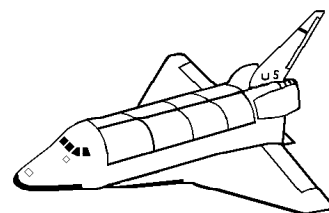


The



SHUTTLE
February 2000

Our 20th year of Publication

*The Next NASFA Meeting is 19 February
2000 at the Regular Time and Location*

Oyez, Oyez

The next **NASFA meeting** will be **19 February 2000** at the **regular time** (6P) and the **regular location** (room 130 of the Madison City Municipal Building).

The February after-the-meeting meeting will be at Ray Pietruszka and Nancy Cucci's house. Come celebrate all the February birthdays!

The February program will be "Drawing Science Fiction Related Things" - or - "You Too Can Be A Science Fiction Book Cover Artist" presented by Randy Cleary. [Hey, don't blame *me* for the titles, Randy, I'm only the messenger. -ED]

Movie Information Sought

Local Huntsville resident Will McGaha is seeking a copy of the 1979 science fiction movie *Ravagers* which was shot in part at Three Caves (on Hermitage Avenue) and the Space and Rocket Center, both in Huntsville.

If you have a copy or can provide Will with a lead on where he might get a copy, please call him at 256-536-5023.

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Deadline for the March 2000 issue of *The NASFA Shuttle* is Friday, 3 March 2000.

NASFA Receivables

by Randy B. Cleary

The following items were received by NASFA over the last few months:

Cargo Cult Books & Notions, November/December 1999, 2804 Stuart Street, Berkeley CA 94705; 510-549-3018; < 70701.2154@compuserve.com > — 12 (digest) pages of books and notions for sale.

ConNotations Winter 1999, Stephanie L. Bannon, Central Arizona Speculative Fiction Society, P. O. Box 62613, Phoenix AZ 85082; < Editors@casfs.org > — This newszine had 20 newsprint pages of SF media, reviews, and club listings.

De Profundis 326, October, November, December 1999, Scott Beckstead, c/o The Los Angeles Science Fantasy Society, 11513 Burbank Boulevard, North Hollywood CA 91601 — 16 (digest) pages of club information.

Derogatory Reference 94, Arthur D. Hlavaty, 206 Valentine Street, Yonkers NY 10704-1814; 914-965-4861; < hlvaty@panix.com > — 8 pages of personal updates and quotes.

File 770: 133, Mike Glycer, 705 Valley View Avenue, Monrovia CA 91016; 626-305-1004; < Mglyer@compuserve.com > — An interesting cover and 32 pages of news of, about, and from fandom and several convention reports.

FOSFAX 197, November 1999, Timothy Lane and Elizabeth Garrott, The Falls of the Ohio Science Fiction and Fantasy Association, P. O. Box 37281, Louisville KY 40233-7281 — 84 pages of articles, features, con and trip reports, reviews, reviews, reviews, and lots of letters of comment with lots of spot illustrations.

Geis Letter 70, December 1999, & 71, January 2000, Richard E. Geis, P. O. Box 11408, Portland OR 97211-0408 — December had 8 pages of feedback, opinion, book reviews, and art. January had 8 pages of essay, obits, feedback, opinion, and reviews.

Kronos October, November, December, and January, D. A. Hussey, Middle Tennessee Science Fiction Society, 115 38th Avenue North, Nashville TN 37209; < bemscribe_too@hotmail.com >; < http://www.geocities.com/

area51/dimension/4242/ > — These e-zines contained club information, fan news, science news, convention listings, and more.

Memphen 262, December 1999, & 263, January 2000, Greg Bridges, The Memphis Science Fiction Association, P. O. Box 820534, Memphis TN 38182-0534; 901-664-6730; < msfamemphen@hotmail.com > — December consisted of 3 unstapled pages of club information. January had a cool Tom Foster cover with holographic stickers plus lots more Tom Foster art and some club information.

Nova Express Volume 5, Number 2, Fall/Winter 1999, Lawrence Person, P. O. Box 27231, Austin TX 78755-2231; < lawrence@bga.com >; < www.delphi.com/sflit/novaexpress/ > — A 45-page magazine of essays, articles, reviews, fiction, and interviews.

OASFis Event Horizon 149, December 1999 & 150, January 2000, Leslie R. Hammes, The Orlando Area Science-Fiction Society, P. O. Box 940992, Maitland FL 32792-0992; 407-263-5822 — December had 4 pages of club information. January was more of the same. Dick Spelman needs a better campaign manager though.

Science Fiction Chronicle 204, December 1999, Andrew I. Porter, P. O. Box 022730, Brooklyn NY 11202-0056; 718-643-9011; < SF_Chronicle@Compuserve.com >; < www.sfsite.com/sfc > — This magazine had 54 pages, including a slick color cover, of professional news, book reviews, and an interview with Jane Johnson.

