

In the Beginning

Fantasy Amateur: I couldn't vote on the constitutional amendments. If I voted for, I would go against my conviction that the FAPAazines should be read before going into the mailings. If I voted against, I would go against my convictions that several other changes should be adopted. So, with the 34¢ I saved for a postage stamp and envelope, I bought two copies of Alfred Hitchcock's Mystery Magazine from the 1960s at a yard sale for 25¢ and I put the other 9¢ into the bank so it'll be available in some future financial crisis. Sansevieria: I wish there were places for pedestrians to walk in Hagerstown. Police don't enforce the law against riding bicycles on sidewalks and 200-pounders pedaling at 20 miles per hour can inflict severe injuries on a person walking who doesn't know they're coming up behind. Red turns on both left and right at many intersections make it dangerous to cross even the few intersections that have brief red lights in all four directions from time to time. Muggers can lurk behind any parked car. '' To bring the Moon down to suitable size while it's just above the horizon, hold a couple of pieces of paper or some other opaque items in such a position that they conceal everything beneath and to either side of the Moon. '' Saskatchewan may stand for farming for most persons. But for me, it is insolubly linked with a song that was popular in the 1930s and probably forgotten by everyone else in the space-time continuum. It had a tarante la rhythm and it began, as well as I can remember: "O what a delight was the night that I met you on in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan! O what a thrill from the spill on the hill I upset you on, in Saskatchewan!" '' I wish I knew a McDonalds official or two so I could verify or refute one of my suspicions: that the chain is plagued with many more claims for money from customers who invent injuries in the hope of winning millions in a lawsuit but settle for a few thousands without litigation. '' I wonder, how did the Manifold Writer work and why didn't it become universally adopted by business firms? Could it have had a primitive form of carbon paper which didn't stand up to hard use? Snickersnee: I still have my tonsils which is surprising because my cousin was married to an eye, ear, nose and throat specialist who thought everyone in the family should be tonsils-free. But I did have a mouth operation when I was almost brand new. I was born with a membrane from my tongue to some anchoring spot on my palate. Our family doctor snipped it away in his office before I was aware of what was happening. It would have prevented me from talking clearly if it had remained there. I've often wondered if there is a similar membrane in my brain and if a physician could have reached it, I would have been able to think clearly. '' Bob's proposal of double memberships for the most antique members of FAPA somehow has a Phil Dick novel implication about it. '' As far as I can determine, someone chosen to produce an opera nowadays must promise not to read its libretto, listen to its music, or attend another production of it before going to work. That is the only way to account for the way the words being sung contradict what is occurring on the stage, why the orchestra is playing peaceful music while all the singers are rolling around on the stage or jumping up and down, and why whatever era into which the producer has switched the original era specified by the libretto has things happening that never happened in realhistory. Several years ago I watched a performance of La Boheme set in Paris during the height of the hippy era in the 1960s and the dying Mimi still asked for a muff and Musetta was still able to go out and buy her one after only four or five minutes offstage. I doubt if any hippy female in Paris knew what a muff was a half-century ago and I can't imagine where one could have been bought without a long search through flea markets or costumers' shops. Still, I've felt for a long time a guilty desire to see a videotape of the production of DonGiovanni in Europe some years ago with a setting on Mars. Green Stuff: The essay on Bill Danneris excellent, telling those not privileged to have been on the Stef mailing list many facts about him. I admired him for the way he lived the way he wanted to live without

