

ALEXIAD

(ΑΛΞΙΑΔ)

\$2.00

Monday afternoon I came home to find that the weekend operation on Barbaro, a last-ditch effort to save the colt, had failed. Sunday night the colt had been in great distress and early Monday the decision was made to end the colt's misery. The Jacksons had persevered as long as the colt seemed to be enjoying his life. It was the same decision I made with Sulla during his last illness. Of course, Sulla didn't have most of the country focused on what was happening with him. Laminitis is very tricky and Barbaro had it in three feet. Thoroughbred racing can be a brutal business sometimes. Perhaps Barbaro's death will save the lives of other horses. It has already resulted in increased funding for laminitis research. To be honest, I kept my emotional distance from Barbaro's struggle for life. I would have rejoiced had the colt made it but after losing Elfling I didn't want to care too much about another animal with a very poor chance of living.

— Lisa

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Great Lent begins **February 21, 2007**
February 26, 2007 St. Photini
 Pascha (Orthodox Easter) is **April 8, 2007**

Printed on February 6, 2007
 Deadline is **April 10, 2007**

Reviewer's Notes

Fred Pohl made a point in *The Age of the Pussyfoot* (1966, 1969) that inflation has tended to obscure. (For example, my copy cost 95¢ but I doubt you could get it except as part of a Pohl Novelscombined edition that would contain two other books and be \$24.95 hc/\$6.99 pb, but I digress.) The hero is frozen after dying in a fire, and is revived and reconstructed. He thinks he's got it made, having a quarter of a million dollars from his trust. Then he looks at his bank statement and finds that he blew \$20k on his first night at his welcome-to-the-new-world party. It's not inflation. It's that there is so much extra to buy. That wireless voice-activated internet connection. All right, that wasn't what Pohl (or should we call him "Φred", in the old fannish tradition?) said, but that is what he described.

Technology advances. As with the fannish nickname. Properly, I should have done an overstrike of a slash and a capital O (thus, "O") for the phi character. That was how they did it in the Futurians; but they didn't have true type fonts with Greek characters.

We have systems that theoretically should make us more productive. (All right, Chris Garcia does.) It seems easier to sit around and chat — or type on the wind.

— Joe

RANDOM JOTTINGS

by Joe



TRINLAY KHADRO

I've finally read Gavin Menzies's *1421: The Year China Discovered America* (2002, 2003) and I wasn't impressed by it. He has imbibed the wisdom of Hjalmar Holand and Barry Fell, one might say. By putting together a few bits of events and a stupendous amount of speculation, interpretation, and handwaving, he has described a stunning world-spanning expedition that touched everywhere except Europe. And, conveniently, had its records destroyed and/or lost.

I was somewhat offput when he had one of Cheng Ho's [Zheng He's] subordinates circumnavigate Greenland, return home via the Northeast Passage, and somehow sail by Iceland without being noticed by the locals. It just requires pushing back the expansion of the Arctic ice pack by 200 years.

Another admiral apparently discovered the South Shetlands and South Georgia, not to mention the Antarctic Peninsula. This is based on some islands on the Piri Re's Map. Menzies also uses the Vinland Map, which is a forgery.

In the ultimate gaffe, he keeps on addressing the Yung-lo [Yongle] emperor *by name*. Such behavior would have had the offender's entire family, if not clan, exterminated while he himself would suffer the ling-ch'ih [lingchi].

I predict that Jo Walton's *Farthing* will win the Sidewise Award for 2006.

Back on November 13 of last year, **Jeff Bezos** finally did something with all that money from selling BigSouthAmericanRiver.com stock.

<http://public.blueorigin.com>

You can see the flight of the Goddard test vehicle for the proposed New Shepard suborbiter. Warning; it's **LOUD!** They also have a job search, but they're looking for engineers. Presumably they will be a little more rigorous than Gary Hudson (of Rotary Rocket).

That only went up 285 feet; hey, it didn't explode or crash. Keep an eye on this little suborbiter; maybe he's going to shoot Stephen Hawking up into space, as he wants. (Really got to get back to the *Enterprise* for another hand or two with LTCDR Data & co, I guess.)

"FoxTrot" has gone to Sunday only, but Brooke McEldowney still has "9 Chickweed Lane" (available on Yahoo.com and Comics.com) and "Pibgorn" (only on Comics.com). It's bracing to find a comic strip with lines like:

"Gentlemen, you are a disgusting pod of antediluvian reprobates for whom satyriasis and the comb-over are intellectual achievements . . . and I, for one, thank you."

— "9 Chickweed Lane", January 3, 2007

And why he said that was pretty neat, too.

May 2007 seems to be a busy month for Pacific War what-ifs. Forthcoming then are:

1945 by Robert Conroy — what if Japan had refused to surrender in August?

Pearl Harbor, A Novel of December 8th by William R. Forstchen and Newt Gingrich — what if Yamamoto had personally commanded the Pearl Harbor strike?

MacArthur's War by Douglas Niles and Michael Dobson — what if the Japanese had won the Battle of Midway, and MacArthur had been given full authority in the Pacific?

The costs of buying these will cause my checking account *Days of Infamy*, it may be *The End of the Beginning* of my day, and the burden of reading them will be as heavy as a *Burning Mountain* on my soul, but after doing so my heart will be *Lighter Than a Feather*, even if it causes the *Downfall* of my vision. All thanks to Harry Turtledove, Alfred Coppel, and David Westheimer for pioneering the way.

He's back.

Sir Edmund Hillary, leader of the third expedition to reach the South Pole over the ice, and I seem to recall he went up a hill or two as well, returned to the Scott Station that he had helped build in 1957 on January 20 to celebrate its fiftieth anniversary.

He deplored the condition of the heritage exploration huts at Cape Royds, Cape Evans, and Hut Point, and particularly the failure of the British government to contribute to the ongoing restoration project. As for his decision to take his depot-laying team and head for the Pole ahead of Sir Vivian Fuchs's team, he said, "I feel I was slightly more irresponsible and the sort of Shackleton type and I was happy to be that way."

David Eddings, fantasy author, had a severe fire at his home in Carson City, Nevada on January 25 that destroyed the garage and damaged the office. It began when he tried to find out if the liquid on the floor of the garage was water or gasoline. Eddings did not qualify for a Darwin Award.

We regret to report the death of **Emiliano Mercado del Toro** on **January 24, 2007** at his home in Isabella, Puerto Rico. Born **August 21, 1891** in Cabo Rojo, Puerto Rico (then a Spanish

colony), Mercado del Toro joined the U.S. Army in 1918 and was in training when the Armistice was signed. Thus, at the time of his death, he was the oldest veteran alive, the oldest veteran of World War One, and indeed the oldest person in the world.

We regret to report the death of **Robert Meier** on **January 29, 2007** while hospitalized in Witten, Nordrhein-Westfalen, Germany. Born **March 10, 1897** in Sergejewka (Serhiivka [Сєрпїївка]), Ukraine, Meier served in the German (Prussian, I suppose) Army and was a front-line veteran of World War I, perhaps the last one left. At the time of his death he was the oldest man in Germany. For his 109th birthday he posed wearing a pickelhaube and a sweatshirt saying "109 na und" ("109 so what").

But as year follows year, more old men disappear,
Someday no one will march there at all.

— Eric Bogle, "And the Band Played 'Waltzing Matilda'"

OBITS

We regret to report the death of **Richard Harris "Dick" Eney**, famous fifties fan, on December 22, 2006, of complications from a stroke. Born **September 13, 1932** (or so the majority of references say), Eney was the compiler of *Fancyclopedia II* (1959), and had more recently returned to electronic fandom in what was his usual controversial way.

We regret to report the death of **Robert Anton Wilson** on January 11, 2007. Born January 18, 1932, Wilson was best known for his writings on political and conspiratorial matters, highlighted by his best-known work, the *Illuminatus!* Trilogy (1975), co-authored with Robert Shea. Fnord.

MONARCHIST NEWS

As you know, until the Third Partition in 1795, the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth was designated a Republic ("Republic of Both Nations" [Polish: *Rzeczpospolita Obojga Narodów*; Lithuanian: *Abiejū tautų respublika*]) but nevertheless its head of state was a King. Currently, the Polish Sejm is considering reinstating the office. And electing Jesus to it. Oy.

World Equestrian Champion **Zara Anne Elizabeth Phillips**, daughter of **Anne, Princess Royal** [Princess Anne Elizabeth Alice Louise] has been named a Member of the Order of the British Empire (M.B.E.) in the 2007 New Year's Honours List.

Meanwhile her mother has visited the British Antarctic Survey's Rothera Base on Adelaide Island off the Antarctic Peninsula and sailed on HMS *Endurance*.

THINGS BY THE ROAD

by Joe

We first noticed them not long after Lisa got interested in cameras. We were always looking for new things for her to photograph, and I happened to glance in her direction while on the last bit of the interstate before going south to Evansville and eventually Henderson, and there they were, beyond her, by the road.

I pulled the car over not too far past the place and then backed up some. Lisa got out and began taking shots with her cameras. The owner had heard the noise (there are rumble strips all along the shoulder of the road there), came out, and called to us that we really couldn't take good pictures from the road, but we could come and take an up-close look.

A craftsman likes to see his work admired. What this particular one does is to buy models of airplanes from the store, take the lines off them, and use those as templates to build very large models in metal. Some of these are over six feet long. They stand on posts in his yard, where they can be seen from the interstate.

The propellor planes have propellers that turn in the wind, the helicopters rotors that do likewise, and the big honking A-10 has fans in the engines that rotate. The planes are painted in proper colors with unit insignia.

Oh, the maker? His name is Lloyd Krohn, though he prefers to be called "Tud". For all his apparent defensive belligerence (i.e., bumper stickers on the shop wall saying "Driver Carries Twenty Dollars Worth of Ammunition") he is polite and enthusiastic about his work; more than glad to show it to anyone who is interested. He also makes windmills.

You'd have better luck buying one of those windmills; he said that only one of his planes was up for sale, and it's \$\$\$\$ (Talk to him about it if you want it.) He doesn't seem interested in leaving or giving them to museums, though I fancy the Air Force Museum in Dayton would be interested. Now if they were to commission something from him . . .

Oh, how to get there? Simple enough. We were on Interstate 64 going west through Indiana, almost at the exit for Evansville. We took Exit 29 going North, on Indiana 57 (instead of south on I-164). Then it was easy: take the first right (at the gas station, on Nobles Chapel Road), take the first right (on County Road 1100 W), and take the first right (on Dassel Drive), his house was the last one on the left (11133 Dassel Drive, Elberfeld, IN 47613-9127 USA; kacey@evansville.net).

We have a lot of pictures of his works. You really can take a decent picture from the road, though up-close is better. If you look at his house with Google Satellite Maps, you can see the models in the yard!

OPOSSUM IN THE HOUSE

by Lisa

Wednesday morning I am heading out to work when I hear a crash just ahead of me. Sarang comes bolting from the entryway. Since

he is the obvious culprit I yell at him and shoo him from underfoot. In the entryway I see that part of the false ceiling has fallen. I start moving prize model horses from another part which looks ready to fall. Not until I have moved two or three do I see the dark brown and black shape hiding behind them. None of the cats are dark brown and black.

I blink and the shape resolves itself into an opossum. A wild opossum. A big wild opossum. Its body stretches almost the whole length of the shelf. I have yelled at the wrong animal.

I hastily retreat from the entryway and drag the big heavy chair forward to barricade the opossum into the entryway. I then make a frantic call to Joe, who comes running from work.

We stare at the opossum and it stares back. I know I cannot reach the opossum the way I could reach a dog or a cat but I don't think it can hurt to try, so I begin talking to the opossum. I tell it we will not hurt it unless we have to and that we like animals enough to live with some. And maybe I do get through for the opossum does not hiss at us and only bares its teeth when we try to maneuver it into a cat carrier.

It jumps from the shelf and whips in frantic terror around our feet. A few seconds later the opossum runs into the place between the wooden door and the glass door. It turns and crouches atop my purse. I see mingled fear, defiance and a desperate plea to be let out in its eyes.

Joe grabs the broom and pushes the door open. The opossum bolts in a blur of black and brown fur from the house. We exhale in deep sighs of relief and leave.

The opossum had climbed up under the siding and gnawed a hole in the wall. I'll never enjoy "Pogo" again. The original lead character of Walt Kelly's strip was a little boy named Bumbazine. One day he just disappeared. Did Pogo and Albert take him out for a walk in the swamp, where you can bury a body so no one will ever find it?

— Joe

**FACIAM UT ANIMUS MEUS
SCRUTETUR — PARS III**
Review by Joseph T Major of
ROME

<http://www.hbo.com/rome/>
<http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0384766/>

Meministine cum nos solum in
nuptiis obviam eramus?

— *Lingua Latina Occasionibus Omnibus*
(MMDCCCLVII), Henricus Barbatu
scripsit, pagina XCIV

AT A FUNERAL

Remember when we only used to
run into each other at weddings?

— *Latin for All Occasions* (2004), Henry
Beard, Page 94

In the Middle Kingdom, it is the fifth year of

the Chuyuan [Ch'u Yuan] era of the Han Yuan Di [Yuan Ti] Emperor. Across the Hellenic Oikumene, it is the first year of the one hundred eighty-fourth Olympiad. In tiny Judea, and to its many children scattered across the world, it is the thirty-seven hundred and seventeenth year since the creation of the world. In Rome itself, it is the seven hundred and tenth year since the Foundation of the city, the consulship of C. Iulius et M. Antonius. Precisely, it is Idus Martis AUC DCCX — the Ides of March, and the prediction of Spurinna the Etruscan haruspex, the soothsayer who bade Caesar beware the Ides of March, has been fulfilled.

At the end of the last season, Xena (Lucy Lawless) and Gabrielle (Renee O'Connor) had been taken down from the crosses and put on ice . . . oops, er, well, we saw **Titus Pullo** (Ray Stevenson) and **Eirene** (Chiara Mastalli), now reconciled, walking into the distance. **Lucius Vorenus** (Kevin McKidd) was sitting in the courtyard of his insula, holding the body of his dead wife, Niobe (Indira Varma), and weeping, glaring at the boy who was not *their* grandson but *her* son. **Mark Antony** [Marcus Antonius] (James Purefoy) was looking over the conspirators, including **Marcus Brutus** [Marcus Iunius Brutus] (Tobias Menzies), who had just murdered Caesar (Ciarán Hinds). **Octavius** [Gaius Octavius Thurinus] (Max Pirkis) was taking his mother **Atia** [Atia Balbia Caesonia] (Polly Walker) away from the gloating declaration of Brutus's mother, Caesar's former lover **Servilia** [Servilia Caepionis] (Lindsay Duncan).

Season II, Episode One: "Passover"

a.d. XIX Kalendas Februarius
(January 14)

And now we see Mark Antony leaving the Senate. Where Quintus (Rick Warden) and a few friends are waiting. Fortunately, Antony is a bit less encompassed, and manages to boogie. Posca (Nicholas Woodeson) recovers from his assault, goes into the abandoned Senate House, tries to tidy up Caesar's body, and ends up bringing him home on a barrow.

At their home, Atia and Octavius begin considering their options. Which from her perspective seem to be mostly packing up and finding some more congenial clime. Timon (Lee Boardman) and a minyan turn up, understanding that here and now (24 Adar I 3717) you sit shivah with weapons. [Pesach isn't even for another couple of months.] Then Antony turns up, looking distraught, and joins in the clamor, though Octavius thinks it might not be such a good idea. They decide to take along Calpurnia (Haydn Gwynne), Caesar's widow.

Calpurnia is grieving in a traditional Roman style (the mother's milk is neat). She insists that her guests stay for the reading of the will. Reading wills is always fun. Posca does the honors, and besides his own freedom and a grant of LXXV denarii a head to the people, the will makes Octavius heir and adopted son.

The new Caesar now manages to persuade his mother, in proper Luke Skywalker manner (as Luke said to Han about rescuing the

prisoner, appealing to his better nature. “She’s rich.”) pointing out that if they bug out, Servilia’s rich, but if they stay, she is. This eloquent plea leads Atia to realize the greatness of her son.

Which leaves Mark Antony to persuade Octavius, or perhaps now we should say Octavian [Gaius Iulius Caesar Octavianus] points out the legal ramifications of annulling all of Caesar’s enactments — none of them will have a job! As First Man In Rome to be, he has to consider the unemployment problem.

Brutus is at his mother’s, knocking back a few with Cassius (Guy Henry), Quintus, et Mater when Cicero (David Bamber) arrives. Toadying in a manner that would have done Harry Flashman proud, Cicero compliments them on the murder and whines about having been left out. Fortunately those words are out of his mouth when Mark Antony arrives. He repeats the kid’s point about offices and offers a general amnesty. With Cicero as honest broker, since of course he had absolutely nothing to do with it. Then he steps outside to let the conspirators conspire.

Brutus gets all gushy and noble and says they can’t hurt Mark Antony or it will reflect badly on them, while Cassius points out that they had better. In the end, though, they accept “his” offer. However, there is one last matter to take care of before he gets back to (Atia’s) bed and board. And I’m sure Quintus didn’t feel a thing when Antony cut his throat.

Meanwhile, Lucius Vorenus has had a bad day. His daughters join her son to start laying out the body. Vorenus pronounces a curse on them; they flee and then damned well gets out of there himself, wandering aimlessly through the streets. He passes out at one point, getting succored by what looks like Dumbledore Albus and Figulus Harrius, on a field trip from Porcusverrucae. Back at the old insula, the family has returned and they keep on preparing Niobe’s body, but then someone else drops by.

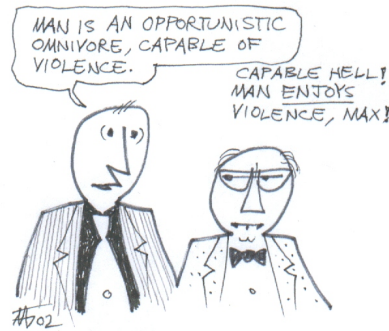
Out in the country, the lovers plight their troth to each other and prepare to join in hymeneal harmony, when a rider rides through the little wide place in the road, bellowing that Caesar is dead. Pullo knows where his duty lies, and hoists Eirene behind as he takes the messenger’s horse and goes back to Rome.

They find Vorenus looking particularly distraught. Pullo tries to get some sense into him. Also there are the children, who are still missing. (Somebody came by, as we shall see.) There are arrangements to be made. Pullo goes to his only source of reassurance and Octavian pledges them to oblivion on that little matter of the father of Niobe’s son.

It’s funeral day. Vorenus, Pullo, and Eirene, still wondering where the children are, take Niobe’s body out to be cremated. Meanwhile, the two sides sit over Caesar’s body, each side looking daggers at the other, but at least properly dressed for a Jedi funeral. Mark Antony is a little put out because Atia hadn’t acceded to his wish of having a woman in a funeral dress as warm-up for his speech, while Servilia, offering formal condolences, got spat-on by Calpurnia.

Caesar’s funeral pyre gets a little out of hand. At the post-funeral visitation, Antony points out that unless Brutus and Cassius really want to follow Caesar, they might want to go to their offices out of town. Meanwhile, the local mob boss Erastes Fullmen (Lorcan Cranitch) sits in the Badda-Binga Taverna joining in a discussion on the comparative funeral speeches.

The other funeral has an aftermath too. Vorenus and Pullo finally find one of the servants, cowering in a cupboard, who explains that Erastes the gang boss had Vorenus’s family kidnapped. We cut to Erastes taking a steam bath and complaining about the noise down below. The cause enters; Vorenus, all messed up and bloody again. He takes Erastes downstairs, where a bloody and messed up Pullo, amid the bodies of Erastes’s bodyguards, explains that he really should say what he did with Vorenus’s family. He does.



Shortly thereafter we see Vorenus and Pullo marching through the streets. Erastes is there too, somewhat . . .

(The movements of Antony and Octavian are simplified; Antony did try to flee, dressed as a slave (again), while Octavian was with the army that was going off to Parthia. Also, they didn’t get along so well, even then.)

Season II, Episode Two: “Son of Hades”

a.d. XII Kalendas Februarius
(January 21)

It’s understandable that Vorenus is taking this mourning thing hard, but he seems to have taken it a little too hard, tossing Erastes’s head on the floor before going to bed. (Well, he is part Gallic and you know how they were about their enemies’ heads; Aemilius Scaurus would have understood.) Pullo and Eirene settle in for a bit of waiting.

Mark Antony is getting settled down, too. Namely, in trying to keep Caesar’s will from being probated, so that around AUC MC someone will start selling shares in the estate . . . that is, keeping himself in control of the cash. Octavian is not happy with this.

Cicero arrives for his appointment with the sole surviving Consul, where Mark Antony gives him the party ticket for next year’s elections and suggests he endorse it. He demurs, but is finally persuaded, and Antony didn’t even have to threaten to cut off his hands and stick hairpins through his tongue.

And then, in the middle of all this, Cleopatra [Κλεοπάτρα Θεα Φιλοπάτωρ; Kleopatra [VII] Thea Philopator] (Lyndsey Marshal) shows up. Something about grain shipments from Egypt to Rome, a cut off the top for the Consul, and oh yes, there’s the boy to consider. Antony is not inclined to credit this Caesarion [; Ptolemaios [XV] Philopator Philometor Kaisar] even though it would solve one other problem.

On the way out, she sees one of the people in the crowd petitioning the Consul, and has a bit of a shock. But Pullo is not unnerved, and when the Consul himself passes by he pleads that Antony should Do Something about Vorenus.

Something Needs To Be Done on the Aventine, which is suffering through the civil wars attendant upon the death of the Boss, the late and abridged Erastes Fullmen. Therefore, trying to keep the City from going to Hades in a handbasket, Mark Antony goes straight to Vorenus’s insula and commissions him to Do Something about the Aventine. He also tosses out Erastes’s head, which one would think would be becoming just a bit overripe. It’s been Vorenus’s comfy object. I said he was part Celt.

Timon meanwhile comes home and finds a visitor; his brother, Levi. They start drinking (nu, don’t you remember, “Shikker is a goy”?) and eventually Timon gets out of his brother that things are not well in Jerusalem.

Atia has decided to prepare for a party. She will have not only Servilia but also Cleopatra. (The scene where she’s bathing with Antony is witty but a bit disappointing, since they never get out of the tub.) Also invited, at least for security, are Timon and the gang.

Vorenus is having a party, too, inviting all the gang bosses of the Aventine to meet under the auspices of Concord. He presents the proposal for general peace and concord, not to mention official payments of MMMMM denarii a month. It’s *res nostrae* [“Cosa Nostra”] time. *Quis tecum?* [“Who you wit?”] But some of the gang leaders don’t want to be wit’ Vorenus, and he has to get really angry. This is where he declares himself a “Son of Hades”. Where is Joxer when you need him?

Which makes it appropriate that Atia and Servilia are all kissy-kissy and reconciliatory. Especially since Servilia wasn’t supposed to leave the place alive (remember last season where she got the haircut?) and Octavian has some persuading to do.

Then Cleopatra shows up. With her boy, who she brags is the very image of his father. This can spoil even the finest of entertainments.

Party’s over, Atia is in a bad mood, made worse by the next day’s breakfast, where Octavian says he wants his money. Something about keeping promises. Mark Antony needs it more. There is dissent in the Family.

Servilia should thank the gods, or the Divine Augustus to be anyhow, that she got out of Atia’s party alive. Instead, she goes to Cicero’s house, where he is basking in the greatness of his ancestors, and begins discussing with him the proper time to invite Brutus to come home again. (Presumably, Gordianus the Finder will

be entrusted with the message.)

Mark Antony is upset. The Newsreader (Ian McNeice) is declaring that next week Caesar Octavianus will pay every citizen the CCC sesterces they are due. The Consul doesn't want to pay the money, then, or ever, and proceeds to have it out with the rather generous fellow, until Atia manages to intervene.

Vorenus is building his own security department. Luca Brasi isn't available yet, but he did pick up another veteran. Pullo is interviewing the madams, which has no doubt become for him a less interesting task since he got married. And he's worried about Vorenus.

Speaking of veterans, Octavian, tired of child abuse (you know how that is about mothers, and lovers beating up the kids) slips out in the middle of the night to go off to see a friend, one Marcus Agrippa. Atia is dazed.

And on the way, Octavian (sporting two lovely shiners, by the way) and his escort pass a slave cart with a very familiar looking girl in it . . .

Season II, Episode Three: "These Being the Words of Marcus Tullius Cicero"

a.d. V Kalendas Februarius (January 28)

We start with Octavia (Kerry Condon) toking with a friend. Her mother comes by and they pass her the bong. It may not be such a good idea for Atia to get the munchies, since it turns out that that roguish young guy who is romancing her personal waitress is working for Servilia, and is waiting for the right moment to poison Atia; one when Mark Antony isn't around.

Antony has his own problems, ones having to do with all those troops Octavian has in Campania. It's hard for anyone to think straight when there are ten thousand arguments against one's authority hanging around. It makes him want to kick the kid, but that's not possible.

So he kicks someone else, namely Cicero. Octavia's fellow toker complained that Macedonia had a wretched climate. So Atia didn't want to go there, so Antony decides he wants to have Gaul as his province after his consulship. (Nobody wants Macedonia, looks like; remember that Brutus turned it down.) Antony has to work harder on Cicero to propose he get Gaul.

Speaking of kicking, Don Lucius is going to have to go to the mattresses, looks like. First off, a local comes to Vorenus with a complaint about his son; the boy played Monica for cash with another guy. Pullo says that jaw jaw is better than war war, but Vorenus wouldn't do anything.

Shortly thereafter the man in question turns up castrated. Vorenus has to retaliate. (It involved stuffing the castrator head-down into a public latrine. Rome had many public service facilities.)

Atia has a visitor. He identifies himself as Marcus Vipsanius Agrippa (Allen Leech), and reports that her son is doing well and sends best wishes. He's a little more flattering to Octavia.

That evening, Antony joins Atia in her bath,

reveals that he knows about this Agrippa, and says he won't be worth the bother to whack. (Boy, will he ever be wrong!)

Out east, Cassius is negotiating with a Bithynian princeling, who wants to see a demonstration of how Romans transgress the speciesist barrier. Meanwhile, Brutus is feeling sorry for himself about having stabbed last. The locals don't seem particularly impressed with him either. Maybe he should have gone to Macedonia after all. (That's what you get for having had Xena and Gabrielle crucified without orders from Caesar, dumb-ass.)

Some people don't feel sorry for themselves, and we see Vorenus's family trying to get out of the slave pen. Lyde, their chief maid, succeeds in making the break for it.

On the other hand, some people do. Vorenus is finally fed up to here with Pullo doing all that reasonable and sensible and sane stuff. He's had it. He accuses Pullo of having been Niobe's lover, even though Pullo has just told him who really was. After they fight like a couple of brothers (say, Jerome and Moses Horowitz, also known as "Curly" and "Moe"; Timon would understand), Pullo staggers out, takes Eirene by the shoulder, and lights out for the country. Any country.

Mark Antony is waiting for the day's session of the Senate to begin so Cicero will propose the change of the allocation of the province of Gaul to him. However, Cicero isn't doing that in person. Rather, he has sent a speech to be read. The bit where he says that Antony was bankrupt before he was of age really hit home, and Antony did kill the messenger. Meanwhile, Cicero, feeling a need to check his farms in the country, on the way is dictating a letter for Octavian to his secretary Tyro (the inventor of shorthand) about the need for Caesar to save the Republic.

We skip ahead three months to see the Newsreader declaring that Generals Hirtus and Pansa are going after the rebel Antony with the aid of the patriotic Octavianus Caesar. Their army must have passed Pullo and Eirene on the way, but they're intent on trying to see if Vorenus is over his mad. He may be, but if so he's gone off to Gaul with Antony for the rest cure. (Looking for Aemilius Scaurus, maybe?)