SFSFS Shuttle 139, November & December 1999, South Florida Science Fiction Society, P. O. Box 70143, Fort Lauderdale FL 33307-0143 — 20 pages of essays, reviews, club information, and letters of comment.

Southern Fandom Confederation Bulletin Volume 7, Number 5, November 1999, Julie Wall, 470 Ridge Road, Birmingham AL 35206; 205-833-8635; < jlwall@usit.net > — 28 pages of the Southern Fandom Confederation doings, con reports, fanzine reviews, convention listings, and letters of comment.

Chattacon XXV Report

by Randy B. Cleary

Chattacon XXV was held January 14–16, 2000 at the Clarion Hotel in Chattanooga TN. The Guests of Honor were Tara Harper and Melissa Scott. The Artist Guest was Nicholas Jainschigg. The Special Guests were Michael Stackpole and Bruce Sterling. The Toastmaster was Charles Grant. The Regional Artist Guest was Kenneth Waters. The Fan Guest (drawn at random from the membership at the opening ceremonies) was Mark Zielke (yes, one of the infamous Zielke clan). There were about 1250 attendees over the course of the weekend. In my opinion, the convention seemed to be a resounding success.

The program book was a two-staple digest-size format with 40 black and white pages and a silver-on-black cover with an image of a steam locomotive. It was dedicated to the memory of the Mars Probe. It contained convention policies, guest biographies, convention information, and short-short

fiction pieces by Thomas Smith (which required a grave sense of humor) and Brandie Griffin (recursive fantasy). It was an entertaining read. The pocket program consisted of two pages (folded to make four) containing locations, hours, video rooms schedules, programming schedule, gaming schedules, and dealer room layouts. It was very useful. The daily convention zine, *Trackside*, consisted of a single double-sided legal size page that provided local happenings, hours, fan quotes, party announcements, a restaurant guide, convention announcements, masquerade awards, art show awards, solutions to various puzzles presented in the program book, and even pictures taken at the convention. It was helpful but could have used more party announcements. The badge also was silver on black.

Programming consisted of six locations with up to five tracks at some points. Friday was light. I made it to the

opening ceremonies, which seemed to go well and was fairly well attended. Mark Zielke recounted his humorous sans-clothing experience at last year's Chattacon. Afterwards was a Meet the Pros Reception with food and a cash bar. I had stocked up on the hotel's convenient buffet earlier, so I passed on the snacks. I then made it to one room party (held by several friends from the Atlanta Science Fiction Society). They had decorations, lots of food and drink, music, and games. I had such a good time that I missed attending the Dueling Easels panel, where attending artists illustrate a passage from a story (in an hour). The results were auctioned off for charity. Then I attended the dance for while. The Friday dance was well attended and went into the not-so-wee hours. The music was high-energy, danceable music. Many conventions could take a clue or two from Chattacon's dances. It featured a great music and light system. There were other parties that I hear also went well on Friday.

Saturday, I attended the Artist Reception and had breakfast on the provided fare. The small quarters and lack of seating did not encourage much mingling (at least on my part due to my slight shyness) but I enjoyed it and applaud the effort. Then I attended the Picturing Tomorrow panel, which consisted of Jainschigg, Deitrick, and Waters talking about a wide range of interesting issues of what the future will be like and how the past leads to it. I then attended the Computer Animation panel, which consisted of Jainschigg and Williams discussing computer animation for art and visualization. Next I attended the Jainschigg Slideshow panel. There was no projector so I tracked down a staff member with a radio and suggest someone get one down to the panel. It was a good presentation that was cut short due to the delayed start.

After dinner (again at the hotel buffet), I attended the end of the Art Auction. The auction consisted of about 30-50 pieces (an exact count was not available to me) and was well attended. The final piece (a very large print) went for an astounding amount of money (hundreds). Most of the other pieces went for reasonable rates.

