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Morrie The Critic Discusses Economic Policy And The Impending Crisis By Alexis Gilliland

"Economic policy? What do you know about economic policy?" I asked. "There are experts all over the place, and YOU have a theory?"

Morrie looked up from his Caesar salad and smiled. "Well of course. Those experts are engulfed in numbers, which are answers to questions they don't want to ask, or were afraid to ask, or never had the wit to ask, and they do the soothsayer thing, fiddling with the numbers until some sort of order emerges from the chaos. That's one reason why they can never give you a timely answer to questions, like: "Are we in a bubble, yet?"

I took a sip of chianti. "And the other?"

"The observer effect. Their opinion about what they observe affects the underlying reality. Greenspan sneezes and the market catches pneumonia."

"But you, you can answer these hard questions?"

He brushed crumbs off the red checkered tablecloth. "As a critic it is my duty, though you may not want to bet the farm on what I tell you. And as a kibitzer, nobody pays any attention to me, so my observer effect is negligible. What would you like to know?"

There had been rumours about moving my office to India. "What's the real poop on exporting jobs?"

Morrie refilled his glass from the carafe. "The actual job loss is negligible in the short term, but like the miner's canary, it is a warning of impending trouble."

A slow nod. "What sort of trouble?"

"A sea change in America's culture," he said at last. "We have too much money and too little discipline, so our kids are getting fat--pardon me, our little darlings are trending towards obesity--and the middle class has stopped renewing itself."

"A bizarre connection, that. How do you figure?"

"Trained in consumerism, our kids eat too much and exercise too little. The middle class is the same thing."

"Would you like to expand on the middle class, Morrie?"

"There is a political program based on an economic theory involved here," he said amiably. "Sadly for the country, but happily for the commentariat--of whom, in a modest way, I am one--the wheels have fallen off the theory, so that the program is grinding to a halt. The traditional theory under which United States has operated favored a semi-redistribution of the wealth, thereby creating a large class of the semi-prosperous at the expense of the rich and the super-rich."

"Ah, Morrie--wouldn't your so-called "semi-prosperous" be the middle class?"

He took a sip of wine. "That depends on how you define your terms. One definition of the middle class is that they are vested in their income; a tenured professor, a retired policeman, a career bureaucrat, the recipient of a modest trust fund, all are vested, all are middle class. Today's semi-pros are making money, and spending it heroically, thereby serving as the engine of America's economy and the world's. They live well, but far beyond their means. If they lose their job, their debt--mortgage, car and credit card payments--will kill them. You can call them middle class if you want, but vested in their income they are not. Most of our history, the semi-pros could survive, and thrive if they worked hard, to end up as home owners of independent means." He buttered a piece of bread and ate it. "America was the destination of generations of immigrants because of economic opportunity."

"Not because of religious freedom?"

Morrie considered the question. "Well, religious freedom was more the absence of religious coercion--the absence of an established church--but it was associated with economic opportunity. If



you worked hard, nobody was going to take it away from you because you were a Jew, Catholic or Huguenot. And the government kept things loose so that if you worked hard, you could get somewhere."

"What do you mean by keeping things loose?"

"In the old country, the conservative--" he laughed. "Hell, the reactionary nobility would rather have a larger share of a smaller pie, and they passed laws to maintain their share. Socially, the businessmen, the entrepreneurs, the mere makers of money were held in contempt--though marrying their well-dowered daughters was a common practice among impecunious noblemen. In America, the new money had a hand in lawmaking, and they were interested in a larger pie, so they kept things loose in their own self interest. One of the early semi-redistribution measures was the abolition of primogeniture and entailed estates, to ensure that those large land holdings would be distributed among all the heirs, instead of being given to just one. A preemptive strike against the potential formation of a domestic nobility, reflected in the Constitution as the ban on granting titles of nobility. Note that the law didn't redistribute anything, it just made sure things were loosened up enough for redistribution to take place of its own accord."

The waiter brought our orders, veal marsala for Morrie, spaghetti and sausage for me, and economic theorizing stopped while we ate. At last Morrie wiped his lips and dropped his napkin on his plate.

"Where were we?" he asked.

"You were talking about the clash of theories, and had just defined the old theory."

"Ah yes, the semi-distribution of wealth as a means of creating a middle class, and why it seems to have stopped working. Too much money, I suggest. There's no such thing as too much money, reply the E-men."

"E-men, Morrie?"

"Economists, especially those advising the government. The graduate students and untenured professors are Junior E-men, like Mickey Mouse in *The Sorcerer's Apprentice*. They, and the legislators they advise, have been looking to inflate the size of the pie by encouraging consumption. How? By taxing the interest on savings, they discourage saving, and by making interest payments tax deductible they encouraged borrowing to spend. Up until it started to cost the government too much revenue. At which point, the law was changed to only let you deduct the interest on your home mortgage. A pity, that." He poured the last of the chianti in his glass. "By then the habit of spending yourself into debt had taken root, and there were all these brooms rushing about carrying water. In the movie the Sorcerer restores the status quo ante with one dramatic gesture. In real life, the Fed avoids dramatic gestures for the best of reasons."

"You are suggesting that this semi-prosperous class of yours is out of control?"

