



Union Street

A joint zine by Jeanne Gomoll & Scott Custis

☉ Business

[SC] Thanks for everything, **Jae**. You were a fabulous leader for our motley little band. All Hail The Pirate Queen! ARRRRR!

Welcome **Jerome**. I wish you the best of luck getting the apa out a mere two weeks before Odyssey Con.

I regret having missed last month's notable 200th issue of *Turbo Apa*. I would have liked to lend my voice to a group Hip Hip Hooray in honor of the occasion. Consider this a belated Congratulations to everyone for helping our little local apa pass this benchmark.

Jeanne has a cover prepared for the April apa already. We will drop it off with our zine this month because we will be out of the US when the deadline falls next month. This will be our last zine until June. We have a very busy schedule in April which includes Corflu and a trip to Seacon in Britain. We will be way too busy in May with WisCon to do a zine, so we expect to next rejoin y'all in these pages this summer.

☉ A few brief comments from Scott on *Turbo* N^o 199

Georgie Schnobrich

[SC] We also enjoyed *The Two Towers* enough to see it twice, the second time at an Ultra Screen (it was too hard to get into an Ultra Screen showing when it first came out, we went back when the crowd thinned in mid-January). I last read the books about 15 years ago. I think that has helped me enjoy the movies because I am not so close to Tolkien's story that Peter Jackson's changes bother me very much. I agree that the movie's version of Smeagol/Gollum was absolutely fantastic.

Your social schedule over the holidays was certainly busy. We had a mellower time up to our New Year's Eve party, which went well once again. We had about 44 people attend (including us) and we were very pleased and surprised to see (former Madisonian and *Turbo-apan*) Nevenah Smith show up, braving the cold from her current home in New Orleans. We were also pleased that (another former *Turbo-apan*) Karen Babich made it up from Chicago. We had a lot of the regulars here along with a few new faces, some of whom we hope to be introducing to the rest of you in these pages in due time.

The party started slowly but eventually gathered steam as folks began to brave the biting cold. Hot cider was really flowing early until everyone finally warmed up and then the Champaign and Asti Spumanti replaced it. We actually went through all our bubbly this year for the first time and the cases of ice cold beer I provided were mostly ignored. We did not have a storytelling this time, but we did manage briefly to break out in song at midnight. We then provided a midnight meal for our famished guests of:

Herbed Turkey Breast, sliced and served with rolls
Quiche Lorraines, mushroom quiche, and onion quiche
Wild rice, current, & pine nut salad
Rice and bean dish (Jim Hudson and Diane Martin's)
Desserts:

Lemon-Lime Coconut Pie
Chocolate Cheesecake (**Tracy Benton's**)
Cheesecake (Evan Evanson's)

The party ended around 5:00 A.M. this year. Earlier than usual, but then we are getting older. We shall see what next year brings.

☉ Gregory G. H. Rihn

[SC] Neither of us chose *Gangs of New York* as one of our favorite films of last year, but it was certainly an interesting film. There was a lot to admire about it. I readily agree with you that the sets, costumes and period "feel" that Scorsese brought to the project and the performances of many of the actors, particularly Daniel Day-Lewis, were wonderful. I had a hard time connecting with De Caprio

Books read by Jeanne in 2002

***The Return of the King*, J.R.R. Tolkien**

I read the last of *The Lord of the Rings* books in a hot fever. I was well and truly hooked by Tolkien's epic at that point. But I look forward to reading *LotR* again sometime soon, when I'm no longer so focused upon what *happens*. (I definitely want to reread it after the third movie comes out, to make sure that I fix in my mind the written rather than the movie version.) Even a year after I finished it, I continue to think about Tolkien's story and mull over how I imagined a whole secondary plot to explain what my subconscious simply couldn't believe, i.e., the near total absence of women. And of course the movies and the dvd release of *Fellowship* have kept the story fresh in my mind. My mother has begun reading *LotR* for the first time; when I talked to her on the phone last week she was still half-way through the first book. She exclaimed at how much she was enjoying it, but then hesitated and asked, "but aren't there any women characters?" I laughed and told her we'd have to talk about that later. I'm expecting some interesting insights from her, actually. She's reading it mainly because *LotR* was my late brother Rick's favorite novel. It's taken her almost 14 years since Rick's death to find the courage to read it; she expects a lot of painfully familiar moments when she reads passages that Rick talked about.

***The Last Hot Time*, John Ford**

Well, I know a lot of you really liked this book. I only found out much later that it can be considered a fragment of the shared universe stories called "Borderlands." But reading it alone without understanding the shared world it was set within, and not having read any of the other stories set in this world, made it slow going for me. And I ended up not liking it very much because characters seemed to act without motivation and according to an unexplained set of rules.

***The Shipping News*, E. Annie Proulx**

I loved the style with which this book was written. The sometimes incomplete, clipped sentences. The way the main character had of describing his life in darkly funny, small town newspaper headlines. The mixture of Newfoundland history and the main character's personal history, both of which sometimes seemed absurdly real in a taken-out-of-context way and sometimes simply magical. I loved the metaphor of sailors' knots. And it's a good story too, of a third-rate newspaper writer who survives his wife's abandonment and death, and joins forces with his two daughters and his aunt to find and make a place for himself in the world. The fact that the story takes place in Newfoundland adds to the black humor and magic. Climate and landscape are pivotal in this novel, almost becoming characters in their own rights. Highly recommended.

***Adventures in Time and Space with Max Merriwell*, Pat Murphy**

It must be the year for finishing trilogies. Of course no one would ever ask where the women are in *this* trilogy. Pat Murphy's adventure novels, linked by the conceit that they are all supposedly written by a fictional author (Max Merriwell) and his pseudonyms, includes a Tolkien pastiche, (*There and Back Again*, by Max), a gold rush western adventure featuring a girl raised by wolves (*Wild Angel*, by Mary Maxwell), and a mystery set on a cruise ship in the Caribbean, in which all the authors, including Pat, and several characters mix it up with aliens and writing workshops (*Adventures in Time and Space with Max Merriwell*, by Pat). I remember when Pat talked about this trilogy in public for the first time, explaining how each book would be written by a different author or author's pseudonym. The prospectus itself was wildly entertaining. While we sat there laughing our heads off, we wondered how the hell she'd managed to convince her editor to go along with her idea. Well, I'm very glad she did. It was a really fun ride.

