Miss Havensham while trying to rescue her husband from a literary devise. The only drawback of the book is that it doesn't end the story as well as the first one did---we'll have to wait for *The Well of Lost Plots* to find out if there's the requisite happy ending.

Another book I've just finished is Terry Pratchett's latest, *The Wee Free Men*. It's supposedly a juvenile and set on the Discworld, though the setting is not really evident until the end. The title refers to the Nac Mac Feegle, the six-inch blue-skinned pictsies last seen in *Carpe Jugulum*. Nine-year-old Tiffany has to get her little brother back from the Queen (of whom one doesn't say the name, but they are often called the Fair Folk). Tiffany is not just any little girl, though---her Granny was possibly a witch and Tiffany herself has the First Sight and the Second Thought. As in all well written books for children, she learns a bit about herself and a bit about growing up by the end. If there were children's books this good around when I was young, I didn't find them---or at least not enough of them.

I took a three day weekend after my final and saw two movies in three days. I recommend "A Mighty Wind". You've probably heard a review of it---a "mockumentary" in the vein of "This is Spinal Tap", but with 1960's folk groups. When a leading producer dies, his children decide to have a concert featuring those headliners "The Folkmen", "Mitch and Mickey", and the reformed "New Main Street Singers". Second stringers all of them, singing white bread folk music. The songs are original and sound authentic; the movie is hilarious. I don't want to tell too much, but I loved one scene in which "The Folkmen" are rehearsing, but stop to discuss what outfits they'll wear for the concert and whether their '60's get-ups were too retro at the time or just will be too retro for now.

I enjoyed "X-Men 2". It was about what I expected---entertaining and far too loud. Not as much angst and soul-searching as there was in the comic when I was reading it, but I wouldn't expect much of that in a movie. I'm glad Nightcrawler made it into this one---he was a favorite of mine though I don't recall him being as overtly religious as he's played in the movie. Hugh Jackman does a good Wolverine, even if he's too tall for the character; Patrick Stewart is still the very model of Professor X. I wonder if they'll try to bring in more characters for the next movie? And would someone like to explain the significance of Magneto reading and Professor X teaching *The Once and Future King*? I'd be happy if they could come up with something other than "humans vs. mutants" again; though I suppose this one was more "mutant vs. mutant". I get bored by long passages of on-screen fighting and start wishing for some dialog.

I haven't seen "The Matrix Reloaded" and don't plan to. I borrowed the DVD of the first one from the library a while back and didn't watch it very far before I said, "This is silly", and gave up on it. I couldn't get past the idea of all those humans as living in a artificial world controlled by the computer for no very good reason that I could see. The advertising for the sequel seems to be so focused on the special effects that I am assuming they didn't spend much time or effort on the script. I did hear one review of it mentioning the Gnostic and Buddhist viewpoints that could be found; so maybe I'll try to watch the first one again with an eye to seeing if I can catch any religious metaphors. If I make it through that one I'll try to catch this one on video. It still seems like nonsense; but maybe it's entertaining nonsense.

Fest For All

I didn't make it down to Jazz Fest this year. It was longer this year, with an added Thursday onto the first weekend. The guest line-up was good that day and I planned to take the day off and drive down. Except that my air-conditioner decided to stop working (actually a broken blade) earlier that week; and with the hot weather already starting I knew I was going to have to get it fixed as soon as possible. I was also getting over a stomach virus and didn't think walking around all day in the heat would be a very good way to finish recovering. And I was

pretty well broke. As a consolation, though, the second weekend of Jazz Fest was the weekend of Fest For All in Baton Rouge. This was a return of a festival that ran in the 80's and 90's. Most of it was along North Boulevard downtown---music by local bands, arts and crafts by local and regional artisans; an art exhibit in the Old State Capital. I went for a few hours Saturday and had a great time. I listened to a local blues band; perused the artisan booths and bought some handmade soap that smells wonderful; bought the official t-shirt and festival compilation music CD; listened to another, Scottish music oriented band; looked around the Old State Capital, which has been set up as an exhibit on Louisiana history and politics; and ended up walking over to the Mississippi River to watch the boats going by. A nice day. It seems to have been a success, so I suppose I'll get to do it again next year.

Silky, R.I.P.