"Well, think about it. Families now have more cars than people, and needs must rent storage space to stash their perfectly good stuff so they can buy newer stuff. For the semi-pros who have fallen on hard times, these same E-men have very little sympathy, viewing them as being mugged by the invisible hand of the market, a mugging clearly understood to be a righteous transaction."

"What has this to do with American jobs going overseas?"

Morrie finished the wine in his glass. "Working class jobs, and their associated factories, have been going overseas for years to benefit the owners of capital, aka the upper class. The jobs in flight are middle class jobs, but their export also benefits the upper class. The upper class, after long years of peace and tranquility, they think there are enough of them so they don't need the middle class any more."

"And your point is?"

"The old policy permitted the creation of a strong middle class, only the government didn't hand it to them on a silver platter, they had to want it badly enough to go after it--by using the traditional virtues of thrift, hard work and deferred gratification."

"Hard work is still in, but there has been a cultural shift away from thrift, and deferred gratification is definitely out," I said at last. "Does that have anything to do with the case?" "

"Maybe, perhaps. At least I think so." He shrugged. "Oh, Hell, truth is truth. Yes. The semi-prosperous class goes for the perks and trappings of wealth, and they want them right now. The heavily advertised leasing of luxury cars means the poor sods can drive a car they can't afford, so eventually debt is going to do them in. The middle class shrinks, losing political clout to the upper class, and the process feeds on itself in a downward spiral."

"That's depressing. You think all our middle class jobs are going overseas, then?"

"Not a chance," Morrie shook his head. "The semi-prosperous class isn't the only one with debts. The National Debt, the Trade Deficit and all those trillions and trillions of dollars they represent, they aren't going to go away. Eventually reality will bite. There will be a catastrofiasco of some sort, central bankers being as prone to panic as anybody, and our government will be obliged to pay off its debt--well, OUR debt, not the governments, just as the taxes we have to pay are our money and not the government's money. In the event, our government will pay off that debt, which is denominated in dollars, by printing dollars--an option not available to lesser nations such as Argentina--because it can, and because there will be no other way. The fires of inflation will be hosed down with higher interest rates, as the country and the world will endure a prolonged and painful recession." He looked mournful and smug at the same time. "During which time of moral reeducation the upper class will rediscover why they needed a strong middle class in the first place, and there will doubtless be enough hard working people practicing thrift and deferring gratification to provide one." He looked at the check and put his credit card on top of it. "We hope that our semi-prosperous class will be fast learners. If not, maybe the foreigners will come here for those middle class jobs, but hey, they already speak the language, right?" The waiter returned the check and Morrie signed it. "As an exercise, pretend that old Greenspan just laid my spiel on the Congress, and try to imagine the reaction."



We stood up and he helped me on with my coat. "It would be the catastrofiasco!"

He nodded. "Greenspan could make it happen. Could he stop it from happening? No, but he can put it off a little--and as long as it doesn't happen on his watch, he wins."

"Is he going get another term as chairman of the Fed, Morrie?"

"At 78 the old boy is overdue for retirement, and the way he's been talking lately it sounds like he will retire," he replied, holding the door for me. "You think he knows something besides his own mortality?"

The End

Like Samson, Shorn of His Locks

The March Fifth, First Friday meeting began with Judy walking in late. "Whenever you're ready," said Secretary Sam, pen in hand. Judy banged the <sorta> gavel. "It's a wee little puppet prez" said someone. Judy declared it to be 9:15. The entertainment committee is fighting. For old business we explained to new people about the hat and the frog. Judy explained that WSFA provides the soda, but members bring goodies. Lee said, "It's a plastic hat that looks like it's straw."

The treasurer reported \$3,971.56 but a lot is smofcon. The club itself has \$1,571.56. Lee said, "There should be a call for a small party."

Activities committee reported that it was going to read Judy's mail. Lee said she called Judy to get permission to open it because we have a lawyer here who works for the post office. There were 13 passes to a movie *Eternal Sunshine* which were distributed to the members <not one of whom wrote me a review!>.

Keith for publication said there was another problem with the website, people couldn't log in so the WSFA Journal email was late. I propose moving the website to PANIX. PANIX is \$350, what we have now is \$300. Sam seconded. Someone asked why PANIX. Keith said they host sf-lovers and are well respected. "I've used them and they are reliable. It's hard to tell with others if they will be sold." Richard said that he had reliable hosting from Yahoo. Lee asked if we could amend the motion to look at others. Keith said



“Since moving is a hassle and I think Yahoo is sleazy, my preference is to stay where we are. Pederson said, “I use Blackgate and they are reliable. They are gamers and I could get a good quote. I’ll get back with more information.” Eric said that the club should trust Keith’s judgment. Lee asked if we could set this up to pay monthly. Sam said that the club has already voted to pay the cost. Judy asked if there was any other discussion. Then a curiously dehaired Mike Walsh walked in. Lee was shocked, “Oh my god, you cut your hair.” The motion unanimously passed while everyone was staring at hairless Mike. Sam Schneider said WSFA is now PANIXed.