***Angry Young Spaceman*, Jim Munroe**

My friend, Gerald Schoneherr picked this book for one of our book discussions, otherwise I'm sure I'd never have decided to read it. I sure wasn't expecting to find a really interesting political perspective in it. Have you ever had a discussion with people who steadfastly deny that the United States does absolutely nothing to coerce the rest of the world to adapt our culture? They say we don't force anyone at gunpoint to watch our movies, listen to

as the central character and I know the film plays fast and loose with history (the number of deaths during the Draft Riots was greatly exaggerated and the ships firing on the city was just fantasy), so I ended up feeling divided about the effort. In the end, there are several pictures I am rooting for the Best Picture Oscar over this one, but I thought enough of the film to buy Herbert Ashbury's book *The Gangs of New York* and its sequel *The Gangs of Chicago*. I will let you know what I think about them.

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[SC] Sorry you didn't make it to our New Years party, but I expect we will be doing it again next year. I will have to file away those Poinsettia ingredients to have on hand for you. You might be finally ready for another one by next year.

© Ruth Nichols

[SC] Thank you for the travel pieces on your trip to North Carolina and the last installment of your camping trip. Sorry about your job, good luck in your search for something new.

© Tom Havighurst

[SC] Your zine is full of tempting little comment hooks this month. As Jeanne explained last month, **Hope** has not yet served as *Turbo* OE. The apa's past OEs have been (I believe in order): **Andy Hooper**, **Kim Nash**, **Tracy Benton**, me, **Kim Nash** again and **Jae Leslie Adams**. So, there are lots of local people who haven't taken a turn. I am all in favor of giving everyone a chance (including **Hope** and **Jerome**.)

What excellent New Years resolutions.

I am amused by the notion of describing work using *Star Trek*. I have certainly known some Quarks, Borgs and Romulans at work.

Exactly what "vision" did Bill Cosby sell out?

© Tracy Benton

[SC] Thanks for the wonderful trip report!

© Comments on *Turbo N^o. 200* Cover

[SC] All I can say is, Wow!

© Greg Rihn

[SC] Thank you for the WFC Memories. You have further confirmed the suspicions I have had about WFC, good and bad, for a long while. I have no personal issues with the convention coming to Madison. In fact I recently played a small role in advising Meg prior to a meeting she had with the Concourse Hotel staff about WFC and I encouraged the Concourse Sales Manager to work out a deal with her and WFC. I felt that WFC would be good business for the Concourse and I now understand they will serve as the convention's main hotel.

However, I am not working on Meg's convention and I have no plans to get further involved. It would be sad if they failed to reach out to solid people in Milwaukee for help. They can use good people wherever they find them.

Regarding *Star Trek Nemesis*, we did not have the detailed scientific problems with the movie you pointed out, but we came to a similar conclusion. It felt to us like it was more of a very good long episode of the TV series than a movie. The story wasn't that special or spectacular enough to justify a movie. It was enjoyable, but a bit of a letdown at the end.

Regarding Michael Gambon, he would make a fine Dumbledore. We saw him recently do a stunning job playing LBJ in an HBO movie about Johnson's last days in office.

Thank you for answering my questions about your Worldcon experiences. I have never worked on a Worldcon and have no plans to do so, but I find the whole organizational problem of Worldcon kind of mindboggling.

our music, and abandon cultural mores, which of course misses the point that there are a lot better ways to do it than with bullets. There are all sorts of marketing techniques and some of them don't look authoritarian at all. I think the truth about the effects of American culture upon the world is both more complex and more horrible than is generally believed. Jim Munroe's novel, *Angry Young Spaceman*, considers this idea as part of a very funny story, where it eventually turns out that the only way to combat invasive alien marketing with self-defense marketing.

***Preternatural Too: Gyre*, Margaret Wander Bonanno**

This novel is the sequel to Bonanno's earlier novel, *Preternatural*, which I read and enjoyed several years ago, about a woman SF author who literally converses and has adventure with her alien muses (intergalactic jellyfish) ... Or is she the fictional creation of aliens with really good imaginations? The meta-novel adventure continues in *Preternatural Too*, as Karen Guerrerri is sent back in time by the alien jellyfish to fix a little glitch caused by the curious aliens. Her time travel excursions ends up having a profound effect upon Karen's understanding of herself as a writer and the power of fiction. I like these novels a lot. Bonanno's references to SF, fandom and writing make me think she would fit in really well at WisCon and I'd like to get her here someday.

***The Silent Strength of Stones*, Nina Kiriki Hoffman**

Hoffman was a Guest of Honor at WisCon 26 and I picked up this novel so I'd have read at least one of her books before the convention. I liked Nina a lot when I met her at WisCon, which made me wish I'd enjoyed her novel more. Nevertheless, this novel, along with John Ford's *The Last Hot Time*, are examples of the kind of fantasy for which I've never developed a taste. Even though *Stones* is clearly the first book in a series, my reaction shares something with my reaction to Ford's novel, in that it is clearly part of a larger work, and many essential details about how its world *works* remain to be revealed. There is a family of werewolves. There is a young girl, the protagonist, who is just beginning to realize that she has a lot in common with them. There are ancient family secrets, none of which come very far into the light in this novel. It's well written, but I don't think I'll be looking for the sequels.

***A Winter Haunting*, Dan Simmons**

You never know what genre Dan Simmons will choose to write in next—hard SF, horror, fantasy, novel noir mystery featuring Ernest Hemmingway as a main character, comedy, thrillers. I've read quite a few of his novels and have been impressed by his flexibility, his imagination and his command of different styles. I'm not a big fan of the horror genre, but I've read several of Simmons' horror novels, including *Summer of Night*, which is about a group of young boys in a small town and some strange things that happen to them one terrible summer. (Psychologically, Simmons' boys seem closely related to the three young buddies in Stephen King's novella *Stand By Me*.) I liked *Summer* quite a lot. But Simmons shocked me because he killed off the smartest, most likeable character in the novel (Duane McBride), the character I thought was in fact the protagonist – about 1/3 into the novel. For a while I thought that surely we readers had been misled, that Duane would turn out not to have been killed after all, that he would return to save the day. But no, Duane stayed dead ... or mostly so until 2002, when Simmons resurrected his ghost in *A Winter Haunting*. Well, of course, I had to read this new novel. I wanted to hear Duane's voice again, even if it came from beyond the pale. But it didn't feel to me that Duane was really there. In fact, Simmons is fairly ambiguous about whether the adult Dale Stewart (Duane's best friend from *Summer*) was just imagining Duane or if Duane was really typing warning messages with Dale's typewriter. I ended up feeling rather dissatisfied with the story for lots of reasons, but mostly because I didn't like or care about the characters nearly as much as I did about them in *Summer*. This may have been Simmons' intention: to show that Dale and Duane had been more real, more complete human beings when they were young boys, and that the horror at the heart of both novels, whether metaphorical or not, destroyed the best part of both of them. Nevertheless I've been feeling like Simmons is writing more quickly these days, with less care, less depth. Certainly his novel last year (*Darwin's Blade*) felt as if it had been slapped together in the space of a few weeks.

