

ALEXIAD

(AΛΞΙΑΔ)

\$2.00

Recently I heard that a young woman had gotten into trouble for dying her bulldog pink and was facing legal difficulties in being accused of cruelty to animals. While I think what she did was pretty silly I also think her accusers would do much better to spend their time promoting the cause of all the shelter animals killed each year for lack of homes. According to the Humane Society website there was a minimum of 6 million cats and dogs in shelters, half of which didn't make it out. That's three million too many. And so I decided that I would devote my (soapbox) editorial this time to speak for the shelter animals. That cute little purebred animal in the pet stores probably came from a puppy or kitten mill and was raised in horrible conditions. If you urgently desire a purebred animal you can always go to a dog or cat show and get a pet quality animal for less than you would pay for an animal likely to be prone to health problems. Racing greyhounds make excellent pets. Many popular breeds have rescue groups eager to find homes for animals.

I also looked at the website of Christian County Animal Shelter for as long as I could stand it. I will let them speak for themselves.

All our pets are in need of homes NOW and time is running out for many of them!

We have kittens and puppies coming to our facility on a daily basis! There simply is not enough room here for all of them. Please help these little furballs!!!! Our kennels are always full of larger dogs too and they deserve a home as well! Please consider a new family member today!!

This is a heartbreaking web site. It gives the figure of 15 dogs and 45 cats per person! But I can believe the figures. Joe and I have turned away over fifty cats and four dogs. We simply don't have the resources to care for more than fifty cats. The plight of the military pets is especially heartbreaking. Yet we have six rescues, no space for more. I had to quit looking at their website because it was simply too painful. Wullie and Sarang have the spots we might have given to a military pet. I have responsibility for them. I'm not taking them back to the shelter to make room for a military pet.

— Lisa

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Comments are by JTM or LTM.

Trivia:

Art:	
Sheryl Birkhead	20, 21, 23, 34
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ConGlomeration 2005 will be **August 12-14, 2005** at the Clarion Hotel and Conference Center in Louisville. The Guests of Honor are Mark Zug and John Hudgens. Membership is \$25 until July 23, 2005 and \$35 thereafter and at the door.

ConGlomeration/Attn: Registration
P.O. Box 32095
Louisville, KY 40232-2095
[http:// www.conglomeration.org](http://www.conglomeration.org)

The 136th Running of the Belmont Stakes is **June 11, 2004**.
 The 80th Running of the Hambletonian (1st leg of the Trotting Triple Crown) is **August 6, 2005** at Meadowlands Racetrack in East Rutherford, NJ
 The 50th Running of the Yonkers Trot (2nd leg of the Trotting Triple Crown) is **August 20, 2005** at Yonkers Raceway in Yonkers, NY
 The 113th Running of the Kentucky Futurity (3rd leg of the Trotting Triple Crown) is **October 1, 2005** at the Red Mile in Lexington, KY

Printed on June 2, 2005
 Deadline is **August 1, 2005**

Reviewer's Notes

There's a new skiffy movement, the Mundane SF Manifesto, calling for realistic science fiction without space drives or other impossible things. *YAWN* More dreary political tracts to go over publishers' transoms, looks like. Look for yourself at:

<http://www.mundanesf.com>

RANDOM JOTTINGS

by Joe



Oops! The Mark Twain story is of course, “The \$30,000 Bequest”, not \$10k. Sorry about that. You’d think that a co-heiress to five milliard marks could do better than a principality with an army of two foot and one horse — read the story to find out. In fact, read Twain in general.

I was watching Kentucky’s own D. W. Griffith’s *Intolerance: Love’s Struggle Through the Ages* (1916) and noticed that obviously the Mountain Girl (Constance Talmadge, who under another name plays Marguerite de Valois; hey, with gargantuan sets and a cast of thousands Griffith had to economize *somewhere*) from the Babylonian section is an ancestress of Xena. The scene with her discovering Cyrus’s army on the march, racing in a chariot to warn Belshazzar, and then fighting bravely in the futile defense of Babylon (presumably the alternative ending where she is only wounded and is rescued by her lover The Rhapsode (Elmer Clifton; who was also First Assistant Director for that sequence; I told you Griffith had to economize *somewhere*) is the real one) demonstrated that. Also in the sequence is Elmo Lincoln, later to play Tarzan, as The Mighty Man of Valor, Belshazzar’s bodyguard.

I got the Kino edition (\$29.95) to replace the cheap Alpha Video one (\$9.99).

<http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0006864/>

As Henricius Barbatus said about another film which shared the topic of one of Griffith’s sequences: “Ecce sanguis, cruor, homines boni malique, mira multa edepol — ex his fiet post duo milia ferme annorum spectaculum cinematographicum memoria dignissimum!” (*Lingua Latina Occasionibus Omnibus* (AUC MMDCCLVII), Pagina LV.)

[Eheu inferno: “Blood, gore, good guys, bad guys, and plenty of ooga-booga — boy, this is going to make a heck of a movie in about 2000 years!” (*Latin For All Occasions* (2004), Henry Beard, Page 55)]

The Pole at last.

On April 26, 2005, British explorer Tom Avery’s Ultimate North expedition reached the North Pole after thirty-seven days sledging,

recreating the Peary expedition’s speed and route. Avery and his team: Matty McNair (a 52 year old woman!), Andrew Gerber, George Wells, and Hugh Dale-Harris, used sledge dogs and arranged to receive supply drops at the longitudes at which Peary’s support parties had turned back.

This was, of course, somewhat harder since Avery did not have advance parties to cut a path. And there is the question of Peary’s not having allowed for lateral drift . . .

(Thanks to Martin Morse Wooster for the additional material.)

I congratulate you on the attainment of the Pole!

<http://www.thepoles.com>

I’m skeptical about Meisha Merlin books. (This is a publisher, not an author.) These, however, I’m not skeptical about as to *content*. Meisha Merlin is bringing out **The Virginia Edition: The Definitive Collection of Robert A. Heinlein**. This is a complete collection of all his fiction, as close to the original text as is humanly possible, along with *several* volumes of letters, speeches, and other items.

<http://www.meishamerlin.com>



Of course, there are serpents in the Garden. The edition costs \$2500, and the buyer has to buy the complete set. The first book to be published will be *I Will Fear No Evil*.

Congratulations to **Leah Gadzikowski** on getting her Juris Doctor degree on **May 14, 2005**.

And speaking of art, take a look at **Buzz Aldrin’s Conspiracy Smackdown**:

<http://thrdgll.tripod.com/buzz.htm>

Meanwhile, of course, his former barber is selling Neil’s hair. As the man said, “I’ve got a bad feeling about this.”

OBITS

We regret to report the death of **Bill Bowers**, faned, WorldCon Fan Guest of Honor, and all-round decent fellow, on **April 17, 2005**. When I first got into fanzine fandom in the seventies, Bill’s *Outworlds* was among the leading zines around; splendidly produced, containing both serious articles and sparkling fun. He was Fan GoH at Iguanacon in 1977 (sadly, overshadowed by the decision by the Pro

GoH Harlan Ellison® to protest the failure of New Mexico to ratify the Equal Rights Amendment). He straggled along in the eighties and nineties, recounting dolefully how one job after another ended prematurely. As a sideline, he began producing another fanzine, *Xenolith*, which was more frequent and more personal; his listings of his books read, movies seen, cons attended and so on in the previous year was a highlight of this production. More recently, he distributed *Xenolith 50*, a DVD of the live-action production of the zine.

He will be missed. I may never see another *Outworlds* again — Gary Grady wants to publish the last one he was working on but I’m told there may be some problems. (Someday when the stars are right I’ll tell you the story about the subscription check and what we finally did about it.)

We regret to report the death of **Harold Wooster**, father of Martin Morse Wooster, in Carlisle, Pennsylvania, on **May 20, 2005** at the age of 86. Harold wrote papers with Robert Heinlein and was the Air Force officer in charge of such matters as the Dean Drive.

Our condolences to Martin.

MONARCHIST NEWS

His Serene Highness **Prince Rainier III of Monaco**, Rainier Louis Henri Maxence Bertrand Grimaldi, died **April 6, 2005** in the principality. Born **May 31, 1923** to Prince Pierre of Monaco, Duke of Valentinois (né Count Pierre de Polignac) and Princess Charlotte of Monaco, Duchess of Valentinois, Rainier succeeded to the rule of Monaco on May 9, 1949, on the death of his grandfather, Prince Louis II; his mother being the natural, legitimated child of Louis II. Rainier was best known for having been the husband of hon. Sir Alfred Hitchcock’s favorite star **Grace Kelly**; there were three children, **Princess Caroline Louise Marguerite**, Princess of Hanover (wife of the male-line heir of George III, Prince Ernst August von Hannover), **Princess Stephanie Marie Elisabeth**, and the successor, **His Serene Highness Prince Albert II of Monaco** (Albert Alexandre Louis Pierre Grimaldi). He held the French and Belgian *Croix de Guerre* and the Bronze Star; he had been a chevalier of the *Legion d’Honneur* and of the Sovereign Military Order of Malta.

The new Bishop and Patriarch of Rome (called in the west “Pope”), Benedict XVI, like his predecessor John Paul II, traces a line of episcopal consecration back to Henry Benedict Stuart, the Cardinal called Duke of York (the Jacobite pretender “Henry IX and I”).

Among the attendees at his inaugural mass on April 24, in the **official Bavarian delegation**, was **Franz, Herzog von Bayern**, the Bavarian claimant and Jacobite pretender. Who, next week, took part in a commemoration of the liberation of Dachau, the concentration camp he had been in during World War II.

ONCE UPON A TIME

Commentary by Joseph T Major
on *The Prisoner*

<http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0061287/>

For those who haven't been introduced, "The Prisoner" is a very mysterious and thought-provoking television show that was produced in 1966-7, developed by and starring Patrick McGoohan. The protagonist, referred to in scripts as "P", is an agent of some undefined covert agency. In the opening of the show, he is seen resigning and going home to pack for a vacation. However, some people (and part of the mystique of the show is that it is never specified whom) kidnap him and transfer him to an isolated place known as "The Village"; a somewhat sappy, somewhat sinister resort. (Part of the "mystique" was its use of this typeface for signs; this True Type Font is called "Village", appropriately, and it is available as an Internet download.)

Harlan Ellison® described the show as a "novel for television"; it had a defined run and a conclusion (of sorts). However, the production sequence was less orderly that it seemed at the time, and the story arc suffered; many of the speculations would apparently be no more than artifacts of the fan's wishes, the way that immense fan fiction story arcs arise from a happenstance of two characters looking at each other.

This in mind; the stories present a conflict of P against the unusual and often sinister management of The Village. Everyone is numbered; P is "Number Six", a designation he rejects but which has become applied (see below about Six of One). Having numbers for names is a standard tactic for anonymity and dehumanization, in literature and in life.

Sometimes P manages a small triumph, sometimes the Village wins. It's easy to assume a "story arc" in the sense of *Babylon Five* but, again, due to the way the shows were produced and shown, such speculations are more speculation than probable intent.

In the end, after a personal struggle, P comes out victorious. Except that the viewer is immediately presented with evidence that throws it into question.

When I was a kid watching this as it came out, it was immensely fun. We speculated about how it would come out and what was going on. (Still doing the latter.) My friend Jim Lockyer (a fellow with a wonderful drawing style, a similar sense of humor, and a habit of blending shows, all reminiscent of Paul Gadjikowski) drew a cartoon that combined *The Prisoner* with *Mission: Impossible*, *Hogan's Heroes*, and the comic strip "Freddy". Number Two was *Oberst a.D* Wilhelm Klink (Werner Klemperner); as he would put it, "Nobody escapes from the Village!" And what happened at the end with Mr. Phelps and the tape recorder . . . I wish I had that now. Jim was very strange.

Recently, I finally got the one set I didn't have of the A&E release of episodes of Patrick McGoohan's series *The Prisoner*; namely Set Three (with Disk 5 and Disk 6). The series is

now available a ten-disk set, but it didn't come out until I started buying the two-disk ones. Such is life.

The disks follow the order preferred by A&E, which is:

- Disk 1 "Arrival"
[Also, the Alternate Version of "The Chimes of Big Ben"]
- Disk 2 "Free for All"
"Dance of the Dead"
- Disk 3 "Checkmate"
"The Chimes of Big Ben"
- Disk 4 "A. B. and C."
"The General"
- Disk 5 "The Schizoid Man"
[Also an interview with Bernie Williams, the production manager for the series]
- Disk 6 "Many Happy Returns"
"It's Your Funeral"
- Disk 7 "A Change of Mind"
"Hammer into Anvil"
- Disk 8 "Do Not Forsake Me Oh My Darling"
"Living in Harmony"
- Disk 9 "The Girl Who Was Death"
"Once Upon a Time"
- Disk 10 "Fall Out"
[Also on-location footage and The Prisoner Video Companion]

Like most shows these days, *The Prisoner* has developed a subfandom of its own. I presume there is *Prisoner* slash, but thus far it has mercifully escaped my attention. There is a *Prisoner* fan club, called Six of One.

<http://www.sixofone.uk.org/>

<http://www.netreach.net/~sixofone/>

It has the unique and fascinating advantage of being able to hold a convention in the setting of the show, Sir Clough Williams-Ellis's exotic resort, the Hotel Portmeirion in Wales. (There is a *Prisoner* gift shop there, set in the building which was used as the exterior of P's flat.) "The Masque of Mandragora", a Fourth Doctor (Tom Baker) story of *Doctor Who*, was filmed there.

<http://www.portmeirion-history.co.uk/>

There seems to be controversy regarding the ethics of the directors of the club.

There are many fine websites discussing the show, and as I have said, the show itself is available on DVD. Rather than discuss them in detail, I will try to give a brief intro, and then add my comments, some of them quite oddball.

"Arrival"

In the script, the character is referred to as "P". P is seen driving to a location in London where he resigns from some unspecified organization. He drives home then, preparing to go on vacation, but a man following him in a taxi blasts sleep gas through the keyhole. When P wakes up he is in a resort in an unspecified place. An edited version of this sequence of events is used for the opening credits of all but two of the subsequent episodes.

The resort, or as it is referred to, "The Village", is extremely isolated and has certain high-technology features that prevent any sort of

departure. As noted, the inhabitants are known only by numbers; the head of the Village is known as "Number Two". In the opening credits, as he walks through the place and out onto the beach, P shouts to Number Two — well, let's quote:

"Where am I?"
"In the Village."
 "What do you want?"
"We want information."
 "Whose side are you on?"
"That would be telling. We want information . . . information . . . INFORMATION."
 "You won't get it!"
"By hook or crook, we will."
 "Who are you?"
"The new Number Two."
 "Who is Number One?"
"You are Number Six."
 "I am not a number! I am a free man!"
 [derisory laughter]

There is some argument that, when asked "Who is Number One?" Number Two is in fact saying, "You are, Number Six," which makes little sense, but does seem to be reinforced by an incident in the final episode, of which more later.

P's name is never given and McGoohan is on record as rejecting the most common thesis, that he is John Drake from McGoohan's previous series, *Danger Man* (*Secret Agent* in the U.S.), but again there is other evidence to the contrary. George Markstein, who played a significant role in the development of the show (and is the man seen in the opening credits; P storms into an office, throws a resignation letter on his desk, beats his fist on the desk spilling tea, and then storms out, leaving the character played by Markstein rather nonplussed), thinks otherwise, for example.

This sets the stage for subsequent events, complete with an escape attempt by P, a tour of the Village for P given by Number Two, a change of Number Two (to George Baker, also known as Tiberius in *I, Claudius*), and several of the distinctive slogans and motifs of the Village introduced, including the giant mysterious bouncing weather balloon known as "Rover" that captures potential escapees.

(Part of the mythos of the making of the show is that "Rover" was supposed to be a complex machine, but the prop built for that purpose went to the bottom of the ocean. Again, this is discounted, but there are pictures purporting to be of the machine-Rover. Whenever "Rover" bounces by, everyone stops, frozen in terror. This is because the weather balloon was being pulled backwards by a cable, and then the shot was reversed to make it look like it's bouncing in the other direction.)

"Free for All"

In "Arrival", it was explained to P that there were elections in the Village, and in in this episode there is an election for the position of Number Two, which P is persuaded to stand in (in spite of the "international" nature of the

Village, the language is English, and the facilities are veddy British, so P is not running for the office). P proceeds to win in a landslide, but finds out that the whole affair is hardly as it appears, though it might expected to be that way.

This episode presents a recurring theme, of the Village as farce, a set-up designed to entrap one man. We rarely see anyone else being questioned or otherwise tricked, and no one else in such detail.

"Dance of the Dead"

The setting here is a giant costume party. It's been pointed out that while everyone else is in fancy dress, P wears an ordinary tuxedo and looks, well, rather like John Drake. After various unpleasant encounters, P ends up confronting Number Two, a woman this time (Mary Morris, who also appeared in the TV versions of Sir Fred Hoyle's *A for Andromeda* and *Andromeda Breakthrough*) as happens every now and then. At the costume party she plays the second most frightening Peter Pan ever (the most frightening one being Robin Williams). In the course of the confrontation he tears up a teletype machine. Why? I'm not quite sure, myself.

"Checkmate"

This begins in a live-chess game, including a piece which starts moving on its, or his, own, and gets in trouble. (Did McGoohan ever read *The Chessmen of Mars*, with its dramatic live-fire jetan (Barsoomian equivalent of chess) game?) This display of initiative and defiance inspires P to start looking for others who might want to escape. They manage to organize an escape plan which is almost successful. The subplot, however, has to do with a woman who is in unrequited love with P and could break up the plan. However, it fails for other reasons. You'd think that the place would have had good offshore security and in fact it does.

"The Chimes of Big Ben"

This time P does get away. He smuggles himself and a woman out of the Village, they travel across country and finally get to London, but then they slip up by making a gross and elementary blunder, using European instead of Greenwich time. In this episode, P locates the Village in the Baltic States, which one would think would entail a rather more severe regime, not to mention giving away one of the questions of the opening [P: "Whose side are you on?" No. 2: "That would be telling."]

"The General"

The entire Village, except for P, is enthusiastically involved in Speed Learning, a means by which an entire semester's worth of university courses can be learned hypnotically in three minutes. Anyone who has read *Brave New World* might have already encountered the argument that such learning would only impart raw data, not understanding. This program has been devised by someone called "The General", and The General turns out to be a (poorly programmed) huge mainframe. (This was

during the era of early cybernetics, when computer size and power were not seen in the same relationship as we have now.)

The episode begins with everyone being summoned to take the second lecture of the programme, which does raise the question of how it was that P missed noticing the first one. It also shows another example of the general herd-mindnesses of the people in the Village (no, "Village People" is a different thing entirely). Finally, it has the odd characteristic that many of the people do not have numbers (e.g., the Professor, the ostensible host of this lecture programme).

For curiosity buffs, one of the actors in the episode is named Ian Fleming, but since the author had died some time before this was filmed, it isn't him doing an anti-theme guest shot. (It is well known that McGoohan was considered for the role of James Bond, but turned it down, and subsequently *Danger Man* strove to reverse the violent and sexual clichés of the Bond movies.)

"A. B. and C."

If computer learning won't work perhaps virtual reality will. Number Two proposes to bring P through a situation in which he will encounter people who might have been responsible for his decision to resign, in the expectation that he will reveal the reason to the people in the simulation, and to the real people monitoring it. P rather handily discovers that this is going on and (again in his John Drake tuxedo) reverses the terms of the engagement, working up to an absolutely overwhelming demonstration of the control he has gained over Number Two and his assistant.

Throughout, P always maintains that he resigned "for peace of mind". In this episode, in the dream sequence he hands Number Two some travel brochures; just as, in "Arrival", we saw him packing them for a holiday. Part of their problem, therefore, is that they are asking P for an answer he can't give, because they won't accept the answer he has given.

"The Schizoid Man"

This has a very grand questioning of identity. P is conditioned (this was at the height of Skinnerian behaviorism; Alex of *A Clockwork Orange* would have an interesting time in the Village) to believe he is someone else, and then assigned to take over the identity of Number Six, a person who looks and acts exactly like P. For a veteran intelligence agent, he doesn't seem to be aware of security checks.

"Many Happy Returns"

Another episode which presents the argument that the Village is an elaborate stage set up to get P and only P. He awakens and finds the Village entirely deserted. There seem to be ground security features, so he builds a raft, gets picked up, and after some adventures ends up back in England — where, in a manner which suggests that his former superiors are and are not in cahoots with the Village, ends up being parachuted back in. (In this episode, apparently the Village is in Morocco, according

to a navigational chart and some pre-GPS (pre-sextant!) position-finding by P.)

The person who speaks as Number Two in the opening credits is not the Number Two we encounter at the end. Even this is a give-away; the identity of Number Two is more proof that the whole world seems to have it in for P.

"It's Your Funeral"

In "Free for All" there was a democratic election for the position of Number Two. Here we have an old-fashioned assassination plot, which P learns of and then has to foil, out of fear of reprisals. Perhaps the plotters have confused their location with somewhere else; this hardly seems to be a trap. This is considered one of the weaker episodes. Interestingly, the hand-over is attended by a number of other people who are identified as former Number Twos but who have not appeared in other episodes.

"A Change of Mind"

This is one of the more Villagers-as-sheep episodes. P is accused of being "unmutual" and is pressured into being mentally reconditioned. One would think this is sort of against his point. Everyone else wants to assail a target who is "unmutual" (it's like being the one kid in school who doesn't like football), and perhaps not unsurprisingly, in the end he manages to turn the fury of the mob against someone else.

"Hammer into Anvil"

"A. B. and C." ended with one big twist of who was in control; this practically begins with it. The new Number Two is responsible for the suicide of another Villager under interrogation. By an elaborate phony investigation reminiscent of Mark Twain's "A Curious Experience", P ends up getting Number Two to report himself for failure.

Given his confidence in deft stratagems by which P pulls off this ploy, this episode is one of those which is usually dated later. It hardly seems likely that P could do this to the mocking, cunning Number Two of "Dance of the Dead", for example.

"Do Not Forsake Me Oh My Darling"

Another high-technology episode. P is drugged (something that happens an awful lot) and his mind is transferred into another man's body. (See also *The Avengers* episode "Who's Who" and the Bugs Bunny cartoon "Hot Cross Bunny".) All unknowing, he wakes up in his old flat, not noticing anything wrong until he looks into the mirror. However, lacking the ability to positively identify himself, being in the same position as Steed and Mrs. Peel in "Who's Who", but with a worse result, after dealing with his former superiors he ends up back in the Village, where he turns the tables on the mind transferers, like Bugs did in "Hot Cross Bunny", albeit with better results for the guy who built the thing.

This episode had a different guy (Nigel Stock) being P so Patrick McGoohan could go shoot Howard Hughes's last favorite movie, *Ice Station Zebra*. Maybe he could have teamed up

with the armourer from the Bond movies (Desmond Llewelyn) trying a new way to identify the mind in that body: "In which P looks different in the morning and Q gets a brain wave," to parody the intros of the Mrs. Peel *Avengers* shows.

"Living In Harmony"

At first, this seems like a Western version of the show, with P or someone who looks exactly like him resigning as a sheriff, riding off into the sunset, and being dragged off to a ghost town where everyone has only numbers. As seems to be the case, he is manipulated into a crisis — and then discovers it is only another simulation, albeit more realistic than the one in "A. B. and C." and harder for him to take over.

CBS refused to show this episode in the original run, either because of hints at drug use, hints of un-Americanism (showing the Wild West in a negative light), or because it was just too confusing (i.e., there are no opening credits and it's even less clear what's going on than usual). Also, McGoohan kept on getting saddled with proposed love interests for P, as with the woman in this episode, and often had rather drastic resolutions.

"The Girl Who Was Death"

And if you thought "Living In Harmony" was confusing, this seems like an episode of *The Avengers*; P in his former job finds himself assigned to resolve another agent's grotesque murder (he was blown up by an exploding ball while playing cricket; talk about a sticky wicket). This investigation involves getting poisoned in a pub (his glass helpfully says "You have just been poisoned" on the bottom), a car chase with a target who can derange his inner-ear balance by remote control, a profoundly fatal market square, and a lighthouse which doubles as a ballistic missile aimed at London (come to think of it, isn't that the basic idea in the James Bond book *Moonraker*?) It turns out that while ostensibly telling a bedtime story, P is toying with the latest Number Two.

McGoohan is toying with the audience here; the actor who played the agent murdered in the initial scene is named "John Drake". (Checking in the Internet Movie Database reveals that his career dates back to 1954, so it isn't a one-off nom de film.)

<http://www.imdb.com/name/nm0236936/>

Moreover, this episode was originally written for *Danger Man*.

"Once Upon a Time"

By now it seems obvious that P is trying the patience of the people behind the Village. (They must try his some time.) A veteran Number Two, last seen in "The Chimes of Big Ben", is arguing with his superior about "Degree Absolute". This turns out to be an isolation facility in which Number Two and his assistant, the ever-present ever-mute midget Butler, go through role-playing events with P to investigate his life. Or perhaps what he should have lived through. Again, P turns the scenario against Number Two, and having broken him (during the filming, Leo McKern had a nervous

breakdown), is allowed to meet Number One. (For what it's worth, the episode was originally titled "Degree Absolute".)

"Fall Out"

In a confusing cascade of incidents and examples, P is presented to an assembly of masked and robed men and honored by a presentation with different scenes and stages of rebellion, including that by the failed Number Two and a happy-go-lucky fellow designated Number Forty-Eight. (The president of the assembly, incidentally, is played by Kenneth Griffith, Number Two in "The Girl Who Was Death", and the other failed rebel by Alexis Kanner, "The Kid" in "Living In Harmony"[and also was in the wretched 1988 travesty *Nightfall* based extremely loosely on Asimov's story] — since that person died at the end of the episode, he can't be the same person, but is the President the former Number Two?) Then, he is allowed to finally visit Number One, who is wearing a monkey mask under his mask and beneath that — he looks like P! Then, in a gunfight, P, Number Two, Number 48, and the Butler escape the Village in an articulated lorry (semi-trailer in American) and drive to London, going their separate ways there, and the show ends with P driving off in his beloved Lotus auto . . .

(If they drove to London on the A20 highway, then the Village is in Kent, on the English Channel, in which case all P had to do to escape would be to row out to sea for a mile or so.)



Some Notes

Besides P, there is one character who appears in every episode, The Butler (Angelo Muscat). As usual, there is an abundant load of speculation about his every habit, from his solemn servitude regardless of superior to his never speaking. The character who appears in the next most number of episodes, aside from the two people in the introduction, is The Supervisor (Peter Swanwick), director of the mysterious control center underneath the Village, and conductor of P to his appointment in "Fall Out".

There were sixteen different Number Twos, including two who repeated (Colin Gordon in "The General" and "A. B. and C." and Leo

McKern in "The Chimes of Big Ben", "Once Upon a Time", and "Fall Out"), three women, and two episodes with two Number Twos ("Arrival" and "It's Your Funeral").

Patrick McGoohan directed five episodes ("Free for All", "Once Upon a Time", and "Fall Out", and as "Joseph Serf", "A Change of Mind" and "Many Happy Returns") and wrote three ("Once Upon a Time" and "Fall Out", and as "Paddy Fitz", "Free for All").

Clough Williams-Ellis appeared as an extra in the show.

One point that undermines many of the "story arc" speculations is that the shows were produced in an irregular fashion. McGoohan originally intended to do only seven episodes: "Arrival", "Free for All", "Checkmate", "Dance of the Dead", "The Chimes of Big Ben", "Once Upon a Time", and "The Schizoid Man". Since "Once Upon a Time" ends with a cliffhanger, there ought to have been an eighth episode.

Then Sir Lew Grade, the head of the production company, wanted more episodes; a total of twenty-six, in fact, two short seasons ("series" in British parlance). Six more episodes were filmed: "A. B. and C.", "The General", "Many Happy Returns", "It's Your Funeral", "Hammer into Anvil", and "Do Not Forsake Me Oh My Darling". The first series [season] would have ended with "Once Upon a Time".

Then the people involved came to an agreement that the show wouldn't go two series [seasons] (that's about the best way I can put it) and after a pause (marked by the departure of George Markstein) the last four episodes shot: "A Change of Mind", "Living In Harmony", "The Girl Who Was Death", and "Fall Out". The reader will notice that they deviate from the Village setting in various ways. It would seem that much of the "story arc" speculation would be in the mind of the beholder.

Two unproduced scripts exist. One had P and a miner trying to dig their way out of the Village. The other had a pilot crashing in The Village, and in the course of the episode P learns that the Village is indeed in the Baltic States.

On the A&E disk set, the episode order is "A. B. and C." followed by "The General". They have the same Number Two (Colin Gordon). The argument is based on the order in which they were shown and Number Two's comment in "The General" about their being old acquaintances. This doesn't seem likely to me. In the opening of "The General" he identifies himself in the usual fashion as "The new Number Two," but in the opening of "A. B. and C." he identifies himself as "I am Number Two." In "The General", he is calm, relaxed, and sure of success; in "A. B. and C." he is nervous, expecting the worst, and that final scene gets a big bang out of a little cordless phone.

