



Brought to you by: K.D. Wentworth, Uncle Guido, Warren Brown and Michael Keller

**Special "Total Concentration" Issue •
July/October 2003**

***** HELLO, OSFW *****

The November meeting will take place on Friday, November 14 at 7:00. Location to be announced. Watch the OSFW newsgroup.

*****Local News*****

K.D. Wentworth signed *Course of Empire* and other of her titles at Barnes and Noble bookstore on Saturday, Oct. 11. (COE is receiving fine reviews.) She is a guest at MileHiCon the weekend of October 25th, and has been invited to be toastmaster at Armadillocon in Austin next August.

Melissa Tatum's lovely new home was the site of the September meeting. Mel and the Wentworth/Kearns duo co-hosted a fine farewell meeting for Matt, who will be serving his country on a training mission for Afghan forces. We will miss him, and wish him well. Photos follow, courtesy of Chris Merle



Elspeth and Dana hosted the October meeting, which featured further adventures of the Crimson Claw as well

as other works of imagination. [Hey, it's the best I can do, I wasn't there. Ed.]

*****CONTINUM*****
by Amanda Gannon

An undisclosed number of people (I forgot to count) attended the October meeting, jack o'lanterns, hot cider, and nifty seasonal Little Debbies in tow. Here's what they were up to:

Published:

Dana published several times online and won a Zippy the Pinhead compilation. Yaay Dana! Brad published 'Skimming Stones' in Men Writing SF as Women, edited by Mike Resnick.

Sold:

Kathy (finally) sold 'The Secret Language of Flowers' to Flesh and Blood Magazine.

Good Rejections:

Melissa got a good rejection from Oceans of the Mind for 'Timeline.' Amanda made semifinalist for Writers of the Future, and won an all-expenses-paid critique from Kathy for 'Iriel's Winter.'

Read:

Tony read 'Skins,' an SF short story about a woman's would-be infidelity with a mysterious palm-pilot wielding commando. This story, supposedly an interstitial work that fits in around the edges of a novel-in-progress, brought many questions to mind. I loved the idea of the 'skins' and the many implications of the technology. This is definitely an idea that could support a longer work, and I think we'd all like to see it more fully developed. Paul read Chapter Ten of *Shadow of the Crimson Claw*, in which our intrepid heroine, pirate fleet in tow, takes on the

Claw's fleet of crimson ships, then faces down the Claw himself. We were all grinning like a sack of possum heads.

*****UNLOCAL NEWS*****

Chinese orbit first manned mission
Pilot radios from space: 'I feel good'
[the comment was not accompanied by funky James Brown music-Ed]

Associated Press – October 15

GOBI DESERT, China -- China launched its first manned space mission today, becoming the third country in history to send a person into orbit -- four decades after the Soviet Union and the United States.

With a column of smoke, the Shenzhou 5 craft cut across a bright, azure northwest China sky at exactly 9 a.m. (8 p.m. CDT) and went into orbit 10 minutes later. The official Xinhua News Agency immediately confirmed the launch and said the astronaut was air force Lt. Col. Yang Liwei, 38.

"China's first manned spacecraft, the Shenzhou 5, blasted off," Xinhua said. China Central Television's Channel One, the government's flagship station, cut into its programming to announce the launch. The station later showed Shenzhou streaking into the sky and disappearing, its tracer billowing behind it.

Minutes after the launch, a CCTV announcer said that Shenzhou 5 and Yang had "entered orbit at 9:10 (8:10 p.m. CDT)." Xinhua said he was "reading a flight manual in the capsule of the Shenzhou 5 spacecraft and looked composed and at ease."

"I feel good," Yang radioed back from

space after a half-hour in flight, according to Xinhua.

It was the culmination of a decade of efforts by China's military-linked manned space program -- and a patriotism-drenched moment for a communist government more concerned than ever about its profile on the world stage.

The launch makes China the third country to put a human into space. The former Soviet Union sent Yuri Gagarin up in 1961; the United States launched Alan B. Shepard Jr. less than a month later. John Glenn became the first American in orbit in 1962.