The entertainment committee tried to get fresh with his wife but she promised to slap him, promises, promises. Capclave Past asked if we could close the account. Bob said, “Except for Judy” but Judy said, “I was paid,” so Bob said, “Then it is closed.” Capclave present has put up more stuff

on the web and has posters and T-shirts with Capclave printed in hieroglyphics. Sam pointed out that from an advertising point of view, printing the convention’s name in a dead language is self-defeating. Lee complained, “You’re no fun” but agreed to put the name in English underneath. Capclave future had nothing new.

Sam said if anyone wanted to take over as editor of the Journal, to see him. Lee asked if anything was happening. Sam said, “No but if someone wants to be editor I won’t stand in the way.”

New people included EJ McClune, Drew Bittner, Laura Syms (a little bit of SF experience vice-chair of MilPhil) and John Syms, Chris Cowan (filthy huckster). 2nd meeting Erin. Jennifer was outed. No one was here for a third meeting but people were told that at third meeting they could become a member with all the privileges thereof. Bob added, ‘As soon as we can find out what they are.’ Other announcements include the Procrastinator’s New Year’s party at Chuck Divine’s on March 13. Candy Madigan’s uniform burning tomorrow. Jim Kling will be in Asia for two months. Article in *Successful Meetings Magazine* about sf conventions. Keith explained that he’s upset that Jim Kling is going to Asia, “Because he’s sort of young and I’m opposed to euthanasia.”

Meeting unanimously adjourned 9:42

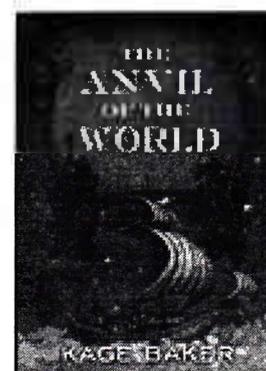
Attendance: 3/5 Prez Judy Kindell, Sec Sam Lubell, Treas. Bob MacIntosh, Trust Keith Lynch, Trust Steven Smith, 2004 Chair Lee Gilliland, 2005 Chair Mike Walsh, Alexis Gilliland, Scott Hofmann, Eric Jablow, Elspeth Kovar, Bill Lawhorn, Ernest Lilley, Richard Lynch, Wade Lynch, Keith Marshall, Cat Mcier, Walter Miles, Mike Nelson, Lance Oszko, Mike Pederson, Larry Pfeffer, Judy and Sam Scheiner, George Shaner, Michael Taylor, Elizabeth Twitchell, Ivy Yap, Madelcine Yeh, Victoria Smith, Stan Field, Chris Cowan, Drew Bittner, Peter Kwak, Erin Truth, EJ McClune, Laura and John Syms, Hugo Gernsback



Review of Kage Baker *The Anvil of the World*

By Samuel Lubell

This book reads like a fix-up of three novellas. In the first story, Smith the hero runs a caravan of trade goods and an unusual mix of passengers. Among the passengers is Lord Ermenwyr, easily the best character in the book. Seemingly a hypochondriac who is convinced he’s dying, he is also the son of a saint who decided to save her people from the raiders by marrying the Master of the Mountain. So Ermenwyr has good and evil in him, plus he’s completely spoiled. Oh, and someone (lots of someones) want to kill him, which makes for a complex trip considering that Smith is a former assassin himself. In the second story Smith has become an innkeeper and Ermenwyr is hiding in his inn when a dead body of a gossipmonger turns up. The third story is



the most complex, involving Smith's destiny, wars between different peoples, and both the Master of the Mountain and his sainted wife.

It's light somewhat humorous adventure. But there's a nice touch in that the non-human cultures are more advanced in knowledge than the humans, but less capable at building/creating. So there's casual mentions of whales being intelligent, to which Smith protests that they are just fish, crop rotation, and lack of birth control being the reason why the humans are fighting all the time.

This book certainly won't make anyone forget about Baker's time-travelling series about The Company, but it's a diverting few hours.

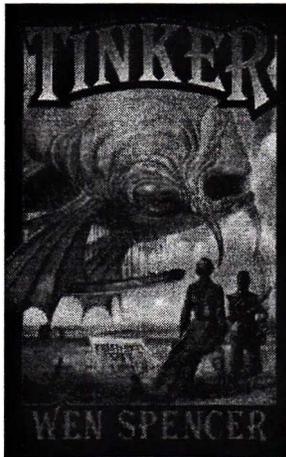
Tinker by Wen Spencer

Baen HCVR: ISBN 0743471652 PubDate: 11/01/03

Review by Cathy Green

Originally Published by SFRevu

Tinker is a bit of departure from Wen Spencer's previous books, which combined the SF and PI genres, since it can most easily be classified as a fantasy novel with elves and magic. However, what Spencer really has done is combine elements from Science Fiction (inter-dimensional travel via manmade gates that operate according to physics), and Fantasy (elves and animal spirit people from Asian mythology) with the action-adventure techno-thriller genre (everybody is after the gate technology). And all of it is written in her usual breezy somewhat humorous fast-paced style.