Earth Logic (Elemental Logic, book 2), manuscript, Laurie Marks**Fire Logic (Elemental Logic, book 1), manuscript, Laurie Marks**

No, the I didn't accidentally type these two books in the wrong order; that's the way I read them. Last year, Laurie sent me an email and reminded me that way back when, I'd offered to read and give her feedback on any new manuscripts of hers. (I made that offer just after reading and loving her novel, *Dancing Jack*). Don't agree too quickly Laurie warned me; you may not actually want to read this book. She wanted me to read *Earth Logic*, which is the second book of her series, *Elemental Logic*. And she wanted me to read it *before* I read the first book of the series, *Fire Logic*, so I could tell her what things were unclear to me, and give her an unbiased report on anything she had failed to explain. She wanted to make sure that *Fire Logic* stood on its own, without irritating the reader with dangling, unexplained motivations or information about the world, and at the same time she wanted to avoid those horrid narrative recaps. Well, since *Earth Logic* hadn't been published yet (it came out just before WisCon 26, where Laurie and her partner Deb threw a lovely launch party for it), my reading was guaranteed to be uninfluenced by any knowledge or even rumors of the first book's plot. I accepted the assignment with trepidation. As you might have concluded by my dissatisfaction with Ford's and Hoffman's books, I can get pretty unhappy when I get the feeling that there is a lot of missing information about how the fictional world works and the author is either assuming I know all that or is purposely concealing it. I sure wasn't looking forward to telling Laurie that I didn't like her new novel. But in fact, I found it amazingly good. As I told her right at the beginning of the very long letter I wrote her after reading *Earth Logic*, if I had a choice about whether to read the third book or the first book at the moment I finished *Earth Logic*, I would have chosen to go on to the third book. (This is not to say I did not want to read *Fire Logic* as soon as possible, but I had become so caught up with the story and the characters and the world, that if I had the chance I'd have keep going rather than catching up with the first novel.) That's what she wanted to hear, I think. And since she hadn't written the third book yet, she was gracious enough to immediately send me the manuscript of *Fire Logic* which I fell upon as if starved for reading material. It was an interesting exercise to read a book consciously looking for clues about what may or may not have happened in the earlier novels, piecing together that plot from clues in the second. Actually it was a lot of fun, made much more satisfying for the fact that I could actually figure out fairly easily what had happened (in general terms) and was nevertheless drawn to the complex and well-drawn characters as they were presented in the second. But all this doesn't tell you much about the story, does it? The *Logic* series (which will eventually include an *Air* as well as a *Water* logic) is an epic story involving a large complex, nation with many cultures and class issues of its own that is subjugated by an occupying, foreign army. It is the story of how these peoples learn to live with themselves and with one another. Atrocities occurred during the occupation that have helped to generate a very unique kind of resistance among the natives. Despite what this simplified description might suggest, the *Logic* series is definitely not a story of "good guys" vs. "bad guys," or any kind of revolutionary war fairy tale. One of the most sympathetic and compelling characters in *Earth Logic* is an officer of the occupying army. Both *Fire* and *Earth Logic* are primarily about families and how relationships among individuals within those families forges new ways of defining community and eventually heal the larger family of this battered country. Definitely read these books. I believe they will become classics of feminist SF.

Northanger Abby, Jane Austen

The Madison Jane Austen group strikes again! Though published later in Austen's career, *Northanger Abby* was actually the first novel of hers that was accepted for publication. It does feel as if it was written by a younger person than *Pride and Prejudice* or *Emma* certainly, but once again I found re-reading an Austen novel rewarding for interpretations that suggest that Austen was criticizing the literary/political culture of her own time under cover of fiction. As she did more sharply and angrily in *Mansfield Park*, she uses archetypal characters from novels published during Austen's lifetime that represent family ideals: the wise, protective father. The foolish daughter in such need of parental guidance. The ideal mail suitor who takes on the role of guardian to his new wife. And then Austen blows apart the assumptions and expectations of her Edwardian audience. The wise protective father's motivations are shown to be anything but wise, and the foolish young girl must depend upon her own moral convictions and intelligence in order to avoid the abuse of

[JG] The reason I have avoided World Fantasy Cons is the WFC's attitude toward fannish volunteers. I think the purpose of the World Fantasy Convention is great. A business meeting for SF/F professionals is obviously a worthwhile thing. If WFC chooses to discourage fans from attending their convention, that is also fine with me. I'm sure this annual convention is essential to the careers of a lot of our favorite writers and editors. What I dislike is that despite the fact this convention is for professionals, the WFC board wants to take advantage of fans' great generosity and propensity to volunteer to work at conventions. Amateur SF conventions would be impossible to run without fan volunteers, or if they were produced with paid staff, they'd be far too expensive for most fans to attend. The community of convention runners is something fandom should be extremely proud. But WFC's board seems to think fans should work just as hard and just as free for WFC as they do for conventions in which decisions are actually made by the volunteers who do the work. Like WisCon. WFC seems to expect fans to do the work and then stay out of sight, being grateful just to be in the same hall as professional writers.

On the subject of paper vs. electronic zines, I'm with you Greg. I used to read Suzette Haden Elgin's newsletters from cover to cover when they arrived in the mail. But now that she sends them out electronically, I'm more than a year behind. There'd be a better chance that I'd read them if I printed them out when they arrived, but as it is, I almost always file them away into a folder for "later." And a later never comes when I'm interested in sitting down in front of the computer to read.

I've also been speculating about Harry Potter's future, which I expect to end up mirroring his father's travails, which will require Harry to figure out where his parents went wrong and how he can meet the same challenge and keep his life. I too am expecting heroic behavior at the end by Snape that will save Harry and cost Snape his life. Dumbledore may be doomed too. Ron and Hermione will get together, right, but not until there's some

sort of misunderstanding around Harry and Hermione. But it doesn't seem likely to me that we're going to see these characters graduate. After all, there are supposed to be seven books for each of the seven years of Hogwarts attendance.

If you and Georgie and **Tracy** do throw that fancy dress party at WisCon, you should write up an entertaining article about it for me and I'll run it in eCube. That way there will be more chance that folks will pack appropriate clothing.