While they're worrying about that, another lost sheep shows up. Lyde has finally found her way home, or to what's left of it, with the news that would have made Vorenus very happy, if only he were around to hear it.

Meanwhile, Atia is finally bowling, er eating alone. And Servilia's spy has the poison . . .

(Cicero delivered a number of speeches against Antony, the Philippics, which explained why Antony was so thorough in retaliating. The line about bankruptcy is from Chapter XVIII of the Second Philippic. At that time, too, Bithynia was a Roman province and had been so ever since Nicomedes Philopator had left it to Rome. Aulus Hirtius and Gaius Vibius Pansa Caetronianus had been elected consuls for AUC DCCXI. Hirtius also wrote the eighth book of Caesar's *De Bello Gallico* and was likely also the actual author of the *De Bello Alexandrino*, attributed to Caesar. Celebrity authors!)

I'm very grateful to Walter Jon Williams for pointing out that "Brutus" translates to "Dumb-Ass". As one of the commentators on his blog, who goes by the name of "Joe Crow", said, "knowing that 'Brutus' translates to 'Dumb-Ass' explains a lot."

Multiple dead bodies, mob violence of various degrees, legal fiddling, quick throat-cutting, the king of goats, traditional uses for heads, moray eel bites, money problems, Torah lessons, going to the mattresses, killing the messenger, cremation fu, curse fu, riot fu, will fu, party fu, sicarii fu, heir fu, bath fu, hemp fu, castration fu, poison fu, assault fu, seven breasts, four beasts, multiple aardvarking.

Check it out.

Stay tuned for **Episode Four: "Testudo et Lepus"** when . . . [Narration Resumatur]

THE BOGLAND OF DR. MOREAU

Review by Joseph T Major of

BEGUILEMENT:

The Sharing Knife, Volume One

by Lois McMaster Bujold

(Eos; 2006;

ISBN 978-0-06-113758-7; \$25.95)

Fawn and Dag might be overwhelmed by the Dowager Royna Ista and her people. Fawn and Dag might find the little Lord Auditor a little preposterous. Yes, Bujold has done it again and struck off on a new tangent with a new world.

Fawn has a small problem common to young women in the old days; and the young man won't take responsibility, of course. So, she is off from her family to be a grass widow, which explains that matter of her belly.

Dag is on patrol when he meets the young lady. The Patrollers have a complicated society and organization. On the other hand (not the most adept term to describe Dag, who has a very complicated hook at the end of his left arm; he could talk shop with Manuel Garcia O'Kelly Davis) they have a very good reason to be so. Their lands are plagued with many and diverse malentities, which would make one wish heartily for an infestation of bandits.

One can, therefore, understand that their Meet Cute is not particularly cute. And then there is the nature of the Sharing Knife, one of which relieves Fawn of one problem and settles another on her.

Sharing crises, Fawn and Dag find they can share relief, and this is followed by a portrayal of rural life that is realistic enough that some readers will find it uninteresting. Somebody has to grow the crops for the Dragonriders, Comyn, Heralds, Witches, etc. to eat!

So Dag has to marry Fawn properly, before her own people. This is a clash of cultures affair, not to mention the traditional resentment of protectors by the protected.

Oh yes, there are the problems of the bogmen to consider. So far what they know is that they seem to have come from Dr. Moreau's workshop, if Dr. Moreau had been a wizard, being animals made faintly human by some not particularly beneficent magic. Now you know

why the Patrollers have to use weapons made from the bone of a dying person, energized by the death of yet someone else. And remember, these are the good guys! At least so far they haven't started rounding up people to contribute to the Cause.

Bujold's has a sensitive characterization of people who are ordinary, yet special. The society is well-defined; as I said, it includes the people who are passed over. Yet the story so far is slight and only half a tale, which will be presumably completed in a succeeding volume, as this is . . . [To Be Continued]

IT'S SUCH A BEAUTIFUL DAY

Review by Joseph T Major of

THE WITLING

by Vernor Vinge

(Tor; 1976, 2006;

ISBN 978-0-765-30886-3; \$12.95)

Isaac Asimov could make fun even of his own habitual homeboundness. In "It's Such a Beautiful Day" (*Star Science Fiction Stories* 3, 1954) he described a whole community of people who found his habits perfectly normal, and those who actually insisted on leaving buildings as downright odd, if not actually sick.

Asimov described a community that had teleportation; people for whom that was normal, everyday. Their world had adapted to it, their ways had encompassed it; there was no "Masters of the Metropolis" style expoundment on the Marvellous Wonders of Teleportation in their everyday discourse. It was a perfectly normal everyday part of their lives, and they acted and lived that way.

As it is for the people in this book. Even Prince Pelio, heir-apparent of the Summerkingdom, who has the misfortune to be able to enjoy teleportation only at a remove. Which puts him at a very real disadvantage in his environment, as the entire civilization is built around that. For example, buildings don't have doors. Why would they need them? Internal doors, either, and in fact a building needn't have contiguous rooms for that matter. This makes the hyperdimensional residence of "And He Built a Crooked House —" (*Astounding*, February 1941) seem ordinary and indeed mundane. The only thing that keeps matters on an even keel is that most people, like the jaunters in *The Stars My Destination* (1956), can't go anyplace they haven't already been, so there's a lot of walking going on, along with a fair bit of escorting.

This is not immediately apparent to the observers, archaeologist Ajão Bjault and pilot Yoninne Leg-Wot, who have been covertly observing an outpost of what they soon will find out is the Summerkingdom. Mostly because the shuttlecraft sent to recover them attracts attention, and the locals can teleport more than just themselves; with fatal results for the shuttle. And, did I mention, the local food contains substantial traces of heavy metals, so Ajão and Yoninne have a certain *motivation* for getting offplanet? All the rest of their lives, so to speak, but plenty of motivation.

So, thrown together, the witlings (as those who cannot teleport are styled) both domestic and alien find themselves with a common cause. There turns out to be one escape for Ajão and Yoninne, but getting there requires a great and laborious project. You see, teleportation conserves momentum. Kimball Kinnison could use that sort of trick to squash Floor between two other planets with their equal and opposite relative motion restored, but these people have the problems of being planet-bound.

The prince is dreadfully alone, understand. Witlings don't make decent rulers, and everyone is hoping that he will get killed, die, or otherwise remove himself from the succession. Not surprisingly he can't get companionship either. So when this strange alien comes along he is attracted to her. (One couldn't do the other those days.)

And then there are still the problems of politics . . .

Before Vinge got entranced with the idea of never-ending progress, he had some interesting concepts to work with. This book shows what he could do.

LE ZOMBIE

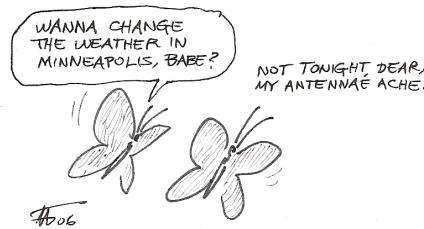
Review by Joseph T Major of

ANANSI BOYS

by Neil Gaiman

(HarperCollins; 2005;

ISBN 978-0-06-051518-8; \$26.95)



Charlie Nancy, the initial point of view character, is so pliant and unassertive that:

Everyone calls him "Fat Charlie" even though he isn't fat

His boss has no trouble setting him up to take the fall for a swindle that's been going on before he started work there

Someone he's never met before turns up in his flat, claiming to be his brother, and proceeds to steal his fiancée

. . . and then he starts getting pushed around. Admittedly by petty gods, powerful spirits, and the like, so one can imagine being pushed around by such folk. (Yes, I know it says that his father nicknamed him "Fat Charlie" and his father's nicknames really stick. Isn't calling him a name like that child abuse?)

In a conceptual follow-up to the Hugo- and Nebula-winning *American Gods* (2000, 2001), Gaiman has shifted his focus across the ocean.

Charlie Nancy, this pliant nebbish, touches a bit of ancient wisdom when he speaks to a spider. (Why do I suspect that he and his family are "Afro-Caribbean"?) Before too much longer, his long-lost brother Spider (is his real name *also* "Paul"?) shows up and begins to take over his life, which isn't worth much.

Then the long-running swindles of Charlie's boss finally reach their appointed end, i.e. they get to the point where someone is noticing the disparity between gross income and net, and it's time to put Plan B into execution. With a fraud charge hanging over his head, and the insecurity of not quite knowing if his father is really dead in spite of having gone to the funeral, Charlie sets out in investigation. As does the ghost of one of the victims. Everything comes together at the island refuge of the fraudster, and indeed there are a fair number of trickster characters involved. Then, Charlie has to save one life and restore another's speech . . .

Charlie isn't the protagonist; he is far too passive. But then, none of the human characters seem quite able to take up that role, even Spider, and I'm not even sure he's a real person. Very few people seem able to pull off a war-of-gods novel; Philip José Farmer did (*The Gates of Creation* (1966)) and even there he had to make his principal god semi-amnesiac and therefore somewhat human. There is a good bit of research into spiritual matters here, but none of it quite seems to come off.

There's a lot of background here. It reminds me of one of the better Avram Davidson stories, the ones where Davidson took his far-flung knowledge of the strange and obscure, the extraordinary and outré, and used it as the source for a story. And there is quite a story here, one on matters of far more than just life and death.

As you know, this book received sufficient nominations to get on the Hugo ballot at L.A., but Gaiman declined, making John Scalzi very happy (*Old Man's War* took its place). I have my doubts about the "official" reason for this, just as I had them about Pratchett's pulling *Going Postal* in 2005.

I wonder if Gaiman enjoyed writing about "nancy boys"?

OLD ONE AND COMMANDER

Review by Joseph T Major of

LAND OF MIST AND SNOW

by Debra Doyle and James D. Macdonald

(Eos; 2006;

ISBN 978-0-06-081919-4; \$7.99)

If Richard "Patrick O'Brien" Russ had written this one, Aubrey and Maturin would have been eaten by blasphemous & abominable Things from the black and unspeakable caverns of sunken R'lyeh, shortly before most of the readers had their brains deliquesce and flow out of their ears from having read the pair's detailed and elaborate conversations regarding issues damned and degenerate. And then matters would take a most squamous and rugose turn, Cthulhu fhtagn! Iä! Iä! Cthulhu fhtagn!

But enough of these Shaggai dog stories.

Doyle and Macdonald have told a story of the madness that lurks without the small circle of sanity that humanity dwells within.

Lieutenant John Nevis, U.S. Navy, undertakes a task that even the legendary John Patrick "Fatso" Gioninni might find beyond even his abilities. (See *Now, Hear This!* (1966), *Cap'n Fatso* (1969), and *Away Boarders* (1971) by Daniel V. Gallery for the story of this old salt.) But it merely begins with a summons to sea duty; which he find most agreeable, the events of the War of the Rebellion having thus far passed without his participation as anything further than being in command of a wooden desk. However, he soon finds himself wishing that he could do something more agreeable, like personally suck out the scuppers of a tinclad Mississippi river gunboat in lieu of a bilge pump.

For the USS *Nicodemus* turns out to have many strange and esoteric features, of which the least is that she will not tolerate iron, or indeed any metal save virgin brass. (Certain compounds seem acceptable, or the crew will perish of anemia, one thinks.) Her construction was in the chill and dark Thule Naval Yard (what the devil does the Danish government think of that?), and her crew is not exactly normal. I'm thinking of the special engineer, Miss Columbia Abrams. Who would no doubt think this Honor Harrington woman a most depraved and licentious person, unladylike in the extreme. Miss Columbia, you see, has the knowledge, experience, and er physical characteristic needed to properly communicate with the spirit of the ship.

As you might guess, the book endeavors to reproduce the attitudes of the era. It follows in the path of *Jonathan Strange & Mr Norrell* (2004) in having the society be plus magic but otherwise the same. (About the only error I can find is when a Confederate army officer styles himself, "Major, C.S.A." I think he'd be more likely to say what state regiment he was from, or use the term "P.A.C.S." [Provisional Army Confederate States].) Thus, when Miss Columbia dresses herself, or doesn't, in the garb, or lack thereof, needed to power the *Nicodemus*, the scandalized officers say nothing of it. It would be ungentlemanly, albeit she is being most improper.

There is enough to scandalize men for other reasons; the captain has a way with the dead. One can't be discharged dead from the *Nicodemus*, and indeed the construction crew was recruited in a most unwholesome fashion.

But Miss Columbia finds a certain affection forming, and not just with Lieutenant Nevis. The spirit of the ship requires her daily attention, and it comes to feel a certain reciprocated fondness for her, as well as paralleling her growing fondness for Mr. Nevis. As for Captain Sharps, now, the ship is not so avuncular.

Their problems and relationships will only matter if they can survive the sinister purpose and powers of the Confederate commerce raider CSS *Alecto*, which has its own means of power, a fatal one. And its sinister builder, President William Walker of Nicaragua, who has defeated

the efforts of Vanderbilt, the Royal Navy, and the locals to remove him, by dint of his communion with sinister powers.

Knowing that Captain Sharps traveled to Arkham among other places in search of the means to acquire the spirit, to unearth the secret of the ancient and banned *Grey Book*, or *Liber Pallidus*, has a certain value among the cognoscenti. Which makes one wonder what the exact blasphemous shape was of the dwarf-frog that the captain carved to track the *Alecto* to their final catastrophic meeting . . .



BE ALL THAT YOU CAN BE

Review by Joseph T Major of
THE GHOSTS OF ANTIETAM

by John M. Grissmer

(1st Books; 1999;

ISBN 1-58500-805-2; \$20.25)

<http://www.1stbooks.com>

There are a couple of good books in this one. They don't fit together all that well, never mind the other items, but that's another matter.

In the first one, in a line taken from McKinlay Kantor's *If the South Had Won the Civil War* (1960, 1961), Abraham Lincoln should have taken Spurrinna's advice; he falls off a horse and is killed, on the Ides of March, AUC MMDCXIV, er March 15, 1861. This leaves Hannibal Hamlin, the new President, with no mandate and a big problem. Which he solves in a drastic fashion; he goes directly to Charleston, meets with Davis, and defuses the crisis with a proposal for compensated emancipation. (There was such an offer floating around, not surprisingly.) To get Davis's backing for the plan, Hamlin offers to support a Davis bid for the Presidency of the *United States*. In the Turtledovian sense, it's diplomacy; a compromise that displeases everyone involved about the same. (I can't imagine the hard-core Abolitionists being pleased with either proposal, for example.)

The second book is a gritty first-hand examination of George B. McClellan's campaigns; the Peninsular Campaign and the Antietam one, as seen by Little Mac himself. This isn't a side of the War that's seen much, and Grissmer has a certain kindness towards the man. There was a real cost in life in battle. (He even gives an excuse for McClellan's snub of Lincoln.)

McClellan is also the point of view character of the first section. Grissmer seems to be very much taken with the Young Napoleon. The choice works in a literary way, since the newly-

promoted General McClellan knows what's going on, so the reader does too, but because of his position he has to be kept informed, thus keeping the reader in a like state. As for the plausibility of McClellan's having come to the administration's notice, that's another matter.

The reader may be overwhelmed by all the names of people involved. Grissmer is showing the matrix of competing forces that make up the situation. Often, for literary economy, historical novels (some of them not even alternate), cut down on the people involved. Grissmer has to handle the full cast, as it were, some of them very important. As when Edmund Ruffin tries for a dramatic twofer . . .

Unfortunately, there is also a lot of semi-magical wandering about, with people slipping mentally from one time-line to another, having weird encounters (the part where Stanton explains to Richard Nixon how he sabotaged McClellan's campaigns so the Democrats wouldn't have a successful war leader, for example), and outright moonbattery (the accusation of Stanton's complicity in Booth's conspiracy). This unfortunately seems to be popular for praiseworthy Alternate History novels (i.e., Martin Gidron's *The Severed Wing* (2002), which started off well and then wandered off into slipping between timelines).

It's unfortunate that a couple of promising ideas should fail so.

OLD AGE AND TREACHERY

Review by Joseph T Major of
THE LOST FLEET: DAUNTLESS

(Ace Books; 2006;

ISBN 0-441-01418-6; \$6.99) and

THE LOST FLEET: FEARLESS

(Ace Books; 2007;

ISBN 978-0-441-01476-7; \$6.99)

by "Jack Campbell" [John G. Henry]

Review of John G. Henry's "JAGs in Space" (as you call it) series: Probably the most realistic depiction of a space navy I've ever encountered. Too realistic for many readers, I suspect: Henry is now starting a new, more conventional space opera series, as "Jack Campbell".

— Taras Wolansky, *Alexiad* V. 5 #6

John Geary of the Alliance Navy was a hero in the Alliance-Syndic war. Like most heroes, he was dead. Organizations prefer dead heroes, who can't embarrass them.

However, dead is a matter of dates — or technology, when the dead hero actually managed to get into suspended animation. Being uncorked a century later has a somewhat unnerving effect on people, Geary and others. Or should I say "Black Jack Geary the Hero". That reputation would be more than enough for a retired guy in a resort community.

However, Captain Geary abruptly finds himself commander of the Alliance fleet that had rescued him. Something about the Syndic ordering all the Alliance commanders to a parley and then whacking them, and he's the senior officer (very very senior) left.

Did I mention that the Alliance fleet had penetrated very deeply into Syndic space, and the enemy already know the jump routes that can be possibly taken as an escape route? After exterminating the Alliance flag command, the Syndic commanders offered surrender, which sort of puts Geary on the spot. On the other hand, what happens to those who surrender seems to be enough to make one envy the late admirals.

Not that the weapon Geary has to his hand is all that good. As he finds out when he learns that the captains are having a debate about how to respond to the surrender offer. After that, there are various incidents that are painfully close to war crimes. And no one salutes, except the Marines. This wasn't the Navy Geary had when he was lost . . . but it's the one that Black Jack has to use now.

There are a number of complex plot elements involved in the story. Geary does not particularly like being a legendary symbolic hero, and he has to use his status to keep his fleet together, never mind obeying orders. There are a number of familiar (to any serving officer in today's "wet" navy, painfully familiar) problems that bedevil the course of operations. Fighting a great smashing ship-to-ship battle in which the Syndic fleet is eradicated while the only survivors of the Alliance fleet are the few remaining on the battered flagship isn't an option, either; Geary wants to get as many men as possible back to the Alliance.

As Geary goes on with his breakthrough plans, he learns more about himself as he really is, his reputation, and what the Alliance Navy has become in the years since his suspension. And the costs of even winning a battle.

But even the legendary heroism of Black Jack Geary can be challenged, and likewise the very real effort, that weary going on for as long as he can make it effort of John Geary. When it gets a challenge from someone who was a different sort of hero, that makes the challenge and the difference even harder.

The fleet is continuing its quest behind the lines. One advantage of being so far behind the front is that there are scantily-defended resources available, and Geary's fleet needs supplies. Rescuing captured personnel is just an added pleasure. Particularly for Captain Desjani of the *Dauntless* (most of the ships have veddy British names, but this comes from rather a different field), whose former boyfriend Lieutenant Riva is among those released. (There was no promotion for the imprisoned.) However, not everyone is so fortunate.

The prisoners were fortunate to have among them a masterful personality, a genuine Hero who continued his authority even when reduced to zekdom; Captain Francesco Falco, the legendary warrior "Fighting Falco". Who isn't used to not being the one in charge.

It's well to note the personality and actions of Falco. It would be easy to make him a cardboard villain, sneering and fleering, or contrawise a cardboard opponent, buckling under the superior wisdom of Black Jack Geary. What Hemry has done is to give him a complete

personality, a background, experiences which have made him what he is. He is a whole, if deeply flawed, person, and a symptom of the problems of the war. At the same time, it is pointed out, repeatedly, that he sustained whatever hope and strength the prisoners possessed during their captivity.

However, in other ways he turned out to be a prisoner of his background. Specifically, the fighting ways that the navy had developed. The fleet finds itself torn between two legendary personalities with profoundly dissonant tactics and plans. Somebody's going to get himself killed here.

Speaking of being torn between two different personalities; Geary is deeply concerned about being torn between his two different personalities, his own and his image. There is a natural solution for this problem, but there is also an inherent problem of improper relations with subordinates. However, in all the fleet there is one person who is in fact not his subordinate — and Co-President Victoria Rione of the Callis Republic, who went along on the expedition to supervise the ships from her country, and found herself in the same trap as the rest of her people, in her own way is in a like situation. At least they have something complementary.

One can find the detailed minutae of space battles to be a little too overwhelming. At least it is *space* battle, where unlike Khan Noonian Singh they do remember that this is a three-dimensional medium; it isn't like it is on the water. What does remain the same is the calculations of loss, and the pain.

Which will go on when this story is . . . **[To Be Continued]**

BUSINESS DEALS

Review by Joseph T Major of

STARSHIP: PIRATE

by Mike Resnick

(Pyr; 2006;

ISBN 978-159102490-3; \$25.00)

Sequel to *Starship: Mutiny*

(reviewed in *Alexiad* V. 5 #1)

Wilson Cole has been rescued from a legal fraud and judicial murder by some people who know better, namely his former crew. Now, sailing over the bounding main, er travelling through the Inner Frontier, the captain and crew of the good (space)ship *Theodore Roosevelt* have to do something for a living. So they turn pirate.

Upon which they discover that there ain't jolly aar aar aar buccaneer fun and games involved aar aar me hearties. Never mind actually fighting, either.

What hampers Cole more than anything is the cost of doing criminal business. Where, more precisely, one goes to get the loot taken care of. Why, this has to go through receivers of appropriated goods. Who, understand, have to deal with very illiquid investments and have high costs in addition. Which means that that huge mountain of swag suddenly becomes a

very small molehill once sold.

This being Resnick, there are a plethora of unusual aliens. The fence, for example, who is also an admirer of certain ancient Terran matters, going so far as to call himself "David Copperfield". Which gives Cole an advantage which he is quick to exploit, calling himself "Steerforth". (Why doesn't this grate when, for example, in A. C. Crispin's *Starbridge* (1989) the heroine and her lover both being fans of André Norton [such a coincidence of antiquarianism] did so? Better writers on both ends, perhaps?)

Having a modicum of decency left, Cole decides to do it the easy way and be a second-order predator; i.e., he will attack other pirates, thus letting them sort out the goods for him. This leads him into a peculiar encounter with a very angry captain, or ex-captain, who had had her ship, er pirated away from her. Ex-captain Val (names tend to be extremely mutable on the Inner Frontier) turns out to be willing to get her ship back by the handiest means possible.

All which leads to a confrontation with the ship thief, the Hammerhead Shark. Cole has to deploy the skills that got him all those medals in the first place.

And then, he finds that pirating really isn't his line of work anyhow . . .

As with the earlier works in this series (it's a part of Resnick's *Birthright* universe, which means that no matter what everyone here does, humanity is done for in a galactic eyeblink anyhow) there is perhaps a bit too much connectivity. For all the millions of cubic parsecs that the Inner Frontier encompasses, it seems to have all the social connectivity of half of New Mexico. When Lucas Trask set out to find Andray Dunnan (in H. Beam Piper's *Space Viking* (1963)), he realized that it was entirely possible that Dunnan would die of old age without ever hearing of Trask again. As it happened, he didn't, but they both had motives.

Resnick has dealt with this situation with his usual bracing dose of realistic thought, vast collection of alien aliens, and his practical, intelligent, humans. Captain Cole and his crew have yet another career to look forward to when this series is . . . **[To Be Continued]**

PIGS THAT FLY

Review by Joseph T Major of

FAERIE WARS

by Herbie Brennan

(Tor; 2003, 2007;

ISBN 978-0-765-35674-1; \$6.99)

"The Faerie Wars Chronicles, Book One"

Every so often I pick up a book by an author I haven't read before. As a result, I have read a lot of lousy fantasy. Not always, though.

Henry's life is going to hell in a handbasket. There's the situation with his father, his mother, his father's secretary, and the affair. There's the odd little case of his good friend old Mr Fogarty and what he used to do for a living. (Hint: he found being a physicist underpaid.) And there's just the general meaningless of life. At least his cardboard flying pig works.

Pyrgus's life is going to the netherworld in a handbasket. When he broke into the glue factory he discovered that the nicest thing they were doing was using kittens as a special ingredient in the glue. And, oh yes, the manager wasn't worried about the break-in, since by his great good fortune he needed to sacrifice someone to a demon, and here Pyrgus was. And then when he got out of it by sheer luck there was another matter to deal with, for which Pyrgus had to take a little trip, to someplace rather different . . .

Which meant that when Mr Fogarty showed Henry the little winged fairy named Pyrgus (you were thinking maybe "Jackeen J. O'Malley"?), his view of the world got far more upset. And Pyrgus, once he returned to his normal shape, had other problems. Even with Fogarty's solution. Which showed that the netherworld had quite a drastic plan in train. Pyrgus could have a very interesting life in what little was left of it.

Why don't bleedin' editors piss off and quit muckin' abbat with the text? I don't 'alf think Mr Fogarty would give two pins for the CIA or the FBI. (Presumably "MI-6" and "Special Branch" in the original.) Since they left in "crisps" for "potato chips", for example, you'd think the bloody sods would have left well enough alone overall. Anyone got a bit of sorcerer's stone to hand?

In fact, Fogarty's story is quite amusing. Pyrgus has a lot more to him than I've let on, including a sister of considerable recourse who doesn't stay mad even though Henry took the wrong turn and saw her bathing — and there will be more when this is . . . [To Be Continued]

INVESTIGATIO LOCI DELICTI: ROMA

Review by Joseph T Major of
A POINT OF LAW
by John Maddox Roberts
(Thomas Dunne; 2006;
ISBN 0-312-33725-6; \$23.95)
"S.P.Q.R. X"

Tonight on "ILD: Roma", our daring investigator, D. Caecilius Metellus and his brilliant investigative team — Hermes, his efficient legman; Asklepiodes, the insightful medical examiner; and his beautiful, devoted wife and researcher Iulia Prima — take on the biggest case of their career. Who killed Niobe, the beautiful young wife of Senator Lucius Vorenus? The ILD:Roma team must find out . . .

Decius Caecilius Metellus the younger thought he had his sandal firmly planted on the next step of the *cursus honorum*. After a clean sweep of the pirates of Cyprus (as described in *The Princess and the Pirates*, S.P.Q.R. IX) he returned to Rome with a spot of treasure and a good reputation. And now, it being the 703rd year of the City of Rome, and all well therein, it was time for Caecilius Metellus to be elected

praetor of Rome, with all the powers and privileges pertaining thereto.

It was more than a little annoying, then, that he found himself being accused of corruption at just the wrong time; four days before the election. It became more than annoying when, on the day of the hearing, the accuser turned up dead — murdered, in fact, and Caecilius Metellus had to investigate a crime of which he was the prime suspect.

Which indeed requires setting up his own *CSI: Rome* in effect, whether it be consulting with the Greek physician Asklepiodes over the meaning of the stab wounds, getting the Greek mathematician Callista to crack the code that the plotters kept the minutes of their meetings in, or fishing in his own knowledge of Roman politics. Part of this work is seeing and understanding why the *res publica* broke down as it did.

This series has had an uneasy course of honors of its own, with a long lapse in the publication of the English versions in the eighties. Then too, it's often hard keeping up with the ins and outs of Roman history, considering that so many names were repeated. Roberts himself admits that he has three characters named "Quintus Caecilius Metellus" [Page x] with additional names.

In the end, for all that he has the facts on his side, Caecilius Metellus has to resort to old-fashioned rhetoric and traditional networking to win the day and turn the tables on the plotters. But his efforts are only straws in the wind that is to blow through *Rome* when . . . [Narration Resumatur]

LUX PRESENTS STAR WARS

Review by Joseph T Major of
*THE ADVENTURES OF LUKE
SKYWALKER*

<http://www.luxtheater.com>

In some circles, Jim Harmon is best known as the man who really didn't like Harlan Ellison dropping a bag full of water on him. In others, he is known as the author of *The Great Radio Heroes* (1967, 1968, 2001), a discussion of the radio dramas of the forties.