Referring to China's earlier unmanned space launches, an announcer on the English-language government channel CCTV-9 invoked American astronaut Neil Armstrong's words upon first walking on the moon. "If these were small steps," the announcer said, "then now we are taking a giant leap into space."

Security was tight around the remote Gobi Desert base, some 175 miles northeast of Jiuquan.

Early today, the only road to the launch site was crowded with traffic, including military vehicles and civilian tour buses. But private cars were turned back and phone calls to the base were blocked.

China kept details of the event secret, saying in advance only that the launch would take place between Wednesday and Friday and that the astronaut would orbit the Earth 14 times. Yang was identified as a lieutenant colonel.

The Shenzhou 5 launch came after four test launches of unmanned capsules that orbited Earth for nearly a week

before parachuting back to China's northern grasslands. State media say the manned flight is expected to last about 20 hours.

"The launch of Shenzhou 5 is long-awaited by the Chinese people," Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Zhang Qiyue said Tuesday. She said the flight was a key step in the "peaceful development of space" -- a reflection of China's effort to reassure the world that its military-linked program is benign.

The Shenzhou, or "Divine Vessel," is based on the three-seat Russian Soyuz capsule, though with extensive modifications. China also paid Moscow to train at least two astronauts.

But Beijing insists everything sent into space will be developed and made in China. State media, trying to dispel suggestions that its triumph depends on foreign know-how, refer to Shenzhou as "China's self-designed manned spaceship."

Xinhua today released a picture of Yang, 38, a pilot since 1983, boarding Shenzhou 5.

"I will not disappoint the motherland. I will complete each movement with total concentration. And I will gain honor for the People's Liberation Army and for the Chinese nation," the popular Chinese Web site Sina.com quoted Yang as saying before taking off.

Yang was selected Tuesday from a pool of three finalists. The astronauts have been training for years, and the field of candidates was narrowed from 14 in recent days.

Yang, who is 5 feet, 6 inches tall, reportedly was born in 1965 in Youzhong County in Liaoning province,

an industrial area in China's northeast.

Sina quoted his older sister as saying he was an athletic child who enjoyed swimming and ice skating. He works for the Aviation Military Unit of China's People's Liberation Army, Chinese media said.

State television had scrapped plans for a live broadcast of the launch. A Hong Kong newspaper said the cancellation was prompted by fears of the "political risks" of something going wrong. [Yang returned safely from space on October 16—Ed.]

RISE OF THE MACHINES

The current issue of *Popular Mechanics* contains some interesting articles that speculate on everything from the shape of future air travel to a high-tech civil war scenario should parts of California secede from the United States (guess who wins). Interestingly, projected commuter air vehicles strongly resemble those seen in the movie *The Sixth Day*. Sorry, no flying cars.—Ed.



*** Review of Kiln People*** by M. T. Reiten

Kiln People is David Brin's latest novel just released in paperback. Like all of his bigger works, *Kiln People* takes on BIG concepts. This time it is the nature of self awareness and continuity of consciousness. Basically this

approaches the realm of religion, and there is a

The initial problem that the skeptical reader must overcome is the basic premise. Humanity has finally found a technological solution to not being able to be in two places at the same time. Simulacrams are fashioned out of a specially prepared clay and then the original imprints his or her Soul Standing Wave onto the golem, transferring consciousness. Depending on the grade of preformed blank, specific tasks are then carried out. At the end of their mayfly lifespan, the dittos have the urge to return to their creator and dump the memories back into the original organic brain.

Like many new technologies, one of the first uses of dittotech is for pornography and violent outlet entertainment. This leads into the plot which follows the protagonist, Albert Morris, a private investigator who specializes in copyright infringement. In this case, the copyright is on personalities. Brin's longer works always center around established adventure or mystery tales, and Morris uncovers deeper and deeper threads in a supposedly simple case. But unlike PI's of yesteryear, Morris can chase down several leads, or several cases, at once with specially honed dittos.

