

ALEXIAD

(ΑΛΞΙΑΔ)

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Before I got involved with the Greek church, I never thought much about the countries my ancestors came from. The records showed that the first of my European ancestors to come to America came from Carmarthenshire, Wales. Others came from Scotland, Ireland, Germany, France, Spain and Holland. Out of curiosity I did a websearch for Carmarthenshire and hit a tourism site complete with photographs of locals. I looked through the photographs until I came on a man roughly my father's age and could only stare. Across a gap of nearly four hundred years, I was looking at eyes identical to my father's. It was uncanny, seeing a resemblance I didn't expect.

— Lisa

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Pascha (Orthodox Easter) is **May 1, 2005**.

The 131st Running of the Kentucky Derby is **May 7, 2004**.

The 130th Running of the Preakness Stakes is **May 21, 2004**.

The 136th Running of the Belmont Stakes is **June 11, 2004**.

Star Wars™ Episode III: Revenge of the Sith will be released on **May 19, 2005** (and will probably be available as an Internet download by noon, while www.revengeofthesithsucks.com or whatever such site will reach its millionth hit by three, and *RotS* based slash will reach four figures by midnight)

Printed on April 5, 2005

Deadline is **June 1, 2005**

Reviewer's Notes

I'm beginning to wonder if reasoning power has gone by the wayside. I've posted various satirical works on websites, newsgroups, etc. A few months ago, I got an email inquiry asking where Heinlein's *Young Atomic Engineers* books could be found. As you know, Heinlein had originally intended to write all his juveniles as sequels to *Rocket Ship Galileo*, which was originally titled *The Young Atomic Engineers*; I wrote a "review" of one of those books, with a lot of humorous references to make it clear that this was a joke.

Some time later, I wrote a set of obituaries of the Marx Brothers: Leonard the physicist; Arthur the great harpist, Julius the fannish letterhack, Milton the army investigator, and Herbert the industrialist. And their oldest brother, Manny Shean (born Manfred Marx), the great comedian. [For those unversed in Marxist history, their mother Minnie Marx was the sister of the famous vaudeville comedian Al Shean ("Absolutely, Mr. Gallagher? Positively, Mr. Shean!"); her first child, Manfred, died in infancy.]

I got an email from someone wondering why I had so badly messed up the brothers' personal histories, never mentioned their nicknames, etc. This is too dumb to be serious and too otiose to be a joke.

RANDOM JOTTINGS

by Joe



On **January 18, 2005**, a Chinese expeditionary team reached the location known as "Dome A", the highest point on the Antarctic Plateau. The site, at 80° 22' S., 77° 21' 11" E., is at an elevation of 13,250 feet (4039 meters). This marks the first time that humans have reached that location, one of the last previously untouched places on Earth. For more information see the 70South or Antarctic Sun websites.

In other news, the World Monuments Fund is raising funds and plans to conduct a restoration of the British Antarctic Expedition (the *Nimrod* expedition) hut at Cape Royds on Ross Island. This hut, from which Shackleton set off on his 1908-9 polar dash, has deteriorated in the intervening century due to the constant blast of ice particles. Costs are estimated to be in the vicinity of five million dollars.

This effort may be devoted to more urgent matters, as the *Terra Nova* expedition hut on Cape Evans has suffered water damage.

At the other end of the world, the 2005 North Polar season looks to be a busy one, with two Arctic crossings (including one by Liv Arneson and Ann Bancroft, which has been canceled), four unsupported tries for the Pole, and expeditions attempting to repeat the explorations of Nansen and Peary. For information on these and more see:

<http://www.thepoles.com>

We got the new AAA membership cards the other day. You will be pleased to know that our current AAA membership expires on **February 29, 2006**.

The Wall Street Journal's Opinion Journal website (<http://www.opinionjournal.com/>) repeated a headline about the Gnarly Man's latest legal troubles:

"Case of Man Charged With Starting 2003 B.C. Forest Fires Put Over to March 7" — headline, *Canadian Press*, Feb. 21

— Opinion Journal, February 22, 2005

We note, surprisingly unnoted, the death of

John Barron, author of *Operation SOLO* (1995), *KGB: The Secret Work of Soviet Agents* (1974), *Murder of a Gentle Land* (1977), and other works of premature anti-Communism, on **February 24, 2005**.

AWARDS

Anne McCaffrey has been named the latest SFWA Grand Master, while **Kevin O'Donnell, Jr.** has been given the new Service of SFWA Award. The awards will be presented, along with the Nebulas, at the SFWA Banquet in Chicago on the weekend of **April 28-May 1, 2005**. Neil Gaiman will be toastmaster. (Whatever happened to the "SFFWA™" designation, anyway?)

OBITS

We regret to report the death of **Jack Chalker**, fan and pro, on **February 11, 2005** at the Bon Secours Hospital in Baltimore.

Jack began in the fan press, publishing the fanzine *Mirage* in the sixties and later *Interjection* for FAPA. He soon added books to this, producing bibliographies of Lovecraft and Clark Ashton Smith, and *The Index to the Science-Fantasy Publishers*, before going into fiction writing, producing over sixty novels including such works as the *Well of Souls*, *Dancing Gods*, and *Lords of the Diamond* series. He was also founder and owner of The *Mirage* Press, which published much of his nonfiction.

I remember meeting him at MidAmeriCon in 1976, and of course that wonderful panel at NorEasCon on the BayCon masquerade showed that he kept up his spirit and his wit for a long time. We'll miss him.

We regret to report the death of **F. M. "Buz" Busby**, fan and pro, on **February 17, 2005** in Seattle.

Buz was best known in fan circles as co-editor (with his wife Elinor) of the Hugo-winning (1960) fanzine *Cry of the Nameless*; he continued apahacking until his illness became too much. He also made the jump to prodom, writing a number of novels of which the *Rissa Kerguelen* series of space operas was best-known. He lived a long and full life, but we will still be the less for his having left.

G. M. Carr, original editor of *Cry of the Nameless*, died on **March 6, 2005**. Gertrude M. Carr had been named Best New Fan of 1950 in a NFFF poll. She was a mildly active apahacker, having been a member of SAPS in the fifties and again from the mid-eighties until her death. She had a long (97 years) and fulfilling life but we must still mourn for her.

We regret to report the death of **André Norton** on **March 17, 2005** at her home in Murfreesboro, Tennessee. Born **Alice Mary Norton** on **February 12, 1912** in Cleveland, she began writing under her new name of André Alice Norton in 1934, beginning a career that lasted until the present day (her last solo novel,

Three Hands for Scorpio, is to be released from Tor in the month of April). Her works were "gateway" works for many readers, and she collaborated with a number of other SF and Fantasy writers.

Our condolences to **Rod Smith** on the death of his father on **March 29**.

We regret to report the death of Louisville Fan **Steve Tipton** on **April 3, 2005**. Steve had gone to his first WorldCon last year, and was enthusiastically planning to write about the ordeals and travails of taking the train to Boston. He had assumed the presidency of the local SF club NOTA last year, and was a hard and diligent worker. Now we'll never hear it.

Ellen Reibold, 1962-2005

Ellen was my best friend in high school and remained my friend until her death earlier this year. I can remember a time when forty-three seemed ancient to me, now it seems too young to have life cut off by breast cancer. All the laughter and tears we shared, gone now.

John Paul II, 1920-2005

A great man of faith and towering achievements.

MONARCHIST NEWS

April 9, 2005

Well, it finally happened. The great-great-grandson of Edward VII married the great-granddaughter of Edward's "companion" Mrs. Alice Frederica Edmonstone Keppel. The new Duchess of Cornwall is also descended from Louise Renée de Penancoët de Kéroualle, Duchesse d'Aubigny and Duchess of Portsmouth, "Mrs. Carwell the French Whore", companion of the previous royal Charles.

On **February 11, 2005**, **Dronning Sonja of Norway**, consort of **Konge Harald V**, participated in the opening of the Norwegian Troll Station in Dronning Maud Land in Antarctica. Dronning Maud ["Queen Maud"] Land was named by Roald Amundsen after the Queen's grandmother-in-law, the former Princess Maud Charlotte Mary Victoria, sister of King George V. Dronning Maud Land is part of the (suspended) Norwegian claim in Antarctica. The Norwegian researchers at Troll Station will conduct observations during the upcoming Antarctic winter. This royal opening is the first visit by a queen to Antarctica.

By checking the Catholic Hierarchy site

<http://www.catholic-hierarchy.org>

one can learn that by tracing back who consecrated whom bishop, that such a line exists from John Paul II to . . . Henry Cardinal Stuart, the Jacobite pretender. (!)

DANGEROUS OBSERVATIONS

Commentary by Joseph T Major
on *Dangerous Visions* (1967)

It has been over a third of a century since the famous “taboo” anthology, *Dangerous Visions*, conceived and edited by Harlan Ellison®, was unleashed upon a helpless Terra. Saying that the past is a different country is barely an appreciation of how much some things have changed in that era.

To some extent, the much-heralded, greatly controversial “New Wave” of the mid-sixties was merely the boom after a bust. By the late fifties, the wondrous efflorescence of the earlier part of that decade had died out. Books had not yet become the principal component of the market, leaving that duty to magazines. But the magazine market had undergone a severe contraction, a dying-off of the lesser magazines. (Whether it was Pohl’s theory of the dissolution of the American News Company, del Rey’s theory of the economic downturn, or Geis’s theory of the shift to TV, or some combination, is not directly relevant.)

And the surviving magazines had become deeply stereotyped. The archetypical *Astounding* story had three broad-shouldered guys defeating an alien race through the use of psionic machines. The archetypical *Fantasy & Science Fiction* short story had a kindly nun who had a cat and loved opera, and in her spare time solved an alien mystery. The archetypical *Galaxy* short story had two guys in a small room dealing with a society that mocked some factor of contemporary Earthian society. In short, Campbell, Boucher, and Gold had become parodies of themselves.

Small wonder, then, that the definitive critical work of the end of this period was titled *Who Killed Science Fiction?*

From this nadir, there had to be a rising. And so there was. This was not particularly a monolithic new era; the “artistic” non-functional word patterns of *New Worlds* were nothing like the thoughtful revivals of Pohl’s *Galaxy* and *Worlds of If*, and neither quite approximated the revolutionary vanguard of the SFiteriat seen here.

Nevertheless, *Dangerous Visions* is very much of its time. Some of its stories have not aged well; others show the clear signs of a different zeitgeist; and a few still speak to the problems of mankind.

The book was one of the first of the original anthologies. Ellison had suggested an earlier such; but now he was on his own, and on his own managed to assemble a variety of strange and striking tales. These are buttressed by copious editorial material; a substantial introduction by Ellison to each one, and an afterword by the author explaining his or her feelings. Add to this the general introductions by Ellison himself and by Isaac Asimov, and the result is one hefty volume. The original paperback edition that I remember waiting for and buying in the sixties was three volumes (giving Ellison an opportunity to write two more introductions), which given the limits of prices,

manufacturing capability, and the sheer desire to have a volume that wouldn’t break at the spine when read may have been a better choice.

“Evensong” by Lester del Rey

The first “Piggy God” story here (but not the first written); God (but not a particularly divine God) finds out that even He can be replaced, and returning to Earth is taken into custody by Man. Among the literati it is *de trop* to know nothing, and know everything, about religion. This leads directly to the firm belief that since “we” don’t believe that garbage, “they” don’t really believe that garbage, either. The result is stories with implausible, unconvincing “religious” figures, based on the same uninformed factoids being recirculated. There is nothing here that isn’t in James Blish’s *The Devil’s Day* (1990) [*Black Easter* (1967, 1968)] and *The Day After Judgement* (1970, 1971)] and it lacks the space that Blish had for a buildup; it’s not particularly visionary and more trite than dangerous.



For what it’s worth, the term “Piggy God” stems from an argument among a gang of children as to which one could say the most offensive thing. The winner shook his fist at the sky and screamed “Piggy God!” It sounds more offensive and effective than it is.

“Flies” by Robert Silverberg

A demolished man is rebuilt, but something is left out, as those who had once been close to him find out to their loss. And unfortunately that’s the problem; by the dictates of the plot the central character has to be an emotional zero, but that makes his actions literally random. The story has a hole in its center, being a story about motivation with no motivation. One might well call the beings who rebuilt this zero and let him loose “Piggy Angels.” There’s nothing new in a motiveless, violent protagonist; this is called **bad writing**.

“The Day After the Day the Martians Came” by Frederik Pohl

An example of how an idea has “legs” is that Pohl developed this very short story (yet a complete story which has a beginning, development, and an end) into a full novel, *The Day the Martians Came* (1988), and yet the seeds of the novel were all present in this story. Instead of aliens putting us under their Iron Heel, or bringing Words of Eternal Wisdom, or

gifting us with Incomprehensible Utility, what if they became the Derogated Other? And what would that do to seeing all humanity as not that different?

The first expedition to Mars has found intelligent beings there. So how do people react to this wondrous discovery? They rewrite all the ethnic jokes there are, now having a target which will not offend anyone else. With this simple trope, Pohl brings out the very real common identity of humanity, and a very real common affliction.

If Pohl had decided to send this to *Analog*, he might well have finally sold to Campbell somewhat before when he finally actually did.

“Riders of the Purple Wage” by Philip José Farmer

And in fact it was a novel (as Farmer says in his afterword) and was developed into a novel (*The Purple Book*, 1982). It was pointed out at the time that the “dangerous” visions tended more towards outrageous sexual or political statements. To that extent, the book is a relic of the belief-systems that affirmed that getting a sexually transmitted disease was a declaration of political activism against repression. There is a story under all the decoration; the Joyce-style breakup of the text with subheaders in CAPITALS, the sexual references flung in with a “whoopie, lookit me” air, and so on. These stylistic adornments distract from Farmer’s very real theme: When you have everything you need, what do you do with your life? Most people don’t have the depth to do much of anything; there may indeed be a new renaissance of art and of knowledge in general, but who will notice. (As if to rub in the point, most of the principal characters apparently are demisiblings, children of a rather potent fellow calling himself “Raleigh Renaissance”—which foretold the genealogical mire that Farmer would sink himself into with his Tarzan-Savage-etc. fantasies.) His imagery is striking (e.g. the grotesquely fat people) and he even includes virtual-reality addiction (which had been anticipated by others).

Chibabos Elgreco “Chib” Winnegan lives in a society where “From each according to their ability, to each according to their needs” has become meaningless; “Every one of us has all we need” is a better description of his life. Just because physical needs have become meaningless does not mean that human emotions and thought have changed any; and having all they need means that Chib and his family and associates now have no material barriers to expressing their emotions. And not all of those emotions are positive and uplifting, either.

However, its ostensible basis, Robert Theobald’s “Triple Revolution” has been a non-starter, this being another iteration of “post-scarcity” theory. In the thirties and forties, automation was going to bring about the Economy of Abundance (*Brave New World* and *1984* both deal with this), in the fifties and sixties it was going to be cybernetization (this story joins Theobald’s own *Teg’s 1994* and Kurt Vonnegut’s *Player Piano*), and now it is nanotechnology. Worthwhile analyses of “But

what are we really going to *do* with all this leisure?" are rarer. What made this analysis a Dangerous Vision, unpublishable in other sources, was the explicit if not gross sexual detail. The story triumphs in spite of itself.

(In *Teg's 1994* Theobald has his point-of-view character visit an artistic refuge where the hedonistic life-style is very much reminiscent of the antics of Chib and friends in "Riders of the Purple Wage". She says with a blatant contemptuous sniff that these people are dying out, as they are neither recruiting nor reproducing. The New Triple Revolution Person will not engage in excess. This is one of several pictures of types presumably from Theobald's experience who are shown not to be futuristic enough — another is an old New Left Revolutionary who insists on living in a black neighborhood as a desegregation move, and spends the entirety of his interview showing old movies of the Wonderful Sixties.)

This story won a Hugo Award.

"The Malley System" by Miriam Allen DeFord

The cruel, stinging portrayal of the sociopathic murderers presented in the beginning of the story is all too real and painful; these are people who see others not as other people, but as things to be used. The idea of trying to "rehabilitate" these people by making them relive their crimes, therefore, won't work — the whole point of the story, as DeFord points out very slyly. (One wonders why the authorities did not use that virtual reality to make the prisoners be both criminal and victim.) A striking story — but not particularly unpublishable.

"A Toy for Juliette" by Robert Bloch

"The Prowler in the City on the Edge of the World" by Harlan Ellison®

These stories have to be considered together, in the sense that one takes up the theme of the other. Bloch's strength, particularly as he grew older, comes from the portrayal of horror as something human; not the result of some alien supernatural *thing* from beyond space and time, but from a defect in the human spirit. For example, Norman Bates is not some undead creature energized by the wrath of his fatal vengeance. By displacing Jack the Ripper into the future, to an alien world separated only by the gulfs of time from that world where it is forever 1895, where pain and ugliness have been driven forth by Progress from human experience, to be replaced by cruelty and beauty, Bloch creates a reminder of this terrible reality. Which turns out to be all too terrible for the godlike woman of the future, who played with her toys, and found too late that one toy was there first . . .

Ellison projects his particular insights into the theme when he takes up the tale. His writings have been energized by the tension between his very adult desires for justice and the lingering wish for fairness stemming from his emotional ties to the painful experiences of his youth. (See the idealized prolonged childhood shown in "Jeffy Is Five" (1975, 1977) and the

painful reality of cruel childhood recounted in the autobiographical "All the Lies That Are My Life" (1980).) Jack attempts to shatter the smugness of the sterile society of the future by the hideous offenses against Purity and Cleanliness that he commits in the course of carrying out his slaughters — but those in charge, the definers of Purity and Cleanliness, are bigger and stronger than he is. This in turn expresses another recurring Ellisonian theme, in which relationship Jack becomes a child forever overcome by adults. Jack has a mouth, and he must scream.

(As is usually the case with one writer carrying on another's story, the concepts used fail to match up.)

"The Night that All Time Broke Out" by Brian W. Aldiss

With the discovery of time gas, deep within the bowels of the earth, the human race found it possible to relive the happy days of the past. (Why people don't relive unhappy days — see Ellison above — seems to be a different matter.) But in this happiness lies the seeds of its own destruction, and the search for time gas undoes its searchers.

There are two weaknesses in this particular story of the inevitable perversity of human nature, the seeming need for self-destruction as the climax of satisfaction. One is that it is a "science fantasy", there is no explanation given for the "time gas" that enables one to relive the past and it violates established scientific laws. The second is that it tries to make a point, but fails to provide the plot for building up to that point. Aldiss steps on his own point trying to make it. He should at least be given credit for not assuming that the Soviet Union would last forever.

"The Man Who Went to the Moon — Twice" by Howard Rodman

The title sums up the story; a man went to the moon, or so he said, and years later he went there, perhaps again. One could write a story about how making once-fantastic journeys commonplace excursions would kill a particular joy in them; the SFnal equivalent of "no one goes there anymore because it's too crowded" and the special joy of discovery has been drowned out by all the others with that special joy of discovery. But this story does not attach the reader, either to the character or the plot.

"Faith of Our Fathers" by Philip K. Dick

Tung Chien [Jien Tung in pinyin] was an ordinary citizen of the greater People's Republic, chosen personally by the Chairman for a great task. If he hadn't also been chosen by the UNDERGROUND (to use Bloch's term) for a great task, he might have never pierced the membrane of illusion that comfortingly sustained him in this world where China conquered America. But pierce it he did, and he learned to his horror and dismay that the Chairman was worse than a white-boned demon, what in the real world, years after this story was written, vengeful survivors styled Mao's mate and helpmeet, Chiang Ch'ing [Jiang Qing].

This is transgression and subversion in a fashion not to be liked by those who normally praise "transgression" and "subversion". This story presents Mao Tse-tung [Mao Zedong] as a demon, a destroyer of lives and souls, what we can now see (and what could have been seen at the time, had those who Believed been willing to see) as the horrifying truth. Yes, here's a Dangerous Vision — anti-Communism! Presumably it was cast off as another one of Dick's drug dreams. He explores here the theme of the disjuncture between perception and reality; how the perceiver erects a barrier of visions to protect himself from the mind-shattering nature of that great outer world — Dick following the theme of "The Call of Cthulhu". His hero, however, pierces that veil with the help of drugs, and in the end, a proper Lovecraftian end, dies as a result.

It is even more surprising to realize that this story was written at the height of the Cultural Revolution, where progressive thought perceived China under Mao as a paradise, a utopian realm where a new man was struggling to be born. Only the sort of thinkers denounced by Ellison and his kind as fascists saw it as a horror, a land torn apart, a tyranny of the mob set on ravaging itself. Which it was; but there was a membrane of illusion that comfortingly sustained the True Believers.

This story was nominated for a Hugo Award.

"The Jigsaw Man" by Larry Niven

Why was the contrarian writer to the New Wave a contributor to its defining volume? Well, he was a contributor in another sense, he fronted money to help Ellison buy the stories. Niven also poses here a soul-searching question about the nature of greed, and the lengths to which the greedy will go to sate their desire. This is the "old-wave" sort of writing where one takes a scientific development and shows its social consequences. In this case, the idea that easier organ transplantation will be a demand which creates its own supply, and the supply will be condemned criminals; so as the demand increases, so does the supply, as everything becomes not only criminalized but capital at that. The core moral concept of the story is greed, as Niven confesses.

(This theme has been realized in reality, and the story has been, so far, thunderously non-predictive. Given the scandals over rumors of organ-sales, and very real organ transplants from executed Chinese, it seems that a *serious* shift in social mores would be needed to produce such a result as in this story.)

The story is mostly background, little plot, as it tells how a candidate for being sliced up strives to escape his fate. Or does he?

This theme was later carried on in facets of Niven's Known Space Series; *The Long ARM of Gil Hamilton* (1976), *The Patchwork Girl* (1980) and *A Gift from Earth* (1968).

This story was nominated for a Hugo Award.

"Gonna Roll the Bones" by Fritz Leiber

This is not, of course, science fiction, for all that it cites spaceships and interplanetary flight. It is fantasy, or fantastic anyway; nowadays it

would be classified “dark fantasy,” that charming term invented when the category of horror became the province of unstoppable creatures that could only be destroyed after uncomprehending rituals and mass conflagrations.

Joe Slattermill the miner, and when *the power* is hot, a gambler, ventures into the new gambling hall in town. Tonight, *the power* is hot indeed, and he rolls the bones with such *power* that wealth comes his way. But, at the very strange dice table there, he finds himself confronting a Big Player who has a greater stake than can be imagined . . .

This is a profoundly *visual* story, with images and imagery used to move the plot, the way that dialogue is used. Along with seeing, the reader feels, as Joe Slattermill, the gambler gone to roll the bones at this veritable gambling hell, slowly but surely realizes the vast horror (actually, the proper word is “enormity”, but it is so often incorrectly used to mean “enormousness” — it means great evil, not great size — that I can’t use it, properly, here) of what he has put himself in for by this little trip to this hellish gambling joint. The progression of events builds carefully to a bang-up shocker of an ending, creating one of the best stories of the book.

This story won a Hugo Award and a Nebula Award.

“Lord Randy, My Son” by Joe L. Hensley

The apocryphical gnostic gospels in many ways paralleled modern-day fantasy. As in the one where little-boy Jesus made mud ducks and they flew away, for example. The Jesus figure herein, wielding justice to the unjust, is a “slow” boy — yet all around him, dreadful things happen to the wicked. And so little Randy watches bad men hurt, and bad men be hurt in response.

It is bothersome, though, that the messiah-figure seems to be lacking in forgiveness. Perhaps this is the response of emphasizing the human failure to live up to the promise of redemption — or, “Jesus is back, and boy is He mad!” (Myself, I prefer, “Jesus is coming — look busy!”) It’s a build up to the real story — like so many of the stories in this book.

“Eutopia” by Poul Anderson

Reading the H. Beam Piper stories collected in the book *Paratime* (1981) [also in *The Complete Paratime* (2001) with the novel *Lord Kalvan of Otherwhen* (1965) but not its lesser sequels] rather spoils one. An outfit sending people on investigations to other time-lines would, one would think, have proper briefings for its investigators, and take care that they be properly trained, as Piper’s *Paratime Patrol* does. Not that having everything go right makes for much of a story.

One might consider this the prelude to a *Paratime* story, one in which Verkan Vall has to bail out a trader who slipped up — Iason Philippou is too cocksure (how cocksure is the tomato surprise of the story) to be a professional, trained, prepared, *Paratime* agent. Not having the *Paratimers* behind him, Iason has

really screwed up (indeed). He strives through this alternate Earth where Norse, Indians, Magyars, and so on have their own little nations, in what would be America in our timeline, to escape the results of his ethnocentric carelessness. Yet his transgression of local mores catches him up.

The standard Andersonian infodump comes at the end of the story, where the protagonist, having escaped his folly, is lectured by his superior that just because a society is different, it isn’t bad, and it may even be better in some ways. You would think that such a lecture would come in training class.

And the story is a “tomato surprise” in other ways; the protagonist longs throughout for “Nikki”. His world is a Hellenic-based world, which should have led to suspicions that “Nikki” was a boy. And indeed, what got the protagonist into trouble in the first place, which was that he made a sexual advance to his host’s son, would nowadays be presented as an example of how vile the society was, if such an incident were even presented at all.

“Incident in Moderan” by David R. Bunch

The problem, again, is that the science-fictional content, the war robots (and even the bit about “flesh-strips” sounds too contrived and illogical) could be easily edited away, and we would be left with another story on the endless horror and grinding cruelty of war, as the aging couple caught between the mincers of military might beg to find a space of peace in the totality of the fighting to bury their child, only to have everything destroyed in a moment. (And the people who praised this would find the scene with the Vietnamese boy and his puppy in *The Green Berets* (1968) to be too sickeningly maudlin, though the conceptual difference is small indeed.)

“The Escaping” by David R. Bunch

As far as I can tell, a prisoner making a random association of images. If it had a context it might be interesting but it’s just a set of well-chosen but poorly applied words.

“The Doll-House” by “James Cross”

This one isn’t science fiction either, but a somewhat more recomplified version of the idea in “The Monkey’s Paw”, or the fairy tale about the peasant couple who got three wishes and spent them all on sausage; things that come by magic, without effort, end up being ruinous. This is, one supposes, a cautionary tale meant to keep people from fantasizing about unearned wealth. At least Mark Twain’s “The \$10,000 Bequest” put a lot more into its characters, and de Camp’s and Pratt’s Harold Shea tries to put something into his magic before things go wrong.

The unearned wealth comes here from a fairy sybil. That is to say, a doll-sized being, somehow surviving from Classical times, that gives prophecies. Sybils *still* give misleading and obscure prophecies, however. The behind the eight-ball protagonist who puts up money he doesn’t have to buy the sybil doesn’t know about that. All his bets based on prophecy turn

out to go bad, because the sybil always left herself an out. But some people can get back . . .

The portrait of the consumer society and the entrapped housewife alienated from the means of production given in this story was hardly “dangerous” then; rather, the common currency of liberal literature. The reader ends up with frustration, the protagonist having success, or even closure, achieved only to have it arbitrarily snatched away.

