

Pi in the Sky?

By Dan Fritz

READER BEWARE: THIS ARTICLE CONTAINS SPOILERS.

The following are sample reviews from Amazon.com related to Yann Martel's *Life of Pi*, winner of the 2002 Man Booker Prize and a book I recently had the pleasure of reading:

"The first, say, about 100 pages of this book were absolutely pointless. It was how about Pi loved God so much and about the zoo and zoology. Once you get to the second part of the book (There are three parts), it speeds up and gets much more interesting...I knocked off a star because some of the book was pointless."

"Part I is a long drawn-out comparative religion study - through the eyes of the author/protagonist. Part II is the story that should be the book.

Skip Part I and enjoy the story of Part II." [misspelling included]

In both cases, the readers actually gave the book a good review. But also in both cases, the readers missed the common thread that ties the entire novel together. They missed the part about faith, spirituality, and God, and they missed the basic elements of the book as art, as opposed to mere entertainment. They've chosen not to engage the larger implications of the novel in favor of an "interesting" story. While it truly is a vivid adventure tale, putting on thought-blinders cheapens the passion for life that the main character exudes and may cause the reader to miss the meatier purpose.

The novel is split into three sections, each one a component of the greater parable that is this novel. The main character, Pi, is shown to have experienced an incredible ordeal while emigrating from India to Canada, via cargo ship. Part One introduces the topic, Part Two tells the parable, and Part Three illustrates the lesson. Part Two is the most comfortable part for most readers, as it is the most alienated, and since it happens to be masterfully told, it stands on its own, but this novel is incomplete without all three parts.

The first part of the novel tells us of Pi's university studies and his life as a child in India. We know that he formalized his religious education in college, which lends to his respect as a dabbler in multiple religions. We also know he is scientifically oriented, which illuminates his keen, organized observation of the world. His father is a zookeeper, so his inclinations are easily

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Thank You for Smoking

By Susan Fritz

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Can Art

Contributed By Elizabeth Carlson



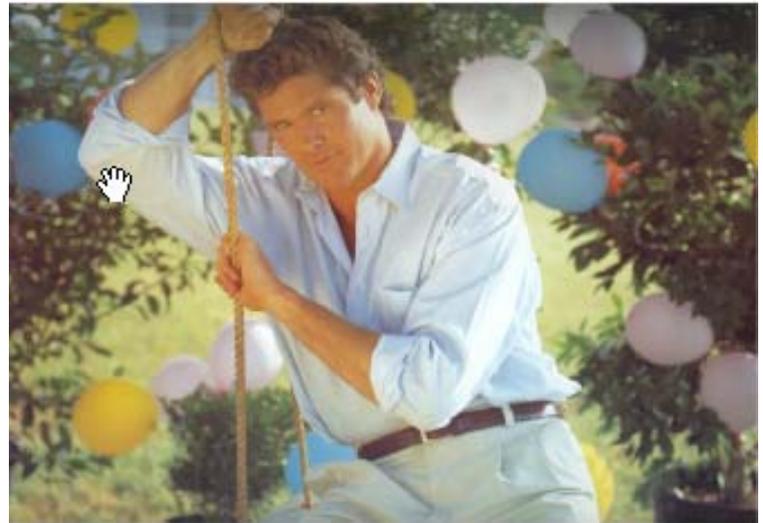
Åsa Say

By Asa Hadsell

“It’s usually the simplest answer, but there are seldom any simple answers.” ☒

Hasselhoff Monthly Planner

Contributed by Bryan Murray



March 2006

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Letter from the Editor

This month’s issue features something that has been largely lacking since this publication debuted—that being pictures. Susan wanted me to include “Live Nude Girls,” but no one contributed any. And I don’t want to dip into my private stash. Since I write most of this on the company computer.

Anyway, enjoy this month and stay tuned for more fun-filled issues of *Babble-ON* this year. It’s been a long couple of months, but spring is on the way. And with spring comes “Live Nude Girls.”

