

The New Port News
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Cover art from **Festus** by Philip James Bailey (Miller, NY 1874)

OO - Sheila - Got the mailing on October 12. Argh, a typo in the Roster - my ISP is *sprynet.com*, not "spynet.com".

Sky Captain - Jeff - The postmailed zine - better than the movie, anyway! I like the quote about random numbers.

The Fake Yorker - Jeff - Funny covers!

Tyndallite - Metcalf - Thanks for the reference to Solomon Spaulding's **The Manuscript Found**, I had never heard of that! I don't know how old the publisher Small, Maynard & Co. was, just that they went back at least to 1919. But why I put that they were "British" I don't know - nothing in the 1919 book **Keep of the Grss** indicates that, place of publication is Boston.

Twygdrasil - Dengrove - According to *Webster's*, "Paracelsus" used the name "Philippus Aureolus Paracelsus" but his real name was "Theophrastus Bombastus von Hohenheim". On the other hand, *Brewer* says that "Bombastus" was the family name of "Aureolus Paracelsus".... I wonder what his friends actually called him? *Brewer* quotes a tradition that he kept a tiny demon in the pommel of his sword.

I think I have seen the origin of the word "bombast" attributed to Paracelsus' love of jargon, but apparently this is not true - *bombast* or *bombace* was the word used at the time for the boll of the cotton plant, which was used to pad the clothing of the time, and thus came to be used for puffed-up verbiage.

Perhaps the commemorative silver plate with the name scratched out was ordered but never paid for, and then auctioned off when the jeweler went out of business.

The cartoon with the Chinaman from the old telegraph anthology is not explained, but I take it to mean that the man on the left has charged a capacitor with a direct-current dynamo and left it for the other fellow to find and get a startling shock - this was apparently a common prank of the telegrapher on the unsuspecting rube. But I don't know why the prankster is in costume.

I was just hit by the *Vundo* trojan. I downloaded the fix from Symantec, *FixVundo.exe*, and ran it several times, but it always generated errors and stopped, complaining that it couldn't find "Dr.Watson". Symantec would not support my efforts and explain this, because my Norton Anti-Virus was too old and no longer supported. I had already ordered the upgrade, so I installed it - but *FixVundo* still wouldn't run. So I did a Full Scan - which takes hours - and the next morning I found a report that the new voodoo had found Vundo and suppressed it. I hope so.... Google finds sites saying that Vundo is hard to get rid of.

Yes, *natural* is a rather useless modifier. Hank says he is in favor of torture as "natural behavior", but this may be mere bombast. I have never actually seen him torture anyone.... But of

course I myself am in favor of gruesome procedures that I would not perform personally - appendectomy, for example - because I lack the skill. That's why motivation and intent must always be taken into account. The police spokesman in New Orleans insists that the five cops who assaulted the old retired schoolteacher "did nothing wrong" - but I have seen the video on TV. The guy was laying on the pavement handcuffed and bleeding profusely - and one of the policemen is kicking him. Whether the victim was drunk and/or disorderly has become irrelevant - what was the motivation for kicking him?

As fans of his age go, Steve Patt was no louder than average. I certainly didn't find him obnoxious. As far as I know he was well-liked in Baltimore fandom.

There is always a fuzzy spectrum of acts between what is clearly a crime and what is "just a prank". Today's *Atlanta Journal* carries an editorial contending that the Georgia Tech freshman's "bottle bombs" were closer to the prank end of the scale. But he made three of them, and was looking for the material to make more, and one innocent bystander was slightly injured. Unfortunately, the design would almost guarantee that - apparently he was putting a bit of sodium in a plastic bottle of water in such a way that when the bottle was disturbed (in this case by a janitor, whose job it is to clear away abandoned bottles), the sodium came into contact with the water, generating enough gas pressure to make the bottle explode with a bang. At least he had the sense not to use a glass bottle! When I was at Georgia Tech, the popular prank was to leave a firecracker with the fuse suck in a lit cigarette as a slow fuse - in due course the cigarette would burn down and set off the fireworks. I once "improved" on this by putting the firecracker in a can of talcum powder. I was an idiot.... Fortunately, no one was hurt and as far as I know no one was ever caught.

Spiritus Mundi - Guy - What a mess the weather made.... I had dinner with Guidry and Dolbear and someone named Rick who thought he remembered me from the Jackson DSC. Last I heard John's mother had regained consciousness in the hospital and he and his sister are still waiting to see how it goes.