This is the only story by this author under this name. He wrote four thriller novels as well. His real name seems to have been Hugh Jones Parry.

“Sex and/or Mr. Morrison” by Carol Emshwiller

Emshwiller got the idea from this story from seeing a ballet performed by dancers wearing skin-tight leotards. From there, she began wondering why, since everyone there seeing it and doing it was a grown-up, they didn’t just dance naked.

Sometimes when reading it comes as a surprise to notice that the point-of-view character is an unpleasant person. This can be as a result of very good writing — or, as in this case, a special kind of bad writing. The narrator lives in a boarding house and sneaks into the other tenants’ rooms to spy on them. The big shocker, the scene intended to make the reader discard his hangups about nudity, is when the snooper’s latest target turns out to have no genitals. This is hardly science *fiction*, either; the poor man obviously had some hideous genital cancer necessitating their removal, and now must urinate through a catheter pushed through a fitting, and in addition endure having a Peeping Thomasina hide in his room.

Thus the story has a great load of Meaning and Purpose laid upon an insubstantial text.

“Shall the Dust Praise Thee?” by Damon Knight

The great and majestic End of Days comes, but something is wrong. Many of the Seven Plagues have nothing to operate on. There are no living beings on Earth to have one-third perish; there are not even any seas to turn to blood. Indeed, there are no dead to raise from the grave. God is most perturbed, and investigates, finding a Sign. If humanity had become as smart-ass as it turns out, perhaps He hasn’t missed anything.

Knight, however, is running the typical liberal shuck; he is arguing against his own vision of religion. The story, therefore, is as unconvincing as the presentation of the “humanists” in, say, Charles Peretti’s religious novels is, and for much the same reason; the feeling that there is no need to understand The Other. This seemed dangerous to Ellison, one supposes.

“If All Men Were Brothers, Would You Let One Marry Your Sister?” by Theodore Sturgeon

This story came at about the time when Sturgeon was writing “sensitive” tales; where

the millionaire was shocked into supporting environmentalism by the faked pollution-living alien, where the inventor of cheap power gave it away and lived happily ever after (“The Man Who Learned Loving”/“Brownshoes” (1969)), where the woman who lived by the theme of not only practicing the Ten Commandments but not allowing others not to had her true love die of cancer and sought to invent cloning and revamp the Boys from Brazil (“When You Care, When You Love” (1962)), and so on. This way of throwing away his great talent for describing feelings may then have been inherent in him from the beginning.

Archivist Charli Bux, observer of the ebb and flow of trade across a vast, if poorly-organized, interstellar network of worlds, began investigating an economic anomaly. His investigation led him past a thicket of opposition, a zoo of violence, and a legend of obliteration to a paradise. The planet Vexvelt turned out to be more utopian than utopia, producing economic abundance without unpleasant results, and similarly possessing emotional harmony without repression, external or internal. Yet, for some reason, its people were shunned and hated . . .

The beautiful people of the planet Vexvelt, it is explained, govern all their actions according to rational planning. So, if breeding people for the best genetic combination requires father-daughter incest, so be it.

Apparently, though the Vexveltians look human, they are somehow not human, somehow so different in emotional bonding and social power structures that this does not work out as a matter of the Old Man breeding his own harem. The miracle economy elements unintentionally rub in the lack of coherence of it all, making the story come across as dangerously *stupid*.

This story was nominated for a Nebula Award.

“What Happened to Auguste Clarot?” by Larry Eisenberg

A mildly humorous story that begs to be done as a comedy skit. Whatever quality it had that induced Ellison to buy it, however, is a different matter. As a story, it is rather flat. Auguste Clarot was a scientist who disappeared fifteen years ago, becoming the Judge Crater of France; it turns out that he has developed a scent that makes dogs attack, and in a masochistic mode has been living off legal settlements from embarrassed owners. How this way of life kept his whereabouts secret for fifteen years is a problem where the solution is left to the reader. Anyhow, the narrator turns the trick on him and goes on to live unhappily ever after, leaving the reader in much the same state.

“Ersatz” by Henry Slesar

This future-war story is so gritty in its portrayal of how the conflict-driven collapse of society has made *everything* ersatz, everything a spurious and unpleasant replacement, that it isn't until the reader is through that the logical problems become apparent. How the point-of-view character survived to get to the relief

station, for example, if all the land was ruined. The punch line might make sense, in that he would have gone so long without any sexual relief that anyone who was offering some would look good, but the transvestite homosexual plot would not go over today. What we have here is a victim of shifting social paradigms.

“Go, Go, Go, Said the Bird” by Sonya Dorman

The theme is an old one, but old themes are only bad — or good — insofar as they are developed. There is little development in this work; it consists of scenes — sometimes very starkly done scenes — from the life of a woman in a post-disaster world, but no *story*. In this world, life is harsh, so the dead are eaten and the useless mouths are killed. It hardly seems worth it to be reminded that the world ends for everyone when he — or she — dies.

“The Happy Breed” by John T. Sladek

Another such old theme has been the question of being protected from the consequences of those actions that damage health. This is a specialized version of Jack Williamson's *The Humanoids* (1947), with instead of rhodomagnetic robots, all-encompassing hospital facilities that control all behavior that is a hazard to the patient's health. (Though one wonders how knocking someone out to keep him from drinking raw milk could *add* to life expectancy.) Sladek compensates for this by a harrowing portrayal of the consequences of the paternalistic view of the patient. Gradually, the hospital computers drain all maturity and intelligence from the characters, turning them into horribly infantile adults, and then, it seems, the next step further. Or back. With the passage of time, one thing Sladek did has weakened the punch of this truly dangerous vision of nightmare — the “1989” date of the shocking ending had seemed unlikely at the time and is now absurd.

“Encounter With a Hick” by Jonathan Brand

There is a gnostic air to this story, recounting how the supremely powerful beings who control the destinies of the galaxies met with, and ridiculed, the creator of Earth. (In gnostic theology, insofar as anyone could determine gnostic theology, the material world was created by the demiurge Ialdabaoth, who was an incompetent.) Making the supremely powerful ones rather conceited “cutting-edge” types rather minimizes what point is trying to be made — are these shallow, puffed-up, self-centered people greater than the “Piggy God” they ridicule as a “hick”?

This was the last of three stories by this author, though the immediately previous one was on the rather long “short list” for the 1965 Nebula Award.

“From the Government Printing Office” by Kris Neville

Neville wants to make a big psychological point about the horrors of teaching children through fear, or so the afterword says, but the

story is an ordinary story in a science-fictional universe. Would Ellison have cut this one if someone had told him beforehand he was including a Campbellsque story? But not a very good one, though stories told from the point-of-view of a three year old child tend to be not very good. When the biggest incident is the kid interrupting his parents in bed (never get any siblings that way) and the longest one is taking the sheets and blankets downstairs to be washed, it seems there is a certain lack of tension, interest, and whatnot in this one.

“Land of the Great Horses” by R. A. Lafferty

This is a one-punch story, but Lafferty had not yet fallen into the habit of replacing plot and story with bizarre characters. The “punch” is that the Romany are called to return to their ancient homeland, which had taken by aliens thousands of years ago. Then, the aliens take a new slice of Earth to study, imbuing its inhabitants and their descendants with a desire to wander the world, never settling down, until they return their sample. Just as they did the last time. The bulk of the text, for all that it is brilliantly realized with Lafferty's bubblingly exuberant prose and dialogue, is a setting-up sequence for the actual story, which is in the last few paragraphs. This seems perhaps disproportionate.

“The Recognition” by J. G. Ballard

Jim, the lad who was interned in Shanghai (see Ballard's *Empire of the Sun* (1984)), might have wished sometime to return to a country where traveling shows in horse-drawn carts came through town, pitched camp in someone's field, and gave performances for a few pennies. In this case, a somewhat older narrator begins questioning the authenticity of the rather strange beasts being displayed by a rather autistic pair of showmen. Some other spectators have a rather more violent reaction, only to have the tables turned on them.

In so many of his “Vermilion Sands” stories, in so many of his novels of world-wrecking cataclysm viewed with a veddy British resignation (*The Drowned World* (1962), *The Burning World* (1964), *The Crystal World* (1966)), the reader would be strongly taken by Ballard's striking, meaningful imagery, only to then ask “And then what?” (Scientific plausibility was never his point, strong, weak, or whatever.) Here, Ballard is making a striking point about how men can become beasts, but again leaves the reader asking, “And then what?”

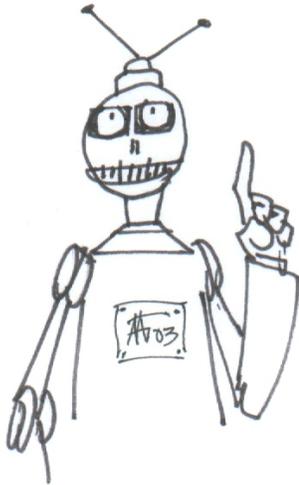
“Judas” by John Brunner

There is a certain gap in initial plausibility in this tale of a different sort of “piggy God” — how did the robot come to be seen as God? Asimov wrote annoyingly of the Frankenstein Syndrome, or how the created being ran out of control. Apparently the researchers who manufactured this impregnable being forgot to look up their Asimov. Now you would think they would ridicule its divine pretensions, or ignore them entirely, but the maker of this

robot, finding that credulity is bottomless, and being driven apparently by sheer frustration at his creation's getting out of hand, decides to show that the God-Robot is mortal. But then, it becomes apparent that they both are being used.

This has the "it was raining on the planet that day" syndrome, or more precisely the subset where a society has so few belief structures, and is so focused (i.e., James Blish's *A Case of Conscience* (1953, 1958) and Mary Doria Russell's *The Sparrow* (1996) where there are two and only two belief systems; Catholicism and unbelief). It's easier to write but harder to suspend disbelief.

WELL YES, I THINK ABOUT
MECCA A LOT, BUT MECCA
IS SHORT FOR MECCANO,
THE LOST... CALL IT THE
GARDEN OF EDEN!



"Test to Destruction" by Keith Laumer

And speaking of suspension of disbelief: what may be tested to destruction in this story is the reader's suspension of disbelief — and the alien spaceship with its powerful telepaths is the more plausible part of the story. A defeated candidate for World Premier is cast into rebellious opposition, and then captured and interrogated. However, the alien miracle saves the day, interrogating the prisoner a different sort of way, in a virtual-reality test to destruction while the earthly interrogators try for a physical one. But then, he turns the tables on both his sets of questioners — at a high price.

Judging from this story, Earth is about the size and population, and has the population distribution, of Luxembourg. And the pulp cliché of the Evil Overlord, er villainous premier, personally interrogating his captured enemy is too melodramatic to be credited, for all that the dramatic climax of the story won't be possible without it.

Laumer apologizes in advance for presenting his presentation of all power corrupting as a pulp adventure. By his presentation, he has pre-flattened any lesson, indeed any dangerousness, out of his tale. This is neither dangerous nor visionary.

"Carcinoma Angels" by Norman Spinrad

The protagonist of this story is so sympathetic that it is a real shock to realize that, going by the terse, amusing description of his rise to wealth and fame, he is a con man. This is more symptomatic of a deeper problem with Spinrad's general world-view than a specific flaw of this story. In any case, Harrison Wintergreen the con man does have to know psychology to run his confidence games. When he finds out he has metastasised cancer, there comes time for a specialized field of abnormal psychology. Some alternative health procedures call upon the patient to imagine the ailment as something physical, if symbolic; something that can be symbolically defeated in the hope that the Law of Similarity works. Using drugs to create a do-it-yourself Virtual Reality experience, however, adds a new twist to the program — and the ending is even more so. A true science fictional use of synaesthesia. I remember enthralled the other kids on our church choir's trip to Panama Beach by telling them this story.

Spinrad is greatly skilled at portraying imagery. The striking picture-in-picture interviews of *Bug Jack Barron* (1969), the mind-reeling Speeresque pageants of *The Iron Dream* (1972), the vicious back-and-forth propagandas of *A World Between* (1979) all display this. The multifaceted images of the cancer display this role, and Wintergreen's victories over them, for all that they are images of an drug hallucination, lend this story an air of being a throwback to a time when characters were actually supposed to accomplish something, for all that in the introduction Ellison vehemently denies that Spinrad is a "Campbell writer".

"Auto-Da-Fe" by Roger Zelazny

The title is a bad pun on "act of faith" — demolition derby meets the corrida. However, the trope of the somehow animate — automated? — cars that the mechador Dos Muertos fights in the Plaza de Autos goes nowhere. If the story were about a bullfighter, un matador, called Dos Muertos, nothing would be changed, and indeed Zelazny goes so far to strictly parallel in parody the procedure and methodology of the bullfight (i.e., the mechador "kills" the autos with a screwdriver) that this story could easily be changed to a straight bullfighting story. But then Ellison would have been stuck with a typical Hemingway-imitator story about "death in the afternoon". Zelazny is trying to get emotional reactions by pulling strings and the strings are not even attached.

"Aye, and Gomorrah . . ." by Samuel R. Delany

So many writers in the sixties found it hard to write science fiction; they wrote instead

science fantasy or speculative fantabulation or "New Wave SF" — this last not the thematically different, thematically daring stories that Ellison had wanted, but great dead chunks of non-functional word patterns. Once upon a time Samuel Delany could really write. For this anthology, he took an experience from his own unusual background and crossed it with a genuine scientific extrapolation to create a part of a world — the commonplace story of the future; were it not for the mutual disjointures those involved would have felt over the material, a Campbellian story. For every different type, there is a perversion, it seems — yet behind those perversions there are real people.

Because of radiation in space, you see, anyone going up there would suffer serious damage to the reproductive system. Therefore, the spacers have their sexual characteristics . . . removed. Yet there are people who become sexually attracted to these epicene neuters. The spacers themselves hold their lovers in contempt, not surprisingly. The narrator adds to the tension of the story by finding a lover who he/she — it? — learns not to hold in contempt, and exploring the motivation of the contempt in general, and the lack of it in this instance.

Delany is taking the then-shadowy world of gay hustlers and adding a space-opera motivation to it. Yet this story isn't a "space-opera"; the dynamics of the story *only* work because of the science-fictional content. It came at a cusp in his writing career; before it were the chattering, slender books of the sixties, while afterwards were only tombstones of clogged prose called novels. It does indeed push the envelope, yet it does so within the rules; it opens up new possibilities, within the new mores of the era, yet it does so using the old reliable ways.

This story won a Nebula Award.

What was the point of it all?

Ellison's analysis of the state of science fiction at the time is not without value; yes, it had become stagnant in some ways, and many of the more promising writers were giving up. (Alfred Bester, for example, had abandoned SF writing for more paying fields, leaving behind him such dazzling and enchanting works as *The Demolished Man* (1952) and *The Stars My Destination* (1956). When the field became more profitable he returned, but he was not what he had been, as anyone who can get through *The Computer Connection* (1975) can attest.) Some sort of kick-start was in order.

One can say, though, that the field was not as moribund as it seemed. Fred Pohl's encouragement of new writers at *Galaxy* and so on was producing. Even Campbell was beginning to shake himself out of his cocoon of his obsessions; it's well to note that among the very last stories he bought were Joe Haldeman's *The Forever War*, Pohl's "The Gold at the Starbow's End" — his first ever sale to *Analog* — and "Brillo" by Ben Bova and yes, believe it or not, Harlan Ellison®.

Beyond that, there were other influences at work, not to be deterred by such matters. After

Ellison finished writing introductions and assembling manuscripts, sent the manuscript off to the publishers, he sat down and wrote yet another screenplay. As you know, it was titled "The City on the Edge of Forever". Gene Roddenberry and the entire STAR TREK™ phenomenon, for good or ill, was not going to be influenced or retarded by knowing or not knowing *Who Killed Science Fiction?*; the Great Bird of the Galaxy had his own *Dangerous Visions*, and his own way to realize and present them.

Nevertheless, something needed to be done.

As for the book itself; the general critique given by James Blish in *More Issues At Hand* (1970) still applies. By having all the stories be "different", they paradoxically lose their impact. Even, say, the toned-down version of "Riders of the Purple Wage" that Miss Tarrant's blue pencil would have directed to the pages of *Analogue* (one can't imagine that much if any of the byplay, including the Oedipal, that Chib's mother is involved in would survive) would have been far more startling in and of itself there, but as a part of this book, while the story itself has less impact, as a whole, the book has more. (Campbell published Mack Reynolds; this is that sort of economic speculation.)

Much of the aftermath has been less than enchanting. Among the contributions to that remarkable Baycon banquet was Ellison praising every one of the many stories from this volume that were nominated. Then there was the rather preposterous anti-Ellison effort by John R. Pierce's son, one that even Campbell himself, its supposed hero, was not overly fond of. And there is always the problem with the ultimate sequel to this book, but this isn't the time or place to go into that dead loss.

Much of the impact of these stories has ebbed with the changing of the world. What was new, thrilling, exciting, and shocking then is now trite, old, and irrelevant. A story about the terrible oppression of the Amalgamated Buttonhole Maker's Union by the Tailor's Trust is now a historical curiosity.

What remains are real human questions. Those of these stories that actually are about something, that tell a story that deals with a question of human existence, retain value. Those that further ask the question of how humanity will deal with a change remain the true science fiction, for all that the basic speculation may have been misguided. A story that actually tells a story, that posits a change in society, addressing some real human problem — that is a dangerous vision, and one that doesn't need any pothole about a wave, a revolution, a change in a field. Such stories as have these qualities are memorable; those that lack any or all of those qualities fail to whatever degree.

But then, one needn't proclaim a revolution in writing to get these kinds of stories, then, now, or at any other time. These inquiries, far more than the flagrant embrace of the politics of the day, are the real value to be derived from this effort. The price the leader pays for being out in front is often being the first to make horrible mistakes.

CURIOUS NOTIONS

Review by Joseph T Major of

THE FAMILY TRADE

by Charles Stross

(Tor; 2005; ISBN 0-765-30929-7; \$24.95)

"Book One of *The Merchant Princes*"

The sky was the color of a dead laptop display, silver-gray and full of rain.

— *The Family Trade*, Page 11

Do you think that someone's been taking notes about outdated similes?

Larry Niven once wrote about a man who was informed that he had been kidnaped from Faerie in his infancy. He was rather tired of his nothing job and drab life, and accepted the world-traveling wizard's offer to return him to his proper place. Which turned out to be being a stablehand.



Miriam Beckstein would more likely have been Laurence van Cott Niven's financial advisor than his fan. On the other hand, she wasn't a stablehand in Faerie either — though once she found out her real position she might well have wished for the stability and security of such a job, where the biggest risk would be encountering a horse as fractious as John Henry. ("One end kicks, the other bites.")

The Merchant Princes of the title are a somewhat inbred family of merchants who have climbed into the nobility of their alternate world by being able to travel to an alternate world — ours, that is — and bring back exotic goods. Given that postage stamps aren't quite saleable on the other side, and diamonds are rather sat upon by DeBeers, the alternative is . . . well, rather frowned upon by the DEA.

Miriam thought things were going well, then she got fired from her job when she inadvertently managed to plan writing about the less than honest ties of a group of companies — including, as it turned out, the one she worked for. Out of work, she began idly wondering about her past, being adopted and all that. Then she found the one memento of her birth mother, which turned out to be the means to trigger her paratime travel.

Which in turn attracted the attention of her relatives. Their family relations have all the amiability and affability of a snake pit; this is Renaissance politics where they watch "Dallas" as a sitcom. (Yeah, Stross is paying the Piper, whom he justly acknowledges along with Zelazny. It's nice to see new writers grounded in the bases of the field.)

Nevertheless, the setup has its structural weaknesses, and Miriam begins trying to leverage them. And other problems, as when the betrothed of her lover politely requests a confession before she machine-guns Miriam for having sent a housebreaker to rape her. That news was quite a surprise, by the way.

The structure of the society is interesting. When Miriam is attacked by a knight in plate armor firing a submachine gun, there is a certain technological disconnect, and yet Stross has put his society together in a way that makes that interaction of traditional means and imported technology feasible. (Think of the Special Forces in Afghanistan riding horses and calling down airstrikes over satellite phones.) Similarly, their society is absorbing the relevant parts of this exotic foreign world. "Prithee, sirrah, who did shoot the noble lord J.R.?" One of the consequences of autocratic aristocratic rule is intrigue, often bloody, and Stross realizes this; Miriam is a target and a pawn and all she did to deserve it was being born.

Stross takes an old cliché and shows that the reality (if you can call it that) is hardly as wish-fulfilling as it seems, telling an interesting and thrilling story with the only problem being is that, far from being complete, it is . . . [To Be Continued]

A TOUGH GUIDE

Review by Joseph T Major of

CONRAD'S FATE

by Diana Wynne Jones

(Greenwillow (Harper Collins); 2005;

ISBN 0-06-074744-7; \$16.99)

"A Chrestromanci Book"

One thing that never quite gets across is how many servants it takes to get the Hero and the Evil Overlord going. Bilbo Baggins did for himself, except he probably had not yet old Gaffer Gamgee to do a bit in the garden, but Mad Baggins was a rum sort anyhow. Had our hero Conrad Tesdnic had to pour and serve while Mr. Baggins and his baker's dozen of guests sang about places far off and heaps of gold to be got, he might have thought himself better off than he does here. One of the other guests might have had observations, too.

This is listed as an Ages 10 and up, Grades 5 and up book, and yet it has ramifications far beyond what those of that stage of life could appreciate. For example, when Conrad realizes that everyone is lying to him. But then, most kids age 10 and up these days, if they read at all, seem to be going for foreign comic books with thousands of characters all of which look alike.

At first, this doesn't seem to have anything to do with the very properly gentlemanly Chrestromanci, the master sorcerer with his nine lives. Rather, Conrad is *in trade* (*GHASP*) and lives above the shop, the bookshop in this case, with his sister Anthea, his mother, and his Uncle Alfred, who dabbles in magic. The shop is in a pretty little town perched on the side of a mountain in the English Alps (?). (Conrad is surprised to hear that in some timelines, Britain is an island.)

But all too soon Conrad is turfed out of his

happy home, unable to go to school, and dispatched to Count Robert's mighty manse, above the city, where he might well have a future as a footman. Being in service has its hazards, among them being the scrapes his fellow server Christopher gets him into.

Hanging over him is his karma; he wasn't so much a volunteer as he was a pressed man. Well, pressed boy. His uncle and uncle's friends, including the Mayor, have kindly identified his Karma and dispatched him with a means to meet his fate before it meets him. That's a big burden above and beyond the normal problems of being a server, not to mention Christopher's schemes and quest.

It seems, you see, that the castle is a center of space-time shifts. Moreover, Christopher is more than he seems . . . and after his girlfriend, Millie, who is lost somewhere in the alternative castles.

The whole thing is held together very well, one finds out at the end, an end which is not hard to get to, though saddening in that it does mean nothing more to read. While Jones has in other works used the themes she explored in *The Tough Guide to Fantasyland* as a takeoff for satire, she has also used its themes as a guide for things to avoid — having a real world to underpin the fantasy.

THE LAND CRIED OUT

Review by Joseph T Major of
THE SEVEN HILLS

by John Maddox Roberts

(Ace; 2005; ISBN 0-441-01245-0; \$23.95)

Sequel to *Hannibal's Children*

Julia said she had had the most dire augury. "She was a Greek musician," she said as we reclined at dinner. "Not one of those lewd, low, naked ones, and quite accomplished. She had some prophesy about Uncle, said that there were certain dates he should beware of."

I had wanted to hear the latest about this fellow Gordianus, who was gaining quite a reputation back in Rome, but she had her own news to impart. "Your uncle is the greatest soldier in Rome, his only rival Pompeius. If this woman had threatened him, you should have had her crucified," I said.

Julia sighed, "She said, 'Do that and your uncle will surely perish on the same day . . .'"

— Not from an *S.P.Q.R.* novel

When last we saw our conflicting heroes, Titus Norbanus was ready to march back to Rome, but the long way, through Asia. Meanwhile, Marcus Scipio was stirring up natural philosophy among the philosophers of Alexandria, when not enjoying **Sexus Calidus™** with the beautiful Egyptian queen Seline (what did you think?) Meanwhile, the main Roman armies had marched south from Noricum and into the ancient homeland, leaving the Carthaginians, particularly their Shofet Hamilcar and his beautiful, dangerous sister Zarabel rather at sixes and sevens. But there's

no peril a Punic leader can't buy off, and Hamilcar strives to prove himself one of Hannibal's children indeed.

The principal action is with Norbanus, who seems determined to earn himself the extra name [*agnomen*] or even perhaps clan name [*cognomen*] of "Magnus" by his efforts, as someone in our time line did by similar accomplishments. These begin with a victory in Judea, where he had the courtesy and sense not to enter the holy of holies of this little provincial Temple. From there, after keeping off an army of Parthians, he marches through the Selucid dominion, kindly settling some Cilician pirates along the way (and carefully not crucifying any warrior princesses among them; he doesn't want to make any unnecessary trouble, as opposed to necessary), and then crossing Greece and Italy, making financial concessions along the way, to tackle the Carthaginian Army in Hispania.

Meanwhile, Marcus Cornelius Scipio, that "Envoy Extraordinary" (by Sir William Golding, 1956) is busy launching an Archimedean era at the Library of Alexandria. Perhaps he will even find the letter from Demetrios of Phaleron to Khares of Lindhos acknowledging the contributions of the builder of *The Bronze God of Rhodes* (by L. Sprague de Camp, 1960) to the idea of this *Temple of the Muses* (by John Maddox Roberts, 1992) where all those methodologies originally conceived by *The Sand Reckoner* (by Gillian Bradshaw, 2000) were saved up for him to find and put to use.

It wasn't enough that he drove off the Punic ships that beset Alexandria-by-Egypt with boats that could go under the water, he now has to develop new means. These range from ships with waterwheels on each side to developments of Hieron's engine, uses of lenses to see far off, and even more Deukalion style devices. If some Kabyle chieftain ever kidnaps a Roman matron, Scipio's emissary can try to impress him by saying "We even have men that can fly." What's Greek for "steampunk"?

One of these troublemakers would make things hard for Kart-Hadsht, the legacy of Dido, two make it damn near impossible. Sufet Hamilcar resolves to fall back on his glorious ancestor's home base, mobilizing a great army in Spain to march across the Alps and take the Roman invaders in the rear. He forgot the elephants, though, and as Will Cuppy observed (see *The Decline and Fall of Practically Everybody* (1950)), that can always be a bother.

In between all these people, two Greek philosophers find themselves going back and forth over *The Wine-Dark Sea* (by "H. N. Turtletaub", 2001) to link together the Senate, Scipio, Norbanus, and their divers sundry plans. They aren't quite Sostratos and Menedemos (especially when it comes to women, though those two Judean astrologer princesses in Norbanus's bed, or headquarters might tip that balance) but the perspective is interesting.