© Georgie Schnobrich

[SC] In response to your intriguing opening essay, well no, I am not doing physical things with full effort these days. Getting older means lots of bad stuff. For example, my switch to a more sedentary job and more normal work schedule have had the result that I am now more than 40 pounds heavier than I was less than a decade ago. My poor physical conditioning probably contributed to my recent herniated disk that left me in considerable discomfort for about a month and a half and will probably never completely heal. I hate writing about personal physical ailments, but to answer your question I have to admit that I am no where near the guy I was just a few years ago and it is no one's fault but my own.

I can and I do intend to something about this. It is seriously annoying. I feel my physical limitations all the time. I tire easily walking uphill or climbing stairs. My endurance is poor. My strength is down, too and I can no longer lift things that would have once been no challenge. My balance is still good at least. All in all, I would say that I have grown cautious physically. Lots of things can bring on "doddering," but in my case it is something that is well within my control. My Dad is 80 years old and he is not doddering. He is quite spry. I want to end up more like him.

[JG] I like doing ordinary tasks quickly and am often rather foolishly proud about little competitions I have with myself. But I've learned to pace myself while doing physical actions. In the long run I'm less likely to get injured and can be physically

such a disreputable guardian. The young male suitor must actually repudiate the actions of his own father and support the greater wisdom of the woman he loves in order to win her. It must have been shocking stuff in the early 1800s. Just to remind her readers where all those assumptions come from, much of *Northanger Abby* consists of the protagonist's commentary on popular novels of her day, and the plot plays with many of the tropes of the very popular gothic novels of her day.

Lamb: the Gospel According to Biff, Christ's Childhood Pal, Christopher Moore

What did Christ do for 17 years, from age 13 when he revealed his divinity and age 30 when he began preaching in public? Well in this wildly funny, but surprisingly respectful novel, Christopher Moore suggests that the young teenager Christ may have been highly dubious about his heavenly origins and might have used this time to search for those mysterious three wise guys who left gifts at his birthday celebration and seemed to know much more than they told his mom. Joshua and his buddy Biff go on a quest to find out what the Savior is supposed to DO. They travel through the Mideast, cross the Himalayas, and visit India. Christ and Biff do time training as magicians, Buddhist monks and Hindu ascetics. Basically they learn (or trip upon) most of the lessons that turn up within Christian doctrine. But *Lamb* is closer to a Hope and Crosby road movie than to a book of the bible and sometimes I had to stop reading because I was tears of laughter were blurring my view of the pages. I leave you with a few early drafts from the Beatitudes: "Blessed are the meek, for to them we shall say 'attaboy.'" and "Blessed are the dumbfucks for they ... shall never be disappointed." I like Christopher Moore's writing a lot. He's the funniest fantasy writer around.

9-11, Noam Chomsky

This tiny booklet contains a number of essays written by Chomsky about terrorism, U.S. policy, and especially about how media coverage shapes our understanding of events and policy. Most scary: the U.S. Congress has officially defined terrorism in such a way that it would include much American international actions, except for the fact that the State Department has helpfully refined that definition to explicitly state that all terrorism is foreign. Apparently it is impossible for Americans to practice terrorism no matter how indistinguishable from the "real" kind.

The Years of Rice and Salt, Kim Stanley Robinson

Activists of all stripe eventually ask themselves if their work has had any effect upon the world, if their passionate devotion to a cause actually accomplished anything. Kim Stanley Robinson confronts this issue quite elegantly and optimistically in *The Years of Rice and Salt*. Several characters reincarnate over and over again within the alternate world that Robinson proposes might have happened if the Black Plague had wiped out ALL of Europe's population and left the Moslem and Chinese cultures to dominate the world. The mission of the characters' spiritual journey is to fight against societal oppression, cruelty, war, starvation, and against racial, sexual, and religious hatreds. Each time, in each life, one or more of the characters takes a stand, and fights for their bit of a time against those enemies. Each time they die, thinking that nothing changed, that things may have actually gotten worse.... But in fact, each battle is remembered in some way—in books, in mythology, in songs or stories. And the battles won DO eventually make a difference for larger and larger groups of people as time goes on. The changes are imperceptible from a single mortal's viewpoint, but they add up. I think Robinson wanted to suggest in this novel that working toward an ideal good is never a waste of energy, that eventually those actions will add up and result in real changes for which no single person can claim responsibility. I hope to keep this vision in mind for my own life, even if I don't believe in the possibility of reincarnation.

The Wooden Sea, Jonathan Carroll

I enjoyed this novel when I read it, but it's become one of those books whose plot I have a hard time remembering. This isn't because I didn't like it (which is the usual reason I lose plots) but because the story has a dreamlike quality, with events happening out of order chronologically, and people meeting themselves from alternate timelines mixing up with each others self perceptions. It was well done. I recall images: the main character digging a grave and discovering that he has found his younger self, buried. A scene at a diner in

which the time-traveling main character meets his dad at the counter and discovers that his father had been having an affair with his son's high school teacher. An relationship between the man and his own teenage self that grows into an affectionate though wary alliance, especially after the teenage self falls in love with the step daughter of the adult self. It's complicated, but good.

Emma, Jane Austen

This was the last Jane Austen novel available to our group and we were very sad to have reached the end of Austen's much too short bibliography. (We are now considering other 19th century classics to read next, although our schedule seems to have gotten a little off track recently and we haven't gotten together since reading *An Ideal Husband* by Oscar Wilde [See below].) In *Pride and Prejudice*, Austen's main character is entirely likable, though if a list of her characteristics were written down, they would describe qualities most Edwardians would claim to despise in women. On the other hand, the main character of *Mansfield Park* is a woman whose listed qualities would define the ideal woman to that Edwardian population; ironically she is the most disliked of all of Austen's characters, a sniveling, cowardly, not very intelligent dupe. Austen makes the point that the so-called womanly ideals aren't altogether good things to aim for. With *Emma*, Austen plays with those ideas again, confusing the issue by creating real people who defy the definitions. In this case she pokes holes in the assumptions of class superiority as well as gender.

The Kappa Child, Hiromi Goto

Have you had a chance to look at the cover of this year's Tiptree winning novel? Did you notice the alien on the cover, painted simply in gloss varnish on top of the lovely close-up photo of prairie grasses? I thought of Georgie Schnobrich when I bought the book and gazed at the cover. It would have been quite a project drawing from the cover because it would not be possible to trace the alien; it would have been necessary to keep turning it to catch the light in order to (briefly) see the image of the Kappa, a magical Japanese creature. As it turned out, the Tiptree ceremony took place in Boston in 2002, and we didn't ask Georgie to make a cake. Inside the cover is a delicate and delightful story of a young Japanese Canadian woman who lives in a prairie town where she attempts to re-create herself as a strong person apart from her family. She has escaped from her autocratic, abusive father and from her injured mother and sisters to a Canadian Prairie city and she has a possibly magical, definitely life-changing and erotic interlude with an alien woman, or perhaps a kappa, that results in a peculiar sort of pregnancy. Delightful.