The Masquerade did not start until 11:00 and was held in the ballrooms this year, which allowed more seating. Even more seating would have been possible as the rows were widely spaced. The show was good with only a few painfully long presentations. There were about 17 entries. Here are the Best awards with my one word comments:

- Show** *Snow Queen* Anne Brunsgard (Beautiful)
- Fantasy** *Fairy Godmother* Judy Chantelois (Cute)
- Science Fiction** *Queen Amidala* Leah Levin (Cute)
- Novice** *Chillie* Angie Kraut Kramer (Cute)
- Oddity** *Lord Gates* Brian Davis (Punch-line)
- Film Recreation** *RoboCop* Eaton Adams III (Impressive)
- TV Recreation** *Worf & Jadzia Dax Wedding* Robert Linn and Kristie Johnson (Neat)
- Theatrical Recreation** *Crizabella & Jemina* Diedra Kilgore and Jesica Oglesby (Weird)
- Uniform** *Count Pietr Vorkosigan* Bill Gawme (Bookish)
- Plaid Presentation** *Men in Plaid* Mellisa Hurley and James Coppedge (Scottish)
- Multiple Personalities Presentation** *Christmas in Hell* several people (*South Park*-ish)

I made it to more great parties on Saturday but still missed about half of those that occurred. I pre-registered for Dragon*Con (bargain) at their party, which had food

and their infamous Green drink. Naomi Fisher and Patrick Molloy hosted the Boston 2004 bid party and I signed up as a pre-supporter. I'm also a pre-supporter of the Charlotte 2004 bid but missed their party that night. Of course, the food prepared by Naomi was the best that I've ever had at a room party. The MidSouthCon party had snacks and Sangria. The Saturday dance was even better than Fridays. It was well attended until the true morning hours.

Sunday, I pre-registered for next year's Chattacon which, if only half the fun of this one, will be well worth attending. I attended the *Babylon 5* Presentation panel, put on by John Hudgens, which consisted of his great music videos using B-5 footage. I also saw *Tie-tanic* for the first time, which was a very funny parody of *Star Wars* meets *Titanic*. I then attended the closing ceremonies.

The hotel facilities were okay but cramped for a con of this size. The layout is a bit confusing also. The Art Show, Print Shop, and Dealers Room were on the bottom basement level this year (though the program book said otherwise). The Art Show was put into two separate rooms and was a little cramped. There were about 82 panels and 10 tables of a wide range of work, much that I've not seen too often at other conventions. The top awards were as follows:

- Peoples' Choice** *Wild Swan* Nicholas Jainschigg (My favorite)
- Staff** Nicholas Jainschigg
- Best Pro Science Fiction** *Glass Houses* Nicholas Jainschigg
- Best Pro Fantasy** *Mississippi Blues* Nicholas Jainschigg
- Pro 3D** *Motee* David Deitrick
- Best Amateur Science Fiction** *Lost Worlds* Jenny Roller
- Best Amateur Fantasy** *Magic Meeting* Melissa Gay
- Best Amateur 3D** *Dragon Desk Tray* Cindy Riley

The Print Shop was a small room off the back of the Dealer's Room. The Dealer's Room had about 60 tables and a wide selection of goods.

There were also rooms for LARP, Gaming Demos, and Tournament Gaming on the bottom basement level. There were Tournament Games, You Don't Know Jack, and open gaming in Ballrooms on the first floor. There was computer gaming (which had a very nice multiplayer network running) on the second floor. All the gaming seemed moderately to well attended, based on my brief glances in those areas.

On the first basement level was the Con Suite which had many separate rooms decorated in various manners. The Con Suite had beer (which seemed popular at all times), fountain drinks, periodic distributions of real food, and usually some snacks. It was a good place to hang out at times, especially since smokers were banished to the outdoors this year.

The guests seemed to be present at the convention (even outside their panels) and seemed to have had a good time and were well received by the convention attendees. I was fortunate to get Tara Harper to scribble her autograph in a book of hers that I picked up for free there. The book is the first in a series about a girl and her wolf.

Overall, Chattacon XXV was excellent. The guests and attendees were interesting. The panels and events were entertaining. The smokers were banished. The parties were excellent. I hope next year, the Art Show gets better space. I enjoyed it immensely.

Barrayar

An approximate precis of Galactic History à la Bujold

by Jim Woosley

The Wormhole Nexus, those planets which can be reached from Earth, and have been settled by humans, across interstellar space using the natural wormholes which connect the gravity wells of stars and the technology known as the Necklin drive. Among the better-known planets of interest in the Nexus are Earth itself; Beta Colony, probably the most advanced of world with both weapons technologies and biotechnologies, with extremely liberal sexual mores to compensate for their tight control of the reproduction process; Jackson's Whole, nearly as advanced and much less scrupulous, where *anything* can be had for a price (including a clone of yourself, held ready so that you can achieve immortality by transplanting your brain into the clone. Of course, the clone's natural brain — and identity — is literally thrown in the garbage in the process); and the Cetagandan Empire, whose body sculptors use genetic engineering as art to make better humans and who look down on lesser, unimproved humanity.