There are a number of tie-in novels, including a new series that is now being released. The original novel, *The Prisoner: I Am Not a Number!* (1969) was by Thomas M. Disch, it had a rather different "arrival" sequence to the one shown in the show (as I

recall, it had him being taken off a train), and specifically had P being John Drake.

There was also a graphic novel by Dean Motter and Mark Askwith published by DC in 1988: *The Prisoner: Shattered Visage*. It involved P and the Number Two of “Chimes of Big Ben” and “Once Upon a Time” being in the Village twenty years later, and focused mainly on the actions of several new characters (as is usually the case with sharecropped sequels). It is not very highly regarded.

A *Prisoner* fan club, The Unmutual (see above about “A Change of Mind”), which sponsors Prisoner events, has with exquisite timing set its annual symposium, PM2005, at Portmeirion on Sunday, 7th August 2005 . . . don’t bother checking, that’s the Sunday of Interaction. Be seeing you, just not there.

<http://www.theunmutual.co.uk/>

Some Wild-Ass Speculations

I don’t mean the usual, about how P is John Drake or really Number One or the like.

The Village is run by U.N.C.L.E.

The United Network Command for Law and Enforcement, headed by the idealistic, wise, and resourceful Alexander Waverly, and including such talented agents as Napoleon Solo, Ilya Kuryakin, and April Dancer, is a multi-national, extra-governmental organization whose working language is English. It employs advanced technology in the furtherance of its mission. It is not on anyone’s “side” but has intimate relationships with all participatory governments.

Just the sort of outfit to investigate why a top man in security should suddenly and inexplicably quit and go off on a cruise. To start work with THRUSH, say? (For those unaware of the “Man from U.N.C.L.E.” universe, “THRUSH” was the bad guys, a sort of multi-national criminal group.) “Who is Number One?” “Alexander Waverly.”

Of course, one could argue that the Village could have been run by UNIT (from *Doctor Who* with the Third Doctor (Jon Pertwee)), in which case Brigadier Lethbridge-Stewart would be Number One and P might try one day to get away from Rover by stepping into a call box that just happened to appear there and find himself being chased by Daleks . . .

Number Two of “Chimes of Big Ben” and “Once Upon a Time” is the barrister Horace Rumpole

This speculation is fuelled because, of course, they happen to look alike. [Both played by Leo McKern, but let’s ignore that for the moment.] This Number Two betrays a legal mindset, his portrayal of the inexorable judge in “Once Upon a Time” shows that. Rumpole, of John Mortimer’s popular and amusing *Rumpole of the Bailey* series, for all his skills, is apparently very poorly paid — most of his cases are minimum-fee Legal Aid work — and he displays a singular indifference to bills or legal consequences; you’d think he had a very high-level patron somewhere. Finally, at the end of “Fall Out”, P and the Butler drop off Number Two and he goes over to the House of Lords — obviously, to see how the Timsons, London’s

most inept criminal clan and Rumpole’s bread and butter, have been doing in their latest appeals. Does Rumpole dream of having She-Who-Must-Be-Obed (the Mrs) mind-transferred with a more compliant woman?

“It was all a dream”

The shows *St. Elsewhere* and *Newhart* had little else in common, aside from high skill on the parts of the performers and production, but each used the same trope for their ending; it was revealed to all have been a dream! Noticing that the very final scene of “Fall Out” is P driving along in his Lotus automobile, the same scene used as the introduction, and that many of the events in the Village have a dreamlike quality, it has been speculated that in fact the entire show is, like *St. Elsewhere* and *Newhart*, just a dream. Which leads to . . .

The Village is a part of the Matrix

Imagine, if you will, P on a drive in pouring-down rain, pulling up behind a deteriorating block of flats, being shown into a room where he meets a very large coloured man in a leather coat who says, “Have you ever had a dream that you were so sure was real? What if you were unable to wake from that dream? How would you know the difference?”

Arguments that this show or that is really set in the Matrix and that at any moment Neo and Trinity may find themselves being chased by the *Men in Black* or doing roller disco at *Xanadu* are amusing. Given the dreamlike system (not to mention such items as “A. B. and C.” and “Living in Harmony”) and the way the Village seems to move around (the proofs at separate times that it was in Lithuania, Morocco, and Kent are all equally valid), and the unusual focus of the place, one can well imagine that it was a Matrix subroutine and that P is really in a pod all along. (“Do you hear that, Number Six? That is the sound of inevitability. It is the sound of your death. Goodbye, Number Six.” “I am not a number! I am a free man!”)

Just remember:

**Questions are a burden to others
Answers a prison for oneself**

Be seeing you.

THE CAT CAME BACK

Commentary by Joseph T Major on
HADRIAN THE SEVENTH
by Frederick Rolfe, “Baron Corvo” (1904)

A Pope making nations fall and reshaping the world by personal example! Can anyone imagine anything so absurd! And a non-Italian? Only someone intimately associated with the structure and administration of the papal hierarchy could have a chance! Don’t be . . . er, ah, can I look that over again?

Frederick William Serafino Austin Lewis Mary Rolfe, known also as “Frederick, Baron Corvo” (a self-assumed title), is one of those writers who is less than the sum of his parts. He painted as well as wrote, and indeed his writing displays a painterly flair for visual description. He wrote history as well as novels, did scientific research . . . and yet never quite seemed to

matter.

Part of it, I would venture to say, is that he put a little too much of himself into his works. This was so obvious that when English playwright Peter Luke adapted this book into a play, he “cut out the middleman” and made the central character Rolfe himself. Rolfe in many ways blurred the line both ways — he was as much of a fantasist about his personal life as he was apt to put himself into his own works. (As the editor of the edition I have points out, describing a painting of St. William of Norwich where all of the 150 figures in the painting, including the saint, have Rolfe’s own face. And you thought Darrell K. “I can only draw the one face” Sweet was bad.) As also in prose, where the protagonist of this novel has the general career and apparently many of the personal attitudes of the author.

For what it’s worth, while most of his works were published as by “Frederick, Baron Corvo”, in keeping with the theme of this one, the author’s name was given as “Fr. Rolfe”. The naïve Gentle Reader was presumably supposed to presume that that was “Father Rolfe” and not “Frederick Rolfe”.

His prose style is most reminiscent of that of E. R. Eddison, and like Eddison, his works include strong and complicated beliefs. Eddison’s *Willezumacht* would be quite out of keeping with Rolfe’s eccentric veddy English Catholicism

Well, so to begin.

In mind he was tired, worn out, by years of hope deferred, of loneliness, of unrewarded toil. In body he was almost prostrate by the pain of an arm on the tenth day of vaccination. Bodily pain stung him like a personal affront. “Some one will have to be made miserable for this,” he once said during the throes of a toothache. He was no stranger to mental fatigue: but when to that was added corporeal anguish, he came near collapse. His capacity for work was constricted: the mere sight of his writing materials filled him with disgust. But, because he had a horror of being discovered in a state of inaction, after breakfast he sat down as usual and tried to write . . .

And so on, in a lengthy and affective explication of the pain of writer’s block. To break out of it, our hero George Arthur Rose (the patron saint, the legendary hero, the national flower . . . talk about “symbolically English”!) puts aside his writing materials and his little yellow cat Flavio and looks around for something to read. Fiction fails, so he turns to the news, which at least has the virtue of being depressing. Russia is in chaos; the Tsar has been overthrown and killed, the officials of the old government being massacred, and the common people even worse off. They don’t even have a Lenin to at least provide some order to the massacres. (That’s one way to get your infodump; have a character look up something he doesn’t know.) As commentary on this reign

of terror George says to his companion, "But we're all Christians, Flavio, and this is only one of the many funny ways in which we love one another."

And then, whilst meditating on the funny ways in which Christians love one another, he gets another example; visitors, a bishop who has been a friend, and a more senior official. Which somewhat puzzles George, since isn't the College of Cardinals shut up in conclave? They explain that the Conclave has taken a break, and then start quizzing George over his little problems. It seems he is the sort of man who can't get along with superiors; though gaining the admiration of some, he earned the disdain of others. Then, in his varied careers, he seemed to have an infallible talent for getting the short end of the stick. But he has persevered; he has been called to the priesthood, never believing otherwise, and all his other employments have been only shifts, to keep mind and body together until then.

They seem willing to make an apology. Apologizing entails not only the long-awaited priesthood, but restitution for his various losses to unfunded church projects in the sum of £10,000. (Comparisons are hard to make; but earlier in this chapter, in search of something, anything to read George borrowed three books, one "a nameless sixpenny shudder"; that restitution would buy four hundred thousand of those books, so apply that multiplier to the price of a cheap hardcover.)

What exactly was Cardinal-Archbishop Courtleigh doing before he went to England to visit George Arthur Rose? The next chapter deals with the Papal election. Leo XIII died July 20, 1903, which when combined with the date of the headnote, in Rolfe's splendidly eccentric rendering "*xxij. Jul. 1904*" indicates that Rolfe set it in the here-and-now, like Morris L. West in *The Shoes of the Fisherman* (1963) for example.) The conclave is, perhaps fortunately, not particularly divided by politics, religious or secular, so it is a matter of their own judgment to determine who seems best fitted to step into the shoes of the Fisherman and steer the church through the shoals of the world. Which, however, doesn't seem clear. In fact the conclave becomes deadlocked.

No candidate seemed "right"; none could be elected; the College of Cardinals then voted to set up a board of compromissaries. One of them is Cardinal Courtleigh from England. As a relief from the problem of the vacant seat, he mulls over rather a different problem, that of a candidate for the priesthood who has been repeatedly swindled. And then, seeing someone oddly familiar . . . the Cardinals adjourn the Conclave, sneak out into the world (presumably the bad precedent of Viterbo, where the Conclave lasted three years, until local authorities took steps, has been modified even further than it was at the time), and come back again, their numbers somewhat augmented.

The newly ordained Father Rose is honored, if curious, when he is admitted to the Conclave as yet another staffer. It's quite the moving

time, then, when all are summoned to the Sistine Chapel (in yet another example of his eccentricities, Rolfe renders it "Xystine") to hear the name of the elected pope. After a moment, George has the sort of feeling that usually comes from dreaming one is in a public place, lost and naked:

George did not take the Latin easily from an Italian tongue: he found himself translating, *Reverend Lord, the Sacred College has elected thee to be the Successor of St. Peter. Wilt thou accept pontifically?*

"Reverend?" he thought. Why not "Most Eminent?" He instantly turned to the bishop, with another question on his tongue. The bishop was kneeling behind him. The crowd also was kneeling. Why in the world did not he kneel too? Why should he hesitate for a moment? He faced round once more, a single black figure with an alert weary white face, alone and erect in the splendour of violet. He glanced again at the canopies.

It was on him, on him, that all eyes were. Why did he not kneel?

Again the voice of the Cardinal-Archdeacon intoned, "Reverend Lord, the Sacred College has elected thee to be the successor of St. Peter. Wilt thou accept pontifically?"

There was no mistake. The awful tremendous question was addressed to him.

And he accepts. This is of course the ultimate wish-fulfillment dream. About the only character, off hand, who outdoes this fulfillment is Jurgen in his eponymous novel (*Jurgen: A Comedy of Justice* (1919, 1920)) who, having got into Heaven by claiming to be Pope John XX, has a conversation with God wound up by God's disappearing, whereupon Jurgen, on a fancy, sits on the heavenly throne. (But God was created by Koschei the Deathless as a favor to Jurgen's grandmother, and several other levels of subordination also exist, leaving no one in charge . . .)

Rolfe uses an interesting trick here. Up until now, George has been "he" and "him"; now the pronouns are capitalized, and the first person is plural. Having accepted the great burden, He is now prepared to be presented. And how:

They brought Him before the altar; and set Him in a crimson-velvet chair, asking what pontifical name he would choose.

"Hadrian the Seventh": the response came unhesitatingly, undemonstratively.

"Your Holiness would perhaps prefer to be called Leo, or Pius, or Gregory, as is the modern manner?" the Cardinal-Dean inquired with imperious suavity.

"The previous English pontiff was Hadrian the Fourth; the present English pontiff is Hadrian the Seventh. It pleases Us; and so, by Our Own impulse, We command."

Then there was no more to be said .

Though in fact there is a great deal more said, by the Pope himself, as he begins making some very far-reaching changes. The first being something that seems very trivial now, yet at the time was extremely radical.

Until the Unification of Italy in the 1850s, the Pope was a significant secular as well as a religious ruler. Renaissance historians will recall the manipulations and maneuvers of Alexander VI and Julius II, and the French revolutionaries deprived Pius VI of his patrimony, and for all that Napoleon made Pius VII attend his coronation, the Papal States remained the satellite Kingdom of Rome until Napoleon's position in Italy collapsed absolutely. But the people of the Papal States had joined the uprisings in Italy in 1848 challenging the authority of *il Papa-Re*, the Pope-King, their spiritual and temporal monarch. In the wars of Italian unification of 1859-1860, the Savoyard rulers of the Kingdom of Sardinia ended up annexing substantial parts of the Papal States, with the remainder preserved by a French garrison. Which was called home in 1870, there being a more pressing need, and as nature abhors a vacuum, so did the Savoyard hosts stream into the Eternal City. The reaction of Pius IX was to shut out the world, so to speak, not even going into St. Peter's Square, much less outside the Vatican, and deny that the Italian kingdom had any authority in the matter.

Now, Hadrian VII is determined to reverse this policy; first by trivial matters as being presented to the outside on a balcony facing out into the city, then more substantial ones, like a progress on foot through the streets of Rome. Perhaps because no one can believe it, Hadrian's progress is well-received and untroubled.

Papal coronations, when there were Papal coronations, were elaborate affairs conducted with elaborate ritual that was burdened with symbolism. Not surprisingly, Rolfe lets himself go describing the enthronement and incoronation (still more arcane and exquisite terminology), up to the foreshadowing rather extravagant proclamation: "Receive this tiara adorned with three crowns, and know Thyself to be the Ruler of the World, the Father of Princes and Kings, the earthly Vicar of Jesus Christ our Saviour."

The theme of the subsequent chapters is summed up in the text:

The Pope laughed. "You shall know that George Arthur Rose has had plenty of time for thinking and scheming. His schemes never came to anything, except once; and he certainly never schemed for this. But you understand perhaps that the last twenty years have rendered Hadrian conscious both of His abilities and His limitations, as well as of His requirements; and hence He is able at a glance to describe in detail what He wants. When He wants something,

without knowing what He wants, He asks questions . . .”

Note the differentiation between George Arthur Rose (“he”) and Hadrian VII (“He”). It might be considered an affected Multiple Personality Disorder, but from this and later incidents it can be seen that the Pope is making a distinction between his personal identity and his official one. He has been summoned to a post of great importance, and must therefore put on the proper vestments thereof.

There is the matter of Hadrian’s sounding out who might be well-disposed towards His Pontificate. Being called to the Papacy on a summoning with an uprising of good-will is all well and good to start with, but for the longer-term there will need to be a better basis for His reign. Interrogating his benefactor Bishop Talacryn (the friend who came to see him when he was only Mr Rose), he learns the names of the Compromisaries (who might be among that party), and then sets about expanding it, firstly by summoning some English priests and an American layman that He thinks well of, and secondly by appointing Talacryn himself a Cardinal *in petto* (i.e., secretly). He has had plenty of time for thinking, after all.

On another level, there is the question of a personal life, insofar as a Pope has a personal life. In some ways it is simplified; Hadrian directs that his personal apartments be as spare and uncluttered as possible. In the “thinking and scheming” department, He rewards some people who had been of help to him in his former life:

“Look here, Mrs. Dixon. Do you remember cooking two dinners one Christmas Day? One, we ate. The other, you carried under your apron to some carpenter who was out of work. Don’t you remember who caught you pretending that you weren’t spilling the gravy on your frock?”

St. Elizabeth of Hungary, anyone? (Who carried dinners to the poor under her dress.) And Hadrian contrasts himself with Mrs. Dixon, in her uncomplicated direct good nature and kindness, much to his disadvantage. Somewhat more in the staff department, He rewards more generously a couple of young men who had been his friends, having them summoned from England to Rome to be His gentlemen-in-waiting — and bringing His small yellow cat Flavio. Even strangers in need receive His material help; it rather makes one think of the peregrinations of Kirill I through Rome in *The Shoes of the Fisherman*. (What with the general acceptance of violent protest nowadays you are unlikely to see anyone more important than your local alderman on the streets unescorted, and probably not even that once the local greenery fans get themselves in gear for a Statement.)

On the more general measure, He has a quarrel with Courtleigh over decorum:

. . .The Pope produced a small green ticket on which was printed, *Church of*

the Sacred Heart — Quest Road — Admit Bearer to — Midnight Service — New Year’s Eve 1900 — Middle Seat 6d. “This comes from Your Eminency’s archdiocese,” he said.

The cardinal looked at the thing, as one looks at the grass of the field. There it is. One has seen it all before.

“We disapprove of this,” said the Pope.

“What would Your Holiness suggest then to prevent improper persons from attending these services?”

“Improper persons should be encouraged to attend. No obstacle should be placed in their way.”

He goes on to admit (confess?) to having actually been to schismatic services, observing how “improper persons” were admitted, because “improper persons” needed to be. (He could cite Matthew 9 about “publicans and sinners” and dining with them, but doesn’t. Courtleigh should know it anyhow.)

He also rebukes Courtleigh for exaggerated statements of the number of Catholics in Australia. Robert Silverberg used a version of this rebuke in his Nebula-winning story “Good News from the Vatican” (*Universe 1*, 1971).

For a bigoted Englishman, Hadrian is remarkably free of the contemporary strictures on religious matters. Several of the various papal letters and other decrees described have a very liberal attitude about them, which at first seems to be at odds with the strictures on Socialists, the French, and the like. It’s a reminder that an author is of a piece, but the piece needn’t be the piece that everyone else has. For example, from his *Epistle to All Christians*:

“It is in no man’s power to believe what he list. No man is to be blamed for reasoning in support of his own religion: for he only is accountable. ‘Other sheep I have, which are not of this fold’; and these deserve more care and live, but not cheap pity, nor insulting patronage, nor irritated persecution; for if, as has been said, a man shall follow Christ’s Law, and shall believe His Words according to his conscientious sense of their meaning, he will be a member of Christ’s Flock although he be not within the Fold. And, though We know that he understands Christ’s words amiss, yet that is no reason for Our claiming any kind of superiority over an honest man, the purpose of whose heart and mind is to obey and to be guided by Christ. Such an one is a Christian and Our good brother, a servant of God; and if he will have Us, We, by virtue of Our Apostolature, are his servant also.”

A Pope who wishes to open no window into men’s consciences, that is to say. And he disdained Queen Elizabeth!

Another topic that comes up in this conversation is the divergence between temporal

and spiritual matters. More specifically, spending on buildings. When Hadrian says, “Yes, the cathedral — a futile monument of one vain man’s desire for notoriety. How many lives has it ruined? One at least. We know.” he is speaking of himself; earlier on he had described to Courtleigh and Talacryn, in his long recount of his financial misfortunes, a case where he had been contracted to provide illustrations only to have his patron decide to build a cathedral instead. This personal injury seems petty, though being broke and starving does matter to at least the starving one. What we have here, though, is a transfiguration of unfortunate personal events into a general analysis of the causes; there is some bitterness in it, there is also a thoughtful justification. Hadrian has ideas about what to do with the temporal treasure.

Temporal matters aren’t neglected, though again the eccentricity displays itself. When we see Hadrian canonizing Alfred the Great, Henry VI of England, and Mary Queen of Scots, he manages to get off a typical Englishness. Should St Mary Queen and Martyr be revered in England, since she was rightful monarch of that land too? Hadrian cites both English law and English myth to the contrary.

This Pope was crowned “Father of Princes and Kings” and begins to correspond with them. The portayal of Wilhelm II would not have been generally received then and even less so a little later. Looking back on it, the biggest problem is that it adheres too much to the attitude of “all the good people agree with Me”. (The comparison that most readily comes to mind is, of all things, van Vogt’s *Empire of the Atom* (1957) where everyone falls in line whenever Lord Leader Medron Linn makes policy.) For all that many of the ideas here are good — he talks Wilhelm into accepting the autonomy of Poland, something not quite up to German opinion then — the wish-fulfillment is a little too strong here. Many of the ideas here are not bad ideas, understand, but there is just a little too much readiness to accept. (Another example is the reckless abandon with which the locals abandon their beliefs for those of the time-travelers in Eric Flint’s Ring of Fire series (1632 (2000) and sequels).)

As more generally. Hadrian begins intervening in foreign policy, so to speak, in a series of public statements addressed to various other countries. Again, while his points are not without interest, and surely there would be acceptance of his messages, would they be so universally accepted?

Well, there isn’t universal acceptance.

In “Fenimore Cooper’s Literary Offenses”, Mark Twain says in a colorful and very much of his time rebuke regarding the rules of literature as relating to dialogue, “They require that when a personage talks like an illustrated, gilt-edged, tree-calf, hand-tooled, seven-dollar Friendship’s Offering in the beginning of a paragraph, he shall not talk like a negro minstrel in the end of it.” One wonders how he would have dealt with these examples of the same person communicating:

"It's a gospel truth, comrades. I had used to fhat ye might call know the Pope a few years ago fhen he was just George Arthur Rose and not a pound-note in his purse. I was running the *Social Standard* oot o' my own pocket, and many's the bit o' work I've let him have. He was trying his hand at journalism then, and gey glad to get it . . ."

"REVEREND AND DEAR SIR,

Since our late esteemed interview when I had the pleasure of addressing your lordship on the subject of Socialism, I have been anxiously awaiting the favour of an acknowledgement of same. In case the subject has slipped your memory I could remind you that I informed you previously on behalf of the Liblab Fellowship that we were not averse to give our careful consideration to any proposal that you may see fit to make . . ."

Nowadays we would make distinctions between left-brain and right-brain. From his presentation here, one could reasonably wonder if Comrade Jeremiah "Jerry" Sant of the Liblab Fellowship has either half. Rolfe spares no measure in describing his unpleasantness, of his envy of anyone better than him in any fashion, his vast will and half-vast ability. Whether or not one could make out Sant's boundless conceit, unbridled envy, and personal ugliness, so explicitly limned, to be universal in the socialist movements of the time, as a character he is of a type that is unfortunately all too common.

When he had fhat ye might call known George Arthur Rose, he had also met a woman who had a unrequited passion. The Pope has mentioned, off-handedly, an attempt to seduce him in his earlier life. The portrayal of the seductress is another example of Rolfe's literary skill; she is an erotomaniac (the most notorious such example, most recently, is that of the woman who kept on breaking into David Letterman's house), in passionate love with George Arthur Rose and just knowing in her heart that he returns that love, for example:

"DEAREST DEAREST GEORGIE

For although you have no more the old sweet name my heart is ever faithful and will not let me call you be any other. Does it not remind you of that day when the floods were out in the meadows and you and I and Joseph were coming home from the Bellmays, and you lifted me in your strong arms and carried me through the water that covered the path. How Joseph laughed. He never thought it worth his while to take care of me as you did. But I know that it was because you loved me and my heart went out to you then and never has been my own since. . ."

Mrs. Crowe's unrequited love has thrown

her into company with Jerry Sant, and he hopes to use her to blackmail the Pope into acceding to his wishes. Indeed, he proposes that they go to confront the Harlot of Babylon, and much to their surprise, he is not particularly moved.

Hadrian is a little more successful in moving more powerful people. The events that were crucial then often are incomprehensible to later readers. Given the degree to which the Papal administrations had denied the reality of the secular rule of Italy, the reactions to Hadrian's far-reaching concessions — renouncing all claims to secular rule — seem incomprehensible. But that was a crucial issue back then.

Similarly, the results of the meeting with Kaiser Wilhelm hinge on matters that were far more important than seem the case now. The new German Empire had launched an effort to diminish Catholic influence in national affairs; for the All-Highest Supreme Warlord of Germany to respect Catholicism again is a climbdown.

One is rather concerned about other faiths. There is almost no mention of the Orthodox, though presumably they would fall under the rubric laid down in the *Epistle to All Christians*. The Pope quotes Arnold of Rugby on recognizing the divine spark in man (presumably he did not have to look for those qualities in Brigadier-General Sir Harry Flashman, V.C., etc., Rugby's most notorious expellee).

As for those outside Christianity, there is no mention of, say Buddhism or Hinduism. Islam (which, as was common back then, is improperly called "Muhammadanism" — I suppose it could be worse and it could be styled "Mahometanism") gets polite treatment; this is a Pope who feels neither the need to convert by the sword (or more in the spirit of the day, the Lee-Enfield) nor grovelingly dhimmically apologize for the Crusades. As for the Jews . . . when Hadrian is determined to walk about Rome, the Cardinal Secretary-of-State invokes the specter of assassination, seeing as the city is "full of Jews and Freemasons". He himself seems more calm, and no such irruption is raised against Him, but later on it comes out that He used to revere Little Saint Hugh.

Little Saint Hugh of Lincoln (c1246-1255) is one of the blood-libel saints. One example of the absurdity of the charge is that Hugh was described as having been "scourged, crowned with thorns, and crucified", which is more the sort of behavior of a Christian determined to blaspheme. (The way that the "witchcraft" of the witch-craze and the Satanic play of seventeenth-century France is based on the concepts of Christianity as imagined by someone within that belief who wished to reverse it.)

It is hard to reconcile thought and action sometime. (As with the case of H. L. Mencken, who unburdened himself of anti-Jewish sentiments to his diary, and publicly declared that the U.S. government should promote and subsidize the immigration of Jewish refugees from Hitler, on the grounds that they would improve the fabric of the country.)

This Pope has to do that. While the Church seems to be flourishing under Him, the world is less so. Revolution has reduced Russia to chaos; again, this only slightly anticipated the disorder in 1905, which was only kept from turning into events as happened in 1917 by the minimal credibility retained by a Tsarist government that hadn't been resoundingly defeated on its core territory, instead of just off in the East somewhere. France too is in disorder. The history of the Third Republic seems to have been a constant jumping from one crisis to another; it had not been that long ago that General Boulanger had had but to put forth his hand to become absolute dictator of France. (Fortunately, like so many would-be tyrants of France, he was a rubber lion; instead of riding into the National Assembly and like Bonaparte dispersing the legislature, he spent the night with his girlfriend.) So such a chaotic collapse was not implausible; surely it was feared at the time.

The response is not quite plausible, especially now. Hadrian has definitive opinions on what are the nations which have the ability to rule still. By an amazing coincidence, these leaders are meeting at Windsor Castle, deciding what to do about the world crisis: the King of England (Edward VII was, as we know, most energetic and effective in promoting British foreign policy), the German Kaiser (Wilhelm was most energetic, but as for effective, well), the King of Italy (Victor Emmanuel was not quite the equal of either and his portrayal is a bit optimistic), the President of the United States of America (all that needs to be said is "Bully!"), and the Emperor of Japan (here Rolfe's cultural knowledge falls down; Meiji would *never* have left the Land of the Rising Sun).

The Pope asks them to come to Rome, where He proceeds to divide up the world in a manner that would have left His less saintly predecessor Alexander VI startled, though perhaps that one's boy Cesare Borgia would have understood. For those who thought of the White Man's Burden as civilizing, that gift might have been a great responsibility; for those who thought imperialism meant being a license to abuse lesser beings, it would have been a wonderful gift; and for those who decried imperialism, it would have been a great defeat and proof of their beliefs. One imagines what Mr. Ulyanov in Switzerland would have said.

Hadrian is less successful in his personal life. One thing that has not changed is that newspapers will gladly disseminate scandal about the powerful, and apparently Hadrian has a lot of explaining to do. That has to be Jerry Sant, and He summons the man and his collaborator Mrs. Crowe to discuss matters. Sant is clear enough in his demands. The Pope owes him twenty thousand pounds for actual loss and inconvenience, and if he does not pay, "Then Ye mean ta pit some more about Ye in the papers?"

(At least there's nothing of altar-boys; the one incident which looks like it might have a basis, a charge that Hadrian was seeing women, turns out to have a resolution that was set up at the beginning of the book; a very skilled piece

of plotting. Whereas the scene where Hadrian, discussing matters with a sculptor, commissions a crucifix in which the body of the Figure is based on a sculpture of Antinous, Emperor Hadrian's boy-love, well . . .)

This entire scene is a painful description of belief beyond influence. If the book is a wish-fulfillment dream (and there is a great deal of that in it) it is at least one where the author realizes that some people can't be convinced. Many of us have encountered people like Jerry Sant, who are aggressive, of strong beliefs, and willing to disseminate them while unwilling to accept any disagreement.

His collaborator is similarly another picture; desperate for some sort of resolution, Hadrian asks Mrs. Crowe to the confessional, only to find that even there her erotomania won't admit of the customary use of the place. She is supposed to be working through the merely human interlocutor to God; she remains fixed on her Georgie, unwilling to admit that he (or He) is not what she expected.