conforming to the pattern of others and, apparently, possessing a much happier life than most persons. I suspect that Stef will become a major collectors' item soon with much more justification than some other fanzines that are in demand today. Ibid: I hadn't known the existence of Blood on the Dining Room Floor until I read about it here. It's unfortunate that Sheffer chose to write an 80-minute opera, though. It's too short to stand alone and twin bills in opera houses rarely seem to work, unless they consist of Cav & Pag. '' There was a song entitled The Bowery that was still being played and sung over the radio when I was a boy, even though I believe it dated from the 1890s. After reading the material about Ben's son from the Times, I suspect I finally know the meaning of the lyrics that puzzled me so long ago: "The Bowery, the Bowery, the things they do and the things they say on the Bowery, the Bowery, I'll never go there any more." '' We've read so much about the strain on humans in a spaceship that requires years to reach its destination. Would this be much different from the experience of a whaleship journey that lasted two or three years, like the Essex? There might be slightly more room aboard the ship on the sea than the one in space but astronauts would have more ways to divert themselves from the boredom than the sailors did two centuries ago. '' I've achieved Ben's feat of causing the entire universe to go around in circles only once. Curiously, it happened when I woke from a deep sleep and found the figures on the clock radio and the faintly visible windows making one complete circuit every four seconds or so. I remember wondering if this happens when a person is dying and isn't known because nobody has ever lived to describe it. But I managed to sit up in bed and then to stand up and gradually the universe began behaving normally. It hasn't hit me again since then. '' '' Mephistopheles should have the traditional costume in performances of Faust because he describes it immediately after appearing in the first act: "The sword at my side, a feather in my hat, a fat purse, an expensive mantle on my shoulder, all in all, a real gentleman." Horizons: I forgot all about Boito's opera when I cited Faust's bad luck in musical settings. Faust is redeemed at its end. I have Busoni's Doktor Faustus on order on CDs and I'm anxious to learn how he gets along in that operatic incarnation. FAPA Venus: If I understand the ending of the story correctly, we're all in much the same situation as characters in animated cartoons who can run off the edge of a precipice and keep on going very well until they happen to look down and see there's nothing under their racing feet or paws. A Postscript: The trucks they call SUVs should be relegated to one particular area in large parking lots. When they're mixed in with automobiles, it's terribly hard to back out of a parking stall because their bodies completely block vision of anything that may be coming along. '' There are several things that could get FAPA into legal trouble if they go unnoticed into FAPA mailings. I don't think reproducing several paragraphs of prose or a single day's comic strip would result in more than a stern letter of warning from the copyright owner but reprinting several chapters of a book like the ones in Fanalysis in this mailing could have serious repercussions. The postal service no longer is as strict about nudity in the mails as it once was but drawings or photographs in FAPAZines that qualify as child pornography would be a different matter that might bring criminal charges. Written material that contains wild charges of someone's dishonesty or guilt in crimes or incompetency at a job could qualify as actionable libel. Major corporations may react violently to outsiders' use of their copyrighted characters or universes, as Star Trek fans discovered many years ago. Alphabet Soup: It's been many years since I last read A World of Fanzines, so my memory may falsify how I really felt about Dr. Wertham's book. But I seem to recall that my main complaint was his failure to understand the differences between science fiction fandom and comic book fandom. He didn't seem aware that the former is about 25 years older than the latter and that there has been comparatively little overlap of interests; with a few exceptions, fans of one type have had little interest in the other fandom, as well as the fact that science fiction fandom has been mostly money-free while comic book fandom has sold instead of giving its publications, sought to produce professional-type comic strips and pages, and restricted its interest to comic books, with little involvement in the remainder of today's world. Voice