The book features the adventures of an eighteen year old girl nicknamed Tinker, and takes place mainly in Pittsburgh, with the twist that Pittsburgh has been transported to another dimension called Elfhome, an other-dimension Earth inhabited by elves. Every thirty days or so Pittsburgh temporarily reverts back to its place on our Earth, due to a faulty orbiting hypergate built by the Chinese. Tinker owns a junkyard and is a skilled mechanic and inventor with a superior understanding of physics, a skill set that becomes increasingly handy and vital as the novel progresses. The book starts at "Shutdown" when Pittsburgh turns off its own power grid so it can reintegrate with the national power grid when it rephases back to Earth. The action gets going pretty quickly when an important elf noble named Windwolf is chased into Tinker's scrapyard by a pack of magically enhanced wargs (think hellhounds) and Tinker has to save his life, fight off the wargs and get him medical attention. Tinker's life becomes increasingly complicated and intertwined with Windwolf's as the novel progresses.

It turns out that the wargs were enhanced with a combination of magic and technology, resulting in magically enhanced solid matter holograms and were sent after Windwolf by another group of non-humans, the Oni, who are from Onihida (Oni are clearly the basis for a lot of Asian mythology involving animal spirits as well as Viking mythology). It also turns out the denizens of Elfhome and Onihida appear in our mythology because there used to be natural gates between the worlds. However they were too small and hard to find to be useful for large-scale travel. In addition to the elves and the Oni, Tinker has also managed to attract the attention of our Earth's National Security Agency and the Elven Interdimensional Agency (EIA), the agency set up to handle relations between humans and elves and to deal with immigration issues. Tinker came to

their attention because her application to Carnegie-Mellon alerted the NSA to the fact that she knows just as much about building a gate as her father, the inventor of the process, did.

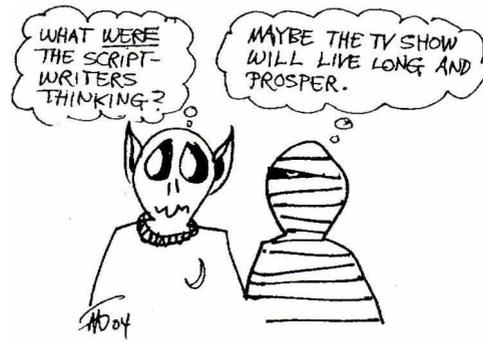
The Oni want the gate technology so that they can invade Elfhome and Earth because Onihida is a resource starved planet. As a result, everyone literally is chasing after Tinker, who is trying to maintain a semblance of a normal life and just wants to run her scrapyard and engage in normal 18-year-old activities such as dating. Of course, when the city you live in has been transported to a world ruled by elves where magic is just as real as physics, normal just isn't possible. Tinker's life gets increasingly tangled up with that of the elves with each choice she makes having increasingly larger, more serious consequences for both herself and those around her up to and including how to save herself, her loved ones, Elfhome and Earth from the Oni.

Tinker is a well developed character. Her motivations and thought processes are clearly depicted and give the reader insight into the character. The elves are more inscrutable, in part because they are viewed from Tinker's viewpoint. This opaqueness of character serves to emphasize the differences between elves and humans. When you're immortal you can afford to take a long view and a wait of 30 days or even 120 years is nothing. By contrast, humans in the book are viewed as mere children by the elves. Tinker, being mortal with a typical human life expectancy, naturally feels things more strongly and urgently than an elf ever would and thus holds a certain fascination for them.

Spencer does a nice job of letting us in little by little on how exactly elf society works without having to resort to obvious exposition dumps. We learn what's going on pretty much the same time Tinker does, although readers familiar with fantasy tropes will figure out many things before Tinker. For instance, I anticipated that accepting gifts from Windwolf would result in Tinker having unintentionally accepted a deeper obligation than just owing him a gift. However, Spencer does provide a logical explanation for Tinker's ignorance of elf customs despite living her whole life on Elfhome that might otherwise be attributed to bad writing. Spencer makes it clear that Tinker's education had some serious gaps, that the elves and humans really didn't mix very much, and that Tinker's advisor on things elvish had deliberately misled her about a number of things. Spencer has also given a lot of thought as to how Pittsburgh's human society and culture would evolve given the shifting between worlds and what the advantages and disadvantages of such a condition would be.

One way *Tinker* departs from Spencer's previous books is that there's a lot more sex, and it's more explicit. This isn't necessarily a bad thing; it just came as a surprise. I did, however, find the scene describing the forced mating between a warg and a kitsune to be distasteful and unpleasant. Of course, it was meant to be unpleasant and was done to the kitsune as a punishment and given that the alternative was to be de-boned alive, the kitsune considered it the best option among bad choices.

Other than the sex scenes, which I could have done without, I don't really have any complaints with the book. It was fast-paced, well-written and hard to put down because I wanted to know what was going to happen next. I do not know whether the book is meant to be a stand alone novel or the first in the series. The ending makes either option equally viable. *Tinker* is an



enjoyable, quick read and I would recommend it both to people who are already fans of Spencer's work and to those unfamiliar with the Ukiah Oregon books.