And Barrayar, a planet superficially similar to Earth, with it's own flora but little if any animal life. Barrayar was discovered several hundred years ago and settled by a mix of Russian, Greek, French, and English-speaking peoples. It was then promptly isolated by the rare natural collapse of the one known wormhole route to the planet. During this "Time of Isolation," the planet evolved a feudal society in which sixty clans — eventually identified by the honorific "Vor" in front of the clan name — came to rule the planet as counts under the leadership of a planetary Emperor. Barrayar developed a society fairly similar to Europe of the seventeenth and eighteenth century, complete with considerable fatal infighting and clan bickering between the counts. And complete with a dismal prejudice of the mutations induced by Barrayaran biochemistry and radiation, in which marked or scarred babies were killed on sight, in the absence of any technology capable of medical intervention.

Finally came rediscovery, about a hundred years "ago," by a chance exploration of the Wormhole nexus through the planet Komarr. Which promptly sought to profit by allowing a Cetagandan fleet through their wormhole to capture and assimilate the planet. Over twenty bloody years the Barrayaran resistance, in which one Count Pierre Vorkosigan was a major leader, demonstrated that the ability to hold the high ground, even with nuclear weapons, was not sufficient to control the low ground.

The Cetagandans withdrew, leaving behind five million dead Barrayarans; this did not serve to end strife on the planet, but reinstated civil war as the "Mad Emperor" Yuri sought to destroy all alternative claimants on the throne — including his sister, Pierre Vorkosigan's wife, and all of Pierre's children except his youngest son Aral. Together, the Vorkosigans again took the lead in overthrowing Yuri and installing his surviving brother Ezar.

Once peace is reestablished on Barrayar, the planet turns its sights to protection from interstellar attack and to revenge on Komarr for letting the Cetagandan's through. Komarr is captured by the brilliant action of now-Admiral Aral Vorkosigan — but the takeover is marred when his political officer orders the execution of 200 senior Komarrans who had surrendered or been captured, setting up fifty years of bloody unrest on Komarr. Vorkosigan executes the political officer with his own

hands — and incidentally breaks the power of the political officer's over the military — but becomes known throughout the galaxy as the "Butcher of Komarr" for the ghastly incident under his command.

Demoted and routed to an exploratory command, where it is sincerely hoped by his political enemies that he would be killed, Vorkosigan meets Cordelia Naismith, a captain in the Beta Colony Astronomical Survey, on a planet she discovers which Barrayar had previously marked for their own. Naismith helps Vorkosigan escape his assassins, and later is intimately involved, with the... disturbed... Sergeant Bothari, in helping Vorkosigan defeat his political enemies during Barrayar's ill-fated attempt to capture the strategic planet Escobar. (*Shards of Honor*, 1986.)

Emperor Ezar's sadistic son, Prince Serg, was also killed at Escobar, and Ezar names Aral as Regent for Serg's five-year-old son Gregor. Cordelia, captivated by the complexity of Aral, returns with him to Barrayar and marries him. Also returning to Barrayar are seventeen Betan "uterine replicators," a technology which allows the gestation of children outside the mother's body (with much better controls for health and the ability, with sufficiently advanced technology, to screen for the mutations which plagued and frightened Barrayarans). These particular uterine replicators were filled with the children of Escobaran and Betan women soldiers raped by Prince Serg, or by his men at his orders, including Elena Bothari-Jasek, a daughter of Sergeant Bothari's. Because of his help to Vorkosigan at Escobar — and his near-worship for Cordelia — Bothari enters Vorkosigan's service as a personal Armsman despite his problems and the halfway cures supplied by the Barrayaran medical corps. Things appear peaceful, and Cordelia attempts to normalize herself to Barrayar, including an acceptance of natural childbirth instead of the use of uterine replicators for the son that she and Aral conceive.

However, Barrayaran politics being nothing if not bloody, a coup is lead by one of Vorkosigan's enemies, Vordarian. One of the first shots of this coup is an assassination attempt in which an obsolete nerve gas, Soltoxin, is fired into their bedroom. Aral and Cordelia get fast and effective treatment; however, the unborn fetus she carries is also affected, as the Soltoxin interferes with the proper formation of bone and cartilage in the unborn and in children. Cordelia forces the Barrayarans to save the child by use of the now-vacant uterine replicators and aggressive in-replicator therapy, instead of giving in to their cultural bent (particularly her father-in-law's) of destroying the ill-formed and ill-fated child.

Vordarian's move to take control of the capital, Vorbarr Sultana, catches Aral and Cordelia on vacation to recover from the Soltoxin attack; the head of Imperial security brings the five-year-old Gregor to their vacation home as his dying act, leaving Vordarian to hold the capital and Empress Kareen. While Aral prepares the military response, Cordelia and Bothari get the young Gregor to safety. Then, concerned about the hostage value of the uterine replicator containing her son (a factor no Barrayaran would have considered, since they all wanted him killed anyway), Cordelia and Bothari break away, with her husband's Aide Koudelka and the emperor's bodyguard, a woman named Droushnakovi, and steal into the capital to rescue the replicator. They discover that it is being

used for hostage value; in the process of recovering it, Kareen is accidentally killed. And Vordarian not so accidentally, ending the civil war preemptively. (*Barrayar*, 1991, Hugo winner.)