Brin, like most scientists turned author, has a love of acronyms and also falls into the class of SF author who artificially creates new words for concepts he introduces. Personally, this reader gets annoyed with more than one or two conjured words per story, but once established, Brin sticks to his new lexicon. Likewise, anyone who has a low pun tolerance must avoid all the chapter headings, though the low-brow wordplay only works its way into the prose regarding dittotech.

This is a highly enjoyable and thought provoking novel in the best sense of SF: exploring what it is to be human and where do we draw the line around the individual.

(minor) SPOILER SECTION: Morris and his dittos find themselves covering different sides of the same investigation, and this was one of the most promising aspects of the novel. By playing with the impact of the dittotech, the author can follow multiple facets of a soon to be discovered common conspiracy. The first person perspective is not limited to a single character, and as the reader is following a dictation style of narration, there is no implicit guarantee that the narrator will live.

Morris is a renowned investigator because he always makes high fidelity dittos. But after he tries to break up a bootleg operation run by his nemesis, Beta, Morris makes too many copies when he is too tired and unfocused. One of the green dittos, meant to do menial tasks, goes "Frankie," and ditches the tasks he was intended to fulfill. This turns into a good thing as Morris was being set up. Morris is caught within a triangle of villains: Beta—the master criminal, Mahara!—the mad scientist, and Kaolin—the super-industrialist. He is being used for his ability to make near perfect dittos and for his high credibility.

Some aspects left me less than pleased. The final climax was a bit new-agey, but did admit that technology and science really has changed life far more than any given religion. So why not expect technology to provide more spiritual answers? Having the nemesis Beta actually being one of his employers felt a bit contrived, but dittotech would have an impact on

mental health or perhaps would be the perfect mode of expression for a less than stable personality.

But the green Frankie actually gets the girl and becomes a real boy.

Who's the Real Reason Britain is Uneasy About the War

By Charles Clark / artsguy01@aol.com

Now the story can be told.

We're far enough along in this thing that some of the secrets about the Iraqi War can come out. For example, why Great Britain was so reluctant to join the United States in this venture. It's quite simple really — "Doctor Who."

Granted, this is a theory. But, it's every bit as sound as my theory that it wasn't President Reagan who brought down the Berlin Wall -- it was blue jeans and rock'n'roll. You see, once Gorbachev opened the door slightly, allowing American pop culture into the Soviet Union, the "black market" bubbled over like Coca-Cola pouring over a McDonald's cup full of Pez. If you saw those televised scenes of Billy Joel in concert, who is tame by Western standards, driving Eastern Bloc crowds wild, well... how you gonna keep down on the collective farm after that?

I understand if you feel skeptical about this scenario. My own son doesn't agree. In fact, he down right scoffs. However, he reads Ann Coulter, so what does he know.

But, I digress.

Just who is "Doctor Who" and what is his connection to this current event, you rightly ask?

"Doctor Who" holds the title of being the world's longest "continually produced science fiction serial." A BBC product, it aired across the pond from 1963 to 1989. Think about it. A TV show so popular, it ran original episodes for almost 30 years, and still airs in syndication. Its fan base is the British baby boomer population that runs that nation today. This year marks the 40th anniversary of Dr. Who.

Now, here's a trivia question for the answer to the theory, if you were one of the American viewers, who may have watched from 1972 (on a limited number of independent channels) into the late 1990s (by then mostly on PBS stations): For whom did the time and space traveling Doctor work?

Answer: The United Nations Intelligence Taskforce.

For nearly three decades, the British were conditioned through one of the world's most popular TV shows, to feel positive toward something known as the UNIT. Not that UNIT actually was part of the UN, but still.

So, when President Bush snubbed the UN in his call to arms, the British reacted, perhaps even subliminally: "See here, old boy, you don't go thumbing your nose at the UN — and Doctor Who!"