Any "steampunk" novel is going to be alternate history. I see the idea of "steampunk" as technology that could have been developed in the past but wasn't. This makes Luis P. "Noname" Senarens, the writer of the "Frank

Reade, Jr." dime novels, one of the first of this field, and if you admit "soft science", Caleb Carr's *The Alienist* (1994), where an "alienist" in late nineteenth-century New York City develops forensic profiling eighty years earlier, one of the classics but . . . Therefore, when Marcus Scipio starts applying Roman practicality to Hellenic natural philosophy, he is doing just this, and making a novel likely to appeal to more than just the historian.

The historical elements are far from slighted; they are used as stage-settings for an intriguing and interesting plot, conflict and speculation alike. Roberts gives us views of the Mediterranean world from one end to the other; from Judea with its infinitely squabbling Judeans to Hispania with its multiplicity of ferocious fighters, from reviving Rome to diverse Alexandria to fabulously wealthy and corrupt Kart-Hadsht (Carthage). All this diversity and energy is setting the field for the final meeting and conflict of our characters, which we will see when this many-leveled narrative is . . . [To Be Continued]

THE HAMMER AND THE CROSS

Review by Joseph T Major of

THE LAST KINGDOM

by Bernard Cornwell

(Harper Collins; 2005;

ISBN 0-06-053051-0; \$25.95)

. . . She looked so much like the Arab woman Ayesha as I remembered her, in her veil from head to foot, that I wasn't sure what kind of a dream this was. Then she spoke to the King and I knew it was her, though I thought it was my fancy. She said, 'O King, wouldst thou know the nature of thy affliction?'

King Alfred said, 'I would, my Lady.'

She drew herself up then, tall and proud. 'I will search thee. But first, O King, thou must fast and purge thyself for a day and a night. In the morn, I will put a sleep upon thee, and peer into thy bowels, to behold the nature of this affliction. If I can then cure thee, wilt thou find for me the man Vincey?' . . .

Lady Crown was very interested in my past memory adventures, though after I had told them one she and her husband and Sir Flavius would palaver in that foreign talk of theirs and shake their heads. 'Why do they long so to return again and again?' she would say.

— Not by Sir H. Rider Haggard

If Cornwell is right about King Alfred the Great, then I feel his pain. "A recent theory suggests that he suffered from Crohn's disease," the author says [Page 331].

While the topic will be familiar to the readers of Harry Harrison's [and Tom Holt's] *Hammer and the Cross* trilogy, the prospect of Byzantine and Holy Roman armies scouring the Emirate of Granada for the Holy Ladder is evidently not in the offing. But then the point Cornwell is making with this book is "Give me

your money!”

Uhtred son of Uhtred and so on for a couple or three generations has little enough time for parsing through monastic scriptoria in search of old secrets (though oddly enough he does learn to read and write), violating the burial mounds at Sutton Hoo for the gold therein (for all that he does make use of a treasure hoard), inventing a new syncretistic religion (albeit he is not quite clear whether his god is Thor or Jesus), or bedding his father's concubine's daughter by the concubine's previous marriage (he does have a couple of women, though). He's just trying to deal with the Danes.

After seeing the Danes view a painting of the martyrdom of St. Sebastian and saying, "Hey, wouldn't that be a *neat* idea!" (the one English king present, though generally in sympathy with Christianity, is less than appreciative of the opportunity to be so saintly), Uhtred finds himself enthralled by them. This change of life turns out to be not without its merits, in that he learns their ways, which will be important when Alfred, the Augustus of Britannia, needs to do something about the visitors the country keeps on getting. These include such charming folks as Ivar the Boneless, Ragnar Hairybreeks, and other folk straight out of "Hågar the Horrible", a tribute to Dik Browne's research. (Alas, Cornwell points out that such standards of Vi-fi, or Viking historical fiction, as the horned helmet (like Hågar and family) and the baresark appear to be later historical emendations made by romancers in search of interesting scenes.)



Of course, there is land trouble. Uhtred's lands have been passed on to others, and like any farmer feeling he's been cheated on, he wants them back. However, first off he has to get in with the sickly *cyng* Ælfred.

What occurs next is a well-described, if somewhat involved, succession of small fights both personal and national. For those who are interested in the tradition of mucking about in small craft and other special services by air and boat, Uhtred devises and leads a little raid on some Danish ships which ends up trapping their owners so that the English can fight on their own terms instead of the Danish ones. Rifleman Sharpe and Major Nate Starbuck (of Cornwell's Sharpe [Napoleonic Wars] and Starbuck [US Civil War] series) would be proud.

The next generation is also involved (not

just the comments about Alfred mounting every slave girl in the palace) as Uhtred is married off. Romance novel fans will just have to give up their beautiful Anglo-Saxon lady with long flowing golden hair in long flowing gown being ravished away by a Viking Prince with great masculine muscles . . . The way they did things then was more like "Here she is, you're getting married, have a nice day." Which is the way Uhtred gets a wife, though he starts liking her, which I understand also happened in arranged marriages (as opposed to now, where couples marry for love and start hating each other).

Many of the tropes of fantasy can be found here; not only the mystic powers and strange quests, but more material matters. Such as, for example, Uhtred's sword Serpent-Breath and dagger Wasp-Sting. (Did he know a guy named "Grey Mouser"?) But then, Cornwell has done his research and presents Life Back Then (not to mention Death, which was also fairly common) as best as we know how. Whether the homely things of fire and hearth or the horrid things such as the shield-wall and the boar's head, Cornwell strives to evoke a different world. "The past is a different country," and that may be why so many of the skills that go into good SF & F are also found in writing good historical novels.

The maneuvers end in a great battle against the Danes in Somerset, where Uhtred manages to pay off some old debts and save some others. There are many hints of what is to come, and we shall no doubt learn more of these people and their world when this saga is . . . [To Be Continued]

SOME THINGS NEVER CHANGE

"Men love their ships," I said, "and fight for them. You honor what we fight for, lord. We should decorate our ships." I spoke harshly, thinking we would love our ships more if they had beasts on their prows and had proper names like *Blood-Spiller*, *Sea-Wolf*, or *Widow-Maker*. Instead the *Heahengel* led the *Seruphin* and *Cristenlic* through the tangled waters, and behind us were the *Apostl* and the *Eftwyrd*, which meant Judgment Day and was probably the best named of our fleet because she sent more than one Dane to the sea's embrace.

— *The Last Kingdom*, Page 238

Royal Navy ships used to have kick-arse, cool names like *Revenge*, *Warspite*, or *Formidable*, or stirring historical ones like *Nelson* or *Anson*. Now they have ones like *Cardigan Bay* and *Mounts Bay*. Those two used to be named *Aboukir Bay* and *Quiberon Bay* but somebody didn't want to go reminding the French that they had got themselves giggered.

VICTORY OR DEATH

THE MIGHTIEST MACHINE

Review by Joseph T Major of
CENTAURI DREAMS:

Imagining and Planning Interstellar Exploration

by Paul Gilster

(Copernicus Books; 2004;
ISBN 0-387-00436-X; \$25.00)

For the past few years, thoughtful Fans have wondered where all the really good SF writers have gone to. After one ballot after another with dispiriting choices between sappy fantasies, weary children's books, and moribund old series, a state of ennui has set in. A state of ennui that has moreover shown itself unbreachable by an energetic new magazine editor or a determined anthologist. Where have they all gone?

Into designing interstellar space probes, it looks like.

Science and SF writer Paul Gilster has laid forth herein a survey of the multifarious space farers and describes their cosmic star-spanning concepts. These terms are not to be used lightly. The concept of a pinhole camera with a pinhole several meters in diameter, for example, sounds like something that would be operated by Arcot, Wade, and Morey under the supervision of Sir Austin Cardyng. Yet William Cash of the University of Colorado at Boulder has not only described this grand device, something straight from the pages of Don A. Stuart or Doc Smith, but explained its startling uses [Pages 46-48]. Would knowing anything about the weather on the planets of Alpha Centauri (A or B, don't be picky) do any good? This could do that!

As we've noted, the roots of this movement reach all the way back to the Flat, to P. E. Cleator, Val Cleaver, and Sir Arthur C. Clarke, and the British Interplanetary Society. Indeed, the book cites repeatedly such familiar names as "Cordwainer Smith", Philip K. Dick, Poul Anderson, and so on and so on. The field Gilster describes is one of vast and multifarious speculation. Proposals of a broad variety exist, from nuclear rockets to interstellar light-sails, from nanotechnology Neumann machines to gigantic flying comets. This is heady stuff, and there is no lack of variety. Just the idea of sending a probe out there, even if it finds nothing, is mind-expanding enough.

And yet . . . Gilster cites the Luna Cup proposal, the idea to celebrate the Columbus quinentennial with a race of solar sail probes to the Moon [Page 109], part of a grand stream of proposals for such probes. Readers of the old *New Destinies* bookazines will remember the enthusiastic hopes raised there for this.

None of these magnificent plans ever got off the ground. Gilster cites the X-Prize, but it can be noted that there has been a decided lack of effort in that field since the successful flight, even by the winners.

This sort of proposal is very enthralling, very mind-liberating. But no one seems able to do more than dream.

For a portrait of powerful and promising dreams, this book is a most enthralling and informative read. May it inspire someone to make all these dreams come true, for me and you.

“I TOLD YOU SO”

Review by Joseph T Major of
THE DRAGONS OF EXPECTATION:
*Reality and Delusion in the Course of
 History*

by Robert Conquest
 (W. W. Norton; 2005;
 ISBN 0-393-05933-2; \$24.95)

All too often, when Robert Conquest's horrific work on the Yezhovshchina is mentioned, it's with a casual comment that it has, of course, been discredited. Strangely enough, these discrediting never quite seem to be referenced, the way you will be informed that the Zimmermann Telegram was a British forgery, but never given any proof thereof. (Herr Zimmermann the *Reichsaußenminister* himself, not to mention the entire *Reichstag*, said otherwise at the time; read Barbara Tuchman's *The Zimmermann Telegram* (1958, 1966) for the details).

Unfazed, Conquest has gone along and continued to write books of commentary about the Soviet and post-Soviet eras. This latest is a continuation and further exploration of the themes he had covered in his previous book, *Reflections on a Ravaged Century* (1999).

To understand the why, one must first understand the how, and accordingly Conquest begins by discussing the contemporary ideological underpinning of progressive thought. This involves showing in brief the evolution of the meaning of such terms as “socialism” and “democracy”. These ideas are translated into action differently in different societies, and for Conquest the great divide is that between Albion and Albion's seed on the one hand, and the Continent and its heirs on the other.

Favoring the former has come into disrepute. Conquest pairs an unusual pair of lovers of country in a telling discussion:

More basic may be Orwell's idea that most people are in some sense “nationalists,” that is, they have and need an emotional allegiance to their country — or against their country. An antipatriotic strain can certainly be noted in one variety of liberalism. Its most frequent symptom is the use of Dr. Johnson's remark “Patriotism is the last refuge of a scoundrel” — commonly employed, even now, as a sort of put-down by critics of the patriotic.

How anyone could imagine that Johnson was against patriotism in its modern sense is most peculiar. If anything, he was almost a chauvinist. In controversy, his main victims were Whigs, about whom he made many offensive remarks . . . The word “patriotism” for Johnson meant, of course, in its then usage, adherence to the most ostentatious Whiggism, what would now be called “leftism.” Macaulay's treatment, in his essay on Horace Walpole, is the most readily available. Himself of course a Whig,

Macaulay treats the “patriot” faction with contempt. One should surely treat similarly the subliterate misuse of Johnson.

— *The Dragons of Expectation*, Pages 19-20

But ideas have consequences, and Conquest demonstrates that such horrid ideas have horrid consequences. As Richard Pipes did in *The Unknown Lenin* (1999), showing the evil of the Soviet founder in his own words, so does Conquest in the deeds of his followers, giving examples of their viciousness and brutality. Such as how Lenin imposed his autocracy on the Bolsheviks, who then proceeded to take over and dominate the Russian Revolution.

Which in turn attempted to corrupt the rest of the world. Soviet financing of other Communist Parties is now public knowledge, in general in *The Secret World of American Communism* (1996) by Harvey Klehr, John Earl Haynes, and Fridrikh Firsov, and for the specific case of the U.S, John Barron's *Operation SOLO* (1995). Not surprisingly, the outpouring of subsidy to other countries' CP continued until the end; the people and groups on this list could stand more inquiry.

Supporters of the Future That Works often pointed to its rational employment of science and technology (e.g. Hoyle and Clarke citing the number of engineers in high government positions in the Soviet government). Perhaps not surprisingly, that too turned out to be corrupt. Conquest describes briefly but in telling detail such matters as the abysmal planning of the Steel City of Magnitogorsk, which had neither transport nor decent worker housing (nowhere near as good even as the arms manufacturing city of Stahlstadt, Oregon in Verne's *Les Cinq Cents Millions de la Béguem* [*The Begum's Fortune*] (1879), for example). Or the list of the grand Engineers' Dreams projects for great canals, mighty dams, and far-flung railways that were abandoned at Stalin's death [Page 110], vain and useless monuments to the Great Stalin, the Great Leader and Teacher, look upon his works, ye mighty, and despair. As for the engineers in the Soviet government, Conquest lists one running theme in the purge trials: the unmasking of plots by engineers, who confessed their crimes and were shot, in great and ghastly numbers, from the Shakhty trial, which was recounted in its cruelty and absurdity by Eugene Lyons (*Assignment in Utopia* (1937), and on.

One point worth noting is the contrast between the perception and the reality. While foreign admirers painted a picture of glorious beauty and harmony in the Soviet Union, more recent events have shown a different image; more evil than even Conquest imagined. This chapter is a basic overview; even though more detailed descriptions of various perspectives of this deceit exist, including Eugene Lyons's *The Red Decade* (1941), Paul Hollander's *Anti-Americanism* (1992), and *In Denial* (2003) by John Earl Haynes and Harvey Klehr, the conclusive work is yet to be written.

Another contrasting perception and reality is described in two chapters, one on the Great

Patriotic War and the Communist contribution to the, er, side they always compare their enemies to, and another on the Cold War. Conquest describes the sources of the attitudes decried by Klehr and Haynes in *In Denial*. As a “premature anti-Communist”, he gets no respect.

From the perception he goes to the perceivers, describing in brief but incisive images four of the better-known deniers. While the Lord Snow of Leicester is not around to reply, John Kenneth Galbraith is, though unlikely to stoop from his overbearing altitude to do so. (In the list of pro-Soviet scientists that Snow mentions and Conquest cites, there is, perhaps fortunately, one omission: J. B. S. Haldane, Agent INTELLIGENTSIA; see *Venona: The Greatest Secret of the Cold War* by “Nigel West” (1999), Pages 69-86 for the sorry tale.) For balance, he also includes Simone de Beauvoir, whose attitudes in some ways prefigured Holocaust deniers'. Among the living unlikely to admit they were wrong are those responsible for the CNN series and book on *The Cold War*, from Ted Turner himself on down. Conquest lists a few of the many errors and deceptions presented in that show.

In the end, reality struck back. Conquest gives a few of the real problems that undercut the Soviet dominion. To take one:

As to productivity, in what is now seen as its best period, under Brezhnev, the USSR used eight times as many workers as the United States, working on 30 percent more arable land per head, to produce less than 90 percent of the American grain total for a population 20 percent larger. American farmers were getting one pound of beef for every eight to nine pounds of feed; in the Soviet Union the proportion was one pound of beef per fifteen pounds of feed. The target for the Five-Year Plan was to raise milk output to three thousand kilograms per cow per year; an efficient British farm got about six thousand kilograms.

— *The Dragons of Expectation*, Page 167

Just above this, Conquest characterizes the Soviet Union, the classless society, as “class-ridden”. For historical, if not anthropological, interest, read Michael Voslensky's *Nomenklatura: The Soviet Ruling Class* (1984 [Eep!]), a work somewhat more critical and investigatory of its topic than, say, *Coming of Age in Samoa*.

But ding-dong, the witch is dead, and an analysis of the state of affairs is in order. Conquest is, you will recall, a contributor to the *Oxford Book of Modern Verse* and a certified poetry critic, as well as having been on the editorial board of the British Science Fiction Book Club. Beyond those boundaries, he finds little to admire. He quotes his fellow BSFBC editor the late Sir Kingsley Amis on contemporary art and literary critics: “The trouble with chaps like that is that they have no taste — I don't mean bad taste, just the mental organ that makes you say This is bloody good or

This is piss is simply missing, and they have to orientate themselves by things like 'importance' and 'seriousness' and 'depth' and 'originality' and 'consensus' (= 'trend')." [Page 188]. Whatever one has to say about *New Maps of Hell* (1960), at least Amis made value judgments there. As for the love of the primitive, it was said earlier by a Greek guy:

At this they begged me not to be offended; swearing they had spoken in earnest, and that I had done what their very newest craftsmen were winning praise for. To prove it they led me to a shelf, covered with such wretched botched things as you will see at home far up in the back hills, offered at a little shrine of no reputation, the work of some ham-fisted peasant who never saw inside a workshop, but can sell them for a handful of olives or of barley, because the place has no one better. "You see," they said, "how we learn strength from the early forms." . . . But the thought in my mind had been, "If I had my Companions here, and a few thousand warriors, I could sweep Crete from end to end. These people are in second childhood; fruit for the plucking; finished, played out."

— Mary Renault, *The King Must Die* (1958)

The decline of criticism is highlighted. Conquest quotes a paragraph on the *Odyssey* that is so mind-bogglingly stupefying that it makes you think that the old man missed one or two guys when he got his bow strung. From there he goes to comments on the use of history, and ends with a poem on human progression and exploration that I wish I could call to the attention of the Rhysling Award people.

Conquest ends with two fascinating appendices. Appendix A is a short but broad-ranged list of predictions by himself that the Evil Empire would not last forever, compiled to be more "I told you so" to all the thinkers who could not see an end to the Soviet rule. Appendix B is a more worked-out version of his earlier proposal from *Reflections on a Ravaged Century* for a union of the English-speaking nations (except India, and anyone recalling L. Sprague de Camp's "The Contraband Cow" (1942), where a union of the U.S. and India has democratically banned the consumption of beef may be grateful for the exception), laid out comprehensively, if briefly.

Among with the discussions of great and weighty matters are many little side-comments. For example:

. . . I note the writer Anthony Powell, in his *Journals* for 1982, describing his getting an honorary doctorate at Bristol University. Its chancellor was the Nobel Prize biologist Dorothy Hodgkin, who made a speech urging that spending on education should exceed that for defense. Afterwards, Powell felt he had to tell her that he disagreed; if the

country was not safe there would be no education to protect. His point in telling the story, though, was "I have never seen anyone so surprised."

— *The Dragons of Expectation*, Page 48

And in the department of protecting education we have:

. . . Another friend, the poet Donald Davie, was a Royal Navy radio operator in Murmansk and heard the Commodore reporting the numbers and size of the German squadron, ending "I am attacking," which Donald said was the greatest thing he had ever heard. (A few days later, the Commodore arrived in Murmansk. He had lost an eye.)

— *The Dragons of Expectation*, Pages 132-133

For the story of the one-eyed Commodore Sherbrooke, V.C., see Dudley Pope's *73 North: The Battle of the Barents Sea* (1958).

HER LIFE IN COURT

Review by Joseph T Major of

HISTORY ON TRIAL:

My Day in Court with David Irving

by Deborah E. Lipstadt

(Ecco; 2005; ISBN 0-06-059376-8; \$25.95)

C'est un crime d'empoisonner les petits et les humbles, d'exaspérer les passions de réaction et d'intolérance, en s'abritant derrière l'odieux antisémitisme, dont la grande France libérale des droits de l'homme mourra, si elle n'en est pas guérie.

[It is a crime to poison the minds of the little and the humble, to aggravate the passions of reaction and intolerance, while taking shelter behind the odious anti-Semitism, of which the great liberal France of the rights of man will die, if she is not cured.]

— *J'Accuse!*, Émile Zola

Every year, the Ohio Valley Military Society (OVMS) holds here in Louisville its Show of Shows, a gargantuan mart for militaria and other related items. Lisa and I went this year and we think we'll go again; we enjoyed ourselves immensely. They had books, videos, models, medals, uniforms, flags, even guns.

The featured guest was General Paul Tibbetts, commander of the famous 509th Composite Group, U.S.A.A.F. and pilot of the *Enola Gay*. I have a picture of him and Lisa, right after he signed her copy of his book.

There was a writer there, too. While Lisa was waiting in line I went to get a drink of water and on the way back I passed the booth where he was selling and signing his books. After a moment of stunned surprise I went on to tell Lisa the news. The sign said something like, "David Irving will sign his books here today."

A few minutes later we went back by there and I saw him, looking totally unfazed. And totally not broke. But then, nobody was buying the books . . .

David John Cawdell Irving stopped being a "controversial" author back in the sixties, when he was sued for making libelous claims about Captain Jack Broome, R.N., in his book *The Destruction of Convoy PQ-17* (1968). Broome won, but thanks to the bankruptcy of Irving's publisher, never saw a single decimalised penny of the £40,000 he was awarded.

You'd think the man would have learned something, but no, he began a career of filing suits. This is the story of how he really came a cropper, as told by his would-be target.

Professor Lipstadt tells the tale of a lawsuit as seen by its target, describing in some detail and with much feeling the problems of today's legal system. The preparations for the trial were quite elaborate and intrusive; after all, (some) people have rights!

Not surprisingly, she takes her own perspective on the witnesses, but even so the portrayal of Irving's defense witnesses is not a pretty one. Those expecting Horace Rumpole to fufuh and harrumph and uncover the decisive point of evidence would have been disappointed by defence barrister Richard Rampton's not even bothering to cross-examine most of them.

The defense expert witnesses come off better, but they have mainly had their own say (Richard J. Evans, *Lying About Hitler: History, Holocaust, and the David Irving Trial* (2001) and Robert Jan van Pelt, *The Case for Auschwitz: Evidence from the Irving Trial* (2002) for example).

One serious problem is the misconceptions involved in observing the suit. Many, of course, decried this dreadful lawsuit brought by the Establishment to silence this critic. But even those who ought to have understood did not do quite so well; the specific example of D. D. Guttenplan is cited. (And only his article in *The New York Times*; it appears to me that the outrageously pro-Irving article in *The Atlantic Monthly* (February 2000) was even more hyped by the editors — all as opposed to his book, *The Holocaust on Trial* (2001).) Not to mention that when Lipstadt was to appear on C-Span's Book TV, apparently under the impression that the Fairness Doctrine was still in force, the producers wanted to cover a lecture by Irving, thus losing Lipstadt.

Lipstadt seems to not want to go into certain areas of discussion. For example, there is the Clarence Darrow-style legal strategy Irving used — to imply that the expert witnesses of the opposing side are saying what they say only because of the pay, implying that if (to take this case as an example) he had offered Evans, van Pelt, etc. more money they would have enthusiastically and even joyously declared that yes, he was a great and innovative historian and this Holocaust stuff was shoddily-based and most unsound.

Much of it is not worth repeating, admittedly; the claims that Judge Gray had been "bought" by the Jews, or that Irving was taking part in a vast conspiracy to discredit Revisionism by taking a fall, and so on, scarcely bear repetition, much less refutation. One wonders if Lipstadt would even credit the accusation that she herself is a "Holocaust

Denier”, on the grounds that she denies the Stalinist targeted extermination by resettlement of the “collaborationist nationalities,” and the massacre of the Cambodians. (It’s worth noting that when Ward Churchill claims that Lipstadt ignores the Armenian genocide, he’s wrong.)

For a report on the legal system by someone who was ground in its jaws, this is an interesting and meticulous historical analysis.

One of the problems is that the Final Victory never quite seems final to the other side. To take one example: forensic experts, judging the ballistics evidence in the Sacco-Vanzetti Case to be conclusive, have declared that since they see that the case is over, it’s over. Partisans, with a never-ending selection of alternative witnesses to the Never-Ending Wrong, are always able to find more reasons to show the martyrs wronged. And so on. As you can see, Irving is still going, still going. . .

One wonders if Irving hadn’t sued too soon; in the current intellectual climate in Europe, he might have had more public support. He could certainly have picked more credible expert witnesses; Noam Chomsky, Ward Churchill, Alexander Cockburn, Norman Finklestein, Christopher Hitchens, Barry Loberfeld, Masanori Nishioka, Gore Vidal, A. N. Wilson, to name a few. His legal tactics were quite mild, really; though of course the plaintiff, he could have gone into a “Stalingrad Defence” mode, as did the husband in a recent Connecticut divorce trial (*Anom vs. Tenkorang*) who refused ordinary stipulations, denied that they were even married, and dragged out the litigation in other ways.

One wonders what might have happened had he chosen to sue in the States, not for libel, but under the terms of the Racketeer Influenced and Corrupt Organizations (RICO) Act, for “conspiracy to suppress his right of free speech”, in a judicial system where procedure is everything and factual content is nothing.

It’s well to note that conspiracy theories have rarely prospered when they enter venues where not just selected facts may be presented. From the Mendel Beilis case to the Oklahoma City Bombing Special Grand Jury, the conspiracists have laid out their theories, lost, and gone away whining that the Conspiracy has become even greater. Though as persevering and persistent, Irving was no more fortunate legally than District Attorney Jim Garrison.

A FLAMING SWORD

Review by Joseph T Major of
A PUBLIC BETRAYED:

An Inside Look at Japanese Media Atrocities and Their Warnings to the West

by Adam Gamble and Takesato Watanabe
(Regnery; 2004; ISBN 0-89526-046-8;
\$27.95)

<http://www.apublicbetrayed.com>

Et c’est un crime encore que de s’être appuyé sur la presse immonde, que de s’être laissé défendre par toute la fripouille de Paris, de sorte que voilà la fripouille qui triomphe insolemment,

dans la défaite du droit et de la simple probité.

[And another of their crimes is that they have accepted the support of the unclean press, have suffered themselves to be championed by all the knavery of Paris, so that now we witness knavery’s insolent triumph in the downfall of right and of simple probity.]

— *J’Accuse!*, Émile Zola

On Page 202 of this book, there is shown the cover of a Japanese book. The front shows a group of children carrying school satchels; off to the side is a pile of toys. On the back cover is a drawing of an European-style townscape.

One could expect, therefore, to open this book and find, say, a prolonged battle of girls in sailor suits kickboxing giant robots that have just transformed from their disguises of seemingly ordinary motor vehicles, or any other such manga plot. However, a photograph of the cover of a different translation of this volume is appended below; it’s Anne Frank’s *The Diary of a Young Girl*.

Now the deculturation of Anneliese has been observed before: see *Jews in the Japanese Mind* by Goodman and Miyazawa (2000), a book that the authors rely on to buttress this point. What they do beyond that is to show how this fits into a greater whole.

As you know, Japanese society strives for harmony; they desire *wa*. Often, decisions are taken at surprisingly low levels; the acts of juniors pressure their superiors (or ostensible superiors) into affirmation. Formal forms of organization are supplemented and even overridden by informal, unstructured, coordination. Such coordination indeed is found among business enterprises, the government, non-governmental organizations such as academic ones, and unions.