Interesting account of the attempted murder trial - I would have to wonder to what extent any of those people were capable of forming a rational intent.

Your attribution of the cover to a Susan Toker as depicting a pirate or whatever is confusing - the front cover is quite obviously a cyber-voodoo manipulation of the image on the back cover - the effect called "solarization" I think.

Why ask me about Karen Valentine? Oh, just because of the issue number. I never watched the show *Room 222*, or even remember hearing of it.

All the courts say that there was no law broken in the torture-murder of Frederick Williams by the Gwinnett County cops. Of course they are saying the same thing about the assault on Mr Davis in the French Quarter this week. The Williams family is pursuing a wrongful-death civil suit.

You never heard of George Griffith!?

Variations - Lynch - Nice photos. When I was in Dublin in 1979 I would have liked to see the Harry Clarke windows in Trinity Cathedral, but it was closed for renovation or something.

Yes, the Bradford Pear trees are very fragile - fortunate that they generally small as well. I don't know why they are so popular, they also have an unpleasant odor in the spring.

Boy George Dubya goes on about how the Islamic terrorists "hate our democracy" but his administration has done a lot more damage to it with the abrogation of the Sixth Amendment.

Peter Pan & Merry - Schlosser - Air raid sirens only need to warn a city - a considerably smaller

area than the coastline they want to warn of a tsunami. Certainly our west coast has cliffs but I'm not sure about others. Only coasts with gradual slopes are subject to tsunami damage, as I understand it.

I am no Biblical scholar, but I suspect it has many different sorts of errors - typographical, translation, factual, logical.... The parts that are poetic probably have the least errors! Rather difficult to "prove" anything about the historical accuracy of course. The greatest error, to me at any rate, is failure in clarity - if you can't make out what a statement means it is useless to wonder whether it is true or false. The claim of inerrancy seems to be based on *Revelations 22:18-19* - actually a sort of threat of a divine curse.

Very disparate examples of error are the logical incoherency of "look not upon the wine when it is red"; and the scientific impossibility of the Sun standing still, or staffs turning into serpents (though of course any competent magician could produce the appearance of this by slight of hand).

The "bell-shaped curve" of IQ has little to do with the design of the test. It arises more from the nature of statistics of large data sets. If, to take a much simpler case, you were to plot the height data of all white male Americans age 21 as frequency of a given height vs. height, you would get a bell-shaped curve, technically known as the normal density function. It represents the fact that certain properties of the elements of a set vary randomly over a limited range but are less likely to vary a lot from a central average.

The Sphere - Don - Excellent analysis of the Katrina disaster. The last time I had occasion to go to the *New York Times* website you could still get in as trufan/trufan for the user/password.

Yngvi - Toni - What a strange cover! I read the lettering on the button as *ORC* rather than *PRO*.

David Zindell's four "Neverness" books certainly fit your definition of Space Opera - but they are better written than most.

The issue of the death penalty for juveniles is precisely where we need a re-interpretation of the "cruel and unusual punishment" clause by the Supreme Court. Something has changed in the factual basis of the issue - we now know, from brain-scan data, that juveniles are not simply young adults who magically acquired adult judgement at puberty. They are not neurologically capable of adult impulse control. The moralistic horror that they might "get away with something" is nonsense - there are (according to today's paper) some 2000 such convicts in prison for life without parole. They may well come to wish they had been executed - but that is a different issue.

You are no doubt right that the "alpha male" is natural - in the same sense that murder, rape, and cobra venom are natural phenomena. The whole point of civilization is to transcend nature! In a pure "state of nature" I would not even be here, as with 20/600 vision I would not have survived.

If "socialism" is the inevitable forerunner of tyranny or communism, how is it that none of the Western democracies, all with strong elements of socialism in their governments, have followed that path since Germany fell to tyranny 75 years ago? The notably "communist" states - the USSR, China, North Korea - did not reach that condition incrementally via socialism but by violent revolution.

The Bible is full of death penalties, some for acts that are not even crimes today - "thou shalt not suffer a witch to live", etc. Whether the wording appears in the Old or New Testament is irrelevant, as Christ is reported to have said that "not a jot or a tittle of the law would pass away" (*Matt 5:18*).

You are quite right that the intent of Islam is to convert the whole world - but note that this is also implied of Christianity in the Bible. The Communists had similar ambitions for their Gospel.