The Mount, Carol Emshwiller

Most people seem to like Emshwiller's earlier novel, *Carman Dog* the best, but *The Mount* is my favorite now. It's an allegorical science fiction story, actually closer to hard SF than Emshwiller has ever gotten, about a post-invasion earth in which surviving humans have become slaves to the ruling aliens. Humans are treated like animals and the aliens depend upon them completely. The main character is a young boy who is treated like a prize-winning racing stallion—a mount. There are rebel humans living in the mountains, and the main character's father is their leader. But the most interesting relationship is between the boy and his master, a young alien who rides upon his shoulder. Both are being trained for their future lives as master and slave/mount, but an uprising throws them into a rebel camp, and they must both come to terms with their mutual dependence as well as the evils of slavery. Like Marks' Logic series, this book does not use the stereotypical plot involving triumphant rebels who transparently represent "us." The romantic view of isolated rebels claiming freedom from evil overlords seems to be something that will be difficult if not impossible to carry off any more, since 9/11. *The Mount* reads like an allegorical YA book, but its many layers of complexity make it rewarding for anyone.

The Fresco, Sherri Tepper

Here's another allegory, quite a bit more heavy-handed than Emshwiller's *The Mount*, however. "Good" aliens land and begin testing humanity to see if human beings are worth protecting from evil aliens bent on rape and pillage of earth's resources. We know the good aliens are good because of the person they choose to be their representative—a smart, capable older woman who has left her abusive husband and who protects her daughter. The fresco in the title is a piece of alien art long hidden under layers of grime

active more frequently. But yes, I agree, the use-it-or-lose-it philosophy seems quite realistic to me.

Interesting idea of doing a Survivor-type show to showcase the capabilities of political candidates. It would be interesting to read an SF story of this sort of competition because a story could manipulate the plot so that the competition wasn't rigged. In today's world, competitions would be arranged to benefit the most powerful competitors, sort of like debates are scripted to exclude the less powerful and prevent the major candidates from looking too foolish. But I'd love to see a fictional depiction of how real, past campaigns might have been different if the candidates had been forced to earn their support this way.

Sigh I've heard way too many people talking about how they expect war to make them feel safer. Where do people think terrorists come from??!

People of integrity sell out sometimes, I think, because they focus so much on the good that a certain end will mean for their cause or to people close to them, or to themselves—and they end up ignoring what the means to that end will do to themselves, their cause and people close to them. It's an old story, isn't it?

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[SC] Congratulations on joining next years Tiptree Jury. I think you are a fine choice and I think you will enjoy the experience. Good luck in your search for work.

[JG] Congratulations, Vicki, on your invitation to the 2003 Tiptree jury. I hope you have as much fun as I did in my year.

I know what you mean about enjoying your language skills. It's really fun when you start using a new language, even when you're just beginning, to communicate and move around in a foreign country. That was the most surprisingly enjoyable aspect of improving my Spanish when Scott and I traveled down to Mexico a few years ago.

© Clay Colwell

[JG] Wow, I'm really impressed by how much serious physical labor you put into working on your house. Hefting 80-pound bags of cement is pretty close to the kind of work done by the French fur-trading Voyageurs in the 19th century. These guys hauled around 90-pound bundles of furs (traveling south) or trade goods (traveling north into Canada) on their backs. I sure hope you're amazingly pleased by the results of your labor.

© Kim and Kathi Nash

[SC] Do you have an update on the pending Kelly and Amanda nuptials? If plans are still on I would suggest that when it comes to kids their age, a lot can change between now and August.

Kathi, you have our sympathy on your mother's passing.

© Maureen Kincaid Speller

[SC] Thank you for the wonderful report from the front lines of British protest against the war. We were very impressed with the number of people who turned out for it and I really enjoyed your step by step commentary. It almost felt like we were there with you. Surely, Blair must be in serious political trouble. Will he be able to survive politically if Britain ends up going to war?

Jeanne and I attended an anti-war candlelight vigil on Sunday night downtown. About 4000 people turned out on a warm night to march down State Street to the capital, then around the square to the city/county building on Martin Luther King Blvd. As Jeanne and I stood on the capital steps at the top of State Street and looked back, we watched a river of candles as far as we could see. It was quite beautiful and moving. Gathered together at Martin Luther King Blvd. there were no speeches, instead people stood around, talked quietly and occasionally broke out into peace songs like "Give Peace a Chance."

As I write this it is Monday night and Bush has just given Saddam 48 hours to get out of town. I expect we will be engaged

and dust that can no longer be viewed directly but can only be studied by reading accounts by people who talked to people who actually saw it a long time ago. (Rather like the Christian bible.) The fresco will reveal that the good aliens haven't always been good, but the question is, does that matter since the aliens have since re-painted their history and have lived up to ideals that pretend or not, have now become real. Human beings help the good aliens avoid shame and catastrophe by showing them how easy and possible it is to reinvent oneself (or ones culture) by portraying and then living up to a better philosophy. As always, Tepper comes up with really interesting ideas, but I want her to spend more time re-writing....

***Stupid White Men*, Michael Moore**

This is a book of essays by political satirist, Michael Moore. Amazingly it was set to hit the bookstores on September 11, 2001, and was frantically pulled back by the publishers after the horrific events of the day. Moore's essay concern Bush's theft of the election, the growing gap between the extremely wealthy and the rest of us, racism, sexism, pollution, prisons, the lack of political choice in mainstream American politics, the religious right, etc. And there is a lot of criticism of Bush W. It's all good stuff, more polemical than his earlier work. Moore is getting more angry and finding it harder to be funny perhaps. His publishers (HarperCollins) told Moore they wanted to scrap the whole print run. If he insisted on the book coming out, they wanted him to change the cover and tone down all the criticism of the president. Word got around. A librarian started a letter-writing campaign to the publisher who eventually caved and allowed the book to be distributed, though early on it was very difficult to find copies of it. Many bookstores were refusing to sell it. But then word-of-mouth gained momentum and in spite of the attempts by publishers and bookstores to suppress information about it, *Stupid White Men* climbed to the top of the *New York Times* bestseller list and stayed there for months. I think it still may be on the top-10 list.