They leave, dissatisfied. The world has failed to live up to their two several expectations. Jerry Sant will take steps to resolve that.

The Pope still feels the need to justify His actions. Or rather, the odd life of George Arthur Rose, and in a typical, lyric, and odd scene he does exactly that. Yes, the difference is significant, the Pope takes off the Fisherman's Ring, and as George Arthur Rose launches into a defense of his life in the days when he had to scratch for a living. He is making a distinction between the person and the office, which is a traditional Catholic attitude, though rarely taken to such extremes. The reader will note both the skill used in portraying the scene and the degree to which the writer takes personally his disagreement with the world.

And in fact, Jerry Sant does take steps to resolve his disagreement with the world. Hadrian has taken the final step of being resolved with the Italian ruler; having established a substantial trust fund for the development of Italy (using Vatican treasure; another "modern" concept), He finally meets personally with Victor Emmanuel, and all goes well when, in yet another procession through Rome . . .

Jerry Sant shoots him.

The dying Pope forgives his assassin (he certainly would have understood the forgiveness of John Paul II for Mehmet Ali Agca), receives the last rites, and passes away. If martyrdom is the ultimate wish-fulfillment . . .

It's only fair to note the employment of technology, often not even superfluous. Some is merely using what's available, the most striking example being that Hadrian makes gramophone recordings to dictate letters and to make a permanent record of the interview with Jerry Sant and Mrs. Crowe. (Probably a good idea, all things considered.) One example, however, is beyond this.

In his frenzied self-justification as George Arthur Rose, temporarily, he says "I invented a score of things," and proceeds to describe how

he couldn't find a venture capitalist; his discoveries were repeated by others with better funding, until there were only four left. And what shall he do with them: "I shall give them to — that doesn't matter. It shall be done to-day."

Sir Iulio, the effervescent Italian Papal Gentleman-in-Waiting, is going to get married, and Hadrian (having put His ring back on and resumed His office) has some concern about what he shall do. After listening to an enthusiastic and eager description of the Beloved, He begins discussing photography:

" . . . Well now: think of negatives. They are dense in places: clear in places; and in other places more or less dense. Understand? Under the negative you put a certain paper; and expose it to light. Light goes through the clear places and stains the paper black; it partly got through the more or less dense places; and stains the paper grey in various graduations of tint. It fails to go through the dense places and leaves the paper white. There is your photograph, a little black a little white and many different greys. Understand?"

"Yes, Santità."

"Your photograph is an image of the form, the contours, the modeling, the morbidezza, of the object before your lens. It lacks one thing. It has not colour. The process has tralated colour into monochrome. Do you see that?"

"Yes, Santità."

"Your white means a blend of all colours; and black means the absence of all colours. Then grey shold mean some colours, of this quality or that, of this quantity or that, according to the clarity or the density of the grey. Understand?"

"Yes, Santità."

"Your negative is black and white and many greys."

"Yes, Santità."

"Then undstand that all colours lie hidden in the black and white and greys of the negative. In the black, lie all colours; it produces the positive white. In the white lie no colours; it produces the positive black. In the various greys, lie various colours — why are you jumping about? Keep still and listen, wriggling lizzard that you are! What do you want to do?"

"To liberate those poor colours."

"So does everybody. At least, everybody wants to photograph in colours; so they paint on the backs of the films; and they play the fool with triply-coloured negatives. Only one man in the world knows that the colour already is there — already is there, my boy — stored in the black white grey negative; and that the black white grey ordinary negative will give give up its imprisoned colours to him who have the key. — Well now; take the second envelope. The key's there; and it's yours. (Don't stare like that!) There are three other

things as well, which may be useful. . ."

Now that's science fiction — a hypothesized advance in technology making a change in society. Rolfe himself developed some photographic devices. Incidentally, Sir Iulio gets more and more excited as Hadrian describes the processes, making for a comic subtext to the serious discussion of optics and other such matters.

This is a very tricky book to deal with. From a writer's point of view, Rolfe's writing skills are noteworthy; his power of description is striking, to be noted and (it is to be hoped) emulated. His word usage is that of a painter — very visual, employing odd and striking language, and detailed.

The author's personal views are as forcefully expressed. Some of these are eerily prescient, others strongly wishful, and many somewhat backwards. His views of doctrine may be a little personal. It's well to remember that this is stemming from real Catholic doctrine, and not the misunderstandings of it that persist in so much of literature today.

The world sighed, sobbed, wiped its mouth; and experienced extreme relief.

The college of Cardinals summed Him up in the brilliant epigram of Tacitus. "Capax imperii nisi imperasset." He would have been an ideal ruler if He had not ruled.

Religious people said that He was an incomprehensible creature. And the man on the motor said that the pace certainly had been rather rapid.

Pray for the repose of His soul. He was so tired.

FELICITER

FRANK GORSHIN

1934-2005

Obituary by Johnny Carruthers

<http://www.imdb.com/name/nm0331319/>

I guess you could say that I'm in mourning today. While surfing the web, I learned that Frank Gorshin died Tuesday May 17 at the age of 72.

Batman was one of my favorite TV series when I was a kid. Come to think of it, I still love the series, and I really wish it would be released on DVD. As I got older, I noticed things that went completely over my head when I first watched it. Some things that I originally took seriously now became the source of chuckles. ("Some days, you just can't get rid of a bomb!")

The Riddler was probably my favorite villain on the series. (It wasn't until I was a teenager that I truly began to appreciate Catwoman; she was probably my second favorite.) I always found the Riddler more interesting than the Joker. His riddle clues struck me as showing more intelligence and creativity than a joy buzzer or a pie in the face.

I also loved the Riddler's costumes, mainly because of the question marks. When I was in

college, I adopted a question mark as a personal symbol, and the Riddler was one of the main influences in that decision. (Theodore Sturgeon and his “ask the next question” philosophy was another influence.)

I have even used “Riddler” as an internet user ID. It’s also my nom du guerre with the American Cryptogram Association. In the case of the latter, “Riddler” is a particularly appropriate choice. In the comics, the Riddler’s real name is Edward Nygma. E. Nygma — quite appropriate indeed for a group of cryptology enthusiasts.

Frank Gorshin was my favorite Riddler. When John Astin portrayed the Riddler in one Batman two-parter, there was something that just didn’t seem quite right. I suppose it seemed more like Gomez Addams in a bright green suit. My least favorite Riddler was Jim Carrey’s version in *Batman Forever*. Carrey’s portrayal was more a pale impression of Gorshin’s performances. He didn’t seem to do anything to make his version of the Riddler uniquely his.

My favorite Riddler after Gorshin is John Glover. And if you can’t remember Glover playing the Riddler, he played the part in *Batman: The Animated Series*. I liked Glover’s voice performance because it was so distinctly different from Gorshin’s performance. Where Gorshin was manic, Glover was calm. Glover’s Riddler looked at his confrontations with Batman as a chess game, but like Gorshin’s Riddler, there was still the compulsion to send Batman riddle clues announcing his crimes ahead of time.

But as I said, for me, Frank Gorshin will always be THE Riddler, the one by whom all other portrayals of the part will be judged. And this brings me back to my original point . . .

I remember a friend telling me several years ago that Gorshin had the rather dubious distinction of appearing on *The Ed Sullivan Show* the same night that The Beatles made their first appearance on that show. The dubious part of this distinction was the fact that Gorshin was the act that followed the Fab Four, which meant that he probably had only a fraction of the audience that the act immediately before the Beatles had.

While reading some of the obituaries for Gorshin, it didn’t surprise me to discover that he had been nominated for an Emmy for his performance as the Riddler. I suppose what did surprise me was learning that he also received an Emmy nomination for what is probably his best-known role after the Riddler — Bele in the original STAR TREK episode “Let That Be Your Last Battlefield.”

I had the opportunity to meet Frank Gorshin several years ago. It was in 1999, when he was one of the guests at DragonCon. He was originally scheduled to give a talk, but he was recovering from recent throat surgery. Instead, he showed an episode of the Sci-Fi Channel series *Black Scorpion*. He guest-starred in this particular episode — again as a villain, and again with a delightfully manic performance.

Later, I got his autograph, and I told him how he had been at least a minor influence for me. Yeah, I know, it was probably something he

had been told before. Before the convention was over, I also bought a get-well card and left it at his table.

One of Gorshin’s last performances was in the season finale of CSI. As luck would have it, I missed most of it, and he didn’t appear in the part that I did see. (Well, I can always catch the rerun.) There was one nice tribute at the end, though. After the last scene, there was a card which said:

In Loving Memory
FRANK GORSHIN
1934-2005

PODKAYNE OF THE ESCHATON

Review by Joseph T Major of

IRON SUNRISE

by Charles Stross

(Ace; 2004; ISBN 0-441-01159-4; \$23.95)

Hugo Nominee

Reviewed in *Alexiad* V. 3 #5

This is not a direct sequel to *Singularity Sky*, but is set in the same universe. It’s also an old fashioned space opera done with cyberpunk technology and procedures.

To explain the spreading of humanity across the spatial spheres, Stross creates a . . . being, outside of space and time (weird), styled the Eschaton, that one day picked up 90% of humanity and scattered them to the stars. Much confusion ensued.

Confusion becomes even more confounded when the far-flung humans develop space travel. Unfortunately, this Eschaton did not bring about an end of conflict. The iron sunrise of the title, for example, is one of those cute little weapon systems that have been developed. It’s all very simple, just dump iron into your enemy’s star, with a result straight out of “Inconstant Moon” (Larry Niven, 1971).

As a result, we have a chase story. One expects to see short fat bald Englishmen in Black here and there, as investigator Rachel Mansour and fleeing Woman Who Knows Too Much Wednesday Shadowmist navigate through a starscape of mind control, interstellar intrigue, smart technology, and dumb luck.

Perhaps from there being all that mechanical intelligence around, there is a refreshing lack of dumb behavior among the authorities. Yes, this book is in some ways a thriller novel of its era — but it’s a science fictional era. John W. Campbell would have been pleased. (And not a conventional thriller, where the authorities are impotent but the lone scorned hero wins the day, either.)

The finale is marked by cruelty, treachery, and valor, not to mention bureaucratic backstabbing. Stross is redeeming the honor of science fiction, as opposed to fantasy with rayguns and spaceships.

MASTER AND COMMANDER

Review by Joseph T Major of

JONATHAN STRANGE & Mr NORRELL

by Susanna Clarke

(Bloomsbury Publishing; 2004;
ISBN 1-58234-416-7; \$27.95)

<http://www.jonathanstrange.com>

<http://www.bloomsbury.com>

Hugo Nominee

There seem to be two kinds of novels about the first decade and a half of the nineteenth century in England that are being read by Fans: 1) deliciously witty tales of strapping young bucks being tamed by forward young ladies, after some rather boorish behaviour; 2) naval tales with infodumps running out the characters’ . . . er, well, infodumps. I’ve read all of “C. S. Forrester” and Dudley Pope, and if it weren’t for Dewey Lambdin’s all too occasional tales of the lecherous, cat-keeping, and greedy Captain Alan Lewrie I would be desperate enough to start reading “Alexander Kent”.

The tea-and-crumpets view of Britain unfortunately persists; reading Stephen Lawhead’s *Avalon* (1999) for example where the true heir and reincarnation of Arthur becomes king in such a land — in the real world, in Blair’s “Cool Britannia” or its equivalent he would be humiliatingly ignored. This is hardly a contemporary or an American attitude. Jane Austen, say, or Charles Dickens described a very detailed and intricate world; the Regency fans we see at Worldcon can testify to that. That it was as much of a creation as Zimiamvia or Amtor is less acknowledged. That in mind, I’ll have to say that this is what Dickens would have written if he wrote a magical work. (*A Christmas Carol* is a ghost story; this would be *Amadis of Gaul* according to Dickens.) It has the customary Dickensian menage of eccentrics, oddballs, and whatnot.

It’s 1807. Nelson has died gloriously off the coast of Spain, but Wellesley has not yet had the opportunity to make his mark there. The Yorkshire Society of Magicians is offered a deal; if this Mr Norrell can prove he’s a genuine magician, they will disband. He does and they do. The statues in York Minster having that rather less than amiable conversation proves rather convincing.

From there, Mr Norrell goes to London, where he blunders around trying to speak to H.M. ministers. Without interest, one cannot get preferment. For some reason I’m reminded of Walter Karig’s *Zot!* (1947), where a man with a power of his own makes the trek from Washington office to office. Fortunately Mr Norrell is luckier than Karig’s Professor John Jones (for one thing he has a name that doesn’t sound like he’s registering at a hotel with a woman he’s not married to), as he finally finds a patron by a rather radical effort; raising his fiancée from the dead. She died not long before they would have been married, getting him a thousand pounds a year. He really loved that.

With the help of a mysterious Man in Green with thistledown hair who appears out of nowhere, Mr Norrell brings Mistress Wintertowne back to life, she becomes Lady Pole, her husband Sir Walter becomes Mr Norrell’s patron, and all is well.

Maybe not.

One magician brings forth a second, and Jonathan Strange comes to public note. He forges a dubious relationship with Mr Norrell,

who gets sent to Spain, where a doubting Arthur (Wellesley, Lord Wellington) asks what the devil this magic can do. Well, it can provide instant roads for the army to march on, but not stick around for the Frogs to use. Brigadier Gérard would classify that as another English trick, or perhaps tell the story of "How the Brigadier Was Sent for a Sorcerer". And then from Spain to Belgium . . .

Nitpick: unless Clarke is willing to bend history farther than it should go — moving Brussels to the Americas temporarily isn't? — there wouldn't be three people at the Duke's table at the night of the battle of Waterloo, namely the Duke, his Spanish aide (and Trafalgar veteran) General Alava, and Mr Norrell [Page 450]. Colonel George Scovell, *The Man Who Broke Napoleon's Codes* (by Mark Urban, 2002, reviewed in *Alexiad* V. 1 #3), would, should, also be there, so they could play a hand or two of whist to pass the time.

The let-down after the peace causes stresses, and none more than between our eponymous heroes. Jonathan Strange publishes a book on magic and then departs for the Continent. Mr Norrell doesn't care for that, and as a result all the copies of Strange's book start disappearing or coming up blank. Adding to Strange's problems is a prolonged encounter with Lord Byron. And what happens when you meet someone who is mad, bad, and dangerous to know? Melancholia (nowadays it'd be called "depression").

However, when wizards get into black melancholy, it's **BLACK**. The entire neighborhood in Venice where Strange is living now has perpetual night. That does depress property values.

Meanwhile, the faerie who helped bring Mistress Wintertowne back from the majority has now adopted another career, which is making Sir Walter's black servant Stephen a King. Since Great Britain happens to have a king at the moment, albeit a little off in the head, as we see in one chapter, this might be difficult. Over all, of course, looms the legendary Raven King, who in the twelfth century subdued all Northern England and ruled it for three centuries, thanks to his magic.

Finally, things sort of drift off . . .¹

I am a little curious as to how, after the Raven King captured all of Northern England in 1110 and held on to it for three centuries, the history of the country developed in **the exact same way**. And indeed for all its potential, magic seems to have made little difference in British history. If Mr Norrell could fool the Frogs with dummy blockading ships, don't you think Prince Rupert would have summoned up *A Midsummer Tempest* (by Poul Anderson, 1974) to confound Blake and the other Parliamentary Generals-at-Sea?

Indeed, one wonders if the heirs of Jonathan Strange & Mr Norrell are going to build a school for the teaching of magic, one with its own special train leaving London from platform 9 ¾ and other features.

The faeries are the heartless, flighty sorts of conventional legend, but somewhat more

powerful. (They don't seem to be troubled by iron, sunlight, and the like.) Also still around, not driven out by Christianity, and in fact they seem to be baptizable, which means they have souls; think *The Mermaid's Children* (Anderson, 1980), though these faeries seem to have a better grip on their Other World.



1. Clarke sure does love them footnotes. One footnote runs over several pages, telling a story that one character begins and is prevented from continuing further.

OIKS AND AWAY!

Review by Joseph T Major of
IRON COUNCIL

by China Miéville

(Ballantine/Del Rey; 2004;
ISBN 0-345-46402-8; \$24.95)

Sequel to *Perdido Street Station*
and *The Scar*

Hugo Nominee

Arthur C. Clarke Award Winner

Somehow the Modern Anti-Globalisation Permanent Activist comes to mind. You know, one who adopts the image of being a Prole Revo from shaven head to steel-toed boots.

But he shaves his head with a surgical-steel razor, hand-forged, hand-ground, and hand-sharpened in the Swiss Alps by a firm of professional cutlery makers with eight centuries of experience, and waxes it with organic beeswax produced by a commune of French apiarists who have forbidden the planting of any gene-engineered plants within a radius of fifty kilometres. The boots are hand-made to order on hand-carved individual lasts by an anarchosyndicalist cooperative of Basque cobblers who breed their own cattle for the leather and mine their own metals for the toe caps and eyelets. Not to mention the T-shirt made from 600-thread-count fair trade cotton grown by Egyptian fellahin using ancient methods handed down from the Pharaohs and spun by Quechua weavers in authentic Inca ways . . .

This book is like the earlier books in this series; it has characters who are finely drawn and motivated, worlds with explicit, detailed, nuanced descriptions, stories which live up to Mark Twain's immortal stricture "That a tale shall accomplish something and arrive somewhere." ("Fenimore Cooper's Literary

Offenses")

It is all so **ugly**.

The world of New Crobuzon is devoid of beauty, grace, and elegance. It is a crude mechanical realm, without any effort by its inhabitants at art or decoration, and no feelings by its inhabitants that might be judged kindly, gentle, loving, or attractive. Sheer bloody realism with none of this old sensitive pretty-pretty tripe, in other words.

The world wherein New Crobuzon festers, er exists is going through an era of upheaval. In the first section, a band of revolutionaries plot in the slums of the town, howling out their rage at the state of the world. (It's all very reminiscent of the anarchist movements of the nineteenth century, which like the anti-globalization movement of today worked hard at persuading everyone that they were dangerously psychotic.)

Then, one of them escapes and after some wandering through the festering lands, gets a job on a remarkably brutal railroad, one that is reminiscent of a Stalinist project in that there is no pay, no community, and no purpose. With somewhat better fortune than the zeks, the rail workers rebel, and even defeat an army that strikes at them with the finest of steampunk technology. This juggernaut, the people themselves or their train, or perhaps both as one, the Iron Council of the title, begins a journey through the hellish twisted terrain of the lands outside, all the better to get back at the oligarchy.

The oligarchy in New Crobuzon responds by cracking down, and sure enough the rebellion spreads. The fighters of the Paris Commune er New Crobuzon Collective are faced by dire creations both magical and chymical, and when news from the Iron Council arrive are about at the end of their rope.

Then, finally, the Iron Council arrives, just as the militia of New Crobuzon is about to triumph. All lies in the hands of Judah Low the golem maker (how original) and he holds everything in his hands . . .

Here, more than before, Miéville mixes technology and magic. His weaknesses continue to plague him, the perpetual train of the Iron Council seems just a bit magical in its function. Similarly, the races, whether the fantastic or the Remade, seem just a bit too impossible when looked at closely, if you can look at them closely without throwing up.

There is a conclusion, of course, but none of that pretty-pretty tripe about anyone coming out well. Oiks and away, 'ats me motto.

MASTERS OF THE METROPOLIS

Review by Joseph T Major of

THE ALCHEMIST

by Iain M. Banks

(Orbis; 2004; ISBN 1-84149-155-1; £17.99)

Hugo Nominee

If Carolyn Janice Cherry were to write a space opera in the style of Richard Patrick Russ, this is the sort of space opera she would write. Of course, you probably know them as "C. J. Cherryh" and "Patrick O'Brian". As you know,

Gentle Reader, these works are laden with a writing technique called “infodump”, wherein much is directly explained to the reader, a methodology most notoriously demonstrated in the famed story “Masters of the Metropolis” by Randall Garrett and Lin Carter.

This publication, for example, is written using a computer program of a type called “word processing”, which enables the writer to not only type but format his prose and even go back to correct errors without using correction fluid. Correction fluid, of course, was a whitish substance that could be painted on paper to cover errors . . . I think you get the idea.

Cherry(h) is also well-known for a habit of introducing alien words with no referents into the text, making confusion even more confounded, although these are invented alien words, not real (but obscurely or even incorrectly used) cliquent, lambent, telic, and preterite terms flung like a bayamo-sped jerid into the reader’s argute, compulsory visage, as one other critic puts it about another writer. They looked horribly like children.

Banks has created here a vast and complex universe, full of different alien races, humans with great and complex capabilities yet still retaining their humanity, enormous intrigues and conflicts spanning eons and parsecs. It’s a universe where the characters live in it, not remain somehow unconnected. Somehow, though, for all that Banks tells us about things in detail, the details seem to slip away when the reader looks at them.

Oh well. Fassin Taak finds himself wrenched out of his ordinary life and dispatched on a mission. Given that the mission starts with him talking to his uncle, who is having his memories drained out of him preparatory to his demise, and has been reshaped into a walrusoid, you get an idea of how extraordinary to us this “ordinary” is. Yet, again, Fassin lives *in* and is of this world.

The mission ships him across the stars, into relations with exotic, yet perfectly consistent, nonhumans (they’re familiar to him so calling them “aliens” seems a bit much), finding mind-blowing devastations. He survives and learns to survive . . .

It’s an exotic universe that would be worth exploring on its own. Fassin is hardly a neurotic, inept ninny, he does what he can to survive and is affecting and interesting; you’d like to meet him. He doesn’t panic.

Similarly, his universe is one of great depth and detail. It has texture, it’s not one of those places where it was raining on the planet that day. Only the parts don’t quite seem to come together.

Thanks to David Herrington for lending me a copy.

THE TEMPEST

Review by Joseph T Major of

THIS SCEPTER’D ISLE

(Baen; 2004 ISBN 0-7434-98899-5; \$7.99)

and

ILL MET BY MOONLIGHT

(Baen; 2005; ISBN 0-7434-9890-9; \$25.00)
by Roberta Gellis and Mercedes Lackey

A Domino factum et est mirabile in oculis nostris!

“. . . We Englishmen happen to have made an ideal of Elizabeth. With that delightful capacity for making our own ideals and maintaining them in the teeth of realities, we have chosen to forget the fact that no sovereign of ordinary intelligence could have helped being gilded by the really abnormal galaxy of talent which illumined the age of Elizabeth. It was those gigantic geniuses who made the glory of England then. England happened to be personified by Elizabeth. Therefore, in English eyes, Elizabeth was great and glorious and all the rest. . .”

— Fr. Rolfe, *Hadrian the Seventh*

But, Denoriel Silverhair might point out to His Holiness, the galaxy of talent that He cites had the liberty to operate as they willed then. Should certain strictures have been enforced, these writers — even He Himself, or George Arthur Rose anyhow — would have been silenced, one way or another, in a *Ruled Britannia* (by Harry Turtledove, 2002) under dominion domestic or foreign.

The Sidhe courts are dependent upon the mortal world, cold iron or no. So, when a Vision is given regarding the red-haired one of *This Scepter’d Isle*, it falls to Denoriel Silverhair, wizard and warrior, to go protect the red-haired one, who doesn’t seem to be around yet. The effect of the Inquisition (they *do* expect the Spanish Inquisition) is fatal to the Faerie life, as the late Faerie courts in the Hispanic peninsula could attest. He doesn’t like the idea at first: “*I am a warrior, not a nursemaid,*” he says, proving that Dr. Bones McCoy had faerie blood (a STAR TREK™ fact I bet you never knew).

The Hungarian nobleman Lord Denno is a rum sort, a *foreigner* doncha know. However, he does have a bit of a dab hand at helpin’ out his Grace Thomas Howard, Duke of Norfolk, and seein’ to the King’s byblow by Bessie Blount, Henry FitzRoy. Even if the lad doesn’t seem to be the red-haired one, he needs protecting — and Denno, or Denoriel, is the one to do it.

Against threats both natural and human. It seems that Denoriel’s demi-siblings from the Unseleighe Court Pasgen and Rhoslyn (Good King Harry ain’t the only one who’s been sleeping around) are having it in for the lad, and Denoriel is at quite a spot of bother to save him from one unseleighe peril after another, beginning with a child-swap and going on to more dire straits. (Their lord is Vidal Dhu. Gorey fellow, ain’t he?)

While Denoriel bounces back and forth between the Overworld and Faerie, and the various intrigues and executions of the Tudor court work their bloody way through, the worlds converge on the surprisingly comprehending

Henry FitzRoy, Duke of Richmond and Somerset. Not to mention the little red-headed girl who calls him “Da”, for all that her father is his, too . . .

The protectors of Faerie and its enemies, both mortal and more-than-mortal, are *Ill Met By Moonlight* in the gardens of Hampton Court. Having escaped the normal fate of King Henry’s courtiers (i.e., he did not have an axe fall on his neck), the fellow they call Lord Denno, and God or his Goddess help him if he ever encounters “fellow Magyar” Count Francisco Ragozy de Saint-Germain (who, though broadly and deeply talented, wise, rich, well-educated, experienced and impotent has the amazing ability to get embroiled in the most perilous and dangerous of circumstances time and again, as chronicled by Chelsea Quinn Yarbro), has to pilot the Lady Elizabeth through the hazards and ailments of normal life, not to mention childhood sicknesses, and also the prospect of being attacked by beings of the Unseleighe Court.

It’s not all violence and nasties; the portrayal of the Bazaar of the Bizarre, Faerie’s shopping mall, is amusing and interesting. (Fortunately, we do not meet Skeeve, Aahz, and the rest of the gang from *Another Fine Myth* and the rest of Asprin’s series . . .)

The authors present a detailed and informed portrayal of the Overworld, er of English social mores and deeds in the days of Good King Harry. Similarly, the faerie elements Underworld are fully informed of the tradition and use it wisely, carefully, and in keeping.

Their portrayal of people both real (Henry FitzRoy, Elizabeth) and fictional (Denoriel) is one showing genuine love, affection, and concern. The Sidhe are only human after all — well, where that counts.

It is fair to note that there seems to be a bit too much magic being tossed around. While it’s all too well to make Pasgen and Rhoslyn clever, cunning, imaginative, and persistent — at least it makes them real people (so to speak) and worthwhile villains — at the same time the plot often hinges on melodrama, with the merely human events being almost irrelevant, and the Faerie ones high comic-bookish.

These are books that can be read; with a story that begins somewhere and arrives at something, with personages that are alive, and can be distinguished from corpses and . . . well, I liked them, and will be waiting when this tale is . . . [To Be Continued]

**This judgment I have of you
that you will not be corrupted
with any manner of gift, and
that you will be faithful to the
State, and that, without
respect of my private will, you
will give me that counsel that
you think best.**

Elizabeth R.

ALL TOGETHER NOW
Review by Joseph T Major of

IMPERIUM

by Keith Laumer

Edited by Eric Flint

(Baen; 2005; ISBN 0-7434-9903-4; \$25.00)

Contains *Worlds of the Imperium* (1961),*The Other Side of Time* (1965), and*Assignment In Nowhere* (1968)

In 1965, former U.S. Foreign Service officer [John] Keith Laumer published the book *Embassy*, a novel of some incidents in the life and career of a military attaché. Which don't seem to include, it seems, saving the day at one post after another from the blunders of an incompetent superior who then takes all the credit, but that's another story, or perhaps a whole series of them. In the end, our hero is ready to go to his new posting in Stockholm, while his fiancée admires her new engagement ring. I bring this up because, you see, the protagonist of that novel is one Colonel Brion Bayard, which also happens to be the name (and rank) of the protagonist of these novels — the first of which begins in Stockholm!

Like so many of the "classics" of elder days, these novels are comparatively short. The paperback edition of *Worlds of the Imperium I* have (Ace Books; 1962, 1973; 95¢) is 176 pages. By way of comparison, that work takes up one hundred sixty-two pages of this volume (466 pages total).

However, it is worth noting that this volume restores the original serialized version of *Worlds of the Imperium*, which contained some passages inexplicably cut. That is, most readers who have previously read it will find something new all the same. (There will be a few who read it in the *Fantastic Stories* serialization of February-April 1961, but even they will now have a hardbound text on good paper.)

The concept of travelers between alternative worlds was, of course, hardly new. The best-known writer in that area was H. Beam Piper, who had done his Paratime Series beginning with "Police Operation" (*Astounding*, July 1948), albeit he was then concentrating more on his "Terro-Human Future History" of works such as *Space Viking* (1962, 1963) and *Little Fuzzy* (1962). It wasn't as if one could get an exclusive reservation on a concept, after all.

So . . . Colonel Brion Bayard is walking about enjoying the wonders of Stockholm, but being decidedly nagged by the fact that he is being followed. Then the followers jump him, drag him into a truck, and then into a strange vehicle indeed. When (after some surprising but not very practicable heroics) the vehicle arrives at the end of its journey, he finds himself — in Stockholm!