One of these was "Lux Radio Theater". Showing that tie-ins are hardly a new thing, the "Lux Radio Theater" consisted of a shortened radio adaptation of a current movie. This was hardly unique; for example, Basil Rathbone and Nigel Bruce were in both Universal's Sherlock Holmes movies and the NBC Blue Network's "The New Adventures of Sherlock Holmes" radio shows. ("Lux Radio Theater" also began on the Blue Network, but moved to CBS. The Blue Network eventually became ABC, but that's another story.)

So, the attendees of first LosCon 27 and then ConJosé were treated to a live recreation of:

Lux Radio Theater
Show 3265 D; #460
"The Adventures of Luke Skywalker"

(For the record, "Lux Radio Theater" Show #460 was really "The Unguarded Hour" and was aired on December 4, 1944.)

The show begins with the introduction by its host, Cecil B. DeMille, giving the usual commercial for Lux Soap, talking about how now, in this time of strife and shortages, we need this special gift. Then the show begins . . .

And that was when I started catching clinkers. The announcer refers to "laser beams", a term that didn't exist in the forties. Similarly, Princess Leia's ["Katharine Hepburn"] message was referred to as a "hologram". Small points, but to be noted.

Some of the humor came off from the actors the recreators were playing reusing their famous lines. From C-3PO ["Oliver Hardy"] saying, "Well, R2 ["Stan Laurel"], here's another fine mess you've gotten me into!" as they amble along in the desert of Tatooine, to Han Solo ["Humphrey Bogart"] saying to Luke ["Mickey Rooney"] after the award ceremony, "This looks like the beginning of a beautiful friendship," such lines provoked laughter from the audience.

The biggest laughs came at the delivery of Aunt Beru ["Mae West"] putting a somewhat odd spin on the text, and I would have expected that one of the droids already owned by Uncle Owen ["Jack Benny"] would have had a raspy voice. He didn't say "Well!", either.

There are some improbabilities. "Henry Aldridge" [sic] is presumably an error for the radio character "Henry Aldrich" from the show "The Aldrich Family". "Henry Aldrich" was played on the radio by Ezra Stone, and who would recognize that name besides Jim Harmon (who I don't think was at either con), or someone with access to *The Great Radio Heroes* or Wikipedia (which didn't exist then)? In any case, the character, a rather hapless boy trying to grow up, isn't the best choice for Wedge.

It sounds amusing to have Gold Leader ["Jerome 'Curly' Howard"] go "Nyuk-nyuk" before attacking the Death Star, which does add to the perception of the show as a comedy. Whereas we, with our pentimento, hear the comment by Red Leader ["John Wayne"] to Luke about knowing his father as being even more sinister. Kenobi had been trying to protect Luke, after all.

Oh, yes, Obi-Wan "Ben" Kenobi. You'd think a wise old sage type would be in order, someone like Sam Jaffe (who played the Lama in "Lost Horizon"). Wall, not exactly — you got it, "Jimmy Stewart". (Taking off from flying bombers, I guess.)

Speaking of that other matter, somehow I kept on expecting for a certain person to say *hiss-pock* I NEVER DRINK . . . WINE *hiss-pock* or some other bloodsucking dialogue for Darth Vader ["Bela Lugosi"]. As it was, dealing with Grand Moff Tarkin ["Erich von Stroheim"] had interesting resonances. Not to mention having "Peter Lorre" and "Claude Rains" in minor roles in the Imperial side, and yes, at one point the Rains character was shocked, shocked . . .

In the tie-in business, LucasFilms itself did a radio drama version of *Star Wars*. I listened to it on National Public Radio. The station broadcast old episodes of "The Lone Ranger"

afterwards (another show covered by Harmon, by the way), and after listening to one I had some thoughts about old radio.

It's very hard to strike a proper balance. The "Lone Ranger" episodes were all too much the announcer describing events for a minute or so, followed by one or two lines of dialogue, followed by more description. This wrenched one away from drama.

By way of contrast, there are "novelized" (there's no real word for "turning a dramatic presentation into a short story", is there?) versions of various episodes of "The New Adventures of Sherlock Holmes": *The Lost Adventures of Sherlock Holmes* (1989), by Ken Greenwood, and *The Forgotten Adventures of Sherlock Holmes* (2005), by H. Paul Jeffers. (And just to make confusion even more confounded, there is a collection of pastiches edited by the ubiquitous Martin H. Greenberg titled *The New Adventures of Sherlock Holmes* (1987).) These have the opposite problem; the characters tell each other what they are seeing. This is obviously dialogue in the original format, but as story it limps.

All which goes to show, as said, that striking a balance on a radio show is hard to do. (A point also made by Harmon.) The original radio *Star Wars* had of course the images from the movie to augment listeners' imaginations, and didn't need the announcer telling the audience what was going on.

The players deserve credit for their efforts, even though the result isn't quite perfect. One wonders if they were going to do the next movie they promised, *The Terminator* with Boris Karloff in the title role. (Note Bob Kennedy's letter about seeing their "The Adventures of Rich Dechard: BLADE RUNNER.")

THE PHOENIX ON THE BAYONET

Review by Joseph T Major of

TEAM OF RIVALS:

The Political Genius of Abraham Lincoln

by Doris Kearns Goodwin

(Simon & Schuster; 2005, 2006;

ISBN 978-0-7432-70725-5; \$19.95)

"In!" roared Booth, on fire with the spirit of the deed.

"In!" yelled Smith. "Death to the tyrant!"

They stopped short. Abe faced them, not a naked man roused mazed and unarmed out of deep sleep to be butchered like a sheep, but a frontiersman wide-awake and at bay, with his saber in his hand.

"In, rogues!" yelled the actor. "He is one to twenty!"

The president glared, puzzled as to their identity. Booth he did not know; and Smith had pulled his rebel-gray slouch cap down above his eyes. But there was no time for surmise. With a yell that rang to the roof, the killers flooded into the room, Payne first. He came like a charging bull, head down, sword low for the disembodying thrust. Abe sprang to meet him, and all his

tigerish strength went into the arm that swung the sword. In a whistling arc the great blade flashed through the air and crashed on the reb's head. Blade and skull shivered together and Payne rolled lifeless on the floor. Abe bounded back, still gripping the hilt.

"Watch the door, five of you!" screamed Booth, dancing about the edge of the singing steel whirlpool, for he feared that Abe might smash through their midst and escape. The rogues drew back momentarily, as their leader seized several and thrust them toward the single door, and in that brief respite Abe leaped to the wall and tore therefrom his ancient railsplitter's axe which had hung there for half a decade.

With his back to the wall he faced the closing ring for a flashing instant, then leaped into the thick of them. He was no defensive fighter; even in the teeth of overwhelming odds he always carried the war to the enemy. Any other man would have already died there, and Abe himself did not hope to survive, but he did ferociously wish to inflict as much damage as he could before he fell. His frontiersman's soul was ablaze, and the chants of old heroes, of Dan'l Boone and Davey Crockett, were singing in his ears.

As he sprang from the wall his axe dropped an outlaw with a severed shoulder, and the terrible back-hand return crushed the skull of another. Swords whined venomously about him, but death passed him by breathless margins. The frontiersman moved in, a blur of blinding speed. He was like a tiger among baboons as he leaped, side-stepped and spun, offering an ever-moving target, while his axe wove a shining wheel of death about him.

For a brief space the assassins crowded him fiercely, raining blows blindly and hampered by their own numbers; then they gave back suddenly — two corpses on the floor gave mute evidence of the President's fury, though Abe himself was bleeding from wounds on arm, neck and legs.

"In, now, and slay him!" yelled Booth.

Abe put his back against the wall and lifted his axe. He stood like an image of the unconquerable primordial — legs braced far apart, head thrust forward, one hand clutching the wall for support, the other gripping the axe on high, with the great corded muscles standing out in iron ridges, and his features frozen in a death snarl of fury — his eyes blazing terribly through the mist of blood which veiled them. The men faltered — wild, criminal and dissolute though they were, yet they came of a breed men called civilized, with a civilized background; here was the frontiersman — the natural killer. They shrank back — the dying tiger could still deal death.

Abe sensed their uncertainty and grinned mirthlessly and ferociously. "Who dies first?" he mumbled through smashed and bloody lips.

— Not from "The Phoenix on the Bayonet, or: By This Musket I Rule!" by Robert E. Howard



The typical political creature of SF — say, the Eternal Emperor of Bunch's & Cole's *Sten* series (1982-1993) — would assume that, once the leader had attained total power, he would have had his rivals immediately put to death, or at the very least assigned to powerless sinecures as a preliminary. A more devious mind would conclude that in fact Seward was the real authority, with Old Abe the Railsplitter a witless figurehead. Somewhere in between, someone on the order of a gun fanatic might speculate that he was in fact setting them up for a Great Trial of the Conspirators, where some Washingtonian-Jeffersonian-Lincolnian prosecutor would point a finger at Seward, Chase, and Bates while bellowing, "I demand that these mad dogs be shot!"

Naming his three principal rivals for the Republican nomination — William H. Seward, Salmon P. Chase, and Edward Bates — to the cabinet — as Secretary of State, Secretary of the Treasury, and Attorney General respectively — would be considered an act of extreme lunacy, and likely to see the President deposed, if not murdered outright. Those who see governance through the lens of absolutism show more about themselves by their comments than they do about their subject.

Team of Rivals is a joint biography. Such a work must be necessarily be brief regarding each of its subjects. The body of Lincoln history is great (one can readily imagine a 916+xx-page book on the topic of "Lincoln: April 15-20, 1841") but what is worthwhile is the *context*; the stories of Lincoln's three competitors for the nomination. One wonders if a similar book could be done about Douglas, Breckinridge, and Bell.

In her recounting of the campaign, Goodwin makes clear how divided and dissenting the American polity was. Lincoln was the compromise candidate; he came to the convention in a very disadvantageous position. By a thoroughgoing campaign of personal contacts, forthright advocacy, and other frontier methods, he became the leading candidate of the anti-Seward factions, which led to his nomination.

Taking Seward, Chase, and Bates into the

cabinet was clearly an act of inter-party reconciliation. (One thinks of a vulgar — so befitting the man — comment by Lyndon Johnson (another one of Goodwin's subjects, by the way) on the comparative virtues of having an opponent inside and outside the tent.) With a nation splitting apart, somebody had to be unified.

Indeed, Lincoln made one even more significant act of reconciliation. In the *McCormick Reaper* case, he had prepared a legal case for a plaintiff, but when the trial was moved to Cincinnati, he was contemptuously dismissed by the lead council for the plaintiffs. When his original choice for Secretary of War, Simon Cameron, proved unequal to the task, Lincoln chose that man, Edwin M. Stanton, to succeed him. More to the point, as he had done with the others, Lincoln turned Stanton into a supporter of his. Such cooperation was needed to bring the country through the next few years of war.

The heart of the narrative is the description of the home front in the grim war. For the first part of the conflict, for all its superior materiel, the Federal side was baffled by the resolution of its foes; as the quip goes, "This whole war could be the Almighty's little joke, He put all the factories and railroads on one side and gave the other side all of the smart generals." [PartiallyClips, 12/7/2003 "Union Soldiers"]

For example, there was the incident when General McClellan went to a wedding, came home, and went to bed. Without telling Lincoln, who had been waiting for an hour to see him, and indeed didn't find out for another half-hour that Little Mac had hit the sack. [Page 383] Lincoln demonstrated here an inhuman patience; in most armies, Private McClellan would have been assigned to permanent latrine orderly duty when he woke up, if he had been lucky. Compared to that little stunt, General Grant's occasional fondness for the bottle was positively deferential.

The Topic A of the war gets its due attention. There was considerable dissent over the Peculiar Institution, ranging from "Freedom Now" to "Win the War". Several Union commanders issued local emancipation proclamations, only to have them withdrawn under pressure from Washington, or Lincoln anyhow. He himself had a personal aversion for slavery, but was concerned about the political and legal aspects of proclaiming emancipation. The situation was far more complex than some people would have it.

The book is enriched by personal images of its subjects. For example, Goodwin describes how Lincoln entertained his associates on a boat trip to Fort Monroe, Virginia:

... He picked up an ax and "held it at arm's length at the extremity of the [handle] with his thumb and forefinger, continuing to hold it there for a number of minutes. The most powerful sailors on board tried in vain to imitate him."

— *Team of Rivals*, Page 437

It's not quite "by this axe I rule" but one

could say that Abe roolz!

But there were other personal matters, and Goodwin also describes the family griefs that plagued Lincoln, the death of Willie Lincoln and the extravagance of Mary Todd Lincoln. The griefs of the Swards, the intrigues of Chase, these and other personal events are also significant in understanding the greater context of the war and the governance of the country.

There are many exotic theses floating about nowadays, since what sells is what's new and scandalous, and Goodwin has for example to dismiss attributions of homosexuality. They didn't think the same way in those days. (I forebear to consider how she might react to an odious comparison of Lincoln to a certain Russian lawyer . . .)

The book drags in places, and occasionally seems to lose focus. The minutiae of the trivial short-lived political organizations of the eighteen-forties and -fifties is not all that relevant to the narrative, for example. (One might as well discuss Joseph Smith's campaign for President, which was aborted by his assassination. Usually they wait until the guy gets elected.)

This is the Lincoln admired by Colonel Andrew Keane (Forstchen's *Lost Regiment* series) and Colonel Harry Flashman (*Flash for Freedom* and *Flashman and the Angel of the Lord*) in their several ways.

Abe, still keeping stubbornly to his feet, grasping his bloody axe with one hand and Flashman's shoulder with the other, singled out Chase, who stood wringing his hands, and ordered: "Bring me the volume of the United States Code wherein there is printed the laws concerning slaves."

"But Mr. President —"

"Do as I say!" howled Abe, lifting the axe and Chase scurried to obey.

As he waited and the maids and secretaries flocked about him, dressing his wounds and trying gently but firmly to pry his iron fingers from about the bloody axe handle, Abe heard Flashman's breathless tale.

"... t'lass had heard old Booth and Smith plotting, and after they left she came to the, er, girls' academy where I was that is, lecturin' them on the wonders of old Rugby . . ."

— Not from "The Phoenix on the Bayonet, or: By This Musket I Rule!" by Robert E. Howard

FAITH OF OUR FATHERS

Review by Joseph T Major of

MAO: The Unknown Story

by Jung Chang (Chang Jung [Zhang Rong]) and Jon Halliday

(Alfred A. Knopf; 2005,

ISBN 0-679-42271-4; \$35.00)

What crossed the room toward the table in the center was not a man. . . It had no shape. Nor pseudopodia, either flesh or metal. It was, in a sense, not

there at all; when he managed to look directly at it, the shape vanished; he saw through it, saw the people on the far side of it — but not it. Yet if he turned his head, caught it out of a sidelong glance, he could determine its boundaries.

It was terrible; it blasted him with its awfulness. As it moved it drained the life from each person in turn; it ate the people who had assembled, passed on, ate again, ate more with an endless appetite. It hated; he felt its hate. It loathed; he felt its loathing for everyone present — in fact he shared its loathing. All at once he and everyone else in the big villa were each a twisted slug, and over the fallen slug-carcasses the creature savored, lingered, but all the time coming directly toward him — or was that an illusion? If this is a hallucination, Chien thought, it is the worst I have ever had; if it is not, then it is evil reality; it's an evil thing that kills and injures. . .

— "Faith of Our Fathers", Philip K. Dick

In 1931, the Chinese Communist Party established a "Red State" of Communist-dominated areas primarily in the provinces of Kiangsi [Jiangxi] and Fukien [Fujian]. The capital was Jui-chin [Ruijin]. The Communists left in 1934; in 1935 it was determined that the population of the Jui-chin area had declined by 700,000. [Page 109]

That was the beginning of the famous Long March, of which more later. It ended up in Yen-an, in northern Shensi [Shaanxi] Province. In 1962 Swedish author Jan Myrdal, author of the enthusiastic *Report from a Chinese Village* (1963), was told "Yenan is only poor and backward" because of the Communist establishment. Indeed, wherever the Red Army had gone in those days before the civil war, it left behind poverty and devastation.

The demon Tung Chien saw was the Chairman (chu-hsi [zhuxi]) himself, Mao Tse-tung [Mao Zedong], the subject of this work. The author of the autobiographical and biographical *Wild Swans: Three Daughters of China* (1992) and her husband have worked at deep and world-spanning length to produce as devastating a picture of the Great Helmsman as Phil Dick did taking some new stuff.

Consider for example their picture of the Long March (Ch'ang-cheng [Changzheng]). In earlier writings this campaign has been depicted as combining the privations of Valley Forge, the Retreat from Moscow, and the *Noche Triste*. According to their research, though, a more balanced view would be that of General Alexander's report on the final hours at Dunkirk: "We were not pressed."

The three chapters of this book that cover the Long March paint a quite different story from the generally received version. As might be guessed from the first of them, Chapter 12 "Long March I: Chiang Lets the Reds Go" [Pages 130-137]. Chiang Kai-shek wanted to move into Szechuan [Sichuan] and get the warlord to fall in line, but couldn't do so

without an excuse. Such as pursuing the Red Army. Similarly, the heroic crossing of the Ta-tu [Dadu] River at Lu-ting [Luding] ends up getting stripped of its moving depictions of anonymous heroic Communists crossing a treacherous and scanty span under massive unrelenting Nationalist fire.

There were no battle casualties reported for the crossing of the Ta-tu river. Except for a horse, which fell off the bridge into the river. [Pages 152-154]

Again, the idealistic revolutionaries abroad painted a picture of an idealistic, spartan leader. The portrayal by Mao's former personal physician, Li Chih-sui [Li Zhisui] in his *The Private Life of Chairman Mao* (1994) was a severe rejoinder to this, and Chang and Halliday build on that. Between Mao's utter neglect of personal hygiene (the man did not take a bath for years at a time and his teeth were rotten) and his personal debauchery (he had a harem, classified as various grades of personal assistants; how do you say in P'u t'ung hua [Putonghua; "Mandarin"] "I did not have sex with that woman.?"?) he was an unlovely person. And did I mention the multiple mansions, all built with an emphasis on security, that he had all around the country and maybe occupied some of them once? Just like Nicolae Ceausescu (see *Red Horizons* by Ion Mihai Pacepa (1987)).

The authors get personal in other ways. Mao was married four times and had four children who survived to adulthood. Two went mad and one (Mao An-yang [Mao Anyang]) was killed in the Korean War. He also betrayed all his wives. He deserted three of them and in his final months made a deal to let Chiang Ch'ing [Jiang Qing] be taken out after his death, as long as they didn't bother him while he was still alive. (They contrast it with the effort that Chiang Kai-shek [Jiang Jieshi] put out to rescue his son, Chiang Ching-kuo [Jiang Jingguo; Nikolai Vladimirovich Elizarov] from the Soviet Union.)

his own fall coming, and got in such a hurry to flee that he forgot to have them fuel up his escape plane all the way [Page 560]. (People who criticize the German *Widerstand* for not being able to summon up the will to whack Hitler should read how Lin Piao, who had the entire PLA at his disposal, and was possessed of a far greater ruthlessness, couldn't even get to the Chairman [Page 558].)

As with his subordinates, so the people at large. The massive population declines, capped by the largest famine in Chinese history during the Great Leap Forward, and the drastic social destruction of the Cultural Revolution show what he could do to people he had control over. And then he got the Bomb. Chang and Halliday quote such appalling comments as the one he made to the CCP Party Congress in 1958: "Don't make a fuss about a world war. At most, people die . . . Half the population wiped out — this happened quite a few times in Chinese history . . . It's best if half the population is left, next best one-third . . ." [Page 439]

Speaking of world wars, the authors describe how Mao worked to get the means for them. He saw a future in which the world would be dominated by one nation, and believed that only China was fit to be that nation. So it needed the weapons of a world power. The Chinese nuclear weapons program required massive Soviet aid and prodigious Chinese resources. Chang and Halliday estimate that the money spent on the development of nuclear weapons could have bought enough food to save the lives of everyone who died in the famine [Page 485]. But Mao got his Bomb. He must have been playing *Civilization*: "Our words are backed by NUCLEAR WEAPONS!"

He may have needed them. This book contains descriptions of the Chinese intervention in Korea and Vietnam; it is claimed that Chinese railway troops maintained the North Vietnamese rail system, enabling the NVA to commit more troops to the south. And apparently, Stalin and Mao wanted a UN police action in Korea, to draw in the West and exhaust them. Mao did not count the cost to his own troops; one front-line observer of this, Fusilier Maurice Micklewhite of the Royal Fusiliers (City of London Regiment), has recounted how the absolute indifference to human life he observed during attacks by the PLA disabused him of his earlier sympathy for Communism. [Page 366] (He is better known as Sir Michael Caine, the actor.) Most of the "Chinese Volunteer Force" troops sent to Korea were former Nationalists who had defected, individually or in groups. This was why so many wished not to be repatriated. (The South Koreans captured by the Communists weren't so lucky [Pages 377-378].)

They had gone over because so many senior Nationalist commanders were Communist moles. Chang and Halliday list a number of Nationalist commanders whose blunders during the Chinese Civil War benefitted the Communist cause [Pages 301-311]. On the other hand, a similar analysis would show that Braxton Bragg was a Federal mole, so that's an argument of shaky utility. Like most such leaders, Chiang

chose commanders on the basis of loyalty, and a competent subordinate would be inherently unworthy of trust.

Then too, they endorse a basis of a conspiracy on a scale so immense as to dwarf any previous such venture in the history of man. A conspiracy of infamy so black that, when it is finally exposed, its principals shall be forever deserving of the maledictions of all honest men. When Senator McCarthy uttered those words, he was discussing George C. Marshall, criticizing among other things his actions in China, and Chang and Halliday say:

Marshall was to perform a monumental service to Mao. When Mao had his back to the wall in what could be called his Dunkirk in late spring 1946, Marshall put heavy — and decisive — pressure on Chiang to stop pursuing the Communists into northern Manchuria, saying that the U.S. would not help him if he pushed further, and threatening to stop ferrying Nationalist troops to Manchuria.

— *Mao: The Unknown Story*, Page 295

However, if one really wanted to see a situation where people were denounced, jailed, terrorized, even killed for their past associations, one had but to look at the Cultural Revolution, Mao's war against all. Mao's conduct in this combined all his habits; his betrayal of anyone for a momentary advantage, his callous indifference to human loss, and so on.

The authors describe the nihilism that the Cultural Revolution made flourish. The tale of Sung Pin-pin [Song Binbin] and how she became "Be Violent" and lived up to that name, for example [Page 517]. Which in turn led to the callous treatment of disgraced Chinese leaders. [Given that they participated in the atrocities of the Civil War and the Great Leap Forward, though, sympathy for them is muted, just as the Old Bolsheviks who were unmasked as enemies of Stalin, confessed their crimes, and were shot had taken part in the massacres of the Russian Civil War.]

Part of it was the destruction of the past. Part of the Cultural Revolution was the extirpation of old thought; the demolition of the cultural heritage of China is described here. For more see the works of "Simon Leys" [Pierre Ryckmans], such as *Ombres Chinoises* [*Chinese Shadows*; 1976]. Similarly, his concern for the environment of China was less than nil, and the devastation produced by that continues. For more see *Mao's War Against Nature: Politics and the Environment in Revolutionary China* (2001) by Judith Shapiro.

As Mao disintegrated, he continued to flail out and destroy all those around him. Chang and Halliday describe a sweet revenge that Chou En-lai [Zhou Enlai] had, for as he was dying of the untreated bladder cancer that the Chairman had had hidden from him, he learned that Mao had amyotrophic lateral sclerosis [Page 616]. Chou and his associates Teng Hsiao-p'ing [Deng Xiaoping] and Marshal Yeh Chien-ying [Ye Jianying] knew that if they survived (Chou,



Mao hardly had any loyalty to anyone else anyhow. The authors reveal how he intrigued and schemed his way to the leadership of the CCP in the first place, allying with and betraying various people. Once he was atop this dangerous dung heap, he proceeded to set his subordinates one against the other, always forcing the most loyal into the most humiliating self-denunciations. Or, for example, the failed coup attempt of Lin Piao [Lin Biao], who saw

of course, didn't) that they could prevail, hence the deal in which Mao offered up the Gang of Four.

Towards the end, he finally found someone for whom he could have sympathy. The authors recount the warm welcome Richard Nixon received, and quote the memorial poem Mao wrote for Chiang Kai-shek [Page 628]. (But then, when Francisco Franco died, the Cuban parliament had a memorial moment of silence.)

And then he died.

As research for this work, Chang inspected Chinese archives (she was, after all, a former Red Guard) while Halliday, a Soviet expert, looked over those in the former Soviet Union. And other places; for example, citing President Mobutu Sese Seko for a comment Mao made to him about trying to assassinate him [Page 571]. And all the way down to the 93 year old woman eyewitness who didn't recall any heroic Red Army storming of the Lu-ting Bridge [Page 640].

The portrait painted here is one of an unrelenting nihilism. Naturally, one wonders if there is an agenda of justification; blaming everything on the one who was in charge and can't reply. Perhaps so; certainly people will exaggerate and shift blame. As Mao was exalted during his lifetime, portrayed as a genius if not a living saint, now he is being execrated, condemned. How to tell where the truth lies? Now the negative information is getting out.

There are the dead, the devastated places, the broken lives. There was a massive literature of adulation of the Great Helmsman both at home and abroad. Now, when there is nothing to be gained by chanting "Long Live Chairman Mao!" (even when he was trying to speak [Page 547]), it might be possible to see him as he was.

I know who you are, Tung Chien thought to himself. You, the supreme head of the world-wide party structure. You, who destroy whatever living object you touch; I see that Arabic poem, the searching for the flowers of life to eat them — I see you astride the plain which to you is Earth, plain without hills, without valleys. You go anywhere, appear any time, devour anything; you engineer life and then guzzle it, and you enjoy that.

— "Faith of Our Fathers", Philip K. Dick

OUT OF THE DUST SHALL EURABIA ARISE — Part II

Review by Joseph T Major of

LONDONISTAN

by Melanie Phillips

(Encounter Books; 2006;

ISBN 1-59403-144-4; \$25.95) and

BETRAYAL:

France, the Arabs, and the Jews

by David Pryce-Jones

(Encounter Books; 2006;

ISBN 1-59403-151-7; \$23.95)

Why should you be concerned about the prospect of a *Londonistan*? What do you have

to lose?

No more Monty Python. No more Blackadder. No more *Doctor Who*. No more *Rome*. No more cons where everyone disappears into the pub before the opening ceremonies and remains until the end of Sunday. No more pubs. No more London Circle (it meets in pubs). No more H. G. Wells (he imagined a future without Islam in *The Time Machine*); and so on down to no more Scottish Socialist writers like Ken MacLeod or Charlie Stross.

"It won't happen," they say, and never say *how*. Except, perhaps, in imagining the continuation and power of the same institutions and attitudes that they have themselves been labouring so hard to end or at least weaken.

This is Phillips's most notable contribution; she describes in unpleasant detail how the teardrop-crumpties Britain we knew and loved through fictions in various media has been overwhelmed by a new and grotesquely self-doubting culture. (One could find more in Peter Hitchens's *The Abolition of Britain* (1999, 2000)). As Bruce Bawer pointed out in his *While Europe Slept* (2006; reviewed in *Alexiad* V. 5 #6), at least in Britain there are other voices, there is an alternative point of view.

But, the new mainstream is Marcusean; it aggressively promotes the minority and aggressively silences the majority. This is because the dominant class truly despises their traditional culture; and when you believe in nothing, you will believe in anything, and Islam and Islamism are the most prominent anything there.

Britain doesn't quite have the banlieu culture of raping any woman who is indecently dressed. It does have problems with burqa wearers, with demanding various one-sided accommodations to Islam, and other aggressive attitudes on their part. One of the more notorious scandals is the number of Islamicist mullahs and organizations that operate out of Britain.