Thief of Lives by Barb & J. C. Hendee

Roc / Penguin Putnam PPBK: ISBN 0451459539 PubDate: 01/01/04

Review by Nicki Lynch

Originally published at SFRevu.com

As long time fan of Laurell K. Hamilton and Tanya Huff, how could I resist reading *Thief Of Lives* by Barb & J.C. Hendee? I'm glad I did read it, even though I haven't read the first book in what promises to be an interesting series, I enjoyed this second novel. While I was unfamiliar with continuing characters from the first book - Dhampir - this second book had enough back story to acquaint me with them - Nicki

Thief Of Lives begins with a terrible murder of a young woman in the prologue and then opens with the reintroduction of the series' recurring characters. Leesil, a half elf, half human, is practicing his fighting moves in the woods and reflecting on his life in the past as compared to his present. Months earlier, he and his partner, Magiere, had traveled and bilked simple towns folks out of their money by convincing them their village had Undead among them who were causing illness or strange deaths. Magiere would claim to be a dhampir, a hunter of the undead, while Leesil would pretend to be the monster she would stake to collect the fee. Traveling with them was his dog, Chap, a large silver-blue hound.

They earned a fair living pretending to be vampire hunters until they decided to settle down in the seaside town of Miiska. After buying a tavern, the Sea Lion, they discovered there was a trio of vampires living there and the towns people, having heard Magiere's reputation, wanted her to kill them. Magiere and Leesil manage to kill two of the three and burn down several buildings as well.

It's now several months later and the tavern has been rebuilt. Magiere is ready to retire to the life of an inn keeper, but Leesil is not so sure they will be able to. He foreboding is correct, and soon a letter arrives asking them to travel to the capital city of Bela to find a vampire who has killed a noble's daughter. Magiere has discovered she is a dhampir, that her father was a vampire, and that she has a taste for blood when vampires are around. In the encounter she and Leesil had with the vampires of Miiska, she nearly killed him when he "fed" her to keep her alive after a vicious attack. Because of that, she doesn't want to ever hunt vampires again. However, Leesil persuades her to take the job in Bela for the money which would help out their new found home of Miiska.

Meanwhile in Bela, Ratboy (who now calls himself Toret), one of the vampires who escaped Miiska has settled in and created two more like himself as his minions. Chane is a nobleman who teaches Toret sword fighting and an introduction to the upper classes; Sapphire is a former prostitute and the love of his life, when she isn't shopping or going to taverns. Toret was glad to get out of Miiska after nearly being given a second death by Leesil.

Once in Bela, Magiere and Leesil began their hunt for the vampires, unaware they are hunting a vampire they already know and that they are being watched by a mysterious man.

Thief Of Lives was well done and I enjoyed it. The authors obviously have a plan as to where their characters' lives are headed and give the reader just enough about the characters to keep interested without giving too much away. While I felt there was too much of Magiere and Leesil stressing about hurting each other, which slowed the story to almost a halt, something would

happen to pick up the pace again. I enjoyed the new characters who were introduced with hints that they would continue in the series. I also liked that some threads were tied up while others were left to tantalize the reader into the next book.

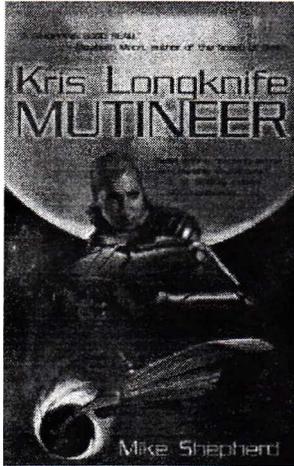
This new series by Barb & J.C. Hendee is welcome as a fresh look at the vampire hunter.

Kris Longknife - Mutineer by Mike Shepherd

Ace / Penguin Putnam PPBK: ISBN 044101142X PubDate: 02/01/04

Review by Madeline Yeh

Originally published at SFRevu.com



This novel retells the fairy tale in which the youngest son of a king goes out to seek his fortune with a magic ring and a faithful friend, though the story has been changed slightly. The main character is not a prince, nor a son, but the daughter of the prime minister, who is aided by a personal computer and accompanied by her loyal sidekick Tommy. Kris Longknife has joined the Navy looking for a life away from the family fame and business. Kris Longknife's father is prime minister of her planet, her grandfather was prime minister, her great grand fathers and great grandmothers have stamped their names and personalities in the histories.

The story starts out with Kris and her brave marines parachuting into an isolated house to rescue a kidnapped child. This not so routine mission is successfully carried out despite equipment failure, and an unexpectedly well equipped and organized opposition. Then Kris and Tommy are sent off to join a humanitarian mission. Here Kris really comes into her own as she blithely cuts through and maneuvers around the bureaucrats. Then it's back to her ship and further problems. All of these adventures are complicated by her family, its history, political maneuvers and a vast conspiracy.

This is a very enthralling story. It's fast paced in a surprisingly normal world. The cookies are made with Ghiradelli chocolate chips. Politicians run campaigns with confused volunteers. College students drink beer and eat pizza. Sweatshirts are printed with university names. Fashionable clothes come from Paris. There is a refreshing lack of futuristic gadgets and jargon. The children of cooks and accountants and politicians join the Navy to escape the family business. The universe of this story isn't entirely mundane. There are 600 worlds colonized by humans which are tied together by the Society of Humanity. The political conflict is between the lightly populated colonies on one side and Earth and the seven heavily populated planets on the other. The history and politics and technology are revealed in interesting pieces, and it's fascinating to try to fit them together. The political setup is refreshing current with presidents and prime ministers, not kings and dukes.