But not quite the Stockholm he was assigned to. Here is where the really paratime stuff comes in. In 1893, two Italian scientists, Giulio Maxoni and Carlo Cocini, made a discovery about the fundamental nature of time. For some reason, they seem to have felt that the local authorities weren't up to the task, and as in other worlds a fellow named Marconi (those names are suggestive, aren't they?) would do, after Cocini's death in an accident during development, Maxoni went to England. While

Marconi became a Marchese in the Italian peerage and an honorary Knight Grand Companion of the Royal Victorian Order, Maxoni received a peerage and 1,000,000£.

The alt-Kaiser of this timeline may have been less aggressive or less insecure than our Wilhelm II; the German and British governments agreed to stave off a destructive war by slightly revamping the constitution of the German Empire to make the lower Saxon prince who just happened to be King of the United Kingdom and his other realms and dominions beyond the seas also German Emperor. (The point of divergence between the two timelines, they have determined, is 1790.)

The new federation discovered that evidently timeline travel is not the safest thing in the worlds. All around them is a vast and trunkless, er devastated area, called with good reason The Blight. For a long time, the explorers of this Imperium had had to content themselves with travel to far-distant timelines, ones where technology was hardly as developed (thus not being destroyed by the malign effects of the Maxoni-Cocini drive). Then, they found one timeline in the Blight where this technology hadn't been developed; but then there had been a devastating world-wide war.

However, the inhabitants of that timeline had been a little suspicious, and may have got hold of some Imperial technology, combining it with some of their own. (That sound you hear is Verkan Vall trying to keep his people from running around screaming "The Paratime Secret is out! The Paratime Secret is out!") Namely a destructive bomb of vast power and lingering effects. Which does naturally concern them.

Their covert investigations in the other timeline turned up a chief suspect, a warlord of sorts. However, the happenstance of events in their line had not had his equivalent born. Fortunately, not too long ago they discovered *yet another* timeline in the Blight, which in fact contained a man with the same original name, appearance, and indeed genetic background as "HIS MARTIAL EXCELLENCY, DUKE OF ALGIERS, WARLORD OF THE COMBINED FORCES, MARSHAL GENERAL OF THE STATE, BRION THE FIRST, BAYARD, DICTATOR." (Page 41)

Thus the rather unsolicited removal. Colonel Bayard might well suspect that there were the same, or much the same, people in differing timelines, inasmuch as the director of the service (he's getting interviewed at the top) is one Freiherr Manfred Albrecht von Richthofen, and one of his subordinates, also present, is one Hermann Wilhelm Göring. (Evidently Laumer thought it too arcane to include the one intermediate commander of JG 1 Richthofen, Wilhelm Reinhard.)

It's not as if he can go back. Would one turn down the opportunity to be an absolute dictator, warlord of the remnants of a crumbling world? As readily as a postman, Bayard decides to take the job. The fact that he gets invited to a party where a gang of militia from the third time-line attack, leaving behind a dubiously-fuzed atomic demolitions munition with which they hoped to nuke Stockholm, killing Bayard and his new girlfriend, helps.

So Bayard, scion of Blight-Insular Timeline Three (ours), or B-I Three, is off from B-I One (the Imperium's), to replace the Bayard of B-I Two and try to stabilize the situation. Imagine if suddenly one morning Beria, Molotov, Khrushchev, and such personal staffers as Poskreybshev the personal secretary and General Vlasik the bodyguard had to deal with a sudden personality change in the Great Stalin, and probably some apparent memory loss, too.

It turns out that Brion the First, Bayard, is not quite as advertised, but others are the same way, and after some rather hair-raising adventures (given the tense trip through the Blight in a jury-rigged timeline-vehicle that Richthofen takes, I wonder if Laumer knew about the time that the B-I 3 Manfred von Richthofen crashed his plane landing near his brother's, trying to rescue him?) Colonel Bayard finally becomes reconciled to his new situation. His new girlfriend helps.

As I've said, the text of this edition restores the text of the original serialized version, presumably combining it with the added material for book publication. It's nice to have any hardback edition, much less an edition more in keeping with the author's intent.

Bayard has settled down, married his new girlfriend Barbro, rescued the dictator Bayard's loyal butler Luc to be his loyal butler (they could get good wine more consistently) and all is well. But then intruders from *The Other Side of Time* intrude, and Bayard finds himself in an empty world. Which soon gets filled by beings from an alternative evolution. Think Sawyer's *Neanderthal Parallax*, though these guys, the Hagroon, would probably think Ponter Boddit was a big-time wimp. Fortunately a third intelligent race of alternative hominids pops in (isn't this getting just a bit *crowded*?) and then matters start getting really hairy (uh, right), with time-travel and the like becoming involved . . .

Among the striking scenes in this work are the presentations of how it looks in the Blight; ones reminiscent of those views that Verkan Vall would see through blinks in the field around his Ghaldron-Hestor conveyor. Though if Vall had seen the devastation, he would have commented that the First Level (the one where Earth's resources were exhausted and all lines but the Paratimers destroyed themselves one way or another) can be pretty bad.

Richard Curlon, fisherman, is in a pretty bad shape, boat sinking, threatened by mobsters, when a fellow named Bayard shows up and requisitions him for an *Assignment In Nowhere*. There is what may seem to be a rather grating continuity error here; his name is John in the first chapter and Richard Henry Geoffrey Edward in the second and subsequent ones. Or, as we shall see, perhaps a subtle significance.

Curlon is a significant fellow himself. Last descendant of the Plantagenets (I wonder what the descendants of Charles Somerset, natural son of Henry Beaufort, Duke of Somerset and great-great-grandson of John of Gaunt, a substantial and titled family even today, would think of that?) he seems to be an intersection of many important time-lines. The mission, and he

has no choice about not accepting it, has to do with restoring the broken sword of his ancestor Richard I, replacing a look-alike alternative on another time-line (where have we heard this before?) and finally having an encounter with a strange alternative in the past . . .

In the final chapter, Richthofen and Bayard are talking about history, and both wonder why they had been thinking that Richard I of England had lived a long and successful life, instead of dying in a pointless siege at Chaluz. Lord Darcy or Master Sean O Lochlann did not come by to clear matters up, however. This also may explain the shifting first name.

The introduction by Harry Turtledove is a good lead-in to the curious notions that stem from this road not taken of crosstime travel. As when the hero of Michael McCollum's *A Greater Infinity* (1980, 1982) found that his paratime-travelling new bosses did not at first comprehend the concept of "spacesuit" . . .

The return to print of these interesting adventures is to be noted. Some people may have a certain grating feeling at the implicit acceptance of prolonged imperial and colonial power; presumably, in B-I One, V. I. Ulyanov was an insignificant nuisance, Adolf Hitler a street bum, and so on. Assuming they existed, which is not certain. Bayard found no trouble entering the service of the Imperium, for they honored and accepted bravery and self-sacrifice, values he found were being derogated in his timeline.

Welcome back.

(In 1971, Laumer suffered a severe stroke, which left him semi-paralyzed. More to the point, the stroke also caused a substantial and very negative personality change. (We still remember the story about him elbowing the man out of the way in the elevator at Rivercon.) He continued to write until not long before his death in 1993, but his work was considerably inferior. Such as *Zone Yellow* (1990), the fourth (or fifth?) Imperium book, which reruns the idea and plot of *The Other Side of Time* with a different kind of bad guy outtimeliners. Completists might feel neglected or offended by its absence from this volume, but it's really not worth it. Really.)

WHO WILL BE EATEN FIRST?

Review by Joseph T Major of
SHACKLETON'S STOWAWAY
by Victoria McKernan
(Alfred A. Knopf; 2005;
ISBN 0-375-92691-7; \$15.95)

Few men could be more forbidding than Ernest Shackleton in a rage, and now, squarely facing Blackboro, his huge shoulders bunched, Shackleton berated the young Welsh stowaway mercilessly. Blackboro was terrified. Bakewell, How, and McLeod, standing helplessly by, never had expected anything of this nature. But then, at the height of this tirade, Shackleton paused abruptly and put his face up close to Blackboro's. "Finally," he thundered, if

we run out of food and anyone has to be eaten, you will be first. Understand?"

— Alfred Lansing, *Endurance*

Caroline Alexander (in her book, also titled *Endurance*) reported how Blackboro, or as it's spelled here, Blackborow, had replied cheekily to Shackleton "They'd get more meat off of you," and in the splendid Firstsight Films production Blackborow (Celyn Jones) replies thus to Shackleton (Kenneth Branagh). Not quite here. [Incidentally, even here the casting is wonderfully well on the mark.]

I rather fancy this is a Young Adult novel; for one thing, the cover illustrations (the back has the Hurley picture of Blackborow with the ship's cat Mrs. Chippy on his shoulder) are printed on the boards. And given its setting, and contemporary constraints, there is no need for it to be located thus, but . . .

McKernan has focused her story on some of the lesser-known members of the Imperial Trans-Antarctic Expedition. The story begins with two sailors down on their luck in a South American port; Blackborow and his pal William Bakewell. Then Shackleton's expedition comes into harbor, and two men are discharged for drink. Bakewell, a Canadian from the Province of Michigan (yes, I know, but he was faking being "Imperial") was hired on as permanent staff but Blackborow was too young. However, Bakewell and his new friends didn't think so, and they took him along . . .

The familiar events take on new life under her writing, including some of the sadder ones, as when the unfit dogs and the ship's cat had to be put down. Similarly, McKernan is almost brutally frank in describing the freezing and amputation of Blackborow's toes. (Did he ever meet Admiral Peary? They might have had an interesting conversation.)

Towards the end, McKernan has to split her tale, and she includes scenes from other points of view, such as of Timothy McCarthy (one of the crew of the escape boat *James Caird*), Tom Crean (see Michael Smith's *Tom Crean* (2000)), and Bakewell. She interleaves the elements of her tale to some effect, as when she describes Shackleton's first attempt to get through to the castaways on Elephant Island from both sides — it was so close, but the ice had already closed up around the island.

The description of the sufferings of the castaways might be considered too hard for some children. McKernan portrays movingly their constant strain, the efforts by which Frank Wild kept them going, and the doggedness with which Shackleton kept on trying. (She also mentions smoking; give her points for realism.)

McKernan deserves credit for mentioning the loose ends; describing Shackleton's plans to go to Ross Island and rescue the other party of *Shackleton's Forgotten Men* (by Lennard Bickel; 2000), telling what happened to the men she featured, and generally leaving an impression that they went on after the story ended. (The sort of thing that makes some people wish that Tolkien had left in the longer Afterword to *The Lord of the Rings* in which Samwise tells his children what happened to the

rest of the Fellowship.) As when McKernan describes how Blackborow held his daughter Peggy in his lap to listen to a radio show about the *Endurance* expedition, and when the show got to a description of their having to shoot the dogs, she knew he was crying.

She credits the aid of the Blackborow and Bakewell families, and lists as sources a number of the familiar books, including Bakewell's, Hurley's, Hussey's, and Worsley's memoirs, Roland Huntford's biography, and of course *South* by Shackleton (and Sanders) himself.

. . . Blackborow, whose toes were so badly frostbitten in the boats, had to have all five amputated while on the island. With insufficient instruments and no proper means of sterilizing them, the operation, carried out as it was in a dark, grimy hut, with only a blubber-stove to keep up the temperature and with an outside temperature well below freezing, speaks volumes for the skill and initiative of the surgeons. I am glad to be able to say that the operation was very successful, and after a little treatment ashore, very kindly given by the Chilean doctors at Punta Arenas, he has now completely recovered and walks with only a slight limp. . .

— *South*

ANARQUIA

Review by Joseph T Major of
**THE BREAKING POINT:
Hemingway, Dos Passos, and the Murder of
José Robles**
by Stephen Koch
(Counterpoint; 2005;
ISBN 1-58243-280-5; \$24.95)

There is a story which they tell about an old Southern planter being driven to town. The coachman, noticing a horsefly on one ear of the horse, flicked it off with a quick snap of his whip. When you're hot, you're hot, and so he proceeded to annihilate a grasshopper sitting by the side of the road.

The planter was intrigued by this deadly accuracy and pointed to a hornet's nest hanging from a tree by the side of the road. "Can you try that?"

The driver shook his head. "No, sir. A fly, he's a fly, and a grasshopper, he's a grasshopper, but a hornet's nest, now that's *organization!*"

The writer John Dos Passos was a member of the Communist party in the twenties and early thirties. Since I first encountered him in *National Review* it wasn't all that surprising to learn this. But what made Dos (as they called him) make that shift? What screams did he hear in the night and where did he hear them?

In this book, the author of *Double Lives* (1994, 1995, 2004) tells the frightening story of how two authors were confronted with the reality of evil: one denied it, the other realized it, and yet the one who made the moral choice

did not prosper.

José Robles Pazos was one of the people who fought for democracy in Spain, or at least the people who described it put it that way. He had prospered since that day in 1916 when he met John Dos Passos near Madrid, but gave it all up to go home when the fighting started. He became a senior officer under the Loyalists, assigned to liaising with the International Brigades.

Another supporter of the Republic was Papa. Ernest Hemingway, that is, and for him the Spanish Civil War was just like being in a great big safari. (One point Koch makes is that after the “victory of fascism”, Hemingway continued to travel there unharmed and unconcerned.) Nevertheless he was surrounded by Communists, including his then current squeeze, Martha Gellhorn. Koch describes Hemingway’s infidelity and cruelty in terms worthy of Paul M. Johnson’s *Intellectuals* (1989).

When they traveled there, then, Dos decided to look up his old friend José Robles. Who, however, had disappeared. This book tells of how Dos Passos tried to find out what had happened, and how Hemingway kept on drinking, shooting, and, er, having sex, showing what a hairy-chested macho man he was, while surrounded by Communists.

Robles had disappeared one night, just as people in Moscow or Kiev would disappear one night. Dos tried a number of maneuvers to get to the bottom of this; from their failure one gets the idea that there was an *organization* behind all this.

Koch concludes by describing their several declines. The collapse of the Spanish Republic as Stalin decided he had got about all he could get out of the situation, the decline of Dos Passos’s literary reputation, Hemingway’s literary rise and fall combined with his increasingly driven and suicidal life: these make for a melancholy and eerie contrast. Was it all connected in the end?

Annoyingly, the book has no index and scatters its bibliography amid the copious footnotes (see one below). Anyone looking for evidence on how, say, the Anarchists could somehow have rallied and defeated the Communists and their *organization*, and then the Nationalists, and then so on, will have to look carefully. *Why* they couldn’t is however somewhat more obvious.

LITERARY NOTE

2. Hemingway rarely named his later heroes very felicitously: there’s something a little stilted and fake in names like “Philip Rawlings” and “Robert Jordan”...

— *The Breaking Point*, Page 305

I thought there was something stilted and fake about the author of *The Wheel of Time!* (And sure enough, “Robert Jordan” is a pseudonym; his real name is James Oliver Rigney, Jr.)

AKU-AKU

Review by Joseph T Major of
COLLAPSE:
How Societies Choose to Fail or Succeed
by Jared Diamond
(Viking; 2005; ISBN 0-670-03337-5; \$29.95)

Guns, Germs, and Steel (1997) played a significant role in the collapse or lack thereof of some of these societies, but other factors were involved also. The author of *Guns, Germs, and Steel* now returns to the other side of that topic; having shown how societies succeed, he discusses how they fail.

Diamond begins close to home, as it were, describing his memories and experiences in Montana; both the breathtaking vistas and the undesirable consequences thereof. Those range from yuppification to heavy-metal poisoning (and he means the actual minerals, left in mine residues, not the music, no matter how bad it is). But Montana is hardly an example of a “failed” society, in spite of its problems.

The failed societies he discusses are globe-spanning and range over a broad sweep of history. Easter Island, for example, which some of us at least were introduced to in Thor Heyerdahl’s *Aku-Aku* (1958). No matter what Heyerdahl’s beliefs were, he went out there, collected information, and published.

Easter Island, Rapa Nui, once upon a time was heavily populated and had a vast variety of flora and fauna. But when Europeans contacted it, they found a treeless, devastated place. Diamond describes the process that led from one state to the other. (Unfairly, he presents a “rapacious capitalist” view in the early chapters and only later provides the nuanced, realistic “common heritage” view in the back of the book.) The Rapa Nuians cut down all the trees, which led to the extinction of the various bird species and an inability to build boats, further restricting their food choices.

Fletcher Christian took the *Bounty* out into the wilds of the ocean, and discovered an unoccupied island. But Pitcairn Island had been populated before. Why did the inhabitants of that and its neighbor island perish? There seems to have been flourishing trade among Pitcairn, Henderson Island, and Mangareva Island, each having a resource the others lacked — and then the trees on Mangareva ran out. No more canoes, no more trade, eventually no more people on the other two islands.

Pitcairn Island had a little war of its own, and the Mayans had bigger ones, it seems. As with Arther Ferrill’s *The Fall of the Roman Empire: The Military Explanation* (1986), points to conflict as a significant cause of the Mayan collapse of the eighth and ninth centuries. Not the only one, but a further consideration.

Restricted food choices are the topic of the next few chapters, which discuss the fate of the Greenland Colony. Which may have learned too much from Iceland. In Iceland, the environmental balance is so fragile that any change is likely to be for the worse — the island was deforested by the early settlers (see above about Easter Island and Mangareva), which meant that it was soon de-topsoiled, too.

Having learned this lesson, the Norsemen applied it in Greenland. Which meant, for example, that when the Little Ice Age kicked in and it became too hard to keep cattle and sheep, they didn’t want to emulate the *skraelings* and eat fish, so they starved while the Inuit flourished. Why Peary, who went native, did better than Nares, who upheld the traditions of the Royal Navy (you know, “rum, sodomy, and the lash”) in other words.

Not all is bad, as Diamond cites the cases of two island systems that did manage to keep their environments and political systems stable and healthy: Tikiopia and Japan. Yes, he cites a tiny Pacific island with a population of about a thousand in parallel with the mighty Empire.

In each case, the society adopted drastic measures to ensure stability. On Tikiopia, the population is controlled by various measures, from sending young men off on journeys where Safe Return Doubtful, down to putting hot stones on pregnant women’s bellies. As for Japan, Diamond cites the Tokugawa Shogunate’s policy of re-forestation as an example of intelligent, desirable environmental management.

In the modern era, Diamond begins by discussing the affair of Rwanda. Given his approach, it is easy but facile to follow the argument ad *Starship Troopers* and credit the source to population pressure. And he doesn’t regard it as the sole cause, albeit he credits it, and given the topic of the book it is justifiable to discuss that factor.

The next chapter is a real-world “compare and contrast”. Flying over Hispaniola, it is possible to see the boundary between Haiti and the Dominican Republic. Haiti is deforested, the Dominican Republic isn’t. Here, Diamond argues, it was a combination of cultural and political factors that led to this disparate development.

The compare-and-contrast extends to the next two chapters, where China and Australia are discussed, each with their various developmental and population dynamics. The Australians seem to have been overfond of farming Like The Poms Did, which style wasn’t quite exactly suited to the climate of Australia.

Finally, Diamond discusses in detail the application of all this to the rest of the world.

Several of Diamond’s attitudes can be called into question. He seems to have a remarkable overfondness for authoritarian leaders, from the *tai-i-seishogun* Tokugawa Ieyasu on down to *el Benefactor*, Rafael Molina Trujillo of the Dominican Republic, a man with a personality cult on a level with Stalin’s.

On a more theoretical concept, in one of the less-well conceived sections of the book, Diamond discusses the famous wager of Julian Simon and Paul Ehrlich over raw material prices, and states that in spite of Simon’s victory, Ehrlich was still right. (Ehrlich’s problems stem from his applying the population dynamics of insects, his field of study, to human populations. This was, after all, a man who predicted in the late sixties that India would be destroyed by famines by 1975, and hasn’t done

much better since.)

In general, Diamond can be seen to applying his expertise perhaps too generally. He doesn't go as far as the single-causists (e.g. Mark Kurlansky, who in *Salt: A World History* (2002, 2003) attributes all world history to salt); the variety of topics he discusses makes a single-cause explanation unfeasible. Yet he does tend to discount explanations outside of the causes he does discuss.

Scientists outside the lab often show a dismaying fondness for autocratic politics. The performances, or antics, of folks as respected as Einstein and Oppenheimer in their admiration for Stalin would make the apocalyptic predictions of tyrannical Scientists' Councils found in pulp SF — the autocracy of Professor Parham, Ph.D. — all the more plausible; the diktats and deeds of eugenicists from Margaret Sanger on down (see *War Against the Weak: Eugenics and America's Campaign to Create a Master Race* (2003) by Edwin Black for examples of how democratic liberal societies can strive to outdo Nazi dreams) argue further in support of this thesis.

HOW TO GO BATS

Review by Joseph T Major of
**THE BATMAN HANDBOOK:
The Ultimate Training Manual**
by Scott Beatty

(Quirk; 2005; ISBN 1-59474-023-2; \$15.95)

In the tradition of *The Forensic Files of Batman* (2004) [reviewed in *Alexiad* V. 3 #6] and *The Action Hero's Handbook* (2002) [reviewed in *Alexiad* V. 2 # 1] is this work, a combination of them. Imagine yourself sitting on the filthy pavement of Crime Alley, Gotham, crying over the bullet-riddled bodies of your parents. What will you do? This work explains what and how.

Like the Moensch book, this volume is based in fact; Beatty has researched how to do the fantastic things Batman does, and this explains how to do them. Should you have to fight a room full of thugs, for example, this proffers some useful advice:

Step 6: Get ready for multiple attackers. Real fights aren't choreographed like the ones you see in action movies. Thugs don't wait their turns as you spar with them one at a time . . .

— *The Batman Handbook*, Page 113

Other useful fighting tips range from the likely (how to disarm a gunman at close range) to the unlikely (how to keep from getting poisoned by Poison Ivy's poisonous kisses) to the odd (how to keep from getting frozen by Mr. Freeze, which can also be useful in mundane places like out in the woods in winter). Also the way to defeat Catwoman's whip, which does not touch on how to keep her out of his Bat . . . well never mind.

Besides fighting, other handy tips include basic criminology, such as how to avoid contaminating a crime scene. The Boulder, Colorado police department should have had

something like this before they went to the Ramsey house to see about the murder of Jon-Bénet. The section on interrogation ends with a question of understanding the Riddler's riddles. (With Zodiac and BTK to mind, the Riddler's habit of sending out advance notices of his crimes now seems less improbable.)

In addition, this book contains various biographical bits, including such items as the question of sidekicks, selecting, training, and dealing with them, with particular attention to the history of the three boys who were (are) Robin: Dick Grayson (now Nighthawk), Jason Todd (now deceased), and Tim Drake (now Robin). Or, tips on how to maintain a secret identity.

With a light hearted delivery (including illustrations of all our old friends in action) of serious material, this book is interesting and readable. (One demurrer; in the list of essential background books, I'd prefer Sir Sydney Smith's *Mostly Murder* to Milton Helpert's *Where Death Delights*.)

AIR CONDITIONING

Trip Report by Joseph T Major
Xanadu 8/DeepSouthCon 43
April 8-10, 2005

I had had some auspicious premonitions (**Right!!!**) when a co-worker told me that he had been in a three-hour traffic jam going through Nashville. Also, the bridge on the interstate highway I-65 south of Louisville is under repair, and down to two lanes (sometimes one). Nevertheless, I shut down on Thursday afternoon, did the final laundry, and we went to bed.

Friday, April 8, 2005
Louisville — Bowling Green — Nashville

On Friday morning we went to Dooley's Bagels for breakfast, then took off south to Bowling Green. In spite of those highway concerns, the trip was easy, we got to the Bowling Green County Attorney's office, then had lunch with my cousin Pat Chism, not particularly unmoved by the cancellation of *JAG* (Pat is a JAG Naval Reservist, with a less interesting life than Harm, much less Mac).

His wife could have met us but she couldn't make it; reluctantly, we went on south towards Nashville. There was some road building along the way and we failed to make one turnoff, but we agreed to see the relative later.

I should have asked for an even-numbered room. As it was, I demurred upon learning that a room refrigerator would be \$10 a day, perhaps I shouldn't have. Or was it being behind guest **Connie Willis** as we checked in?

Got our luggage up to the room, then went down to check out the situation. **Mike Resnick** was out and about, while **Tom & Anita Feller** were doing their work. **Khen Moore** was lazing around watching **Dan Caldwell** doing what he had done. **Roger & Pat Sims** reported that their house hadn't been blown away by last year's hurricanes, so perhaps there's hope.

This time, it seems, there was a computer

error and our memberships just hadn't got in. The advance of technology makes it possible to make mistakes quicker and more thoroughly than ever before. **Debbi Hussey**, professional restaurant-finder, got us checked in.

Thanks to Ops for letting me keep my medicine and freezer package in their fridge, by the way.

While we talked to Mike, he saw **Sue Francis** and told her that they had had a good rest, thank you, and what would they do for RiverCon next year? (Mike is, shall we say, less than entranced with the current convention in Louisville.) Sue and, later on, **Steve (Francis)** demurred.

There were a few minutes to kill and we went to Borders' on West End, where I got the Hugo-nominated movie *The Incredibles*. We trickled back and stopped in to see **Hank Reinhardt** commit mayhem on innocent paper towel tubes; he was demonstrating sword procedure, with **Guy Lillian** among the enthusiastic spectators. Outside was **Richard Dengrove**, who makes a policy of coming to DSC no matter where it is.

Opening Ceremonies went off almost on time. Dan introduced the guests, which beside Mike and Connie included "Uncle Timmy" Bolgeo, and encouraged everyone to have a good time at the parties.

We spent a little time at the **Cincinnati Fantasy Group** party, which as it happened was down the hall. There was also the **TriNocCon** party (DSC 2006). The parties were very orderly — with the usual mess of conversation and a few drinks, but nothing we couldn't handle.

And so to bed.

Saturday, April 9, 2005
Nashville

Next time at that hotel, if there is a next time, as I mentioned, I'll ask for an even-numbered room. The sunlight woke us up at seven — we were on the east side of the building.

The hotel breakfast room was nice. While they didn't have much in the way of things that required cooking, you could have toast (white or whole wheat), English muffins, or bagels. They had fruit; apples, bananas, various juices. There was also dry cereal, oatmeal, and cinnamon rolls. Milk, of course, to go with the cereal but there was nothing keeping me from drinking it by itself. And coffee and tea.

The room was filling up by the time we got there — the traditional DSC hearts tournament continued in the atrium, by the way — and so when Richard Dengrove came down he joined us, and we had some very nice conversations.

At noon, Amy Sturgis spoke on the topic of "**Rowling and Tolkien**", avoiding the so common attitudes that if one is good the other must not be, that neither is any good but **<insert obscure author>** is great, and so on.

Tim Lane and **Elizabeth Garrott** got in for the day and managed to see a few things. We accumulated a substantial stack of books at the Larry Smith table (his wife was running it),

\$216 worth. They paid off their share before they left.

I saw the beginning and ending of the presentation by **Toni Weisskopf [Reinhardt]** on the topic of **What's Coming Next from Baen?** She had seemed to think that what I had written and submitted to them back in September (as Evelyn Leeper had suggested) would at least have interesting details. Stay tuned.

(In the middle I stepped out to meet my cousin Joe W. Giles, former president of the Association of Tennessee Music Directors. Joe's first job was at a Methodist church, which is interesting since he is an Episcopalian, and doubly so because the minister was his and my cousin John B. Sessoms.)

I wasn't feeling all out so I went back to our room to rest up before our event, and then went to meet Guy & Rosy at the end of their fundraiser. The **Faneds Dinner** was splendid. Unfortunately Roger and Pat Sims had a more pressing engagement. You guys missed a really good place. We gave Guy & Rosy Lillian and Richard Dengrove a ride down to Nashville; Tom & Anita Feller and Debbi Hussey had gone ahead, and much to our surprise, we were joined by Naomi Fisher, her brother, and her and Pat's new daughter Grace. If it weren't for a different meeting in another town for another outfit, Pat Molloy would also have been there.

We discussed the dearth of new faneds, what worthwhile items were out there, and other such relevant topics. One of which was how **GOOD** the place was. Kudos and happy awards to Debbi for recommending the place.

Afterwards, after dropping our passengers off at the hotel, we went to Davis-Kidd. Since Larry Smith didn't have the two Hugo nominee novels, *Jonathan Strange & Mr Norrell* and *Iron Council*, I got them there.

We looked in on the parties, but we had had our party for the night.

And so to bed.

Sunday, April 10, 2005 Nashville — Hopkinsville

Again, up early thanks to the inadequate curtains. Breakfast in the breakfast room with Richard, and then out and about to see who and what there was to be seen.

The winner of the 2007 DeepSouthCon bidding is Bob Embler's OutsideCon, September 7-9, 2007, in Clarksville, Tennessee. Fortunately for the campingly challenged, there is a hotel not far from the camping grounds.

The **Fanzine Panel** had a certain proportion between the panelists and the attendees. Admittedly, one was a ringer, namely Lisa. And Richard Dengrove was there too.