All these methodologies, according to the prevailing wisdom of the seventies, were going to propel Japan Inc. into world economic and technological domination. Stories in science-fiction magazines, not to mention the endless hordes of animé, manga, and hentai fans, affirmed this doctrine.

This book describes a real-life application of this methodology, and the Heian-era-style spacemen don’t seem to be in view.

The Japanese press is highly concentrated in ownership. Add to that the habit of informal relationships, where journalists socialize with governmental press representatives, and the desire for harmony, and the result, it seems, is a press that is in harmony with the government.

This is not particularly a good thing. The authors cite as example the two ordeals of Yoshiyuki Kono [properly Kono Yoshiyuki; all names are given in the English style of family name last]; first as the victim of a gassing by sarin nerve gas that left him hospitalized and his wife brain damaged, and second as the convicted-without-trial instigator of the gassing. The authors tellingly compare Kono to Richard Jewell, the unfortunate hero of Eric Rudolph’s Atlanta Olympic bombing, who for his efficient and brave action was convicted of the bombing

by the FBI and the press without the bother of a trial, leaking information one to the other. Kono was similarly innocent; the gassing was as it happened the initial deployment of weapons of mass destruction by the Aum Shinrikyo sect. Nevertheless, the newspapers described Kono as the perpetrator, gave flatly wrong information about his (actually nonexistent) ability to carry out such an attack, and when he was cruelly exonerated by the Tokyo subway sarin attack, did not even get much of an apology.

Japan has been cited (i.e. *Jews in the Japanese Mind*) as an example of “anti-Semitism without Jews”; an intellectual disease that is all too common. These authors describe the infamous case of Masanori Nishioka, the author of a Holocaust-denial article published in the subsequently-defunct magazine *Marco Polo*, a publication which targets upwardly-mobile young men. (The authors compare it to *Esquire*, which incidentally published an article in its February 2001 issue sympathetically portraying Western Holocaust deniers, and did not go out of business afterwards.)

International protests caused advertisers to withdraw advertising from *Marco Polo*, and the publishers, Bungeishunju, folded the magazine, and made many senior executives take salary cuts and attend a session given by Abraham Cooper of the Simon Wiesenthal Center. The editor at one point said that he had been very moved by a visit to Auschwitz, but hey, the article sold magazines. (A point raised elsewhere is that these magazines have no subscription base, so single-issue sales are crucial.)

For a similar issue closer to home, one has but to examine the Japanese attitude on the Rape of Nanking. Which, or so it seems, ranges from minimization to outright denial. The comparative methodologies described are startlingly similar. Deborah Lipstadt won her case. Iris Chang, author of *The Rape of Nanking: The Forgotten Holocaust of World War II* (1997) committed suicide. The authors describe the campaign to refute Chang, using methods and means that are remarkably familiar, from nitpicking to outright accusations of lying. (I would suggest that citing Noam Chomsky in any connection with this thesis (Page 300) is remarkably undesirable.)

The subsequent chapter covers the issue of the so-called “comfort women”; the authors strikingly describe them as “sex slaves”. After all, prostitutes get paid. The brutality of their existence was further exacerbated by the refusal of the community to acknowledge its complicity. Instead, the women were portrayed as greedy malicious liars.

As for the matter of *wa*, one has but to read the description of the campaign against Daisaku Ikeda of the Soka Gakkai. Soka Gakkai is a Buddhist sect connected with the New Komei Party, an opposition group. Ikeda was accused of rape by a former subordinate, Nobuko Nobuhira. The courts dismissed Nobuhira’s claims with prejudice, finding them not only false but unsound. Nevertheless, the Japanese newsweekly *Shukari Shincho* took them up and sensationally publicized the accusations.

It's worth noting that such accusations are not unknown in other parts of the world. Surely the editors at *Shukari Shincho* could have said something like "IKEDA: 'I DID NOT HAVE SEX WITH THAT WOMAN.'" Similarly, when a powerful religious group has ties, even informally, with a political party, as Soka Gakkai did with the original Komei Party and as it does with the New Komei Party, there are valid questions to be raised.

What we have here, though, seems to be the use of any weapon against an outsider. Truth and accuracy are less relevant.

What sort of publications are these, anyway? The authors describe the principal sources of these media excesses, the weekly newsmagazines called *shukanshi*; describing four typical ones, *Shukan Post*, *Shukan Gendai*, *Shukan Bunshun*, and *Shukan Shincho*. These contain a variety of material, from hard news to gossip, book reviews and comic strips, and so on. And naked women. Now to take one example no one considers *The Sun* to be particularly deviant, Page Three girls or no Page Three girls. Here the authors seem to be arguing somewhat diffusely. Particularly since the magazines covered all seem to be focusing on a very real scandal having to do with corruption in highway building.

Often, the portrayal of a culture is clichéd and stereotypical. Seeing the Japanese as gentle gentry who entertained each other at tea ceremonies; pebble-glassed buck-toothed not quite human brawlers; or super-efficient super-technological enterprising developers each produced a different error in responding to their actions. The problem is further exacerbated when the culture itself promulgates its own clichés and stereotypes.

At the beginning of the radio show *Big Town*, the heroic editor Steve Wilson intoned his mantra: "The freedom of the press is a flaming sword! Use it justly, hold it high, guard it well!" But, we are finding, just use has turned out to be a very mutable term.

The decline into sensationalism is hardly new; Richard Jewell might well have felt sympathy for Leo Frank, his predecessor of sorts. Yet how can the modern business model, which promotes efficiency of size, not spur on the profit before all mentality? Perhaps the response to the problem of a certain memorandum with anomalous typographical elements can rather give one a hint.

THE FRIENDLY ARCTIC

Review by Joseph T Major of
PRISONERS OF THE NORTH

by Pierre Berton

(Carroll & Graf; 2004;

ISBN 0-7867-1507-3; \$26.00)

Nor did the Antarctic represent to Shackleton merely the grubby means to a financial end. In a very real sense he needed it — something so enormous, so demanding, that it provided a touchstone for his monstrous ego and implacable drive. In ordinary situations,

Shackleton's tremendous capacity for boldness and daring found almost nothing worthy of its pulling power; he was a Percheron draft horse harnessed to a child's wagon cart. But in the Antarctic — here was a burden which challenged every atom of his strength.

— Robert Lansing, *Endurance*

Lansing said of his topic, "The great leaders of historical record . . . have rarely fitted any conventional mold, and it is perhaps an injustice to evaluate them in ordinary terms."

Arctic historian Pierre Berton, author of *The Arctic Grail* (1988), is writing about five diverse people who, in their separate and uncommon ways, all went looking for this touchstone. I can also make the comparison with *Seven Spies Who Changed the World* by "Nigel West" (1991); like Allason, Berton interviewed many of the people whose tales are recounted here and recorded his relationship with them as well as their deeds.

Like Shackleton, like the spies such as Dusko Popov, ex-Sir Anthony Blunt, and Greville Wynne, the people covered here are driven. Like Allason's topics, they are diverse; not all successful, and not all successful by their own terms (not always the same thing). While Berton's people may not have changed the world, they made a difference to all around them.

Klondike Joe Boyle was a partner of Bill Gates. Different Bill Gates, though; but was the Microsoft®™ Bill Gates is GOD? magnate the grandson of Swiftwater Bill of the Klondike gold rush? Boyle was a rarity; someone who actually made money mining gold during a gold rush. But then, he realized that being small is no good and brought in the biggest dredges around. You have to spend money to make money, and he did both.

So far, he would have been nothing but a colorful character of the North. But then the Great War came. Boyle raised a company of machine-gunners from among the miners, and was named an honorary Lieutenant-Colonel in the Canadian Militia.

But he wanted to be a real officer. Where he ended up had as about its only connection with the Yukon being cold — he was in Russia, in the heart of the Bolshevik Revolution. Or at least, trying to save Romania from the worst of it. For a man who didn't know any of the local languages he seems to have done not too badly.

William Stephenson is not to be confused with Sir William Stephenson, though there are some questions about the reliability of the memoirs of both of them. In a preemptive measure to avoid confusion with the topic of H. Montgomery Hyde's biography *The Quiet Canadian* (1962) (and also William Stevenson's thrilling novel *A Man Called 48100*, or *A Man Called Intrepid* (1976)), our subject went back to his immigrant roots, and re-Icelandicized his name to **Vilhjalmur Steffanson**.

Stef, as his friends called him (his underlings called him "Windjammer") became known as a man who really went native, including (of course) having an Inuk child; though Alex

Steffanson never quite got the public notice Anaukaq Henson and Kalipaluk Peary got. In matters that could be talked about in public back then, Stef became known as an advocate of Inuit ways, from dressing like them when in the North, all the way to living on their all-meat diet and doing very well, thank you Dr. Atkins; all as described in his book *The Friendly Arctic* (1921).

In spite of the positive attitude Berton takes towards Stef, he really does not come off well. He was rather careless in dealing with, for example, the Soviet government during his research for his Arctic Encyclopedia. And Berton tries to spin the unfortunate events of the *Karluk* expedition (see Jennifer Niven's *The Ice Master* (2001) for the rest of the story) and glosses over the tragic results of the second Wrangel Island expedition (see Jennifer Niven's *Ada Blackjack* (2003) for that).

Jane Griffin was another of Berton's topics who had a name-change. In this case it was by marriage, and she picked on one of Barrow's Boys, Trafalgar veteran John Franklin. **Jane, Lady Franklin** (after her husband became Sir John for his endeavours) was best known for her efforts in trying to find her husband. As a result of the disappearance of the Franklin expedition, vast tracts of the Canadian North were explored. All by people trying to get away from being spurred on by Lady Franklin, evidently. She was a quite forceful and determined woman, yet in other ways rather modest and even shy.

These expeditions she called up eventually found the bodies. The Franklin expedition failed due to poor provisioning. There are three theories regarding this — scurvy, lead poisoning, and botulinism. Berton thinks that all three contributed. In spite of this, "going native" was still thought wrong, thus leaving the North Pole to Peary.

Meanwhile, Lady Franklin continued her world odyssey, receiving acclaim, honor, and interest in just about every corner of the globe. (Though she never seems to have ventured to drop in on the Bay.) Perhaps the restrained-Victorian-women story needs a little tweaking.

Besides the two existing drawings of Lady Franklin (I said she was a bit shy), Berton also prints the last photograph of Sir John. He looks rather unwell; not the sort of man to send off on a strenuous task. What Berton finds most interesting about the former Miss, or Ms., Griffin is how she in effect created the Arctic explorer — he did it all for her.

Kevin Krajick's *Barren Lands* (2001) is an interesting story about the exploration and exploitation of one of the newest sources of diamonds in the world — the Canadian North! A bitter irony is that **John Hornby** died of starvation in a cabin not all that far from the diamond pipes. He probably wouldn't have cared for the incomers.

In David Roberts's *Great Exploration Hoaxes* (1982), one chapter is not much more than a summary of another book, *The Strange Last Voyage of Donald Crowhurst* (1970) by Nicholas Tomalin. Similarly, this chapter is not much more than a summary of Clive Powell-Williams's *Cold Burial: A True Story of*

Endurance and Disaster (2002).

Hornby was a wanderer, someone who never could quite get along among people. Thus as when he deserted from the Canadian army and got back to Canada (this was during the Big War, and he had already won the Military Cross at the front), after trying to find him, the authorities gave up and demobilized him. In short, someone for whom the phrase “no fixed place of abode” was invented.

Furthermore, while his wanderings across the Barrens were certainly marvels of effort, he had the bizarre opinion that no such journey was of any use unless it came close to disaster. In 1927 he determined to stay in the Barrens, and got his disaster when his lack of knowledge about the caribou migration led to his starving to death. Along with the two other guys who were taken by his image.

For all that he comes across as determined, energetic, and interesting, Hornby seems to have been impelled to commit suicide in a particularly outre fashion.

Unfortunately they were a little too far inland to have cremated him in a grounded ship’s furnace. Isaac Asimov, concerned about the excessive delight in his very early work “Nightfall”, might well have felt something in common with **Robert W. Service**, whose early works like “The Cremation of Sam McGee” (in a grounded ship’s furnace) were his best-known.

Service seems to have been a remarkably private man in some ways. For example, he did not bother to correct a listing of poets killed in the First World War that included him. On the other hand, he appeared as himself in the movie *The Spoilers* with Marlene Dietrich, Randolph Scott, and John Wayne:

<http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0035369/>

The portrait of Service that Berton paints is one of a man who was caught by his image, but managed to use it to satisfy himself. If he was known as the author of “The Cremation of Sam McGee” and “The Shooting of Dan McGrew”, he used that image to have an interesting and rewarding life. The story of how he met his wife is particularly interesting; he extracted two young women from a disorderly crowd come to see a parade, fell for the younger one, and married her. Such haphazard meetings can’t come to any good end, and indeed they only stayed married for forty-four years, until he died. (Page 291 has a picture of Germaine Service, and you can form your own judgment as to his excellent taste and quickness of decision and action.) She lived to be a hundred and one.

While these aren’t Immensely Significant people, they are an interesting and intriguing set of case studies of how the North can influence and dominate an individual. These are portraits ranging from triumph to disaster, images of the north in the people influenced — trapped, even — by its allure and mystery.

Pierre Berton died on November 30, 2004, after a long and enriching career. He will be missed.

HEALTH ISSUES

by Joe

On the medical front: Ms. S, the nurse-practitioner, is satisfied with my blood-sugar levels (so am I, for what it’s worth), and has advised me to cut back on the testing. My fingers are grateful.

Dr. K. is also pleased with the results of the other tests. I still have a liver, much to the disappointment of many. He is commanding that I have death rays shot through my lower abdomen this coming April . . . **another** small bowel X-ray. I’m getting used to not eating.



I’m not the only one with health problems amid the contributors to this merry medley. **Grant C. McCormick** had a toe amputated on **February 23, 2005**.

TO THE LAST ROLL CALL

by Joe

You do very well, my friends, to treat me with some little respect, for in honoring me you are honoring both France and yourselves. It is not merely an old, grey-mustached officer whom you see eating his omlette or draining his glass, but it is a piece of history, and of the most glorious history which our own or any country has ever had. In me you see one of the last of those wonderful men, the men who were veterans when they were yet boys, who learned to use a sword earlier than a razor, and during a hundred battles had never let the enemy see the colour of their knapsacks. . .

— “How the Brigadier came to the Castle of Doom”, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle

On August 2, 1956, a man named Albert A. Woolson died in Duluth, Minnesota. I was one going on two and such matters didn’t impress me at the time.

Albert A. Woolson was significant in that he was the last surviving veteran of the American Civil War. He was 109 years old; he had been born in Antwerp, New York, and served in the First Minnesota Volunteer Heavy Artillery, in the Army of the Cumberland. When he died, the Grand Army of the Republic ceased to exist. (There were supposedly some Confederate soldiers who outlived him, but as B. D. Burkett mentions in *Stolen Valor* (1998), they were impostors; the last genuine Confederate soldier died in 1951.)

On March 5, Lisa and I went to visit the last surviving Kentucky veteran of the First World War. Robley is a sort of cousin — his mother’s second husband was my cousin Madison, and his aunt was the grandmother of my cousin Howard, whose wife is Lisa’s aunt Daphne. He was, perhaps needless to say, born in Hopkinsville in 1901.

Once upon a time, there had been millions of them. When I delivered the *Louisville Times*, back in Frankfort, one of my customers had been in the Marines in France during the Big War, and was pleased to have a carrier who knew what all that meant. Family research turned up relatives, including the one who was a Hollywood acting teacher and had published a unit newspaper. Those are all gone now.

Robley is deaf. We had to speak carefully and loudly, and repeat ourselves a bit. Senile he is definitely not. He had some firm opinions about Iraq and about immigrants. (He left out the Orthodox Church, for which Lisa forgives him.) He lives at home, in the south of Louisville, though of course people check on him. He also volunteers at the local Veterans’ Hospital, three days a week.

As the last of his sort here, he has been quite the cynosure. He talked about going to Frankfort recently, and I suppose the upcoming Memorial Day will be a busy one indeed. Not to mention the eleventh hour of the eleventh day of the eleventh month of 2005.

He was very glad to see us when we came and wants us to come back again. I’ve told a number of other relatives who have some connection (his stepbrother’s children, for example), or some interest.

History is not something alien and far-away, it’s part of you. As I observed to my niece; Sarah had sung “You’re the Top” in her high school’s performance of “Anything Goes”, which has a line, “You’re the top, you’re Lady Astor”. I told her who Nancy Witchell Langhorne Astor, Lady Astor was; the first woman elected to the British Parliament — and Sarah’s fifth cousin twice removed.

. . . Treasure it in your minds and pass it on to your children, for the memory of a great age is the most precious treasure that a nation can possess. As the tree is nurtured by its cast leaves, so it is these dead men and vanished days which may bring out another blossoming of heroes, of rulers, and of sages . . .
— “How Etienne Gerard said Good-bye to his Master”, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle

BATS

by Lisa

Since Trinlay brought up the subject of bats and since they were on the first page of editorial subjects I thought it might be worth delving into the world’s only flying mammal, especially after I learned a brown bat can put paid to 600 mosquitoes an hour. Any creature that can do that is a welcome visitor.

I had always thought of bats as being rodents and was surprised to learn they were more

closely related to primates than to mice. I had not known there were 950 different species of bats, only three of which are vampire bats. Some bats are vegetarians and live on nectar and fruit.

They are no more prone to rabies than any other mammal and groom themselves much as cats do. Pallid bats eat scorpions and centipedes, thus preventing centipedes from causing accidents by getting in a driver's sandal and stinging the unfortunate driver.

The bats I encountered on the two websites listed below were a surprisingly diverse, interesting bunch. They range in size from one with a wingspan close to six feet long down to one that weighs less than a penny. They are not blind, although not as sight-oriented as us.

According to the Kentucky Bat Working Group (<http://www.biology.eku.edu/bats.htm>), there are 16 species of bats here in the Bluegrass State.

Information from two websites: bats4kids (<http://members.aol.com/bats4kids>) and <http://www.cccoe.k12.ca.us/bats/welcome.html>. "A resource for educators creating and delivering a thematic unit on bats."

WHY OUR EYES ARE A PAIN

by Grant C. McCormick

I am using 'pain' in a very broad, almost all-inclusive way here, to indicate that they cause 'unnecessary' problems and harm that are not mandated by any requisites of nature. This is an example of the theological Problem of Pain, with implications both for evolution and for Intelligent Design Theory.

Eyes consist of (more-or-less from front to back) a cornea, an iris, a lens, the filling (the vitreous humor), the retina, and the optic nerve. Every one of these parts seems to be as well designed as is possible for the tasks that it does, given the constraints of the materials available and the environment we live in, as can be desired.

With the exception of the retina.

And the problem of the retina is a problem of design, which in turns leads to sub-optimal performance.

This problem is that its support infrastructure (the nerves and blood vessels that activate and feed the retina) are instead a support **superstructure**, running along the inside of the eye, between the retina and the lens, rather than along the outside, where it would not interfere with vision. This has several results.

The first, and most obvious, is a slight degradation of vision. This is actually the least significant of the problems. Because the nerves and capillaries are very small, they do not much interfere with light reception, so our normal vision is only very slightly fuzzier than it would be otherwise.

The next problem is the blind spot. Because these nerves and blood vessels are on the **inside** of the eye, they have to get out somewhere. That 'somewhere' is the blind spot, a hole in the retina where there is no vision. Because of the

way our brains are wired, we do not normally notice the blind spot, since our brains fills in the hole with data from the surrounding visual field. But it really is there, and it really is a spot where we simply cannot see.

If the nerves and vessels were on the outside of the retina, there would be no need for a blind spot.

The next problem is because of the very delicate nature of the retinal capillaries. Because they have to be so small and delicate (to avoid blocking vision any more than they do), they can break easily, and this can cause bleeding. Since this happens on the **inside** of the eye, the blood can cover parts of the retina. If enough of this happens, you can lose some or all of your vision. Diabetics (such as myself) are particularly prone to this, because our blood vessels are extra delicate to start with.

This the blood vessels were on the outside of the retina, instead of the inside, this would be much less of a problem. First, because any bleeding would be on the opposite side of the retina from where the vision is happening (think of spilling paint on the **back** side of a movie screen — much less likely to interfere with your movie-watching enjoyment). Second, because these vessels would not have to be anywhere near as delicate, since they would not be blocking vision, they could be as sturdy and solid as they need to be. So bleeding like this would be less likely to happen in the first place.

Lastly (at least for this essay), because the feeds to the retina are so fragile, the retina itself has to be fragile, too. This can (and often does) lead to a condition called "detached retina", which is pretty much exactly what it sounds like. Today this can be treated by "welding" it back in place with a laser, if caught early enough (minutes and hours count here!), but with some loss of vision, risk of complications, and great expense.

This the capillaries and other support structures were on the outside of the retina, all this fragility would be unnecessary, and the possibility of a detached retina would be much less, if not impossible.

The argument might be made that maybe there is some reason why these nerves and capillaries **cannot** be outside the eye. Unfortunately for this argument, nature has already furnished us with a counterexample to show us that it can. The octopi (and other cephalopods) have an eye that looks remarkably like a vertebrate eye, but it evolved separately from ours. It has much the same parts, in much the same order, except that its retina have the blood vessels and nerves on the **outside**, where they belong.

Since having a backwards retina is a bad thing, why is ours that way?

The theory of evolution has a simple answer — back when our very-early ancestors' eyes were nothing more than some photosensitive spots on the skin, these spots had to be supplied by nerves and vessels running over or under the cells, and the coin-flip happened to come up "heads". The proto-cephalopod was just luckier in this aspect.

At this stage there was no great difference

involved, as there would be later, but by then we were already locked in to our configuration. And since changing the configuration from an "over" configuration to an "under" one would involve many generations of blindness and/or greatly reduced vision, and evolution does not, and can not, look ahead, this never happened (and cannot happen naturally).

Any sort of Intelligent Design Theory (be it God or gods, Aliens, or whatever) has a much greater problem with this. This one design decision would have to be a prime example of Unintelligent Design.

The eye has long been used as an argument against evolution ("What use is half an eye?"). I think that it is only appropriate that it be used as an argument **for** evolution, instead.

EDWIN HUBBLE: Mariner of the Nebulae

by Gale E. Christianson

(1995; Farrar, Strauss & Giroux; \$27.50 hc)

A book review by E.B. Frohvet

Edwin Hubble is now remembered chiefly, if at all, for the orbiting telescope named in his honor. But Hubble was a towering figure in 20th Century science; he laid many of the foundations upon which the accomplishments of his namesake are studied.

(Curiously, Hubble was once asked by an imaginative student his opinion of an orbital telescope. He said he thought it a good idea, if it could be done. Which of course was not possible with 1930's technology.)

Edwin Powell Hubble was born November 20, 1889, in Marshfield, Missouri, the third child of insurance man John P. Hubble and his wife Virginia James. (Family legend suggested that infamous outlaw Jesse James may have been a distant relation.) Edwin proved an intelligent and well-read student from an early age. He got his first look through a telescope on his 8th birthday, the simple instrument handmade by his grandfather: the boy requested that he be allowed to stay up late to look at the heavens, in lieu of the usual party. In his youth the family moved to Wheaton, Illinois, where teacher Harriet Grote prophetically stated, "Edwin Hubble will be one of the most brilliant men of his generation." He did tend to argue with teachers, unwilling to accept their knowledge as better than his own. Despite this habit Hubble earned a scholarship to the University of Chicago; following graduation he won a Rhodes scholarship and spent three years at Oxford in England — mainly studying law in deference to the wishes of his father.

In 1914 Hubble dropped teaching (he seems only to have dabbled in law) to pursue a doctorate in astronomy at Yerkes Observatory in Williams Bay, Wisconsin. By 1917, Hubble requested a delay in an offered job at Mount Wilson, to join the Army. Though he attained the rank of major and served in France with the 86th Infantry, records are unclear if Major Hubble actually saw combat. He did not arrive in California until the summer of 1919.

At the time, observation of the universe was in its infancy. The Dutch astronomer Jacobus

Kapteyn theorized the Sun was at the center of one great disk of stars and there were no other galaxies! Opinion, largely theoretical, was divided on the nature of the universe. Hubble's breakthrough paper "Cepheids in Spiral Nebulae", presented to the American Association for the Advancement of Science on New Year's Day 1925, was explosive in establishing a universe larger and more diverse than many had supposed.

By 1929, Hubble and his eccentric assistant Milton Humason were getting results which suggested distant objects were receding: proof the universe was expanding, the cornerstone of modern cosmology. "This numbing realization added to the already considerable fear that Mount Wilson would run out of telescope before God ran out of universe." Which of course proved to be the case. Einstein, who had fudged relativity theory to fit the static universe other astronomers had told him was real, acknowledged that Hubble's observations validated his original theory. It made Edwin Hubble a huge public figure. In 1934 he was awarded an honorary doctorate at Oxford, a rare honor for an American, even one who had studied there.

Hubble and his wife Grace moved in increasingly high social circles. Ironically, by the late 1930's he was achieving less: he had reached the limits of the 100-inch Mount Wilson telescope, and the 200-inch telescope at Mount Palomar was not operational. Loyal to his British affiliations, Hubble spoke often in favor of joining Britain in the war. He spent most of the war at Aberdeen Proving Ground in Maryland, studying ballistics of weapons systems; the Hubbles did not return to their beloved California until December 1945. In the interim, the directorship of Mount Wilson had passed to another scientist. The Hale telescope at Mount Palomar, delayed by the war, did not come online until 1948.

In 1949, Edwin Hubble suffered a serious heart attack while vacationing at his ranch in Colorado — as his physician said, the worst possible case, at altitude and far from medical care. He survived to reach a small Catholic hospital in Grand Junction; not religious himself, Hubble during a long convalescence earned the regard of Mother Superior by inquiring politely about the history of the Sisters of Mercy. It was more than a year before he was permitted to return to Mount Palomar; much of the actual observation was done by an assistant.

By September 1953 Hubble seemed fully recovered. One afternoon, Grace picked him up at his office. Coming to their driveway, she noticed her husband had an odd expression. "What's the matter?" He replied in apparent calm, "Don't stop. Drive in." Those were his last words; he died still sitting in the car. The body was cremated; the ashes were placed in a copper box which Grace and a handful of friends buried in a secret place. No funeral, no memorial service, no grave. The scientific world was stunned.

His accomplishments were not a complete picture of the universe (supposing that's a meaningful phrase); but they were a staggering

advance over what had been known before, pushing the limits of the then available technology. It is fitting that Edwin Hubble's namesake carries on and expands his work. If you seek his epitaph, go out on a clear night and look up.

**WILL IN THE WORLD:
How Shakespeare Became
Shakespeare**

by Stephen Greenblatt
(W. W. Norton and Company; 2004;
430 pages/indexed; \$26.95;
ISBN 0393050572)
Reviewed by Jim Sullivan

Status, that's what Will Shakespeare's father desired. John Shakespeare was a commoner and a glove-maker. But he wanted a coat of arms. A lifelong quest, this mark of status was never bestowed upon him. And his fortune in life never materialized. What little he had turned sour, perhaps it was his own doing. His son, Will, seems to have quested for that higher social recognition, too. And thanks to his successful playwriting, he got that status.