Their reason for losing control of their borders is the extension of the concept of "asylum". When the judge sentenced Klaus Fuchs to fourteen years, he said that Fuchs's espionage against a third party may have damaged the concept of asylum. It was, but in the direction of being stretched out of any meaning whatsoever; anyone can be a refugee.

Which leads to a whipsaw between activist judges on one hand, who impose these cultural means even beyond what the laws mandate, and international mores, which create new laws without the consent of the governed. Who could imagine that a international treaty on Human Rights would mean an end to human rights? (There are reports that the British government is planning to drop out of this treaty regime; but then there are reports that the British government is planning to lay up a substantial part of the Royal Navy. That last I'd believe.)

Phillips devotes an entire chapter to the rising tide of anti-Semitism consequent on this importation of values. Perhaps David Irving was too hasty in bringing his lawsuit. She describes how a flow of Islamic anti-Semitism is stimulating a corresponding anti-Semitism

among the new class of multicultural elites.

In his essay "A Low Taste for Hanging", Auberon Waugh, the even more acerbic son of Evelyn Waugh, cited the government's opposition to capital punishment, and the massive public support of it, as indication of a broader concern, which was that "if the majority cannot be allowed to decide about capital punishment, why should it be allowed to decide about anything?" This seems to be a more general attitude; consider, for example, that Deborah Lipstadt found "ordinary" English people to be of the opinion that Irving got what he deserved and that she herself was a good and brave person. It's among the elites that you get the Christopher Hitchenses, the John Keegans, and the like.

Looking at the consequences of this practice of multiculturalism, it seems that Phillips has identified a means by which the unlovely prospect of *Prayers for the Assassin* (2006) can be realized; the multicultural unbelievers are recognizing Islam as a beautiful and complete lifestyle.

At least in London, not yet wholly Londonistan, there is disagreement. Where the wogs begin, though, there is less. David Pryce-Jones chronicles briefly the *Betrayal* of Jews by the French elite.

It began with the Dreyfus Affair. Of course. From there, Pryce-Jones recounts a long and shameful career of French crapauding to the Arabs, and a reciprocal betrayal of Jewish interests. One has but to note the distribution by French diplomatic officials of *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion* (Page 42) to see this.

Now you understand, this was not some private matter, but an official communication. Pryce-Jones has done extensive research in the French archives, using their own words against them, as it were.

The principal topic of this brief work is the self-destructive French trend towards aggressively pro-Islamic policies. The author cites two parallel incidents of French protection: initially, of Amin al-Husseini, the Grand Mufti of Jerusalem, and later, of the Ayatollah Khomeini.

This stemmed from a number of sources. There was a desire to restore the status of France in the world. There was a dislike of *les anglo-saxons* for various reasons. There was a need to position France as a "third way" power, not beholden to *les communistes* or *les anglo-saxons*.

He says a little about the internal problems of France brought about by the combined forces of multiculturalism and immigration. He does cite the comment by Napoleon III that France was "*une puissance musulmane*", a Muslim power. It seems to be becoming that now, but not in the way that Napoléon le petit thought.

This is a slender — some might say "slight" book. He could have written in more detail, but this is a picture that is ugly enough that any detail would be more unpleasant. There is a lot to pick from and he can be said to have cherry-

picked the worst cases. The case to the contrary seems to be lacking.

AN INQUIRY INTO THE NATURE AND CAUSES OF REPUBLICAN PARTY REPTILES

Review by Joseph T Major of
ON THE WEALTH OF NATIONS
by P. J. O'Rourke
(Atlantic Monthly Press; 2007;
ISBN 978-0-87113-949-8; \$21.95)

Leo Rosten's essay "A Modest Man Named Smith" explaining the great philosopher and his work may be found in his *People I Have Known, Loved, or Admired* (1970), or on the website of the Adam Smith Institute (not surprisingly, <http://www.adamsmith.org>). If the Republican Party Reptile has taken longer to discourse on this topic, it is merely because he has had more breadth to do so.

What makes it notable is O'Rourke's willingness to be unconfined in his examples and similitudes:

When Smith considered how division of labor developed, he briefly — for Smith — directed our attention to an interesting and characteristic quality of man. The most powerful creature to ever stride the earth is the most pitifully helpless. We are born incapable of caring for ourselves and remain so — to judge by today's youth — until we're forty. At the age of two when any other mammal is in its peak earning years, hunting, gathering, and procreating, the human toddler cannot find its ass with both hands, at least not well enough to use the potty. The creativity of a Daniel Defore couldn't get Robinson Crusoe through the workweek without a supply of manufactured goods from the shipwreck's hold and the services of a cannibal executive assistant.

— *On The Wealth of Nations*, Page 41

O'Rourke's summary includes commentary describing how the issues raised in the book are still relevant, more than two centuries after its publication:

"There is no commercial country in Europe of which the approaching ruin has not frequently been foretold . . . from an unfavourable balance of trade,"⁵ Smith wrote, making the news in the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post* very old news indeed. "Nothing," Smith wrote, "can be more absurd than this whole doctrine of the balance of trade."⁶ As Smith had already made clear, every freely conducted trade is balanced by definition. The definition doesn't change because one trader gets an iPod and the other gets an IOU.

— *On The Wealth of Nations*, Page 103

Some people never learn:
But this book isn't just on *The Wealth of*

Nations; O'Rourke also gives background and exposition. He discusses Smith's first book, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* (1759) as well as the third book which he never wrote, on political theory. There is an approach to this, in the temporarily misplaced Memorandum to Alexander Wedderburn (the future Earl of Rosslyn) with proposals for resolving the American matter. Some of his comments are surprising:

Smith had another even less practical solution to the American problem, a merger with Great Britain. Benjamin Franklin had proposed such an idea in the 1750s, but tempers had been cooler then. Smith seemed to feel that he was now almost the only person in favor of it. He told Wedderburn that political agglomeration "seems scarce to have a single advocate . . . if you except here and there a solitary philosopher like myself."²⁴ . . .

. . . He thought that his concept could be extended "to all the different provinces of the empire inhabited by people of either British or European extraction."²⁷ (Lest this be thought racist, he favored including the Irish.) He even foresaw, without wincing, the Bush/Blair relationship:

In the course of little more than a century, perhaps, the produce of American might exceed that of British taxation. The seat of the empire would then naturally remove itself to that part of the empire which contributed most to the general defence and support of the whole.²⁸

— *On The Wealth of Nations*, Pages 127-128



Now there's an interesting idea! Better founded than guys with handguns enforcing the unanimous consent of the governed, too.

This is more of a "Through *The Wealth of Nations* with Gun and Camera" [and perhaps a box of Montecristos, several bottles of scotch, and maybe a tab or two of Ecstasy] than a replacement for reading the books themselves. One can see the ideas that enlightened Smith himself, expressed in an exuberant idiom that the contemporary reader can appreciate.

. . . one of the books they forced down our throats at Rugby was Smith's prodigious tome. Never cared much for it myself, I would have respected him more for writing about how to ride fast on laudanum while getting your wing-wang squeezed without spilling your drink. But such practical applications would never have occurred to Arnold and the rest of those old prigs.

— Not from the Flashman Papers

FEAR AND REPTILE

Review by Joseph T Major of
*YOU CAN GET ARRESTED FOR THAT:
2 Guys, 25 Dumb Laws, 1 Absurd American
Crime Spree*
by Rich Smith
(Three Rivers Press; 2006;
ISBN 0-307-33942-4; \$13.95)

Rich Smith describes here how he took a £20 bet that he couldn't storm the beaches of Normandy. He did; it cost him £60. [Page 6] It looks like there are still some people in England who keep the faith! The spirit of Phileas Fogg yet lives!

What can one do after this? Well, here we have a defiant and proud scofflaw. Smith set out to America to break laws. This is proof that Homeland Security is not working.

Of course, the laws he broke were ones like the law making it illegal to hunt whales in Utah, peel an orange in a hotel room in California, or fish while wearing pajamas (or even pyjamas) in Chicago. Warn Homeland Security, Rich and his Dr. Gonzo, his friend Luke Bateman, flew a kite in Washington D.C.

What Smith and Bateman did was to drive across the U.S., looking for obscure and bizarre laws to break, and observing the people while doing so. Almost everybody was warm, friendly, and welcoming. (Only the beggars weren't, and not all of them.) In return, Smith and Bateman liked the Yanks (particularly those two girls from the Hooters in Horn Lake [Pages 143-147]). However, while admiring the natural beauty of New Hampshire [Page 201], they forgot to stop in Jaffrey to see P. J. O'Rourke.

What's wrong? Bateman was supposedly photographing the whole thing, and there's not one photo in the book. Also, they went from St. Louis (where Smith drank beer from a bucket while sitting on the curb [Pages 131-132]) to Oxford, Mississippi (where they drove around the town square a hundred and one times [Pages 151-155]) by going through Missouri and Arkansas to Tennessee, not through Kentucky, which would have meant going through Nashville as well. In Nashville they could have seen the state capitol building, which is different, particularly as Smith counts himself a connoisseur of state capitol buildings [Page 197].

In spite of everything they didn't get arrested. There was one speeding ticket [Page 81] and one stop by the Chicago Police [Page 111-113]. It is probably not a good idea to carry a Cornish flag (sable, a cross azure) in Chicago. That happens to be the symbol of the

Black Gangster Disciples. Eek! Eek! Eek! (Or maybe not, and apparently the gang has changed its name to just Gangster Disciples.)

Yawl come back now, heah?

A REAL NOWHERE MAN

Commentary by Joseph T Major on

TRAVELS IN ICARIA

(*Voyage en Icarie*)

by Étienne Cabet

Translated by Leslie J. Roberts

(Syracuse University Press; 1839; 2003;

ISBN 0-8156-3009-3; \$24.95)

Marxism (or perhaps more precisely, Marxism-Leninism) in some ways demonstrated the validity of *The Origin of Species*. The nineteenth century cast up a number of political ideas that fell in the general category of communalist, or as some of their practitioners would have it socialist, or communist. Most of them perished before long, leaving behind only extravagant millenarian books gathering dust in university libraries. The Leninist version (“*M. Lenini*”?) survived a little longer, but in the end its internal contradictions brought about its extinction.

These doctrines spread from the original thesis of utopianism. (Though to be fair, the originator seemed to be on both sides of the matter, since the name of his narrator, “Hythodlaeus”, means “dispenser of nonsense”, and a number of other place names have similar dissonances, not to mention the dissonances between More’s theories there and his practices as Lord Chancellor. Given that he said that there were many things in Utopia he thought worthwhile, he may have been “triangulating”; proposing more than he wanted so he could compromise on that.) There were a number of other works proposing such theses, from Campanella’s *City of the Sun* (1602, 1623) down to Callenbach’s *Ecotopia* (1975). Similarly, there were a number of experiments in communal living, from the Transcendentalists to The Farm. They tended not to survive the first generation.

Some did both.

Étienne Cabet [1788-1856] was a French politician and writer who had a difference of opinion with Louis-Philippe’s government in 1831. Precipitously relocating to Britain, all the better to escape prosecution, he began to read about communal movements, and put forward his own theory. In the late eighteen-forties, the theory became active, and groups of French communalists departed for America to organize communal living according to Cabet’s doctrine. Without Cabet, as he got kicked out of his own outfit (in Nauvoo, Illinois, which was available for some reason) and died not long thereafter. The communities kept on having splits and purifications until the last eight members divided up the assets and turned off the lights.

In fiction, though, he could have more success. *Travels in Icaria* follows the traditional plot of such works, where the narrator gets shown around and is told by all and sundry how everything here is so much better than it is at his home.

Cabet did not just stick to social innovation; he described in detail a number of scientific and engineering innovations that made life in Icaria easier and more convenient. Icaria has a nationwide public mass-transit system. It introduced Taylorized mass-production before Henry Ford had even been conceived. Some might consider it an early steampunk novel (in which case Luis P. Senarens, the “Noname” of the Frank Reade, Jr. books, is Da Man of Steampunk) what with its many innovations.

But how did this technological wonderland come about? A priest named Icar was deeply concerned about the state of the people. When the king died, and his cousin the wicked and ugly Duke Lixdoh engineered the accession of the beautiful but hapless Countess Cloramide, the country went to hell in a handbasket. Icar rose to distinction in the ensuing revolution, and was by unanimous consent of the people named as dictator in the year 1782.

He undertook a wholehearted and thorough rebuilding of the country. The land itself was reshaped so that every provincial capital was in the exact center of its province, the national capital itself in the center of the nation. A new language was instituted, being perfect and regular, and all that was necessary, useful, or pleasing in the existing literary, historical, philosophical, and scientific corpus was translated into it, after which the unsuitable works were destroyed by burning.

Having created a nation of equality, a perfect democracy, Icar expired peacefully. In his honor, the country was renamed “Icaria”, and his name and fame are remembered several times a day by all the people. At the daily Republican Feasts the first toast is to Icar. Regular reenactments of his modesty and virtue are performed for the enlightenment of youth and the reaffirmation of age.

Hurrah, hurrah, for the GREAT ICAR, the Great Leader and Teacher, the Great Friend of the People!



Can you say, “Cult of Personality”?

You will recall that in *Carson of Venus* (1939) the Zani government had commissioned a hundred-and-one act play on the topic of the life of Mephis, and everyone had to go see an act at least once in every ten days. Not to

mention the other Mephis-praising methods of Zaniism. Icaria seems to lack a Zani Guard equivalent, but then they seem to have no Atorians or other internal enemies, race, class, or whatever, and at least they don’t go standing on their heads to shout “Maltu Icar!”

Anyone with the ego to write such a great overwhelming world-concept tends to be so enamored of it that he can’t imagine that anyone sensible would oppose it. Thus for example, we see that every law in Icaria is thoroughly discussed by all the People, who being completely informed, are in complete agreement with their representatives, who unanimously approve it.

And the laws go pretty far. When the first item on the legislature’s agenda is approving a new vegetable for the Icarian diet (Page 149), that’s a pretty conclusive example. Nowadays we call that “nanny state”.

Cabet follows in the tradition of the Encyclopedists in describing the development of Icarian society. Whenever the Icarians wish to do something they establish a *committee of experts* that thoroughly study the issue, categorizing the field into the necessary, the useful, and the pleasing. Then the issue is discussed throughout the republic by all the People, and finally adopted by the unanimous vote of the National Assembly.

(Any resemblance to the procedures of the European Union is not to be discussed. EU regulations don’t need any silly trivia such as public discussion or legislative adoption.)

Like More’s Utopia, Icaria lacks any places for dissent. There are no taverns or stews. Any person who wished to commit adultery would find no place in which to carry out his vile act, and would incur the excretion of the entire community. (This sort of attitude makes Cabet’s Frenchness open to question.)

Indeed, along with the almost comically over-the-top cult of personality there is a supporting structure of lesser absurdities. For example, everyone in Icaria wears a uniform. Or several uniforms, since there are different clothes to be worn at different times of the day, for work, for leisure, for Republican Festivals, and the like. Moreover, the uniforms are categorized according to one’s status — single, married, widowed, and many other categories that weren’t quite worth mentioning. This kind of detail sounds nit-pickingly absurd. Like with most utopias, it’s one of those obsessions of the creator projected onto his created society. Or as when his narrators visit a farm and find that the farm house is a four-sided building with each side done in a different national style, for example, just as in town where every building on a street is in a different national style. Cabet seems to be prefiguring multiculturalism here.

Somewhat more worthy of concern is the deliberate intellectual isolation. Cabet makes much of how the Icarians don’t waste time studying foreign languages, or classical ones. And there was that bit about selecting the material to be preserved.

Similarly, the lack of gathering places and the constant association with “the community” does tend to reduce the area of private space.

Who has the opportunity to sit down and think?

Or could you say it even if you had the time? You see, there is only one local newspaper in each commune, one regional newspaper in each province, and one national newspaper. The editors may be replaced at any time, and all articles submitted are reviewed by the relevant Assembly, and are to contain only facts, without any opinions. And of course, since there is a public source free to all, no other such publications are permitted. (Can Citizen Winston Lefevbre at least write in his journal, "A bas Icar.??")

It's not all bad. Cabet describes quite modern and workable methods for improving public health, including provisions for clean air and clean water. The cities are planned with concern for public safety and convenience, with covered sidewalks, lit streets, mass transit, and the like. Icaria has a quite advanced hospital system, with concerns for cleanliness and patient care. And so on. The book is rife with technological speculation, in fact. I'm surprised that Gernsback didn't discover it and reprint long extracts in *Science and Invention* or *Amazing Stories*.

I've seen the comment that if *Brave New World* (1932) had been published in a SF pulp magazine, it would have featured people trying to raise all the Epsilons to Alpha mentality and overthrow the Controllers. In *Astounding*, the full technical consequences of the advanced technologies would have been explored, after which Huxley would have been advised to put in comments about Dianetics, psionics, or whatever was Campbell's current enthusiasm. And in *Galaxy*, after Gold had maimed the prose, the story would have been slanted to emphasize the critique of contemporary society. (STAR TREK: TNG™ got that from *Galaxy*.) One can imagine similar reimaginings of this work in those venues. But then, there were all those fan-fiction sequels to Bellamy's *Looking Backward* (1888) which had Julian West discovering how the Nationalist America he had awakened into was really a ghastly tyranny . . .

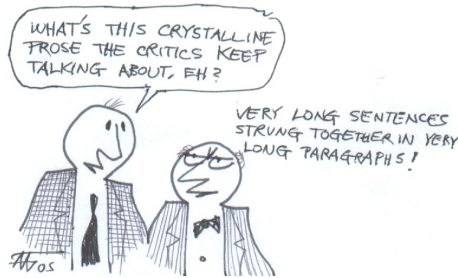
The translation is . . . restrained. Sections of this work were translated in Marie-Louise Bernen's *Journey Through Utopia* (1951) and that translator LET GO with CAPITALS and italics in the style of the ORIGINAL!!!! And exclamation points TOO!!!! Living in Icaria would have been a very exhausting thing to do.

This particular edition is only a part of the entire original work; besides this tour, Cabet wrote a long history of Icaria and a philosophical discussion of why it would work. And you thought that Le Guin's *Always Coming Home* (1985) was something new.

One of the reasons the real-life Icarian community didn't work out was that most of the communards had joined up for the artistic opportunities promised and weren't particularly into that manual labor stuff. That was one disagreement Cabet had with his followers, who weren't as cooperative as his characters for some reason.

The critique of such utopias that I've run

across is that the people are like a group-photograph key; no one has a face, just an oval which contains a number. Which may be why dystopias such as Ayn Rand's *Anthem* (1938) or Yevgeny Zamyatin's *Мы [We]* (1920), not to mention *The Prisoner*, have people who are only numbers.



Another problem arises from the the auctorial voice. "The characters do as I wish," the author says, and so all opposition either vanishes or is preposterous. Thus in such more recent works as Mack Reynolds's *Ability Quotient* (1975), Robert Rimmer's *Love Me Tomorrow* (1976), and John Dalmas's *The General's President* (1988), all involving far-reaching changes in society, the only opposition to the restructuring, the only people who have any problems with it, is from a sinister conspiracy of rich power-seekers. No one, as given, has any valid reason to object, for example, to career and lifestyle classification by government tests, because they can't be rigged to make a would-be electrical engineer seem qualified only to be a sanitation engineer, say.

Again, I'm surprised that Gernsback didn't reprint this work, seeing as how with its abundance of technological wonders it prefigures *Ralph 124C41+* (1911). Now, with all its efflorescence of technology, exuberance of description, and mutuality of population, this work is generally available in English. To ICAR, the Great and Terrible . . .

BIO-DOME

Review by Joseph T Major of
**THE HUMAN EXPERIMENT:
Two Years and Twenty Minutes Inside
Biosphere 2**

by Jane Poynter
(Thunder's Mouth Press; 2006;
ISBN 978-1-56025-775-2; \$26.95)

A scientific project that gets satirized by everyone from Leno to Letterman, from Scott Adams to Pauly Shore, has to have trouble. And so this did.

Biosphere 2 participant Jane Poynter has recounted her side of the experiment in closed environments. The Biosphere Project began, not surprisingly, in environmental, not astronomical, research. Poynter herself seems to have drifted into the project through involvement in environmentalist activities. Indeed, there was a very strong sixties attitude to the project, with meditation, communal

living, gaudy beliefs, and the like.

For all that harmonic convergent universal love that was supposed to pervade the community ("organization" is like so linear and old-timey) they had some old-fashioned power struggle and management straight out of *Dilbert*. (Dogbert staffed his biosphere with managers and then forgot the oxygen . . .) The director turned out to be a manipulator.

Indeed, when the biosphere was closed, that became a serious problem. The group split into two sub-groups; if not exactly hostile, at the least noncommunicating. (A co-worker of mine who had been at the Amundsen-Scott Station at the South Pole read Jerri Nielsen's memoir *Ice Bound: A Doctor's Incredible Battle for Survival at the South Pole* (2001) and noticed that she only mentioned a few people, which he thought meant that there had been a very severe clique problem that winter.)

The other internal problem was the oxygen level. Poynter describes their constant problem with lower levels of oxygen in the atmosphere, and the way that this affected them.

She expounds initially on the healthy diet they were living on, but as the experiment progresses they suffered from inadequate calories, bland and few food choices, and similar problems. This is a graphic description of the *Diet for a Small Planet* future.

Outside, there were grand public relations failures. They must have done something to annoy the writer for the *Village Voice* who wrote the initial doubting article. All too soon, such writers could get plenty of support from informed sources — the former employees who had been fired for little or no reason.

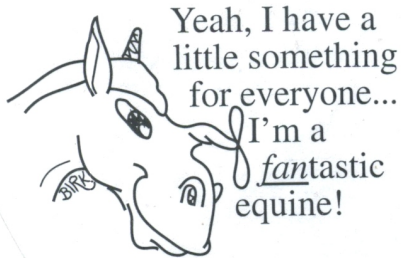
In the end, in spite of everything, the researchers served out their time and were released. Poynter says "two years and twenty minutes" but somehow doesn't count her having to leave the biosphere two weeks after the experiment started to have a severed fingertip operated on. The experiment was over.

What did this prove? Poynter cites mostly "spiritual" values. One wonders if this was a proper return on the \$250 million investment. The second biosphere experiment had a deliberate breach of enclosure done by two of the people from the first experiment, protesting against the management. This does not seem to show any respect for science, much less for the management.

Perhaps that was more appropriate than one thought; the management was very new-age, managing to keep their findings out of the system (everything they did was copyrighted and not peer-reviewed). As a result, the scientific advisors resigned en masse partway through the stay, which sort of lost the group their credibility.

You'd think that the remnant O'Neill Colony people, or Robert Zubrin and other Martian expedition people, would have taken an interest. Poynter didn't mention it, though apparently there was some interest. It has been noted that Zubrin's simulated Mars Missions in the Arctic are far more scrupulous, careful, and dedicated to scientific research (see *Mars on Earth* (2003) reviewed in *Alexiad* V. 3 #5). Alas, about the

greatest legacy of Biosphere 2 may be the Pauly Shore movie *Bio-Dome* (1996) — another sign of the decline and fall of civilization.



ARABIAN HORSES

by Lisa Major

The Arabian horse is perhaps the oldest horse breed in the world. It is known for its elegant, arching crested neck and naturally high-set tail. Its exact origin is lost in history. What is known is that the Bedouin tribes were the first to keep track of pedigrees, even if not written down. The Arabian contributed to the founding of many breeds. Most Thoroughbreds today trace their ancestry back to either the Darley Arabian, the Godolphin Arabian, or the Byerley Turk. Arabians rule in endurance contests, even if they are not as fast as their Thoroughbred descendants. Arabians also race over shorter distances. They are undeniably beautiful. I spent no little time looking at pictures of individual Arabians.

THREE BARS

by Lisa Major

Three Bars, the horse at the top of my list of horses to write about, was a Thoroughbred stallion foaled in 1940. He traced back to Domino, a tremendously fast horse of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. His dam was a daughter of Luke McLuke, winner of the 1914 Belmont Stakes. A Quarter Horse breeder who had seen her race and liked her bought her when she was in foal with Three Bars. The more than 380 foals he sired on Quarter Horse mares excelled both at Quarter Horse racing and the show ring. I first encountered his name at the Horse Park where a plaque outside the Hall of Champions commemorates him.

THE REAL SEASONS OF THE YEAR

by Johnny Carruthers

[originally on

<http://chocolatescifi.livejournal.com/>]

If I asked you to name the seasons, you would probably respond with, “winter, spring, summer, fall.” While I suppose that is true, I deal with two other seasons on my calendar — candy and non-candy. These two seasons each cover roughly half the year — but unlike the

traditional four seasons, there is no definite beginning or ending date on the calendar.

Come to think of it, it’s not a completely equal division, now that I think about it. Candy season lasts roughly seven months, while non-candy season lasts only five.

We’re in the middle of candy season at the moment. It begins more or less right after Labor Day, and runs through late March to mid-April. Candy season kicks off with a bang once all of the back-to-school promotions have faded away. At that time, the stores are in a mad rush to put all of the Halloween candy (and related items) on the shelves.

We’re in the middle of the second phase at the moment. That begins on November 1, as the remaining Halloween candy is unceremoniously shoved to the clearance tables, and the Christmas candy takes over the place of honor on the shelves.

December 26 begins the third phase of candy season. The Valentine’s Day candy is now taking the spotlight, and the Christmas candy slinks off to the clearance table, much as the Halloween candy did several weeks earlier.

The final phase, of course, begins on February 15. That’s when the Easter candy takes all of the attention, and the remaining Valentine candy is discounted.

And the day after Easter? Well, that’s when candy season ends. Okay, it might last a week or so beyond that, as whatever Easter candy that went unsold is marked down. But that eventually disappears, and the long non-candy season sets in.

Okay, that might be something of an exaggeration. There is always some sort of candy that is being sold. But for those five months between April and August, there isn’t any holiday that has any special candy being produced for it. The closest thing to a holiday candy that comes out during that period is the red, white, and blue M&Ms for Independence Day.

As I suggested earlier, the good thing about non-candy season is that it is shorter than candy season. Now, if we can just think of seasonal candies for other holidays, so that we can make non-candy season even shorter . . .

In reality, the transition between the different phases does not run as smoothly as I suggested. I was reminded of this earlier this afternoon, while I went out just to get out of my parents’ house for an hour or two.

During my little sojourn, I stopped by both CVS and Rite Aid. And as I walked through the aisles of both, I noticed one thing. The Christmas candy was already shoved aside to make way for the red heart-shaped boxes of chocolates of varying sizes and prices.

I suppose I really can’t blame the personnel at either store. Christmas was just two days away. If people are going to be buying Christmas candy, chances are that they probably have already bought most of what they planned to buy. And those same store personnel are probably eager to get as much of a headstart on setting up the new displays as they possibly can.

I encountered the same kind of overlap a few days before Halloween, and I am willing to bet

that right around February 10 or 11, I will see another overlap with the Valentine’s Day and Easter candy. Still, wouldn’t it be nice to get one holiday out of the way before we have to start focusing our attention on another?

DARK CHOCOLATE DIPPED ALTOIDS

Candy Review by Johnny Carruthers

[originally on

<http://chocolatescifi.livejournal.com/>]

Altoids, those curiously strong mints, just got a little curiouser with the release of Dark Chocolate Dipped Altoids. These aren’t exactly a completely new product. The people at Callard & Bowser took three of the flavors of Altoids mints — Peppermint, Cinnamon, and Ginger — and dipped them in dark chocolate. Or a line from the packaging puts it, the mints are “carefully dipped in a most indulgent, rich, premium dark chocolate.”

(Personally, I’m glad that C&B chose only those three Altoids for chocolate dipping. I do have my limits, and there is no way I would have tried even one chocolate-dipped licorice Altoid.)