Tim Bolgeo kept on insisting that email distribution was the only way to go and sure recipients wouldn't mind in the slightest paying the printing bills. Guy kept on emphasizing the desirable physical feeling of an actual mailed and printed zine. I don't like to point this out, but reading fanzines on a PDR is reading small text with no formatting.

They did put us up against the panel with

Connie Willis and Mike Resnick. Grrrr.

Then there came **Closing Ceremonies**. Dan explained that what with half his staff leaving and a certain exhaustion, the next Xanadu, date to be announced, would more likely be a relaxacon. And with that the party was over.

After leaving we went to see my cousin Vaden the lawyer, only getting lost twice. I should have gone down West End, not Broadway. For history buffs, Vaden's father was captured in the Battle of the Bulge, having a better time than Kurt Vonnegut.

The next cousin we wanted to see was unwell, so we headed off north to see cousin Bennett and his wife Edwine, both of whom are ailing. Most people their age are dead, and they are living at home, so there's that. We recalled a few good old times, then were off to Mayfield to see Lisa's aunt and uncle.

Or maybe not. As we got close to Clarksville, I noticed that the Check Engine light was on. I tried to get in touch with my younger brother (he teaches at Austin Peay State University, which is where I got my computer science degree) but he was out; instead we drove very carefully to Hopkinsville, ate dinner there and then called Bennett's sister Mae and told her about her brother's state and ours. She very kindly offered us hospitality.

Told Mae about Bennett and all the other folks in Nashville until we began yawning.

And so to bed.

Monday, April 11, 2005 Hopkinsville — Clarksville — Hopkinsville

We took the car out to the dealer's in the morning. It turned out that the Check Engine light was a minor thing, but the air conditioner needed a part they didn't have. So we had to spend an extra night there, and couldn't get to Mayfield to see Lisa's aunt and uncle.

We went to the local flea market and I found a DVD of *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind* for a very reasonable price. That's two Long Form Hugo Nominees.

The mother of some friends from my childhood had died, and Mae was going to the visitation. Lisa and I did so a little later, after our shopping trip. Remembering a kid who sat in the shed in back of your house bellowing out a song about Marilyn Monroe and Brigitte Bardot, and seeing a grave, white-haired, successful adult who is the same kid plus forty years is, well, science-fictional. They remembered me too, and were as surprised to see me as vice versa, also grateful.

I called my older brother, who also remembers Breck and Mike, and he informed me that he was on the way to eat dinner with our younger brother and his wife, if we were nearby we could make it. We were and we did.

Got home very late, and told Mae about all the wonderful things that had eventuated.

And so to bed.

Tuesday, April 12, 2005 Hopkinsville — Louisville

Up late again. We had a most pleasant

breakfast with Mae, then loaded up our car and left with many thanks on both sides for the dealer's. But we had to wait an hour for the part to come in. It came in, with the qualification that it would take two hours to install. At least it's all on warranty.

We got in a good bit of reading before the hose was installed, but all too late the car was in our hands again, and we went home, with a dinner stop at Bunbaker's in Elizabethtown, through intermittent rain, to find six lonely felines emitting **Piteous Mews™** of greeting.

Wednesday, April 13, 2005

I had to recover from my travels.

TRIPLE CROWN by Lisa

Once again there will be no Triple Crown winner. I can't say that I'm really sorry this time, as the alternative would have been for Afleet Alex to suffer what probably would have been a fatal fall. And at least Afleet Alex had been in the Derby. He wasn't some fresh horse turning up just in time to spoil a Triple Crown bid. It should also be noted that Afleet Alex doubles as a cancer fund spokesperson. I can't begrudge him his win after the terrific feat he managed. It evoked memories of Alysheba and his similar feat eighteen years ago. I never thought I would see such a feat again but I have. I like such feats much better than I like the alternative.

CANDY BAR REVIEW

Nestle Crunch With Peanut Butter
Review by Johnny Carruthers

Hershey isn't the only company producing limited edition candy bars. Nestle entered that arena a few months ago with the Crunch With Peanut Butter Bar.

Structurally, the bar uses the same mold as the Crunch With Caramel Bar. The base of the bar is the Nestle Crunch bar – milk chocolate with crisped rice. A layer of peanut butter rests on top of the Crunch bar base, enclosed with a dome of plain milk chocolate (no crisped rice here).

Overall, the taste of the bar is rather like a Reese's Peanut Butter Cup that has had crisped rice added to it. (That's a variation that Hershey hasn't tried yet, but I am certain they will give enough time.) Unfortunately, there isn't enough peanut butter in this bar. The flavors of the chocolate and the crisped rice overwhelm the flavor of the peanut butter. And it is a creamy peanut butter, so there is no additional texture to differentiate it from the other ingredients.

The bar might have been better if there had been more of the peanut butter filling, so that the peanut butter flavor would be more distinct. Another way it could have been improved would be if the peanut butter was crunchier, such as the inside of a Butterfinger bar. This would have given the bar an additional crunch.

The Crunch With Peanut Butter Bar wasn't bad. It just didn't have something that would make it stand out. If Nestle decides to bring it

out for another run, I hope they do a little tweaking to make it stand out.

CANDY BAR REVIEW

Butterfinger Crisp

Review by Johnny Carruthers

I first saw the Butterfinger Crisp bar on the shelves sometime last year. I've tried a number of them over the past few months, and it does make an interesting addition to Nestle's product line.

The center of the bar is several wafers (vanilla flavored, I'm guessing) layered with the same peanut butter filling that comprises the center of the Butterfinger bar. This is covered in milk chocolate, and sprinkled on top is what appears to be more Butterfinger candy bits.

The original Butterfinger bar has a hard crunch when you bite into it. The Butterfinger Crisp bar, on the other hand, has a more delicate crunch to it. The wafers seem to offset the crunch, giving it a more muted sound (at least to my ears).

The wafers also give the bar a slightly different flavor. As I said, they seem to be vanilla flavored, because that is the flavor that hits my tongue when I first bite into the bar. The peanut butter flavor isn't as distinct as it is in the original Butterfinger bar during the initial bite. The peanut butter flavor begins to assert itself after a few seconds, and becomes more dominant as I chew. Meanwhile, the chocolate takes a more supporting role, providing a backdrop against which the flavors of the peanut butter and wafers display themselves.

The Butterfinger Crisp bar is now a regular part of the Nestle candy bar product line. If you want to try it, you don't have to rush out right away in the fear that its presence on the shelves is only temporary. You just have to find a store that carries it. Which, from what I have seen, is most of the stores that usually carry Nestle candy bars.

THE TWILIGHT OF ATHEISM: The Rise and Fall of Disbelief in the Modern World

by Alister McGrath

(Doubleday; 2004;

ISBN 0-385-50061-0; \$23.95)

A book review by E. B. Frohvet

The basic premise of this book is that atheism is a failed experiment of the 19th Century.

Professor McGrath argues, with some justice, that a large part of the original motivation behind atheism was political rather than theological, e.g., Karl Marx. Those who resented an arbitrary, top-down political system in which they were deprived of any role, quickly transferred that hostility to the institutional churches that were part and parcel and defender of that status quo. In a secondary sense, ivory-tower intellectuals who embraced atheism did so from a naïve belief in the perfectability of humanity through reason. Remove the arbitrary, dogmatic morality imposed by religion, and the human race would invent better systems. (See,

e.g., Wells, *In the Days of the Comet*.) In short, no one had actually tried an atheist system. Now we know better. The Soviet Union failed because it was so detached from the realities of human needs and ambitions. Arguably, at least one factor in which it avoided reality was depriving citizens of the religious outlets many desired.

So far, so good.

However, McGrath — a self styled failed atheist who has returned to Christianity — having concluded atheism is a failure, is conveniently satisfied to ignore any reality that conflicts with his idea. The sexual abuse scandal of the last decade is not mentioned at all: it's irrelevant to his premise. The worldwide network of Islamic terrorism, or any of a dozen other examples of barbarism driven by religious fanaticism, are not the author's concern. The professor cites approvingly, as proof of the decline of atheism, the rapid growth of Pentecostal and charismatic churches and cults, with their emphasis on emotion, spontaneity, "speaking in tongues". That these churches are simplistic, theologically vacant, and patronized mainly by the poor and ignorant who are easily manipulated, does not trouble McGrath. Anything, it seems, is better than atheism.

The worst fault of this book is that it defines atheism as a movement — i.e. Communism — determined to impose itself, rather than a personal decision. There's a connection, surely, but it's not the lockstep identity that McGrath apparently sees.

The author does make the interesting point that the Protestant Reformation indirectly encouraged atheism, by what he calls the Disconnection of the Sacred. Influential Protestant reformers, as Zwingli and Calvin, preferred plain whitewashed churches so as not to distract from the preaching; but, "The dull, joyless and unattractive churches of Protestantism conveyed the subliminal message that the God who was to be found in them shared those disagreeable characteristics." There's something to that.

THE MEANING OF EVERYTHING: The Story of the Oxford English Dictionary

by Simon Winchester

(Oxford University Press, 2003,

260 pages/indexed, \$25.00,

ISBN 0198607024)

Reviewed by Jim Sullivan

The British Philological Society decided in the mid-1800s that they wanted to produce a new English dictionary. After a series of false starts, the program got underway.

"It was 12 May 1860," writes the author, "— and though most of those involved thought their work would come to fruition within the following decade, it was in fact to be 68 years and three weeks from that starting date before the great work finally saw the light of day. The Rules were in place, the team was assembled, and now, that late spring day, the clock had finally started ticking."

Samuel Johnson, the good English doctor,

had produced a dictionary over a hundred years earlier in 1755. But that contained a mere 43,500 described words. Moreover, its definitions were sometimes more complicated than words being described. And Noah Webster had produced his dictionary in America in 1828 with 70,000 words. Therefore, the Society decided that a newer, more comprehensive dictionary was required. And so in 1860 work was begun in England.

Over a few years, with different editors, part-timers mainly, and lots of difficulties, the book's progress slowed almost to a stop. Its complications pointed to the need for a full-time editor. That's when James Murray, an informally educated wordsmith, holding no earned university degree, was discovered and appointed editor. He resumed work on the dictionary and in an organized manner, too. Several sub-editors and numerous volunteer helpers from all over the English-speaking world, including from America, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand, were added.

Mostly, he wanted quotations, from these unpaid helpers, in which various words of the dictionary were used. Many of these people were eccentrics. A case in point: the mentally deranged, convicted murderer who was serving a life sentence in prison. And he became one of the best contributors to the dictionary. Most of these far-flung volunteers sent in thousands of quotations.

And so, work moved forward, if at a glacial pace. Moreover, the decade or so planned for the dictionary's completion ended and more time passed. The Philological Society eventually approached several prominent publishers to get quotes for printing and publication of the dictionary.

Now publishers of consequence were not interested in what was rapidly becoming the longest running book project ever undertaken in such an obscure field. Even Oxford Press connected to the famous University in England, though accustomed to publishing academic books with minimal sales and little or no profit, turned the project down.

At long last, however, a wealthy Englishman who liked the idea of the new dictionary and who was well connected with Oxford prevailed upon its Delegates, the board that ran Oxford Press, to take on the dictionary project. After much wrangling, a contract was signed, but, of course, the new manuscript didn't come to the printers as scheduled. As a consequence, Murray, its editor, was pressured to produce the work with less than his usual thoroughness. He resisted, though he took a verbal battering from those Oxford people. And he did not cut a word from the book.

And so, months, years, and decades passed. Eventually, because of delays, Oxford Press began publishing the dictionary piecemeal and selling it by subscription. The first part of the letter 'a' was brought out and sent to subscribers. The purchaser would get each portion as it was printed till the dictionary was complete. But even these small sections came out only once a year, if that often.

In 1928, a celebration, described within the

book, was held for the publishing of the final sections of the dictionary. By this time, the original name, "A New English Dictionary on Historical Principles," had been changed to the "Oxford English Dictionary," or OED as we know it today. Oxford Press had put up most of the money and had taken the biggest risks, so they deserved the namesake. The dictionary's many parts, containing 15,900 pages, 414,826 words, and 1,824,306 illustrative quotes (out of the over 5,000,000 quotes submitted by volunteers), were hardbound into thirteen volumes. But by its very nature, it was never finished. Soon, supplemental books encompassing new words that had recently entered the English language were being published. In the 1980s, a completely new edition of the dictionary was brought out. It was comprised of twenty volumes. And not long afterward, supplemental books for it, were being printed, too.

The first set was estimated to have cost 375,000 English pounds. That seemed reasonable to the parties involved. After all, it was thought to have been one of the finest, most monumental, and truly important efforts for any language in history.

An even more current OED is being compiled as you read this review. It has so many words that its publisher, Oxford University Press, is seriously thinking of not publishing it in book form, which would require at least forty volumes, but of bringing it out in digital form only, for use on the internet.

Simon Winchester has previously written *Krakatoa* among other tomes. He divides his time between the U.S and Scotland.

Recommended for English speakers everywhere.

FANZINES

Beyond Bree April 2005, May 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.

Catchpenny Gazette #7 Spring 2005, #8 Summer 2005

David Burton, 5227 Emma Drive, Indianapolis, IN 46236-2742 USA

catchpenny@mw.net

<http://www.efanzines.com>

eI #19 April 2005

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

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<http://www.efanzines.com>

FOSFAX #211

FOSFA, Post Office Box 37281, Louisville, KY 40233-7281 USA

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The Knarley Knews #111 April 2005

Henry & Letha Welch, 1525 16th Avenue, Grafton, WI 53024-2017 USA

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<http://www.msoe.edu/~welch/tkk.html>

Lofgeornost #79 May 2005

Fred Lerner, 81 Worcester Avenue, White River Junction, VT 05001- USA

fred.lerner@dartmouth.edu

MT Void V. 23 #41 April 8, 2005 — V. 23 #48 May 27, 2005

Mark and Evelyn Leeper, 80 Lakeridge Drive, Matawan, NJ 07747-3839 USA

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<http://www.geocities.com/evelynleeper>

The New Port News #221 May 2005

Cuyler "Ned" Brooks, 4817 Dean Lane, Lilburn, GA 30047-4720 USA

nedbrooks@sprynet.com

Nice Distinctions #9 March 2005

Arthur D. Hlavaty, 206 Valentine Street, Yonkers, NY 10704-1814 USA

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<http://www.efanzines.com>

Opuntia # 56.3 April 2005, #57 May 2005

Dale Speirs, Box 6830, Calgary, Alberta T2P 2E7 CANADA

Plokta V. 9 #2 November 2004, V. 10 #1 March 2005

The Cabal, various places (but mainly Alison Scott, 24 St. Mary Road, Walthamstow, London, E17 9RG UK)

Hugo Nominee

Or to be precise, *SkypeCaptain and the Plokta of Tomorrow* and *Never Mind the Bollocks, Here's the New Plokta*. LPs? Heck, I remember 78s!

Spiritus Mundi #207 April-May 2005

Guy H. Lillian III, 8700 Millicent Way #1501, Shreveport, LA 71115-2264 USA

ghliii@yahoo.com

Guy's apazine for SFPA, with his report on Xanadu.

Vanamonde # 578-587

John Hertz, 236 S. Coronado Street, No. 409, Los Angeles, CA 90057-1456 USA

Visions of Paradise #102

Robert Michael Sabella, 24 Cedar Manor Court, Budd Lake, NJ 07828-1023 USA

rsabella@optonline.net

<http://visionsofparadise.blogspot.com/>

The Zine Dump #8

Guy H. Lillian III, 8700 Millicent Way #1501, Shreveport, LA 71115-2264 USA

ghliii@yahoo.com

<http://www.challzine.net>

REAL OR NOT

by Rodney Leighton

Joe wondered what I considered a for real fanzine. As it happened, the day before the



latest issue of *Alexiad* appeared I received a package which had a customs sticker which declared that it contained twenty fanzines. Surely

not, I thought, it ain't very thick. But my friend can count.

The package contained *Banana Wings* #20; *Trap Door* #23, eight issues of *The Drink Tank*, and twelve issues of *Vegas Fandom Weekly*. *Challenger* #12 was larger than the entire package. Which doesn't have much relevance but it interested me.

I read everything I wanted to in these fanzines within two days.

Banana Wings is a good solid paper fanzine. I couldn't find any indication that any portion of it is available on the Internet. But I also have never seen any indication of how one gets dumped off their mailing list. In any event, I would have personally wished for good old North American sized paper rather than that legal-sized stuff Brits prefer but this is a good solid publication which I sat back in my chair, puffed on my pipe, and enjoyed reading, mostly. There were a few articles and sections which did not interest me but I would guess I read thirty of the thirty-five pages with interest.

Trap Door is a good solid fanzine which is apparently partially available via ether or is soon to be. It is a nice size to hold while lounging in the chair and smoking a pipe. It contains much good reading. I had already read the Silverberg piece since it was in the FAPA mailing I got; it was interesting the first time. There is an article on visiting a nuclear reactor which I skipped due to lack of interest. Everything else was good. My gracious, that Carol Carr is a wonderful writer! It was a tad weird reading the Harry Warner loc. I might do a *The Knarley Knews* column on this one.

Conversely, while I appreciated my friend printing them off the net and sending them to me . . . well, I believe she printed them to read herself . . . I did not find much of interest in either of the ezines. This is probably more a reflection of interests than of content; although, obviously, content is what makes a fanzine of interest. In *The Drink Tank*, publisher Chris Garcia runs some very short stories, about a paragraph, which are cute. Later issues include some locs; locs are usually of interest. Not much else in these eight issues for me. Issue one proclaims: "I'm a big fan of SteamPunk, Jazz, El Santo, Calculators, and Frank Wu." Okay, good for you. He claims to have been around fandom a lot but apparently had not heard of Victor Gonzalez until recently and either he or Lloyd Penney doesn't know how to spell Bill Kunkel's name. Well, I've seen Lloyd misspell it elsewhere. Other than those nits . . . hey, he does a tribute to *Mimosa* complete with photo of Nikki & Rich.

The twelve issues of *Vegas Fandom Weekly* ranged from a single sheet to eight pages. I would imagine fans in Vegas and fans who wish they were really like it. I can't imagine what

value it would have for anyone outside Vegas. Typical of any Katz fanzine I have seen it has various intriguing layouts and a number of amusing comments. Of late, Katz zines include photos. This one is no exception. This zine is actually what I picture as being the ideal fanzine to be online: track it down, call it up, look over the photos, read an occasional bit, and then go find a for real fanzine to enjoy. I did enjoy seeing the pictures of Bill Kunkel . . . that's how it is spelled, Lloyd, trust me! . . . and some other folks; Aileen Forman has not bad legs. There were a few written items of interest; an essay on apas which ran most of a page and a biography of Joyce Worley Katz which runs an entire page in which she is proclaimed one of the three greatest female fans of all time. Don't jump on me Robert; I ain't arguing. It did seem a tad amusing to me to see someone proclaim his wife as such. Arnie also provides a good essay on exploring fandom on the internet.

Given Arnie's habits, I would suspect this fanzine is already history. If I had Internet access, it is something I would check out once a week, read some bits, check the photos, and go look for something else.

It took me about the same amount of time to go over the eighteen issues of the two ezines as it did to read Claire Brialey's essay on fan writing, fan awards, and fanzines.

Does any of this mean anything? Probably not. Are these two fanzines representative of what is available on line? Not necessarily; I know that, for instance, *Gegenschein* is on there and that is a for real fanzine when it is on paper. I have no interest in seeing any other issues of either of these ezines. Which is, I suspect, a matter of personal interest. I know there are fanzines out there that I would be happy to read if someone should print them off and ship them to me. Including some other Katz zines. Someone told me there are over 100 sf fanzines on the Internet. Sounds absurd to me. But who knows?

Banana Wings

Claire Brialey and Mark Plummer, 59 Shirley Road, Croydon, Surrey, CR0 7ES, UK
banana@fishlifter.demon.co.uk

Trap Door

Robert Lichtman, Post Office Box 30, Glen Ellen, CA 95442-0030 USA
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<http://www.efanzines.com/TrapDoor/index.htm>

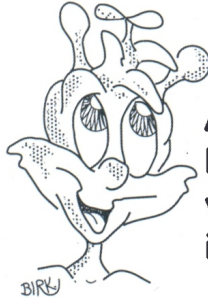
The Drink Tank

Christopher J. Garcia, 1401 N. Shoreline Boulevard, Mountain View, CA 94043-1311 USA
garcia@computerhistory.org
<http://www.efanzines.com/DrinkTank/index.htm>

Vegas Fandom Weekly

Arnie Katz, PMB 152, 330 S. Decatur Boulevard, Las Vegas, NV 89107-2804 USA
crossfire4@cox.net
<http://www.efanzines.com/VFW/index.htm>

HANDICAPPING THE HUGOS



Ah . . .
It's Hugo
voting time
in Fandom!

The final ballot for this year's Hugo Awards was announced right around Easter. Even though I saw it online a day or so after it was announced, I think I really started paying attention when I received my ballot in the mail last week. Sometimes, it's easier to study the ballot when you aren't staring at a computer screen.

Last year, after looking over the ballot, I posted my initial choices for the 2004 Hugos. After last year's Hugos were announced, I should have posted a comparison of my choices to the actual winners. It would probably be good for at least a laugh or two, since my record at picking the Hugo winners is far from stellar. Sometimes, I almost think that announcing my choices for the Hugos is the kiss of death for my picks.

Well, even if my choices are the eventual winners, that isn't going to stop me. So, without further ado, here are my choices.

2005 HUGO AWARDS:

BEST NOVEL: Given that this year's Worldcon will be held in Glasgow, I suppose it isn't too surprising that British novels make up most of this category. I may have to go with the only one that I can even remember seeing in the bookstores.

*** *Jonathan Strange & Mr Norrell* by Susanna Clarke

BEST NOVELLA: I will probably go with the only one of the nominees that I have read. It doesn't hurt that I have thoroughly enjoyed previous stories featuring that featured the same lead character.

*** *"Elector"* by Charles Stross

BEST NOVELETTE: I'll have to go with the only nominee that really grabbed my imagination by the throat when I read it.

*** *"The Voluntary State"* by Christopher Rowe

BEST SHORT STORY: I'm going with the Resnick story, partially because of its allusion to Edgar Rice Burroughs's Barsoom stories, and partially because I thought it was a good story. Oops, make that one of the Resnick stories. I forgot he has two stories nominated in this category this year.

*** *"A Princess Of Earth"* by Mike Resnick.

BEST RELATED BOOK:

*** No choice — at least not yet

BEST DRAMATIC PRESENTATION, LONG FORM: I like most of the nominees in this category — I'll have to double-check, but I think I nominated four of the five. If I have to choose just one, though, I think I'll go with the most incredible one of the nominees. (Pun intended.)

*** *The Incredibles*

BEST DRAMATIC PRESENTATION, SHORT FORM: No contest here. I have been a fan of *Angel* since the first announcement that the series would be spun off from *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*. One thing I loved about both series is how Joss Whedon would throw something at the viewers that would be even less expected than the Spanish Inquisition in a Monty Python sketch. Turning the lead character into a muppet has to rank among the biggest gigglefests Whedon has ever given the fans.

And yes, two episodes of *Angel* were nominated this year. I will be putting "Not Fade Away," the series finale, as my second choice, and I won't be disappointed if it wins.

*** *"Smile Time"* — *Angel*

BEST PROFESSIONAL EDITOR: I really hope that this is the year that Dr. Schmidt's losing streak finally ends. I'm also hoping that the Hugo voters won't automatically vote for Gardner Dozois just because this is the last year he will be eligible.

*** *Stanley Schmidt*

BEST PROFESSIONAL ARTIST: Sadly, one of the nominees died earlier this year. I had a chance to meet Mr. Freas a couple of times. Wonderful artist, very nice gentleman, and I suspect he will be the sentimental favorite this year.

*** *Frank Kelly Freas*

BEST SEMIPROZINE: The last time someone other than *Locus* won in this category was 10 years ago — the last time Glasgow hosted the Worldcon. It will be interesting to see if history will repeat itself.

*** *Interzone*

BEST FAN WRITER: This category has gone beyond getting itself into a rut. After seeing the same person win this category for the last 16 years, that rut is well on its way to digging a grave for the category. I want to see someone else win this year. At the moment, I'm still making up my mind as to which of two nominees I want to see win it more.

*** **Steven H Silver or Cheryl Morgan**

BEST FANZINE: Flip of the coin here, because there are two nominees that I particularly like.

*** **Challenger**

BEST FAN ARTIST: As is usually the case with this category, I like most of the nominees. I also know several of them, which serves to make it even harder to choose just one.

*** **Teddy Harvia**

BEST WEBSITE: Every Worldcon has the option to create a Hugo in one additional category. Interaction has decided to use that option, and this is the additional category. A Best Website Hugo has been awarded once before, at ConJose in 2002. It proved to be one of the more popular categories that year, which is one of the reasons Interaction has chosen to award it again. (Part of me suspects that this may be the prelude to making it a permanent Hugo category.)

None of the nominated websites are ones that I visit on a regular basis. I'll have to go with the site that I've probably visited the most.

*** **SciFiction**
(<http://www.scifi.com/scifiction>)

JOHN W. CAMPBELL AWARD FOR BEST NEW WRITER: This isn't a Hugo, although it uses the same nominating and final ballots as the Hugos. Unfortunately for me, I'm not familiar with any of the nominees — not an unusual occurrence for me, I'm afraid.

*** No choice — at least not yet
— Johnny Carruthers

BEST NOVEL:

4. ***Iron Council*** by China Miéville
Detailed but unremittingly ugly world and complex but pointless plot.
3. ***The Alchemist*** by Iain M. Banks
He tried, creating a great coherent universe with a likeable protagonist, but somehow nothing was quite clear as to what the devil was going on.
2. ***Jonathan Strange & Mr Norrell*** by Susanna Clarke
A valiant try at a Dickensian novel of fantasy, but has Dickens's flaws of plotting without his flair for characters, and thoughtless background to boot
1. ***Iron Sunrise*** by Charles Stross
The people are doing something, and you know what they're doing, the universe is

odd, different, but coherent, and *you know what's going on.*

In other recommendations:

Best Fan Writer

- 5) No Award
- 4) Cheryl Morgan
- 3) Claire Brialey
- 2) Bob Devney
- 1) Steven H. Silver

Best Fan Artist

- 5) No Award
- 4) Frank Wu
- 3) Steve Stiles
- 2) Sue Mason
- 1) Brad W. Foster

Best Fanzine

- 5) No Award
- 4) *Emerald City*
- 3) *Banana Wings*
- 2) *Plokta*
- 1) *Challenger*

(Yes, I know I left one off each list. I have my reasons.)

— Joseph T Major

AWARDS

2005 Nebula Awards

- Best Novel: *Paladin of Souls* by Lois McMaster Bujold
- Best Novella: "The Green Leopard Plague" by Walter Jon Williams
- Best Novelette: "Basement Magic" by Ellen Klages
- Best Short Story: "Coming to Terms" by Eileen Gunn
- Best Screenplay: *The Lord of the Rings: The Return of the King*

A double-header for Bujold, and Peter Jackson has another one for his trophy shelf.

2005 Sidewise Award Nominees

- Short Form**
- "The Ashbazu Effect," by John McDaid
- "Five Guys Named Moe," by Sean Klein
- "The Gladiator's War: A Dialogue," by Lois Tilton
- "The Heloise Archive," by L. Timmel Duchamp
- Ministry of Space*, by Warren Ellis
- "Red Hands, Black Hands," by Chris Roberson

Long Form

The Plot Against America, by Philip Roth

The awards themselves will be presented at InterAction in Glasgow. (*Ministry of Space* is a graphic novel, which is why it is in Short Form.) Our thanks to Steve Silver, who sent out notice.

(Don't worry, they could always vote "No Award" in the Long Form!)

<http://www.uchronia.net/sidewise>

CON NEWS

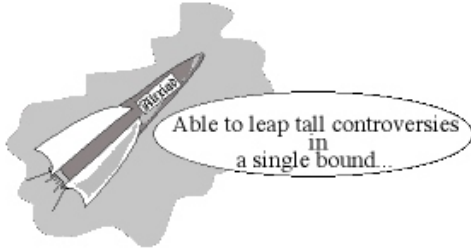
Ditto 18 in Milwaukee, WI
October 14-16, 2005



October 2005

- 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 (877) 461-8547
- Room Rates:** Mention Ditto for Convention Rates of \$84.96 single or \$94.96 double. Featuring a spacious inner atrium swimming pool, lounge, and game area.
- Memberships:** \$35
- Make Checks to:** Milwaukee Science Fiction Conventions, Inc. (MSFCI)
- For more information contact:**
Henry Welch
1525 16th Avenue
Grafton, WI 53024-2017 USA
welch@msoe.edu

Letters, we get letters



From: **John Hertz** March 31, 2005
236 S. Coronado Street, No. 409, Los Angeles, CA 90057-1456 USA

Every medium has its own merit. People will see what writing does. E-mail is already revealing this — the hard way, but “all contributions gratefully received.”

Thanks for the kind words in *Alexiad* V. 4 #1.