Dan, editor@babbleonline.com ☒

Submission Suggestions

Your contribution can be anything that fits onto a sheet of paper. Here are a few ideas:

Editorials	Reports	Philosophy
Reviews	Ramblings	Rants
Comics	Puzzles	Jokes
Quotes	Polls	Trivia
Drawings	Poetry	Recipes
Photographs	Short stories	News
Predictions	Advice	Graphs

Please send all of your submissions to editor@babbleonline.com. ☒

Tower of Babble-ON's ‘Before-and-After’ Corner

By Susan Fritz

Weiner Dog Days of Summer

☒

Hasenpfeffer Recipe (German Rabbit Stew)

Contributed by Dan Fritz

Ingredients:

4 lb Rabbit
1 1/2 c Dry red wine
3/4 c Cider vinegar
2 ts Salt; optional
1/2 ts Freshly ground black pepper
1 Bay leaf
1/2 c Onions; chopped
1 tb Mixed pickling spice
1/2 c Flour
4 tb Butter
1 c Onions; thinly sliced
2 tb Sugar
1/2 c Sour cream

Directions:

Cut rabbit in serving-sized pieces. Wash, scrape, and soak in salted cold water for 1 hour. Drain and dry.

In a glass or pottery bowl mix together the wine, vinegar, salt, pepper, bay leaf, chopped onions, and pickling spice. Add the rabbit and let marinate in the refrigerator for 3 days. Turn the pieces occasionally. Drain the rabbit; strain and reserve the marinade. Dry the rabbit with paper towels and roll in flour.

Melt butter in a Dutch oven or deep heavy skillet; brown the rabbit and sliced onions in it. Pour off fat and add sugar and 1-1/2 cups marinade. Cover and cook over low heat 1-1/2 hours or until rabbit is tender. Turn the pieces occasionally and add more marinade if needed. Taste for seasoning. Mix the sour cream into the gravy just before serving. ☒

Johnny On-the-Spot Oats

*brought to you by
Quaker® Instant Oatmeal*

By Susan Fritz

The preparation of low fat/high fiber oatmeal is a delicious and nutritious idea. But don't be fooled by the "instant." There are *several* steps involved in this process.

First, select a pre-packaged, paper container of oats, from the box. The third from the left is usually the best choice.

Step two, open the package with a tear and

...continued next page...

...Pi in the Sky?, p. 1...

fostered at an early age. As a child, he practices Hinduism, Christianity, and Islam simultaneously, a seemingly contradictory group of religions until Pi's motivation becomes clear. The novel is not a doctrinal story, nor a story of truth, so the details of the religions are merely cultural eccentricities. They are simply rituals. To Pi, the important part is to love God, as he exclaims when confronted by his three disparate religious gurus while walking through the park one day. Martel uses Part One to establish an attitude of striving in the form of spiritual exploration. Like everyone who has attended school knows, first comes the book knowledge, then comes the real life test of that knowledge. Part One is the book knowledge.

Part Two is certainly the test. When Pi's family decides to close the zoo and move to Canada, the entire family drowns as the transport sinks in a storm at sea. Pi miraculously survives, floating across the Pacific in a lifeboat filled with dangerous, wild animals. The danger is further emphasized by the tiger episode at the zoo in Part One. All this is perilous, on top of the fact that he is stranded in the middle of the ocean. But while Pi's tale is one of suffering, it is not one of despair. Think of the limiting factors that he suffers from initially: no food, no water, deadly carnivores in the boat, no help from anyone else. In spite of this, his outlook increasingly "gets better" as he learns to deal with the situation he has been thrust into. He uses his head. He finds water and food. He saves himself by creating barriers between himself and danger. So, what does this have to do with God and spirituality?