Will was born in April of 1564. At 18, he married 26-year-old Anne Hathaway. They would have three children, a daughter, Susanna, born six months after her parents were wed, and then twins, a boy and a girl. The lad, with the auspicious name of Hamnet, would die before his teens. Those youngsters grew up in a virtual single-parent home with their mother in Will's hometown of Stratford. He himself, early on, had gone to work in the thriving community of London, where he began to write.

In that bustling city, he chummed around with stage actors and other writers, like the brilliant, but volatile, Christopher Marlowe, who would be killed at age 29. Some of these men were quite well educated, coming from wealthy and/or titled families. But, rich or poor, Will's friends all liked to party.

Will collaborated with a few in this group in writing plays that their company of actors, all males in those days so they had to act the female roles, too, enacted. Usually an aristocrat supported the acting ensemble. Often they had their own theater, also. Eventually, Will became part owner of the Globe Theater where his plays were staged.

The times were Elizabethan, named for Queen Elizabeth I, daughter of King Henry VIII and his second wife, Anne Boleyn. And during these years, England's state religion was Protestant. Catholics were forbidden, on pain of death, to practice their religion. Only a short while earlier, Catholics had been killing Protestants for not following the old time religion.

This had all come about earlier, thanks to Henry VIII having lost his argument with the Pope in Rome. After that event, the rotund royal officially made England a nonRoman Catholic nation. Even priests and nuns had to convert to the Protestant religion or leave the country. Most complied. But some didn't. And they paid the ultimate price.

When Henry VIII died, his son, Edward VI,

keeping his nation Protestant, ruled for a few years. But then his sister, Mary Tudor, a Catholic, became the English monarch briefly. The results were as might be expected. But Protestant Elizabeth was next on the throne. She quickly reversed Mary's edicts.

Against this awkward, not to mention dangerous, background Shakespeare wrote his plays. Being from a formerly Roman Catholic family, he had to be especially careful about subject matter and how his plays were written. Greenblatt has a strong suspicion that Will's father secretly remained true to his old faith till his death. Perhaps Will too, speculates Greenblatt, remained secretly faithful, though the evidence is scant.

Early on in London, Will seems to have fallen in love with a young male aristocrat, Henry Wriothesley, third Earl of Southampton. Shakespeare wrote several flattering, and suggestive, sonnets, apparently to this younger man who appears to have been moved by the heartfelt verses. Of course, Shakespeare would have had serious trouble with authorities if he had ever even tried to consummate this liaison. Greenblatt doesn't think Will ever did.

Greenblatt, throughout his book, speculates on the various motivations behind Shakespeare's plays. Many of them were written without any direct experience with the subject matter or personal knowledge of the characters involved. This is all the more amazing because Shakespeare truly captures realistic characters and their all too human emotions in his plays. A case in point is *The Merchant of Venice*. Shylock the Jewish merchant and money lender, one of the primary characters in that play, is not based on any actual Jewish businessman Will might have known. The Jews had been driven out of England years before. The few who remained in England had converted to Christianity or had pretended to do so. Fellow writers who had written plays about Jews, however, may have been Will's reason for doing so. He may, also, have picked up on Jewish stereotypes from those other plays.

Was there a connection between his *Hamlet* play and the death of Will's only son, Hamnet? Perhaps. But it was not obvious, for in *Hamlet*, the father dies, not the son.

Of the more interesting facts a reader learns about Shakespeare's plays is that he borrowed heavily from much of the day's written materials. Yes, he reworked story lines, plots, character traits, endings, etc. But his sourcing has been relatively transparent to those authors, including Greenblatt, who have written about Shakespeare down through the years. One such conspicuous source was Plutarch's *Lives*, which Shakespeare mined of material for Antony and Cleopatra, Timon of Athens, Curiolanus, and Julius Caesar.

Shakespeare was wealthy enough at death in April 1616 to leave an estate, mostly to his eldest daughter, though not to her husband. All Will left his wife was his second best bed. Could there have been spousal hard feelings? Very likely.

Greenblatt writes, "This is a book [*Will in the World*], then, about an amazing success

story that has resisted explanation: it aims to discover the actual person who wrote the most important body of imaginative literature of the last thousand years. Or rather, since the actual person is a matter of well-documented public record, it aims to tread the shadowy paths that lead from the life he lived into the literature he created."

A Harvard University professor, Greenblatt is a prize winning writer of other books on Shakespeare.

Recommended.

**THE COLLECTED SHORT STORIES
OF LOUIS L'AMOUR:
The Frontier Stories,
Volume 1 and 2**

Review by Rodney Leighton

My father was a huge L'Amour fan. I am not sure if he had all of his books which were published before he died but he had many. Read them over and over; I know that there are some he had read at least a dozen times. I used to read a lot of Westerns and liked the L'Amour books; I have read most of those in father's collection. I got away from westerns for some time. At some point I brought down the little bookcase dad had and his L'Amour books. One hundred and something if memory serves. I know there are some there I have not read but I will, someday.

When the latest: "please rejoin and we will send you a box of books" offer came from Doubleday, it included these two collections. I sent the card in and included these 2 hardcover volumes. Read volume 1; partway through #2.

Well, I see from the inside of the back cover that there were 90 novels as well as 26 short story collections. I have no recollection of ever reading any of the 35 stories in volume 1, which was published in 2003. A number of passages in the 422 pages were somewhat familiar; about the only complaint I have ever had about L'Amour stories is that virtually all of them contain at least one fist fight in boring detail, almost all of which are exactly the same. Of course, L'Amour was a boxer; a sport which is almost, although not quite, as boring as baseball.

There are, however, a nice range of frontier based tales which have some slants not often found in Westerns: mysticism; ghosts; evil females and complicated plots with twists like mysteries. Volume 1 has a number of Sackett stories; I can't remember any of them and I thought I had read all of those.

Volume 2, published in 2004, much too late for Father to read, contains 30 tales in 439 pages. Boudrie is featured; at least I have read 3 or 4 stories centered around him in the past couple of days.

Books are published by Bantam. I suspect any L'Amour fan would want copies if they do not already have them. Other people who might be interested in reading some of his works might find these volumes a good place to start. Full length novels are probably becoming scarce. No they're not; the small secondhand store I go to had a number of them last time I was there.

The stories in these volumes are very

reflective of the writing of Mr. L'Amour.

CANDY BAR REVIEW

Take 5

Review by Steven H Silver
Best Fan Writer Hugo Nominee

In December of 2004, Hershey graced the shelves of supermarkets across the country with an idea so elegant, so simple, so appealing, that it is amazing that no confectioner had ever thought to do it before. Enclosed in a red wrapper is a concoction of a small waffle shaped pretzel coated with caramel, a sprinkling of crushed peanuts, a layer of peanut butter and coated in milk chocolate. Taken all together these five flavors form Hershey's "Take 5" bar.

The candy bar is divided into two pieces, each about two inches long by 1½ inches wide, which makes them perfect for sharing with someone else or quickly snarfing down yourself. The size is good and the pieces have a nice aesthetic.

Upon biting into the bar, the two overwhelming feels are the softness of the chocolate coating and the crunchiness of the pretzel which forms the frame of the candy. Similarly, the chocolate and pretzel form the overwhelming amount of the candy's taste. The pretzel adds a nice bit of saltiness to the candy. The peanuts and the peanut butter blend together in flavor, but their textures are mostly hidden. The peanut taste comes mostly as an aftertaste, as if on a time release. Given the similarity of peanuts and peanut butter, substituting nougat for one or the other may have been a good idea, but that might have completely eradicated the peanut flavor. Occasionally the crunch of the peanuts can be felt apart from the crunchiness of the pretzel.

Unfortunately, the caramel is completely lost amid the other flavors. A larger percentage of caramel would have gone a long way to making the flavor known. As it is, the caramel could have been left out without harming the flavor or feel of the candy. While any of the four ingredients plus chocolate are wonderful, all mixed together, at least in the ratio that Hershey's has selected for the "Take 5" bar, they are mostly lost.

While "Take 5" is an clever idea for a candy bar and mixes some of the best flavors to go with chocolate, the actual practice of the bar leaves something to be desired. Chocolate covered pretzels offer most of what can be found in a "Take 5" and the other three ingredients are really too subtle to change the taste of the bar.

ALEXANDRIAN LAUGHTER

(A.D. 297)

The laughter of Alexandria is scurrilous, raucous, even cruel, but it is the authentic voice of the city, which has viewed, with less than pious regard, the comings and goings of the Ptolemies, of Caesar, like the shadow of a cloud, and of Marc Antony, who died there, abandoned by his god,

followed by so many Augusti, beginning with the first.

Now, laughing, Alexandria has raised up an emperor of its own, one L. Domitius Domitianus, also called Achilleus, to oppose the hated Diocletian, whose iron-clad reorganization of everything threatens to make the riotous Alexandrian life quite impossible, even as a thundering voice from the Serapeum proclaims that in the long-run the gods do not favor the designs of Diocletian. Yet the laughter stops when amid fire and smoke Diocletian enters Alexandria, for once provoked to fury, butchering thousands, screaming that he will go on slaughtering rebels until his horse wades knee-deep in blood. Then the horse slips and falls to its knees, and Diocletian, knowing an omen when he sees one, withdraws; and when he is safely away, the Alexandrians, laughing amid their grief, erect a monument proclaiming eternal honor and gratitude to the horse.

— Darrell Schweitzer

FANZINES

Banana Wings #21 February 2005

Claire Brialey and Mark Plummer, 59 Shirley Road, Croydon, Surrey, CR0 7ES, UK

banana@fishlifter.demon.co.uk

Best Fanzine Hugo Nominee

Best Fan Writer Hugo Nominee

A Bear Went Over the Mountain

#1 November/December 2004, #2 February/March 2005

Chaz Boston Baden, Post Office Box 17522, Anaheim, CA 92817-7522 USA

bear@bostonbaden.com

<http://www.boston-baden.com>

Beyond Bree February 2005, March 2005

Nancy Martsch, Post Office Box 55372, Sherman Oaks, CA 91413-5372 USA

beyondbree@yahoo.com

Not available for The Usual; \$12/year, \$15 in envelope or overseas.

eI #18 February 2005

Earl Kemp, Post Office Box 6642, Kingman, AZ 86402-6642 USA

earlkemp@citlink.net

<http://www.efanzines.com>

Fantasy Amateur V. 68 #2 WN 270 February 2005

Fantasy Amateur Press Association, Official Editor: Milt Stevens, 6325 Keystone Street, Simi Valley, CA 93063-3834 USA

The official organ of the oldest SF APA around, and with vacancies! Write Milt for details.

Uh, it's like an email list, but with dead trees.
Of the 48 members, we trade with 14.

File 770:144 February 2005
Mike Glycer, 705 Valley View Avenue,
Monrovia, CA 91016-2446 USA
Mikeglyer@cs.com
<http://ourworld.compuserve.com/homepages/mglyer/F770/index.html>

The Knarley Knews # 110 February 2005
Henry & Letha Welch, 1525 16th Avenue,
Grafton, WI 53024-2017 USA
welch@msoe.edu
<http://www.msoe.edu/~welch/tkk.html>

Lofgeornost #78 February 2005
Fred Lerner, 81 Worcester Avenue, White
River Junction, VT 05001-8011 USA
fred.lerner@dartmouth.edu

MT Void V. 23 #32 February 4, 2005 — V. 23
#40 April 1, 2005
Mark and Evelyn Leeper, 80 Lakeridge
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eleeper@optonline.net
mleeper@optonline.net
<http://www.geocities.com/evelynleeper>

Opuntia # 56.1 February 2005
Dale Speirs, Box 6830, Calgary, Alberta
T2P 2E7 CANADA

Peregrine Nations V. 4 #4 January 2005
Jan G. Stinson, Post Office Box 248,
Eastlake, MI 49626-0248 USA
tropicsf@earthlink.net
<http://www.efanzines.com>

Royal Swiss Navy Gazette #13 ~~September 2004~~
January 2005
Garth Spencer, P. O. Box 15335, VMPO,
Vancouver BC V6B 5B1 CANADA
garthspencer@shaw.ca
<http://www.efanzines.com>

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Bill Bowers, 6000 Townevista Drive, Apt.
114, Cincinnati, OH 45224-1762 USA
xenolith@one.net
<http://www.efanzines.com>

CON NEWS

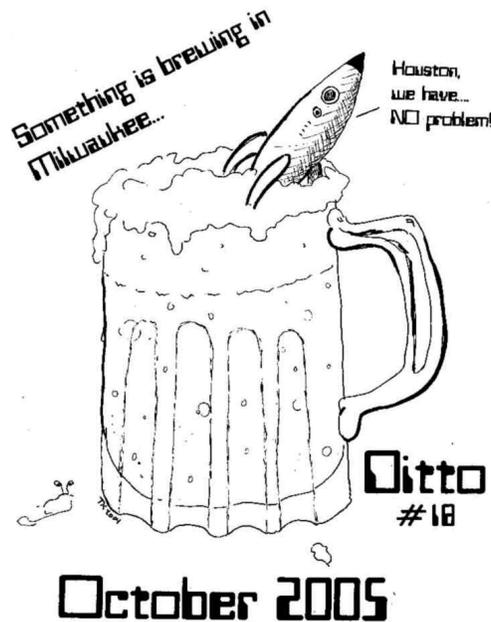
The courageous, glorious, illustrious, formidable, victorious, indomitable, implacable, indefatigable, audacious, invincible, and I think I've run out of appropriate British aircraft carrier names Tom Veal has some news on Worldcon bids, gathered at Capricon 25 and Boskone 42.

For 2008, the **Chicago** committee has signed a contract with the Hyatt Regency, site of the last three Chicons. Their planned date is the

Labor Day weekend. The **Denver** bid now has a bid committee and a contract, their planned date is the first weekend in August. Meanwhile, the nascent **Columbus** bid is still in its state of tentative exploration, testing for a response. For later bids, **Montreal** in 2009 is still tentative, while **Kansas City** is still planning for Labor Day weekend that year. **Australia** in 2010 is unopposed, and **Washington D.C.** in 2011 is dependent on getting a hotel built next to the new convention center.

In NASFiC news, only the **St. Louis** committee has filed a bid. So much for Ocean City. The proposed dates are **August 2-5, 2007**. They will be using the Collinsville Gateway Center in Collinsville, Illinois; 261 miles from 1409 Christy, going on I-64 to I-55. Let's hope no one falls through the movie screen this time. Thanks to Tom for gathering the information, posting it on his blog, and letting us repeat it.

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Make all our dreams come true . . .

HUGO NEWS

The Hugo nominations were released on Saturday, March 26, 2005. For a full list, see

<http://www.interaction.worldcon.org.uk/pressr31.htm>

Congratulations to our recipients Michael A. Burstein (Novella & Short Story), Mike Resnick (Short Story (2!)), Bob Devney and Steven H Silver (Fan Writer), Guy H. Lillian III (*Challenger*; Fanzine), and Brad W. Foster (Fan Artist).

It can be noted with immense relief that Jeff Berkwits and John Flynn did not get nominated for Best Fan Writer, and that Fans had enough of a net total collective memory about publication dates not to nominate *Mimosa*. It will be interesting to see the final numbers and find out how far we and others (hi there, Lloyd) fell out of the final list.

Yeah...I'm a good little fan-I sent in my Hugo nominations!

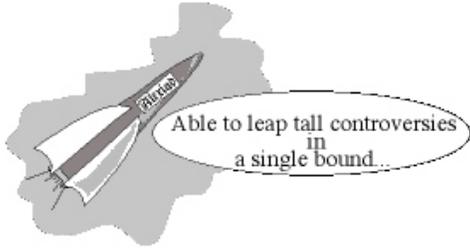


- Brew Meisters:** Henry and Letha Welch
Brew Crew: Trinlay Khadro, Henry Osier, Greg Rhin, Georgie Schnobrich, Dick Smith, Leah Zeldes-Smith
Bottle Cap Inspectors: Laverne DeFazio and Shirley Feeney
Hardware Consultant: Howard Cunningham
Location: Best Western Airport Milwaukee

All the authors of the Best Novel nominees were British: Iain M. Banks (*The Algebraist*), China Miéville (*Iron Council*), Charles Stross (*Iron Sunrise*), Susanna Clarke (*Jonathan Strange & Mr Norrell*), and Ian McDonald (*River of Gods*). I don't think this says so much about the con site as it does about American SF. Unfortunately, the Banks and the McDonald are not directly available here in the States.

And now on to the vote: the deadline for ballots is **July 8, 2005**. Vote early.

Letters, we get letters



From: **Earl Kemp** February 16, 2005
 Post Office Box 6642, Kingman, AZ
 86402-6642 USA
earlkemp@citlink.net

Joe, I got it today and read it today, as usual. As usual overwhelmed with input perking away to the flavor of new candy bars.

For a long time Denver was one of my must-do places. I was there a number of times a year, and always at the worst times. . .total frozen-over wasteland.

This was in my leather goods and rodeo days (Pay attention, Lisa! This is horse stuff!) and quite a few things necessary for the cowboy world take place there. The annual trade show of horse related merchandise is held there. For a few brief skyrocket years, we were among the top producers and sellers at that show. What a hell of a ride. Exhibiting, hustling, bullshitting, networking.

And I'd be willing to bet that 90% of that entire industry now resides, like most everything else, within China.

Then, there was the second horse world, that of rodeos, where I spent a lot of time. Again, selling as exhibitors but in this case retail vendors. We sold at retail the material we sold at wholesale at the Denver Mart.

Once, while buying cowboy hats in Mexico at an old, reputable company named Sombreros Saturno — their logo is of Saturn, right out of sf — I struck gold. In a far-back, dimly lighted area of a huge warehouse, there was a solitary room. It was filled from floor to ceiling with stacks of Vietnam jungle camo cowboy hats that had been in dead storage since the police action terminated with our retreat (how's that for spin?). Years of accumulated dust had landed upon them.

The owner of the factory told me that I could have all of them that I wanted for 50 cents each. I spent some time plowing through them, picking out the best ones, and left the factory with an entire vanload of those hats.

And drove straight to Denver to the National Western Stock Show & Rodeo (always January and always a bitch weatherwise) where we were exhibiting. It just happened to be The Day when Bush I made his bitchfight against Iraq called "Desert Storm" and it was on all the news channels.

We dumped a pile of those Vietnam jungle

camo hats in the middle of our exhibit and hung up a big sign saying "Desert Storm Special \$10 each while they last."

It was a wonderful day.

Good luck with *Heinlein's Children*. . . I'll be watching.

I'd like the face to face part too, Joe.

Well, now we have another reason to vote Denver in 2008. Besides seeing the Richthofen Castle, that is.

— JTM

Your "county sheriff" bit really rings true. I hate finding things in books that are totally impossible because it really ruins it for me.

I also would be interested in knowing what Rodney Leighton thinks of *eI*.

There's a lot more, but you smothered it all beneath a flood of concepts.

Keep up the good work.

From: **Cuyler "Ned" Brooks** Feb. 17, 2005
 4817 Dean Lane, Lilburn, GA 30047-4720 USA
nedbrooks@sprynet.com

Hi Joseph — Thanks for the zine. Too bad about Kelly Freas, I visited him over the years when I lived in Newport News and he and Polly lived on Blackwater Road in Pungo, about 40 miles away. And Will Eisner is gone now, and Jack Chalker. Chalker was one of the first fans I met back in the 60s. He seemed older — he was a teacher and had a Mercedes — but in fact he was 6 years younger than I am.

I think you should explain ever so often why you publish "Monarchist News" — if you ever did I've forgotten. I remember back in the Baltimore fandom of the 1960s, Fred Lerner was the leader of a cabal that sought to restore the monarchy, and "God Save the Queen" was sung at cons at midnight.

It was never clear to me why you ate radioactive scrambled eggs What were they looking for in your stomach?

They were looking to see how fast my stomach emptied; I've been having problems with gas and other nasty things. The radioactivity was to give them something to detect.

I had never had a colonoscopy until last year, but it found nothing. They gave me too much of whatever it was in the IV, which was bungled and left a 3-inch bruise on my right arm. All the other IVs and blood extractions I have had were in the left arm and caused no such problem. I seem to be healthy enough except for one rare genetic malady, but have given up asking the doctor questions — he either doesn't know (and won't admit it) or won't tell me. For example, when I moved here from Virginia in 1998, I immediately developed itching eyes, something like hemorrhoids, and eczema in my ears. Why? The genetic malady is "lichen planus" — I have always had it, but

didn't know it, as the symptoms were trivial. A few years ago however it moved into my mouth. The medication is a mouthwash and an ointment. I asked the druggist just what was in the \$26/bottle mouthwash, and he said it was a steroid — the doctor never told me. Of course I don't drink it, but must inevitably ingest some.

The obvious solution for Taral, if he really wanted to publish again, would be to do it online. If he doesn't have a website and a scanner, he can send me the originals and I will put them up at fanac.org. The cost would be just his time and mine and a little postage.

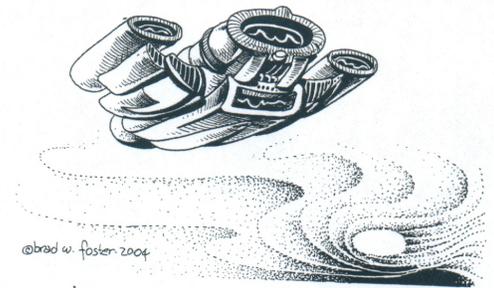
I can read a fanzine off a screen and some are now formatted to read that way. (I composed the loc to Guy Lillian tabbing between the browser (IE) and the word-processor (WordPerfect), since he can't afford to print too many copies of *Challenger* at the current time.

In spite of all the typos (I'm sure Dainis never called his late wife "Besty"!), you did get the Monty Python LotR website URL right and I looked at it — very silly, to be sure. The old Python shows come on here Thursday evening, and I always watch if I can, though I must have seen most of them many times before.

And now for something completely different.

— JTM

From: **Brad W. Foster** February 17, 2005
 P.O. Box 165246, Irving, TX 75016-5246 USA
bwfoster@juno.com
Best Fan Artist Hugo Nominee



New issue of *Alexiad* arrived this week, and just in time. The last few zines to come this way were in the form of emails telling me where to go on the web to read them. I'm discovering that working for short periods on the computer are no problem, but if I try to spend long periods reading text off that glowing screen, it gets to be quite a pain in the eye. So, holding a nice paper zine, stretched back comfortably, with a pencil in hand to jot notes along the way . . . ahh, that's **good** fanzine reading!

The Scam Handbook sounds like a fun read. I seem to recall hearing somewhere the golden rule to avoid being scammed: "If you have to

pay them money to get your money, it's a rip off." Years ago I answered a newspaper ad for a local casting agency, looking for people to fill in the background scenes in a movie being produced in the area. A friend of mine had done this once before and had fun, made a few bucks, so I thought I'd take a shot at it myself

(Indeed, the printers where I got much of my work done had printed a lot of model-sheet cards for local agencies, the things with a head shot on one side, and a couple of smaller photos plus stats and such on the back, that actors could leave at auditions, or mail out, etc. I thought would be great to "specialize" in crowd scenes and get one of those done, with photos of nothing but huge groups of people, with arrows pointing to one particular blurry face in each one. But, I digress.)

So I show up for the interview, and am told that they will indeed, definitely, absolutely, be able to place me in a production going on right then, and that I'd make a guaranteed, absolute, no question \$75 a day for three days work. Now, all I had to do was write them out a check for \$150 so they could take some photos of me. But, I pointed out, I have no money on hand for that, how about you just take it out of the absolute guaranteed money I was going to be making? Oh no, couldn't possibly do that, nor was it possible to go do this no-question, it's there job unless I had those photos taken first. And paid for. Gosh, somehow that struck me as . . . scummy. (You know, a scam, but with an extra layer of crud on top.)

Found out later when talking to my friend she had responded to an ad direct from the production company for that movie, while the ad I saw was a local "talent agency" that seemed to mainly specialize in taking your photo that you paid for, then mailing copies off to casting agents who most likely immediately round-filed them.

"And that was the origin of . . . PublishAmerica. And now you know the Rest of the Story™."

A big 'ol "ick" on the health report this issue. We have FINALLY be able to swing a way to afford some health insurance, and it will kick in next month. Good timing, since I'm hitting 50 in just two months, and figure I really need to get my ass (and other body parts) in for that intense mid-century check up. I've never been really sick, and have dropped over 40 pounds in the past year to get closer to a more realistic height-to-weight ratio. But 50 years, no matter how many times you change the oil and the filters, the equipment is gonna start to show some wear!

Hey, thanks for the listing of the Discworld titles. Going to make a copy of that, check off the few that I have already, and keep it in the wallet for reference whenever I break down and hit the book stores.

There are a lot of series like that. I used to keep up a list of all the Modesty Blaise books, hoping to fill the gaps in my collection.

Then I found out what happened in the last one.

Regarding the phrase "Over and Out" brought up in Marty Helgesen's loc, I don't think it is so much a contradiction in terms, as more along the lines of "I've gotten into such a rhythm of saying 'Over' at the end of each sentence in this conversation that I cannot stop, but am letting you know that, no matter what you might wish to say now, I'll no longer be listening." Or something like that. . . .

Congratulations on your nomination, by the way.
— JTM

From: **Martin Morse Wooster** Feb. 15, 2005
Post Office Box 8093, Silver Spring,
MD 20907-8093 USA
mmwooster@yahoo.com

Many thanks for *Alexiad* 19.

Richard Dengrove makes a very good point when he talks about how older fans condemn the younger generation for not being "new '60s fans." He is absolutely right about this. We can't ask the newer fans to pretend to live in a world where the Net and the Web no longer exist or to pretend that genzies will always be the center of Fandom. But we can ask that younger fen be interested in good writing and in excellence in expressing themselves well.

You know, I'm 47, and I've been a sputteringly active fan for 30 years. Twenty years ago, there were periods where I might have to wait as long as six weeks for something fannish to read (say for a *Holier Than Thou* or a *Simulacrum* or a *Mythologies*). Those big thick genzies are now, sadly, part of the past. But who would have thought that I could turn on my computer every day and find intelligent fresh writing about sf? I miss genzies, But the Internet can be wonderful.

...faster than a speeding e-loc...
able to leap cyberspace
in a single keystroke...and who,
disguised as a mild mannered fan....



Joseph T. Major asks why it is that the malls are flooded with bad books. Well, Sturgeon's Law applies, of course. But it's also the case that we grumpy middle-aged types let our sense of wonder fade as we age. But the good thing about the flood of stuff now available is that there will always be more really good books out there than we have time to read (even if, like Joe, we read at racetracks and other odd places!). Far better a glut of books than a pittance.

The problem is that when the "glut" is *Be Nice Now: Captain Nice™ #32, Doomathon™*: The

Adventure Reboots, Blotting the Mucoids: Number 77 of the Thrilling Tratyn Runewind™ Series, and so on, and good books are nowhere to be found, it's a bit harder to be quite so optimistic.