And so, Miles Vorkosigan is born with a very weak bone structure, one which he overcomes through both intense medical and physical conditioning until he is capable of many routine activities, but is by no means normal. And a most unique upbringing. “Poster Child” for Barrayar’s attempts to outgrow the anti-mutant legacy of the Time of Isolation. Son of his mother, the planets leading spokesperson for women’s equality. And for the sexual liberation of her Betan mores. And *against* the inadequacies of the Vor system and the stupidities of his leaders. Son of his father, who unconsciously teaches him by example that the political and military leaders of the planet are his underlings and his playthings. Foster-Brother to Gregor, his emperor to be — and, through his grandmother, second in line to replace Gregor on the throne if something should happen to him. Grandson of old Count Pierre, who finally fights through his anti-mutant biases and begins to see him as a real grandson, only then to judge him by the “Old Vor” standards and hold him to being something he could never be physically. Protected by old, deranged Sergeant Bothari. Playmate of Bothari’s “daughter” Elena Bothari-Jasek and his cousin Ivan (whose father was one of the last victims of the Vordarian war and whose mother Alys is one of the last of the regal “Old Vor” women, who are as competent as Cordelia would want but focussed on their role in the “Old Vor” system — and, who is next in line for the throne after Miles).

How does this strange mixture of overprotection and overexposure turn out? Well, on a trip to visit his grandmother on Beta Colony at sixteen, with Bothari and Elena, Miles takes pity on a down-on-his-luck Wormhole pilot named Mayhew, and a Barrayaran deserter named Jesrek. Within days of his rash attempt to help he is in hock to his teeth (secured by several thousand acres of “his” homeland, which he neglects to mention is about three hundred years from cooling from a Cetagandan nuclear attack) for Mayhew’s ship, and under contract to deliver a cargo of weapons to the government of the planet Felice. Which is under attack by rebels aided by a mercenary force, the Oserans. Arriving to find that the government is virtually in hiding (but still with bills to pay), Miles uses a combination of bull, bluster, lessons from his father and grandfather, the anonymity of operating under his Mother’s maiden name of Naismith, and an unbelievable run of luck, to put the rebels down and to take over the Oserans from their leader Admiral Oser, assimilating them into a “Free Dendarii Mercenary Fleet” he invents to explain his unescorted freighter foray into Felice space. The only casualties were his crush on Elena — who falls for Jesrek once he proves himself. And Bothari, who is not killed in battle, but is murdered by Elena’s mother, who was on Felice when the Rebel blockade began. Miles returns home in time to prevent rumors of his escapade from being turned into a capital charge in the council of counts for raising a private army against the emperor, by turning the “Dendarii” into a secret arm of the Imperial Service. (*The Warrior’s Apprentice*, 1986.)

Miles is then sent to the Service academy, despite his failure of the physical exam (he broke both his weak legs on the first obstacle on the obstacle course), where he proceeds to score the best academic record in the history of the academy. Graduating at the age of 21, he is sent to an arctic base for “seasoning,” because his superiors recognize both his ability and his discomfort with dealing with superior officers. After

this fails rather badly (He is sent to jail for mutiny for a while, though the order was illegal and the superior officer in question is broken for it), he is called upon to make contact with the Dendarii and try to learn something about a military buildup at the Hegen Hub, an uncolonized star system with a large number of wormhole exits. He discovers that the Dendarii have fallen back under the leadership of Admiral Oser — who clearly would like to have Miles Naismith killed. Miles also learns by accident that Emperor Gregor, in a blue funk following the discovery that his father Prince Serg was not the paragon of virtue he’d been lead to believe, has literally run away from home (at 26) and doesn’t much care if he gets back. With help from Elena, Jesrek, and other officers of the former Dendarii who still remember and respect Naismith, Miles manages to resume control of the Dendarii, rescue Gregor both from opportunists and from himself, discover that the unrest at the Hegen Hub is being stimulated to ease the way for a Cetagandan takeover, and hold the Cetagandan’s at bay until Gregor can return home and bring his father and a Barrayaran defense force to fight the Cetagandans back. (*The Vor Game*, 1990, Hugo Winner.)