of the Habu: My experience with a cellular phone is exactly opposite to Roger's. I've had one now for two years or longer and I still haven't placed a call. I got it solely as a source of emergency help. I keep it at my bedside cabinet where I can reach it if I suffer sudden severe illness while in bed and I take it along when I drive beyond the builtup area in and immediately adjacent to Hagerstown, in case of car trouble. I admit I thought about making it my one and only telephone when I found an enormous increase in my monthly bill for my regular telephone. But I hesitated because I couldn't keep it turned on constantly for incoming calls, and then I discovered that the inflated bill resulted from new long distance fees which I got rid of by the simple method of removing myself from all long distance access. I average about one long distance call a year and I can still make them by using one of those much-advertised cheapskate services via dialing a long series of numbers before the desired phone number. Synapses: Now that Speer has entertained us with sophistries meant to excuse murdering unborn babies, I hope he will provide a delightful explanation of why it was all right for the Nazis to kill millions of Jews. Photographic film manufacturers can control the size of the particles of light-sensitive chemicals they deposit on the film stock. Larger ones have more surface area so they react more readily to light. Smaller ones won't do their thing until a greater amount of light has struck them. The former create fast film but the images aren't as sharp under considerable enlargement as the latter. "Bradbury seems to have started this thing about a prehistoric butterfly's accidental death causing major changes in contemporary history. But his story about hunters in the distant past was flawed. The butterfly died when a hunter stepped off a path that a modern time travel outfit had constructed to prevent interference with the past. But already vast changes would have resulted from the construction of such a path. " The current century still has 33 years to go before it's completed. The World's Fair in Chicago in 1933 was entitled A Century of Progress and nobody complained it was wrong. Visions of Paradise: I wonder why children today who are so seriously affected by squabbling parents aren't like the tough ones of the not too distant past. I've read autobiography after autobiography of celebrities who grew up in humble circumstances with parents who were always fighting with words or with fists. Those reminiscences usually tell us that the kids were unhappy but marital discord didn't change their personalities or ability to cope with life. " I haven't read any of the Mars fiction by Kim Stanley Robinson, so I don't know how much he has terraformed the planet for the purpose of his series. But I suspect it would be much harder to throw a good curve ball on Mars even if he has postulated a thickening of its atmosphere to Earth's standard. A baseball might curve horizontally as well on Mars as it does around sea level on Earth. But the best curve balls also veer vertically and Mars' lower gravity would create a problem for pitchers. If Robinson's Mars has a thinner atmosphere, the curve balls would be even less effective. The comparatively slight difference in the air pressure in Denver has made it impossible for some pitchers who depend on curve balls to win consistently there. Ride the Lightning: "Classic" is a word that should be retired from the English language because it has been abused to meaninglessness. Recently I saw on TES a promotion for a new movie scheduled for its first showing anywhere later in the week. It was called a classic. " I'm not sure that all colleges have stopped offering for senior citizens "pottery, basket weaving and flower arrangements". The other day the local community college sent me a catalog of courses intended to raise the intellect and understanding of people as chronologically challenged as I am. The first item I noticed was a class in how to decorate front doors for Thanksgiving. I imitated Petrarch and on that day read no more. Western Romance: Joyce's listing of railroads her family used to travel was as evocative as if I'd actually been a passenger on them, because Hagerstown was once a railroad town and almost everything connected with the iron horse seemed somehow connected to the rails that ran through all parts of this city. Sweet Jane: Just