This appears to be the first story from Mike Moscoe writing as Mike Shepherd, and it's set in the same universe as Moscoe's earlier books. *They Also Serve*, *First Casualty* and *The Price of Peace* are set in the same universe as *Kris Longknife*, and precede this book. I've read several and found them to be straightforward Space Opera and a lot of fun, if not too complex. Military good - Politicians bad and other popular notions allow the stories to move along quickly with a minimum of distractions for the reader.

This is a well crafted space opera with an engaging hero and an acceptable universe. The heroine definitely has the deck well stacked in her favor, but is still challenged by the problems she encounters. There aren't idiot plots or idiot situations. The title implies that this novel has

ambitions to be the "Midshipman Hornblower" of a very long series, and I hope it succeeds. I'd like to read more.

Tales of the Grand Tour by Ben Bova

Tor HCVR: ISBN 0765307227 PubDate: 01/05/04

Review by Ernest Lilley

Originally published at SFRevu.com

For the past decade, Ben Bova has been writing stories about the Grand Tour: humanity's expansion into the solar system. He's used the results of the latest planetary probes to craft the most realistic environments possible, and I don't think there's another SF author alive with a better grasp of planetary science, nor one that can match Bova's storytelling experience, so it's no surprise that this is one collection of tales worth telling.

Every story needs a conflict, and for the most part that need has been served by the insatiable greed of multi-zillionare Martin Humphries on the one hand, who pretty much wants to own the universe, and a cast of freedom loving folks like Dan Randolph, Pancho Lane, and Lars Fuchs who want to open space up for all mankind. Governments don't seem to play into this a lot, probably because the Earth has gone over the edge of environmental disaster (The Precipice) due to greenhouse warming, and it's just a fragmented mess of folks hanging on.

There are plenty of loose ends to tie up, or just good stories worth revisiting, in a series of this size, so it shouldn't have been too hard for the author to put together this collection of stories to flesh out some of the sparser parts. Even so, several of the entries in *Tales of the Grand Tour* are excerpts from novels, which work well either as standalone tales or as enticements to read the full work.

Some of the stories bring characters I didn't associate with the Grand Tour into contact with those I did. The first story in the collection, "Sam and the Flying Dutchman", for instance pairs Bova's Samm Gunn character who has appeared in numerous short stories, with characters from *The Precipice* and *The Rock Rats* and adds some dimension to the tragedy that drives the geologist turned asteroid pirate, Lars Fuchs. In the last story, "Sepulcher", he goes so far as to tweak the character names to make it fit the series, as he explains in a preface, because it became clear in retrospect that the evil zillionaire was an early manifestation of his Martin Humphries character. He even includes a story from another series altogether, part of the Kinsman saga, because it has the same feel as the Grand Tour series. I'm certainly not complaining, as "Fifteen Miles" is an example of the best of lunar survival fiction.

We get a look at just how bad things are back on Earth in "Greenhouse Chill", where the author congratulates himself for anticipating the coming of an ice age as the result of greenhouse warming, and a look at what the moon might offer to an aging population in "The Man Who Hated Gravity". Bova holds out hope for space as a popular initiative if only it could be packaged so that enough people could feel the adventure in "Appointment in Sinai" and what it means to be a daredevil stuntman when all the Solar System is your playground in "High Jump".

All in all there are a dozen stories and each of them makes you wonder what happens next. Fortunately, what happens next is contained in the novels of the Grand Tour and you can go out and read (or re-read) them. The tour isn't over yet either, and you can look forward to *The Silent War* coming out this May.

Attendance Report By Keith Lynch

For the fifth year in a row, here is my annual WSFA meeting attendance report. The information this report was based on comes almost exclusively from the meeting minutes and other information in the WSFA Journal. This information is not always accurate or complete, so please take this report with a grain of NaCl. Some people don't sign in, some arrive after the meeting is over, and some write in fake names or the names of members who aren't present. Lydia has been at nearly all the Maryland meetings since she was born, but is only signed in sporadically. Ted White comes to many of the Virginia meetings, but usually arrives after the meeting is over, and doesn't sign in. Bill Squire often arrives very late -- sometimes after midnight, long after the secretary has taken the sign-in sheet and gone home.

We now have 21 years of WSFA Journals online (at <http://www.wsfa.org/journal/>), up from eleven years a year ago, and six years two years ago, but meeting attendance wasn't consistently taken and recorded in the Journal until 1995. We currently have attendance data from 293 meetings online, 131 of which were at the Gillilands', 98 of which were at the Ginters', and 64 of which were elsewhere.

Where are the WSFAans of yesteryear?

If I define a "regular" as someone who attends at least a third of the meetings, 1995 had 46 regulars, and 2003/04 has 36. Of the 46 1995 regulars 32 have attended at least one meeting in 2003/04 (down from 33 last year), and 18 are 2003/03 regulars (down from 21 last year). The 1995 regulars who have disappeared entirely (attended no meetings in 2003 or 2004) are Dan Burgess, Chris Callahan, Steven desJardins, Dan Hoey, Terilee Edwards-Hewitt, the late Joe Mayhew, Dick Roepke, Rachel Russell, John and Peggy Rae Sapienza, Tom Schaad, Michael Watkins, Miles Weissman, and Ben Zuhl.