Confirmed in his role as “Admiral Miles Naismith” at the head of the Dendarii, Miles works for Imperial Security directly on various missions involving them (*The Borders of Infinity*, 1989, including one Hugo-winning short story; *Brothers in Arms*, 1989), except for one diplomatic mission to the Cetagandan empire in his own right, where he manages to become the only Barrayaran to earn the Cetagandan’s highest military honor (*Cetaganda*, 1995). Along the way (*Brothers*), he discovers that Komarran separatists have created a clone of him which they intended to substitute for him after having him assassinated; however, approaching the clone based on his Betan heritage (by which both he and his mother are obligated to recognize the clone as his legal younger brother), he succeeds in winning the clone to his side, and giving him the name Mark, as befits a younger brother under Barrayar’s traditions for assigning names to Vor male children.

Mark next enters Miles’s life during a mission to Jackson’s Whole when Miles is 28; Miles is killed, his body frozen for resurrection, but then mailed to an unknown address to avoid capture. (*Mirror Dance*, 1994, Hugo winner.) During the several months before Miles is resurrected by the one ethical clinic on Jackson’s Whole (thence he had been mailed) and recovers his memory, Mark does learn that Cordelia — and Aral — are serious about treating him as Miles’s brother. Miles comes to his senses, Mark and the Dendarii help find him, and everything comes out OK.

Except that cryo-revival is not free, and virtually nobody is returned sane and completely whole from the process. In Miles’s case, the consequences are seizures which occur at moments of high stress. In once such, he accidentally hurts — nearly kills — a Barrayaran courier the Dendarii had been sent to rescue. He then lies about it to his superior, Simon Illyan, the legendary director of Barrayaran Imperial Security. He is drummed out of the service, nearly court-martialed, for his falsehood, which act breaks Illyan’s heart. However, when Illyan starts acting very strangely in the next month, Miles forces himself back into Illyan’s life, finally taking from Gregor the role of Imperial Auditor (a title which goes back to tax collection in the Time of Isolation but has been expanded to mean the investigation of virtually any development which falls under the Emperor’s interest) to discover that Illyan’s mind had been tampered with by a senior deputy who saw a fast route to promotion now that Miles was placed out of contention

by his medical discharge. (*Memory*, 1996.)

Miles's second major assignment as auditor was an apparent accident involving a major solar power station in Komarr orbit, essential to Komarr's terraforming project. Complicating the situation politically, Gregor has decided to take a Komarran bride, must to the unrest of Komarran's who remember "the Butcher" and other incidents in their troubled relationship with Barrayar. Along the way, he discovers treason, sabotage, and intrigue, resulting in the death of the

Barrayar director of the project, Tien Vorsoisson. And he meets Tien's estranged wife (now widow) Ekaterin, and begins to fall for her, particularly after she plays an instrumental role in preventing the Komarran rebels from accidentally destroying a second space station with over 10,000 civilians on board with their malfunctioning "secret weapon." (*Komarr*, 1998.)

Thus leading to *A Civil Conspiracy*, 1999, the most recent of the Miles Vorkosigan books.

Another Visit to Barrayar

by Jim Woosley

A Civil Campaign by Lois McMaster Bujold, Baen Books, 1999, Hardcover, ISBN 0-671-57827-8, \$24.00

Ever since John W. Campbell became editor of *Astounding*, the measure of science fiction has been how it focuses on, not the gadgets, but the effect of science and technology on people.

By this measure alone, *A Civil Campaign* marks science fiction in its truest sense, despite abandoning the traditional focus of the Vorkosigan saga on climactic space battles — the battle at Tau Ceti in *The Warrior's Apprentice* or the Battle of the Hegan Hub in *The Vor Game* — or climactic and violent ground confrontations — Cornelia's endgame of the Vordarian Pretendship in *Barrayar* being perhaps the prime and most memorable example.

Instead, *A Civil Campaign* virtually abandons (but does not eliminate completely) physical confrontation in favor of battles of the heart and mind. Some of these battles deal strictly with character development; other deal with the immediate personal response (including, in some cases, revulsion) to the use of biotechnology to further political and economic ends.

In the first instance, consider Lady Donna Vorrutyer. Her brother Count Pierre has just died without naming as heir his despised younger brother, Richards. Lady Donna has been Pierre's assistant for the last five years of his life, which was unfortunately shortened by a fear of doctors incubated by Richards' past theft of medical records to use against him. Donna has her own reasons to dislike Richards, beginning when he attempted to rape her when she was 12. Barrayar, of course, observes strict male primogeniture in matters of succession. So, Donna offers Barrayar's conservatives their most direct challenge: she visits Beta Colony and returns a man, styled Lord Dono, with genetically engineered — and hence fully functional — male "equipment." This also offers a severe challenge to Miles's cousin Ivan's interest in finally settling down and courting her.