about everyone in the past history of this nation is being claimed systematically, a dozen or so at a time, as homosexuals who concealed that status. If a celebrity had a dozen children and three wives, he was going to such great lengths to give a false impression of being normal sexually. An adult who died in his or her 20s is cited as a probable example of all the people who killed themselves rather than reveal homosexual preference. If a famous businessman belonged to a stag club, it was a secret hotbed of male love. I'm sure the old popular song, Painting the Clouds with Sunshine, has been banned from performance on records or broadcasts because its lyrics begin with a misleading message: "When I pretend I'm gay, I never feel that way, I'm only painting the clouds with sunshine." The Road Warrior: If the computer search for "Tom Feller" produced only the items reproduced here, someone didn't hunt very hard. If Uncle Tom's Cabin was listed several times, where's Tom Sawyer? If Feller is referenced by several recent news stories, why isn't there a mention of several books written by and about him (Bob, that is, not Tom)? Free Radical: I haven't noticed any excessive travel time for mail from the United Kingdom to Hagerstown. But the air mail situation from Australia is scandalously slow. Often a fanzine whose envelope is plastered with expensive stamps and big AIR MAIL lettering takes more than a month to reach me. Detours: I can't imagine why Russell thinks I sit down 274 times to read a 274-page FAPA mailing. I vaguely recall writing a mailing comment an issue or two ago about my inability to read more than a page of a barely legible FAPazine at a time. Maybe this is the beginning of a campaign to alashley my fannish character. " I commented on the Bob Peterson article reprinted here on its original appearance. Corflatch: This must be the longest report on the smallest con published in quite a few years. I'm glad Arnie seems to have had such a good time. But I wonder about certain things. One is the feat of drawing from a hat the name of the fan guest of honor at Corflus. Who in fandom except Mike Glicksohn and me wears a hat? Does a hat magically appear from nowhere when needed for this purpose at each Corflu and vanish when the name has been drawn from it? I am also puzzled by the use of the present tense in a reference to Judi Sephton. I thought sure I'd read a brief obituary of her some months ago. I also have some doubts that SFPA members would want to distribute their apazines "throughout fanzine fandom". Unless that organization has changed radically since I left it a couple of years ago, most of its publications are very candid about the publishers' experiences and thinking. If just anyone could see them, there would be some danger of statements getting to the SFPA member's employer or might become part of the litigation in a divorce suit or otherwise cause embarrassment or worse for the publisher. Within the organization, there are no tattlers even though some members hate other members. " I'm sorry to see Arnie resurrecting the old fable about fans in the 1930s being "people who could not fit into mainstream society despite abundant talents". Almost all fans were too young to have had time to become financial successes or prominent in some field or other at once. But on the whole, I think the fans of that period made their mark in the world in greater quantities than ever after. Just think of the careers that came out of Los Angeles fandom of the 1930s: the most famous special effects expert in Hollywood, one of the top dozen science fiction and fantasy writers of the century, a museum director, a leader of homosexual advocacy who got an enormous writeup in the New York Times when he recently died, the biggest collector of and authority on science fiction in the nation, and so on. A Propos de Rien: It is impossible to enjoy those two-lane country roads in this area. People drive on them now as if they were four-lane inter-states. There are gruesome accidents and particularly bad spots which authorities refuse public pleas to do something about. At one of these, a school bus driver rounded a curve on a hill, went onto the wrong side of the road, and collided with a truck, sending almost 30 kids to the hospital, just a couple of weeks ago. " One very small town in Arkansas renamed itself as a money-making measure back in the early part of this century. When the radio series, Lum and Abner, became enormously popular, this village changed its name to Pine Ridge, the fictional town where the old fellows lived and ran the Jot 'em Down Store. They got the expected influx of tourists.

" A humble lunch counter like Kresge's or Newberry's was superior from my ideals to those in rest homes or retirement communities. Except perhaps for the most luxurious retreats for the elderly and infirm that only the rich can afford, you eat what you're offered at whatever hour it's given you when you're in such an institution. The humble lunch counter permitted you to choose your edibles, order as much or as little as your appetite wanted, and have your meals at any time of day or night that appealed to you.