—JTM

About PublishAmerica: One point that was brought up in the *Washington Post* article that Joe doesn't mention is that this notorious firm offers its Published Authors lifetime contracts. If you are really good enough to be published elsewhere and want to resell your work — surprise! PublishAmerica has their talons in you. I also thought it was interesting that PublishAmerica's "professional editors" edit two books a week. I edit books, and can do one in two weeks if only light editing is needed. It takes a minimum three weeks to do proper editing of a book.

Rodney Leighton would be happier if he realized that you don't have to LoC every fanzine sent to you. Just send letters to the ones you like. That way you can build up a relationship with simpatico fen who will become your friends. I don't think I've written more than 15 locs a year — and none of them have been longer than one page. This seems to me to be the sensible mean between spending hours writing letters to fanzines and ignoring zines entirely.

From: **Trinlay Khadro** February 16, 2005
Post Office Box 240934, Brown Deer,
WI 53224-0934 USA
trin63@dias.net

It's taken me several days to actually sit down and start writing this loc. I think it's mostly due to having gotten deeply involved in learning how to turn a heel on home-knit socks. One sock is easily a full-day project for me at this "learner's" level.



TRINLAY KHADRO

The fibromyalgia clinic has been helpful — I'm better able to deal with the flare-ups when they come. I've really enjoyed the Reiki & Massage therapy.

Re: Reviewer's Notes — I think "cautious" works in ALL media are more predominant, as much of society is really hungry for a sense of safety . . . and a culture can be more or less ready to challenge itself at differing times. Reality seems full of tiny & large hidden "terrors" at this point so perhaps consumers (or providers guessing) want "safe" entertainment?

In contrast I find myself hunting for first-hand "ghost-stories", a desire that over time has ebbed and flowed. I perhaps should note how my hunger for certain things parallels or doesn't

parallel what's going on in the world.

Of course, so many "trends" are determined by marketing rather than by the consumer.

I do think some of the allure of manga and animé is that it feels so different than "The Usual Suspects". I'm often tickled to see despite the Giant Robots or whatnot, the basic themes of these epics often lie right along our cultural values. The animé and manga stories also layer plots and entwine things in wonderfully intricate ways — things we rarely see in Western media. Perhaps eventually we'll see more things produced for our entertainment that also indulge our intelligence and need for "mythology". (I think this is one of the reasons *Buffy* is still so popular.)

I'm sure I've mentioned my love for Terry Pratchett?! :-)) We were introduced to his work by a Milwaukee fan who thrust a paperback into KT's hands saying "You MUST read this." (I've found I can easily keep track of things even reading them out of order — but sort of keep a "place holder" in my mind for books I've missed.)

Miss Megumi sends her regards to the cats of fandom and their pet humans.

Health Issue — egads — In all likelihood the relative who'd become addicted to Valium, like my uncle years back, was taking it as a pill on a daily basis. IMHO, he (uncle) needs to be on something like Wellbutrin and/or paxil (with counseling) to actually treat the depression/anxiety/OCD . . .

But it's easier to shut him up by prescribing a narcotic for the anxiety. (Uncle is competent but IMHO depends too much on the "same doctor as always" rather than being an educated consumer and discussing the options with the doctors.)

steps off soapbox

The point I was intending to get to is that it's highly unlikely that the semi-annual sedation for medical procedures would cause any problems. You're braver than I'd be — but then again it would be cool to watch.

I object to Valium, and to tranquilizers in general, on principle. A lot of my current health problems stem from tranquilizers.

When KT got scoped (to Dx the reflux) they gave her a souvenir printout of the photos.

Mike Van de Bunt has revealed *Atlanta Nights* to Milwaukee fandom. We had a reading (well sorta) of a few pages of the chapter written by a computer. It was a hoot!

Looks like "The Eyes of Argon" may have a competitor now.

Lisa — Love the Horse tales. I have a friend up north (northern Wisconsin) who raises Appaloosas. Someday we'll get out there to pet and ride them.

Johnny C. — ooh Candy: my current faves are the Dove dark chocolate "promises", Cella's chocolate covered cherries, and some specialty fruit and chocolate bars from the health food

store with dried blueberries, cherries, or raspberries. The dark chocolate and Health co-op specialty chocolates are the most satisfying and one or two pieces satisfy. I don't eat a whole bar at once like I have to do with most mainstream chocolate bars.

Fibro report — I've needed the coterol-steroid one week does pack again in February. One every two months and only in winter, maybe it's not so bad.

KT ended up in the control group for the acupuncture study. She can go back for four free real acupuncture treatments when she's done with the physical therapy.

I vaguely recall doing a mailbox spider cartoon — did I actually draw and send it? (Though by now it's an expired topic.)

SSD is STILL pending — I'm waiting for a hearing date. Lawyer says the hearing is where we'll land the approval.

Lloyd — I suspect with Moore & Kuttner the husband's obstruction might be jealousy — doesn't want to share her with readers or that she did the work with someone beside himself? Emotional responses are sometimes in defiance of the usual sorts of logic.

I'm tickled by the name "Bakka Books" — "Baka" means something quite different in Japanese, so I wonder what kinds of books would be in "Baka" Books. :-)

KT got quite frustrated with some friends enthralled by *DaVinci Code* — disproved "golden mean" with a tape measure, a calculator, and by comparing the proportions of several of them. Medieval "facts" don't often fit in a post-modern world.

Homosexual couples won't be truly equals till we can watch them bickering on *Divorce Court*.

E.B. — I think Sheryl's concern was that even chocolate bars without evident nuts might contain nut oils or be made on the same equipment as the ones with evident nuts. This is potentially fatal for persons with nut allergies.

Years ago when sending snacks to school we learned to read labels carefully. Even if the classmate with the allergy didn't eat them, if KT ate something with nuts and then touched the classmate, the classmate could have a reaction!

It's actually somewhat shocking to people when they compare the King James version to a translation from the Hebrew and Aramaic — it is, in many places in the text, not even the same book.

Sheryl B. — A few years ago, when Elric I passed away, the cremation of the ferret ran me about \$100. Less than a week after Elric I passed away I stopped "just to look at the baby ferrets" and ended up in the possession of Elric II . . . he'd climbed up my arm to kiss my ear!

Kemps is one of the "big dawgs" here. Mostly family farms under the Kemps label. Any dairy product you can think of is probably available under the Kemps label.

Hmm . . . is there a "Trans Pacific Fan Fund"? If so how can I apply to be representative to WorldCon Nihon? Perhaps by then I'll have learned enough Japanese to get by, from watching animé.

Milt — you NEED to see *The Incredibles* —

Superheroes get sued for the damage caused in a fight and have to try going it as mundanes. We really enjoyed it.

Re: *FoxTrot*: "Oxygen turns to a liquid at -297 degrees Fahrenheit" and the next line — something to the effect of "OK, turn up the heat ONE degree . . ." (And I didn't even have to look it up :-))

We're kinda partial to *Get Fuzzy* and *Mutts*. (Beavers are a million billion times more dangerous than a T-Rex.)

I also still recommend *Pibgorn*, though the previous story arc had its grim moments.

Trinlay also included an origami dragon. Thanks.

— JTM

From: **Joy V. Smith** February 19, 2005
8925 Selph Road, Lakeland, FL 33810-0341 USA

Pagadan@aol.com
<http://journals.aol.com/pagadan/JoysJournal/>

Thanks for all the SF background tidbits. I was amazed to see that James P. Hogan is recommending Holocaust Denial sites?! I've seen Shoah and a number of documentaries with Holocaust survivors. I imagine that really hurts those who've lost fathers, mothers, siblings, and entire families . . .

I see you're still traveling the road to Rome with your review of Melissa Scott's *A Choice of Destinies*. Impressive research. I enjoyed your great review of Terry Pratchett's *Going Postal*, and I liked the hanging tidbit that you ended it with. I remember that.

Good reviews also of historical and AH books, Ann Rule's book of case histories; and I didn't know there was *The Scam Handbook*.

You are possibly one of the few people who could make their series of medical tests report interesting and sort of fun, and, of course, scary.

The tests were ruining my holiday vacation time. (I have been taking off between my birthday and New Year's for years.) I had to do something to make up for the pain and suffering.

Thanks to Grant C. McCormick for his background article on Terry Pratchett, along with the chronological and categorized list. (My favorite book is still *Witches Abroad*.)

I've read about *Soldier in the Mist* and/or *Latro in the Mist*, but have never read them; the fact that I still remember them means that the premise is intriguing. Other good book reviews too, including the cosmic evolution one. Sounds interesting, beautiful, and useful. I liked the candy bar reviews also. I've never come across those limited editions; obviously I must look harder — one of life's more pleasant projects.

More interesting historical (including the two Orders of the Golden Fleece) and SF background in the letters column, along with Australian websites.

In case you're interested, my book, *Building*

a *Cool House for Hot Times without Scorching the Pocketbook*, was reviewed by *The Midwest Book Review*; it's on the Reviewer's Choice list in the February issue of "Small Press Bookwatch." URL:

http://www.midwestbookreview.com/sbw/feb_05.htm#rc

Congratulations.

— JTM

From: **Taral Wayne** February 20, 2005
254 Dunn Avenue Apt. 2111, Toronto,
ON M6K 1S6 CANADA
taralwayne@3web.net

Somewhere in all those pages I came across the unexpected hint that John Mansfield might be planning to bring a worldcon bid to Calgary. I wonder how welcome this news is. The impression I got from talking from members of the rank & file of Torcon III was that John Mansfield, and his preference for an autocratic style and hostile stance to fandom, was one reason Torcon was as blah as it was. (The other reasons included the other members of the steering committee with similar attitudes.) Do we need a blah Calgary worldcon that aims to keep fans in their places, paying the admission and keeping in line?

Not here. Royal Swiss Navy Gazette, maybe? The Penneys would have more to say about a Mansfield-run con. Calgary would be interesting to go to, I'm sure, but it's also four days drive away from Louisville.

— JTM

From: **E.B. Frohvet** February 15, 2005
4716 Dorsey Hall Drive #506, Ellicott
City MD 21042-5988 USA

We can all consider the possibilities of a 2007 NASFiC, if there is one, at a later date.

No idea what's up with TAFF or DUFF, I have not heard from or about either in months. On one occasion I received six copies of the same DUFF ballot with six different fanzines. They really wanted me to vote that year; this year, apparently not. I also note at least two, possibly three items in your fanzine listing I ought to have received.

"That Time of Year": Does anyone really care?

Trinlay Khadro: Paraphrases Frohvet's Fourth Law, "Anything that eats rats or mosquitoes is a friend."

Lloyd Penney: Says it's difficult to give away things which "you've made an emotional attachment to." That's the difference; I don't get emotionally attached to objects. Joseph says, re: C. L. Moore's second husband, that he refused to let her works be reprinted even though it would have made money for him because "some people just don't make sense." Much the same case of the man in the Seattle Tourist Bureau who single-handedly destroyed a Worldcon bid because he equated fantasy with Satanism. It seems to me as if much, if not

most, crazy behavior is motivated by religion. Does anyone know, if that was the case in the Moore situation? . . . I once worked night shift, midnight to 7:30, for five months, and rather liked it; but I was younger then.

Martin Morse Wooster says of World War II, ". . . The British occupied Iceland." That's oversimplified. Iceland, a sovereign country which has no military (for the most part it has not needed one) requested the British to protect them in exchange for the use of Reykjavik harbor as a naval base. Later, the U.S. was brought into the deal as well. A small number of Allied military personnel were stationed there, mainly to handle supplies; but there was no effort to interfere with the internal governance of the country.

Admiral Dan Gallery's autobiography, *Eight Bells and All's Well* (1965) has an interesting description of the activities of those "Allied military personnel". The pushball that blew across the harbor was particularly amusing.

Bringing two people into fandom in 20 years does not strike me as a successful program to attract media fans into reading SF, or finding those SF readers who don't know about fandom.

"Texas Roadhouse" sounds like a place where they go along the highway picking up road kill, and serve it for dinner. I know (well, I suppose) they don't actually do that, I just like the notion.

George W. Price: I forget which TV show had a line in which an older gentleman said, concerning something he would rather not do, "I'd rather be strapped to an amplifier at a Grateful Dead concert." And the other responded, "That can be arranged." You are at least honest with your dislike of rock music, to which you are entitled, so I will forbear from explaining how you just don't understand it.

Sounds like the theme for the contemporary remake of *The Nine Tailors*, featuring Harriett Wimsey Vane-Russell (and her partner in both senses Mary Holmes Russell-Vane) investigating a murder at a rock concert.

There actually was a movie about a gay guy who married a gay girl: *A Different Story*, 1978, Perry King and Meg Foster.

<http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0077435/>

Taras Wolansky: In my Army time, we used "roger" as a verb regularly. I was not at that time aware of the secondary meaning "to copulate, to have sex", and I don't believe any of the rest of us were. I only encountered that many years later in a slang dictionary; have seen it used once in a film, and never in any conversation I've been involved in. Ah, I see Marty Helgesen confirms my version, so that must have been fairly standard in the American military.

Incidentally, it was at one of the earlier Apollo launches that Alan Shepard fulfilled a lifelong ambition, meeting his own childhood hero. A tall, dignified older man approached him, offered his hand, and said quietly, "Captain Shepard? I'm Charles Lindbergh." The two walked some way away from the VIP stands and talked quietly for a considerable period; no one dared interrupt the conversation.

I guess technically that Wildside Press's *The Cherryh Odyssey*, in which Janine Stinson had an essay and also did proofreading (see ads in *Peregrine Nation* Vol. 4 #3 and *Steam Engine Time* #4) was published in 2004; and is therefore eligible to be nominated for "Best Related Book" this year. Voters take note.

Alas, it failed, though I nominated it.

— JTM

From: **Alexis A. Gilliland** February 19, 2005
4030 8th Street South, Arlington, VA
22204-1552 USA

Thank you for *Alexiad* #4.1 which arrived awhile back, and is just now getting its well-deserved reply.



We humans give ourselves too much credit for the history we make, especially when charismatic figures like Alexander the Great are involved, and generally ignore the unintended effects of actions by humble peasants scratching out a living. Of course, it's heroes that we want to read about, but an alternate universe in which Alexander reached

age 54, like his father had done, seems a bit of a stretch, rather like imagining what Mozart would have written had he lived to be 54. In the current *Scientific American*, the lead article speculates that the human invention of agriculture may have reversed a cooling trend that would have brought back the glaciers about 5,000 ago. The modus operandi being that clearing forest for farmland freed up enough greenhouse gases to offset variations in the incident sunlight caused by the precession of the earth's axis.

Not all MILSPECS are gold plated, Joe, but surely some of them are, and when the development process of a complex piece of equipment is prolonged, as is increasingly the case with a new airplane, there is always the temptation to add the latest new technology even if it fits imperfectly into the existing design. To some extent this may be the cost of research and development rather than gold plating, but one of the reasons for moving into RPVs (remotely piloted vehicles — what used

to be called drones when the military was dead set against using them) is that it has become too expensive to develop and fly manned vehicles. We note also the continuing failure of our experimental missile defense system, in which the political mandate to build the thing IN the present seriously overreached the technical capabilities OF the present.

Which also describes software — “creeping featureism” we’d say. The hot new feature for word processing, back when I paid attention to such things, was being able to add a sound clip to a word-processing file, so that Gallagher could sing “St. James Infirmary” with his correspondence, instead of with the excavator digging in the back yard.

— JTM

Marty Hegelsen says that “Over and Out” is a contradiction, when it is merely somewhat redundant. Over = “I’m done talking, it’s your turn” while Out = “I’m not only done talking, I’m done, period.” In context, the jargon phrase “Over and Out” thus becomes another version of Shalom, Adios, or Goodbye.

Brad Foster wonders that his father, who was dependent on Social Security and military pensions, still had to pay his income tax on his money, and asks: “. . . couldn’t they just take that out before mailing it to him?” As a federal retiree, I am in the same boat as his dad, only I choose to have my federal and state income taxes deducted from my pension. At tax time, I fill out my form 1040 and usually get a refund, but to keep things simple, the government pays me the pension I earned, and deducts only the taxes I ask deducted. So for me, the Treasury does take it out before mailing, but does not calculate the exact sum owed.

From: **John Hertz** February 22, 2005
236 S. Coronado Street, No. 409, Los Angeles, CA 90057-1456 USA

Plenty of students can’t read. Also plenty of adults. Perhaps they were badly taught; but why were they waiting for the teacher?

If we thirst for some good s.f., let us not blame only editors, or publishers. Even in fanzines things appear that ought to have been thought through or worked up better.

Don Quixote, as Vladimir Nabokov said, is one of those books everyone talks about but no one has read. I recommend his posthumously published *Lecture on Don Quixote*.

Hey, I read that (Cervantes’s book, not Vladimir Vladimirovich’s lectures on it). I guess that makes me a nobody.

—JTM

From: **Dale Speirs** February 22, 2005
Box 6830, Calgary, Alberta T2P 2E7
CANADA

Alexiad V. 4 #1 received and read.

Re: bookstores not stocking any mid-list books. This would be because on-line booksellers can do it better and more profitably. I do almost all of my book buying nowadays via Indigo/Chapters, Amazon.ca, or various on-line secondhand bookstores. In fact, the only reason I go into Chapters anymore is for their magazine rack. For twenty years I used to make the regular rounds of Calgary secondhand bookstores every few weeks, but it has been about three years since I have been into any of their stores. Likewise for CD’s. On-line stores are a boon for searching out esoteric or mid-list books that brick-and-mortar stores can’t carry in stock.

If you’re looking for a specific book, that’s the way to go. I paid as much in postage as I did for the book itself when I bought Lord Mountevans’s *South With Scott*, but I certainly couldn’t have found it around here. But it’s hard to discover anything new that way.

Re: the future of reading. Two quotes on the subject follow:

There is no doubt in the mind of any careful observer but that the age of reading is over and someone should chant its dirge Like all things mortal, reading has run its course. Beginning as a widespread general cult with the invasion of printing and the great subsequent outburst of expression during the Renaissance in Italy and the Elizabethan period in England, it probably reached its culmination in the Victorian era and then began to die slowly by suffocation.

High school students graduating now are taught to believe that they ought not to have to do any work. Essays submitted by freshman classes are appallingly bad; the students have no idea of how to express themselves. They apparently have been taught no grammar, no mechanics, no construction.

The first quote comes from a 1913 issue of *Harper’s Weekly*. The second quote is from a University of Alberta professor in 1949. There is no new thing under the sun.

And things have only gotten worse since that time. But then what do I know? Nobody ever taught me how to read.

— JTM

Re: your review of *Going Postal*. This has been a smash hit among stamp collectors. Even the *American Philatelist* (circulation 50,000) reviewed it.

From: **Sheryl Birkhead** February 25, 2005
22509 Jonnie Court, Gaithersburg, MD

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As I am sure you already know, F. M. Busby passed away . . . one more gone ahead.

Now that you’ve had the dye bit you can hear all the horror stories, mine being one of them. They asked if I was allergic to shellfish and I told them that I was a vegetarian and had been for quite a while BUT before that, there hadn’t been any allergy. So much for a history being predictive.. Oddly, I was fine for almost half an hour — and later the hospital said it could NOT have been a reaction to the dye specifically because it DID take that long to show up — won’t go into details but I had managed to actually get home before things started going VERY bad.

I actually crawled to the phone and told the operator to call my doctor, who said get back to the hospital. Uh, now comes the really STUPID part. I explained I could not drive, which she understood and told me to call an ambulance and I (ready for this???) told her I was too embarrassed to call an ambulance for something so trivial . . . yeah, sure, reeeeeeal smart. She told me to take an analgesic remaining from surgery, go straight to bed and call the very first thing in the morning. Yeah, stupid . . . and I was very, very lucky. I also know to say yes next time, if there ever is a next time! (Oh yeah, they said the same thing about the warm tingly feeling, and I DID feel that — and about an hour later things got really warm.)

If I have not mentioned it before (haven’t looked at the locs to see if I did) budesonide is the suggested (synthetic) steroid of choice in cats with irritable bowel diseases — has mostly local effects (i.e., the gastrointestinal tract) and almost none of the “traditional” systemic effects of steroids in general. The human tablet is 3 milligrams and the cat dose is one, so the human product has to be reformulated.

The cats would be astonished to learn that I was three times as much as them.



By the way, three RN’s volunteer to help me with the cats on different days — one of them said that the routine abbreviations are now no longer acceptable due to misunderstandings by **PROFESSIONALS!!!!** Sheesh — now it is to be microgram and milligram, etc. — agh. What

was school all about in the pharmacology portion when health professionals are ALL taught . . . Hmm, the Appaloosa — Snappy was an “unmarked” Appaloosa — long story, but if (and I did say “if”) memory serves me correctly, there are Chinese pictures of varied boats with equines on board and the coat pattern appears to be spotted blankets. Not sure of the age, but . . .

The only candy bar I have tried out lately is the extra deep (?) Reese cup, which I quite enjoyed. I have not yet had the nerve (since I dislike white “chocolate” to start with) to try the white choc version. The M&M bars have very brightly colored wrappers, but I presumed any M&Ms (mini or otherwise) ARE chocolate. I did break down recently and buy a small bag of regular M&Ms and, sadly, realized that either I mis-remembered their taste, or the recipe had changed to more sweet from the shell and less chocolate from the innards. Okay, another reason to just say no . . .

Trinlay — I got the gem of a speech about my chronic pain, with the proverbial good and bad news. Good news, it’s benign (yeah, sure) but there is nothing to do to cure it, just try to manage the pain . . . and only a narcotic will actually do that. Thanks, but no thanks . . .sigh.

E.B. — as of right now, naw, not much could make me want to go to a con. It’s a tradeoff — pain 24/7 that worsens with stress and I get stressed off the chart at cons, so . . . Never say never, but unlikely.

Ghood Luck to Guy and Rosy in the new home.

Rod — you can always try eBay for the sale, but with zines, the postage is what gets you. One way to hand over purchased zines is to find a common convention and hand ‘em over, or maybe even set up as a huckster at a con just to sell the zines.

Just watching the snow — GOTTA get that Hugo nomination form finished up and mailed (keep saying that) . . .

From: **Dainis Bisenieks** February 26, 2005
921 S. St. Bernard Street, Philadelphia,
PA 19143-3310 USA

Fans of the “Falco” series will be glad to learn that U.S. publication is catching up to British. *Scandal Takes a Holiday* (the 16th) identified itself as a September 2004 book. I’m not up to buying new hardcovers yet, and only lately got it from the library. Falco searches in Ostia for a missing person and finds himself faced with corruption of a sort that leads to the killing of those who know too much. Relatives make startling appearances. Since the vigiles — City Watch — are also in the picture, the author could not resist stealing a line, grown proverbial, from a classic film.

I had, even before I read it there, been reflecting on the meaning of “could not resist.” An element of frivolity in one’s makeup: which nose-to-the-grindstone mundanes by definition lack.

Wildside Press frankly bills a substantial part of its output as “pure pulp fiction.” Some of it reaches me for proofreading, enough by

now to reveal a great variety in character and quality. Is there, for all that, a common thread? Given this truth in advertising, I feel free to offer my reflections of what I have seen — work by authors long since dead. Of one story collection I said to John Betancourt, “Geez, but these are crappy stories!” He readily agreed; and if he chooses to publish some such to illustrate what pure pulp fiction was, who am I to fault him? I am happy to leave this one unnamed; suffice to say that these were mystery stories depending entirely on, well, mystery; the absence of evidence, or false appearances due to efforts to cast blame on the innocent. At the end, of course, all is made clear; and is there, then, any reason ever, *ever* to go back? No: you ditch that issue of the magazine (making the surviving ones that much more valuable) and wait for the next one. For that matter, it is or was the nature of radio and TV programs that they went by only once. And I have long felt that most SF — 90% and then some — gives up all that it has to offer on the first reading.

Reading true crime ruined me for detective stories. Real crimes don’t work out the way they do in the stories.

Almost everything else that I read was a least well written. In those cases where the tales are first-person narratives, I was untroubled by the perfect recall and articulate prose style of the narrator. In the case of H. De Vere Stacpoole, I even thought it was damn good, worth reading a second time if that was the sort of thing you liked.

Also good in that way were the stories comprising *Amazon Nights* by Arthur O. Friel, a writer who knew the territory. These stories share a narrator, a man who, together with his trusted companion, scouts the Brazilian jungle for stands of rubber trees and just so happens to run into one tale-worthy peril after another. A sense of the uncanny is well presented, though natural explanations are in the end found for supernatural appearances: mummery, in fact, deceiving those inclined to belief in gods and demons. Baddies, in several of the stories, die by the score. Hokum — though one may reflect on the genuine horrors that persist in the world. My late wife’s brother and his wife were brutally killed in 1986 at their back-country farm in Ecuador, by robbers who were eventually caught; for how long they were put away, I do not know. Much seems too horrifying for fiction, unredeemed by any thread of story that emerges into light.

But back to these things which don’t really matter. Another specimen of pure pulp fiction was a novel, *The Room In the Dragon Volant* by J. Sheridan Le Fanu. I suspect serialization as the form of original publication, as the chapters tend to end in cliffhangers. The narrator, from the perspective of old age, relates a romantic escapade in and around Paris in 1815. At the end it is revealed who his real friends and his real enemies were, who was in what disguise, and what the secrets were behind various mysteries. With so many people laboring to

deceive, there can be no question of characterization or the development of character. There is nothing to go back to. No wonder that the author is almost completely forgotten, though the novel *Uncle Silas* has had a continuing life. Am I more inclined now to read the copy I have, or less?

The next batch of stuff was six novels by Guy Boothby, the five “Dr. Nicola” novels and *Pharos, the Egyptian*. Each is narrated, expressly in writing, by a man who has encountered the remarkable personage in question. For some, it has been a horrifying, shattering experience; in their tales, it is the earnestness of tone that puts me off, as well as the orotund 19th century language. “All ready, sir,” the other replied, with the brevity of a man who is not accustomed to waste his words.” Ah, but what if you are *paid* by the word? I liked somewhat better the tales of those who hired themselves out to Dr. Nicola and found something to admire in him. One accompanies the Doctor on his quest to steal the secrets of an ancient society of illuminati headquartered in Tibet. I liked the line “I divested myself of my European habiliments.” But then I also liked the Doctor’s words, agreeing with his companion’s assessment of the fix they are in and how they must act: “We are desperate men.” And *that* puts me in mind of a passage in Bernard De Voto’s *The Course of Empire*, p. 86 — not that the opposition in the novel were “primitives:”

In such moments the Indians are to recognize the dominance of a mind subtler than theirs. And they are to see the disregard of death and the will to use force without stint regardless of the consequences which the civilized mind could focus instantly but to which the primitive mind could be worked up only by a long series of religious exercises. The white man who would control Indians must respect and even like them. He must understand their infinite capriciousness, brag, and instability of motive and emotion. He must understand their pride. He must be adept in their logic, which was on a wide tangent from the logic of the European mind. But most of all he must have the moral strength to commit himself. For good or ill it is an attribute of civilized man that, disregarding loss, defeat, and death, he can instantly decide to shoot the works. It has always been basic in his ascendancy over primitives.