May 23, 2005

Thanks for *Alexiad* 4/2.

Another book Don Quixote's friends save is *Tirant lo Blanc*, of which an English translation was published in 1984 — and I mustn't fail to commend Nabokov's posthumous lectures on *Don Quixote*.

From: **John Thiel** April 21, 2005
30 N. 19th Street, Lafayette, IN 47904-2950 USA
thiel@dwci.com

The mundane individual in Alexis Gilliland's cartoon on Page 15 of the latest issue has his wires a bit crossed — computers are the devil to *operate*, not the Devil himself.

There's so much about Greeks in this issue that it puts me in mind of the Trojan Horse. That was a good thing to have happened, contrary to writings about it. It was beneficial to Troy and looked good in their public square. Their rather secular existence was made more expansive and world-conscious, too. It was a cultural confusion leading to progress. In that way, it resembled the computer.

You wouldn't, by chance, have recently got a Trojan horse virus on your computer?

—JTM

From: **Taral Wayne** April 25, 2005
254 Dunn Avenue Apt. 2111, Toronto, ON M6K 1S6 CANADA
taralwayne@3web.net

Overall I don't meddle in fan politics any more. It almost never does any good, creates ill-will, and uses up time that could be used much more productively. (Like by watching re-runs of *The Simpsons*.) But Torcon being so close to

home, and having briefly raised such hopes, seems to be an exception. I keep talking about it, and asking people what happened. Everytime I hear more, I think I understand a little more. Probably it's an illusion. Be that as it may, recent scuttlebutt had Torcon absconding with pass-along funds, accused various people of hiding the books from scrutiny, and suggested a broad popular sentiment that no Canadian, or at least Torontonionian bid should ever be allowed to succeed again. So I started asking questions again.

Evidently the books were in the keeping of the chairman until rather recently when they were placed in the hands of the treasurer once again. Larry Hancock had left the concom shortly after Torcon, and the books given to the chairman Peter Jarvis. Over the next 18 months or so it developed that Peter left much to be desired as fall-back treasurer, and many things that should have been done hadn't. Now that Larry has the books again, he says the wrap up should be finished soon, and refunds to volunteers in the mail this summer. As for the pass-along funds, they've been already passed along . . .

This is good to hear.

It still leaves a lot of troublesome backbiting. Depending on who I talked to, it was X, Y, & Z who messed everything up, or it was A, B, and C. I frankly found it impossible to lay responsibility on some individuals, knowing them as I did. But I wasn't eager to asume others (who I didn't care for personally) were to blame either. There was someone to vouch for everyone. But cancelling all the finger pointing out tended to absolve everyone of the blame, which doesn't exactly seem right either.

Here's my guess to what happened, with a minimum of vilification. Torcon sold itself on the basis of past worldcons in Toronto, and a tradition of great fanac. However, that was the past, and the Toronto fandom of today wasn't able to assemble a workable team. Instead, it filled important jobs with odd applicants who had often never worked together. As a result — weak leadership, poor communication between departments, a notable lack of harmony among some of the concom, and a committee largely out of touch with the norms and expectations of fandom.

Things could have been done better. It was a lack-lustre artshow and a small dealers room. The program book was a throwback to the 70's. Other problems, like Kelly Freas breaking his hip, were plain rotten luck. Still, it wasn't a total failure. Torcon had a couple of points in its favour, if you happen to be crazy about costume shows and Hugo ceremonies. It would seem that if there's a lesson to draw here, it's not to look at the bid, or at past glories, but at the team that will be charged with the responsibility of actually running the worldcon that the voters must evaluate.

If in ten years there's another Toronto bid (heaven forbid!) it might well be unfair to burden it with the mistakes of Torcon III. Then again, fandom deserves better than another worldcon with unknown chairmen and principal department heads with ambiguous experience.

We better be sure who's behind the dishes of M&M's and platters of cheese before we vote.

Yes, this goes for Calgary too, whatever I said before.

Tim Lane went to NoLaCon 2 and had a good time, even though the convention management was improvised on the fly (i.e. the call from Mike Glycer on a Sunday afternoon inviting me to be on the Simak panel). I had a good time at TorCon in spite of such things as the programming mixups. All the same, you have valid points there, not just for Canadian cons but U.S. ones.

“This goes for Calgary too”; what about Montreal?

—JTM

From: **Cuyler “Ned” Brooks** April 21, 2005
4817 Dean Lane, Lilburn, GA 30047-4720 USA

Thanks for the April *Alexiad*. Excellent reviews, especially of the stories in *Dangerous Visions* — I know I read them at the time, but not one was of the quality that I would remember in any detail.

I am always surprised at these accounts of taking blood from the fingers — the part of the body most likely to come in contact with infectious matter and most inconvenienced by bandages, and well supplied with nerve endings. I remember as a child having blood taken from the earlobe — much more convenient.

The way I have to do it involves getting blood on a test strip, so I don't think an earlobe would work so well.

—JTM

Perhaps the German name *fledermaus* started the notion that the bat is a flying rodent. I don't know that I have ever seen a bat other than in films or TV — they are nocturnal after all, and good at not being seen. I never seen the possum here except as roadkill.

From: **Alexis A. Gilliland** April 21, 2005
4030 8th Street South, Arlington, VA 22204-1552 USA

Thank you for *Alexiad* #4.2, which arrived shortly after the 78-year old Cardinal Ratzinger was elevated to become Pope Benedict XVI. Lots of spectacle on the TV, including the funeral of his predecessor, but what you see appears to be what you get and there will likely be few surprises in store unless the new Pope lives to be 100. Joe's “reviewers notes” on the first page inspired a cartoon which is enclosed along with some others. Given his prodigious output of bona fide book reviews, a heads-up might be appropriate when he strays from the paths of righteousness by attempting humor. A necessary straying, that, not unlike the stonemasons building a cathedral, who had to

take a break from carving saints to chisel a gargoyle or two in order to stay sane. And speaking of books, I signed the contract with Renaissance E Books and proofed and returned the emailed text of *The Revolution From Rosinante*. I hadn't read it for awhile, and it struck me as a very retro view of the future. Oh well, maybe retro sells.

I thought the way the books were structured was interesting. For anyone who hasn't read the Rosinante series, they overlap in an interesting fashion, the second starting midway through the events of the first, showing them from a different perspective, and similarly with the third. Glad they're getting back in print — well, "print" as broadly defined.

—JTM

Grant McCormick describes the human eye at some length, and uses its shortcomings as an argument against Intelligent Design. Given that ID is really a half-assed counter argument against evolution, it also has the machine shop problem; namely what agency is responsible for executing all those God-created IDs? Me, I always liked the idea that evolution was God's solitaire.

Marty Hegelsen, while admitting that Matthew, Mark, Luke and John composed a set of texts of Jesus that were necessarily incomplete, is puzzled by my letter, which simply argued that a secular text of Jesus (based largely on the history of Josephus) might also be valid. The actual life of Jesus surely provided the basis for any number of different texts, but the incorporation of the Gospels into Christian dogma meant that there was an institution with a vested interest in those Gospels, which effectively suppressed all alternate texts. The Holy Inquisition was indeed instituted in the 13th Century, but the Church has always had other means of enforcement, which it rarely hesitated to use. Thus, when the needs of the Church were in conflict with the facts of the life of Jesus, it was the historical facts that gave way to provide the well edited and ultra sanitized version that the Church had to have. For what it's worth I understand that Matthew's text of Jesus is not consistent with that of Luke.

What else? Sen. Bill Frist and his senatorial GOPs are considering the "nuclear option" against the filibuster — they say only against judges, but the precedent will surely be used against other filibusters. Which is not necessarily a bad thing, seeing how well the country was governed when filibusters/protracted debate were the law. Bob Dole has it right when he reminds them that the GOP isn't going to be in power forever, and they oughtn't to mess with the rules for a piddling advantage.

From: **E. B. Frohvet** April 22, 2005
4716 Dorsey Hall Drive #506, Ellicott
City MD 21042-5988 USA

An area Korean Presbyterian church is at odds with the community. It's located on a narrow side street in a residential neighborhood. The (mostly white) neighbors were fine with it as a little local church. However, with the expansion of the Asian community, the church is now drawing worshippers from outside the area and even outside the county. The church is doing four services each Sunday — five for Easter — at intervals of 15 minutes. The effect on local traffic can be imagined. The church wants to expand their facilities and parking, arguing this will actually improve the situation, as they won't have to rush people in and out to make room for the next service. The neighbors, not surprisingly, see a bad traffic problem getting worse. There seems to be little room for compromise. No one has openly played the race card. Yet.

I have never been much interested in genealogy. (Tom Sadler seems to be involved in it to the exclusion of being in fandom any more.) A cousin traced the German side of the family six generations, to Bavaria, Hesse-Darmstadt, and Alsace. The Irish side appears always to have been Protestant, arguably from County Cork; though my father always insisted there was some admixture of Welsh in the lineage. Perhaps we are distant cousins.

Regrettably, I have not read any of the books reviewed this issue; except *Dangerous Visions*, my copy of which was lost or given away many years ago (and of course the one I reviewed).

It seems superfluous for me to reiterate the view that NOT having Worldcon over Labor Day weekend has lots of advantages. Of the supposed Montreal bid, allow me to point out that the U.S. government intends to phase in requirements for American citizens to have a passport to re-enter this country from Canada. . . For the sake of arbitrary discussion I will look up Collinsville, IL.

Trinlay Khadro: See, now I had not considered that aspect of chocolate bars with/without nuts. Since I almost never eat candy (once a year I buy a bag of Reese's Peanut Butter Cups for Halloween on the off chance of trick-or-treaters, and wind up eating most of it myself) this area does not grab my attention.

Well, I did get TAFF and DUFF ballots. Voted on the former, shrugged off the latter as there were no candidates I knew about.

Whatever the deficiencies of S.M. Stirling's "Nantucket" series (begin with *Island in the Sea of Time*), it does observe correctly some of the small print of establishing a sustainable technology. For instance, salt. Lots of salt, and not just for sprinkling on the highway during snowstorms. A reliable source of Vitamin C is another. The huge advantage of starting off with modern machine tools, even simple ones, like lathes and drill-presses.

It seems to me that Eric Flint's "Ring of Fire" is better, simply because it lacks Stirling's Willezumacht. However, it also runs into the publisher's insistence

on collegiality, which tends to encourage consistency errors.

Henry Welch: Thanks for the update. *Knarley Knews* usually reaches me early in odd-numbered months, and *Alexiad* in even-numbered months. These two are far the most regular and reliable fanzines I receive. I would just expand on Joseph's comment: Having a deadline can be a burden, but not having one can mean that the editor keeps putting it off precisely because no one has any expectations, and therefore there's no time pressure. Time pressure is not a bad thing — ask any surgeon.

George W. Price: Thank you. My order is in the mail.

Milt Stevens: If Kristin Kreuk is for rent, where do I bid? (Yes, I know, I like to look at pretty girls. I'm a pig. The difference is, I know I'm a pig.)

Temar in A Wizard of Earthsea, Lana Lang in Smallville. Hm. She has a younger sister.
<http://www.imdb.com/name/nm0471036/>

I am looking forward to Lyn McConchie's visit here in Maryland in mid-May. We will probably spend a lot of time cruising book stores and catching up on fannish gossip. Supposing that anything I do can be described as "fannish", which many would reject.

Parked in my lot even as I write: A mobile pet-grooming salon on wheels, to which a lady in the opposite building just delivered her dog. I have to deliver myself to, e.g., the barber; but the pet groomers will come to my door. Something to be said for being a pet; they don't have to go shopping or do laundry, either.

Regrettably, my health is disgustingly normal. My cholesterol is borderline — mainly due to the American Medical Association having dropped by ten points what they consider "normal" — and my doctor wishes I would exercise more and lose 20 pounds. (My doctor, by the way, my primary care physician, is a woman. Am I embarrassed? No, why should I be? She's a doctor: she's seen any quantity of ugly naked people.)

I looked at myself in the mirror while getting my latest small-bowel X-ray, and noticed that in the hospital gown I looked like my own grandmother.

— NKM, er JTM
(Nancy Katheryne Mabry Major)

Death to French gerbils.

I'm not going to ask why you hate French gerbils.

— LTM

From: **Joy V. Smith** April 28, 2005
8925 Selph Road, Lakeland, FL 33810-0341 USA
Pagadan@aol.com
<http://journals.aol.com/pagadan/JoysJournal/>

Thanks for the fan, Antarctica, monarchist, awards, etc. news. I'm afraid I think that five million dollars is a little high for restoring the Nimrod expedition hut.

What a fantastic and thorough review of Harlan Ellison's *Dangerous Visions*! I don't recall reading it, but I know I've read some of the stories; I remember the two Jack the Ripper tales. I really enjoyed your review . . .

Well, thank you, but it wasn't much more than a general overview. The book really deserves a far more detailed examination, in light of its significance.

Lots of other interesting reviews, especially *History on Trial: My Day in Court with David Irving* by Deborah E. Lipstadt. I'm afraid I'm unaware of that though I usually pay attention when I come across revisionism. Btw, I saw an interesting documentary recently about conspiracy theories and those who believe that we never put a man on the moon. Nope — despite all the evidence and explanations — no one changed their minds.

Fascinating review of *A Public Betrayed* and its examination of the Japanese culture and the media. I'm still stunned. I thought the Japanese had higher standards. *Prisoners of the North* by Pierre Berton sounds interesting too. I wasn't aware of any of the five people he profiled.

Re: your Health Issues. Have your fingers healed yet? I'm glad things seem somewhat hopeful. All the best to your lower abdomen.

Thanks to E.B. Frohvet for his review of *Edwin Hubble: Mariner of the Nebulae*. (Wonderful title!) I learned a lot about him and the science of his time. I always enjoy the candy bar reviews too. I think I won't bother trying Take Five. As a matter of fact, I passed it up recently and chose a Skor bar instead (just one of my favorites).

Re: Letters. Thanks to Ned Brooks for his query about the radioactive scrambled eggs. (I was probably too awestricken to wonder.) Uh, Joe. What happened in the last Modesty Blaise book. (I never did read them all.) To John Hertz, I read *Don Quixote* in a Spanish class (I read it in English); I was always proud of myself for having accomplished that. Thanks to Dale Speirs for his 1913 and 1949 quotes. I always feel a sense of relief when reading old quotes from Roman times, etc. To Lloyd Penney, what is the significance of Travis Tea? Thanks much to Rod E. Smith for the background on flight rated equipment. (It's so easy to jump to conclusions.)

Btw, I enjoyed Christopher Anvil's stories and bought the recent reprints. I have some of his old paperbacks too. I think I looked at *Alien Siege*, but can't remember much about it. That may have been the one that I fled from. Re: the PublishAmerica lifetime contract. I think it's only seven years; and I've signed seven year contracts. I want to add my recommendations for *The Incredibles*. Be sure to get the DVD version and see the two cartoons — "Jack-Jack Attack" and "Bouncing". Along with all the info and illos, I enjoyed *The Day of the Boomer*

Droogs. (Was that triggered by *Dangerous Visions* and/or Burgess?)

No no no our droog Harlan had nothing to do with it, it was like that old veck Fred Pohl on the droogs in the States and what happened when some traveller from like the far distant future let them have some really bolshy toys for the old ultra-violence. [Pohl's story "The Day of the Boomer Dukes", that is, about a naïve time-traveler who wanted to join the Mafia, and rather imprudently asked a street-gang for help.]

— JTM

From: **Trinlay Khadro** May 1, 2005
Post Office Box 240934, Brown Deer,
WI 53224-0934 USA
trin63@dias.net



TRINLAY KHADRO

Hmm, maybe there should have been a betting pool on "just how bad will *Revenge of the Sith* be?" I imagine it'll be better than the last two but not as good yet as the first (middle) three.

Reviewer's Notes: "There's a *baka* [idiot, smart/dumbass] in every bunch . . ." There's always going to be

someone so obsessed that they're going to miss the joke anyway.

So many 'real' things are written in a humorous slant I'm not surprised that some people are confused.

Re: Chinese team reaches the top of Dome A in the Antarctic. Wow. How d'ya say "Huzzah" in Chinese?

Condolences to Rod Smith on his loss.

Re: Ellen Reibold — my cousin out in California is fighting breast cancer and recently finished her rounds of Radiation Therapy. It's a hard thing being so terribly ill and at such a young age.

Re: *Dangerous Visions* — well, the 60s were odd like that. And well, having seen some dancers performing in the skin tight leotards and pondered why they even bothered with "costuming".

Re: *The Last Kingdom* re Uhtred's arranged marriage — after my divorce many years ago I suspected that I'd have done much better in an arranged marriage. I could have done worse, but I think my parents care about me, and would have done better.

Re: *A Public Betrayed*: in contrast © there's always our press which tells us more than we'd ever want to know about Michael Jackson and

Britney Spears and runs the REAL news as a tiny banner across the bottom of the screen. It's even worse if one doesn't have cable. . .

The local paper isn't much better.

Paris Hilton, Scott Peterson & Amber Frey, Ben & Jen for various values of "Jen", Martha Stewart . . . the list goes on. Remember when it was O.J.? The 24/7 Simpson Trial News Channel?

As for stereotypes both the positive and negative can be stereotypes. And Everyone has negative and positive qualities which in combination make us all human.

My friend, Deb, had her first colonoscopy — she reports "the prep was the worst." She was surprised you had the procedure sans sedation.

Re: Last Roll Call — "Sarah's fifth cousin twice removed" Holy cow! Who aren't you related to? (Or don't know how you are related to them.)

Thanks for the Bat articles — though I suppose we can add that they've also inspired Batman™. © Some of the nature centers and museums sell kits to build Bat houses. I'm sure there's even bat-house plans on line.

Re: Shakespeare — I wonder if that Eldest Daughter was already caring for the wife, which could explain the disposal of property in that direction.

Brad Foster: My dad says "If it sounds too good to be true, it is."

Re: my comment re: making socks: I've got sock making down now — and I'm making several things to sell (by mail or at cons and art shows) including the origami dragons (my own design), iPod cozies (or any pocket tech: I just need measurements), cell phone bags as well as purses, hats, scarves, etc. If anyone is interested write or email me!

Joy Smith: My great-uncle, who was multi-lingual, was with the US Army in Europe when the camps were liberated and they used him to translate survivor accounts. As various relatives passed away his letters home got trashed — I would have liked to have them and historians have been wanting letters from the war.

E.B.: well, y'know what happens when you play a country record backwards.

John Hertz: Kids who read usually have parents who read and vice versa. KT taught herself to read at 2 ½ years age. I was ready to *burn* the ABC book (I'd read it to her hundreds of times in a few days . . .) and she started reading newspaper headlines.

When I was four there was an article about me in the Hopkinsville paper. Something about having read aloud from a copy of *Popular Mechanics* at a party where a reporter was. The title of the article was:
"Boy 4 ½ Has Read Since He Was 2"

Sheryl B.: one of the "big things" at some local clinic is the R being printed off by the

computer to avoid errors from handwriting confusions. Though why the pharmacist wouldn't think to call and ask "I can't decipher this; what did you mean?" . . . though perhaps all the calls *to* the doctor were the reason for the printouts.

Lloyd: Have you tried second-hand bookstores? Most of our Pratchett books came from Half-Price Books and then lending, borrowing, and trading with friends.

Robert K: Went to see *Zatoichi* at the theater this summer. Wew got a kick out of the Busby Berkley type tap dancing in geta finale.

I may be more sensitive to gas prices lately since my income has gone down. I've always felt it seemed high.

Rodney: Perhaps it's more that people with their own suffering, in many cases, become more aware of the suffering of others and thus more likely to be perceived as "the good people"?

Or in some, illness renders doing evil into "too much trouble."

Taras: In any large city ANYWHERE in US, Canada, or New Zealand or even the UK, if you put out a casting call for African-American, Asian, Maori, Native American roles you'll get plenty. There may not be as many Big Names in those classifications but they exist. Granted some may be "can pass for" but on screen, in my humble opinion, that's close enough.

Keep in mind the majority of gays live as "double income no kids" . . . less output probably for health insurance and the like than the family across the street, one income and four kids.

IMHO if someone takes on the responsibility and obligations of marriage they should also have access to the rights.

Martin H. & Sheryl B.: *Laminate* those instructions . . . just in case.

Chuck L.: re comment to Richard Dengrove — More like "the problem of people who say they take the Bible literally" is that even as translation the usually favored translation (King James Bible) is pretty horrid — more written to keep an English King happy than providing a reliable translation.

Liked *Fired, You Are* and *Missed Opportunity* and *Joy of High Tech* — though I *really* rely on my Palm Pilot. No real news here.

From: **Martin Morse Wooster** May 2, 2005
Post Office Box 8093, Silver Spring,
MD 20907-8093
mmwooster@yahoo.com

Many thanks for *Alexiad* 20.

E.B. Frohvet doesn't think very much of my accomplishment of getting two fans into fandom. I suppose I should explain that my club (the Silver Spring Science Fiction Society) isn't meant to be a large club. It's supposed to be a place where fen who like each other can get together once a month and have a nice dinner and a good time. I only recruit people when membership falls off. Moreover, my club isn't supposed to be a large club that runs cons or publishes books. It's just a small fun group. I'm

sort of proud of the fact that I *haven't* had to recruit for over a year.

But I do agree with Frohvet that it's more than curious that neither he nor I have gotten a TAFF or a DUFF ballot lately. I do contribute the minimums to these two funds whenever I'm sent a ballot. Perhaps the people who are running them think that only faanish fen should be allowed to cast ballots. I'm of the opinion, by the way, that TAFF has outlived its usefulness, since it's far easier to get across the Atlantic than it was when TAFF was created over 50 years ago. However, my view of TAFF has improved since I read James Bacon's trip report, *Worldconomicon* which I believe is the first TAFF report in 20 years. (None of the American delegates — good faanish fen that they are — can be bothered to produce one.)

I thought Joe's review of *Dangerous Visions* was quite a good idea, except that a basic question remains unanswered — how many of the stories are worth reading now? How many have dated irrevocably? I haven't read the anthology in 25 years, but my guess is that the Bloch, Farmer, Delany, Dick, Niven, Anderson, and Sladek stories still work, while everything else are artifacts of the 1960s. I would also guess that Spinrad's story was well told and a little pulp, since Spinrad has always been someone who combines somewhat radical content with traditional storytelling techniques. Spinrad learned a lot from his yeas as Scott Meredith, and has always been a good storyteller.

I was surprised to see Joe make some errors. I thought Ben Bova, not Campbell, bought *The Forever War* and "The Gold at the Starbow's End." I thought both Pohl and Haldeman made clear that they were Not Campbell Writers. Joe also says that Harry Harrison and Tom Holt wrote *The Hammer and the Cross*; I thought that Harrison's collaborator was Tom Shippey.

As for David Irving: of course his lawsuit was idiotic, and the courts were right to whack him for it. But I'm really bothered by Lipstadt trying to suppress Irving's right to speak. Isn't the best way to fight bad arguments to offer better ones?

Check the dates, but the stories began simultaneously with Bova's getting named as editor, so I doubt he had bought them right out of the pack. You're right, it was Tom Shippey.

What Lipstadt objected to was Book TV's "balancing" the coverage of History on Trial with an appearance by Irving, and then, when she objected, dropping her and keeping Irving!

— JTM

From: **Rodney Leighton** April 24, 2005
11 Branch Road, R. R. #3,
Tatmagouche, Nova Scotia B0K 1V0
CANADA

Thanks for *Alexiad* 4/2 which appeared on Friday. Along with my monthly shipment of 4

MIRA novels. It was a good week for me fanzine wise: Wednesday brought *FOSFAX* 211 and in between a bundle of fanzines arrived including *Trap Door* 23, *Banana Wings* 20, and a slew of printed off the ether editions of a couple of zines, neither of which held much of interest. I still have some things to read in *FOSFAX*.

Here's a for real loc. First one in awhile. May be the last one for awhile. The employer says he has lots of work and funding so I expect that when the next couple of issues arrive I will be crawling out of bed about 5:00 a.m., or earlier; heading off for work half an hour after that and home seven or eight hours later too exhausted to do battle with this machine.

Believe it or not, I read one of those *Dangerous Visions* editions; well some portions of one. It was paperback. Don't know where I got it. I recall some of the stories you describe. "Jeffy Is Five" was in the one I read; I thought it was cute. I guess if I ever make it to Louisville and need something to read after I run out of fanzines, I might find a book or two that is of interest. Only the Berton book in this issue would not have been of some interest to me. Well, that you reviewed. I very much doubt that EBF would have any more interest in the book I reviewed than I would have in the one he did.

We once lived in a house which had a lot of bats in the crawspace. I know there are a lot of folks who think I have bats in the belfry . . . they used to leave at twilight to start eating mosquitos. Quite a racket. We tried one counting one time; I believe we reached 120 something.

Ah, Martin . . . thanks for the advice but it would not work with me. For one thing, although I haven't always adhered to it, I truly believe a fanzine is a product of a lot of work, energy, and money and if someone makes you a gift of a copy you should send a response. Unless other agreements are in place. John Hertz is cool with sending me bundles of *Vanamonde* and hearing from me once in a blue moon. In the second place, I am no longer receiving any fanzines I don't want. It has been ages since I received a fanzine out of the blue; any that I didn't want I asked to not be sent any more. There were a bunch I was ambivalent about; the editors have apparently all realized that and kicked me off their mailing lists. I was unconcerned with whether *FOSFAX* appeared or not but I was happy to see it; read quite a lot with more to go and they will get a loc. And, well, surely you recall the time that I sent you a full page letter in response to a two sentence note. Brevity and conciseness are only words in the dictionary. I once was accused by a woman whom I was . . . seeing . . . of having diarrhea all over the typewriter.

I picked up a copy of the March issue of *Playboy*. Not for that ugly Paris Hilton on the cover and not for the articles. I admit that I wanted to see the Debbie Gibson layout. Having admired her eyes and other attributes, I read some stuff. In the *Playboy* Advisor I discovered a letter describing a technique taught to me around twenty years ago by the

aforementioned female except she had a slightly different version. This letter was signed . . . M.W., Silver Spring, MD. Hmnnnn . . .

Mr. Kemp is more than welcome to put some or all of the issues of his fanzine on paper and ship it/them to me. I'll send back a response. Might even do a review of some sort. I think I need another one or two *The Knarley News* columns to fill out the year. I might do one on *Trap Door* although I note Robert is talking about going partially etherized. I don't think that's a word. Might do one on *Banana Wings* although I note that #21 is now out and anyway they booted me off their mailing list with neither warning nor explanation.

There's a loc in there by some guy I've never heard of who mentions that he sent a bunch of letters requesting copies of fanzines and not one person responded. And "And correspondents wonder why fandom doesn't gain new blood." I know how he feels. A decade or so ago Vicki Rosenweig informed me, via *The Frozen Frog*, that she was under no obligation to inform me that she did not want me on her mailing list. But most publishers simply ignore you. It is especially aggravating . . . unless one is in a good mood and finds it amusing . . . to be ignored by a publisher and shortly afterward see a loc or a column by that person moaning and wailing about the lack of new people in fanzine fandom.

Ah, but they have to be the right kind of people. After the notorious Nashville Conflu, I read a comment by one of the people there — the organizer, I believe — that they didn't want to bring in a lot of new people, just the right kind of people.

But there is also another aspect of this: most publishers provide no reasons for not sending fanzines. Only one or two that I have ever encountered have given a reason for not sending the first requested issue. And no one has ever informed me that I was in danger of being removed from the mailing list or why I was. *Banana Wings* provides a brief description of how to obtain a copy which, unless they have changed greatly, will actually work in their case since writing a letter requesting a copy was how I started receiving copies. No where is there any explanation as to why Rodney Leighton no longer is mailed copies nor is there any explanation of what might cause anyone to be expelled from the mailing list. I am left to speculate.

Fortunately that is the only one I actually miss. If I minded no longer receiving *Opuntia*; *Challenger*; *Argentus* and the other various fanzines that are still being published but not coming my way I would be terribly upset that I was removed from the mailing lists of these fanzines with neither warning nor explanation and would then expand my animus and disgust to include all of fandom.

Which would, of course, be silly not to mention unfair. But this is what I tend to do. I recognize how silly it is to blame all of fandom

for one person or event. But that is the way it is.

There are other matters to take into account. I know, for example, that Guy Lillian has had financial restraints on his fanac. Hardly anyone got a printed copy of the latest Challenger.

— JTM

Anyway, the grief seems to be easing somewhat; the depression that has been bugging me seems to be lifting a bit; fanzine fandom seems like fun again. But. Well, it's getting close to silviculture season. I have a feeling loccing is going out the window until next winter.

From: **Rod E. Smith** May 11, 2005
730 Cline Street, Frankfort, KY 40601-1034 USA
RodE.Smith@mail.state.ky.us

Speaking of the Marx Brothers, and getting the joke . . .