Fanalysis: Most physicians keep their distance from patients and treat them with reserve because so many sick or injured individuals would just love to pick up a million or two from a malpractice suit. A doctor who laid his hand on a female patient once in a while risked media publicity that could ruin his career involving her claim that he made indecent advances under a pretense of a medical examination. A man whom a doctor kidded about a medical problem can always find a lawyer who will go to court with the claim that this lighthearted treatment caused his client to fail to recognize the severity of his ailment. And all persons who need medical attention suffer because the cost of malpractice insurance for physicians grows ever higher and this burden is passed along in the form of doctors' bills. " I've spent perhaps a dozen weeks in hospitals in my life. Some of the worst memories of those times involve people who tried to be funny in those places. Patients who wonder how they will be able to pay their bills, if they will recover sufficiently to continue to work after release from the hospital, dread tomorrow's operation or invasive procedure, have constant pain, or suspect they haven't been told the full seriousness of their problem are rarely in the mood to appreciate fully a funny nose on a doctor's face. For FAPA: It's hard to find new manual typewriters in the United States. Unless someone stumbles on a stack of them in the basement of an old store, a mail order firm offering Mexican-made acoustic typers is the only source known to me. **Trial and Air:** This is the best-looking FAPazine in years and years, as far as I can remember. The color illustrations are spectacular and I almost never see solid blacks, shadow detail, and excellent differentiation of middle tones in monochrome photo reproductions in fanzines, like here. " I will gladly support the idea of a joint FAPA-ANZAPA mailing in June, 2026, if it is understood that I can't promise to contribute to it. As Mabel once said in *The Pirates of Penzance* in somewhat different circumstances, "It seems so long to wait." " Michael's narrative of his camera career and the accompanying prints reawaken my catatonic picture-taking instincts. I did a lot of photography as a boy with a Brownie and a folding Kodak 120 film camera, desisted in my teens, but resumed around 1950 with first an Argus C-3 and then a Contax III-A. I got as far as doing my own developing of color film before one thing and another caused me to put away the cameras and equipment about 15 years later. But I haven't time enough for the things I'm already trying to accomplish and I don't know what I could abandon to make room for a return to shutter release pressing. " Obviously, there is no way to make hard and fast rules on FAPA reprinting to the exact word. Nobody should object to quoting a paragraph or two of an already published article or rerunning a small Rotsler fillo when activity credits are being counted up. But I think members should be honest enough to identify reprinted material covering a page or more as such, shouldn't expect a double-spaced page to count as a full page toward meeting activity requirements, and shouldn't try to get credit for a last page on which is scrawled "Th-th-that's all, folks!" I complain about a failure to meet eight pages of new material per year only if there are obvious forms of cheating, not if the body type is a trifle larger than usual or a double space is used between paragraphs. " The only leather I wear is possibly in my wallet and keycases and I'm not sure about them now that plastic wears so many deceptive disguises so it looks like other substances.

Recent Reading

It's going to make some people in fanzine fandom unhappy. But I'm glad it has happened. The brand new edition of The Comic Art Price Guide by Jerry Weist contains what I believe to be the first generally distributed and substantial listing of fanzine price estimates. Jerry has added to the previous edition of his book a section which gives estimates of the value of several hundred fanzines of the past, together with descriptive material about many of them, and reproductions of several dozen fanzine covers.

Obviously, some fans will feel that such a price list will tend to drive up the amounts of money a fanzine collector must spend. However, he was right on the nose in his figures for the worth of Willis fanzines if Arnie Katz' mention of a transaction at Corflu is consulted. His estimates don't seem exorbitant to me for the sale of fanzines at major auction houses or events like a worldcon. Obviously, there will still be many fanzine transactions for a small fraction of the scale of figures listed here when a gaffiated fan who is disgusted with his lapsed hobby decides to sell his fanzine collection to some other fan for a few bucks per box. And please don't charge me with licking my senile chops over the prospect of how much more I'll receive when I sell my fanzine collection. I haven't sold a fanzine since shortly after publication of the last issue of Spaceways in late 1942 and my collection will go as a bequest, not for money, to an institution after my death.

I think any drawbacks of this publication are more than compensated by the publicity it will give far and wide to collectors and dealers about the fact that old fanzines have value, in some cases extreme value. This is the only way I can think of to improve the chances for survival of at least a few copies of every good issue of a worthy fanzine. Maybe librarians who have some fanzines will hear about the situation and will be less inclined to dump the fanzines the next time they need shelf space for a large new acquisition. If the general public should eventually become aware of the dollar value of old fanzines, they will hunt a purchaser instead of throwing into the furnace the collections a son or divorced husband or other relative left in their home for storage. There was a time when nobody thought early comic books were worth saving, but it's hard to find today a person who doesn't know at least enough about them to know that the ones with prices of 10¢ or 12¢ are almost sure to be worth a lot.