***The Battle of the Sexes in SF*, Justine Larbalestier**

I was really impressed by Justine Larbalestier's literary history, *The Battle of the Sexes in Science Fiction*. We've come a long way from the days when apparently the only reason most people could imagine for including a woman in an SF story was to provide a "love interest." I really liked how Justine followed the fiction that worked on the war-of-the-sexes theme, and linked correspondence, fiction, and criticism into her text to suggest that a long conversation has raged on this topic and continues up to this very day, and is firmly embedded in the process and products of the Tiptree Award. Also, it was kind of fun reading about the last decade or so of activity and recognizing so many of the names!

***An Ideal Husband*, Oscar Wilde**

The movie is better. There are some great lines; Wilde is a witty writer, but I felt like throwing the little book at the walls several times for all the stuff about the "nature" of women and the "nature" of men. *An Ideal Husband* would not win the Tiptree Award.

***Making Book*, Theresa Nielsen Hayden**

A funny thing happened. I finally got around to reading Teresa Nielsen Hayden's book *Making Book*, and it was fun partially because I knew almost every person she mentioned in her stories and essays. In some cases, I remembered reading the articles for the first time when they were originally published in Teresa's and Patrick's fanzines. I told Teresa at Readercon how much fun I had reading her book and she seemed pleased. We talked a while and it was like a little reunion. She pointedly mentioned that a lot of people whose names I had recognized were hanging out on some SF discussion list. Anyway. Then I read a Jae Adam's lively, fascinating report of her experiences at Ploktacon and realized that I recognized hardly anyone mentioned it. A funny thing, time. If you haven't read it I suggest you do so, if only for the classic story of how Theresa got herself excommunicated from the Mormon church, though I also really enjoyed the inside story on the art and craft of proofreading.

***Bold as Love*, Gwyneth Jones**
***Castles Made of Sand*, Gwyneth Jones**

I finished Gwyneth Jones' Clarke Award winning book, *Bold as Love*, just a day before we arrived in Boston for Readercon, and was delighted to discover that she had brought some extra copies of the sequel with her. So I was able to begin *Castles Made of Sand* on the plane going home. I like these books a lot, though after that panel with Gwyneth in which she spoke disparagingly about "strong women characters," I couldn't help but think about one of the protagonists, a young Rock and Roll star/Revolutionary named Fiorinda. Despite the fact that other characters describe her as tough as nails, she is most certainly not a "strong woman character" according to the stereotypical definition (physically powerful, always dominating, always rescuing, etc.). Fiorinda, is however, a strong woman character in the sense that her character instigates action within the plot and is developed unsterotypically and imaginatively. But she is no feminist poster woman: at one point in *Bold as Love* Fiorinda compares her role in the Rock and Roll Reich (which basically dominates this fictional British society in a post-ecological-disaster world) to that of a concealed, protected, restrained woman in Moslem culture. She is also a warped, polyamorous version of Guinevere in this turbo-charged version of the King Arthur legend. But I'm crossing my fingers that Fiorinda will grow into a more powerful woman, or at least into someone who is comfortable with the power she does possess, as the story continues. Jones says that she plans three more novels in the series. Right now, it looks like the Rock & Roll revolution is moving toward a really interesting sort of artist-designed, ecologically sustaining utopia/Camelot. I'm sort of expecting that sexual politics in the next book in this series will experience a renaissance similar to that experienced by the women's movement in the U.S. after the anti-war demonstrations of the late 60s and early 70s. Or maybe not. Maybe Gwyneth means exactly what she means about being tired of strong women characters. We'll see.

***Fast Food Nation*, Eric Schlosser**

This is a muck-raking book in the best tradition of Upton Sinclair's *The Jungle*. *Fast Food Nation* has become identified as the book that attacks McDonalds, but really Schlosser's target is much wider and includes several industries that were born along with fast food technology. The potato, beef, and chicken industries have all recently become Big Business by perfecting methods of processing huge amounts of food in the cheapest way possible. The cost has been unsafe workplaces, impoverished workers, dangerously tainted food, and the collapse of many smaller businesses and the workforces and families that depended upon them. It's a horrifying picture of one of a network of industries that have had a profound affect upon US culture, and upon the whole world. The style is engaging and not at all academic.

***Firestorm at Peshtigo*, Denise Gess and William Lute**

We here in Wisconsin are frequently reminded of the firestorm that burned the northeast part of the state on the same day as the infamous Chicago fire of 1871. Even though the number of fatalities and the acreage burned was far greater than Chicago's, the metropolitan tragedy overshadowed the event at Peshtigo, even to this very day. What's really fascinating about the two fires is that they are considered by some scientists to be two parts of the *same* fire that raged on both sides of Lake Michigan and were caused by an unfortunate coincidence of several months of drought, available tinder, and a monster high pressure system that brought record-breaking high winds at exactly the wrong time. The fire in Peshtigo, especially, were studied for the fearsome fire cyclones spawned by flames and winds; this is when the term "firestorm" was coined. I didn't realize that research begun at this time was relied upon in the plans to bomb Dresden and create a man-made firestorm in that German city during World War II. *Firestorm at Peshtigo* retells the individual stories of survivors and victims of that terrible event, and explains how the practices of the lumber industry and homesteaders (both of which frequently used fire to clear land in all weather), and the super dry weather cell combined to make firestorms inevitable that day. I wish Gess and Lute were a bit more conversant with climatology; they are obviously able to only quote other scientists' hypotheses about what occurred. They also favor the 19th century scientists who first identified what the real cause of the conflagration had been. I would have liked to read some of the later refined theories, or at least some explanations of how science now understands firestorms. Nevertheless it

in heavy bombing by the apa deadline this week. I am not really sure what there is to say, anymore. It is all so sad and so stupid.

[JG] Thanks for the wonderful telling of your experiences at the London march. How exhilarated you must have felt! Scott and I attended an anti-war vigil last week and felt a bit of that when we stood on the top of the capitol stairs overlooking State Street and saw a ribbon of people holding lit candles stretching as far as we could see and filling the street from one storefront to the other. I have to believe that our activism has some effect on the world around us, though I can only hope and imagine what that might be. But I know it has a good effect upon the people who have take public stands and marched publicly. I do agree with you that the activism and the international marches show that the world has already achieved something of great value in itself, that we are approaching a sense of community that crosses national boundaries and that our leaders don't seem to notice the good that has been created by people's opposition to their madness.

And as I write, the war has started.

© **Jim Nichols**

[SC] Good news about your planned trip to Ireland. Jeanne and I visited Northern Ireland years ago briefly and we have always thought that we would like to go back and see a lot more.