The implications of Pi's survival tale are challenging aspects of the story, perhaps leaving more questions than answers, though revealing all of Pi's symbolic description of the human experience and God. Pi's massive suffering directs him to focus on very particular aspects of survival and calls convention into question. When he is literally dying of thirst, all other considerations immediately become irrelevant. His suffering serves a very real purpose, as clear as the "purpose" of the tiger in the lifeboat—without the danger and the pain, he would die. Without these influences, however negative, he would fail to maintain clarity of purpose. Granted, if a storm hadn't sunk the original boat his family was taking to Canada, he wouldn't need to go into survival mode in the first place, but the greater lesson of the ordeal is not derived from that misfortune but from the incredible string of circumstances that allowed Pi's to survive and on his ability to make use of that relatively *good* fortune. In other words, Pi's story is incredible because of his survival, not because of his pain.

Throughout the novel, there are implications about the random nature of circumstance and/or God's chosen path for an individual. One different move at any point along the way could have destroyed Pi, but it seems that he was either very lucky or God created an opportunity for him to survive and tell his story. The introduction to the novel claims that this story "will make you believe in God." Nothing can make a person believe in God, which is exactly why it is called "believing," and it is probably something other than the string of circumstances that would *lead* someone to believe in God. After all, without Pi's determination, clear-headedness, and faith, he would not have survived, though without seemingly impeccable timing and incredible fortune—both completely out of his control, perhaps provided by God—he also would have perished. At least, his circumstances could make you consider the existence of God, or Fate, but there must be some other element to the novel that would serve to back up the introduction's claim.

This is where Part Three enters the novel. When Pi returns safely to civilization, a pair of investigators meets him in order to determine how the transport sank. Pi tells his fantastical tale, little helping to answer the investigators' main question. They are not interested in his story, they are interested in the facts surrounding the sinking of the ship. At this point in the novel, we have already been given the introductory lecture on faith and the corresponding life experience. Here begins the true commentary. Just as the investigators seek bland factuality, humankind becomes misguided by the wrong questions of human experience, a sentiment that is brought forth in the very last pages of the novel. When the investigators don't believe Pi, he tells them another version of his survival story that is supposedly more believable, because it doesn't include animals. When he is finished, he makes the following comments:

...continued next page...

...Oats, from previous page...

a pull. Be careful, don't spill!

Step Three, spill purposely. Empty packet into the bowl. (This step implies that you already have a bowl in front of you. If not, go get one, Johnny.) Make sure your bowl is microwave safe.

Step Four, assuming you have a microwave, plug it in and make sure it's in proper working condition.

Step Five, back to the oats, find a measuring cup, and add up to 2/3 cup water or milk.*

Step Six, compile ingredients in bowl.

Step Seven, microwave on high 1-2 minutes.

Step Eight, remove from microwave. Be careful, bowl might be hot!

Step Nine, without sticking your hand into bowl, stir with spoon or other stirring utensil. Do not use plastic spoon. Spoon may melt!

Step Ten, get spoonful. Place spoon in mouth. Chew—the food, not the spoon (teeth are sensitive). Swallow. Repeat.

HOT TIP: for gourmet oats, try adding bananas and raisins. Sprinkle cinnamon on top.

NEXT ISSUE: Learn to make toast!

*For **thicker** oatmeal use less water. For **thinner** oatmeal use more water. ☒

...Pi in the Sky?, from previous page...

"Neither [of the stories] explains the sinking of the [transport]."

"That's right."

"Neither makes a factual difference to you."

"That's true."

"You can't prove which story is true and which is not. You must take my word for it."

"I guess so."

"In both stories the ships sinks, my entire family dies, and I suffer."

"Yes, that's true."

"So tell me, since it makes no factual difference to you and you can't prove the question either way, which story do you prefer? Which is the better story, the story with animals or the story without animals?"

[The investigators prefer the story with animals]

"Thank you. And so it goes with God."

For Pi, the particulars of the survival story make no difference. How the boat sank makes no difference. The ship sank, Pi doesn't know why, but he does know what happened to him, and that is the essence of his view of God. The canonical particulars make absolutely no difference—believing in God takes a leap of faith, but that leap is preferable to none at all. Furthermore, that leap of faith isn't necessarily transferable to anyone else. It's less important for the investigators to believe than it is for Pi to believe.