I have tried all three, and the best way to enjoy these Dark Chocolate Altoids is to place one on your tongue. Let the dark chocolate slowly melt on your tongue, and let it coat your tastebuds with a velvety dark chocolate blanket. Then, as the last of the chocolate flows away, it is replaced by the curiously strong and intense flavor of the inner mint.

My least favorite of the three is the Peppermint. As I have mentioned, peppermint is not a particularly favorite flavor of mine. The intense flavor of the peppermint completely overwhelms the chocolate that was on your tongue just a few seconds earlier. (Indeed, that holds true for all three varieties.) And it leaves behind a cool, almost, icy, aftertaste in your mouth.

My favorite, on the other hand, is definitely the Cinnamon. To my way of thinking, there are way too few cinnamon-flavored confections, and this may be the only one that combines both cinnamon and chocolate. On the tongue, the Cinnamon gives a sensation that is somewhere between a sting and a tingle. Call it a stingle. And it leaves an aftertaste in your mouth as well, but where the Peppermint is ice, the Cinnamon is fire.

If there are very few cinnamon-flavored candies, the Ginger Altoids is probably the only ginger-flavored one. (At least, it’s the only one that I have seen readily available.) Like the Cinnamon, the Ginger gives the tongue a stingly sensation, but the Ginger has more spice, more kick to it. And the aftertaste . . . I suppose I would have to call it eye-opening.

From what I can tell, C&B doesn’t do limited editions, so I am going with the assumption that these are permanent additions to the Altoids product line. I just saw them for the first time yesterday, so if you don’t see them where you normally find Altoids, you should be seeing them very soon.

GOOGOO CLUSTER and GOOGOO SUPREME

Candy Review by Johnny Carruthers
[originally on
<http://chocolatescifi.livejournal.com/>]

In one chapter of *Candyfreak*, Steve Almond wrote about visiting the factory where GooGoo Clusters are made. During a rereading of that section, I realized that I had never written a review of this bar. That was as good an excuse as any for me to obtain the necessary research material, and write said review.

From what I have read, the GooGoo Cluster was the first combination candy bar; that is, it was the first bar that wasn't a solid piece of chocolate. Calling it a bar, though, is something of a misnomer. It's really an amorphous, somewhat circular blob of caramel, marshmallow, peanuts, and milk chocolate.

If you look at a cross-section of, say, a Milky Way, you'll notice that there is a certain ordered structure to it. The nougat and caramel are always in the same positions, there is always a certain pattern to the chocolate, and so forth. But as Almond learned during his tour, that isn't the case with the GooGoo Cluster. It really doesn't matter how the caramel and marshmallow are brought together, just as long as they are brought together. The marshmallow/caramel patties are dipped twice in milk chocolate. The first coating of chocolate provides the peanuts a surface to which they will adhere, and the second coating seals the peanuts inside the Cluster.

Biting into a GooGoo Cluster is a pure sugar rush. The caramel is firm and chewy, aided and abetted by the marshmallow. In fact, it's difficult to differentiate the flavors of the two; they blend together into a sweet chewy bliss. The peanuts are plentiful; enough where they add their own distinct flavor as well as a crunch. As for the milk chocolate, its flavor almost gets lost on your tastebuds. At times, it almost seems as though its only purpose is to hold the rest of the Cluster together.

The one problem with the GooGoo Cluster is that it might be just a little difficult to find. Since it's made by a smaller company, it's more of a regional product, and that region is primarily the southeastern US. But in the age of the Internet, if you can't find it at a local store, you can order GooGoo Clusters directly from the manufacturer.

If I had to rate it, I guess I would call the GooGoo Cluster all right. But if you're going to give me a preference, I will have to choose the GooGoo Supreme.

Like the GooGoo Cluster, the GooGoo Supreme is an amorphous blob of marshmallow, caramel, and milk chocolate. But instead of peanuts, the GooGoo Supreme is topped with pecans. And from a close examination, it appears that it is topped with pecan pieces. This is one distinct difference from the GooGoo Cluster. That bar is topped with whole peanuts, as I noticed during the research phase of writing that review.

From what I can tell, the same disdain for a

precise structure that Steve Almond observed during the process of making the GooGoo Cluster goes into the making of the GooGoo Supreme. Caramel and marshmallow are brought together in whatever manner suits the operator of the machinery. Like the Cluster, the GooGoo Supreme is double dipped in milk chocolate, and for the same reason. The first coating gives the pecan pieces a support foundation, and the second seals them in place.

I described biting into a GooGoo Cluster as a pure sugar rush, and the same holds true for the GooGoo Supreme. The caramel/marshmallow combination is the same wonderfully chewy amalgamation, and it's virtually impossible to distinguish the flavors of the two. The flavor of the pecans is a little more subtle than the Cluster's peanuts, and the flavor of the milk chocolate stands out a little more because of that. This may be why I prefer the GooGoo Supreme over the GooGoo Cluster; I get to experience all of the flavors.

As I mentioned previously, the GooGoo Supreme isn't made by one of the big three candy makers, and distribution may be more limited than any of their products. But as I also said, they can be ordered over the Internet directly from the manufacturer.

SIMPLY DELICIOUS and SIMPLY THE BEST

Candy Review by Rodney Leighton

The post office allows some fundraisers to sell chocolate bars. They are to help kids in various ways. If I have any money, and they have any bars, when I am at the post office, I usually buy one or some. They are a tad pricey at \$2.00 each but I figure I can get part of my chocolate fix while helping disadvantaged kids at the same time.

I really have no money to spare. But, with a few dollars left after doing my post office business, I decided to spend some. They had some of the CADBURY Caramilk that I usually get but they also had some new, to me, bars.

From some outfit called Aunt Sarah's from Thornhill, Ontario Don't know if they are available outside Canada, or even if they are still available inside. One is called **Simply Delicious**; one is **Simply the Best**. 80 gram chocolate bars. They are very good. Dark, milk type chocolate. Nuts. Caramel sauce. 89% fat on one; 94% on the other. Yikes. According to the wrapper, **Simply Delicious** has whole roasted almonds smothered in creamy caramel. The **Best** has pecans, so the wrapper says. That's the one with 94% fats.

I couldn't tell the difference but the rest of the statements are true. The caramel is thicker than what is in a Caramilk bar and seems a bit sweeter; although that may be because the chocolate seems a bit sweeter. Nuts are in little pockets of caramel, all wrapped in delicious chocolate and then 8 little mini bars are wrapped in very good chocolate to make a delicious bar.

I wouldn't say either was the best chocolate bar I have ever eaten but they are very good.

Oh. I didn't think they could be all fat. This

little info thing on the bars is allegedly listing the percentage of various things one should obtain on a daily basis from some guideline; the 94% is supposed to mean(I think) that eating one **Simply the Best** bar will provide 94% of the saturated and trans fat the eater is supposed to have for that day. Huh. NO carbohydrates, although . . . bah! . . . no cholesterol but also no vitamins. 15% carbohydrates. 10 and 7% fiber. 15% calcium. Iron. Lots of good stuff. Probably shouldn't eat much meat the day you eat one of these. Yesterday I ate two of them. And 3 pieces of chicken. I'm done for!

I love to find amusing things here and there. Each bar has, on the wrapper, in letters a bit larger than this:

WHOLE ROASTED ALMONDS (FRESH
PECANS) SMOTHERED BY(IN) CREAMY
CAREMEL.

Under the list of ingredients, in French and English, is: Allergy Alert: This product may have come in contact with peanuts and other nuts.

Ya suppose?

I realize they have to put that on there because of all the peanut allergy business. Still, it struck me as rather amusing.

THE JOY OF HIGH TECH

by Rodford Edmiston

Being the occasionally interesting ramblings of a major-league technophile.

Bringing Harm to the Enemy

Important note: This article will focus on battlefield weapons, and not those meant to be used by civilians.

People are often surprised to learn that the sword was a secondary weapon on the battlefield in most times and places. Even long before the development of practical firearms.

Throughout history people have held the sword in special regard. From the bronze age on the swords of warriors are frequently detailed in history and myth. There is a special romance about swords, which are often given specific names, with individual weapons being handed down as valuable treasures for generations of use in battle or display. Much more uncommon is the mention of the spear, with few receiving a name. Yet the spear in its various incarnations was for millennia the primary melee weapon in military use.

One of the few times and places where the sword was the primary weapon of a military force was during the Hallstatt period of the Assyrian empire. Of course, even they used spears, of several types.

There are only so many ways to do damage with a weapon. You can pound, or inflict blunt trauma. You can puncture, which means piercing with a narrow part. You can slash, which means making a cutting swipe with a narrow part. You can chop with a broad edge. And you can slice, which means making a sliding cut with a broad edge. Even today,

bullets puncture, shell and grenade fragments chop, bombs pound — as much by dropping a building on someone as from direct concussion — and so on. Those operations — plus burning — are about all a physical weapon can do. Some categories of weapons are better at some operations than others. Swords and spears, for instance, can puncture, slice, chop and slash, with swords — especially those with curved blades — being better at slicing. Neither is good at pounding. (Note that a few very heavy swords for use against plate armor were sometimes pounding weapons, intended to inflict blunt force trauma to the wearer of such protection rather than trying to penetrate it with a thrust or chop.) A war hammer is great at pounding but obviously not so good at slicing.

Note that many weapons have secondary components to provide other ways of inflicting damage. Sword pommels were designed for pounding. A chopping or hewing spear might have a spike on the rear end for thrusting, though those may have primarily been intended to use for bracing the spear against a charge. A war hammer or battleaxe might have a spike on the reverse face. And so on. The balance between weapon flexibility and utility — including not being too heavy or awkward to use effectively — is a delicate one, much explored.

People who have studied the variations on the sword through time and place know there are scores, even hundreds, of types. Yet collectors and curators find they can group nearly all of them into about two dozen categories. The number of types of spears dwarfs that. Also, many of the differences between types of swords are matters of style rather than function.

As an example, over and over again, through history and over wide expanses, you see swords with a blade of a meter or a bit more in length, sharpened on one edge or both, primarily intended for use with one hand but with a hilt long enough for two. The blade may be straight or slightly curved, the hilt may be wood or ivory or simply leather wrapped around the tang, the guard may be anything from a plain crossbar to an elaborate basket. But the function is the same: chopping or piercing another human, with the target likely wearing some light armor. Swords separated by half a planet and two millennia, one of bronze and the other of steel, can be quite similar in size and general shape. Spears, though, are more complicated. (Yes, this is a judgement call, but one based on some study and echoed by some — though certainly not all — people with much more knowledge of the subject.)

Spears come in two basic types, with considerable overlap. Those types are the throwing and the thrusting. The former are shorter and lighter (and often come with a throwing aide, such as the *atlant*) while the latter are longer and heavier. Yet many throwing spears are sturdy enough to use for thrusting and many thrusting spears can be thrown reasonably well at least over a short distance. Within those two broad categories are a huge variety of types.

There are spears with long shafts and short shafts. Spears with long blades and short blades. Spears designed for thrusting and penetrating,

and chopping and cutting. Spears designed for the head to come off. Spears for use on foot, and spears for use on horseback. Spears with varying amounts of taper to the point. Spears with straight edges, curved edges, fluted edges. Spears with smooth edges and serrated edges and barbed edges and auxiliary blades (winged spears) or even hooks. And this doesn't include the spear's descendants, such as the pike, glaive, Bec de Corbin (Raven's Beak), lance, javelin, halberd (though that word may actually mean "flat axe" and most versions have been closer to the poleaxe than the spear) and many others.

The primary weapon of the Roman Legionnaire through much of the Empire's history was the square pilum. This was an unusual spear with a short wooden shaft, an iron or steel shaft affixed to the end of that, and a short iron or steel head out front. The purpose was to allow the spear to be thrust at the enemy from behind a shield with little risk of the spear being cut, because the only part the enemy could reach with their own weapons was the metal part of the shaft. If thrown, the thin metal shaft would generally bend on impact, rendering the spear useless to the enemy without work. (Note that very similar types of spears were in use by various barbarian tribes — such as the Franks, the Anglo-Saxons and the Scandinavians — for many centuries after the fall of the Roman empire.) The famed gladius and the lesser-known Roman swords (such as the pugio) were primarily intended for close fighting, or were purely ceremonial.

The Vikings, famed for use of axe and sword, also had two distinct types of spear (all of these weapons having blades of iron). The swords were used primarily for slashing and chopping, in much the same way as their axes. Of the spears, one type had a short head and short shaft, to be used for thrusting and throwing. The other was longer in both parts, and primarily used in cavalry operations. (Yes, the Vikings had cavalry.) They were also used as the Romans had used their long spears, from behind shield walls.

You see this pattern repeated throughout history, even long after the use of firearms began. For medium and medium-close fighting, the spear reigned supreme, with the sword used strictly for close work.

For long range fighting, the bow and arrow or heavy crossbow were the choices. While the tale of English longbowmen pinning French knights to their saddles at 300 meters might be an exaggeration, the tests I am familiar with which cast doubt on this used a bow with a somewhat lower draw weight than the heaviest used by the English, which could reach 180 pounds. A rank of longbowmen facing modern infantry on open ground would probably win. Few modern armies equip their troops with weapons effective at the maximum range of a top-quality longbow, and the arrows used against knights would consider modern soft body armor a minor impediment. (Of course, modern infantry can call in an artillery barrage or an air strike.)

Crossbows were easier to use than longbows and required much less training, especially for

consistent accuracy, but those matching the power of the longbow were slower to load. At least, for the first few dozen rounds.

For penetrating metal armor — either solid or flexible — you don't want a razor edge. That would bend or break. You want a chisel edge or a punch point. Against unprotected flesh or soft armor a sharp edge, of course, is usually the best choice. Interestingly, the famed Japanese katana not only has a razor edge, it is designed for a draw cut. It was normally used against people who either wore no armor, or armor made primarily of lightweight materials with some metal reinforcement. These protective garments could be something as simple as a multi-layered silk vest, or complex samurai armor made of multiple laminations of metal plates, silk, bamboo, wood and laquer. However, because of the large, sweeping motions required by the draw-cut stroke of the katana these armors were designed to accommodate such large movements. This meant they had large open areas, though these were usually not exposed except during a sword strike.

Contrary to some claims, the katana, wakizashi and tanto were not designed as armor piercing weapons. The asymmetrical angled tip typical for these blades would be too likely to skim across the surface instead of biting in the way a more symmetrical point would. (Look at the tip of a cold chisel for an example.)

Of course, the Japanese also had spears and arrows, some of them well suited for chopping or punching through armor. China was even more enamored of the spear, and developed many types. A number of martial arts systems emphasize the spear in their weapons forms.

Note that, as with swords, spears designed for a particular function often resemble each other, across empires and through time. For example, one type of Hallstatt spear mentioned above is almost identical to a type of Viking spear from a thousand years later. As Ewart Oakeshott wrote "A spear is a spear whether it is of the middle Bronze Age or the Nineteenth Century; there is little room for variation and the same shapes of spearhead crop up in every age and in every land." It's just that there are so many uses for spears that matching two of them is difficult unless you happen to find some with the same intended function.

So just what are those functions? You have your choice of piercing — which can be performed by thrown or thrust spears — chopping — performed by long-bladed hewing spears in a function later assumed by halberds, pikes and the like — and slashing and slicing, with that last being rare. Some historical spears are nearly four meters long. Many have shafts of ash, which is frequently mentioned in old accounts. So we know from those that we have so many ash spears because it was thought to be a good wood for the purpose, and not just because ash lasts a long time in bogs. :-)

I think a large part of the reason swords are venerated and spears tossed away (often literally, being thrown at the enemy) is that while a spear uses a relatively small amount of precious bronze, iron or steel attached to a simple (usually wooden) shaft, a sword involves

both far more metal and far more skilled labor. An army would have multiple spears per soldier, but often less than one sword.

The axe has also long been a popular melee weapon. In fact, a stone axe may have been the first weapon of war. The thrown hand axe was being used to fell game long before humans existed. An axe and sword of the same weight balance very differently, with the axe focusing the weight in the head. For a chopping cut the axe is far superior to the sword, while being slightly inferior in the slash. It is also far handier than the spear, though the latter certainly has the advantage in reach.

While the primary intent of the military axe is chopping (through metal or leather armor or just through thick tissues and bone) some did have a hammer or spike on the back, and a few even a spike sticking out of the far end of the shaft, past the head. I don't think anyone ever used an axe for a slicing cut.

Early on axes used in war are scarcely distinguishable from those used in more mundane labors. However, as time progressed and the art of war developed, specialized battle axes were created. As mentioned above, these often had more than a simple, single blade on the head. Some were meant to be used with one hand (the other usually carrying a shield); some with two, and some either. There were even throwing axes. (Watch a modern lumberjack competition, sometime, where they throw axes. The double-bitted type were almost certainly not used in war, but the long-handled single-bitted were. Imagine having one of those planted in your chest from a dozen or more paces across the battlefield. Maybe those dwarves were on to something.)

The English were great ones for using the two-handed battleaxe. The Bayeux Tapestry and other sources — including found examples — tell us that some had hafts over a meter and a half long and blades with edges over half a meter long.

The Franks employed the "Francisca," a short, light throwing axe. There has been much scholarly discussion over whether the people were named for the axe or vice-versa. The weapon is also known as the "Frakki." The Longobards were named after a particular type of long-handled axe they used in battle, as well.

The Vikings seemed to have really liked the axe. They became very popular among the Norsemen during the Viking period, and are mentioned with more respect in the sagas from then. Part of the reason could be the development of a new type of war axe which was far more effective than previous ones. These have edges over 30cm long, and are true battleaxes; there's no chance of confusing them with woodworking tools. Here are weapons besides swords for which individual names are common. Examples are Fiend of the Shield, Battle-Witch and Wound's Wolf. (In the same way the Vikings gave their axes names with "witch" or "fiend" in them, the names they gave spears often had "serpent" as a part. One particularly romantic name for spears was "the flying dragon of the fight.")

Continental knights seem to have disdained

the axe until the Twelfth Century as something not suitable for a gentleman. Then it began to gain popularity. Stephen — good knight but poor king — used one to great effect at the battle of Lincoln in 1141. Eventually, though, it, and then his sword, broke, and he was taken captive.

During this period, while the great axes continued to be popular a new type of lighter axe also took hold. It had a head with a long edge, but lighter design. The back of this often had a hammer head.

One of the more unusual types of axe comes from ancient Egypt. The epsilon-style axe has a section of a curve attached to a silver shaft, so that it resembled the later Greek letter.

War hammers were, indeed, hammers designed for use in war. However, the flat surface was often the secondary implement, with the long spike coming off the back seeing the most use.

Maces — close relatives of the hammer — are among the least complicated of melee weapons, at least from the viewpoint of variations in type. There is a Bronze Age mace in the Blackmore Collection in the Museum at Salisbury which is identical in form to several Thirteenth Century examples.

What makes a mace different from a spiked club is the amount of metal at the end, which shifts the weight of the weapon away from the hand. This metal is crafted in a roughly spherical form, either a ball with spikes or a series of curved or angled flanges brazed to a collar on the shaft.

More than a mere bashing weapon, the mace is designed to pierce or dent armor.

As mentioned above, there are only so many ways to use a physical weapon to harm someone. Likewise, there are only so many ways to get through the physical protection being used to prevent such harm.

In modern warfare one of the most effective types of weapon against armored vehicles is the APDS, or Armor Piercing Discarding Sabot. This fires a hardened and very dense sub-caliber projectile in a light weight sleeve, which falls away once the projectile has cleared the bore. The actual projectile looks very much like an arrowhead or spear head designed for piercing plate armor. Which simply shows that no matter how far our technology advances, the laws of physics remain the same.

One thing you can be sure of, if a certain form or shape was used for a type of weapon for thousands of years — possibly invented independently several times — that is probably a good shape for the job.

ON A ROLL-OUT

Taral Wayne

Last weekend old-time Toronto fan, these days Seattle fan, Alan Rosenthal and his wife Janice Murray were in town. They have only a small list of people to contact since the main purpose of Alan's annual visit is for family. Sunday (the 8th, to be precise), Alan met with me, Janet Wilson, and her son Paul. Janet is the ex-wife of Robert C. Wilson, and Paul is their

son. Janet was also for a few years a resident of Nanaimo & Vancouver, and hopes to return on her retirement. Me . . . I'm just me.



Photo Paul Wilson

We drove up to Downsview Airport where the new aerospace museum is. Downsview used to be a working military post, but that was many years ago when Downsview was a small hamlet north of Toronto. At present it's about in the middle of Toronto, like a large hole in the doughnut of the city. Some of the old barracks and hangers have found new uses, and one of them is the new museum.

It won't compare well with the National War Museum in Ottawa. But then, we have to pay for this one ourselves. We have no MP's as in Ottawa who can wave their magic wand and make the Canadian taxpayer pony up for our ornaments. But the Downsview museum is off to a decent start, with a number of odd-ball exhibits such as an actual, working ornithopter, the tailplane of a British Nimrod anti-sub patrol craft that crashed in Lake Ontario during one CNE airshow, a T33 jet trainer, and perhaps the world's only 1/1 scale model kit of a Lancaster bomber.

The bomber is real, and until a few years ago sat atop a concrete pillar down by the lakeshore, not far from the Canadian National Exhibition. It was once in fair shape, but years of Lake Ontario weather, unscrupulous souvenir collectors, and snot-nosed kids throwing rocks at it, the old Lanc looked worse than many that had been shot down over Berlin. It was removed finally and I lost track of it. In my mind the odds were it was already in Ottawa. . .

In fact it's been in a box somewhere locally. I found it at the Downsview museum looking very much worse for the wear, wings, tail, and engines disassembled, paint stripped off much of the body, and all the glasswork removed. But the good news is that it will someday be fully restored in its full war paint, and will stay in Toronto.

(Unlike the HMCS *Haida* that MP Sheila Copps arranged to tow away from our harbour and bestow in restored glory in her own riding for a new marine park.)

But of course the highlight of the Downsview Aerospace museum has to be the commemorative replica of the Avro Arrow. We were lucky enough to be there for the official public "roll-out" ceremony on Sunday, October eighth, though in fact there'd been a preview for museum members the day before, and an even

more elite ceremony on the fifth. We got our first glimpse of the white and day-glo red dart from the parking lot. The Arrow, a replica of the third production vehicle RL 203, guarded the open hanger doors of the museum and stood over the crowd like a Martian war machine. For those with the patience to wait in line, a hydraulic lift offered a view from above, but the view from below was awesome enough. The Arrow is a large aircraft, no lithe F16 to weave and dodge in dogfight, but to sweep Soviet bomber formations from the thin arctic environ of near-space.

The replica is unfortunately, like many aspects of national pride, a bit of a sham. You can winnow your way beneath the white belly pan of the plane, and poke your head up into the airbrake cavities. The Arrow is hollow and its weight supported by much the same aluminum lathing your office ceiling hangs from. But never mind, Dan Ackroyd sounded so gallant as he defended the National Dream against scheming Yankees and clueless Conservatives! The Arrow would have been glorious!



Photo Paul Wilson

Perhaps it is a sign of the real state of things that the gift shop had no adequate souvenirs of Avro's greatest creation. There were models and toys enough of the Stealth bomber, the American designed CF-18, the EH-1 helicopter we didn't buy in the end, and any number of other aircraft that were neither relevant to our aerospace history, nor represented in the museum. But there was only one quite poorly made, small die-cast toy with child-like rubber wheels to represent the Arrow, and it was sold out even as I watched.

(There have been few model kits of the Arrow, either. Back before Expo 67 was even a gleam in anyone's eye, a long ago vanished model company called Aurora made an Arrow. I built one and what I recall of it leaves much to be desired. It was, however, much like Tygger — the "only one". At least one vacuform kit was created in the 1980's. It too, left much to be desired. Sucking half melted plastic sheets into a mold is no way to preserve small surface details. The parts had to be first cut from the sheet, then their edges filed smooth, before any thought of assembly. It was a chore I never got around to, and to this day my vacuform kit sits unbuilt on a shelf. A few years later, a Canadian plastics company called Hobbycraft released a line of aircraft kits that included Canadian types. For the first time in decades you could build

either a CF-100 Canuck or a CF-105 Arrow right out of the box! It wasn't the highest quality you could hope for. Aerilonactuators or something of the sort, that should have been on the underside of the wing, were embarrassingly molded on the upper surface! But hey! It was a miracle to be able to build an Arrow at all, let alone one rating a C-plus as kits go. Japanese and American model companies have never shown much interest in us.

At least there was no shortage of books one could buy on the Arrow. The authors of several had tables in an open space to hawk their wares and if they hadn't run to \$40 and \$50 a copy I would have gladly bought one or two. But I did have the opportunity to speak briefly with one friendly old codger who had staked out somewhat different literary territory. He'd been a Lancaster pilot, and his book was about the bomber he'd flown, but alas it too was a costly read.

Meanwhile Paul was descending on the cherry picker, his digital camera glutted with memories for later acknowledgement. The rest of us had pretty much seen the works and were ready for dinner. Unexpectedly we ran into the Penneys of all people, almost as we were heading for the door. Lloyd and Yvonne were be-spattered with patches and badges and pins supportive of Canadian aerospace, rather resembling two wanna-be NASCAR drivers in their endorsement covered firesuits. They had a few words with Janet and Alan before we split and went our different ways.

The rest of the evening was social and perhaps not mandatory reading.

Now that we've seen the Avro Arrow resurrected, I wonder what now? Should we use it to bomb Ottawa perhaps?



Canadian built Lancaster bomber on its former perch by the lakeshore near the CNE, 1999. Now at the Downsview Aerospace Museum for restoration and permanent display. Photo by Taz Wayne

PRETENDER

by C.J. Cherryh

(2005; DAW; \$25.95 hardcover)

Book review by E.B. Frohvet

The eighth volume of the *Foreigner* trilogy is marginally more interesting than the sixth and seventh (*Inheritor* and *Destroyer*) because it at least gets back to the atevi planet — it seems not to have a name — offering access to a greater variety of action. The *paidhi* Bren Cameron, the only human who lives among atevi, has to bag for now the result of his interstellar mission. The local populace are more interested in their own civil war, which will either restore Bren's ally Tabini to leadership of the Western Association, or confirm in power the usurper who has taken

over. It's all a matter of that Ragi word *man'chi*, which renders (badly) as "loyalty", but in atevi custom is much more of a variable.

I admit to having a problem with this series. I've been around it so long that, yes, I want to know what happens next. Conversely, I'm less involved in it than I should be; because the aspect in which I was most interested, the interaction of atevi and human custom, has been all but abandoned. It's become a story of atevi politics. I wonder if the author intends to return to this in the felicitous ninth volume, or if she has just lost interest in the empathy for characters which marks her best work, in favor of a convoluted problem that interests her exactly for its lack of resolution.

Also, what's up with the adverbial tag "ever so"? Cherryh has latched on to it — as she did with "hardwired" earlier — and overuses it to the point of annoyance: *three* times on page 294 alone! There's a limit. A competent copy editor (distinct from a proofreader) might have advised against this.

TO BE CONTINUED.

ENGAGING THE ENEMY

by Elizabeth Moon

(2006; DelRey imprint; \$25.95 hardcover)

Book review by E.B. Frohvet

Continuing the series begun with *Trading in Danger* and *Marque and Reprisal*. "Now she [heroine Kylara Vatta] was supposed to save whatever was left of the family and business, with no allies and few assets." Okay, that brings you up to speed. Except for the Treaty of Paris.

Having recovered the ship *Fair Kaleen* from a renegade Vatta, Ky refuses to submit to the adjudication of local courts. Instead she sends in the older, slower *Gary Tobai* with cousin Stella to begin rebuilding the Vatta name and legitimate trade network. (Nice moment: "I thought toilets were toilets," Stella said. "Mature technology . . .") Meanwhile Ky, recognizing the pirates have immediate communications with ship-to-ship ansibles, proposes assembling a combined privateer/naval force to confront them. It's a war: the way you win a war is by engaging the enemy. On your own terms, of course.