[JG] I hope you get to make that trip to Ireland!

© **Jeannie Bergmann**

[SC] I applaud your political rant against Bush and Co. and the war. I think it is a fine thing that you are acting out in concert with your conscience. These are frustrating times for thoughtful and compassionate Americans. The peace vigil I mentioned above to **Maureen** was an especially good thing for me. After getting there, I realized how much I needed to do something, to take some kind of action to express my opposition. I knew my frustration level had been building for quite a while and it

felt good to get out and be surrounded by so many other people who felt the same way and do something that wasn't violent or aggressive, but peaceful and upbeat.

[JG] I have distrusted the polls too, though I don't believe the data is being directly fudged. There are too many different groups doing these opinion polls and outright manipulation of some of the results would be pretty obvious. Nevertheless, I do believe that poll questions are slanted by the powerful to give them answers closer to what they want to get, or at least with less of a tendency to hurt them. But even if that's true, and if less biased poll questions would elicit a larger percentage of Americans against the war, I'm still horrified that the percentages give as much support as they do to the war.

© Hope Kiefer and Karl Hailman

[SC] Thanks for keeping us updated on Griffin's impressive progress. Sorry to miss your big 40th birthday bash, Karl, I have to be very heavily committed to miss an excuse to hang out at one of Madison's brewpubs for awhile. I hope you had a good time. Don't wait until you turn 50 to do it again.

In response to your comment to us, right now my job looks pretty secure. Jeanne's job is a little shakier because graphic arts is always the sort of thing some idiot administrator might think could be privatized. We'll see.

[JG] Welcome to Big Family world. I grew up in a big family too—three boys, two girls plus the parents. I remember things getting fairly chaotic at times.

I had that sort of font problem for a while with PageMaker—right after I upgraded the printer utilities. I don't think Adobe is taking as much care with that program anymore since they've begun focusing on their new layout program, InDesign. I really really like InDesign.

was fascinating to read this historic account of an incredible disaster that is unknown to so many people.

Report to the Men's Club, Carol Emshwiller

This is a collection of short stories written from Emshwiller's typical absurdist, surrealist point of view. What a fine short story writer Emshwiller is!

Stay, Nicola Griffith

I hardly ever read mystery fiction, but I did read Griffith's novels *The Blue Place* and its sequel, *Stay* because I like Griffith's other writing so much. (Ironically it seems that most lovers of mystery fiction do not like these books.) The main character of both books is a woman with nearly superhuman powers. She can fight using any weapon, she is preternaturally observant, she can build her own house from scratch and make the tools needed on top of it. She is incredibly smart. And yet (in *The Blue Place*) she was unable to save the woman she loved, and so (in *Stay*) she must learn to deal with limitations and accept her own need for help from others. I think it's possible that Nicola is purposely dealing with the false value of purely physical strength in these novels, possibly because she is so focused on her own ebbing strength in real life.

A Game of Thrones, Book 1 of A Song of Ice and Fire series, George R.R. Martin
A Clash of Kings, Book 2 of A Song of Ice and Fire series, George R.R. Martin
A Storm of Swords, Book 3 of A Song of Ice and Fire series, George R.R. Martin
The Hedge Knight, George R.R. Martin (a novella and prequel to A Song of Ice and Fire series), George R.R. Martin

I may not have begun this series if I had realized that it was going to go on for more than three books, but somewhere I got the impression that it was (just) a trilogy. At 800-1000 pages per book, it would be a pretty hefty trilogy. But as it turns out, it's likely to go on for 4 *more* books. Someone broke this news to me when I was partway through book two. *Aargh* But now I'm hooked. I finished the third book a few weeks after I started the series and am very eager to get the fourth book due out sometime later in 2003. Aside from each book's resemblance to a doorstop, I really enjoyed the complex story ("epic" is too puny a word for these books) and characters. There is no "good" family vs. "bad" family, though there is most certainly conflict between several dynastic families whose alliances and hatreds are based on perceived loyalties and insults incurred in previous generations, not to mention an extremely unreliable medieval communication system. Each of the many dynasties (and aspiring dynasties) is made up of admirable as well as despicable individuals. Sometimes the only thing that makes a particular family good or evil at any given point in time is the accident of birth order of its members. On top of that, there are no characters who could be considered totally admirable or despicable. I found myself gradually feeling respect for characters that, at first, I thought were pure scumbags. And visa versa, characters I thought at the beginning were saintly, were swayed by circumstance or simply bad assumptions to do awful, despicable things. The complexities Martin weaves into each of these characters makes them fuller and more interesting for their contradictions. Martin's characters include quite a few really remarkable women. In fact, that it's hard to believe that not one of these books ended up on a Tiptree shortlist. This is a world in which there are as many amazing and strong women as there are men, even though it could in no way be called an egalitarian society. I use the term "strong women" here in several senses—the individuals are both strong physically and/or mentally *and* they are strong as characters. I plan on suggesting that the Tiptree committee consider Martin's book next year.

Solitaire, Kelly Eskridge

Solitaire is a rousing hard-SF yarn about a rather naïve person (Ren "Jackal" Segura) who witnesses something she shouldn't have and ends up in prison because the world-running corporation doesn't want the truth to come out. "Prison" in Eskridge's world makes the most horrible of the modern super prisons look like pleasant places. Jackal's experience of lockdown is totally in her mind; she is drugged and sentenced to months of *solitaire* that literally feel like years. She develops a skill to cope with this experience however, and ends up running for her life again in an attempt to learn how to control that skill before the corporation kills her to get it. The most amusing thing about this novel is how the novel demonstrates the old maxim, "write what you know." Kelly Eskridge spent the last

decade working for a giant corporation as an upper level executive. Jackel's career at the beginning of the novel, and the skills she uses to cope with the stress of her imprisonment are obviously science fictional extrapolations of corporate skills she gained in real life, and reminiscent of the training workshops attended by many of us who work for large agencies or corporations.

The Chamber of Secrets, J.K. Rowling

Well the movie was coming out and Scott and I took a long road trip. It seemed like a fun thing to read aloud Rowling's second Harry Potter novel to Scott as he drove. We were only a couple chapters from the end when we got back home and rather than unpack, we just sat down in the living room and finished the book. What fun!