That is why this novel is not a comparative religious study. Pi does not make a claim at any point that religion—especially a particular religion—is the pathway to God. Through his own naturally subjective view, he makes the leap of faith to believe in God, rather than to not. His own perception is, in this sense, an enabling factor rather than a limiting one. He need not ask *how* God can be, he simply knows that God *is*.

This novel is a three-part lesson in life, and while the second part in itself is a great story, this book should be read as a whole. Some people compare this novel to *Old Man and the Sea*, a novel that is deceptively simple in language but is actually not a children's book in the slightest. Like any great work of art, *Life of Pi* works on multiple levels, a truly pleasurable read. If you haven't already done so, put this book on your summer reading list. ☒

Thank You for Smoking,

Or What Happened When They Took her Candy Cigarettes Away

By Susan Fritz



Do you want to be a published, international celebrity? Send in a submission to *Babble-ON!* All submissions are due the Friday before publication. See the website for details.

<http://www.babbleonline.com>

THE TRAGIC TALE OF
MADELEINE ALBRIGHT'S CAREER AS A FASHION MODEL
IN 19TH CENTURY NEW YORK

(PART 8)

By Several Bored Office Pukes

In our last installment, Madeleine's brother, Schenker, approached New York City after his journey from Amish country. After accidentally floating out to sea, he ran into Teddy, who knocked him out after a struggle. He dreamed as he was unconscious....

A few hours passed, and the scenery began to change. Teddy had laid his oar hard in the water and was making good time down the coast toward those anaconda-loving South American women. They passed by Chesapeake Bay and saw the lights of famous Charleston. As the sun came up, Teddy pulled out his small knife. The blade came out of its alligator sheath, to the length of a horsecock. He looked at young Schenker and flipped the knife over in his hand, making it glint in the sun. He flipped it from blade to handle, blade to handle as he stood up in the canoe. He walked down the center of the canoe toward where young Schenker still lay fast asleep. Teddy thought it strange that a grown man would suck his thumb. But that was no matter; Teddy didn't want anything to spoil his trip. The knife glinted in his hand, blade to handle, blade to handle, and with a lightening quick flash, Teddy gave Schenker a thwack on the head, ensuring that he would continue to sleep.

Teddy returned the knife to its sheath and pulled up the alligator hood on his alligator jacket, as he returned to his seat. He reached in his pocket and put on his sun spectacles, just in time to see the rays catch a huge sign, "Strom Thurmond's Chocolate Plantation." So that is where the slave owner lives.

He laid on his oar again, and a few hours later they had passed by the newly acquired territory of Florida. He turned his canoe South east, by south south south, and rowed for South America.

The tepid calm waters of the Caribbean lulled Teddy to sleep. He dreamed of Maddy, dressed in a kilt and little else playing the bagpipes in front of an ancient synagogue while pilgrims gathered in droves to kiss her strawberry painted toes. Suddenly, the synagogue came rushing at Teddy and bellowed loudly, its wide door transforming into a gaping, carnivorous maw. Maddy began screaming a terrible scream that was so shrill it shattered glass, filling the sky with tiny prisms that rained down on the pilgrims and eliciting shouts of "Oi vey!" and "What in the hell is this??"

Teddy awoke with a start just as a giant boat plowed through his canoe. The terrible scream from Teddy's dream was emanating from Schenker's mouth, whose tiny mind was trying to process how it could be possible that he was about to be plowed by the very boat that he remembered being plowed by before. He drew the immediate and not wholly inaccurate conclusion that he was being punished for having been rescued by a Jew.

The canoe exploded in a cloud of dust and wood shrapnel. Teddy and Schenker were thrown into the air, head over feet, and landed with enormous splashes. Two lifesavers whizzed from the ship and landed softly above where each man had disappeared. Teddy burst from the depths, filling his barrel chest with air, and then disappeared again, diving after the sinking Schenker, who, once again, was extremely bewildered to be sinking. Teddy pulled him to the surface and slammed him through a lifesaver. He grabbed his

...continued in right column...