But before we get to that, there are genetic surprises, and a judge who imposes the death penalty for contempt of court. And another ship, and more alliances, and eventually a battle. Kylara and her allies have to fall back and regroup, which means the story is . . .

TO BE CONTINUED.

REDUCED SHAKESPEARE: The Complete Guide for the Attention Impaired [abridged]

by Reed Martin and Austin Tichenor,

(Hyperion, 2006, 244 pages/indexed,

\$17.95, ISBN #1401302203)

Reviewed by Jim Sullivan

Arguably, according to literature professors in the English-speaking world, Shakespeare may just be the greatest writer ever (in the Elizabethan dialect that is, or was). Martin and

Tichenor are actually stage performers who know well the works of Shakespeare. Over the years, they've taken the great writer's works (shortened, of course, to help those who can't concentrate for very long), like "Hamlet", "As You Like It", and the sonnets and acted out various parts of them on stage, TV, and radio.

Now they've taken their knowledge of Shakespeare and put it into book form. And they've managed, as they had in the past with their performances, to keep it brief, informative, interesting, and, above all else, humorous. These actors are inherently funny and smart, a combination that comes across in the volume to this reviewer as a variant of Woody Allen's intelligent humor.

The authors ask, "wily have we written this book? . . .

" . . . Because we're fed up. There are simply too many Shakespeare books out there, most of which are an utter waste of paper and readers' time, and the issue needs to be addressed. Where can any reader-from the mildly curious dabbler to the most rabid Shakespeare geek learn everything he or she needs to know about the greatest dramatic poet the world has ever known? Somebody, somewhere needs to boil down all the pertinent information into one brilliantly concise, intellectually cogent and entertainingly readable volume. Until somebody does that we've written this."

A whole chapter of this book is devoted to movies made from, or derivative of, Shakespeare's work. Though it goes on and on, it, too, is fun to peruse.

Reed Martin and Austin Tichenor reside in California. Recommended for lavatory, or any other room in the house, reading!

SUCCESS THROUGH FAILURE: the Paradox of Design

by Henry Petroski

(Princeton University Press, 2006,

235 pages/indexed, \$22.95,

ISBN #13: 9780691122250 and

ISBN #10: 0691122253)

Reviewed by Jim Sullivan

Petroski is a Duke University professor of civil engineering and history.

He takes the reader through a series of inventions and improvements from the design perspective. His range is wide: from lantern slide lectures in the 19th century to modern-day PowerPoint presentations, up through skyscrapers like the Empire State Building, onto bridges, such as the Quebec Bridge, around the world. He details how advanced versions of successful models don't always, in fact seldom, lead to more success. On the other hand, new items built when taking into consideration the previous one's failure, like the Tacoma Narrows Bridge collapsing in 1940, usually leads to truly improved designs.

Though a lot of design history and engineering are covered, this volume is mostly philosophical in nature. A brief, nontechnical, and interesting read, its excitement level won't keep readers up past their bedtimes.

"Desire, not necessity, is the mother of invention," writes the author.

"New things and the ideas for things come from our dissatisfaction with what there is and from the want of a satisfactory thing for doing what we want done. More precisely, the development of new artifacts and new technologies follows from the failure of existing ones to perform as promised or as well as can be hoped for or imagined. Frustration and disappointment associated with the use of a tool or the performance of a system puts a challenge on the table: Improve the thing . . ."

Henry Petroski has written a dozen books including *Pushing the Limits: New Adventures in Engineering* and *The Evolution of Useful Things*.

Recommended.

THE WAY OUT WORLD

by 'Long' John Nebel (John Zimmerman)

[and Sanford M. Teller]

Prentice-Hall, 1961.

Reviewed by Richard Dengrove

I once listened to the author's show on New York City television. In fact, I was a fan of it. Also, he had a show from 12 AM to 5 AM at the WOR radio station there. I doubt I ever listened to that. In that radio time slot, he replaced the commentator Jean Shepherd. Jean Shepherd is another person I remember. I was also a fan of his, in his later 11 PM to 12 AM WOR time slot. This book brings back those shows and that time. I think I read it in the '60s and forgot about it. Recently, a friend found another copy at a book sale and gave it to me. It was a nice present. One day it dawned on me that I might want to give it another reading.

As the title suggests, Long John Nebel was into the way-out. In fact, he was the Art Bell of his time. His first chapter concerns flying saucer contactees, who were popular in the '50s. He also had guests who were into the occult: auras, spiritualism, telepathy. Guests who were into self-improvement. Guests who were into the Abominable Snowman. (When it was sighted in the States, it wasn't yet referred to as the Sasquatch.)

While a good deal of the book reflects Long John's reading and research, it increasingly gets back to these guests. As a people person, unlike Martin Gardner, he had to deal with these way-out people in a personal way.

However, the book not only filled me with nostalgia for the TV personalities of my youth, but it also filled me with nostalgia for a lost Ethos. Unlike Art Bell or Larry King today, Long John showed some skepticism. It wasn't uncommon for hosts of shows about the way-out world to be skeptical. I gather Joe Pyne was practically obnoxious in being skeptical.

Long John wasn't, not to me. However, he was skeptical enough. For one thing, the Amazing Randi was a regular on his show. For another, his byword was "I don't buy it." I am sure it is as he claimed: he was hated by many people because he was skeptical of their beliefs — and operations.

I gather Long John Nebel's skepticism

wasn't fake either: he came to it through the school of hard knocks. He had been a pitch man. He had worked in a circus. Out of desperation, he had been a grifter during the Depression. Among his schemes then, he sold envelopes full of napkins claiming they were pornographic photos. From these ways of earning his daily bread, he learned a full spectrum of cons.

Ironically, at base, he was honest. When prosperity returned, while still a pitch man, he was supposed to have been one of the more honest ones. In fact, someone called his auction the most honest on the East Coast. I bet his skepticism was the effect of cons on a basically honest person.

The *Skeptical Inquirer* skeptics have been pining for someone like him. I am sure that he would seem to them to portray the ideals of their skepticism. I am sure they would contrast him to the talk show hosts of today.

It is true the baloney they feed the public cannot be exaggerated. By contrast, Long John looks like an island of reason in a sea of con games. Also, he looks an island in honesty in a sea of cynicism. A skeptic once objected to all the hogwash Larry King was putting on his show. He replied that he was as skeptical as the skeptic; he just had to make a living. I am sure he earned a good one at that.

However, the *Skeptical Inquirer* skeptics claim that their criteria is scientific proof and method. Long John's criteria definitely wasn't. It is obvious he used intuition to tell whether a belief was stretching things or not. Of course, criteria is not necessarily used consistently in intuiting the credible from the incredible.

This does not mean that Long John's criteria was completely unscientific. A lot of authors, his objection was that he could not make heads or tails of what they wrote. Or said.

Once he had on his show a Norman Colton, who was publicizing an anti-gravity, free energy spacecraft. He sicced an eminent but mystical physicist on him, Dr. Wallace Minto.

Colton: When the full absorption effect of the accumulator permits the concentration of the antigravitational free-energy available, you inaugurate a series-reaction of natural responses and a remarkable, but scientifically valid, phenomenon occurs — it goes up.

Minto: I'm afraid that I'm forced to be blunt, Mr. Colton, none of that makes any sense.

This reflected Long John's view. His comment on an article pushing the free energy, antigravity spacecraft was: "On the other hand, it might be put this way:

"Mxhyn ppgdnt Hojwnaz osossenfoump mxmhsgsred alal."

Another criteria similar to scientific criteria is that Long John had a problem with what he couldn't see. His guest one night was a George King of England, who claimed to be a flying saucer contactee.

It is obvious Long John did not like him one

bit, but he limited his dislike to offhand remarks. He said he didn't know whether that was George King of England; or George, King of England. Also, he found it bad taste when George had made his mother, Mary King, into a flying saucer Virgin Mary.

However, Long John had Jackie Gleason, the famous comedian, give a more detailed analysis when Gleason called up during the show. While the late Jackie Gleason was a very strong believer in flying saucers, he couldn't stomach King.

Gleason: If I were, for instance, to say to you that you are bare-faced liar, now you know you could sue me for libel, right?

King: Yes, yes.

Gleason: Now do you think that you could get any legal assistance from them [the flying saucer people] in a case like this?

King: No, I don't

Gleason: Why?

King: Why should they help?

Gleason: Well, you're championing their cause.

King: No, no, I'm not. I'm trying to give a spiritual message, which I believe to be good for all people...

Of course, seeing is not the only scientific criteria here. There is also a matter of interpreting what you see. Long John had a difficult time doubting the interpretation most associated with what he saw even if he knew there could be another interpretation. I probably would have a difficult time too.

In one incident he relates, a hypnotist called John Kollisch hypnotized a kid called Tommy in Long John's apartment. He claimed Tommy had psychic powers. At one point in the session, Long John asked Kollisch to have Tommy's astral body go down to the street and describe a car parked there. Tommy did it, including getting only one digit of the license plate wrong.

Long John realized from his time with magicians that this could have been a magic trick. The question could have been weasled out of him. There could have been a confederate.

Nonetheless, While he said he didn't 'buy it,' his normal phrase, he wasn't sure he could explain it. I probably would have had the same reaction. However, it would not have been a scientific reaction.

Also, Long John gives some credit to things he did not see but which feel credible to him. He is reluctant to doubt them. This is fullscale intuition. Reincarnation is credible, as far as he is concerned, because it is an ancient belief and held by many respectable people.

Similarly, the existence of the Abominable Snowman/Sasquatch seems credible to him partly because it is not a farfetched creature. This is not the approach of *Skeptical Inquirer* skeptics, who doubt the Sasquatch not because it is impossible but because no one has provided sufficient evidence they have seen it. Also, Long John Nebel used criteria that would not be considered scientific at all. Having seen so many

cons, he was extra leery of people who were making good money off their beliefs, and whom he felt had a con game going. As he says about Scientology:

"[L. Ron Hubbard] doesn't mention how much has been spent by the customers on [Scientology and Dianetics]. Whatever the amount, it's up in the many figures. Few offbeat ideas of our times have been so patently successful as these. They've scientifically drawn in and measured out thousands of people; but, unfortunately, unlike this writer, they didn't say: 'I don't buy it.'

On the other hand, he gives slack to ideas where he doesn't believe the promoter is mainly out for money. Among others, he gives slack to Edgar Cayce, the sleeping prophet, and Morey Bernstein of Bridey Murphy fame partly because he doesn't believe they were out to make a killing.

Long John, like other people on the lookout for cons, sometimes believed that the presence of a lucrative angle is better evidence an idea is faulty than scientific proof. However, he could be easily fooled. In one instance, I suspect Long John was.

He interviewed a fellow who called himself RRR, Infinite Master of Applied Yoga — Western Division. He wore a turban with a glass in it and pajamas. Also, until the end, he talked vaguely like Yoda. It fit in that he told Long John that his native language was not Hindi but Swedish — which it definitely wasn't. The interview was just as outrageous. As Long John said, none of his answers matched any of the questions.

At one point, Long John asked RRR to do something special. He said he would stop the beat of his heart. The problem was that everyone could tell that his heart was still beating.

RRR scolded: "If you weren't going along with the bit, I don't know why you had me come up. Now you've blown the whole damn gaff. Thanks for nothing, dads."

Long John couldn't make hide or hair of this fellow's lucrative angle. I can. It sounds to me it was the non-monetary one of a put-on.

Another non-scientific criterion, Long John Nebel seemed to have, comes under the heading esthetic, moral and spiritual. When he uses this criteria, they all seem to mix into one another. He finds a lot of the flying saucer people tasteless for the way they handle religion. For instance, for associating themselves with Christ and the Virgin Mary.

On the other hand, Long John gives credit when someone shows good taste. It is apparent he believes that the flying saucer contactee Orfeo Angelucci is off the wall. He has an entire chapter named after his claims: "Five-inch Blondes and Three Wild Georges." However, he gives him credit for handling religion tastefully and, for overall, having a rather beautiful tale.

To say that his criteria is not scientific does not mean I dislike Long John. No, I really like him, and I think the criteria he is using is completely appropriate to a show presented to

the public on *The Way Out World*. Just that I think we should know the difference between his world view and modern science. People have too much of a tendency to conflate their world view and modern science these days.

Probably there is even an appropriate place for the views of the Way Out people Long John interviewed: the flying saucer advocates, the fake Yogis, the self-improvement gurus, the free energy crazies and the believers in the occult.

GHOST WHISPERER

CBS

Friday 8:00 PM/Eastern/check local listings

<http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0460644/>

Television Review by E. B. Frohvet

Melinda (Jennifer Love Hewitt) is a charming young woman. She has a charming husband (David Conrad) who is a firefighter /EMT. They live in a charming small town where she owns a charming antique shop. The fly in this saccharine tale is that Melinda can speak to ghosts: those who have unfinished business here in the mortal realm before they can pass on. Melinda has to solve their problems so they can "go into the light". In short, it's a detective story with a supernatural twist.

The ghosts' problems are frequently banal: an athlete who died of a freak football injury wants to assure his rather plain girlfriend that he really loved her, instead of the pretty cheer leader. Some don't even realize they're dead — Melinda's best friend (Aisha Tyler) was killed off in the first season finale, and didn't realize it until the second season premiere. That character has been replaced by a widowed realtor (Camryn Manheim) who struck up a friendship with Melinda. Will she survive the second season?

The show's weakness is that it's repetitive: variant of the same simple plot every week. On the plus side, Love Hewitt is very pretty, and not shy about displaying herself. A typical episode has her scrambling out of the shower wrapped in a towel, or wearing a top so low, if she leans forward too far, the rating jumps from PG straight to R. Presumably this wardrobe decision has in mind maintaining the interest of male viewers who find the stories boring. Works for me.

JERICO

CBS

Wednesday

8:00 PM/Eastern/check local listings

<http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0805663/>

Television Review by E. B. Frohvet

A small town in western Kansas sees a mushroom cloud over Denver. Circumstantial evidence indicates Atlanta has been vaporized as well, and possibly other cities. All communication with the outside world ceases instantly. (There are *thousands* of radio stations in the U.S.: can the enemy have hit everyone, without a miss, on the first strike? Clausewitz wouldn't believe it, and neither do I.) The people of Jericho, Kansas are on their own.

The hero is the mayor's son; I haven't been

able to sort out the actor's name yet. In the first few episodes he has shot a bandit, set dynamite charges, and performed a tracheotomy — all with no apparent training in those skills. The rest of the characters are right out of central casting. In a nice touch, the town's skeezy bar is doing business as usual.

This is such a perfect 1959 TV show, the offspring of *Alas Babylon* out of *Twilight Zone*, that you have to figure some Baby Boomer programming exec, pressed to pitch an idea, pulled this out of his childhood. Watch it now, if you care to bother: this has early cancellation written all over it.

[The actor who plays the mayor's son is Skeet Ulrich, né Brian Ray Trout.

<http://www.imdb.com/name/nm0000240/>

His earliest credit is as an extra in *Weekend at Bernie's* (1989) but he has done more substantial stuff.]

FANZINES

The Hugo-winning *Who Killed Science Fiction?* is now available online:

<http://www.efanzines.com/EK/eI29/index.htm>

Go, read, marvel, and learn at this brilliant snapshot of what the field looked like in 1960; when all the people who made it what it was had their say on what was happening and why.

Also now available is the twelfth issue of *Science Fiction Five Yearly* (November 2006), published regularly since 1951 by Lee Hoffman:

<http://www.efanzines.com/SFFY/SFFY12.pdf>

For back issues see:

http://fanac.org/fanzines/SF_Five_Yearly/

and Furthermore . . . #23 December 16, 2006, #24 December 30, 2006, #25 January 10, 2007, #26 January 25, 2007
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Steven H Silver,

shsilver@sfsite.com

<http://www.efanzines.com>

<http://www.sfsite.com/~silverag/argentus.html>

Beyond Bree December 2006, January 2007

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.

The Drink Tank #106, #107, #108, #109, #110, #111, #112, #113, #114, #115
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The above-mentioned *Who Killed Science Fiction?* and an annual index.

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Plokta V. 11 #1 May 2006 [*"Plokta Gamer"*], V. 11 #2 November 2006 [*"The 2006 Plokta Christmas Catalogue"*]

The Cabal, Croydon, UK

locs@plokta.com

<http://www.plokta.com>

The Resplendent Fool #61

Thomas D. Sadler, 422 W. Maple Avenue, Adrian, MI 49221-1627 USA

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He's back! And moving to Kentucky, too.

Science Fiction/San Francisco #35 December 8, 2006, #36 December 20, 2006, #37 January 10, 2007

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The Zine Dump #13

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<http://zinedump.blogspot.com>

BIDS TO COME

Science Fiction/San Francisco #36, edited by Jean Martin and the tireless Chris Garcia, has an article by Jack Avery laying out the future progression of Worldcon bids. As you know, this year will see voting for 2009; the choice being between Kansas City and Montréal. 2010 is Australia's; now that the DC in 2011 bid has collapsed the only one for that year is Seattle.

From rumor, speculation, hints, and fan chat, Avery has laid out a progression of potential bids. The 2013 Worldcon bidding competition could be very heated, with a bid for Texas facing potential bids from San José and believe it or not Minneapolis. (A for-real Minneapolis in '73 bid — sometime in Elul, 5773, I guess.) All this fuss for that particular year stems from a feeling that Chicago will bid again for 2012, having lost so narrowly for 2008.

SH/ACD SYMPOSIUM NEWS

Sherlock Holmes/Arthur Conan Doyle Symposium Chairman Cathy Gill announces:

Just a reminder — watch your mailboxes (or emailboxes) for the registration form for the 26th Annual Sherlock Holmes/Arthur Conan Doyle Symposium —

March 9-11, 2007, in Dayton OH

If you know anyone who would like to be added to the email/mail list, please contact me at this email address or at my home:

Cathy Gill
4661 Hamilton Ave.
Cincinnati OH 45223-1502
chirpsworth@fuse.net

Registration is \$45 until February 21, \$50 until March 1, and \$55 at the door. Elementary.

CONGLOMERATION NEWS

Louisville's local con, ConGlomeration, has announced its future dates. As of next year, it will be moving to April:

April 18-20, 2008
April 10-12, 2009
April 9-11, 2010

(Note that the Kentucky Derby Festival begins April 19, 2008, so hotel space may be cramped. Also, there will be fireworks downtown.)

Their rates are going up to \$30 prereg and \$40 at the door, but more surprisingly, they will no longer be taking checks!

The Guest of Honor for ConGlomeration 2007 is Ben Bova, science and SF writer and editor, and it takes place **August 10-12, 2007**, one week after NASFiC.

HUGO RECOMMENDATIONS

Spider Robinson wants you to "Give one to the Admiral"; get Robert Heinlein his fifth Hugo (not counting Retro-Hugos) by nominating *Variable Star* (2006) for the Best Novel Hugo.

For those who have so far been unaware, *Variable Star* was written by Spider Robinson from an outline written by Heinlein.

I don't think anything more needs to be said.



Please have your recommendations for the Hugo for our nextish. As a starter, I'll say I recommend Michael Flynn's *Eifelheim* for Best Novel. There is a good buzz for Lois McMaster Bujold's *Beguilement: The Sharing Knife Volume I* but it is the first volume of a series.

It will be interesting to recommend Earl Kemp's *el* for the Best Fanzine. And Dale Speirs has been sadly unrecognized for Best Fan Writer, as those who get *Opuntia* and look over his many writings about fan history, his personal

journals, his explorations of SF-style topics, and so on will agree. Likewise, Sheryl Birkhead's fan art has been long unrecognized.

AN AWARD 4 E

by Johnny Carruthers

<http://purpleranger.livejournal.com/>

Last time, I talked about how the Big Heart Award was being renamed to honor Forrest J Ackerman. At the end, I said that while Forry does deserve an award named after him, I would prefer something that (theoretically, at least) everyone in SF fandom could have a say in who the recipients are, like the Hugo Awards.

I've been giving the subject some thought, particularly what such an award would honor. As I have been thinking about it, two things came to mind. First, Forry loves science fiction in all media. Whether books, or movies, or TV, or whatever else, he has a fondness for all SF. Second, out of all his exploits, I suspect that he is probably best known for his editorship of *Famous Monsters of Filmland*. (It's definitely one of the top three things for which he is best known.)

When I combined those two bits of information with the idea of a new award, the proverbial light bulb went off. Why not an award for science fiction that crosses the boundaries between media? (I realize this might sound a little vague at the moment, but as I continue, things should become a little clearer.)

As I mentioned previously, I see this award as being presented under the aegis of the World Science Fiction Society. (As I said, this would theoretically make everyone in SF fandom eligible to nominate and vote for these awards.) It would use the same nominating and final voting procedures as the Hugo Awards, and fall under the same general rules outlined in Article III of the WSFS Constitution. (Sections 3.2, 3.4, and 3.6 through 3.12, if you want the specifics.)

Several possible categories for the award came to mind. To me, the most important category would be **Best Media Magazine**. My rough definition of this category is "Any generally available publication devoted to science fiction, fantasy, and related subjects as it appears in multiple media, and which is known primarily for its non-fictional content." If it will make a little more sense, this would be the category for which *Famous Monsters* would have been eligible. (I'm trying to parallel my definitions with those of the Hugo categories, so there might be one or two other things added as well. This is a **rough** definition, remember.)

I thought of two other categories as well:

Best Fiction: "Any work of commercially published science fiction or fantasy which is either A) an adaptation of a motion picture, television, or other dramatic script, or B) utilizes characters and/or concepts from science fiction or fantasy in another media."

Okay, that definition is really rough, but I think it gets my point across. I'm talking about

SF which is derived from movies, TV, and other sources. There is a lot of it on the shelves, and even if you want to apply Sturgeon's Law to all of it, that still means that 10 percent is pretty good. But even if it's as good or better than anything nominated for the Hugos, you'll never see any of these stories nominated. I feel that there are some among those who vote for the Hugos who take the idea that the Hugo is a "literary award" way too seriously, and would be absolutely horrified at the thought of a media tie-in making the Hugo ballot. (This is just my impression; any similarity to reality may be completely coincidental.)

And I used the phrase "commercially published" to specifically exclude fanfiction. I don't want to get that particular debate started. I could see far too many legal issues (and headaches) involved if we went down that road.

Best Non-fiction: "Any non-fictional book whose subject is related to the field of science fiction or fantasy in other media, appearing in book form for the first time during the previous calendar year."

Again, this is a rough definition, but this category is a parallel to the Best Related Book category in the Hugos. This category would cover works ranging from general encyclopedic works on SF movies or TV to books on the making of specific movies or TV series to published scripts to compilations of essays such as *The Science of Superheroes* or *Buffy the Vampire Slayer and Philosophy*. (Yes, those two are actual books.) In theory, all of these works would be eligible for the Best Related Book Hugo, but for some reason, they rarely if ever appear on the ballot.

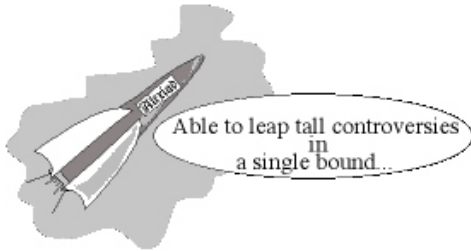
The basic idea behind all of these awards is simple. I feel that works that cross over between media don't get the recognition that some deserve, and creating an award or awards that do so would also be the perfect way to honor Forry. And by making the awards WSFS-sponsored, it would be a way for as many fans as possible to express their opinion.

Granted, the first big step would be get the WSFS Business Meeting to agree with me that this is A Good Idea. And I'm not certain what the likelihood of that would be. I have a feeling that some BM attendees would be chomping at the bit to yell, "Object To Consideration!" at their first glimpse of the proposal on the agenda.

As for what to call the award, my thought is that its official name should be the "Forrest J Ackerman Award." But knowing fandom the way I do, though, it will probably become better known as the "Forry."

As for the award itself, it should be some rendering of Forry himself. And in keeping with the tradition set by the Hugos (I am thinking of this as sponsored by WSFS, remember), the base design should be left to the discretion of each Worldcon.

Letters, we get letters



From: **Christopher J. Garcia** Dec. 11, 2006
chris@computerhistory.org

Another *Alexiad* is in my mailbox...and I like it!

I'm all for fanfiction, as I really dislike the modern system of copyright keeping things out of the hands of the people. I know, I'm a radical, but I want openness where now there are only profits to be made.

It's not the first time all of the Lensmen books have been issued together. I remember reading one, probably from the 1980s, that collected all the books together in a very cheap edition.

The note about the oldest surviving vets from WWI reminds me that Moses Hardy, the oldest African American to serve in WWI, just passed away. He had great stories, I'm told.

Glad to hear my buddy Warner Herzog hasn't given up on Docs yet. He keeps saying that 'this is the last one' in his weird German accent.

The passings section always depresses me. Jack Williamson was one of the guys I always loved reading. I did a screenplay based on one of his short stories the first time I decided to try writing SF films. I'm always annoyed by the way time keeps on slippin'.

Alfred William Lawson sounds like one of those guys who I really would have loved going out drinking with.

Which would have been interesting, because one of the many things that Lawsonomy opposed was the consumption of alcohol.

Great reviews, but the one that made me stand up and take notice was *The Crack in the World*. Living in Santa Clara less than five miles from The Winchester House, which has a major connection with the Earthquake as well. Sarah Winchester, who I don't believe is related to Simon, was trapped in one of her bedrooms of the house and that led to her shutting off more than half of the magnificently weird house. I've seen a lot of 1906 earthquake photos and some film of the aftereffects. There was even an exhibit just around the corner from my house at Agnew Historical Park, which was the site of Agnews Mental Hospital where more than a hundred people died during the quake.

I loved the DNA Detectives. I hear they're doing a big documentary on the book on Discovery Channel next month. I can't wait to see that one.

I had a great Thanksgiving in the city of Hemet California, and afterwards I went to Target and bought every 1 dollar DVD I could get my hands on. They're mostly bad TV transfers, which will go to various White Elephants, but some of them, like the Cat & The Canary, will get many viewings.

I loved the Dark Chocolate Coffee kisses. We had a huge bag of them at work and they're all gone. A shame, as we just tore through them. Computer History types are known for leaving no chocolate untouched.

The renaming of the Big Heart Award bothered me to when I heard about it at WorldCon. I was hoping they'd either keep the old name, do a slash (like in wrestling they've got the Lou Thesz/Ric Flair Wrestler of the Year Award) or just call it the Big Heart Award. Still, Forry has at least one award named after him, and I could honestly think of one other person who could deserve the honour (Big Hearted Howard comes to mind) but I'll never say that Forry doesn't deserve it. It's just weird.

E. Everett Evans didn't mean anything to anyone anymore, except a few old-timers. In a few years, neither will 4SJ, and if the Big Heart Award goes on, I venture to say it will be renamed again. "John Hertz Big Heart Award" anyone?

— JTM

Great issue. Thanks for sendin' it my way!

From: **Trinlay Khadro** December 10, 2006
 Post Office Box 240934, Brown Deer,
 WI 53224-0934 USA
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<http://stores.ebay.com/Silly-Kitty>
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Sorry about the delays in writing LOCs. Things are starting to get less crazy.



TRINLAY KHADRO

It's been just over a year since Elric ferret passed away and Megumi is wanting a "little brother". So we may be headed to the shelter this spring to get her a 3 month old kitten to raise.

My parents stopped by this weekend: they're visiting my aunt & uncle and then today my sister in Madison. They gave me a New

Year's present a little early: a new better digital camera (Olympus Stylus 710) that I'd been wanting for awhile. I'm doing pet sitting and pet

photography from time to time and it helps.

My SSD was finally approved which has made my life much easier.

Eventually, I'll have to sit down and scan my latest batches of drawings. KT has gotten herself a new computer, with a printer-scanner-copier that's very handy.