Or consider Miles Vorkosigan's "clone-brother," Mark, who appears on Barrayar for the Emperor's wedding. Along the way, Mark has collected a "pet," one Dr. Enrique Borgos, formerly of Escobar, now a fugitive from Escobaran debtor's court complete with 8000 of *his* pets: "butter bugs," genetically engineered creatures which can eat virtually any organic matter (including organics of non-earthly origin, such as the native plants of Barrayar), vomit most the residue back as a sterile and nutritious food product ("Just like bees," Mark claims proudly), and excrete the rest as perfect compost. Lovely — except for the aesthetics of the production process, which leave most people gagging. However, Mark sees this as a perfect opportunity to invest profitably in the future of

Barrayar, which he hopes will help him press his suit for the hand of the lovely and talented Karen Koudelka.

And Miles himself, now hopelessly in love with the recently widowed Ekaterin Vorsoisson. Recognizing the effects of yet another technological innovation which has affected Barrayar — the ability to select the gender of children, with the consequent 4:1 surplus of men as his cohort goes courting — Miles attempts to tie himself to Ekaterin with an interesting but subversive proposal: a commission to design a garden of native Barrayar plants next to Vorkosigan house, the better to give her the illusion of independence while allowing him to see her every day — *and* keeping her too busy to pay much attention to the swarms of Barrayar bachelors infesting her aunt's living room. Meanwhile, Ekaterin is certainly curious about Miles — as was shown during *Komarr* — but she is allergic to marriage after the death of her abusive husband Tien at the hands of Komarran saboteurs.

These three threads come together at what was supposed to be a Miles-triumphant dinner party to introduce Ekaterin to his circle of friends. Instead, the result — aided and abetted by the social confusion of Lord Dono's appearance; a misguided attempt by Mark to modify the menu à la butter bug; Borgos' ill-considered attempt to butter up both Miles and Mark's prospective in-laws; and, last but not least, a Miles-classic faux pas, the dinner party ends in a disaster with Ekaterin running off in tears, Mark running off to an evening of binge eating featuring most of his bug-butter supply, and Miles running to an evening of binge drinking. And Borgos running around Vorkosigan house looking for a ...herd? troop? ... of escaped butter bugs. This scene by itself is reminiscent to the last humorous culinary disaster in SF, the infamous "omelet from hell" cooked up by Maclyn in *When the Bough Breaks* by Lackey and Lisle (re-release available bound with *Wheels of Fire* by Lackey and Shepherd next month from Baen), and I almost hope that it marks the beginning of a "war" to write the most humorous SF culinary faux pas.

Needless to say, Miles — and Mark — are forced to spend the rest of the book trying to "fix" things, Miles with Ekaterin and Mark with Karen's parents. Particularly after Richards Vorrutyer — and Alexi Vormoncrief, the most hopeless and incompetent of Ekaterin's potential suitors — hear the story and leap to the conclusion that Ekaterin must have fled Miles because she believed that he had murdered her husband to "steal" her hand.

Needless to say, Miles survives and comes out on top from the worst of his mistakes, but the climactic confrontation between Richards, Dono, Ivan, Ekaterin, Emperor Gregor, and Miles I will leave to the interested reader (the two of you who haven't already scarfed the book down :) We must leave *some*

surprises.

* * * * *

During a recent bout of the flu, I found myself rereading *A Civil Campaign*. Three times. Mind candy for a numbed brain? Perhaps. But also, I was as always impressed by Miles' ability to rush into catastrophe; and then, turn it into triumph. A message I was also looking for when I returned to work. The book has definitely catapulted Bujold into my list of top-five writers. (But let me get back to you on which member of the previous list she displaces...)

One more factor about the book: Bujold has inspired her characters to come forth with some of the most memorable lines about the nature of life since *The Notebooks of Lazarus Long*. A brief compilation, selected to minimize foreshadowing of the plot:

Mark, thinking of their mother Cordelia: "Be careful how you aim this woman. The Countess was to obstacles as a laser cannon was to flies."

Cordelia's response to Mark. "You don't pay back your parents. You can't. The debt you owe them gets collected by your children, who hand it down in turn. It's a sort of entailment. The family economy evades calculation in the gross planetary product. It's the only deal I know where, when you give more than you get, you aren't bankrupted — but rather, vastly enriched."

"(Armsman Pym) sketched a bow at the three ladies, leaving them to construe the stygian blackness of a soul that could find fifty kilos of bug butter in the main drain an improvement in his gloomy world."

Miles, coming clean to Ekaterin about his reasons for the garden. "I wanted to give you a victory. But by their essential nature triumphs can't be given. They must be taken, and the worse the odds and the fiercer the resistance, the greater the

honor. Victories can't be gifts. But gifts can be victories."

Ekaterin's later evaluation: "If a genius thought Miles was a genius, and a great man thought he was a great man... maybe she ought to have him vetted by a *really good* husband."