Irving Thalberg was the *wunderkind* of MGM during much of the studio's heyday. He was so brilliant, and so obviously good at what he did, he had most people intimidated. Early in the career of the Marx Brothers he called a meeting with them in his office, to evaluate their potential. When he got there the Brothers were sitting around Thalberg's decorative fireplace in their underwear, roasting potatoes.

Thalberg not only Got It, he Liked It. Because no-one else would joke with him! For as long as he lived, the Marx Brothers got pretty much whatever they wanted. It wasn't until after he died that their careers started a downward slide. (Yes, that's a matter of opinion, since admittedly, everything after *A Night at the Opera* is a lesser work to most Marx fans.)

He not only Got It, he sent out for butter. What about the time with the cigars?

On eyes: I thought the blind spot was caused by the optic nerve being attached to the front of the retina instead of the back. I like to design species, and have several — some developed from genetically-engineered humans — for an "after the fall" scenario. Besides fixing the blind spot I also made the carpal tunnel larger, and so forth.

With all the Hugo-nominated contributors in the latest issue, I need to renew my button proclaiming me "Hugo award nominee for best chocolate-chip cookie."

I wonder if Joseph T. Major (responding to Martin Morse Wooster) knows there actually was a *Captain Nice* TV show, back in 1967? (I believe there was also at least one issue of a companion comic.) William Daniels played the title character. This was the same year as the rather similar *Mr. Terrific*. (Ironically, a super-powered character who took the name of one few non-powered Justice Society of America characters.)

Yeah, I remember Captain Nice and Mr. Terrific ("He tried to cure the common cold."). Both of which shows only lasted half a season. Nowadays that'd be a good long run. They were on opposite each other, as I recall; premiered on the same day and had their last shows the same day.

Captain Nice
<http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0061239/>
Mr. Terrific
<http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0061281/>

E. B. Frohvet mentions the guy in Seattle who ruined a couple of conventions. I have fannish friends there and was getting almost real-time reports. I don't remember all the details (can ask if anyone wants them) but think he was actually a main-office manager in the hotel chain. Which is how he managed to bollix contracts with two different hotels (in the same chain). I believe he was either fired or transferred sometime later.

Alexis A. Gilliland mentions humans affecting the Earth's climate. There is a theory, based on data from ice cores, tree rings and such, that either the last ice age restarted or a new one was starting several centuries back. However, there were enough people in Europe at that time that they burned enough wood to create a significant greenhouse effect and sent the ice fleeing back northward. (If you can call a few meters a year "fleeing.")

A particular mountain in Europe has been popular with artists for thousands of years. Back in the Seventies I remember reading about a project which compared the foot of a particular glacier (taking season into account) shown in works of this mountain down through time. Until the middle Twentieth Century the ice was trending downwards, indicating a cooling climate.

JTM (I think) mentions in a comment to John Hertz's letter paying as much for postage as for a book. Most bookstores can order any book in print. I happen to be lucky when it comes to books not in print; Poor Richard's, in downtown Frankfort, is just two streets over from where I work. They have thousands of used books, and are very accommodating about ordering what current works they don't have in stock. And their retail price includes shipping. LexFA has had a couple of nice economic suicide missions there, with the downside that we usually have to drag at least one person out of the attic (where most of the old books are) at closing time.

Poor Richard's is a wonderful place, we go there every time we go to Frankfort, but I've never seen (say) South With Scott there or at any other used bookstore.

Sheryl Birkhead mentions pain keeping her from cons. At ConCave Samantha Jude's friend #5 told some of us that her post-polio syndrome is causing her so much pain she has also given up on cons.

She also suggests using e-Bay to sell my old books and magazines. Well, despite my repeated statement that I would never do business with a company whose name is in pig-Latin, I recently joined.

Richard Dengrove talks about *The DaVinci Code* and other popularizations which include the Knights Templar or similar groups. Many years ago I read the book *Kolchak's Gold*, about a historian (IIRC) searching for the lost treasure of the Czars. Apparently quite similar in theme (I haven't read any of the newer works to compare) but too early to catch the wave.

Chuck Lipsig mentions people who take the Bible literally. What bugs me about them is that the Bible itself says not to. (Argh. I thought the admonition to not trust the written or spoken word, but to think for ourselves was in Hebrews, but naturally I can't find it now.)

I enjoyed the two-part Mirror Universe story on *Enterprise*. Of course, part of the charm of this was watching a *Constitution* class starship running roughshod over everything in its path. If only the original series had had the financing to film such battle scenes.

Roddenberry wouldn't have liked it.

— JTM

When it came to exploring space, President John F. Kennedy had vast ideas. Problem is, every president since has had half-vast ideas.

— Stickmaker

From: **Colleen R. Cahill** August 26, 2004
5112 Huron Street, College Park, MD
20740-1725 USA
ccah@earthlink.net

Thank you for both the 4.1 and 4.2 *Alexiads*. It has been a while since I sent in a LOC — not due to disinterest, but because of life. In December the construction on our house expansion was almost done and with furniture deliveries, last minutes changes and moving stuff around, it is still chaos here. In the middle of all that, we took a trip to London, England: Dennis for work and me for fun. This was my first time there and I enjoyed the Tower, the British Library and the British Museum (I asked for the Elgin Marbles and was told they are called the Parthenon Marbles now). My highlight was at the Royal Observatory where I got to see John Harrison's clocks, made almost 200 years ago and still running. If anyone has read Dava Sobel's *Longitude*, you will understand my excitement: these are the clocks that solved the enormous 18th century problem of determining longitude.

The trip to London was fun, but five days after getting back, we flew up to Salem, Mass. to visit friends. Again, I enjoyed lots of history, but by the time we got back, I was mighty tired of being in planes. Since I am flying to Raleigh, NC for a business meeting as I write this, I guess I got over that feeling eventually. It is my hope that Dennis and I can travel to other historic sites in the US soon, but I would prefer to drive there, as the flying bus is getting old.

Robert Kennedy's comment on the History Channel having errors about the Knights Templar did not surprise me. I find some of the shows on that channel are either incomplete or misleading in their presentation of information. It is frustrating to be given a "fact" with no background or support; kind of like a book with no footnotes.

My thoughts and prayers are with Joseph on his continuing health issues. Like many others, I preferred to be knocked out for my colonoscopy. When I woke up and said "see you in ten years" I got a shock: because my father had colon cancer, I get to do this every five years! Joy.

Thank you for the kind words. I really don't know what this is about drugs. It's like in grade school where the D.A.R.E. presentation ("Pavelik Morozov - Live Like Him!") is delayed to second period because first period all the boys are getting their Ritalin™.

To Trinlay, I hope your sock heels turned well — it took me a while to figure them out, but now turning the heel is my favorite part of knitting socks.

Lloyd Penny's comments on Nigerian spam and lotteries rang a bell with me. I moderate SF-LIT, a listserv at the Library of Congress and 80% or more of the messages are of that ilk. Too bad none are real: if even 1% would pay off, I could live a life of leisure. Since it is a moderated list, I don't share these tidbits of financial gain with the members of the list.

And speaking of email, I laughed at Paul Gadjikowski's The Joy of High Tech cartoon, because I DO still telnet to my email . . . and I even use Pine, which is my favorite email reader.

And so do I, and so do I . . .

— JTM

From: **Dainis Bisenieks** May 11, 2005
921 S. St. Bernard Street, Philadelphia,
PA 19143-3310 USA

I continue to make big bucks at home in my spare time, proofreading Wildside Press reprints. As usual, I read for sense, at mentally-moving-lips speed; twice recently sense required adding or deleting a negative: an error, I'm sure, of the printed book, but how would fidelity to that text serve the reader? I rather preened myself on correcting an allusion to "Casablanca", making it "Casabianca". Who he? One who did not like all the others hotfoot it out of there; I'm sure you would recognize the words.

And under fire from the Billy Ruffian herself, too. (See David Cordingly's *The Billy Ruffian*, reviewed in *Alexiad* V. 3 #5.)
VICTORY OR DEATH

In the latest batch were several works by P. G. Wodehouse, from around 1920, and rather a revelation. We think of the typical Wodehouse character as a feckless young man of independent means who must evade the attentions of matchmaking aunts. Such Wodehouse characters do not change. But here, in several novels, the mating game is played through to its conclusion. Misperceptions occur and are overcome; characters rise above their shortcomings, excepting those who fall by the wayside.

These are still comedies, of errors in particular; often the long arm of coincidence stretches forth in the neatly plotted comings and goings and encounters of the characters. This we accept and revel in, as long as the writer keeps up the pace, which in one novel he does but in another, not.

The Adventures of Sally is the good one. Sally is a spirited young woman with a gift of the gab: in joshing, in repartee, and in getting people to open up and part with their secrets. She experiences ups and downs, but is never down for long. In short, an ideal Wodehouse character. Several men figure in her life, whose true worth she must fathom. She must deal, too, with her brother Fillmore and the people in his life, all of them in theater. As the story develops, a production is a sparkling success, and he has dreams and plans for hitting the really big time. His friends, quite justly, worry that he will overreach himself, and a telegram comes to Sally: HAVE YOU BEEN FEEDING FILLMORE MEAT? (What was that line about Shaw, "Someday he'll eat a steak, and then God help all women?") . . . No, he is not actually a vegetarian . . .

I laughed. As to that, there is an episode in which Sally bursts into irrepressible laughter, and I thought that was a splendid bit of characterization. Well done, too, was the episode in which she gets some very shocking news; the conduct of the bringer of news (who had of course no inkling of what it meant) is worthy of note, too.

And what values come to be accepted? Nowhere in these words, but: follow your star, pull your weight, and stick by your friend. IN a pinch, no honest employment is to be disdained. At one point, money (an inheritance) having come and gone, Sally returns to work as a taxidancer. Crucial but salutary misunderstandings arise from this. Could we disagree? What are wealth and "social status"? What is climbing the ladder of success? The climber tends to spurn those below.

The Coming of Bill falls utterly flat. A man from Bohemia (and a dabbler in painting, who must learn better) and a woman from Society marry; over a span of years, crisis develops. Trouble — for the reader — is that they get very earnest about it, and that is not Wodehouse's forte. He is one of your omniscient authors. The soul of each character is an open book to him, and in that book he reads to us, sometimes for over a page, which is way past the limit. Cut to the chase!

But the chase is awfully, awfully long in Ann Radcliffe's *The Italian*, and so is "reading in the

book.” Furthermore, every character speaks like a book, except members of the lower classes, who speak like human beings. The question of worth and social standing is raised and settled in the traditional manner, viz., the heroine, whom the hero was going to marry regardless, turns out in the end to have credible ancestors after all . . . This will be read out of curiosity, as a period piece.

I don't know why; that's the plot of about half the Regency Romances out, and in its modern equivalent ("money" for "credible ancestors") as much for the contemporary ones.

I surmise that the text goes back to a 19th century reprint in which the long esses of the original were changed to ordinary ones, but with far from complete success; some effs, of course suffered too.

My fate, which I accept cheerfully enough, is to labor behind the scenes; once in a while a printed acknowledgment comes my way. In this, I may boast, I have hit the big time: the Note to the Text in the latest (for the moment) “typographically preferred” *Lord of the Rings*. I did my regular re-reading in the previous one and took notes. For instance, Treebeard says “Turn around,” departing in this instance, ad not before nor anywhere else, from the British usage “round”. I spoke up for “my gaffer” vs. “the Gaffer” but do not know how this was settled. I have not seen the actual books and don't know when I will.

With genuine horrors afflicting the world, it is probably error in me to be affected by the awful things done by publishers; and yet we do want truth, not error, presented in the right words in the right order (and rightly spelled, too). Just the other day, I saw a bio of Asimov where in the capsule history of SF we find consistently the spelling “Gernsbeck” and various errors of fact and interpretation. Elsewhere, two blocks of type, totaling two pages, are out of sequence. Asleep at the switch!

If I had been Ann Radcliffe's subeditor, I would have queried the words spoken sibilantly which *in Italian* have no sibilants.

More seriously, the old-fashioned suffering heroine is not my type. I rather fancied one to whom these words were spoken:

“Your ladyship has taught this unworthy person to do everything thoroughly. You have taught her that if one eats poison, one should lick even the dish.”

And one in another book, who heard this:

“There's something about this that reminds me forcibly of that remarkable scene when we broke into my engine room. It has your personal signature. My grandmother had a phrase for it — something about late, and a dollar . . .”

In real life, to be sure, I'd feel desperately unequal to any of that ilk. Equality: a state that permits one to declare: “My view of you matters” as well as “Your view of me matters.” Or: “I can't write you off; don't you write me

off.”

Jack Vance's work has been mentioned; dire deeds are done in most of his novels. Think of all the characters who have lost home or at least one parent. Begin the list with Kirth Gersen . . .

I had some trouble disliking the Demon Prince Harold Alan Treesong (The Book of Dreams) after he went to his high-school class's twenty-fifth reunion and thoroughly humiliating all the people who had humiliated him in school. Fortunately for the folks from Frankfort High School, in 1997 I was happily married, in a good job, had no henchmen at my command, and had not written a first draft of a fantasy epic back then and had it abstracted.

Reading of the St. Nazaire raid in 1942: *The Year That Doomed the Axis* by Henry H. Adams, I found the statement, “No fewer than five Victoria Crosses . . . were given for this operation. Never had so large a proportion been given.” It says there that 611 were on the expedition. But at Rorke's Drift in the Zulu War there were over 350 men (Morris, p. 397) and eleven were awarded the V.C.

Actually Captain Stephenson's company of the Natal Native Contingent deserted except for Corporal Michael Anderson, who was shot while trying to desert. So it was eleven out of about a hundred and fifty.
<http://www.rorkesdriftvc.com>

I recall how the passing of Albert Woolson had been noted in *American Heritage* (October 1956). I have all but one (October 1957) of the hardcover editions of that magazine, also index volumes covering the first twenty years, all obtained on the cheap. The collection peters out after a few years of softcover publication; I have not been searching assiduously. If I were to buy a unitary 50-year index, it would cost me twice my expenditure for the lot.

A welcome recent acquisition has been *The Complete Upmanship* by Stephen Potter. A sample passage: “One must be able clearly so suggest either that one is absolutely healthy or, alternatively, never really free from pain. The two styles MUST NOT BE MUDDLED.”

The essence of one-upmanship is, of course, to achieve the maximum effect with the minimum substance. So I might make a virtue of sticking to the good ol' typewriter, guaranteed never to crash and wipe out a month's work . . .

But I am pleased to observe that the upmanship practiced in fandom is the kind with substance: actually Knowing the Answer. Thus, one might cite Imperial Japanese Navy or S. S. ranks without giving their equivalents. *But of course a Sturmbannführer* is a major. (I looked it up in Andrew Rollo's *The Armed Forces of*

World War II.)

In school I was the kid who knew the answers, which won me no points with my classmates. My most cherished episode of Knowing the answer came in 1968 or '69, when I was a volunteer digger near the Western Wall. Somebody had found a piece of brick or tile with LXF impressed upon it. “All right, who knows?” said the supervisor. “*Legio Decima Fretensis*.” I promptly said, following with the translation, “Tenth Legion, ‘Fretensis’”.

Which Stephen Dando-Collins says in *Caesar's Legion* (2002; reviewed in *Alexiad* V. 2 #1) was *Caesar's Tenth Legion*, unfortunately almost certainly incorrectly. It's a pity, as the man has a real feel for depicting the life of the legionary.

— JTM

I could, like the “innocents abroad” who sailed on the *Quaker City* with Mark Twain, have had a souvenir of my stint at the excavations. One day, toward the end, I saw a small bulldozer clearing off some totally uninteresting masses of dirt, south of the ramp leading up to the entrance to the Moslem precinct. And it knocked a chip from a corner of one of the stones of the Wall! The next morning I went to the spot, found the chip, hefted it . . . and threw it aside. To take it seemed like a needless complication . . . and I can still tell the story.

From: **Robert S. Kennedy** May 18, 2005
1779 Ciprian Avenue, Camarillo, CA
93010-2451 USA
robertk@cipcug.org

Thank you for Vol. 4, No. 2. It was mailed on a Thursday and arrived on a Monday — much better.

The last episode of *Star Trek: Enterprise* was a great disappointment. It ended not with a bang, but with a whimper.

I am completely and totally disgusted — *Farscape: The Peacekeeper Wars* did not make the HUGO ballot. Some others I nominated did make the ballot. But, not *Farscape* and that is incredibly revolting. That's not even to mention *ALEXIAD*, Joe, and others I nominated that didn't make it.

The rain season is from July 1 through June 30. On March 23, 2005, we officially reached the second wettest season since records have been kept — 34.95 inches of rain. There has been a little more rain since, but not enough to set a new record. The wettest season was 1883-1884 with 38.18 inches of rain. The Los Angeles Daily News said: “The last winter that it rained harder there were no cars or airplanes, Chester A. Arthur was President and the population of Los Angeles was just over 11,000.” The great Camarillo flood of February 6, 1998, only rates as part of the season in 7th place. That's when my street turned into a river, it was well up over my front lawn, the back yard was flooded, and I watched the trash cans float

off. There was really bad flooding and damage in other areas of the city and Camarillo made the TV news as it was flooding.

Back in November 2004, **Lloyd G. Daub** in an e-mail mentioned that he had received an advance copy of *Old Man's War* by John Scalzi. Lloyd indicated that Cory Doctorow thinks well of the novel. It turned out to be a 2005 book and I finally obtained it from Interlibrary Loan. I recommend it highly and plan to nominate it for a HUGO. I might be wrong, but Scali may be eligible for the John W. Campbell Award.

One of my all time favorite movies is *The Truman Show* starring Jim Carrey. So, I purchased the DVD. The extras are not all that great. But, as for the movie itself, as Gary K. Wolfe said in his review in *LOCUS* (July 1998): "... this time Winston gets out."

Well, now I've watched the Special Extended DVD Edition of *The Return of the King*, all four hours and ten minutes of it, as well as one of The Appendices for *The Fellowship of the Ring*. Now, all that's left to watch are the rest of The Appendices, five more DVD's.

GOD AND I PLOTTED
OUR FOREIGN POLICY,
BUT IF GOD HAD TOLD
ME WHAT HE HAD IN
MIND FOR THE COUNTRY,
I WOULD HAVE DONE SOME
THING ELSE!



So, it looked like *Tru Calling* had been resurrected from the dead. ☺ If I had not been watching something else on Fox earlier in the week, I would not have known about it. It was not in the TV Guide and, as far as I know, there was no other publicity. During the *Farscape* panel at *LOSCON 31*, a panelist who

seemed to be very conversant with TV programming was firmly convinced that *Tru Calling* was really dead. But, On March 31, 2005, there was a two part *Tru Calling* that was advertised as the season premier. They were obviously just two programs and not one whole. Anyway, it was good to have it back. (Oh, did they have us fooled!) On April 14, *Tru* apparently discovered Jack Harper's secret when they were in the art museum. However, I could not understand what she said. I have this problem sometimes, usually with female voices. (This can also happen at the movies.) Even if I back up the tape (I tape almost all the TV programs watched and watch them at my convenience) and turn the sound up full, I still cannot understand what is said. Anyway, the series finale was pulled and it appears that the last *Tru Calling* was on April 21st. (When it comes out on DVD, maybe the missing episode will be there.) They replaced it with that piece of crap, *The Simple Life*. As TV Eyes said when I looked *Tru Calling* up on the Internet — "It deserved to be treated better, and so did we!"

They thought it would do better with *Friends* gone. What is it about Paris Hilton, anyhow? She seems mostly to be famous for being famous.

Tru Calling
<http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0364817/>
Paris Hilton
<http://www.imdb.com/name/nm0385296/>

Johnny Carruthers: If you know what *Tru* said was Jack Harper's secret, it will be appreciated if you can tell me. *dreamwatch* #6, and then #7, were obtained at the newsstand to see if I wanted to subscribe. I broke down and called in a subscription. It was to start with #9. But when I cried the woman said they would start it with #8. We'll see as #8 has not as yet been received. (Well, it's only been three weeks.)

Lisa Major: I'm a bit confused by your comment: "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." A photograph nearly four hundred years old?

The four hundred years refers to the time distance between myself and my Welsh ancestor.

— LTM

Joseph T Major: AAA membership card that expires on February 29, 2006? That's a good one. Probably a product of the public schools. Or maybe an alternate Earth?

After reading your review of *The Family Trade* by Charles Stross, the book was obtained from Interlibrary Loan. I then spent an enjoyable evening reading it. I have just one question. Given that the people in the book are "world walkers", why are there only two worlds?

In the second book, *The Hidden Family*, there is a third world, and possibly more to come.

— JTM

Excellent review of *The Dragons of Expectation* by Robert Conquest. "I told you so" is an understatement. I especially enjoyed Chapter VI ("Slouching towards Byzantium"). Also, his deconstruct of John Kenneth Galbraith and Ted Turner/CNN (Chapter XIV). **Martin Morse Wooster** might enjoy the first paragraph of Chapter XVII (p. 191). I do feel that Conquest should have made mention of Walter Duranty. But, Duranty was missing. In 1999, Conquest was interviewed by Brian Lamb on *Booknotes* (C-SPAN) about his book *Reflections on a Ravaged Century*. I have the interview on video tape. It's still available from C-Span on DVD/VHS.

"There are strange things done in the midnight sun — By the men who toil for gold . . ." Robert W. Service has been my favorite poet ever since I found my father's four books (published from 1909 to 1921) of his poetry

when I was about 15. I still have the books. *Prisoners of the North* has been ordered from Interlibrary Loan.

Grant C. McCormick: I gave a copy of your "Why Our Eyes Are A Pain" to my ophthalmologist.

Sheryl Birkhead: What's this about "budesonide" for IBS? I take Dicyclomine (generic for Bentyl).

Milt Stevens: I too enjoy the *Stargate* shows which I just started watching at the beginning of *Stargate Atlantis*. It is my understanding that the next season will be the last for *Stargate SG-1*. Yes, *The Chronicle* was excellent. So, of course they cancelled it just as they did *Farscape*.

Chuck Lipsig: Welcome back.

From: **Milt Stevens** May 18, 2005
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While reading the obituaries in *Alexiad* V4#2, it occurred to me how obituaries frequently make people look far less colorful and controversial than they were in real life. Take for instance G. M. Carr. She was known for promulgating the G. M. Carr Theory of Egoboo. It stated that it didn't matter what people said about you as long as they mentioned your name. It is unknown whether this led to her becoming the only person in fannish history ever to get their head stuck in an elevator door at a worldcon. Nobody ever figured out how she did it. Her theory undoubtedly led to her futzing up one FAPA egoboo poll. In those days, you were allowed to vote a certain number of points in several categories to any member. She voted all her points to herself and came in first place. The rules were changed after that so you couldn't vote for yourself. She was well known as a badass feud fan and quite capable of becoming the enemy of those who had no enemies. She started a campaign against Walt Willis for being un-American. Since everyone knew Walt Willis was a native of Belfast, North Ireland, nobody had ever thought that his being un-American was surprising.

Joseph seems to be learning that when you pull some people's legs they come off. Granted, the Marx Brothers joke should have been obvious. Back when I was in high school, it was sometimes said the Marx Brothers consisted of Groucho, Chico, Harpo, Zeppo, Gummo, and Karl. It's an old joke. However, it's fairly easy to fool people with specific references to books and magazines that never existed. Sometimes, these references become widely circulated. The Contento Index found it necessary to tell people that *Spicy Horror Stories* never existed, but *Spicy Zeppelin Stories* really did. Over the years, I've written quite a few humorous articles about improbable sounding science fiction stories that really existed. I've had a couple of people ask me if there really was a published science fiction story titled "Onslaught of the Druid Girls." Yes, there was.

I don't mind that much pulling

people's legs and having them come off. It's when I do that and their heads come off that bothers me.

"Onslaught of the Druid Girls" was by Ray Cummings and was in the June 1941 *Fantastic Adventures*. They don't write them like they used to.

I haven't thought about *Dangerous Visions* in a long time. I bought it in hardcover when it first came out. I didn't buy it because I was interested in taboo breaking science fiction. I bought it because people were talking about it. Looking over this list of the stories, I find I only remember four of them for the stories themselves; "The Day After the Day the Martians Came," "Gonna Roll the Bones," "Jigsaw Man," and "Eutopia." I think I figured out what the problem was in "Eutopia" somewhere on the first page. I thought it was pretty obvious.

There are a couple of the other stories which I remember for reasons other than the stories themselves. I remember "Go, Go, Go, Said the Bird," because I thought it was a silly title. I didn't remember anything about the story itself. The only reason I remember "Aye, and Gomorrah . . ." was because Gordon Eklund published a Cultzine titled *Frelking in the Woodshed*. I'd read the *Satyricon* before reading *Dangerous Visions*, so I knew eunuchs were receptive to anal sex. So what's so dangerous about this story?

Sonya Dorman, author of "Go, Go, Go, Said the Bird", died on February 15. Fortunately she lived to see her story published.

— JTM

From: **Lloyd Penney** May 21, 2005
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Thank you for the newest *Alexiad*, issue 20, I believe. It's Saturday night, and I'm at home alone, because Yvonne has spent the last few days in Washington, attending the 2005 International Space Development Conference, and she comes home tomorrow. It's a long weekend here, Victoria Day, so at least I get to spend a day and a half with her. So until I pick her up at the airport tomorrow, here's a letter of comment.

Reviewer's notes . . . British fans often think of American fans as humour impaired. I think there's too many humour impaired people everywhere, and just as many people who are simply too eager to be offended, and rage against something usually imaginary. These people are best ignored; otherwise, you'd become just as easily enraged as they are.

As a Canadian, and as a member of the British Commonwealth, I can say that Charles Windsor has spent too much time among his mother's Corgis, for he married a woman who looks like one. Meow! A six-pack of mice and a saucer of milk for me and my catty remark.

The upset monarchists can get a life, and I list them under those too easily offended.

The idea of the *Last Dangerous Visions* has shifted to being one of great promise to one of being a cruel joke. I read *DV* and *Again, DV* a long time ago, and enjoyed them then. I've read a lot of Harlan Ellison's work, fiction and anthology work, and I've no doubt I might have the same opinion of them were I to read them again. And, as I have for a similarly long time, I'd like to see *Last DV*, but would those stories stand the test of time, should that fabled anthology every see print? I think I might like to see it, just out of sheer curiosity. Then we could truly complain about the quality of the stories instead of speculating about their bad quality. I suspect this would also be a reflection on Mr. Ellison's abilities as an anthologist.

Glad you enjoyed the Pierre Berton book. Many Canadians miss him. He was larger than life, in his television, radio and newspaper presence, and by his physical presence. I believe he was 6'9" or 6'10". I think I may have told you in a long-past loc that I met him in a department store downtown; I had to look way up from my own 5'4" to meet him eye to eye. The Canadian media industry, such as it is, has reaped a huge benefit from Berton's presence in it all these years.

As I look at the list of fanzines, I see Bill Bowers listed. A shame he passed away recently; are we ever finished with what we want to do? If we could live until we were done, we'd live forever. And that would be just to pay off the taxes. . . I look forward to the final issue of *Outworlds* that shall be produced posthumously by fans who admired Bill's work, and his ability to publish fannishly.

Re the Hugos: Indeed, Joseph, we'll find out how we did nomination-wise in September some time. Hope still springs eternal.

Well, I may be up for nomination in one more category at L.A. We can but try.

The local . . . Martin Morse Wooster wonders about Sturgeon's Law and the fact we're growing older. That sensawunda gets tougher and tougher to find, and we reminisce about it more than we report on it. The older we get, the more we think that Ted Sturgeon was an optimist. That's why should I want to buy new books, where is a rarity these days, I would look at the reviews in *Locus* and *Emerald City* to see what's good and what's so-so. He's also right in that you don't have to loc every fanzine you get. I don't. Just almost every one, and sometimes they pile up, and I loc the lot. There are some zines I just don't know what to say or even how to respond, so I say thank you, and go on to the next one.

To Trinlay . . . of course, the name Bakka Books refers to the bakka in Fremen legend in the Dune books. The bakka is the weeper who mourns for all mankind. When the current owner purchased the store from the previous, he changed the name slightly to indicate a new beginning, and the store is now Bakka-Phoenix.

I think I may have mentioned the possibility

of a Calgary Worldcon in these pages. Or it might have been elsewhere, but I did mention it somewhere, based on meeting some of the Calgary Convention Centre staffers at a travel trade show here, and letting this event slip. It is possible that John shifted his plans of such a Worldcon to supporting a sudden Montreal bid. Perhaps Taral is under the impression that John was the puppeteer running Torcon 3, and it's just not true. I know John was unhappy over the fact that he was not a senior person on the committee, or an advisor to the chairman, but was an assistant department head. In fact, the Mansfield on the senior BoD was Linda Ross-Mansfield, who replaced me on the board.

E.B. Frohvet's mention of Alan Shepard's ambition reminds me of something Yvonne told me this weekend on the phone from Washington. Shepard wanted to meet Lindbergh; Yvonne has met Erik Lindbergh, the grandson, in the past, but this weekend, she met Burt Rutan and Buzz Aldrin. Some ambitions have a common thread.