Sorry to hear of Elfling's passing. Joe: he's not out in the wet and cold, he's sheltered in your hearts. What illness went through your herd of cats? I'm glad Megumi is an inside cat, I love her to bits (as evidenced by all her portraits on flickr).

Fleas; and consequently anemia.

Richard D: knitting, as I expand and reduce patterns, has improved my math confidence a great deal.

Does it matter if religion "is valium" if the particular person/situation calls for valium? I can't face dental work, even a cleaning, without valium. (I've had intense dental experiences as an adult and it sticks with you.) Without valium I'd probably be toothless at 43.

Different experiences. I had a very bad time with carelessly prescribed tranquilizers which has left me totally suspicious of such; so, for example I had a colonoscopy without drugs. And I had bad dental experiences, such as having had such a time with having the teeth on the left side filled that I asked the dentist to leave off the novocain for the work on the right side and the pain was the same. But I'm not afraid of going to the dentist's.

IMHO: sometimes unverifiable faith is what gets us through and over life's rough spots.

Janine & Brad Foster: Yeah! I want to see a photo of Duffy's wings as well. Maybe you should post it online someplace like flickr.com.

I've heard of some Wikipedia scandals where someone went out of their way to insert false misleading information into several articles. As always maybe Wikipedia is a start; but people shouldn't rely on it and should always use primary resources (when possible), reference books, and cross-reference like mad.

KT was excited to see an ad for *Rome* on DVD but we haven't gone to rent or buy it yet.

Darrell & Joe: History based on Manga would be just as silly; though there are several well-researched and carefully done historicals. (*Rurouni Kenshin* for the Meiji era; *Kaze Hikari* slightly earlier.) A friend is gradually supplying me with home-burned DVDs of the Japanese t.v. series *Shinsengumi*. I've been a bit surprised how I recognize the historical people from both Manga and Animé and how in 12 episodes I've seen thus far, how much the story has drawn me in. The *Shinsengumi*'s Captain Kondo has more than his fair share of charisma.

Ned Brooks: I think the Tibetan name for Everest is Chownoulungma/Chomolungma. So except for various forms of spelling Sybille

Noel got it right.

The art in the book (copied in *Alexiad*) isn't a being I recognize, but there are some variations from lineage to lineage and some aren't exposed to the general public. Keel in mind that the Swastika in Buddhism and Hinduism predates the Nazis and has a completely different meaning.

From the iconography; my guess would be that it's a wrathful deity/dharma guardian: probably a former demon that has been converted to Buddhism. It has the clothing and jewels of a Bodhisattava.

Sheryl B: The different response to and from Megnum and the female vets vs the male one were so huge that in the future she'll only see the female vets.

Lisa Mason is recovering well and her hair is growing back. For a bit she joked about disappointment that the radiation therapy did not cause her to glow in the dark. We gave her some glow in the dark nail polish and lipstick at Halloween.

Have I ever mentioned how much I like your cartoon aliens and critters? They always make me grin.

EB: Yeah it is quite likely someone high up just said: "Leave Hiroshima and Nagasaki alone . . ." What I find a bit crogging is that in the period of isolation Hiroshima and Nagasaki were the only places where foreigners could do business and pull into port. They were, also, earlier on, centers for the dispersed (and often hidden) Christian population.

And Kokura. Kokura was the original target of Bockscar but it was cloudy there that day.

I know that Nagasaki (Gulliver's "Nangasac") was the open port, the site of the Dutch artificial island of Deshima (Dejima), and the center for Christianity (the Southern Baptists have a presence there now, such as Elizabeth's brother Jack). But I never heard that about Hiroshima.

Rodney: I hope you are feeling better soon . . . I will drop you a line before I write another LOC.

Cartoon on Page 24: Hey! I'm the hot water bottle for the CAT . . . ☺

We've recently gone to see *Happy Feet* and *The Prestige* at the invitation of friends. We may soon go catch *The Illusionist* at the budget theater. *Happy Feet* is a clever and cute musical full of pop songs and penguins.

Sue: Thanks for the well wishes to Lisa Mason and me. My tests, fortunately, turned out OK. If any of you have young females in your life make sure they get the HPV vaccine.

Jeffrey Allen Boman: See above.

© I'm glad we (and the veterinarians) aren't the only ones who do that.

Megumi is an inside cat and she gets annual just-in-case shots. It's not too expensive, especially considering that she's saved my life and takes good care of me.

December 13, 2006

Abe no Seimei (aka "Seimei" and "Mr. Loveyface") age 12 weeks was welcomed by Trinlay, KT, and Megumi-hime.

January 24, 2007

Happy Year of the Boar. I'm glad that Goat is gone . . . what a doozy.

I've got photos up on Flickr: Mostly Megumi, her lil' brother Seimei, and lots of my craftwork, but also some of us and our friends, and Milwaukee area fandom.

<http://www.flickr.com/photos/trinlayk/>

KT had a rough week, but is back on her feet. She finally broke up with her long time boyfriend . . . who she'd been trying to break up with for MONTHS. However, she leaves him better socialized for the benefit of his next girlfriend, and eventually someday a wife.

Megumi and Seimei are getting along fine. He's occasionally the annoying little brother, but I am also witness to mutual washing and cuddling. The little guy sure has been growing, and sucking down the cat food. The vet says he's going to be tall, and already at about 20 weeks old, he looks something like a basketball player, long legs, long body and a triangular face. He's just a purring bundle of love.

That was how it was with Delenn, who just growed.

They take turns at night sleeping with me, or with KT, though sometimes I feel like I have 3 or 4 cats on top of me . . .

See *I'm Just a Cat Mattress* by Susan Sturgill (Crescent Hill; 2006; ISBN 978-1-889937-10-6; \$14.95) for more on this.

— JTM

Aside from some fannish local activity, I am mainly spending a lot of time at home with the SciFi channel and my computer since the weather makes me particularly achey and quick to fatigue.

The new doc has me on Cymbalta, and vitamin B, Iron and MSM . . . which seems to help in that I'm taking less than half of the pain pills that I had been taking everyday. I know that HAS to make my liver and kidneys happier. The thing about fibromyalgia, is that it may actually be a classification that includes several disorders, what works for one person (triggering a remission) won't work for another, or may make another have complications.

I really don't have any news, but I have intentions of writing articles for several folks, when I find my motivation again.

I've recently been gifted a copy of *Musui's Story* by Katsu Kokichi, and *Tokugawa Ieyasu: Shogun* by Conrad Totman . . . neither of which I've really even looked at yet. Eventually, they may be book reviews. I'm hopeful that the Ieyasu book will fill in some intriguing life

events that sometimes make it as a landmark on a time line, but don't get any discussion in my usual sources. (for example: WHY did Tokugawa change his surname from Matsudaira?)

More news when I have some. I probably had some comments but seem to have misplaced the most recent zine. I'll send a LOC if and when I find it.

From: **Richard Dengrove** Dec. 13, 2006
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I enjoyed the October 2006 *Alexiad*, as I have other *Alexiads*.

The theme of my letter, if not your issue, is gullibility. When people are fanatical like the Nazis, can we trust them to be satisfied with the facts? The book *Master Plan* talks about how popular Hörbiger's doctrine was among the Nazis. Hörbiger was the least of their gullibility.

Of course, not even supposedly non-fanatical people are satisfied with the facts. In that way, they are gullible too. They prefer to believe their most glorious fantasies true. It scares me that a lot of people have the fantasy that wrestling is not fixed.

In fact, some fantasies get to be respectable and 'fact.' Almost all of the public is gullible. Is Global Warming one of these fantasies? Even someone so skeptical as Rodford Edmiston is reluctant to come out and say that is the case in his "Joy of High Tech."

However, I keep running into arguments for it that have nothing to do with facts or logic. Recently, someone I know was pushing a Pascal's Wager for Global Warming. If we fight it and it proves not to be a threat, no harm will be done.

Not only can what we assume be revealed as fantasies, but whole eras can be revealed to be living in fantasy. They were gullible eras. You reminded me of this with your comment about some women with S&M fantasies: the bottom is more in control than the top.

If you believed the media and books, everyone believed that was the bottom's proper place during the '70s. Fortunately, under the table, common sense, for the most part, overcame such political correctness.

On the other hand, that you are gullible does not mean you will be gullible about everything. Vincent Gaddis, for instance. I gather Gaddis started out as a Fortean and, in Charles Fort's manner, related a lot of anomalies which he didn't attempt to explain. I'm sure they came from the same sources Fort's did, news clippings. The gullible learning from the gullible.

Also, I know Vince wrote for Ray Palmer's *Amazing* magazine in the '40s, and his anomalies were placed in the service of proving the existence of the Deros, Titans and Lemurians. In the '60s, Vincent created his own monument to gullibility, his book on the Bermuda Triangle. Therefore, I am surprised, but delighted, to learn that he showed some skepticism: he had a natural explanation for the

disappearance of the ship the *Mary Celeste*.

On the other hand, us skeptics can be gullible if it shows some decency. I blame myself that my "Queen of Sheba" essay is missing a passage. I cannot prove otherwise because AOL deleted the message I sent it in.

Insert before five paragraphs from the end, after "supposed sources of this history."

Trouthook, *Street Cries and Epithets of old Ma'in*, 1806.

Outhouse. *With Shush in Africa*. Philadelphia, 1894.

Tortoni's *Ma'in la Bella*. Florence, 1908.

Of course, the most important, and ridiculous, of Meade's sources was *The Ptunk or Crutch, Manuscript*. Hitherto unpublished. Meade as Phinneas Crutch claimed that he had gone to Beeswax, Maine to convalesce after a severe attack of temporary insanity.

Us skeptics can be gullible in another instance, when it is supposed to be literature not science. No only do I wish to thank Joy V. Smith for complimenting my remarks on the Priority of Sion and the novel *The Martian*; but also for pointing out that the concept of Martians is not dead. Joe Haldeman has recently written fiction about them. He isn't going to let the pictures sent back by Mariner IV in 1965 crimp his style.

Furthermore, us skeptics have to be prepared for the opposite problem, truth being stranger than gullibility. You wanted to know how much National Geographic's Genographic Project cost. A friend of mine gave me his DNA profile, and said it cost \$110.

More important for now, he found something extraordinary. Up until the profile, he had thought of all of his ancestors as Greek and Greek Orthodox. According to the project, his ancestors, at some point, were Ashkenazi Jews.

Fortunately, I am better prepared for an exotic ancestry. A translator/librarian at the Library of Congress suggested my name was originally Turkic Moslem.

That's it for this letter.

I know my name was originally Norman (as in Normandy).

— J. de Mauger

From: **Rod E. Smith** May 10, 2006
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I was pleased to note rave comments about my climate change column. I did a lot of research, thinking and re-writing for that one. Even tried to plot known temperature points in Excel, failing miserably. :-) Another column, on a more mundane topic, is attached. I do note George W. Price's correction on the latitude of Bermuda. I did a quick glance at a map instead of actually checking the numbers.

I had a story published, recently. In 2003 the European Space Agency held a contest for

stories on beanstalks (orbital elevators), the 1st Clarke-Bradbury International Science Fiction Competition, and I submitted an entry. I didn't win, but they subsequently published the best of the entries in *Running the Line: Stories of the Space Elevator*. This is a print on demand book, available from Lulu Press. Unfortunately, most of the stories weren't in English, and the translations were apparently performed through sheer force of processor. As a result many of the tales have odd phrasings, typos and mistakes in formatting.

I have a new cat. My sister had a young fellow show up at her farm out in Woodford County, and volunteered me to adopt him. (They already have three cats, three dogs, three horses, two miniature horses, a miniature donkey, about a dozen goats and over fifty chickens.) He's lean and very long in the tail, with large paws, not yet full grown. He's also stark black and white. I've named him Michael, after the Japanese comic strip *What's Michael?* and the Michael Jackson song. The two older cats I have are trying to ignore him, maybe hoping he'll go away. :-)

Seimei, meet Michael. Michael, this is Seimei. I hope that this trend will stop before it reaches us. Lisa has had to turn down four cats a co-worker had.

I have a contemporary fantasy novel finished, am working on a hard SF novel about the first extra-solar colony (HUGE amounts of research for that one) a novel in the same universe set two hundred years later, and a pair of connected vampire novels, plus several short stories. I'm trying to get ready for my retirement, currently scheduled to start at the end of next March. (Naturally, a significant raise just came through for my pay classification last month, and this month I get my annual increment. Since retirement pay is based on the three highest years, and I won't have these raises for long before quitting, people have been trying to get me to stay longer.)

Marty Helgesen's note about the Great War vet who hired belly dancers for his 111th birthday party reminds me of the story that Señor Wences gave a twenty minute performance at his own hundredth birthday party.

And he lived to be a hundred and three. Are you all right with that? "S'aright."

— JTM

From: **Darrell Schweitzer** Dec. 16, 2006
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Two thoughts come to mind glancing through the latest *Alexiad*:

Why don't space aliens abduct fans?

The same reason why (with one exception) they do not abduct SF writers. We are too aware that science fiction concepts come from *stories*. They are made up. We make them up or know

people who do it for a living. We know that these ideas can be switched around and manipulated. We have a very good idea where the concepts came from and how it's all done. In other words, we have the perspective of a professional magician watching a sidewalk shell game.

If you're used to consciously creating fantasy, you are less likely to believe in fantasy.

There are exceptions, though. Let us not flatter ourselves. I know a woman who believes she can "prove by logic" (I am not sure she knows what those words mean) that Lovecraft received all his inside dope "telepathically from another dimension." I also vividly remember the first real lunatic I met in fandom many years ago. This was a man in his forties perhaps (I was in my early twenties, so he looked old to me) I was chatting with while we stood in a line for something at, I believe, a Disclave. He was wearing a ludicrous costume which, if I remember correctly, involved a lot of yellow plastic and what looked like a plastic cooking pot on his head. His name-badge bore the name of a legendary character from a famous sea chantey. He proceeded to explain to me how he'd had out-of-body experiences, and how his soul was drawn all around the world on "missions" to save lives and do good deeds. I don't remember if he said he incarnated physically in those other places, but it sounded like a not-bad premise for a superhero comic book.

If I didn't know it before, I learned from him the first law of detecting the deluded: there are too many stories. If an otherwise sane person claims to have had one unusual or even fantastic experience, that is interesting. If they claim to have had several of them, it is not. Fantasy prone people believe in *too much* for plausibility. Thus the woman who believes HPL got it all telepathically. She would not understand if you tried to explain that this involves three, possibly four unsupported assumptions: 1) that telepathy exists 2) that "other dimensions" exist in the science-fictional sense as inhabited places 3) that non-human intelligences exist 4) that Lovecraft knew all this and denied it.

I suspect that a predictor for UFO abductions would be a belief in a wide variety of fantastic things: the Bermuda triangle, Bigfoot, the Loch Ness Monster, telepathy and other psi powers, crystal magic, past lives, etc. etc.

Such correlations have been noted. Ivan T. Sanderson, the cryptozoologist, author of *Abominable Snowmen: Legend Come to Life* (1961), also wrote on the "Vile Vortices", the pattern of "Bermuda Triangles" that circled the globe, for example. (And he worked for British Security Coordination — you know, the intelligence outfit headed by Sir William Stephenson, the Man Called INTREPID, er 48100?).

This does return to the point of why so many

SF writers are hardcore skeptics. It is because they are in the business of making such things up. If only out of professional pride, they know they can do a better job.

On another note, it occurred to me seeing the obituaries of Nelson Bond and Jack Williamson together is that the reason we revered Jack Williamson so much is that he remained relevant to the SF field for every decade between the 1920s and the present. Bond, however pleasant his stories of the '30s and '40s may have been, had basically stopped writing by the early '50s. So it isn't just longevity. If you look in the book *Science Fiction: The Gernsback Years* by E.F. Bleiler, you will be surprised to discover how many Gernsback era writers were still alive until quite recently. But nobody had heard from them since the middle '30s. Some, like Frank K. Kelly, wrote a few stories in their youth and then went on to do something else. Others, I suspect, never learned to write above the Gernsback standard and so couldn't keep on publishing even until the end of the pulp era.

So Jack Williamson's accomplishment is a lot more than longevity. Long life is a matter of chance and biology. But he managed to keep up with the field and remain creatively vital, decade after decade, when so many of his contemporaries fell into obsolescence or silence.

In 1995 I interviewed him and he modestly told me his secret. "The brain still works," he said.

That's what I refer to as "The Great Campbell Die-Off". There was a change in the writing climate and a lot of writers simply could not go on.

— JTM

From: **Brad W. Foster** December 19, 2006
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<http://www.jabberwockygraphix.com>

Ha! That was great how the "Nest of Vipers" actually managed to reflect something in the text. (Kind of blurry though. I scan my stuff at grey scale, maybe I need to send them in a strict b&w for your use?) [That would help.]

Liked your eulogy for Elfing. We lost another of our little furries, Vlad, this past fall. He was the youngest of our three, and so it was the most unexpected and quickest of turn-arounds. He was with us, then suddenly there was rapid breathing, a horrible diagnosis, and he was gone. At the same time Sheryl Birkhead made the most selfless gesture that helped make the passing easier. I won't say more than I just want to pass on to everyone to be aware that we DO have the closest thing to a saint among us while Sheryl is around. (And that will probably embarrass her, but it needs to be said.)

C'Mell, Delenn, Gemellus, Red Wull, and Sarang send their condolences.

And still speaking of cats (a fannish thing, it seems) I liked the list of cat names that John Purcell provided, along with your followup. When I was growing up my sisters were always the ones to name out cats, and so we ended up with Pammy and Ginny and etc etc with all the names ending in a "e" sound. I swore I wouldn't do that, so the first kitty I named on my own was Sable — an e at the end, but not pronounced! I also named the recently lost Vlad. Cindy named Duffy, but I'm not as bothered by that "e" ending, since I thought it was a clever name: we found her at a local sf/comic convention, the Dallas Fantasy Fair. Or, as it was more well known, the DFF. Get it?

Duffy from DFF? Yeah, well . . . I liked it.

You and Jeff Boman (from Jeffersonstown?)!

— JTM

From: **Joy V. Smith** December 19, 2006
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Thanks for the background on the social credits idea proposed by various people (in your Born Again article). I'm not aware of the "naive portrayal of farm work in Bellamy's *Equality*," but I suspect it was romanticized? And having read stories about people running free and naked in nature, I always wonder if the writers had done any work outside. There are nettles (including Tread Softly) and cat's claws and fire ants and parasites out there!

Interesting and good review of *Eifelheim* by Michael Flynn. I posted an excerpt from it in his AOL SF Authors folder. And your review of *Witchling* was a fun read, though I think I'll skip the book. And thanks for the review of *The Last Explorer: Hubert Wilkins* . . . I'd never heard of him, but he sounds like he certainly deserves his own biography.

I'd read James Calvert's *Surface at the Pole* (1960), admittedly in a Reader's Digest Condensed Books version, back in my sub enthusiast days in '62 & '63, so the name was familiar.

I also enjoyed your review of *A Crack at the Edge of the World* (the 1906 California earthquake). I've seen a good documentary on that. As I recall, a lot of damage could have been prevented except for the corruption in San Francisco, which resulted in the water supply (to fight the fires) being inadequate.

I swear I learned more than usual from this issue, including your reviews of *The Father of Forensics*, Sir Bernard Spilsbury; the Nell Gwyn biography; et al. And thanks to Lisa for the background on Sunday Silence.

Interesting review of *Wintersmith*. I preferred the first two books in the series, but I'll read it again. (Sometimes you get more out of a second read.) Thanks to Johnny Carruthers for his candy reviews. I came across the Candy

Cane Kisses, but I'd forgotten what he said and passed them by. (I was getting Christmas candy for a gift package.) I'll pick some up for myself. Thanks to Trinlay Khadro for her Choxie reviews. I wasn't aware that Target had a chocolate brand. Fun name.)

And I know there were lots of tidbits in the LOCs. I'm going to have read *Alexiad* with little flags because I can't remember where everything is that I wanted to mention.

What I usually do is to go through the zine again after my first read and compose my comments. With e-zines, of course, it's a matter of switching between WP and Acrobat Reader.

— JTM

From: **E. B. Frohvet** December 17, 2006
4716 Dorsey Hall Drive #506, Ellicott City MD 21042-5988 USA

Apparently I am one of the few who finds it incongruous to be greeted with a cheery, "Hi! How are you today?" — at the doctor's office!

Some observations on 2006, the year in fanzines. *Alexiad*, *The Knarley Knaws*, *Visions of Paradise*, *Peregrine Nations*, *Banana Wings*, *Opuntia*, *Nice Distinctions*, *Challenger*, and *Vanamonde* all had years of solid consistency within their track records. There was one each of *Zoo Nation*, *Bento*, and *It Goes on the Shelf*, all normal for those titles.

Returned from the dead: *The Reluctant Famulus* after nearly three years; *No Award* after more than two years; *Steam Engine Time* after nearly two.

Faltering: *Plokta* distributed the "August 2005" issue in May 2006, and the "May 2006" issue in December; *FOSEAX* mailed the "December 2005" issue in May 2006; *SFC Bulletin*, one issue in July (first time in my experience since 1997 they failed to get out at least two issues in a year); *Tortoise*, one issue in April.

Vanished in the mist: *Halo of Flies*, *Cosmic Hairdrier*, *Meta*, *Thought Experiments*, *Trap Door*, and *Argentus*, none of which published at all this year that I know of. Of course one or more of these may have gone totally on-line, or dropped me from their mailing list.

There was an *Argentus* right at the end of the year. Perhaps Steve should send you a printed copy.

"Altitude sickness"? Good one. Anyone else with an idea?

Umm, happy birthday. My cousin's is December 26th. I choose not to have one.

Modest proposal: I have no objection in principle; however when I was first exposed to the "Lensman" stories I already found them absurd and badly written. I might have been sixteen, and already reading Asimov, Heinlein, and Bradbury.

Your review of the book about people convinced they were abducted by aliens, affirms

what I said before: UFO cultism is a religion for people who can't find anything in existing religions, but still feel a need for a "transformative experience".

Okay, I give in: what does a "blue roan" horse look like? I imagine a sort of steel-grey with highlights that can look blueish in certain lighting?

Chocolate of several descriptions: I like chocolate, in moderation, but I almost never eat candy except in the week after Halloween, when I eat up whatever is left over from the trick-or-treaters. (No sense wasting it. . .) I can't think of any one food item I couldn't give up for 48 hours, except perhaps bread.

At the moment I am reading two SF books in alternation (sometimes it's three): *The World Menders* by Lloyd Biggle Jr., and *The Left Hand of Darkness* by Ursula K. LeGuin. Guess which of the two has a cover blurb from John W. Campbell declaring that it is "going to be one of the classics"?

Uh, the one that he edited?

Taras Wolansky: The way I recall hearing it on the news, a teacher at a religious school was fired for saying that the Bible does not contain all knowledge needed to deal with the modern world. I would think, saying the Bible is not the final authority about all subjects of which it speaks, would be more offensive to the devout believers in perfect inerrancy.

Joy Smith: If you liked *Kon-Tiki*, look for a copy of Heyerdahl's *The Ra Expeditions*. Both remain compelling reading. I am thrilled to find that someone I know is a fan of the Liaden™ books.

Alex Slate: Sorry, no e-mail. That would require me to have a computer, a fate I have avoided so far. Let me know when you're going to be in the area, perhaps we can arrange to have lunch.

Joseph: The newcomer ignorant of the fact that "sci-fi" is pejorative, or at least specific to media, in real SF circles, is precisely the sort who can be educated. Unless what he wrote was media fanfic or media slash, in which case (sigh) the problem takes on another dimension.

The person in question rather thoroughly proved that he didn't want to be educated, and very quickly turned exceedingly nasty, in the modern style.

Alexis Gilliland: The tale of your recycled piano put me in mind of a story (by Spider Robinson as I recall) in which the character had an immovable pool table, and "couldn't imagine" how it had been put in the room in the first place. I still cite this as a textbook example of a lazy writer failing to do his homework.

Sheryl Birkhead: If you have not read Lyn McConchie's *Key of the Keplian*, I recommend it; the behavior of male animals toward young not their own figures prominently in the story.

Marty Helgesen: I believe the specific point Ehrman was making in *Misquoting Jesus*, was that classical Hebrew was written without

punctuation, capitals, or word breaks. Also, more to the point, that the transcriptions of texts in the first few centuries of the Christian era, was done largely by amateurs. Somebody has to be mayor — a Hugo award voted to "None of the above" would be an improvement.

In the spirit of the season, I hope that you may all enjoy an egg-and-lemon-based sauce on your vegetables. Or in other words,

Happy Hollandaise

Vegetables are what food eats.

— JTM

From: **Martin Morse Wooster** Dec. 23, 2006
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mmwooster@yahoo.com

Many thanks for *Alexiad* 30. I second **Johnny Carruthers's** comments about the Big Heart Award. I remember Forry giving a speech every year at the Hugo Awards about who E. Everett Evans was and why it was important to remember his generosity towards others with the Big Heart Award, I don't know very much about Evans, but it was important to Forry that each year Worldcon attendees knew something about his friend. I hope whoever hands out the Big Heart Award (it seems to be under the control of Dave Kyle now) will figure out a way to honor Evans's memory as well as Forry's.

I know something about the San Francisco Earthquake, because I was commissioned to write a long article about charities' response to disasters, which was eventually published by the Capital Research Center as two issues of their newsletter *Compassion and Culture*. (You can find the articles on the web at capitalresearch.org.) I remember that Gen. Greely succeeded Gen. Funston as head of the Army's efforts to aid San Francisco. The best reminiscence of Gen. Greely that I found was in the memoirs of Edward T. Devine, who was sent by the Red Cross to supervise that agency's limited aid to earthquake victims. He recalled that Gen. Greely was a forceful man who always shouted "Sunthin' gotta be done!" before giving an order.

I enjoyed **Sue Burke's** revelation that the palace built by King Pedro I in 1364 is still being used (and how many palaces does King Juan Carlos have, exactly?) I did see one 14th century castle when I was in Scotland, but it was in ruins. This was in the isle of Bute, which I went to on a very pleasant excursion on the *Waverley*, the last paddlewheel steamer in Scotland. (Yes, I spent the day on a steamboat instead of at Worldcon. You may report me to the Worldcon Control Board.) I don't remember very much about the castle, except that a wedding party was using it while I was there, and I walked out of the castle while photographers and a Rolls Royce were ready to greet the bride and groom. I of course put on my best red carpet smile, waved my arms, and said, "Thank you! And thank the Academy!" as I walked back to the boat.

The review of the biography of Sir Hubert Wilkins was enlightening. Who would have

thought that someone who was on one of Shackleton's expeditions could have taken part in the age of atomic submarines? Not to mention the curious connection between Wilkins and L. Ron Hubbard. But what does an "honourable correspondent" of the Secret Service mean? Is this comparable to, say, Joseph P. Kennedy's volunteering to feed information to J. Edgar Hoover?

An Honourable Correspondent is an unpaid amateur agent. They do what most agents do, which is to look around, come home, and talk. Then, Greville Wynne patriotically offered to cover the fille d'joie bill for Col. Penkovsky . . .

— JTM

From: **Dale Speirs** December 15, 2006
Box 6830, Calgary, Alberta T2P 2E7
CANADA

The December 2006 *Alexiad* is at hand. Your article on Alfred William Lawson and the Direct Credits Society caught my eye, being that I am the son of a Socred supporter. My father ran as a Socred candidate unsuccessfully in several provincial and federal elections in the early 1970s. This was in the dying days of the party, which had been hijacked decades before by the pragmatist faction. When the Alberta Tories defeated the Socreds in 1971, the pragmatists had nothing to fall back upon since they never paid much attention to ideology. The Alberta provincial Socreds were the last stronghold of the party, and when they fell, so did the party, which is now extinct, although the Social Credit League still exists. As far as I know, my father was the last Socred belonging to the original monetary reform branch who stood as a candidate. The problem was that while Social Credit had some good ideas for dealing with the extreme deflation of the Great Depression, the monetary reformists never understood that the inflationary times of the 1970s required a different set of ideas.