It remains to be seen just what effect the change in Florida law with regard to lethal force will be. I never expected anything radical or immediate! It will take a series of actual cases of slaughter for the practical effect to appear through popular attitudes.

Black & White - Jeff - Great cover strip - I love it when Calvin's father "explains" things!

But there is not a single DVD format - we have the artificial Region incompatibility and the real PAL/NTSC dichotomy. An LP or audio cassette could be played anywhere.

The most I paid for gas here was \$3.05 (but I don't think that Chevron station had an honest pump meter), right after the panic hit. As of mid-October, the QT up the road is below \$2.90 - but it doesn't always have any. The pumps are honest however - my driving is very consistent (the same road at the same speed) and I get 30 mpg, so I know pretty closely how much it will take to fill the tank.

gone - weber - Well, I've had Windows 2000 since 2002 and have seen little degradation. Internet Explorer doesn't work any more, but I never used it much anyway. Could I reload it from the Windows 2000 CD? By "degradation" do you mean obsolete or corrupted?

Fancy zine! I had heard of Bessie Smith, but not how she died, so the M.A.S.H. episode would have meant little to me. I didn't see much of that show, though I remember when it was on.

Lowering the unemployment rate by including the military in the data would only work once - and they should have been included from the beginning.

Aha - so the "repulsive force" that would replace gravity is the repulsiveness of empty space? I rather like empty space myself, especially if I can store books in it conveniently. But gravity is called a "central force" because it appears to emanate from a central point. There would be no such center in repulsive space, leaving no place to measure a radial distance from - and yet we find that gravity falls off as the square of that radial distance. I see no way to write a rational equation for what happens with the force between two objects caused by repulsive space.

You are quite right about the "three-cornered wheel" - even though the diameter is constant, there is an inevitable concentration of radial force at the corners. For moving a heavy object on soft ground this would be a serious problem. However, the equation I gave would produce a shape as close to a circle as desired, but it would not actually be a circle unless $e=0$.

I had been getting "svchost" popups for several days before I was warned of the Vundo virus. These were from the firewall - I could tell it to block, but the thing would just appear again. One time I blocked it 56 times before it gave up, another occasion it was 11 times - it would appear when I linked to the Net. I could also shove it off to the side and ignore it. It did not seem to affect operations. Since I installed the new security and ran a full scan, which reported it had fixed Vundo, I have not seen "svchost" again. But the program FixVundo.exe still will not run to the end - it ends with two windows, once saying that the program had generated errors and would be shut down; and the other a window labelled "Dr.Watson Error" that references a Windows 2000 error ID=5.

Oblio - Brown - Skiffy cover! Sorry to hear about your sister. But if the lawyer doesn't want to take the case.... Has Florida passed one of these "tort reform" laws that the big corporations have pushed through in some states?

The 19-century telegraphers must have been one of the first large groups with lots of spare time and access to electricity. Apparently they spent some of their time using it for pranks.

Probably harmless enough for the most part - this was direct rather than alternating current and would not have had the contracting effect on the muscles that sometimes keeps people holding on to a live wire. The prank in that cover cartoon does not seem to have any provision for power wiring to the box, so the effect must have come from a capacitor in the box.

There have been long debates about seatbelts in school buses. Aside from the cost, there is the matter of rapid evacuation. Just lap belts would be worse than nothing, there would have to be a shoulder harness. And it would have to fit a wide range of passenger size. Some school buses here still have children standing in the aisle. But the statistics don't seem to warrant seat belts - how often do you hear of a child injured for lack of one? The buses are heavy and the speeds are moderate as compared to the average sedan.

Ditto, which is an aniline dye, fades mostly because of UV, though I suppose heat might play a part. I have many old dittoed zines that are still legible. Hard to say how much they have faded, there is no basis for direct comparison.

The chances of the postal workers opening media mail to inspect it are remote, in my opinion. I doubt they are authorized - probably they have to call a postmaster or inspector. And think of the volume that passes through the system. In 40 years of mailing stuff I have had trouble only once, with a large zine mailing that I marked as "Book". It was over 16 pages, permanently bound (stapled), and had no ads, which seemed to fulfill the requirements of the regulations of the time. Some clerks seemed to believe that mimeo and ditto were not "real printing", but I have seen the regulation - they were specifically permitted. I think carbon copies were specifically banned (as "printed"). The zines were delivered, but they tried to bill me for the difference between "Book Rate" and "Third Class Printed Matter" - I never paid it. Perhaps the case finally reached someone who knew shit from Shinola, at any rate I never heard from them again.