And now my cat population is down by one. Silky, my sweet black kitty, died in early April. He had been droopy for a day or so, then suddenly got much worse one evening. He started yowling in the middle of the night, and I held him for the rest of the night. I didn't expect him to live until morning; but he lasted until just after I got him to the vet. I took him home and buried him in the yard wrapped in a towel. He was a beautiful cat--solid black with semi-long hair on his body, a fluffy tail, and a ruff around his neck. I used to call him my hyperactive cat because he always seemed to be awake while the others were snoozing away. He was a Houdini of a cat; the one who discovered how to get out of a screened porch by leaning on a clawed screen until it split. Until I got the screens replaced; I used to come home and find him sitting outside in the yard quite content. I couldn't chase him down to catch him, but eventually he'd come in the door.

Summer travels

On a happier note, next month, I'll be going up to Toronto for the American Library/Canadian Library Associations conference. I noticed that many of the program items will be in the Toronto Convention Centre; the same one they're using for WorldCon. My library won't pay for it; but since I have a place to stay; I figured this was a good chance to see a professional conference. Plus, with me paying my own expenses, I can attend whichever program items strike my fancy without worrying whether I'm attending the professionally "appropriate" ones. (I think I can justify deducting at least some of my expenses, though, on my tax return next year.) The only library conferences I've been to before were the ones run by the Louisiana Library Association; this one should be an interesting experience.

I'm still undecided about DeepSouthCon. Not that I've heard anything negative about the con committee, but I'm reluctant to make the long drive. If I do, I'll probably want to take it in two days up and back---it's possible to drive to Chattanooga in one day but it makes for a very long day.

I'm planning on WorldCon, though I don't have a hotel room. With no roommate lined up yet; I can't afford to stay in the con hotels. Current plan is to stay with my sister and commute to the con. It's not a perfect plan, but it gets me to Worldcon! WorldCon under less than ideal conditions beats no WorldCon at all. I'm already worried about the possibility of getting to WorldCon in '04. Our semester starts about the last week in August and depending on what day or days of the week I have classes; it could be hard to wedge in going up to Boston for several days. Missing a class is not an option; but I would hate to miss seeing Terry Pratchett as a Guest

of Honor. Nothing I can do about it now, of course; just hope I can get classes on Monday (Labor Day is a school holiday, so I have no worries about this year.)

Mailing Comments

Tyndallite: Ct Richard Dengrove on the story "Ancestral Voices": Did going back in time and preventing Hitler being born result in no Holocaust? Do you think it would have prevented it, really; or would another Hitler have arisen and taken advantage of the times?

Bit of a jolt to read the letter from Harry Warner, Jr. I hadn't realized he had been a member of SFPA.

New Port News: Ct David Schlosser on "California"-accented LOTR: Do you mean the movie? I didn't notice any California-style accents in it; but I didn't notice much of any accents. I'm sure some type were there; but I was so caught up in looking at the sights and listening to the words that I didn't pay attention to how the words were said.

Ct Poulette on using chocolate or beer to trap a sasquatch: Is that for trapping a sasquatch or a fan?

Ct Gary Brown on Cuba: Health in general may be good; but there seems to still be some suffering there. A group from our church goes down there about once a year. They always take over-the-counter medicines such as vitamins and baby Tylenol with them to hand out, and the meds are always highly in demand---supposedly they are very hard to get.

Variations on a Theme: I hope Nicki has managed to find a job by now. Home-made bread, oh, yum. I need to make some of that myself. Maybe if I take it to work I won't be s tempted to eat the whole batch myself!

That's a sad and harrowing story about Alice Sheldon. I don't think I heard the whole story at the time; just that she had died. She was a fine writer; it's a shame we lost her so soon.

Last Minute Stuff: I think you win the "Best Offhand Comment" award of the mailing for saying "Oh, and we are leaving for New Zealand tomorrow morning." We expect to see lots of pretty pictures this time!

Twygdrasil and Treehouse Gazette: Ct to Guy Lillian: SFPA Slash Fiction? No, no, a thousand times no! Remember, there are some things fan was not meant to know.

Ct Gary Robe on the SFPA flag: just what we need? Or maybe a coat of arms; it could feature a typewriter, a mimeo (to remember our past), a computer, and for that final faanish fillip, a propeller beanie!

Peter, Pan & Merry: Ct Ned Brooks on the difference between "repressed memory" and just forgetting: I'd define a "repressed memory" as something terrible that happened to one that one deliberately tried to forget, or deliberately told oneself over and over "it didn't happen, it didn't happen." I've had events happen to me that I'd just as soon forget; and I've not tried to keep

those memories alive. Not that I've tried to forget all the bad things, but some events are not worth remembering.

Frequent Flyer: I see the house is coming along nicely. Have you moved in yet? You and Anita seem to be really making the cultural rounds what with musicals, ballets, and the Symphony.