Well, *Star Wars* is done, and *Star Trek* is done, at least for some time. As much as I have enjoyed them both, it's time to wrap them up. It marks a milestone for me . . . my entry into fandom came just a few months after the first *Star Wars* movie came out in 1977. As some coincidence, Episode I is on the CBC right now, and a look at Jar-Jar Binks conjured up a reminder of Cecil the Sea-Sick Sea Serpent. I'll put it down to fatigue . . .

So, now kids, wind up your lids,
We'll flip again real soon,
With Beany-boy, *hee hee hee*
And your Obedient Serpent. . .
A Bob Clampett Car-TOOON!

Those were the days, my friends. The things of our youth have that special freshness because they remind us of when we were young. (Of course it was fannish; the "lids" were propellor beanies.)

<http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0052492/>

— JTM

My loc . . . the first fans would look at us today, and label us the worst-possible fakefans. Basic fannish credentials change with time. Buffy and Angel brought in a lot of people I have little in common with, but I had little in common with local fans in 1977. I am happy to report that for once, my employment situation is static. Still with the *Globe and Mail*, and still with BBW, although I am on another daytime assignment. I may not be working fulltime, but two part-time assignments seem to filling the gap admirably.

I will wrap up; I hear fireworks bursting outside in an early celebration of the long weekend. Take care, and I am so looking forward to seeing Yvonne again tomorrow.

From: **Richard Dengrove** March 8, 2005
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It's no wonder you've gotten in trouble when you make satirical statements on the web. It is amazing how few people have a sense of humor.

Over twenty years ago, my office was putting on an open house. Since my agency is the Food and Nutrition Service, I thought it would be great to put up a quote by Leonardo DaVinci: "Man is merely a conduit for food." My boss forbid it. She gave as a reason very few higherups have a sense of humor.

Also, very few people have the slightest empathy for people outside their group. I have to agree the New Leftists and the Hippies who wrote *Dangerous Visions* didn't. It needs no comment.

On the other hand, how close were you, Joe, to the New Left? Were they pro-Communists? My experience was they were pro-Communist only when the Communists were the rebels. They were pro-Ché because he was a rebel, and pro the Viet Cong because it was rebelling against the evil U.S. government.

Other Communists, they were not really pro. Moscow and Peking was viewed with suspicion if memory serves me right. I remember when a professor, an Old Left radical, introduced a top Communist Party theoretician in class, a Dr. Aptheker. Aptheker got booted.

The problem may have been that the Hippy/New Left were not all that different from other Americans, although they were proclaiming it and believing it. I notice the tales in *Dangerous Visions* presume you can sate your desires and live happily ever after. Unhappiness only comes from lack of something. OK, it was sex in the case of the Hippy/New Left as opposed to money for most Americans.

It would have been really revolutionary if *Dangerous Visions* had pointed out that some desires are insatiable. Certainly, the desire for sex seems to be. However, I imagine the readers would have hated it. John Lennon could only sing "no possessions" because people didn't listen to the words.

Of course, we are as parochial as the *Dangerous Visions* crowd. Are the Japanese any worse than us? Are the Japanese media any worse, as the book, *A Public Betrayed*, claims? Our media certainly gangs up on the weak. Our media certainly covers up atrocities at times. Our media certainly railroads innocent men. I know because I live in Washington and see it done everyday.

On the other hand, I agree with Martin Morse Wooster that young people will not be able to correct it because they can't write. That is the main thing I have against the younger generation, lack of coherent sentences.

I agree with him too that we cannot expect them not to webhack and emailhack, and be '60s fans. They have both feet in the new world. Even us old farts have one foot in it.

However, the web and email have not wiped out the need for coherent sentences. In fact, there is a more desperate need now: to make sense out of world that grows more incoherent by the year.

It strikes me as basically ephemeral. Not the convention but the chat, here today, gone when the site expires. Not the fanzine but the blog, lost among thousands of other diaries (you do remember the proposal for a Best Blog Hugo?). We have gone through the Singularity of time-binding; it used to be all-past, now it's no-past.

— JTM

Among the things that has complicated our world is the Priory of Sion Hoax, as popularized by Dan Brown in *The Da Vinci Code*. It certainly confused me. I found out a 19th Century historical novel that, I thought, first mentioned the Priory of Sion was probably itself a hoax.

A propos of the Priory, Robert Kennedy wanted to know how to get the Robert Richardson's Gnosis article. I guess he could write away to the remnants of the old Gnosis. However, it seems to have been reprinted at http://www.alpheus.org/html/articles/esoteric_history/richardson1_print.html.

While Dan Brown has made the world too complicated, so have I. I did for Taras Wolansky. I have to tell Taras I am not an Atheist, like him; but, like him, I believe Christ lived. The question was whether Josephus' writings are good evidence that Christ lived. There is a difference between that and whether I believe Christ lived.

Also, I made the world too complicated when I talked about the novel *Battle of Dorking*. I didn't mean that it had to have future technology to be science fiction. I was just wondering whether it had, and was more like the science fiction we are familiar with.

Finally, I am going to complicate the world further, and I can understand if Joseph doesn't understand me. Donald Morris may have been thorough; but that does not mean he wouldn't have excluded any hub bub over the eclipse during the Zulu War. An eclipse may have carried cultural baggage that made it seem even more insignificant than ammo box straps. . . Maybe not.

On the other hand, I misunderstood Joseph. I thought that his animosity toward PublishAmerica was animosity toward small press. It turns out to be vanity press. It may specifically be PublishAmerica, especially after the statement someone there made about science fiction.

We are not against small press. I don't have any real objection to vanity presses that are honest about what they are and what they can do for their customers.

— LTM

Anyway, that's it for my comments for now.

From: **Sue Burke** May 25, 2005
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Monarchist news from Spain: The Princess of Asturias, doña Letizia, who married don Felipe with splendid celebration last spring, is pregnant. The child, expected in November, will probably be heir to the throne of Spain — probably. Like any good Spaniard, the baby will arrive with controversy.

Article 57, paragraph 1 of the Spanish Constitution, specifies this succession to the throne:

"the earlier shall precede the more distant; within the same degree, the male shall precede the female; and for the same sex, the older shall precede the younger."

So, if this baby is a girl, and Their Highnesses later have a boy, he's the king, and she's just a runner-up.

The Constitution will probably be amended, but an amendment must be passed by two-thirds of both the Congress and the Senate, whose members must then stand for re-election, then they must pass it again, then it must be approved by a general referendum. So far so good; everyone supports equality. That re-election bit is tricky, and there are other amendments under consideration to the Constitution which are more controversial, but if only royal succession was on the referendum it could become a plebiscite on the Crown. . . . Politicians prepared to squabble.

But the happy father-to-be diffused tensions when he smiled and said, "There's generation ahead of the baby, so there's no hurry." This kind of level-headed thinking has endeared the royal family to its subjects. The Prince doesn't care if it's a boy or a girl, by the way, and he hopes for "more than two and less than five" children — three or four, in simple math.

What should the future king or queen be named? In quick surveys, a number of people proposed Pelayo for a boy and Covadonga for a girl, uncommon but not totally weird names. In 722 in Asturias, a nobleman named don Pelayo led a historically decisive victory over the Moors at Covadonga, originally called Cova Dominica, or Cave of Our Lady, an ancient site of worship to the Virgin Mary. Legend says she provided don Pelayo with a miracle, although other historians credit don Pelayo with a thorough understanding of the terrain, which allowed him to ambush the enemy. The victory at Covadonga by don Pelayo is considered the founding moment of the Spanish kingdom.

Crown Princess Mary of Denmark is pregnant, due in October. Princess Mathilde of Belgium, Duchess of Brabant is pregnant, due in October. Doña Letizia, Princess of the Asturias is pregnant, due in November. Crown Princess Mette-Marit of Norway is pregnant, due in December. Amazing how that worked out.

Should Wills name his first son Cerdic, then? Or Hengst? How about, to satisfy Scots opinion,

Kenneth?

— JTM

By the way, there was another Basque separatist bombing this morning in Madrid, but it missed me by 7 kilometers — no serious injuries, in fact. I'm guessing that the cloud of smoke passing overhead right now is from a grassfire. There's a drought this year that is already serious and could become disastrous.

From: **George W. Price** May 29, 2005
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I find I must amend Advent's offer in the April *Alexiad* of a \$20 price for pre-publication orders for Joe Major's forthcoming *Heinlein's Children: The Juveniles* (to be published at \$25). Orders from Canada must not only be paid in U.S. dollars, the check must be payable on a bank *in the U.S.* — either a U.S. bank, or a U.S. branch of a Canadian bank. Or use an international money order payable on a U.S. bank. The reason is that Advent's bank nicks us \$10 for cashing a check that won't go through the U.S. clearinghouse. As before, send checks to Advent at P.O. Box A3228, Chicago, IL 60690.

* * * * *

Alexis Gilliland — responding to Brad Foster's wondering why his father had to pay income tax on his Social Security and military pension, instead of just deducting it at the source — notes that you can have the government make a deduction, but it won't be for the exact amount owed. You still have to file a return and pay the balance or get a refund. In this case, I must admit, the bureaucracy knows what it's doing. The government has no way to know what other income you might have, nor what your exemptions and deductibles might be, so there's no way it can calculate the exact amount owed. And it's not just pensioners; the same applies to government workers, including active-duty military personnel. Everybody has to file.

Department of Mixed Blessings: A month ago I was startled to receive a tax refund check about one-third larger than I had calculated. It was followed by a letter from the IRS stating that I had made a mistake in calculating the tax on our Social Security. Well, I was glad to get the money — but the buggers didn't say what the mistake was! So if I can't figure it out for myself, I'm likely to make the same mistake next year. One more argument for abolishing the income tax and going to some sort of national sales tax!

I started using TurboTax e-filing a couple of years ago and such problems don't seem to be bothering me anymore. Now if I could only remember to get the Deluxe Edition right off . . .

— JTM

From: **AL du Pisani**

June 1, 2005

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I am reluctant to once again write a letter bemoaning my lot in life. That is what had happened last time, and I had to tear up the letter for dripping too much self-pity. I had hoped to write a cheerful letter, in which I could lightly run over what have been happening to me since my last letter.

(Was in a non-serious car accident — I was not hurt, and my bakkie suffered light damage. Broke a tooth and had to have it pulled. Still at the same job — now working even longer hours than before, but at least I am now getting paid overtime. And that in another two weeks I will be going on holiday to my family in the Northern Cape. I am so looking forward to it.)

Unfortunately, during the past week or so, I have been involved in incidents at work that make me worry about keeping my job. I have been trying to get out of the job, on and off, for the past three years, but I do not like the possibility of getting fired from it.

The job market is picking up again, and there does seem to be a possibility that somebody with my background, race, culture, sex and training being able to get a job. I have just been too busy to actively look for a new job. I do have my CV out in the market, but will need to go and beat the bushes, to get a new job.

Now for some news from South Africa: I have mentioned the Shabir Shaik corruption trial in previous letters. After eleven months of on and off trial, judgement is being delivered. So far the judge has been talking for two days. Looks as if he will take another couple of days to finish. The big question is if Shaik will go down, and if he will take Jacob Zuma (the current vice President of SA) with him.

I have heard an interesting tidbit two years ago, when attending the synod to which my congregation belongs, nugal. According to this tidbit, just about every MP in South Africa, especially the junior ones, is technically bankrupt. See, when all the new MPs got to parliament, the banks were falling over each other to grant these new MPs an overdraft facility on their cheque accounts, to grant credit cards, to grant them vehicle finance and home loans. So eager, that they did not notice that every one of the four big banks granted the same people the same very generous debt packages. And the MPs went and accepted all of what was offered.

So, a couple of years down the line, the banks start to find out that the MPs are having difficulty in repaying their debts. Which is when they found out that these people's debt situation is a lot worse than what they had anticipated. It is so bad that they cannot attempt to move against any one of the people in trouble, because once you move against one, you have to move against all, and they have the power to revoke that bank's banking licence.

And I thought the US House of Representatives bank scandal was bad! (They had to close it.)

Talking about money: About eight months ago, the current monolithic R5 coin was replaced in new issue with a new two tone R5 coin. There have just been two problems with the new coin: For one, most of the coin operated machines do not accept the coins. For another, the coins themselves are still scarce. I touched the first new R5 coin some four months after the date it was introduced. It have become more common since, but most of the R5 coins in circulation are still the old ones.

About three months ago, all bank notes started to be replaced with a new issue. This was launched with lots of fanfare, and an advertising campaign instructing people to be on the lookout for Makoya Moolah. Strangely enough, these notes have been a lot easier to get hold of than the new R5 coins. At the moment, all the bank notes in my wallet are of the new type.

Education in South Africa seems to be going ahead, even as it slips behind. For instance: It appears that the government Department of Education is spending 95% of its time in trying to destroy "traditionally white" schools. This is about 5% of all schools, and are schools that have mostly white teachers, and a tradition of excellence. (Even if only in comparison with the rest of schools.) These are schools that require all pupils to speak one language, for instance Afrikaans. And these are schools that have a concept of discipline: Pupils are there to be taught, and they are supposed to behave.

In my congregation there is a lawyer that has had 93 cases in which he represented a school board against the Department of Education. Where the Department tries to force schools to do something they do not want to. He has lost one case on a technicality. The government have responded by changing the law, so that they are allowed to force schools to do things the school does not want to do.

Here is the good point: Every single one of those schools has a waiting list of pupils, white and non-white, waiting to come in. I am living in an area where government have been negligent in supplying the schools necessary for the current population, and where there has been an explosion in new building over the past five to six years. Yet every single school is full. And about half of the pupils come here from Soweto. Their mothers may be domestic workers, but they insist that their children will be getting a decent education. Even if the children have to catch four taxis in the morning, taking four hours to get to school. This is so bad that I am told that there are three schools with a capacity of 800 pupils each, standing empty in Soweto. This is because the parents do not trust those schools, and associated teachers, to do a good job.

And the schools: South Africa is sure catching up with the US! (This is not a good thing.)

In the area a new low cost housing development, Cosmo City, was recently launched. It was expected that this would lead to an influx of black people into a mostly white area. Strangely enough, only half of the people

buying the initial development properties have been black. The rest are mostly white and coloured. Which mean that my church has to pay attention to the development, as a matter of urgency.

Strangely enough, the two items in my life currently giving me the most energy are the meetings of SFSA, and of my local congregation.

Now, I am a member of the Dutch Reformed Church (Afrikaans: Nederduits Gereformeerde Kerk or NG for short.) This have been one of the three (white) sister churches that most Afrikaners belonged to. (To become a member of the Apartheid era Broederbond, one prerequisite was membership on a congregation of one of the three sister churches. The others were, I think, to be male, Afrikaans speaking and married.)

Now there have been talks about church unity between the three sister churches, but the internal cultural and dogmatic differences have been too much. However, the NG church was the white member of the NG church family, comprising of the coloured NG Mission Church (NGSK), the black NG Church in Africa (NGKA), and the Indian Reformed Church of Africa (RCA). And these four churches have been in talks about re-unification since 1965. Which was in the heart of the Apartheid era.

Now, one of the ways for people to say things the Apartheid government did not like, get away with it and get decent news coverage, was for a church leader to say it. And for a bunch of years during the 1980's one of these activist church leaders had been Dr Alan Boesak, of the NSGK. Unfortunately for the man's political ambitions, at the time that the government transferred from the old National Party to the ANC, Dr Boesak ran into some trouble. For one, it became public that for the second time, he had been cheating on his wife. (He could convince the church council of his church that the first time he cheated on his wife, it became public due to government operatives trying to discredit him.)

This time the government was supremely indifferent to what he had been up to, as it had more important fish to fry. And this time his wife did not stand by him, and he eventually divorced her and married the (white) journalist he had been having the fling with. Now, one strange thing in the church order of the NG church family, is that you can only be a minister while coupled to a congregation. (There may have been one or two exceptions, if they were in synodal service, but all those jobs were starting to be phased out, and is today almost completely phased out.) And Dr Boesak's congregation told him that they would accept his resignation.

That would not have been the end of it, except that the Foundation for Peace and Justice, of which he was one of the directors, ran into some trouble. See, one of the Scandinavian countries that have been donating money into the Foundation for poverty alleviation, came to have a look at what had been done with the money. And the Foundation could not tell them. Which lead to Dr Boesak ending up in court, and sent to jail on fraud charges.

He has come out of jail since then, have been granted amnesty (while he vigorously maintains his innocence), and have become coupled to a new, rural congregation. And seems to be on his way to becoming a major player in the church once again.

Why did I tell you this story? (I hope that it interests you.) Because it is relevant today. You see, one of the things he had been involved in, as Moderator (leader of the general synod, i.e. all congregations in the church) of the NSGK, has been the Confession of Belhar. This was accepted in 1984, declared Apartheid a sin, and called for unity in the NG church family.

After his removal from the church area, the NSGK and NGKA merged into the VGK (United Reformed Church), and accepted the Confession of Belhar as a statement of faith. Except that this merger did not complete: Half of the NGKA rejected the Confession of Belhar as a statement of faith, and is still operating as a entity.

Now my church has gotten into the mess, trying to have unity talks with the three parties. Where accepting the Confession of Belhar is a prerequisite for unity the one way, and is a stumbling block, the other way. When my General Synod put out a statement of intent to talk seriously about unity, and mentioned the problems, this was received enormously negatively. Until some of the people talking to each other found out none of the other parties had actually read the statement.

Oh, and guess who is driving a movement to unify the NG church family? If you say Dr Alan Boesak, you would be right.

So, why am I telling you about this: To give you an idea of that which is currently giving me energy. It is enormously satisfying to work for a voluntary organisation that is active and dynamic. A place where what I do grants my life meaning.

As I do not get that from my job. And, on the SF side, we have not yet become insane enough to launch our bid for a Worldcon. (But watch this space!)

Thank you for providing me a window to people with similar interests to mine.

Thank you for providing us with
a window on a different part of the
world.

— JTM

From: **Taras Wolansky** June 1, 2005
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Alexiad 4.2: "Too dumb to be serious and too otiose to be a joke." Joe, some of your jokes are so inside that you're the only one who understands them! (The advantage of being your own editor.) Reading those Marx Brothers obituaries, I would have twigged to the fact they were parodies/alternate histories but, knowing little about the real biographies (or even the real first names), I would have gotten few of the jokes.

Please tell me I mis-read the
editorial



"The Norwegian researchers at Troll Station will conduct observations during the upcoming Antarctic winter." Another "extinct" species rediscovered!

Review of **Dangerous Visions** (1967) — "Riders of the Purple Wage": **"A non-starter . . . another iteration of 'post-scarcity' theory"**. As if human wants will run out. Or, in other words, in a "post-scarcity" economy all the readers of *Alexiad* will have personal starships — and will grumble about renting only a continent and not the whole planet, as in Jack Vance's "Ullward's Retreat". Vance is one of the wise ones.

The post-scarcity economists forgot that land was inherently "scarce". Theobald doesn't even mention the issue in Teg's 1994. As for the other point, he should have read Pohl's "The Man Who Ate the World" as well as "The Midas Plague".

Turns out, when the post-scarcity folks speak of all wants being satisfied, they mean all wants they approve of.

Review of "Eutopia": **"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"**. Compare the movie, *Stargate*, which I walked out on, with the TV series, *Stargate SG-1*, which is unfailingly intelligent (judging from a random sample of about 20 episodes). Ellison himself edited a story in *Again, Dangerous Visions* about an explorer who travels to a parallel world in which lobotomized humans are treated like farm animals, meets the (lobotomized) local analog of the woman he loved — and immediately has sex with her. My impression from Ellison's intro to the story was that he instigated the author to write that idiotic scene. It's "In the Barn", by Piers Anthony. Figures.

"What was new, thrilling, exciting, and shocking then is now trite, old, and irrelevant." This is why Ellison's aborted *Last Dangerous Visions* is the greatest literary crime in the history of SF. Many authors never bothered to retrieve their work from the cardboard boxes under Ellison's bed, because they knew time had long passed them by. In some cases, careers may have been aborted as well.

Review of Charles Stross' *The Family Trade*: "Their family relations have all the amiability and affability of a snake pit". Not really a Piper influence there; and if Zelazny then indirectly Philip Jose Farmer. Zelazny's "Amber" series, with its murderous siblings, was inspired by the backstory of Farmer's *The Maker of Universes* and *The Gates of Creation*, themselves probably taking inspiration from the Jacobean revenge tragedies.

Piper took much of the politics of Lord Kalvan from Italian Renaissance politics, so that sort of behavior would follow suit.

Review of Bernard Cornwell's *The Last Kingdom*: I've heard it said that the mythical Viking horned helmet came from an over-literal interpretation of medieval images, in which Vikings are presented as devils.

"To the Last Roll Call": Interesting that you say the last Civil War veteran died in 1956. I have a clear recollection from my childhood of watching a black and white TV news report of the death of the last Civil War veteran. It must have been one of the fake Confederate veterans you spoke of.

Joy V. Smith: "James P. Hogan is recommending Holocaust denial sites?!" Hogan has some cranky views, about Velikovsky and whether HIV causes AIDS, but this would be a surprise. Or is it one of those "guilt by distant association" deals; e.g., Planned Parenthood publishing Nazi eugenicists back in the 1930s?

Eugenicists: have you read *War Against the Weak*? And Hogan's webpage has a link to the IHR's

— JTM

John Hertz: I've read *Don Quixote*. Then again, I think it was assigned reading for a college course.

Jim Sullivan: (Review of *Will in the World*.) My own reading of Shakespeare's sonnets makes me doubt the story that "Will seems to have fallen in love with a young male aristocrat", though it's possible that fellow fell in love with Shakespeare. Compare the "homosexual" sonnets with the clearly heterosexual ones. The former, for all their stylized praise of male beauty, repeatedly urge the young man to marry. (I imagine the young man's father slipping Shakespeare a few pounds to put that in!) The latter show more of the jealousy and vividness of real, sexual love.

All this is assuming that there is any biographical content whatsoever in the sonnets. As critics have pointed out, Shakespeare was writing in a genre: neither the young man nor the dark lady, nor "greasy Joan", may have actually existed. On the other hand, it is a problem for Oxfordians that several of the sonnets play games with the word/name, "Will".

Milt Stevens: "Some of the darkest people I've ever seen were East Indians." Same here; when we talk about color discrimination, we are really using a euphemism.

"**Forbidden Planet could easily have been the first episode of Star Trek.**" My first thought was: it *was* the first episode. That is, *Forbidden Planet* is the immediate source for *Star Trek*; the more distant source being A.E. Van Vogt's *Mission to the Stars* ("Lost: Fifty Suns", "The Storm", "The Mixed Men"). My second thought was: *Forbidden Planet* did it better. My third thought was: A.E. Van Vogt did it better, too!

From: **Martin Helgesen** June 1, 2005
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That was an interesting retrospective of *Dangerous Visions*. I remembered some of the stories but had forgotten some others so completely that I didn't recognize the descriptions of them. Incidentally, the Fundamentalist fantasy writer best known for *This Present Darkness* and its sequel *Piercing the Darkness* is Frank Peretti, not Charles.

In discussing Deborah E. Lipstadt's book *History on Trial* Joe observes that we live under "a legal system where procedure is everything and factual content is nothing." Nat Hentoff, in a Village Voice column entitled "Terri Schiavo: Judicial Murder. Her crime was being disabled, voiceless, and at the disposal of our media," gave many examples of Judge Greer and the appeals courts ignoring facts and quoted Ralph Nader as saying, "The court is imposing process over justice." The entire column is available at: http://www.villagevoice.com/news/0513_hentoff.62489.6.html

Grant C. McCormick concludes his essay on the eye by saying, "The eye has long been used as an argument against evolution ('What use is half an eye?'). I think it is only appropriate that it be used as an argument for evolution instead." I haven't read much about the evolution controversy, partly because I have no problem with the idea that God used evolution as an instrument of creation. However, as I understand it, the argument is that the various components of the eye have no evolutionary survival value by themselves. They have to work together. From the point of view of someone who believes that God created the universe his objection based on ways in which the eye could have been designed better is one aspect of the general question, "Why did God create the universe the way He did?" One answer to that question is, "We don't know", a reply that should gladden the heart of any agnostic.

Alexis A. Gilliland refers to me as "Marty Hegelsen". My name frequently is misspelled and mispronounced in many ways and it doesn't bother me. I mention it now only say that that particular misspelling appeared once in MINNEAPA. Doug Hoylman noticed it and commented, "Marty Hegelsen? You kant be serious."

As for "over and out", I know what it has become in practice, but using the official definitions, it is contradictory. Here is a site with an official list of radio prowords:

<http://basic.armystudyguide.com/ctt/113-571-1022.htm>

Joe says to Sheryl Birkhead, "The cats would be astonished that I was three times as much as them." Does that mean he has 27 lives?

Joe says to Milt Stevens that the guys doing *ST: Enterprise* could have had Leslie Nielsen as Starfleet Admiral Adams. Leslie Nielsen already appeared in a science fiction movie, *The Creature Wasn't Nice aka Spaceship aka Naked Space*. That last title obviously was intended to evoke thoughts of the *Naked Gun* movies. That's why I bought a cheap, remaindered DVD with that title. It is bad, nowhere near as funny as the other movies.

It was initially released in 1981 and retitled when the others came out.

<http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0082213/>

Lloyd Penney mentions watching the original Star Trek. I watched the first episode of Star Trek and didn't see it again for months. That was not a choice. My Army Reserve unit met the day it was on and I saw the first episode only because there was no meeting scheduled that week.

I strongly agree with Robert S. Kennedy about the distinction between "sex" and "gender". When I first saw mentions of "gender studies" I said it was a very specialized branch of grammar. I did know what the users meant, but I reject it. However, considering that the phrase "have sex" can be used with a specific meaning (cf. Clinton, passim) his comment, "Words have gender, people have sex," presents interesting ideas. How do words do it?

How can you deny words their right to sexual expression in their own fashion?

— JTM

Joe asks, in connection with my statement that I keep a small jar of preserves for sandwiches in hotels' ice buckets while at cons, "What happens when the hotel's ice machines run out, thanks to the con's demands?" That's never happened to me. I refill the ice bucket in the morning when the machines have refilled themselves. I usually check it again in the late afternoon.

WAHF:

Lloyd Daub, with various items of interest.
Rykandar Korra'ti, with a report on the NorWesCon fanzine lounge.

See you at ConGlomeration, we hope.

AN ANDROMEDA STRAIN

by Paul Gadzikowski.



EMAIL I NEVER FINISHED READING

From: malwoj419@hotmail.com
 To:
 Sent: 13 April 2005 02:33
 Subject: URGENT REQUEST

Compliments, With humble heart and spirit I commit myself this day to write to you asking for your benevolent and kind consideration of my plight for assistance .I am making this contact on behalf of my family not minding the consequences but hoping that you will understand our predicament and come to our aid and assist us. I would also want to apologize for any inconveniences or embarrassment this might cause your person, as we neither know each other personally nor have had any previous contact or correspondence .

This letter to you is as a result of information and esteem recommendation I received from the local branch of the International Chamber of commerce, on your credibility and reliability with regard to business dealings. Indeed it may come to you as a surprise but it was borne out of my sincere desire to share a mutual business relationship with you. First, your strictest confidence in this transaction is highly solicited. This is by virtue of its nature as being utterly confidential and top secret with its success based entirely on mutual trust, cooperation and an uncompromisable high level of confidentiality

In unfolding this proposal, I want to count on you, as a respected and honest person to handle this transaction with sincerity, trust and confidentiality. I have decided to seek a confidential co-operation with you in the execution of the deal described Hereunder for the benefit of all parties and hope you will keep it as a top secret because of the nature of this transaction. I came to know of you in my private search for a reliable and reputable person to handle this confidential transaction which involves the transfer of a huge sum of money to a foreign account requiring maximum confidence

I am Mrs. MALGORZATA WOJYTŁA wife of deceased JOHN PAUL II, who until his unfortunate death on the 2d of April 2005 was the Bishop, Patriarch and Pope of Rome. Among his personal effects was a banking account in THE BANK OF ITALY in the sum of €127,000,000 (ONE HUNDRED TWENTY SEVEN MILLION EUROS).

Due to the banking laws and personal rules of the Republic of Italy I am handicapped in removing this sum to my homeland in Poland. I wish to have this funds, which have lingered for long in the bank transferred overseas as soon as possible as there recent eyebrows being raised as regards the funds and further leaving the money in the bank here might jeopardize my claim to it. I write to solicit for your assistance in helping provide a trusted bank account where tax will not take a large toll on the money as I have completed all necessary documentation to the release of this fund. . . .

Co-Editors: Lisa & Joseph Major
 Co-Publishers: Joseph & Lisa Major
 Writers, Staff: Major, Joseph & Major, Lisa

Art: What we are mainly looking for is small fillos. Your fillo will probably be scanned in and may be reused, unless you object to its reuse.

Contributions: This is not a fictionzine. It is intended to be our fanzine, so be interesting.

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ALEXIAD

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