Jerry published comics fanzines when he was very young but he got interested strongly in science fiction fanzines only in more recent years. He has been building an impressive-sized collection and unlike many collectors of fanzines, he actually reads his acquisitions. The result is a selection of titles for his new book that are almost all desirable both for rarity and because they have good material inside. Like all the other sections of the book, The Comic Art Price Guide gives three prices for almost all the fanzines listed: for good, fine and near mint copies. I was properly staggered to find he had priced the earliest issues of Horizons from \$75 to \$100 for near mint copies. (I am not sure, however, that any copy of those issues looked near mint ten seconds after I finished pulling the last page off the hektapad.) The most valuable fanzines in this section are the five issues of Jerome Siegel's Science Fiction, a set of which sold three years ago at Sotheby's for \$19,950. I was pleased to find he values highly En Garde, the splendid fanzine of the much-maligned Al Ashby, listing its worth higher than fanzines from some of those who tried to demolish his character.

However, fanzines occupy only a small part of the very thick book. Most of it is devoted to market prices and information on original art surviving from comic books, newspaper comic strips, pulp magazines, paperbacks, and other sources. There are also plump sections on the worth of underground comics and comics fanzines. These are accompanied by many examples of prices actually paid at major auction houses or in private transactions, estimates of the number of copies that survive of particularly rare publications, and much information on artists. You can also find page after page of lists of the estimated worth of various pulp magazines. Finally, here and there is an informative or entertaining article on topics related to the main subject matter, some of them of interest to science

fiction fandom. There is an interview with Ackerman, Jerry's memories of publishing fanzines on the mimeograph, helpful information on the best ways to preserve printed matter on old, low-quality paper, the evolution of original artwork collecting, and various others.

I don't know the details about availability, but I am sure many shops specializing in comics and other pulp artifacts will have copies, and I assume other book stores could order it through Arcturian Books, 18 Edgemoor Road, Gloucester, Massachusetts, 01930.

Everyone keeps advising me that the world is growing smaller all the time. I have doubts, which have strengthened since I read John Miller's biography of Dame Judi Dench, subtitled *With a Crack in Her Voice*. Here is an actress who by common consent is considered the natural successor to Dame Edith Evans as the greatest in England. But in a career that has lasted more than four decades, she is hardly known in the United States to any but the most knowledgeable theater buffs. She didn't perform on any United States stage from 1958 to 1999. Most of her great quantity of performances for the BBC never made it to United States television. She hasn't done an enormous amount of movie work and most often prefers small roles in them and United States distribution of most of her films has been spotty. An American hardly has more knowledge of her art than the early 19th century playgoer over here knew of England's stage celebrities.

Fortunately, as this biography points out near its end, all this began changing just a few years ago. In addition to her touring in the United States with *Amy's View*, some public television stations in this nation began to show reruns of *As Time Goes By*, which began life a decade ago as a six-hour miniseries but was so popular that the BBC persuaded her to continue year after year. It was in its eighth season when the book was published and I'm not sure if production continues. Finally, Judi was honored with Oscar nominations for her portrayals in successive years of two of England's queens, in *Mrs. Brown and Shakespeare in Love*. She won the latter Oscar even though she was on the screen for only eight minutes. This book should increase awareness of her over here. It bears a 2000 copyright date but the flyleaf of the copy I found at a rummage sale has "Xmas, 1999" written on it.

This might be the authorizedest biography I've ever read. Miller obviously did an immense amount of research and spent a very great amount of time with the actress. In some respects, it gives both sides of the story. It quotes both favorable and unfavorable reviews of plays in which she starred, for instance. It also details some of the odd quirks of her conduct, like her habit of starting to rehearse a play without having read the whole thing through first. But is quite reticent about certain other matters. We never learn, for instance, if the various romances she had before her marriage were just casual flirtations or serious affairs. There is a brief reference to a big newspaper flap over some event involving her daughter, but the author apparently thinks everyone in England will remember that and doesn't give any details. I didn't mind too much this fault. The absence of scandal rehashing leaves more room for factual matters. When I started reading the book, I was startled by several instances where Miller had used the word *corpse* as a verb. I thought that noun wasn't very probable as a verb. Then I realized from the context that it is the British equivalent of what is usually called breaking up in the United States: when during a performance something goes wrong like a mispronunciation of a line or a telephone ringing at the wrong time or an actor dropping his cup of coffee, and everyone else on stage begins a desperate effort to control the irresistible urge to break out into giggles. I've never seen the term in any other book about the British stage and I suspect it might be a new use.