You mention the movie "Chicago": that was one I missed and didn't think I'd like; but perhaps I should give it a try. I'm one of those who doesn't usually like musicals. The drawback of contemporary musicals is that there're not many, if any, actors like Fred Astaire around. Men who can dance as if they are just making it up on the spot, and sing at least passably well are a rare breed nowadays.

Spiritus Mundi: Looking forward to reading about how you coped with that long, long flight to Australia. It's okay to keep the majority of your Australian story for the official DUFF report (which'll be out for WorldCon this year, right?); but we want to hear a few little details. And I hope your face had healed a bit before you left! Good grief, you looked thoroughly battered! I'm glad to hear you were feeling better at least.

Poor Malibu. I hate the way some people (your neighbor, I mean, not you!) treat animals. To own a cat, then kick him out; not even having the responsibility to take him to the animal shelter where he'd have a chance of being adopted or if not at least a relatively quick death.

Ct me and my margins: I was pasting the article into the Works format I do this zine on---and it blew the margins. I was doing it last minute, as usual; and didn't have the patience to fiddle with it and get it right.

Trivial Pursuits: Love the cover. I think I need a subscription to "The Reassure"; at least during the semester.

I'm surprised you hadn't read Dorothy Sayers; I had the impression that her books were very popular among fans. Which means nothing, I know; just that sometimes we expect that "everyone" has read everything we have. (Coming back to this a few days later, I just learned my head librarian had never read Dorothy Sayers, either!) I discovered Sayers years ago, happily. I've read all the Peter Wimsey novels and some of the stories. I found myself intrigued by the unstated assumptions of position and class that everyone in the books seems to share. It's not like reading a Victorian or Regency novel where everyone "knows their place"; this is taking place in the 20th century.

You mentioned not liking *White Doves at Mourning*", by James Lee Burke: have you read any of his other books? I've read several of his Dave Robichaux series, and liked those a lot. I don't generally like books with as much violence as these have; but Burke's ability to paint a word portrait of south Louisiana is enough to get me through the rough spots.

Boskone and the Blizzard: Boskone sounds like a good con. Despite the potential for awful weather, I'd like to attend one year; but going to school will have to put that idea on hold for a while. Working full time and going to school means I have no weekends---I spend days off working on assignments online or at the library.

You found a misplaced rib when you got home? Forgot to pack it, did you?

“Asians in the Civil War” sounds like a practice reference question. Last semester, we were going over how to do a reference interview; and one scenario was a student coming in to ask for information on “flying gerbils”. We were supposed to interview this person to determine just what they really needed. None of us could get it---what they actually meant was “dirigibles”!

Oblio: So Scalia is so fond of free speech that he wants to exclude broadcast media from seeing him accept an award for supporting free speech? I just checked the calendar and it didn't say, “1984”; obviously I have the wrong calendar.

Tickets for Jimmy Buffett were \$55? Yikes, if this is normal, no wonder I don't go to concerts. But it sounds like it was a good one. I hadn't realized he was such a popular draw; I'm not a particular fan of his, but I do like his music.

I liked the headline “Bush: We know Iraq has banned weapons”. Maybe that's why they can't find them. It reminds me of the joke Molly Ivins repeated in one of her columns that of course we know Iraq has weapons of mass destruction---we have the receipts for them!

Guilty Pleasures: I hope Adam Brown is safe; have you heard from him yet? The main fighting of the war may be over, but it's still dangerous for the troops over there.

Congratulations to Raphi for making the Dean's list. Good going.

Insert Dignified Title Here: Ct me on cats that want attention: Silky was one who wanted attention. And I did give him a little extra. He loved being brushed; so I gave him a brushing when I could find the cat brush and get him to sit still for a bit.

Home With the Armadillos: Don't apologize for missing the mailing; you certainly had more than sufficient cause. I hope your recoveries are continuing well.

I'd like to have a garden, but digging up this clay soil and putting in the proper additives translates into more time than I have/want to spend. I also have the problem of shade---my yard, front and back are fairly small, and there are enough trees around to keep me from putting in the plants I prefer that need lots of sun. My mother always had roses, but I don't have a suitable site for them here. I could do shade plants, yes, but most of them don't have the bright colors I like.

Hello Kitty: Thanks for the extra copy of the Hugo listings. I hope to be able to keep up with it

One thing that annoys me about the “war” with Iraq is how Bush will no doubt use it for his re-election bid. We'll see those images of Saddam's statue being pulled down over and over. They won't mention the way American troops are still being shot at; or show the looted libraries and museums; or the lists of the dead civilians.

And to All: I thought I'd do a better job on comments this time around, but as usual, I'm finishing this late. See you in 60.