...Madeleine Albright, from left column...

own, and they were both pulled toward the speeding ship, up the side and onto the deck, where they landed with a crash. When Teddy had finally untangled himself, he looked up and was filled with joy.

The Mexican Greeks were dressed sharply in khaki uniforms and smart hats, and they were smiling broadly at their old friend. Schenker recoiled from the sight. These men, dressed alike, with their dark skin and perfect smiles had to be only one thing, and he had not the strength to even think the name.

"Brothers!" boomed Teddy, "Where are we going?"

"To Cuba!" yelled the Mexican Greeks in unison, "And I hope you like it rough!" Schenker fainted.

Meanwhile, in the basement of a Chelsea art studio, little Maddy dabbed base under her puffy eyes in an attempt to hide the dark circles. Her nose bled slightly since she had just snorted 12 ounces of Coca Cola Classic. Her gaze lingered as she looked deeply into the mirror and saw herself, as if for the first time. What was she doing in the basement of a Chelsea art studio, a mere, mostly-nude supermodel serving sushi to the wealthy art patrons at an exhibit of Goya's masterpieces? It was in that instant that she feared she had finally become the cockslut that everyone loved to call her. She may have been a well-known supermodel, but she was only as powerful as her fleeting looks would last. Weeping bitterly into her hands, she spat out a curse, knowing that she would now have to apply her makeup...yet again.

Emerging from the powder room some twenty five minutes later, Madeleine gathered the courage to walk tall and be the supermodel she was. Teddy may have been cavorting with loose women in God-knew-where, but she had a responsibility to herself and to the survival of the modeling community to strut her stuff as the hottest damn bird this town had ever seen! She was a SUPERmodel, snap, snap, snap! It was time for a tantrum, not a lonesome weep in the basement.

That's when several different pieces of information suddenly collided in her mind as she passed by Goya's 1780 masterpiece, *Crucified Christ*. Teddy the Jew. Her Amish family. Her carnal occupation. Schenker's deformity. A shockwave of emotion exploded in her brain as she tossed the sushi tray into the air as she strode stark naked into the room of waiting guests. The sushi tray rocketed toward a lone squirrel powered ceiling fan where it exploded in a shower of rice and scrod.

She held her head high as the fish rained down around her and over all of the guests who were now staring with beady eyes at the languid curves of a stark naked supermodel. Why was she at the Irish Convention of New York Male Models, when she was a female model with shadows of "super" dancing around her name. "Chimichanga tes madres, Irish" she exclaimed as she pushed through the crowd toward the matron of the Irish male modeling machine.

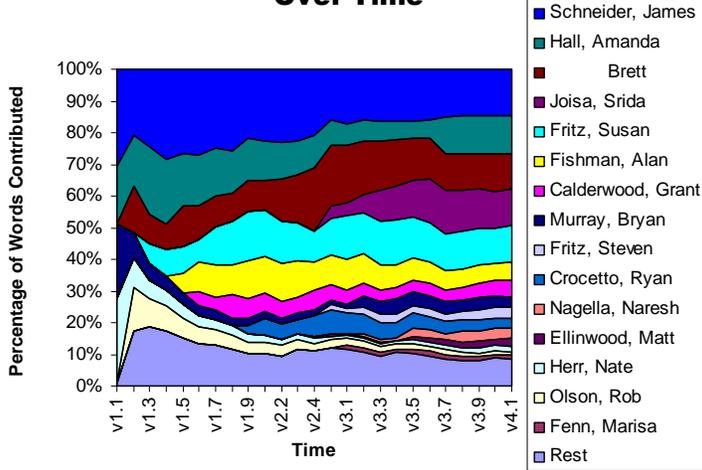
Meanwhile, white silk ropes shot out from the stiff bellied ship. Castro's fashion sun spectacles reflected the hot Cuban sun on to his well pressed uniform and on the shirtless men running on the decks below. "We are home boys," Castro shouted from the eagle's nest. The men on the docks, also in smart beige uniforms, were running at a frantic pace, their strong muscles rippling. Castro surveyed his empire and was amused to see that retarded compatriot of Teddy still passed out on the deck. Seven days without water in the Caribbean sun had not done wonders for his skin. Teddy on the other hand was standing in his gator skin coat, seemingly immune to the heat at the bow of the ship.