From its humble, low-budget beginnings on TV, The Doctor, as he became known, developed a national following. The Doctor then made a name for himself in virtually every medium -- film, radio, genre literature from very popular paperbacks to comics, and by now, a pretty lengthy set of videos. But, perhaps, in his most American appearance, he showed up on "The

Simpsons."

For the un-initiated, several actors have portrayed The Doctor over the years. And there are logical explanations for The Doctor's changing look and age -- unlike, say the jarring swap in Darrins on "Bewitched" that American kids had to cope with. The Doctor "regenerated" a new body and persona some eight times on the TV series, probably becoming warmer and more likable with each new face. He was a might cantankerous in the beginning.

What began as a children's show has emerged into a worldwide following of science fiction fans. Earlier this summer I had the good fortune to catch an episode of "Doctor Who" I had not seen. It was showing in the 24-hour video room at Conestoga. Conestoga is Oklahoma's premier s-f convention held annually in Tulsa. The audience grew from three to over 30 as the episode played, and concluded to rousing applause.

The Daleks, Cybermen, TARDIS, the colorful scarf all have meaning for fans of The Doctor. But, Americans will never relate like the British. Afterall, while his space ship on the inside is a high-tech spacious wonder, on the outside it has the nostalgic appearance of a London police call box.

There you have it. My theory on why Prime Minister Tony Blair is on the hot seat over Iraq — he should never have gone against the UN. For the past 40 years, the British people have taken The Doctor into their hearts. And they know, while The Doctor was banished to Earth, that he was in league with UNIT, soundly repelling invaders, saving Britain and the Earth.

For the intrigued

Some of the above details were checked out in the St. James Encyclopedia of Popular Culture Web site.

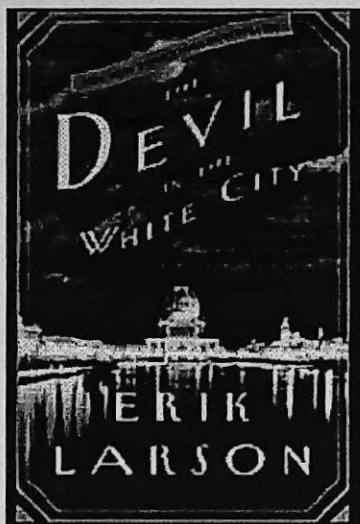
Other sites worth a look:

www.bbc.co.uk/cult/doctorwho/ and
www.doctorwhowebguide.net/

*****Books Read and Recommended*****

The Devil in the White City—by Erik
Larson

Master architects and engineers strive to build a city of technological marvels while society threatens to unravel and a psychopath stalks the metropolis. Sound like SF? It's not. It's the true story of the Columbian Exposition of 1893. Not to be missed by fans of SF, history, or mystery.



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***** SUBSCRIPTION INFORMATION *****

A subscription to Son of GPIC, the official newsletter of the Oklahoma Science Fiction Writers, may be obtained online or by mail. \$13 for the hard copy of the newsletter, \$15 for a family membership, \$7 for the electronic-only version of the newsletter. Mail a check or money order in the correct amount, prorated by quarter, to:

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***** OSFW INFORMATION *****

The OSFW meets at members' homes the second Friday of every month to read, critique, and promote in general SF, Fantasy, and Horror writing. All willing to contribute and (after a couple of trial meetings) pay their dues are welcome. **There is no age limit but parents should understand that material with adult themes and language is read and discussed.**

***** GPIC NEWS AND ARTICLES *****

GPIC solicits news and articles from OSFW members. We prefer they be on disk or sent via e-mail. Pseudonyms are OK. We accept files on either a 3-inch Mac [well, maybe] or PC disk. We like RTF files or MS Word files compatible with Word 97. Always include a separate ASCII file just in case. Send any email to Warren at underland@aol.com, with "For the GPIC" in the subject line.

You retain copyright on material. If this is of special concern you might let us know who you really are along with your pseudonym. We reserve the right to edit (although we try not to).

***** NEXT GPIC DEADLINE *****

Pesky deadline for Next issue: November 15.