Let us hope that the recent American events will persuade PBS or some other television entity to begin rerunning some of the treasures that Britons saw during the era when Judi was young and quite pretty. She had pointed ears before *Star Trek* when she played Titania in a production of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. There was a whole series of appearances in a BBC cycle of all the historical plays of Shakespeare. It would be good to see her early films like *Family on Trial* and *Confession--Neighbors*, which I'd never even heard of be-

fore readin the book. And I've almost steeled myself to watch three James Bond movies in which she had small parts, despite my intense dislike for the series.

Every time I read another Anne Perry novel, I find myself even more in awe of her characterization skills, her ability to evoke mid-19th century England, and her malicious ingenuity in keeping the reader guessing until she is ready and willing to reveal some vital element in the story to him. *A Breach of Promise*, for instance, is centered around the young, much-talented architect who is hauled into court by the mother of the young lady who assumed their betrothal and even made wedding plans before the architect refused to get wed. This architect won't reveal even to the attorneys defending him the reason for breaking off an apparent courtship, even though the litigation will almost certainly ruin a great career as a designer of buildings. As I read through the rather long novel, I told myself that this time I was going to figure out the problem for myself, and I managed to come up with no fewer than five possible explanations for the architect's conduct. I felt awfully foolish when Miss Perry snapped her fingers and produced out of thin air a revelation that was much simpler than mine and more logical, too.

The first few Anne Perry novels I read disturbed me a little because their general atmosphere of the time and place seemed subtly wrong. Somehow, England 150 years ago seemed so bright, faster-paced, almost modern in these books than it was in the novels of Charles Dickens who actually was living in the era she writes about. It wasn't until I read a recent biography of Dickens that I realized the actuality. This biographer emphasized in many ways the fact that Dickens wrote about the past of England, even when a novel was allegedly set in the time in which he was writing it. Dickens never forgot the England he had known near the start of the 19th century as a boy and very young man. England underwent very great change during the first half of the 19th century as a result of the industrial revolution, the coming of railroads, a beginning of social awareness on the part of authorities, the rise of a middle class and other factors. The Anne Perry novels could very possibly be more accurate depictions of the early years of Queen Victoria's reign than those of Dickens. She is outpacing him in the number of novels she has written. I count 29 so far in the two series, one devoted to William Monk as the principal character, the other to Thomas and Charlotte Pitt.

However, the modern writer delves into unpleasant things that Dickens rarely emphasized in his fiction. You could read through the entire set of Dickens' works and hardly realize that there was a war in Crimea. One of the Perry novels describes events that are an outgrowth of the horrors of that war. Dickens wrote about the white slave trade in *Oliver Twist* but he didn't have much to say about other forms of de facto slavery in England: slavery for labor purposes. A subplot of *A Breach of Promise* involves two wretched young girls who have been bought and sold to serve as mistreated menials and their rescue by Monk. I assume that she has depicted realistically the way detectives and policemen behaved in the time of her novels, much more subtly than you'd guess from others who have written fiction about them in that or other eras.

There are violent deaths in this novel but they have a subordinate role, since the trial for breach of promise is the main event. Before I read this novel, I would have guessed that such a trial could never be accepted by modern day readers as important and serious, after the famous Trial by Jury of Gilbert & Sullivan and Mr. Pickwick's problem in *Pickwick Papers*. Somehow, Anne Perry has made breach of promise seem a very serious matter indeed that involves human happiness and lies instead of a topic that deserves to be treated lightheartedly. And, as if to comfort the reader for destroying his illusions about the hilarity of one aspect of marriage, the book ends with an unexpected and very satisfying revelation of another marriage that seems certain to be sullied by no breaches of promise.