TO BE CONTINUED NEXT ISSUE

NEWSLETTER STATS

Note: These statistics are close approximations and do not include the current issue or the submissions provided by the Editor.

Percentage of Total Contribution Over Time



Contributors:

Grant Calderwood
Elizabeth Carlson
Matt Ellinwood
Dan Fritz
Susan Fritz
Asa Hadsell
Bryan Murray

Compiled by:

Dan Fritz, Editor-in-Chief
in Norwalk, CT
for the March 14, 2006,
Volume 4, Issue 2 edition of Babble-ON™

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Awards

These awards could be yours!

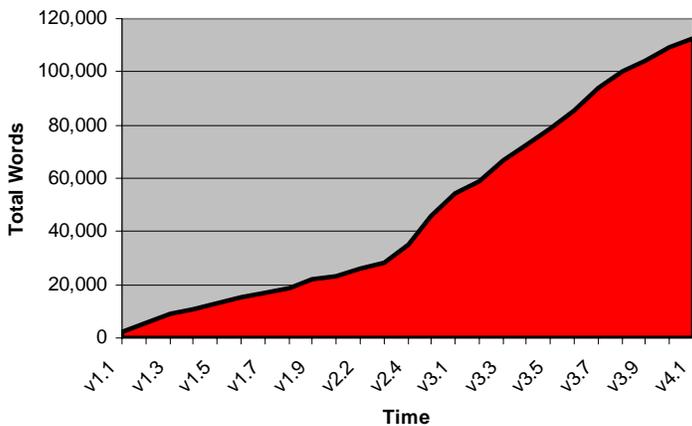
For Total Words Contributed:
1,000: **Little Scribbler**
5,000: **Babble-ON-ian**
10,000: **Grimmelshausen Award**
Each additional 10,000:
Proust BabbleStar

For Exceptional Content:
Alfred, Lord Tennyson
Platinum Seal of Excellence:
To date, no one has won this.

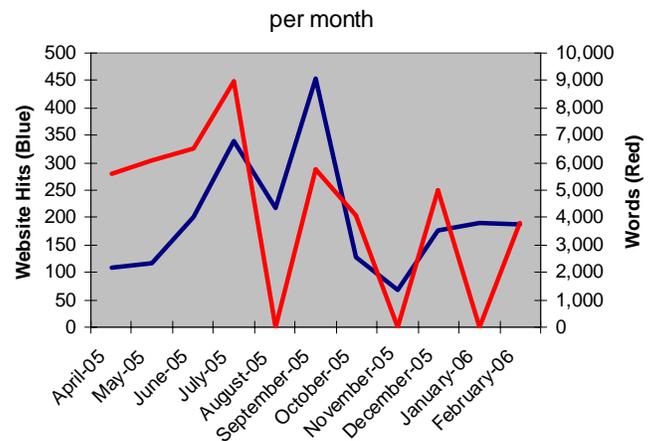
Good luck, and keep the submissions coming! ☒

Keep the Submissions Coming!

Word Count Growth



Website Hits v. Words Contributed



Global Watch Map

BabbleON has attracted contributors and readers from around the globe. In addition to the U.S. writers from 14 different states (noted on the map), there have been international submissions from:

Nussloch, Germany,
Brussels, Belgium,
Venice, Italy, and
Sydney, Australia.

Key: Red squares mark the residence of each contributor. ☒