The Amazing Adventures of Kavalier and Clay, Michael Chabon

Scott and I camped along the sandy eastern lakeshore of Lake Michigan this summer. While we relaxed around the campfires I read the first book from George Martin *A Song of Ice and Fire* series and Scott read *The Amazing Adventures of Kavalier and Clay*. I'd be holding my head moaning, "you'll never believe how THIS guy dies, oh my god. One more chapter." And Scott would look up and snip at me, "Quiet. I'M reading a Pulitzer Prize-Winning Book." Well we had a lot of fun with the contrast of our reading materials, but I'm glad I finally got around to reading *K&C*. It's probably the best book I read all year. *K&C* is in the Great American Novel tradition because it comments about American culture even as it tells a much more intimate story of two young men and their dreams. The comic book industry of the 1930s provides the backdrop against which two friends, Kavalier (a Jew and a professional theatrical escapist who slipped out of Nazi Germany just in time) and Clay (an aspiring comic book artist, lame from childhood Polio, ambitious to make it big) form a partnership and create a Superman-like comicbook character named the Escapist. Kavalier turns out to have the greater drawing skill, while Clay finds he can write compelling stories. Their work draws from Houdini, from a real Golum with whom Kavalier escaped from Germany, and from Clay's dream of overcoming his handicaps. It's a brilliant novel.

Telling, Marion Winik

"Telling" is one of the funny, autobiographical short stories in this anthology. You may recognize Winik's name if you listen to NPR; she is a frequent contributor and she read many of the stories in this volume on "All Things Considered." "Telling" contemplates the benefits of confession, of "telling." It begins with the story of a little lie Winik felt ashamed of telling her best friend, and which she confessed. Winik's stream of conscious continues along that topic to her jealousy of the Catholic ritual of confession to her enjoyment of certain kinds of magazine articles that are in fact public confessions, which lead logically (or it seemed so at the time) to the presumption that revealing all would heal all. Her experience as a topless dancer didn't seem to bear out that hypothesis. But that story leads into other kinds of confessions, of tellings.... That's how Winik's stories go. By the time I finished the book, I felt like I knew her pretty well.

The Minority Report, anthology, Philip K. Dick

This was another book chosen by our book discussion group and I had fun reading it, although I felt a bit of the same sense of disappointment I felt when I read a Theodore Sturgeon anthology a couple years ago. In re-reading some of the stories I remember loving so much in the 1960s I kept asking myself, did I really like stuff like this? Didn't I get annoyed at ALL at how these authors talk about women? With Dick's stories, I most frequently asked, isn't this a really super simplistic view of the world? Didn't he consider the affect on people of some of the technology he imagined? I always thought Dick was so paranoid. But suddenly I realized that I've become far more paranoid than Dick every showed himself to be in his fiction. News media machines with sensors everywhere, so the news is always complete and completely invasive of everyone's privacy. Dick seemed to think that would actually be neat. Marketing technology develops such power that a whole planet's population can be moved as one toward pre-scripted opinions about war. Sounds familiar, only in Dick's world, the marketing technology is actually understood by only one person, who changes his mind about war partway through the story, and decides to reprogram everyone so that war can be avoided. See what I mean about simplistic?

© Velma deSelby Bowen

[JG] Interesting stuff to coordinate imaginary and so-called real timelines in ones life. Sounds like both you and Soren have similar mental projects going right now.

I'm sorry to hear your mother's health is such an uncertain ... and unsettling thing. Take care.

© Soren deSelby

[SC] Welcome to *Turbo* apa.

[JG] I hope you feel more comfortable wearing your new name and life stories. Your identity quests certainly provide an entertaining ride for us her in *Turbo*. Welcome!

© carl Juarez

[JG] Microsoft Word really hates the fact that you don't capitalize your name. I just thought you should know. Good point about the incapatability of display fonts for text.

© Andy Hooper

[SC] I enjoyed reading your reflections on 200 *Turbo* deadlines. I find meeting *Turbo's* deadlines to be satisfying, too, though deadline management for the OE can be a difficult and elusive thing. I don't agree with you that the apa is particularly forgiving about the lack of mailing comments or that mailing comments are truly optional in *Turbo*. I think the frequent lack of meaningful feedback has contributed to the apa's increasing turnover of late. People get tired of doing major apa contributions when they so frequently get very little feedback in response.

That said, I still enjoy *Turbo* very much and look forward to staying in it. I am glad that you and Carrie are planning to stick around too. I have always enjoyed your work here, even the essays on the most esoteric subjects, and I want very much to keep in contact with Carrie. Three Cheers for *Turbo* 200, thanks for starting it all, Andy.

[JG] The last zines in this issue of *Turbo* are definitely suffering for mailing comments from me because they're at the end ... and I'm in a hurry. I liked what you had to say about deadlines, I too have had a love/hate relationship with them over my lifetime. They're so useful, and so stressful....

You and I have had a long-term disagreement about whether the most valuable contributions to the apa are performances or conversation, and I see we still disagree.

—Jeanne Gomoll & Scott Custis
20 March 2003

Still the sheer number of ideas he crammed into each story amazes me. I can also see why Dick's stories have been such popular sources recently for movie plots. If you liked the movie, *The Minority Report*, you might enjoy reading the original story, which is much different than the filmed version. Again, Dick seems to like the central technological idea (prediction of crimes before they happen).

***The Star Fraction*, Ken McLeod**

***The Stone Canal*, Ken McLeod**

***The Cassini Division*, Ken McLeod**

***The Sky Road*, Ken McLeod**

If I can count all these books as one novel, then this would seriously compete with *The Amazing Adventures of Kavalier and Clay* for the title of best book read in 2002. And it's hard to avoid thinking of these books as one work because events mentioned in *The Stone Canal* are viewed from another perspective in *The Sky Road*, and some events in *The Stone Canal* precede events in *The Star Fraction*, some of which are themselves viewed as apocryphal legends in other books. It gets complicated, and I can see why there was some debate as to which order they should be read. I love how events seen from one point of view or in one era look completely different from a different character's point of view or from the perspective of a later age. In fact, the theme of unreliable perspectives offers a good tool with which to consider these novels about an evolving revolution from the current day through various permutations of anarchic democracy and anarchic communism. The difference between these two political systems is, of course, a matter of perspective. Human beings survive a near apocalyptic AI takeover of the planet and throughout the series we readers waver back and forth about whether the evolving AI intelligence is a hopeful evolution of human intelligence or a deadly alien threat to humans. In the course of these novels, humans begin settling the solar system, create a wormhole and create an anarchic capitalistic utopia on a planet in a distant star system, while the humans who stay behind build an anarchic utopia on earth. Technology and science is viewed as evil or liberator depending on where and when and who the point of view. Gradually details of events described in earlier novels are filled in by flashbacks from the point of view of various characters. Sometimes we know better *what* happened, but usually the question of *why* or whether it *should* have happened simply get more complex. A masterpiece.