Count Vorkosigan's partial evaluation of Miles' situation after Richards' leap of faith hits the rumor mills: "Reputation is what other people know about you. Honor is what you know about yourself. The friction tends to arise when the two are not the same." Miles: "Do impure thoughts count?" Count Vorkosigan: "No, only acts of will." Miles: "What about acts of ineptitude?" The Count: "A gray area, and don't tell me that you haven't lived in that twilight before." Miles: "Most of my life, sir. Not that I haven't leaped up into the blinding light of competence now and then. It's sustaining the altitude that defeats me." The Count: "It could be worse. There is no more hollow feeling than to stand with your honor shattered at your feet while soaring public reputation wraps you in rewards. That's soul-destroying. The other way around is merely very, very irritating. ... If you're really asking for advice from my accumulated experience, I'm saying, Guard your honor. Let your reputation fall where it will. And outlive the bastards."

Miles: "You just go on. I never encountered any good advice that didn't boil down to that, in the end. Not even my father's."

* * * * *

A Civil Campaign has won the 1999 Sapphire Award of the Science Fiction Romance Newsletter, and I sincerely hope that it will once again bring Hugo and Nebula attention on this deserved series.

Information about Bujold and her fiction is found at the Bujold Nexus at < www.dendarii.com >; information about her books including sample chapters of several recent books at < www.baen.com >.

Letters of Comment

POC-POC-POC-POC-POC-POC-POC-POC-POC

Sheryl Birkhead
23629 Woodfield Road
Gaithersburg MD 20882

16 January 2000

Agh — and if I don't clear out my supply of the Monsters postcards it will be an additional 2¢. I cringe when I look at the vet. med. envelopes I still have to use... at 15¢ each.

The stack of zines has now doubled in height — yeah RSN.

When I put all my *Galaxies* — plus slipcases — on sale on eBay I wanted to sell the batch at about 50¢ each — totaled \$50 or so I think. Anyhow, no bids at all. Several other things I've hauled down out of the attic did sell... things I felt less attractive than the prozines — but who knows. Unfortunately this did not even make a *small* dent in the stuff I don't want to take with me to the new place. Wherever or whenever that is.

Think about those Hugo Nominations.

[Remember that all attending and supporting members of last year's Aussiecon Three, as well as this year's Chicon 2000, are eligible to nominate for the Hugo Awards. The deadline for nominations to be received by Chicon is 31 March 2000.

Chicon memberships are currently available for \$150 (attending) and \$40 (supporting). Meanwhile, Sheryl, good luck with finding buyers for all those attic items — and I think you have the rest of this year before postage rates go up again. -ED]

LOC-LOC-LOC-LOC-LOC-LOC-LOC-LOC-LOC

Harry Warner, Jr.
423 Summit Avenue
Hagerstown MD 21740

16 January 2000

Congratulations on your 20th anniversary for the *Shuttle*. Just think, you'll be almost halfway through the 21st century when you catch up with me. Not long ago I produced the 60th anniversary of *Horizons*, which started as a genzine but has been distributed through FAPA for more than a half-century. Only once in those six decades was there a gap of more than three months between issues. I failed to produce an issue in the winter of 1943–44 because of a dreadful case of intestinal flu.

I'm glad my estimate of the inflation rate turned out to be almost right. But it should be noted that a few things haven't risen in price at the tenfold rate over the past 60 years.

Unprocessed farm products, for instance, seem to have averaged only about half the general inflation rate. On the other hand, printed matter has exceeded the cost increase for most things. In 1939 paperbacks cost only 25¢ to 35¢ and hardcover books sold in general for \$2 or \$3. I believe the *Saturday Evening Post* cost a dime and *Liberty* cost only a nickel, to the best of my memory. Proazines had cover prices ranging from 10¢ to 25¢. It runs in my mind that you could buy a new Chevrolet for \$559 during most of the 1930s.

It was only a few years ago when I read *The Forever War* for the first time. I may have rebelled against the almost universal praise it has received, because I didn't enjoy it as much as most fans and esteemed critics did. However, all

praise should go to Joe Haldeman or any novelist who allows a quarter-century or longer to elapse between a novel and sequel seeing print. When that happens, nobody can blame him for stretching one book into two for the sake of profit.

[We're not quite at the 20th anniversary yet, Harry. This is our 20th year so we won't reach the anniversary until the end of the year. (OK, technically not even then since the first issue was February 1981, but I figure that's close enough to the beginning of the year.) I, for one, have no designs on rivaling your 60-plus-year stretch. Even if the *Shuttle* makes it to 60, I haven't been editor the whole time nor would I expect to be editing it 40 years hence. -ED]



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