I don't know if the members of the KKK belonged to any particular sect. Probably no Catholics! I have a vague notion that at the time that the KKK was really active, the Methodists and Baptists had most of the franchise, and differed mainly on the question of "full immersion" baptism, while the Baptists were split between the Calvinists (who believed in predestination) and the Free-Will (who did not). Did any of the members of the KKK sincerely believe that their burning cross represented Christianity? I have no idea. Their mindset seems so alien to me that I doubt I could talk to one long enough to find out.

Glad to see Alan is looking well - I wish he had let Fender Tucker use the **Werewolf vs The Vampire Woman** art for the Ramble House reprint. As it is their edition (Tucker sent me one) has no interior art, just a color cover by Gavin O'Keefe.

Trivial Pursuits - Janice - Good grief, I would never have guessed the Australians would ask such impossible questions on a visa application!

Sorry to hear about the auto accident - it must be one of the most common varieties. It only happened to me once, driving in Hampton VA on a rare layer of snow. Another time I hit a stopped car from the rear, didn't see it at all until too late. It was an asphalt road shiny with rain in a commercial district with lots of reflected light, and the car I hit was dark with dim purple tail lights.

For "Basic Knife Skills" you should have applied to Horrible Hank....

Well, the local "court house killer", Brian Nichols, had been caught in jail with pieces of metal (made from door hinges I think) in his shoes. It wasn't clear from the newspaper account whether these were escape tools or weapons. I suppose such things could be on the box-knife level of hazard. But if the shoe itself is explosive, I don't see how taking it off and putting it back is much

help.

I probably attributed *Ozymandias* to Swinburne because there are a couple of other Swinburne poems I like - *Garden of Proserpine* and the old Fugs favorite *Before the beginning of years* - and they have something of the same mood. I can't think of anything else by Shelley.

Tennessee Trash - Robe - Nice cover photo! Glad to hear everyone had a good time at the worldcon. I was surprised to see *loo* on an official document. The word for restroom is said to come from the French "Gardé l'eau!" (beware the water) that was shouted before a chamberpot was emptied out the window into the street of medieval cities. The chamberpot itself was called a "po" in England, from the French *peau de chambre*.

Revenant - Sheila - Glad to hear the hurricanes were no worse for you. I lost power for 4 days in the 2000 ice storm. I know what you mean about the degree work - by the time I got an MS I was heartily sick of it. My father wanted me to get a PhD!

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Still trying to inventory my books - I started in June of 2004, and so far have gotten as far as the authors G... in the SF hardcovers. I estimated that if I did ten a day it would take me three years - but I don't get to it every day. I went back to the beginning once and added the illustrator, if any.

The new deck on the back seems to be fine as far as I can tell. It's smaller than the old one that was rotted out, and I had to do some landscaping. I have found that the smaller deck on the other side, obviously of the same vintage, does have some rotten wood in one corner, probably because of a gutter leak keeping it wet there. I will patch it up myself.

I got rid of the tower of surplus books in the foyer - a guy at the Last Chance Thrift Store wanted books to send to Africa. I gave him about 80 lbs. I hope someone finds them of interest - if I were more energetic I would have made a list. Lots of skiffy of course - LeGuin's early "ansible" novels, Jack Williamson's **Terraforming Earth** (an odd title!), etc. They were all nice books, but not worth my trying to sell online as I wouldn't have asked more than \$10 each, and then have to wrap them and pay the postage.

I didn't want such books to turn up on the Last Chance shelves - I might buy them again. I go by there four days a week. The covers on this issue were scanned from a book found there last week. Today I got two old books there - a **Pilgrims Progress** "shortened for modern readers" in 1939 but with excellent art by Robert Lawson; and a 1948 Winston cartoon book by H. T. Webster, **How to Torture Your Husband**.

Another project was instigated by finding at the Last Chance a stack of finished wooden shelves with holes in the corners - I made two hanging bookcases and put them up in the basement, which has open rafters.

I had seen no fire ants all summer, then after last week's rain the hills popped up all over. I guess they were just waiting for the poison to be taken off the shelves at Lowes - they wanted space for the Christmas stuff. They had shrink-wrapped pallets of the Bayer fire-ant poison and stuck them on a high shelf outside. But I wasn't the only one wanted some, and they sent someone to climb up and pull it out a bottle at a time.