I generated a similar list last year. Curiously, three of the disappeared 1995 regulars returned, i.e. attended at least one meeting in the past year: Covert Beach, Jim Edwards-Hewitt, and David Grimm. But an additional four 1995 regulars disappeared: Chris Callahan, Dan Hoey, Dick Roepke, and Tom Schaad, for a net loss of one. That's not to say meetings have become smaller. We just have a slightly different mix of people every year. WSFA no longer has any overlap at all with the original attendees, back in the 1940s. Perhaps WSFA of the 2060s will have no overlap at all with the WSFA of today. (Greetings to the WSFAans of 2060, poring over this ancient WSFA Journal, wondering what all the strange people listed in it were like.)

Of the 36 2003/04 regulars, 18 were 1995 regulars, three were 1995 irregulars, and 15 are new. The 15 new regulars are Sheri Bell, Adrienne Ertman, Cathy Green, Scott Hofmann, Jim Kling, Bill Lawhorn, Wade Lynch, John Madigan, Cat Meier, Larry Pfeffer, Judy Scheiner, Sam Scheiner, Elizabeth Twitchell, Ivy Yap, and myself. It's possible that some of them may have attended pre-1995 meetings (indeed, John Madigan certainly did), but none of them attended any meetings in 1995, 1996, or (except in my case, and John Madigan's) 1997.

Of the 36 2003/04 regulars, the median first attendance (i.e. half first attended a WSFA meeting earlier, half later) is 1991. Of all the people at each of the most recent four meetings, the median first attendances were 1991, 1993, 1997, and 1991 respectively. (The *average* first attendances were certainly earlier, but I can't say how much earlier until I find out just how long ago Alexis, Judy Newton, etc., joined. This information is presumably buried in the First Series (pre-1975) WSFA Journals, and I hope to dig it out by next year.)

Here is an attendance grid of people present at WSFA meetings in 2002-2004 to date. V or M for Virginia or Maryland meeting at the regular locations (lowercase if attendance wasn't taken), C for a meeting at Capclave, G for a meeting at the Madigans' (in Greenbelt), and x for a meeting not held. Only people who have been to three or more meetings during this time are listed. People known by different names at different times are listed under their current name.

A J before the person's name means they've contributed to the WSFA Journal during this period, an L means they're on the WSFA email list, an M means they've hosted one or more events to which all WSFAans were invited during this period, and an O means they're currently an officer. I do not have information on who is a paid member, or on who has attended Capclave.

The two digit year before a person's name is when they were first mentioned in the WSFA Journal, or when they first attended a WSFA meeting, whichever happened first. If the year is blank, that means they were active in the club in 1978. Pre-1984 years should not necessarily be trusted, as I did those mostly by eye rather than online, and as I don't have all the pre-1981 Journal issues at hand.

	2002												2003												2004		
	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D	J	F	M
	V	M	V	M	V	M	V	M	V	M	V	M	V	M	V	M	V	M	V	M	V	M	V	M	V	M	G
81 F.L. Ahsh											*											*	*				
00 L.Barry-Kessler*						*																					*
80 Mike Bartman		*	*	*						*																	
87 Covert Beach															*		*				*						

Kitty Jensen 121 12 112
Ron Kean 1 11121 11 111 22222212
Judy Kindell 3222322234112222222233433233323323423332322332312222421
Jim Kling 1222223332233211
Elspeth Kovar 11244222442222331222422241211312444334223111233112334221
Bill Lawhorn 11 33221214313231
Brian Lewis 223 2 1 1 1 1 1 1 111 2 2 1
Paula Lewis 113 1 11
Winnie Lim 2312 2
Samuel Lubell 1223412 44323133334333444244433143443333432443324233442
Will Ludwigsen 31422
Ferrienne Lurie 3213 212 1 1 1
Bradford Lyau 212131
Keith Lynch 322222432222432344444344444443444434444442
Nicki Lynch 1232431331233223322341223313234334233424444344333343334
Richard Lynch 1233431231233223332341223313234334233424444344433333331
Wade Lynch 12434441
Bob MacIntosh 44434323434343444334334433434333444334243333344334232322
Candy Madigan 11 122112 111212 1 1 11 1111 1111 1 1 212121
John Madigan 1 1211 1 11 11 2 1 212121
Keith Marshall 323343213112222113322 2 212132434 33232121 1 11112211 11
Kit Mason 1 2 2 2 1 1 1 1
Winton Matthews 22 11 112 11 1 111 1 111 2
Joe Mayhew 33444321434343444443422444343442
Cat Meier 132243324213112
Walter Miles 3244432142113212111 121 2223321121232332444213343322
Abner Mintz 1111 1 111 1
Marilyn Mix 211 11 12
George Nelson 1 12322231141 12 1
Michael Nelson 2243331242334332433442232313332334 2231312212142 21211 1
Barry Newton 11 123 2 1 2 2122111 2111 1222123312211223111311 211231
Judy Newton 1 22 1 1 2 1 1 1111 1221 1321211111211231 111231
Meridel Newton 1 1 1 1 2 22111 211 11222 1231 111111 11
Lance Oszko 3244232242334231441321231112 11222 131 1111 12 221 1
Kathi Overton 211 21 1111 21321 241 11 13 1122 1 222223111121 1
John Peacock 113 1 11
Larry Pfeffer 1323 32
Evan Phillips 211221 211 12 2 32 2 2422221121211111221 11 111111 21
Sam Pierce 2331111322233331222312211313211333434224111322 1431
John Pomeranz 22334113333243444344331 231342123 1122 2212 212121111
Rebecca Prather 2212112212211121222 21121111112 22221222211322221131
Richard Pugh 1 3321
Dick Roepke 143241112312213 1 222 11 12 21 1
Rachel Russell 123313132 11 1
Juan Sanmiguel 13332
John Sapienza 22232111 2 11 1 1 1 1 1
Peggy Rae Sapienza 234331223121 123 111 1 1 1
Tom Schaad 2111211 1 111 11 1 12
Judy Scheiner 11 111111211212222211211
Sam Scheiner 1 1121112222213222111211
George Shaner 34243413444231234424313433333423411214343341224233234232
Steven Smith 13444212423 321222334 2213231211231322122423234322432242
T.R. Smith 1232 1 1 1 1 1 1
Victoria Smith 11 1 1 1 1 11 1 1 1 1211 12 2 111 1
William Squire 3232312 21 11 121 21 1111 21111 1 2 112 1121 1111
Lee Strong 1111221 3232221 14 2 11 2222 31 212121 212122 221 31
Michael Taylor 23443321312141324433412332234431324234322242332212322321
Ronald Taylor 11 3111211 111 11 1 1 1 1 1
Rob Thornton 32221 1
Elizabeth Twitchell 1311323233132 2
James Uba 3232221 1 2 1 1 11 1 1 111 1 1 1
Michael Walsh 334243224233323132232 121321 222213332332132322133334241
Michael Watkins 2122211131132 2 1211 11 1
Miles Weissman 222212 2 1
Andrew Williams 22232212 2
Ivy Yap 332444322 24333