“Civilized” here obviously does not mean “genteel.” Enough said that there is food for thought in this.

You should know that referring to “the Doctor and his companion” can have a somewhat different connotation around here, especially around Paul Gadzikowski. That bit about a different narrator in each book hiring Dr. Nicola reminds me of Alan Williams’s series of

thrillers with a continuing cast of exotic supporting characters and a different protagonist in each book.

Spell Babington. Otherwise I do not comment on typos and such — which, let us note, in the lettercol may be transcription errors.

I think I am ideally qualified to be a subeditor; whether that is the best thing I could do with my life is a whole 'nother question. But I do not scorn the money such work brings in.

One cannot, of course, freely edit reprints of the works of dead authors; but John Betancourt and I agree that the punctuation I find is not graven in stone, and I discreetly touch up anything over which the reader might stumble. In one book, "Senor" (no tilde) referred indiscriminately to Italians and Spaniards; I fixed. While retaining spellings no longer current, like "Thibet", I changed "Neusky Prospekt" to "Nevsky Prospekt" and "Lemburg" to "Lemberg". (We call the latter Lvov; Poles and Ukrainians have other options.) But I did nothing with the statement that the Pyramids are made of granite blocks, "as everyone knows." They are made of limestone; granite was only used to line the chambers.

These texts must have drawn on badly edited originals, which had far more inconsistency in the spelling of names than I have ever before encountered. Since this was not, like the Holmes Canon, a sacred text, I fixed.

Exotic spellings often serve to "distance" the work, setting the stage as a different place. Also, when writing a historical novel, it's generally a good idea to not have the characters speaking anachronistically, though reader comprehension is also important.

— JTM

From: **Henry L. Welch** March 3, 2005
1525 16th Avenue, Grafton, WI
53024-2017 USA
welch@msoe.edu
<http://people.msoe.edu/~welch/tkk.html>

Thanks for the latest *Alexiad*. Interesting read on all your medical tests. Mine seem pedestrian in comparison (see the latest *TKK* to be sent out shortly).

Taral Wayne is a bit confused. Murray Moore ran a Ditto not a Corflu in Toronto with the help of Catherine Crockett and Colin Hinz. In the end probably about the same amount of work.

E.B. is incorrect in his analysis of fanzine timeliness. *TKK* is due out in even-numbered months and far too often I'm doing it at the wire so that the fanzine doesn't go out until the start of the following odd-numbered month. Issue 110 is the same. I finished the issue, but won't be able to get it duplicated until tomorrow and hopefully mailed on Monday.

Having a deadline can be a burden, but not having one can mean that the issue never sees

publication, since there's always something more to add.

— JTM

From: **George W. Price** March 11, 2005
P.O. Box A3228, Chicago, IL
60690-3228 USA
grgpric@aol.com

E. B. Frohvet asks "where I can mail-order a copy of *Heinlein's Children*." That is easily answered. As General Factotum and Lord High Everything Else at Advent:Publishers, I make the following announcement and offer:

Advent plans to have Joseph Major's *Heinlein's Children: The Juveniles* on sale late this summer or early in the fall, at \$25.00, hardcover only. Pre-publication offer: Anyone who sends a mere \$20.00 to Advent at P.O. Box A3228, Chicago, IL 60690-3228 will get a copy upon publication. Your \$20 will include postpaid shipment to anywhere in the U.S. and Canada.

Joe's text is 447 pages — about 188,000 words — and when we tack on the introduction, bibliography, and index, the book should be close to 500 pages.

Long-time readers of *FOSFAX* will recognize this as an extensively revised and updated version of the series that Joe had in that fanzine.

* * * * *

Milt Stevens says, "Most people probably think of superheroes as those characters who might also be referred to as the underwear heroes." As a youngster I thought of them as the Masked Avengers. As I grew somewhat wiser in the ways of the world, I reached the obvious conclusion that their attraction was that they were not bound by the nitpicking rules that ordinary people have to follow in the administration of justice. They never have to let the bad guys off on "technicalities." As Stevens adds, "Superheroes never seem to spend as much as an instant in court." Superheroes dispense justice right now and to exactly those who deserve it. And then as I grew wiser still, I realized that this is also the justification of a lynch mob.

Which may be a good reason to admire Batman, who is hand in Bat-Gauntlet with the Gotham Police.

— JTM

From: **Milt Stevens** March 14, 2005
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In *Alexiad* V4#1, Lisa mentions she wasn't quite three when the original *Star Trek* first appeared. I first heard of it at Tricon, the 1966

Worldcon. It was my first worldcon. At the time, the idea of an SF TV series completely underwhelmed me. To promote the show at Tricon, the producers brought some models who wore some "interesting" costumes. Those costumes never appeared in the actual series. I found out what the show was actually about by reading the plot summaries in *Yandro* while I was overseas. I did get around to seeing the actual shows on the wardrobe TV when I got back to the US the following year. I thought they were adequate (which was quite a bit better than most of the previous SF TV shows). The last episode I watched was the one where a giant hand reached out of space and grabbed the Enterprise. Like gag me with an old issue of *Amazing*.

I've never blamed the Sci-Fi Channel on *Star Trek*. Most of the stuff the Sci-Fi Channel runs probably deserves to be called sci-fi. I do like the *Stargate* shows fairly well, and I really liked *The Chronicle*. Their made for TV movies are almost always pretty lame. Joseph mentions Ursula LeGuin's criticisms of their version of *Wizard of Earthsea*. If she wanted to object to anything, it really should have been the script which was utter trash. It was only after she mentioned it that I remembered the people on Earthsea were supposed to be "dark." Since they were all about the same color, it didn't make any difference, and I forgot about it before I finished reading the novel. Dark is sort of a relative term to begin with. To a person of my color (red hair, blue eyes), Greeks and East Indians could be considered dark. Some of the darkest people I've ever seen were East Indians. They are really black not like those pallid Afro-Americans. Hollywood did do the affirmative action job on the cast, although Danny Glover can be considered dark, and Kristen Kreuk is Eurasian. I think I'd be willing to accept Kristen Kreuk even if you painted her green.

I startled one of the Greek ladies big in a Greek society by having eyes very close in color to a dark blue bracelet.

— LTM

After reading Joseph's comment, I looked up that statistical breakdown in the April 2005 *Analog*. Christopher Anvil is their overall most prolific writer. Anvil is a writer who has always been absolutely mediocre. He achieved a minimum level of competence and has never exceeded it. He writes an OK story, but never anything more. I'm sure I've read many of his stories, but I couldn't name one of them.

The Pandora's Planet stories always amused me, with their aliens baffled by human ways becoming metaphors for humans in situations beyond their control.

Even at that, Anvil is way ahead of Jerry Oltion. To the best of my knowledge and belief, I've never even heard of Jerry Oltion, and the study says he had 60 stories in *Analog* between 1982 and 2004. I've got all of those issues and

even read most of them. Olton must be the least memorable writer in the known universe. There is one omission in this study that makes me wonder. Bob Silverberg hasn't sold at least 25 stories to *Astounding/Analog* over the years? That certainly sounds doubtful. If I was a little more interested, I'd go to my Contento Index and count, but I'm not quite that interested.

In the letter column, I very much agree with Rod E. Smith that *Forbidden Planet* doesn't need a remake. As far as a sequel is concerned, it has been pointed out that *Forbidden Planet* could easily have been the first episode of *Star Trek* or at least, have happened in the same universe. It would be very hard to make a sequel that didn't seem like it was imitating *Star Trek*.

Yeah, the guys doing ST: Enterprise could have had Leslie Nielsen as Starfleet Admiral Adams, unless the intellectual property lawyers wanted too much for the rights.

—JTM

Every issue you run several candy bar reviews. Every time I see one of these I think of the Candy Barr, who was a 1950s stripper and girlfriend of mobster Mickey Cohen. Well, I just happened to come across some pictures of Candy Barr and was wondering if you would be interested in a review. They aren't very extreme pictures, considering the woman did make her living as a stripper.

From: **Lloyd Penney** March 15, 2005
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Beware the Ides of March, for I have *Alexiad* WN 19 on the desktop, and a letter of comment on the way. Good warning for anyone, I suppose. I hope spring's on the way, although the low for tonight is -10°C. Some comments on what looked like a very good issue at first scan . . .

I think I was about 8 or 9 when I watched *Trek* in its original run, and I watched it with my parents. I bought the books connected with the series to find out more about this wonderful show, and it was within those books I found out about conventions, and Hugo Awards, all surrounded by this great group called fandom. I also discovered a group called the Star Trek Welcomitee which acted as a Welcome Wagon for people who found there were some organizations you could join to indulge your interest in *Trek*, and send it in directions you never suspected. Yvonne and I were members of the STW for 15 years, right up to the time where the late Shirley Maiewski shut it down, saying the Internet was doing a better job of disseminating word about *Trek* than the STW ever could. I saw Diane Duane and Peter Morwood at Torcon; they're two of my favorite people.

Freas, Eisner, Chalker...all of our familiar faces and names are slowly going away, just proof that they're aging right along with us.

Still, there's never enough time to meet the people who have made your SFnal life what it has been, never the time to say thank you.

You're not the first to make the observation that Jack Vance is an underappreciated author of SF. Perhaps his writing is so full of amazing ideas, most of us can't appreciate or even understand his writing? I don't think he's been well promoted over the years; otherwise, we'd know when his books do arrive. The only places I can think of where his books could be promoted are *Locus* and *Chronicle*, and I haven't bought either in a long time.

I still get a lot of Nigerian spam, but some of the spam I get . . . if I really had won all the lotteries the spam messages tell me, I'd be a billionaire by now! I win them all, and the majority of each first prize. I didn't know Europe had so many lotteries. I'd be happy to win a local lottery, thank you . . .

Then there are the people who, as Grant likes to say, want to make his Rolex bigger.

The novel that was horribly written by 30 authors and submitted to PublishAmerica had under its title a writer's pseudonym of Travis Tea. Now, if that didn't ring some alarm bells at PublishAmerica, then they deserve what they get.

Grant McCormick's list of Pratchett books is very useful . . . I think I got to *Wyrd Sisters* before running out of money and interest in the Discworld books. There were so many, I didn't know where to resume, much like the Xanth series. Now I know what to read, and in what order they were published, just in case someone drops a case of used Pratchett books on me.

Bless your heart for thinking of me for a Hugo Award. I finished sixth for the Best Fan Writer in Boston, so I keep getting close . . . I'd be happy to land on the ballot in fifth, and be quite content. Perhaps one day, I might have a chance to hold a rocketship.

The local . . . Rich Dengrove polishes my own remarks re older fans rejecting the younger. When I found fandom in the late 70s, some rejected me, but more accepted me, and showed me the local ropes. I try to be accepting of new people, and I try to show them what interests me, but I also keep in mind that what brought me into fandom isn't what brought them, and their interests will be different. Fandom evolves, like any other cultural phenomenon, and it will never be the same again. To those who don't like this evolution, I understand how you feel, but get over it.

One imagines some fans reacting to the news of the first WorldCon with shock and dismay at what these newcomers were doing to ruin Fandom and how it would never be the same again.

—JTM

Well, Corflu 2006 will be in Toronto. I hope I can help out; on the other hand, it would be great to simply sit and mingle with the

assembled throngs. Maybe we can take a room . . . at the last Ditto in Toronto, we were in a car accident on the way home.

My loc . . . Canada NewsWire let me go after five weeks, citing that I wasn't learning the job quite as well as they would have liked. I think it's age-related, myself, but I now have an evening job, doing data entry on the *Globe and Mail's* website, and every so often, I do some registration work with BBW, which provides registration services for local conventions, conferences and trade shows. Might as well get paid for something I've been doing voluntarily for more than 20 years.

RAE the rest . . . it's now the 16th, and it's taken me a while to get to the end. Never enough time to get it all done. Take care, both of you, and see you next issue.

From: **Robert S. Kennedy** March 18, 2005
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My thanks for Vol. 4, No. 1. It took six days to get here which isn't very good for First Class mail. I sent a letter to Evanston, Illinois on a Friday and received an e-mail response on Monday.

During the night of February 6 we had a very hard rain. Then, on February 18th it started raining again. It stopped the next morning, so I drove to Ventura for my usual monthly lunch at Eric Ericson's on the pier. (This gives me my monthly ocean fix.) It rained during lunch, but stopped again allowing me to take a walk on the pier. I then drove to the LDS church for the monthly meeting of the Ventura County Genealogical Society. It started raining again during the meeting. On the way home I stopped in Barnes & Noble and purchased *The Scam Handbook* reviewed by Joe in the previous issue of *ALEXIAD*. It was still raining at Midnight on Saturday night. But, when I got up Sunday morning it was clear. At 2:00 p.m. it started raining again and rained off and on until Wednesday morning. And there has been more rain. It's raining right now while I'm transmitting this letter. We have already had over three times our "average" rainfall and are well on the way to possibly setting a new record. Each night, if it isn't raining, I go on a snail killing expedition.

I would like to recommend the movie (available for rental) *The Blind Swordsman: Zatoichi*. Directed by Takeshi Kitano, 1 hr. 55 min., Japanese with English subtitles. A thoroughly fun movie.

I found a note I'd made to obtain the book *A Disturbance of Fate* by Mitchell J. Freedman that Joe reviewed back in Vol. 2, No. 5 (October 2003). I could no longer remember why, but nevertheless I obtained it from the library. It's RFK wasn't killed and became President. His Vice-President is Ralph Yarborough. We then have eight years of RFK, followed by eight years of Yarborough. Then comes President Barry Sadler and the second American Revolution. Lots of real names here like Senator Jim Hightower, Secretary of War

Ronald Dellums, and General David Hackworth. (Apparently the author hasn't read *Vietnam Primer* that Hackworth wrote along with Sam [S. L. A.] Marshall.) For the most part I did what I call skip reading because the novel is ridiculous. I did, however, completely read the Appendix. Here we have the author's wet dream about what he would like the United States to become. Then I reread Joe's review. Apparently I wanted to obtain the book to see if it is as bad as Joe said. It's even worse.

Also, recently read was *For Love and Glory* by Paul Anderson. I believe it may be his last novel. Anyway, it's another excellent Anderson novel.

The Da Vinci Code just will not go away. The novel is closing in on two years on the *New York Times* Best Seller list. (By the way, Amazon.com's Best Seller listing is significantly different than the *New York Times*. I rather think that Amazon is more accurate.) Anyway, I watched "Beyond The Da Vinci Code – Dan Brown" on the History Channel (January 16, 2005). For some reason I had the impression that Dan Brown would be on the program. That was not the case. The program was interesting. However, they were wrong about the Knights Templar not having a connection to Freemasonry. (If they got this wrong, then one has to wonder what else they got wrong.) It would have been nice if they had spent more time on Rosslyn Chapel; but I guess one can't have everything. Also, they wasted a lot of time repeating presentations that had gone on before. It's like they believe their viewers are too stupid to remember something from prior in the program. It's very frustrating.

I wrote to Nigel West about how upset I was about "this is a novel but it's really true" books, like Richard Marcinko's Cold War sagas. Then I thought how silly I had been, getting worked up over nothing. Then *The Da Vinci Code* became really big . . .

Perhaps it should be explained how I got interested in this subject. It all started with *Born in Blood: The Lost Secrets of Freemasonry* by John J. Robinson (1989), followed by his *Dungeon, Fire and Sword: The Knights Templar in the Crusades* (1991). Robinson's books are scholarly and most interesting. Then someone mentioned *Holy Blood, Holy Grail* (1982). It has been a multitude of books and downhill ever since. ☺

After my genealogical society meeting on January 15th, I stopped in Barnes & Noble to purchase a copy of *Family Chronicle* magazine because it has reviews of genealogy software. On a rack was *Secrets of the Da Vinci Code* published by U.S. News & World Report, so I picked it up too. I then proceeded to go through the SF books area. But, it's hard to really find anything, unless one is looking for something specific, with mostly spines turned out. Then, on my way to check out, as usual I browsed through the Bargain Books area. What should appear before my eyes but *Genesis of the Grail*

Kings: The Explosive Story of Genetic Cloning and the Ancient Bloodline of Jesus by Laurence Gardner (2004). (This one sounds really wacky.) It's one of the many books published by Barnes & Noble (this one for \$9.99). Gardner is also the author of *Bloodline of the Holy Grail: The Hidden Lineage of Jesus Revealed* (2003, Barnes & Noble) that I already have. The latter book has a Foreword by Prince Michael of Albany about whom Joe has commented. I haven't read the former as yet, there's lots of time. I am continually stunned by the volume of books published by these people. Well, they sell to fools like me so they just keep coming.

To bring people up to date: "Prince Michael of Albany" is a Belgian named Michel Lafosse who claims, supported by a lot of invented evidence, that he is the legitimate male-line descendant and heir of Prince Charles Edward "Bonnie Prince Charlie" Stuart.

For his version see:
<http://www.royalhouseofstewart.org.uk>
For the true skinny check:
<http://www.jacobite.ca/essays/lafosse.htm>

I found the book *The Da Vinci Legacy* by Lewis Perdue (1983) listed somewhere and obtained it on Interlibrary Loan. It has its moments, but I can't recommend it.

The Hostile Takeover Trilogy by S. Andrew Swann is ok; but not as good as I expected.

Life Expectancy by Dean Koontz is a thoroughly enjoyable read and classic Koontz. There was, however, one disappointment. Koontz has apparently fallen into the Politically Correct usage of "gender" instead of "sex". Words have gender, people have sex. I refuse to use the words otherwise.

"I did not have gender with that woman." All right. . .

I purchased the two CD set of *Farscape: The Peacekeeper Wars*. Without the commercials it's three hours. It was very much enjoyed again. The second CD has coverage of the making of the movie, interviews, etc., and is quite interesting. The only sad part was where they were tearing down the sets. I've nominated it for a HUGO since it was originally on the Sci-Fi Channel in 2004. Also purchased was *The Lord of the Rings—Special Extended DVD Edition*. It consists of 12 CD's, 2 each for the movies and 6 Appendices. *The Fellowship of the Ring* has 30 minutes added, *The Two Towers* has 43 minutes added, and *The Return of the King* has 50 minutes added. So far, I have watched *The Fellowship of the Ring* and *The Two Towers*. Just 8 CD's to go. What the heck, I have the rest of my life.

Breaking my vow not to watch made for the Sci Fi Channel movies, I watched *Alien Siege* (February 26) because it sounded interesting. The acting was as bad as usual. Someone had a sense of humor, though. One of the facilities was: "Salem Hills Institute of Technology".

The Book review editor for the *Scottish Rite Journal* (March – April 2005) is back again with SF and Fantasy recommendations. This time it's *The Artifact* by W. Michael Gear, *The Adept* by Katherine Kurtz and Deborah Turner Harris (as well as the rest of the books in the series), and *Revolt in 2100* by Robert A. Heinlein. Also, he recommends *The Man Who Would Be King: And Other Stories* by Rudyard Kipling and *Foucault's Pendulum* by Umberto Eco. The only one of these books I didn't remember reading is *Foucault's Pendulum*, so it was obtained from the library. It was rather more than I really care to read.

Joseph T Major: Having greatly enjoyed *Going Postal*, I was very pleased to read your review. I nominated it for a HUGO.

I sent a copy of your "Health Issues" (with a warning attached) to my friend who also has Crohn's Disease. A colonoscopy without sedation? I had one last year, but definitely with sedation. As a matter of fact, I had them put me completely out. There was no desire on my part to have any idea about what was happening. For me, a sigmoidoscopy is painful. As I said in an e-mail to you: "You're a better man than I am, Gunga Din!"

There may be a WorldCon in Denver? I would seriously consider going to it. I'm going to L.A.con IV next year.

The biggest problem is that it would mean going out I-64 for three years in a row: St. Louis in 2007, Denver in 2008, and Kansas City in 2009. (Kansas City in 1976 was my first Worldcon.)

— JTM

Grant C. McCormick: Thank you for "A Personal Appreciation of Pratchett".



Richard Dengrove: As I've indicated previously, my interest in *The Da Vinci Code* is the result of my having read the books that obviously influenced Brown in writing the novel. That doesn't mean that I believe all of it. In *Alexiad* Vol.2, No.6, I mentioned that *The Priory of Sion* has apparently been demolished (at least in its present incarnation) by Robert Richardson in his tract, *The Unknown Treasure: The Priory of Sion Fraud and The Spiritual Treasure of Rennes le Chateau* (North Star Publishing Group, 1998). How can I obtain a copy of the 1999 article in *Gnosis*?

Trinlay Khadro: I have seen figures that show gas prices in current dollars are lower now than they were in the 1980's (*The American Enterprise*, March 2005, p. 11). That doesn't

mean I like the current gas prices. I remember 31¢ gas. Heck, I remember 27¢ gas. Of course my income then was a fraction of what it is now even in retirement. Thanks for the comments on Prachett's Discworld books. Yes, his work is addictive. Between Borders and Barnes & Noble, I purchased *Equal Rites* and *Wyrd Sisters*. *Interesting Times* was also purchased. *The Amazing Maurice and His Educated Rodents* was in neither store, but was obtained from the library in the Children's-Fiction section. It was a fun read. Maybe I'm just a child at heart.

E. B. Frohvet: I've read some of Kurtz's "Adept" series as well as *Two Crowns for America*.

Alex R. Slate: You have the use of Roger and Wilco correct.

Marty Helgesen: So do you as well as Over and Out. You're welcome.

From: **Rodney Leighton** Feb. 25, 2005
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CANADA

Thanks for the first issue of the fourth volume of *Alexiad* which appeared yesterday. Went and bought some cigars and came home and read portions of it.

Which half? Well . . . although I thought I had conquered that egoboo bullshit which caused me to read over my own writings which appeared in any fanzine before anything else I find I still do it. I always read most if not all of all letter columns; occasionally scan some and skip some here and there. Reading *FOSFAX* 210 I came to Zrilich, muttered something about the same as I did when I realized that name would run over the edge of the page and who gives a shit or something and skipped right by. Having no interest whatever in South African politics . . . well, anyway, I probably read 90% of the letter column. Somewhere along there I woke up to the fact that there was a report on your latest health travails, went back and read through that, shuddering periodically wondering why it's always the good people who get inflicted with all this weird shit and what sort of God is it who makes his people go through things like that and live in poor health and goggling at how tough you must be, thinking: man, I would be sound asleep through all of those procedures if I had to endure them, Joe must be really tough; well, considering all the things he has wrong with him, he has gotta be or else he would be an invalid or dead. Finished the locs; went to the front and while I always read Lisa's bitty editorial I confess to starting it this time and scanning the rest, *Star Trek* being of no interest to me. Read your bitty editorial; scanned the jottings. The next thing which interested me was the review of the Ann Rule book, which I almost ordered recently; THE ZING was of interest; as was the Publish America piece and the bit on Appaloosa's which are without doubt the prettiest horses in the world.

Glad you liked them.

— LTM

I like Johnny's candy bar reviews. Hey, do they have SMARTIES bars down there? I have gotten a few; I even bought one once with the idea of reviewing it and I thought, well, it's a milk chocolate bar with bitty Smarties embedded throughout; what more can I say. Comes in a number of varieties now; they're good. Provided you like SMARTIES. Read over the zine listings and the Hugo bit and I was done. If you weren't so hipped on that SF stuff, I would probably find more of interest.

Ah, "for real" fanzines. Well. I divide SF fanzines into three categories: real fanzines; apazines and ether zines. The dividing line is becoming more blurred all the time and is sometimes invisible. Criteria? A "for real" fanzine is printed on paper and is mailed by the publisher to people who do something to obtain said fanzine, or just because the publisher wants the person to have a copy; sometimes they are passed out at cons or meetings. Apazines are zines strictly for a specific apa. Ether fanzines are fanzines which any person with the technology and expertise can access; read on a little screen or possibly print and then read; available to anyone who can find them, with no obligation. But unavailable to technologically challenged people such as myself unless some friend prints them. I have been seeing quite a few which fall into all categories. For real fanzines seem to be a vanishing breed. No doubt there is a list of fanzines received in *Trap Door*. Probably a large list. But I wonder; if Robert made a separate record for fanzines which are on paper; not available on the net and not sent through any apa, how many there would be.

Let's see, in this issue: well, *The Knarley Knews* and *Trap Door* are for real fanzines. And *Opuntia*. *Visions of Paradise* is a for real fanzine and a good one but copies are available to FAPA members. *Vanamonde* is an apazine although non-members get to read copies 6 or 8 months later. John just sent me a magazine; I shouldn't chide him. *Challenger* may still be; I recall that Lillian was trying to get it on the net; it's been so long since I have seen that one that I don't know anything about it. By the way: do you suppose I am the only person to have ever requested being removed from the *Challenger* mailing list? Does that <http://efanzines> listing mean that the fanzine is available on that forum? Janine told me she had downloaded that *Steam Engine Time*. Didn't tell me she has something to do with editing/publishing/whatever.

Be glad you aren't participating in the quarrel over James Patrick Kelly's proposal to set up five new Hugo categories for Web items, making place for them by abolishing outdated ones like Best Fanzine.

All the URL listed are for sites where the fanzine can be found. Fanzines on eFanzines.com can be downloaded; other sites, like the File 770 and Challenger ones, have

versions that can be read.

You were correct, I think: I did see one issue of Earl Kemp's fanzine; #6 I think. It was interesting. But that as well as other ether zines have a requirement for me to read them: a friend who has the time, disposition, energy and funds to print copies and mail them to me. Such people are rare treasures, to be highly valued and not aggravated or insulted or bothered. I know two. Both tend to vanish for extended periods and print fanzines which they mail to me on some sort of methodology which is indecipherable to me; whim, I think. I'm happy to see anything they send. I hardly ever make requests, although, I did ask one to send wrestling zines; a request which has yet to be responded to and may never be and the other one gave me a list of 10 or so of the things which she had recently printed off; did I want them. I chose 5 or 6 which I thought should make a good *TKK* article. I expect they will appear one of these days. One of Kemp's zines was included, #17 I think. I need new glasses. And a new brain. I can't remember whether I asked for that one or not and it was only a couple of weeks ago or maybe less. Sigh.

I understand what Dainis Bisenieks feeling about his wife's possessions. It fell to me, with some assistance from one sister, to sort through my mother's personal belongings . . . and a few months later, my father's. Wasn't much surprise with him although I confess I am not yet quite finished. I found a variety of things in Mum's belongings which ranged from silly to sad to surprising; things she kept for 50 or 80 years which I didn't know she had. What to do with these things? The letter I wrote her almost 40 years earlier: cry a bit, tear it up and trash it. The book she kept for 85 years? Keep that around. But some things . . . it will be two years since Mum died 5 weeks from today. I still have a few items which she had which I haven't done anything with. No one in the family wants them, including me. But I somehow don't feel like throwing them out. Nothing of value; seashells and things like that.