This turns out to be more difficult than I thought it would be, even with various simplifying assumptions. Fortunately, like most of you, I have more computer power at my disposal than existed in the world during WSFA's first two decades. When I get a round tuit, I plan to try an approach involving Laplace transforms.

I plan to do this again next year. I am open to suggestions for interesting analyses or charts I can do on these data. I also have (or can easily get) weather information for all meeting dates. Perhaps I should check to see if there are any fen who are less likely (or more likely) to show up during bad weather.

The Passion [of] Hellboy

The 3/19 meeting began with a move to adjourn before the call to order. Bob was in charge. Third Friday called to order at 9:15. For old business, Secretary Sam explained we didn't follow Douglas Adams' advice on ISPs (Don't PANIX). The treasury was \$1,591.56. "Let's have a party" came a very weak call. The President is at Lunacon and the Veep in Italy. The trustees are actively seeking a president. Candy asked "of U.S. or WSFA?" Candidates for Capclave 06 is Elspeth, for Sec is Keith. Capclave 04 and 05 chairs were at Lunacon. Kathi said, "I hope their meeting is going better than ours." Publications has three of the four missing Journals. Once I get that, I can go looking for the first series 1965-1975 said Keith. Brian suggested checking with Alexis. Keith said Alexis had most of those. For entertainment committee, Sam reported that Lee was in a magazine for Titanic fans, which he explained as being for fans of the sunken ship, not the movie. Kathi expressed amazement that there was such a thing. Ship on ice.

Eric asked about carpet cleaning. Erica said not yet. How often asked Sam (who has never had his carpet cleaned since moving in). Every 1,000 people. Keith said that Panix offered to host us for free since we're a sf club. Keith said he didn't tell them we had already voted to pay full price. Ernest moved three huzzahs for Keith. Erica can't host Third Friday in May, Candy offered unless the Bungalow wants to host. Ernest suggested a double bill *Hellboy* and *The Passion*. He asked if there was any interest in a trip to see *Hellboy*.

Fast Forward has a DVD and will be making a regular donation to the club. Interviews are online www.fast-forward.tv. Elizabeth is selling Disney toys. John Pomeranz, too has a new job. He's at law firm Harmon, Curran, Spielberg, and Eisenberg. <What, has Lawyerman left the Alliance for Justice for good, or for evil? Is this a trick by Rex Ruthless? Or does Lawyerman have a secret agenda of his own? Find out in *Adventures of Lawyerman* #362.> Another Kat is here, is connected to the Other Cat. Siamese Twin Cats? Just littermates. Also here for the first time, "I'm Clay. Just something the Kat dragged in." Hugo nominee deadline is the 25th. Candy said that Air Force uniforms don't burn, they melt.

Meeting unanimously adjourned at 9:36.

Attendance: Sec. Sam Lubell, Treas. Bob MacIntosh, Trust Adrienne Ertman, Trust Keith Lynch, Trust Steven Smith, Erica and Karl Ginter, Lydia Ginter, Scott Hofmann, Eric Jablow, Jim Kling, Ernest Lilley, Candy and John Madigan, Cat Meier, Walter Miles, Barry and Judy Newton, Kathi Overton, Larry Pfeffer, Evan Phillips, John Pomeranz, Emily Richter, George Shaner, Elizabeth Twitchell, Ivy Yap, Madeleine Yeh, Kat Darnell, Clay Daetwyler, Brian Lewis.