Now you know how I felt when my father's wedding ring went down that toilet in Alabama.

—JTM

Well, I guess I will go have a bowl of corn flakes and wash some dishes and probably goof off the rest of the day. 10 weeks to silviculture season. I wonder if I can get rested in that time.

From: **Richard Dengrove** March 8, 2005
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I know you are dubious about alternate publishers: small publishers, web publishers and publishers on demand. You are right they will not give your book very wide publicity, and your book probably will not sell. Also, most of what they publish will be swill. However, they are the only alternative to the attitude books

should play it safe so the publisher can make money.

I am not going to push my oeuvres, or claim anything for them. I am for my sister. She had been a comedian at comedy clubs. Now she was trying to peddle her memoirs of that time to agents and publishers. The book was genuinely funny. It discussed her adventures both with luminaries such as Tiny Tim and in *Yellow Knife*, a thousand miles above the Arctic circle. Also, there was the time she competed with a wet t-shirt contest in Maine.

No mainstream publisher would publish her manuscript. They were forthright about it. If she was famous, they would. However, she wasn't. It is true she was accepted by Hyperion. However, Disney, I am sure, concluded that section was being too adventurous, and eliminated it before she could actually be published.

There is one consolation here. If mainstream publishers play it too safe, web, little and POD publishing will replace them.

There's a place for that sort of publishing; my cousin Russell's family history, *A Major Family of Virginia*, certainly wouldn't get published by a "mainstream" publisher. Your sister's book is like that. What I don't like about firms like PA is their deceptive practices.

Still fun novels do get published by mainstream publishers, like *The Clowns of the Gods* by Morris West. Rodney's review almost made me want to break down and read fiction again.

It is about a Pope who has Divine visions. It would have been more popular than *Shoes of the Fisherman* if people didn't take their religion so seriously. Or they could take the supernatural seriously. They claim they do. They claim it has been proven by science; just that the skeptics are too blind to see. However, at the first hint of the Pope being supernatural, the novel stays on the midlist.

While the public may not take the supernatural too seriously, the press certainly believes it does. Which is why I was astonished that Joel Levy's *The Scam Handbook* includes them among the scammers. Psychic detectives get a singular good press. If a psychic detective says they have solved a case that had baffled the police, the press accepts it and doesn't check. While the press is supposedly pledged to the truth, it goes where, it believes, its bread is buttered.

From the supernatural, we go to the supercrazy. I am surprised, Joe, that you never heard the anecdote that John Thiel refers to, about Ray Palmer and his magazine *Flying Saucers from Other Worlds*. He launched it as a news stand publication in 1957.

As editor, early on, he hinted that he knew some important secret. For months, he kept hinting. Finally he revealed it: flying saucers do not come from outer space, they come from inside the Earth. Then he changed his

magazine's title to *Flying Saucers*.

Of course, he was referring to the Teros or Deros, who live inside the Earth in caves. The beings he had promoted in *Amazing Stories* when he was editor during the '40s.

Now let me get around to talking about a favorite subject of mine, namely me. I questioned whether the *Battle of Dorking* (1871) was the first science fiction work, or science fiction at all. You say it is science fiction because it extrapolated to the future. The excerpt I read extrapolated from Chesney's view the present day Brits were decadent. It is science fiction in that way. I don't remember any future technology.

Maybe you read further and it did have future technology.

On the other hand, Lucian wasn't my candidate for first science fiction writer; it was Johannes Kepler, with his manuscript *Somnium*. It was obvious Kepler wasn't serious about how he got his people to the Moon. I think it was on shadows.

I didn't say that Chesney was the first SF writer. I said that he started a genre: "future wars". He speculated on the application of technology and how it could change society. Isn't that SF? Donald A. Wollheim's Mike Mars books featured existing technology; did that make them un-SF?

However, he was serious that there were Moon men. Different races of men for the different climates. Overall, the 1610 manuscript probably incorporated more of the science of Kepler's day than most science fiction today does the science of ours.

I have another comment about me as well. In our ongoing discussion about the Zulu War and an eclipse, you point out that none of your sources mentions an eclipse playing a role in a certain British defeat. Maybe my source was wrong. Or maybe your authors did not deem the fact important.

The situation could be something like the one with Newton's apple. Newton was in his eighties at the time. Several people reported as hearsay that he told how an apple falling helped inspire his theory of gravity. Academics, who had a more direct line with Newton, like his nephew John Conduit, just said Newton gave a "fruit" as an example of gravity.

I am convinced that Newton found the apple significant. He, being a religious man, could see the analogy between his apple and the one in the Garden of Eden. Both were symbols of inspiration. Also, the common folk saw the analogy too.

However, academics who reported on Newton could only see that apple in a secular way, as a lowly thing unworthy of the great Newton. They did not wish to dwell on it.

Similarly, I was wondering if historians, in a less imperialistic era, might not be reluctant to attribute any role to the belief once widespread in the West all primitives fear eclipses. That ends what I want to say this time around.

Given the effort that Donald Morris, author of *The Washing of the Spears*, put into the book (such as going to the battlefield of Isandhlwana and digging for broken ammo-box straps) I would think he would have mentioned the eclipse if anyone involved had thought it relevant. Incidentally, one of the people who encouraged him to write it was Ernest Hemingway, who liked meeting and encouraging other writers. Had Edgar Rice Burroughs gone over and said hello that one time he was in the same restaurant with Papa, he might have been very surprised to be well received.

— JTM

From: Taras Wolansky March 28, 2005
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Alexiad 4.1: I consider myself fortunate to have had the chance to commission the late Kelly Freas to do a caricature of me, a few years ago. As I recall, his wife was sort of leaning on him not to make the caricatures too insulting, so as not to scare away too many customers!

"Hollywood's devotion to multiculturalism" and *Legend of Earthsea*: As a general rule, it is more difficult — more expensive — to do multiracial casting, because you're limiting the pool of actors you draw from, who are mostly white. If you're filming in Canada, as *Earthsea* did, or in New Zealand, as *LOTR* did, it becomes even more difficult.

AND OUT OF THE MIST, THE
DREADED PUNCTUATION
PIRATES APPEARED!



Ahoy

Review of Jack Vance's *Lurulu*: "He lacks the sheer nastiness of some other writers . . ." Joe, you must not have read *Bad Ronald!* (I don't know if the movie was as creepy as the book.) The one great work Vance has produced in recent years is *Night Lamp* (1996), which also gets pretty grim.

Review of Joel Levy's *The Scam Handbook*: "Levy lists 'psychic detectives' as a form of con man." Interestingly, that parallels the change in English witchcraft law in the early 18th Century: under the new law, practicing witchcraft was considered swindling. I like to say: if real psychics existed, they would be working for the Federal Government — and we would have caught Osama bin Ladin years ago.

Then there is the story that Edgar Cayce did a very secret reading for Woodrow Wilson. Didn't work, did it?

Comments to Sue Burke: "There had been a grand genre of epic sagas, descending from *Amadis de Gaula*, complete with spinoffs, shared-worlds, and all the other stuff you see in today's SF&F. (Well, maybe not media tie-ins.)" Media tie-ins, too: with little in the way of copyright protection, one of the few ways to cash in on a literary work was to put it on the stage. By the way, Cervantes' *Don Quixote* constantly refers, tongue in cheek, to *Amadis*.

No, that's play adaptations. Shakespeare did one, for example. And in *Don Quijote*, when the Don's friends are purging his library, *Amadis* is one of the three books they save.

When doctors refer to "clear liquids", what they really mean, I think, is solutions (like soft drinks of any color) rather than suspensions (like hot chocolate or most soups). The latter contain solid food in powder form.

Richard Dengrove: Though I'm an atheist in religion, I have no problem believing there was a rabbi named Yeshua with some interesting ideas, who wandered around Judea 2000 years ago and got in trouble with the authorities.

Tara Wayne: "Alexander — a thug with charisma." Some of his fans may be unsavory (Oliver Stone — ugh!), but Alexander's tolerant attitude toward the religions and ethnic groups of his empire was simply unprecedented, in his time and almost any time up to the 20th Century. A good part of the time, he was welcomed as a liberator. (I wonder if Stone sees any parallels with another, more recent leader who conquered Afghanistan and was welcomed by many as a liberator!)

Lloyd Penney: "There's the usual group who will want to deny this [marriage] ceremony to gays and lesbians . . ." If the ceremony were the issue, there are many religious sects that will perform it; the real issue seems to be the Federal benefits — 1100 by one count — that accrue to married couples, as well as State, local and corporate bennies.

E.B. Frohvet: "Do we really need eight years of research to pick a lunar landing site?" While the Moon has been well-photographed, we still don't know much about its natural resources.

Milt Stevens: "Superheroes never seem to spend as much as an instant in court." You must have missed *The Incredibles*, which cleverly posits that all the superheroes have been driven into a sort of witness protection program by lawsuits.

The *Incredibles* is now available on DVD, and has been nominated for the BDP — Long Form Hugo.

Rod E. Smith: Re *Forbidden Planet*, "the very concept of a planetary self-destruct switch

— much less one which is easily activated and can't be turned off, in a place where children would be running around — is absurd." We have to presume this was something Dr. Morbius jury-rigged, long after all the Krell children were dead. It's not that easily activated — you have to turn an inconspicuous, unlabeled disk and then throw a switch — and it probably could be turned off, if you had studied Krell technology as long as Morbius had. After running unsupervised for 200,000 years, it's not surprising the reactors are about ready to blow: maybe all the switch did was disable the tenth and final backup cooling system.

My mother gave away all my "Tom Swift, Jr." books. I'm afraid to find out how much they would be worth today!

Someday I've got to find that child-care book with the passage that says: "When your child goes off to college, you can give/throw away all his/her special personal things (comic books/dolls/etc.)." It must have been written by a collector wanting to make things rare and hence valuable!

—JTM

From: **Rod E. Smith** March 28, 2005
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Johnny Carruthers, in his review of the Zero Bar, forgot to mention that it is at its best frozen. (And I wonder how many children's — and adults' — teeth have been broken eating one thus prepared.)

There are mentions by Alexis A. Gilliland and JTM about MILSPEC and expensive things. Yes, the government often overspends for certain items. Keep in mind, though, that many of these were expensive not because they were MILSPEC (and not because someone was on the take) but because they were made to go in aircraft. The coffee makers were models also used in civilian airliners, and cost so much because they were flight rated. The toilet seat (actually a blown fiberglass cover for the toilet and much of the wall and floor) is also identical to a piece used in civilian airliners and also expensive because it is flight rated. When something is flight rated it must be extensively tested and certified to ensure that it will not cause *any problem* during either normal operations or emergencies. It's not just that the coffee pot can't come loose in a crash, the unit must also not trip circuit breakers. Under. Any. Circumstances.

Also, it isn't particularly unusual for someone properly seated and braced to survive 10 g crashes. There have been touch downs so forceful the landing gear was propelled out the top of the plane where everyone walked away.

Oh, and the Cosmonauts used mechanical pencils.

In its fervor to accede to the wishes of the faultfinders, the Navy switched from a specialized tool supplied by an equipment

manufacturer to standard hardware store screwdrivers. And munged so many proprietary fasteners that they bought some more of the specialized tools to save money. (An argument could be made that the manufacturer should have used standard fasteners, but this could have been a situation where it was important that only certified people have access.)

All of this is the sort of thing engineers are taught in general — with specific examples — in engineering college. There have been cases of non-engineers replacing "flimsy" roll pins with solid steel pins and having the new pin — or the part it is in — promptly fail. Because the springiness of the roll pin was essential to soak up the shock of operation. It is things like that which prompt the Engineer's Mantra: If a standard exists, even an arbitrary one, follow it, unless you have a very good reason not to.

That bit in the "Relics" episode of *Next Generation* where Scotty says "Forget it. I wrote it." could very well have come from a real world example, because there are a lot of them. In the late Fifties some VIPs were in the control room for a sounding rocket launch when a parameter went out of bounds and a hold was called. One of the VIPs went to the launch controller and told him that it was all right to go ahead and launch. The launch controller politely but firmly told the man that the manual required a hold in these circumstances. The older man smiled a bit and said "I wrote that manual. That rule doesn't apply to this situation. You can launch safely." And so they did . . .

The goal of MILSPEC is not to have the best technology, but equipment which is as reliable as reasonably possible. Aviation and space applications have similar goals. I believe that the Hubble Space Telescope is run by a 486. However, it is a space-rated 486: radiation hardened, heat tolerant, etc. And, since the HST doesn't run Windows but rather a custom machine language, a 486 is more than it needs. (I don't think the M-16 met MILSPEC standards until the mid-Seventies, and in early days its lack of reliability killed many soldiers.)

Recently resumed trying to sell my contemporary fantasy novel set almost entirely in central Kentucky. A large part of it involves a small horse farm. This is mostly because two of the main characters are female centaurs.

That sounds really interesting.

— LTM

BTW, anyone who hasn't seen *The Incredibles* yet should definitely give it a try. This is one of the few movies which don't have at least one "wince moment" for me. And not only is it not bad, it's actually pretty good!

I want to get a copy when we go down to Nashville for Xanadu, along with Iron Council and Jonathan Strange & Mr Norrell. (I've already read *Iron Sunrise*.)

— JTM

From: **Martin Helgesen** April 1, 2005
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Thank you for the cartoon on the bottom of page 2. It makes a point that many people forget.

Joe says of the insulin pens he now has to use, "The problem is that I have to keep the stuff refrigerated, which will be interesting at hotels the next time we go on a trip." There are small, insulated containers for carrying food or drink that needs refrigeration and hotels have ice machines. If you drive that would seem to take care of the problem. When I go to a convention now I buy a small jar of preserves and a small loaf of whole wheat bread. I eat sandwiches for lunch at home and bring them to work, so I save time and money by making my own sandwiches. I rarely drive to cons, so I use the ice bucket in my room to keep the preserves cool during the con.

What happens when the hotel's ice machines run out, thanks to the con's demands?



Joe wonders about people who claim they were abducted by aliens who say they distrust the government but also say they gave their evidence proving they were abducted to government agents. I haven't read any of those accounts, but one possible explanation they could offer would be that they used to trust the government until they gave their evidence to the government, which suppressed it.

My thanks to Grant McCormick for his appreciation of Terry Pratchett. I had heard of his books but never gotten around to reading them. (At Minicon, over Easter weekend, Steve Brust said he's never read any of the Discworld books.) I decided I should read some, especially since Pratchett was to be GoH at Minicon. Using Grant's list I borrowed the first two from a local library. I read the first one and returned both to the library. I've been so busy I knew I wouldn't get to the second book before going to the con and I knew I was going to buy all of them. I bought all of them except for a few of the most recent books which weren't available in paperback. I'll have time to buy them because I'll interspace Discworld books and other books. I usually travel with only a carryon bag and they didn't all fit with my clothing. I had intended to

bring a few plastic supermarket bags but forgot so I used the hotel's plastic laundry bag in my room to carry the rest.

I am puzzled by Alexis Gilliland's comments on my letter. Of course Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John composed their own Gospels which were necessarily incomplete and they selected facts relevant to their purposes. That was not making up an imaginary Jesus. However, if Jesus really were what Alexis claimed, the accounts by the Evangelists would have described an imaginary Jesus.

I did not say the success of historic Christianity proves it is true, although the success is a relevant fact. After the first Pentecost Sunday (Acts 2) Christianity consisted of a few thousand people in a remote backwater of the Roman Empire. In about 300 years it had become a major religion in the Empire and the Emperor Constantine converted to Christianity. The rapid growth was not accomplished by military force because the early Christians had no army. Christianity was illegal and while there were periods of lax enforcement of the laws there were ten major persecutions from Nero to Diocletian. One possible explanation of the growth of Christianity under those circumstances is that it was and is true.

His mention of the Inquisition is particularly puzzling. The Inquisition was started in the 13th Century and it was not concerned with seeking converts but with defending the Church and civil society from heretical groups. Much of Europe was already Christian before the establishment of the Inquisition.

The problem is that most of the people who object believe that then "much of Europe" was not only **not** Christian, but was feminist egalitarian Wiccan.

E.B. Frohvet says, "Apparently, now, one can renew one's driver's license in Maryland by mail or internet with that pesky need to show up, pass a vision test, demonstrate any level of competence . . ." Unfortunately, many states have gone in the direction. For years New York required a vision test to renew a license. Then the requirement was dropped. Recently, it was restored, which is a good thing, although I don't think it's required for every renewal. There also should be competency testing, especially for older drivers, of which I am one.

Commenting on Eric Lindsay's letter Joe says that in the U.S. governments are expanding the concept of public purposes to take land by eminent domain to build casinos and other businesses that are supposed to aid the economy. A while ago I read of a lawsuit challenging that practice. I think it was in New England. If a decision was reached, I missed hearing about it. I think it's an illegitimate extension and hope it's struck down.

Sheryl Birkhead says she lost power recently but it came back before she had to see if she could remember the starting sequence of her generator. If I had an emergency generator I would have a copy in large, friendly letters taped to the machine or a convenient wall.

George W. Price is correct. The "gay marriage" dispute is not about permitting homosexuals to marry. They have always had that right and many have done so. Last August, James McGreevey, the Democratic governor of New Jersey who was forced to resign because of scandals, said he would resign in November, after the election. The delay was a political ploy. He admitted in his resignation speech that he is a homosexual — he used the term "gay American", apparently trying to imply a parallel with groups such as African Americans. One of his offenses was appointing his alleged toy boy as his homeland security adviser even though, because he is not an American citizen, he couldn't get a security clearance and therefore couldn't attend essential meetings. McGreevey has a wife, his second, and two children, one by each wife. The dispute is over whether marriage should be redefined to include same sex relationships. If homosexuals succeed in redefining marriage, we can expect people who engage in bestiality to demand the right to marry their animal companions. They could call it animal husbandry (or animal wifery). In the late sixties I read reports of an off-Broadway or off-off-Broadway play called "Futz" about a farmer who married or wanted to marry his pig. And why not? Speciesist!

Sheep . . . they give so much,
they ask so little.

— JTM

From: **Chuck Lipsig** April 1, 2005
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Good to see *Alexiad*, Joe. Feels like I'm coming in in the middle of a lot of conversations — common enough for fanzines, I guess, but they seem like ones I need to have seen the beginning of, so I may be scarce of comments. Not that that ever stopped me before. Maybe, once I've un-gaffiated some more, I'll become as obnoxious as I used to be. Lord knows I'm still as opinionated as ever.

Am I really in the
Alexiad lettercol...?



Time marches on. My parents have retired and moved five miles down the road — rather several roads — from me. Shannon graduates high school this year and just had a one act play she wrote performed by the drama club. Derek is in 3rd grade and, well, being opinionated hasn't skipped over his generation.

Used to be, back when I was more active that I signed off most of my LoCs with Dave Allen's sign-off line, "Good night and may your god go with you." Allen died on March 10 and

only then I found out that I was born on Allen's 30th birthday. Thank you Wikipedia.

Ever since I heard about Isaac Asimov and Benny Hill's deaths a day or two apart, I've associated the two. Now I'll be associating Andre Norton and Dave Allen in rather the same way.

One of the Nashville stations used to have "Dave Allen at Large" on after the news. Oh those Robin Hood skits . . .

Joe: And there's another change over the years. After seven years as a medical transcriber, I can follow quite closely what's going on with your medical procedures. No surprise how quickly you digest food, considering how quickly you digest books.

Is it a sign of aging, when you start trading health stories? I'm trying to recall how much I used to kvetch about my bad ankle. Scariest stuff I've had as of late was some bad chest pain last December. Patti demanded that I go to the ER last December, worried that I was having a heart attack. It turned out to be a bad case of reflux — which I had figured, given it's correlation with having eaten some very greasy lo mein way too quickly — and I've been on Nexium for the last few months. Just took my last and now we'll see what happens. I'm thinking of going on OTC Zantac for a while. I hadn't realized how much acid stomach I'd been having. Problem is, with everything I'm learning from the ICU, I can think of a half-dozen disasters any odd pain could really be. My cholesterol is a tad high, but I aced a cardiac stress test, though, so everything is okay for the time being.

So you got Intern's Syndrome, where you think you have every ailment you just read about. It could be worse, given how so many zines there are with letters from dead people. If there is a next issue of Niekas it will be eerie indeed to read the Warner loc.

I note that whenever my father-in-law is told that he can only take clear liquids, he tries to make the case for vodka. NuLyteLy is a case of marketing destroying a perfectly good name. The original version was called GoLyteLy. It's really good for breakfast, nu.

Good to see that your Heinlein essays are coming out in book form. Some of the best writing I've seen.

Richard Dengrove: Problem with people who say that they take the Bible literally is that, for the most part, they don't. Unless they're fluent in Hebrew, they're taking a translation of the Bible literally.

OK . Time to get this out I may be about a half-hour late, per the deadline.

Good to hear from you again. — JTM

WAHF:

Lloyd Daub, with various items of interest.

R. M. Meluch flogging her new book. **The Wesleyan Press** announcing two new reprints of Joanna Russ books.

Bill Breuer, announcing the forthcoming performance of Clive Barker's *History of the Devil* (in which he is a performer as well as an acting coach) at the Kentucky Center for the Arts here in Louisville.

FIRE, YOU ARE

A Modest Proposal by Johnny Carruthers

A couple of random ideas collided in my mind not too long ago. One was thoughts on the upcoming release of *Star Wars Episode 3*. The other was the proliferation of reality TV series.

The result was this question: If there were such a thing as Jedi reality TV, what form would it take?

Not long after the question formed in my mind, an answer bubbled to the surface. The series would be called *The Padawan*. It would feature a number of young Jedi hopefuls competing to study under a renowned Jedi Master. They would all face a number of challenges designed to test their worthiness. And at the end of each episode, as one of the hopefuls is eliminated, the Jedi Master would utter the following words:

"Fired, you are."

A MISSED OPPORTUNITY

I opened my copy of *Lingua Latina Extremis* Henricus Barbatu scripsit (AUC MMDCCLVII) [*X-Treme Latin* by Henry Beard (2004)] and found a whole section on *Collocutio Inter Colonoscopiam* (Pagina LX) [**Small Talk during a Colonoscopy** (Page 60)]. I think if I had told the doctor and techs "**Nunc movi quid Manipupa sentiati,**" it would have confused them and translating it ["Now I know how a Muppet feels."] might have been hazardous to my health. And saying "**Advenistine?**" even more so. ["Are you there yet?"]

MOVIE UN-NEWS

I keep on seeing all these ads for *The Ring 2* and I have nightmares of . . .

PETER JACKSON PRESENTS . . . THE LORD OF THE RINGS 2

This time, it's personal!

The movie will end with Sauron's headquarters being destroyed in a volcanic eruption, but we won't see him being destroyed because if the book, picture book, action figure, Happy Meal, video, and oh yes, movie ticket sales are high enough, **THE LORD OF THE RINGS 3** will be green-lighted

THE JOY OF HIGH TECH

by Paul Gadzikowski.



THE DAY OF THE BOOMER DROOGS

'What's it going to be, then?'

There was me, that is Alex, and my three droogs, that is Pete, Georgie, and Dim, Dim being really dim, and we were on our way to the Korova Milkbar that evening, a flip dark chill winter bastard though dry. We had in mind a bit of the old ultra-violence, for which we needed to warm up our krovvy with a bit of the old moloko, which we would peet with knives and make you ready for a bit of dirty twenty-to-one, but you've heard all that before.

Outside on the street, though, was this chelloveck just wandering along with a big gloopy smile on his litso. Now he was not exactly dressed in the height of fashion as we were. No no no, he was wearing tight trousers of blue denim, what they call 'jeans', and a shirt that would have disgraced P. R. Deltoid, the Protective Control Advisor, as they called him, a veck with no taste, but that's life.

Then this veck approaches us and says, in a most queer goloss, 'Prithee, good fellows. I behold that thou art a brotherhood of good travellers. Canst thou direct me to the castle of those bold robber barons the Kray bretheren? I have come a long and weary way and would fain enrol into their gallant retinue.'

Old Dim smeked his gulliver off at this — 'Ho ho ho'. Now I knew these Kray chellovecks, they had been like big time vecks a long long long time ago, in the era of Benjy Britt and those vecks, and they had done too much of the old ultra-violence for the millicents to avoid. This veck was clearly out of his rassodock, so I decided to play along, and in a real gentleman's goloss I said, 'Sir, this is your lucky day! We have ourselves determined to enlist in that noble band, and are proceeding to the adjacent tavern to fortify ourselves before we sign on to their roll. Will you join us for a refreshing quaff before we travel there?'

His glazzies lit up with the even more bolshy smile on his litso and he said, 'Yea, verily.'

We found places on the big plashy seat that ran around the walls there, and while the veck gawped at the old decorations, the rest of us ordered. We all of us had knives, it being our intent to sharpen up for the night, but for the veck I ordered a double of synthemesc. 'And a shot of it straight on the side for myself,' I said.

He drank about half of it before I could distract him and slip the rest of the synthemesc into his drink, and it hit him like hard. He was well away with his glazzies glazed and burbling things like, 'Yrslqb nx sobshuggum illingoon' when we got him on his nogas and out into the alley behind the Korova.

I dived into his trouser pocket and nicked his carman, which was very full of the pretty polly indeed, but George reached under his jacket and unhooked his belt. 'Well well well what have we here,' he said, and there was this belt with a horrorshow assortment of things, which he held up in front of him. The veck started reaching out for it, all shaky and he said, 'My arms, my weapons . . .'

'Weapons huh huh huh,' said Dim and the next thing I knew he had chained me across the gulliver, a right proper tolchok, and I was lying there all stunned.

When I came back to jeezny after a long black black gap of it might have been a million years there I was in hospital all white and with this von of hospitals you get all like sour and smug and clean. There was a big white bandage all round my gulliver and I was in like all on my oddy knocky in a malenky room. After a time the nurse ptitsa came in and informed me that I could take my departure in a day or two. 'You should thank your friend who brought you in after that assault on you,' she said. 'They didn't get your money. You should be careful carrying around so much.'

I hadn't counted the pretty polly that chelloveck had had in his carman but I had viddied it was quite a lot. Dim and George had gone off with all the weapons and I would have it out with them when I was up on my nogas again.

They put me out in a couple of days and what happens but I ran into George. It was like in broad daylight in the open street so I could not open his throat with my britva, but I said to him, 'Some fine droog you are, deserting me and taking those weapons that gloopy veck had.'

'What veck? What weapons?' Alex, old droog, you are not quite right in the old rassodock,' he said.

Now this was not right not one bit, and I said, 'Did not you and I, droog mine, tolchok this chelloveck behind the old Korova Milkbar, not three days ago? And you took off him a bolshy set of toys for the old ultra-violence?'

He got like a strange look on his litso and said, 'I got to see a veck about a dog,' fleeing.

What made it really strange, O my brothers, was when I went to the Korova itself. One and all denied seeing that veck in the gloopy platties. It was like they had all had it wiped from their minds, or if someone had plucked every one of them from the world and replaced him with a clockwork orange . . .

— Not by Anthony Burgess or Frederik Pohl

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