You don't mention when the Direct Credits Society got going, but I get the impression from reading between your lines that it was the Great Depression. Since I never heard of the Direct Credits Society until I read your article, I can't answer your query as to whether Lawson borrowed the idea from Major C.H. Douglas. The Canadian Socreds definitely originated from Douglas's ideas. However, Douglas was not especially original, as he was not the only person to correctly recognize that the Great Depression could be cured by increasing the money supply instead of reducing it as the governments of the day did. It is not too unbelievable that Lawson might have independently thought of public credit ideas, but it seems more likely that he had picked it up from his reading. Monetary reform was in all the newspapers at the time.

Lawson doesn't seem to have been the sort to pay any attention to anything but his own ideas.

Remember, his original book, *Born Again*, came out in the middle of his baseball career and the beginning of his aviation career, in 1904. The Direct Credits Society was founded in 1931 and seems to have faded away after DMUL was founded in 1943.

Regarding the re-naming of the Big Heart Award. Why not say the truth out loud and call it what it really is? The Old Geezers Mutual Admiration Society Award.

Shall we talk about the FAAN Awards while we're at it?

— JTM

From: **John Purcell** December 27, 2006
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This will definitely be a short loc since I want to get back to working on the last issue for this year of *...and furthermore*. That being said, I hope you and Lisa, and also your brood of pets, had a wonderful Christmas, and that 2007 will be a good year for one and all.

Your article about Alfred William Lawson was fascinating. The man was obviously a person best described as an inspired kook. It never ceases to amaze how at how someone with such a distorted view of the world has the ability to sway people's minds to believe in his vision. More than anything, that is the subtext to your article. Lawson's life and writings are definitely something else. So he really played in major league baseball? What team? I'm sure I could look it up, but this tidbit of information is interesting. Quite the queer duck, I guess one could say about Lawson.

1890 season:

Boston Beaneaters (NL) 0-1
Pittsburgh Alleghenies (NL) 0-2
[These teams are now the
Atlanta Braves and Pittsburgh
Pirates respectively]

Again, tons of great book and candy bar reviews. I may have to get in on this action. We got a really awesome chocolate tray as a gift from our daughter's boyfriend's parents, and I may have to write up a review on it. Really yummy chocolate varieties: Cocoa, amaretto, tiramisu, lemoncello, capuccino — from Icam, Italy, it says on one wrapper. The main wrapper with the product name is long gone, and the chocolates are almost that way, too. Ah, but it's been worth it!

One final comment, and I'm going to direct it to E.B. Frohvet, who commented to me about FWACs (Fans Without A Clue). I most certainly agree that newer fans need to be educated in the ways of fandom, but like E.B. points out, if a person hangs around fandom long enough, they learn what they can and can't get away with. Many moons ago I learned that most writers appreciate knowledgeable readers; some

authors, though, take great offense when an "amateur" wants to "talk shop" with them. Fortunately, most pros once were fans; some still consider themselves fans, too, which is A Good Thing.

Hey, thanks for the dates on ConGlomeration. I have been sort of mapping out a tentative convention-attending plan for 2007; so far, I'm good through the end of the school year. Summer is another question. I really want to get over to Austin in August for Armadillocon, which would put attending Bubonicon out of the running. *grumph* I may have to alternate years; odd-numbered years, Armadillocon, even-numbered years, Bubonicon. Ah, heck. Armadillocon's the only other definite beyond May that I'm putting on the schedule.

Thanks for the zine, Joseph, and I'll see you at some point in the near future, I am sure.

From: **George W. Price** December 30, 2006
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December 2006 *Alexiad*:

In "Random Jottings" Joe says, "What I'd like to see is a one-volume collection of the original serialized versions of the four 'core' Lensman books — *Galactic Patrol*, *Gray Lensman*, *Second Stage Lensmen*, and *Children of the Lens* — that is to say, without the interstitial explanatory material, so that in one complete narrative the reader can gradually see as the story progresses how Kinnison (and eventually, family) learned of the depth and complexity of Boskonian and its Plot Against Civilization. Instead of being told flat out at the beginning."

If I may toot my own horn, Advent published something a little like that in *The Universes of E. E. Smith*, by Ron Ellik and Bill Evans, a concordance to the "Lensman" and "Skylark" stories (1966, but still in print). On pages 38-39, the entry for **Boskone** includes a chart of "Civilization's Growing Awareness of Boskone." It is a diagram of Boskone's structure, divided into six levels: "As known to Virgil Samms"; "As first seen by Kimball Kinnison"; "As later seen by Kinnison"; "As still later seen by Kinnison"; "As Kinnison finally saw it"; and "As seen only by the Children of the Lens."

That was one of the things that made me think of it. I was going to recommend the Ellik & Evans book to Leah Gadzikowski's daughter, Jessica, but she moved away before she finished the series. (It contains spoilers.)

Speaking of a Lensman omnibus, the Science Fiction Book Club did publish the *Chronicles of the Lensmen* (in two volumes) — and made the awful mistake of taking the text from the Pyramid paperback version, instead of going back to the Fantasy Press first editions. I know they copied Pyramid for *Galactic Patrol* (and

presumably all the others) because they reproduced the same typos. Apparently SFBC scanned the paperbacks but did not check to see if Pyramid had everything right. Most of the typos are misspellings, but there is at least one really horrendous booboo:

In Chapter 22 of *Galactic Patrol*, page 249 of the Fantasy Press edition has the following dialogue between Helmuth and Wolmark:

"I don't see how they fit."

"Neither do I—yet. However, it should be clear to you that we do not want that Lensman thinking such thoughts as that into this base."

"We certainly do not. However, surely he can't trace"

But in the Pyramid paperback (page 215) and the SFBC edition (Vol. 1, page 690) we find:

"I don't see how they fit."

"Neither do I—yet. However, surely he can't trace"

Ye gods and little fishes! I noticed this goof by happenstance; I have not checked all the Pyramid editions for comparison with Fantasy Press. So there may be other boobos as bad. Or worse. I'll try not to think about it.

One hopes that Gutenberg's imminent posting of *The Skylark of Space* will be more careful.

Dainis Bisenieks asks, "Who besides George Price knows what an "offog" is? (I do but I'm not telling.)" He flatters me. I don't know what it is either. If it was mentioned in a previous *Alexiad*, I didn't notice. Now that he has called it to my attention, I see "a replacement offog" mentioned in an editor's comment in Taras Wolansky's letter. OK, I'll bite, what is it?

It's mentioned in Eric Frank Russell's Hugo-winning story "Allamagoosa" (Astounding, May 1955).

Trinlay Khadro says, "I had always heard that Hiroshima and Nagasaki were chosen for the bombs because they'd seen so little activity up to that point in the course of the war." And Taras Wolansky suggests that targeters may have purposely spared Hiroshima because they knew the superbomb was coming and wanted to get accurate data when it was used. That seems a little far-fetched; I doubt if targeters would have been given such advance knowledge. What I do remember reading many years ago is that Hiroshima was chosen because it was a major port of embarkation for troops.

Marty Helgesen finds problems with suggestions of a "None of the Above" line on ballots. In political elections (unlike the Academy Awards), somebody has to win, he

says, and it would be very troublesome to have to rerun an election if "None of the Above" won.

I have a different suggestion: Instead of voting for just *one* candidate for each office, vote either "yes" or "no" for **all** the candidates. You could vote "yes" for two or more opposing candidates, if you think they are all satisfactory, or "no" for all, if you don't like any of the buggers, or "yes" for some and "no" for others. Subtract each candidate's "no" votes from his "yes" votes, and whoever gets the highest net total is the winner. And if they all get more "no" than "yes" votes, then the winner is the one with the smallest negative total. The virtue of this scheme is that it gives the candidates a much better idea of what we really think of them. It might induce an appropriate humility if the winner understands that we don't love him and are not giving him a mandate; we are merely saying that he is not quite as repulsive a bastard as his opponents.

Thanks for the untitled Revised Scripture on page 35, about Noah and the serpents, with the punch line "Adders we are, and need logs to multiply." I am irresistibly reminded of the joke common when I was in school, long before pocket calculators were invented, and most technical calculations were made with slide rules or logarithms:

- Q. How do engineers and mathematicians differ in handling the problem of constipation?
 A. Engineers work it out with a slide rule; mathematicians work it out with logs.

And logicians use a friendly enema.

— JTM

From: **Henry L. Welch** January 2, 2007
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Thanks for the latest *Alexiad*. As usual not much to comment on, but I did find a few things.

I saw Lisa Mason at the Milwaukee New Year's Eve party and she appears to be doing well. Her hair is growing back and she seemed fairly energetic, staying fairly late into the evening.

Taras Wolansky is correct that deer are often nothing more than pests. I wish they'd eat the garlic mustard in my yard rather than all the other flowers. This is why deer hunters do the rest of us a public service.

So it's "Hasta la vista, Bam-bi!"

— JTM

From: **Rodney Leighton** December 27, 2006
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 CANADA

The latest *Alexiad* arrived one day a couple of weeks ago along with the VISA statement. That seems to happen a lot, for some reason. Read the lacs.

You commented on and reviewed a number of books I would find of interest for a change. I had most of *Strange Highways* left. So I would read something written by Joseph T. Major and then something written by Dean R. Koontz. Except he hadn't started using the R. when they released *Strange Highways*. That was a fairly good anthology. Couple of novels and a dozen short stories. I remembered some of them quite well and others not at all. Skipped the one about sentient robots which is entitled *The Night of the Storm* if anyone cares. I remembered *Trapped* quite well but did enjoy reading it again. And *Chase*, novel length, is a hell of a good story. The one before that, *Twilight of the Dawn*, is a great tale about religious fervor in reverse. Having enjoyed these, I read the author's notes, intended as a forward but in the back for some reason. I always like these notes that Dean writes, sometimes more than the book. He mentioned the similarity of *Trapped* to *Watchers*.

I had some memories of that novel and since I seem to be in a weird sort of mood in which I spend large portions of my reading time on books I have read previously, I hunted this one up and read it. Enjoyed it. Started *Dark Rivers of the Heart* recently. *FOSFAX* readers may recall how much I liked that book and what it means to me. In between I found a John Sandford *Prey* novel I had read a couple years ago and read that again. I don't for the life of me know why I insist on reading books I have read and ignoring the hundreds of books I have that I have never read.

Ah, computers. 12 or 13 years ago my friend Cliff Kennedy, living in Toronto and rescuing discarded computers, planned to bring me one on one of his infrequent trips home. No, it was closer to 15 years ago. Back when I was in Pugwash, Cliff was going to bring me a computer system, monitor, printer, et al; set it up, show me how to use it, set up a tent on the lawn; show me how to make spaghetti. Something happened each time, usually caused by one female or another. One time he was loading the truck when some guy came looking for a computer; that guy was desperate, I was, then and now, ambivalent over whether I wanted one or not. So he gave it to that guy. Then Cliff, to steal a line from Marty Cantor, went to reside in a better place. Over the years there have been 3 other folks who have offered to ship me one if I paid the freight. Sometimes I simply couldn't afford to do so. Other times, I didn't want one.

Occasionally, like when I can't find a hockey game I would watch, or I would like to know something about what passes for pro wrestling these days or if I would like to read a fanzine that will not be coming my way, or once in a long while for other reasons, I wish I had a computer and internet access and the ability to find these things. I have a couple of photos posted on the wall above me of a certain female which someone found on the Internet and

printed out and sent to me. And a number of people have told me that I would hear from them more if I had email; some have vanished because they no longer could be bothered to write a for real letter.

You have never had to sit through Tim Bolgeo going on and on and on at the top of his voice about how email zines are the only way.

If I had the setup and could afford the net, I would likely read various Katz zines and Earl Kemp's zine and probably others. On the other hand: while part of me misses the folks who have gone totally electronic and part of me can see some advantages to email; most of me, most of the time, prefers a good old fashioned letter and those people who don't wish to bother writing to me can go about their life without thinking of me and I will carry on my life without thinking of them. I doubt I would get Internet in any event, at least until my finances improve greatly, if such ever happens. And, much of the time, I am content with this old thing. A computer would likely just be a letter writing tool. Probably I could make any letters cleaner and neater than I do with this machine. . . but many of the typos are due to carelessness and/or inattention and what would happen if I did that with a computer?

And if I get pissed off and drive my fist through the machine, well, I paid 20 bucks for it 3+ years ago. No computer would be absolutely free.

I am thinking about doing some kind of zine-like thing entitled: *The Maillady Brought It*. I have considered this off and on for years but there have always been book clubs and review materials and things. Now that I no longer do any reviews and have cancelled all book clubs, anything which the mail lady does leave in the mailbox excluding the 2 or 3 issues of *Reader's Digest* I have left and a few issues of a magazine . . . *Harrowsmith* . . . which is something to read will be a gift from someone. I am thinking I will make some brief comments on anything that arrives; get the thing copied 2 or 3 times a year and send copies to those people who sent me said gifts. That should keep me on the mailing lists of those few fanzines I get and will get me out of the letter columns.

Of course, I change my mind on this a lot.

Had a nice day Dec. 25; I went to work. No snow; worked in shirtsleeves for awhile. Dec. 26 brought some snow, more some places than others. Got about 2 days to finish this job; I hope I can get it done this week.

Take care.

Am I really in the *Alexiad* lettercol...?



From: **Robert Sabella** January 15, 2007
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I am sitting with an entire year's worth of *Alexiad* that I have not locced, and a New Year's resolution to be a better correspondent. After all, now that *VoP* is primarily an online zine, if I do not start loccing, I will find myself off a lot of mailing lists very quickly!

Back in Feb 06, Johnny Caruthers commented, "I remember where I was January 28, 1986. You could ask anyone 25 or older where they were, and what they were doing when *Challenger* exploded, and they would be able to tell you without a moment's hesitation." That's partially true in my case. I remember ending a class and the teacher who followed me had just watched the explosion on tv in the faculty room. However, I had no idea what Caruthers was referencing when he gave the date 1/28/86, because I have absolutely no idea what day, month, or even year it exploded.

The same is true of Kennedy's assassination. I recall being in a high school class between periods when a student entered the room and told his friends, "the president was shot." I know it was November, 1963, but I do not remember what day it was.

November 22 — 33 years to the day before our wedding.

The reviews of *Heinlein's Children* that I read have been uniformly positive. Congratulations. It's on my Recommended Reading list, and I do hope to buy it eventually. My fear is that reading it will encourage me to read all the Heinlein juveniles discussed within, which would probably not be a totally bad thing to do. To date I have only read *The Star Beast* (thumbs down), *Time For the Stars* (ok) and *Citizen of the Galaxy* (thumbs up).

The passing of Jack Williamson is sad, but not unexpected considering his age. Reading the various tributes I realized how few Williamson fiction I have actually read in my 45 years of reading sf, mostly a few pieces of short fiction in various anthologies and his *Starchild* trilogy with Frederik Pohl. His fiction was definitely a case of "too many books, too little time."

Awhile ago in the pages of *VoP* I compiled a list of the "most senior sf writers" of the past century (under the restriction that it had to be a "major" writer rather than a second tier writer), as well as the current runners-up (same criteria). With the passing of Williamson, I guess the torch passes as follows:

Most Senior Living SF Writer until...	
Jules Verne	1905
Arthur Conan Doyle	1930
H.G. Wells	1946
Edgar Rice Burroughs	1950
Murray Leinster	1975
Jack Williamson	2006
Frederik Pohl	present

Yes, Bob Tucker died a little

too soon to become Most Senior Living SF Writer.

Thanks for the condolences for my mother. The past 15 months have been traumatic for the Sabella family, portions of which are pulling together as a result while other portions are pulling apart. I guess that is not unusual. My best friend's father also died recently, and he has retired from teaching, so he commented to me last weekend that we are now the older generations in our families. That is a rather scary thought, a fact which kind of sneaked up on us very unexpectedly. Weren't Andy and Mark just born a few years ago? Didn't Jean and I just buy this house and settle into the best years of our lives? I am now closer in age to my mother's dying (26 years) than I am to my wedding date (27 years). It is definitely a spooky feeling.

The last family member in my grandfather's generation died in 1999 and the surviving ones in my father's generation are in their late eighties. And by NASFiC I will be a great-uncle. Eek! Where did this age thing come from?

— JTM

From: **Dainis Bisenieks** January 8, 2007
 921 S. St. Bernard Street, Philadelphia, PA 19143-3310 USA

The proofreading chronicles: *Adventure Tales* #4 has a story by REH, in which we are introduced to "Fraulein Olga von Bruckmann, known as a famous German secret agent." One supposes Two-Gun Bob wrote this with a straight face; could you? In its way, this line epitomizes REH, just as Thorne Smith is epitomized by the name of Hunter Hawk's dog in *The Night Life of the Gods*: it was Blotto. Also, Smith wrote at a time when men's and women's underwear could still be a fruitful subject for humor. Has the present time risen above this?

In the Era of Jim Carrey, I would have to say no. Some attitudes are different; it is no longer funny to be slightly tipsy, as so much of Smith's humor depends on. Watching Borat wearing a thong drawn up to over his shoulders though . . . As for v. Bruckmann, if her identity had been blown by eine mole Franzisch, ach du lieber, she would be a "famous secret agent" but not a working one.

Yeah, well. Another story in that issue was by E. Hoffman Price and told of a series of episodes in the early career of Tamerlane — from which I went on to Harold Lamb's book, from the look of it a good and judicious history through with the patches of word-painting designed for popular appeal: to which I cannot actually object, as the subject demands scene-setting and word-painting. Samarkand in the

days of its glory is not to be described dryly.

Price was a far better writer than Howard: why has he remained obscure? I do not revel in descriptions of combat; but judging by these alone, I will take Price's any day. And from my reading the ones that remain in memory are those that aim in truthfulness: in Renault's *Fire from Heaven*, or Duggan's *Knight with Armour*, or Bradshaw's *The Bearkeeper's Daughter*.

After more than twenty years, the washing machine went bust, fortunately not in the course of an actual wash; I was merely trying to spindry some things I had hand-washed. When the replacement was delivered, the workmen misconnected the supply hoses. Really! At the supply end, the yellow brass and white brass couplings were on the right taps, but evidence of a hot rinse told me there was error at the other end. Quickly fixed — I did it the easy way.



More proofing: in quick succession, three novels by living authors, reprint or new; I will leave them unnamed, as being in some sense under the sigil. Be nice if I could proofread some more works that fell within my scope of interest and of which I thought entirely well; the Talbot Mundy reprints came close to that. It is, more often than not, the work of compositors that affords amusement. A little list, drawn from several works, the correction coming last: preserve = persevere; stroked = stoked; alluded = eluded; pursuing = perusing; ridged = rigid.

Now the accepted wisdom used to be that it was inefficient for a compositor to go back and correct. Is this still so? The text appears on the screen before you, and a few simple keystrokes provide a fix. But nowadays anyone who knows the querty keyboard can be a compositor; yet not all are truly qualified.

The textual state of the new novel was ghastly beyond belief. I had to add a final d or

s hundreds of times; “to” chronically appeared as “too”, “its” was often “it’s”; more, much more, including oddities I could only ascribe to the author. I wasn’t merely proofreading; I was line editing. A tiny sample: isn’t “One or two would talk to each other” a bit askew? I had to stop and recast that, just as in the historical novel I had to do something with “Far better than I had done that than what I have done.” Analysis revealed that the third word had to be that, referring to another person’s actions just described; even so, I offered a revision: “His course was far better than mine.” In a number of places, that book had a “that that” problem (see “Jurisdiction Session No. 40320” in *The Well of Lost Plots*), and the 14th century had orders of magnitude more introspection than Emily Wrackgarth in “Scruts”.

I helplessly make bobbles in writing or typing, but I don’t for example substitute vowels as shown above; I’m clear in my mind about the sense-and-spelling of a word. And, in checking the work of others, I do not let a sentence pass until the sense, or the intended sense, is clear to me.

In a box of discarded household stuff on the curb I found a plastic bag of pennies, almost 6 ½ lbs. Being mostly zinc cents up to the current year, they might be as much as \$15. Wheat ears, about one in 200, as in the previous find: the oldest 1927; of 1944 there were four. I upgraded a few in the “collection”, which on principle comes from circulation or finds in rain-washed soil. No gifts, no swaps, no purchases. I would then become a mere owner. To have all years is the basis goal — one or two before 1940 are represented by Denver only, and I’d still want to add the other available mint, San Francisco being unattainable. Almost all from 1935 is from circulation, earlier mostly finds, some remarkably clean. It has puzzled me since the 1950s why Indian Head cents were more susceptible to corrosion when they were of the identical alloy. In Ann Arbor they turned up every few months, typically under hedges. Long-lost cents of like age that I find now tend to be much cleaner.

Ten years between 1910 and 1924 remain to be found, as well as 1932 and 1933 (low mintages!).

To *The Economist* I owe knowledge of the recent death, at an advanced age, of the Hungarian poet George (György) Faludy, whose *My Happy Days In Hell* has been in my library about as long as any book. I was moved to re-read it. I’d like to know more about the latter half of his life, which appears to have been lived to the full much like the first. One is reminded of the totally different but equally full life (still in progress) of Patrick Leigh Fermor. Or Wilfred Theisiger, who lived the life of his choice.

The year-end issue of *The Economist* has more than news; an essay on the art of conversation named Fermor among noteworthy living practitioners. Yes: the reciprocal play of words and ideas. In fandom it can be found to a good extent.

Gee, I imagine I could hold my own in conversation with Fermor. A matter of each

leaving openings for the other. . . . With people whose achievements are known to me — which means, basically, writers, I find myself unable to ask questions or offer comments, except on sidelights. Which is probably just as well — they have heard all the commonplace questions before. Time was when R. A. Lafferty could be seen at worldcons, mooching around the public areas . . . probably under the affluence of incohol. What can a body find to say to R. A. Lafferty? “Hello.” Pleasant to meet and briefly talk with have been Alfred Bester and Terry Pratchett. I was pleased to reveal to the latter that I knew the name of Wynkyn De Worde, successor to Caxton.

The chronicles of proofreading continue with a fantasy novel, first of an N-logy (how else?), filled to the gunnels with uncouth names and words, not least for articles of clothing. One imagines a scene like this:

She undid the buttons of her hultsa and shucked it off, then undid the waistband of her simla and stepped out of it, continuing until she stood there wearing nothing but her mishkafayim.
“Ehze shdadim — kmo avatihim!”

I presume that last means, “Help! I’m trapped in an early Cherryh novel!” Or as Cyril Q. Kornbluth said, “Yrlsqb nx sobshuggum illingoon. Mark my words!” (Seriously, the words are Hebrew: “hultsa” = “shirt”, “simla” = “dress”, and “mishkafayim” = “glasses”. Glasses?)

Anyway, why should these things require my attention? Is this the 21st century? An alphabetical printout of everything not recognized by the spellcheck would include all those names and their misspellings, which could then be identified and eliminated, leaving the likes of me to deal with poured/pored, than/that, ordinance/ordnance, and other things in the English language.

January 25, 2007

In the fullness of time I got — all on the cheap! — a long enough run of “Dortmunder” books (1 - 9, 11) that I can now read them in sequence and understand the allusions to earlier events. It is seen that May enters in Book 2, *Bank Shot*, which is as far as I got just now, though I had earlier read one or two of the others, and I’ve peeked here and there. It is obvious and scarcely needs comment that Westlake had dealt with the problem of aging in somewhat the P.G. Wodehouse manner. The first, *The Hot Rock*, came out in 1970 but was begun a few years earlier. Each book is set, vaguely, in the present; in that one Friday October 13 fits the calendar of 1967, for what that’s worth, and Dortmunder is stated to be 37. His former, indiscreet marriage is fixed at 1952-54, as is (elsewhere) his service in the Korean War Police Action. One doubts if a type like his ex would have married a man under 22, or such

a one, her. Born 1930, shall we say? But in *Nobody’s Perfect* (1977), a judge looking at his rap sheet finds that he is 40. One doubts if his military service or anyway the dates of his former marriage will be mentioned again. My paperback of *The Road to Ruin* (2004) has a sample chapter of the next, *Watch Your Back!* in which the regulars are still going strong and are decidedly in the world of today (cell phone cameras).

What claim has Westlake to being the inventor or anyway a pioneer of the comic crime caper, as is claimed in the blurbs? No more, I suspect, than Pratchett or Asprin invented the humorous fantasy. Before even *Unknown Worlds* and its writers there was Thorne Smith, and before him there was F. Anstey, to name no more than those. But one can see that before Asprin and Pratchett there were individual works, while now there is a whole sub-genre.

I wanna see the film of *The Hot Rock!* Helicopters may be a dime a dozen, but surely they didn’t omit the episode with the locomotive?

It also had Robert Redford as
Dortmunder, and is available on
DVD:
<http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0068718/>
— JTM

It is worth while considering the evolution of prose in fiction, especially in comic fiction. What have we got that earlier centuries did not have? What does modern prose owe to the cinema (and later, TV)? Terry Pratchett uses some confessedly cinematic tricks of scene-setting . . . I incline to think that the practice of opening a chapter or a scene with a line of dialogue is one of these things, though the less leisurely writers may have done it before there were talking or even silent films. Dorothy Sayers did it; I don’t have materials for a scholarly survey. And how about dialogue doing some of the work of exposition, as in radio drama? When Thursday Next, in *Something Rotten*, says “. . . and put the skull away,” that is our first glimpse of it.

A “Jeopardy” question: “A letter to Berlin in 1500 would be addressed to what country (3 words)?” The official answer was “Holy Roman Empire” but, no, I said, that’s like Philadelphia, U.S.A. It’s the Margraviate of Brandenburg.

I think my son will not forget that one.

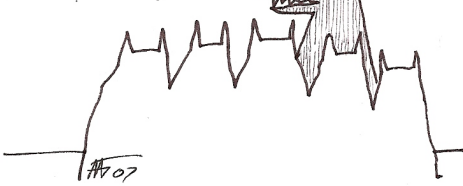
From: **Alexis A. Gilliland** January 14, 2007
4030 8th Street South, Arlington, VA
22204-1552 USA

Thank you for *Alexiad* #5.6, which arrived shortly before Christmas, and went unanswered, first because of the season, and then because Lee and I were somewhat distracted by taking a week to cruise the Hawaiian Islands on the “Pride of Aloha.” Mentally, I had composed a letter, but upon returning all of my salient points seem to have eluded me. A senior moment? Perhaps, but a five hour flight to LAX followed by a five hour flight to Honolulu Airport, and back again with a week on a cruise liner in

between will do that to one. However, we visited Pearl Harbor, going through the USS *Missouri*, and the USS *Bowfin*, a vintage submarine, docked beside a little memorial to the subs and submariners lost in the WW II, where I found my uncle, CPO Walter Cartmell listed; he went down with the USS *Argonaut* in 1943.

The career of the USS *Argonaut* (V-4; APS-1) is not without its points of interest:
<http://www.hazegray.org/danfs/submar/sm1.htm>

OKAY, NOW WHILE MAURICE HAS THE MOOSE TRYING TO GUESS WHICH SHELL THE PEA IS UNDER, THE REST OF YOU GUYS SNEAK UP AND BITE THE SUCKER!



Other highlights: Taking a boat ride to see the whales. We counted 18 breaching, a record says the captain, and we saw a new born baby humpback whale with its dorsal fin still floppy, and dolphins and sea turtles. A submarine — this one with a double row of picture windows — took us down to see lots of fishes and corals, but the water was somewhat murky, possibly due to pollution. A bus ride took us up to the huge — like 19 square miles — caldera on Mauna Loa, where we saw this gigantic extinct volcano, and there, tucked away in one corner, was Lake Halemaumau — which used to be a lake of lava until it froze over back in 1926 — a “mere” quarter of a mile across.

That evening, the ship delayed sailing so that we could see Kilauea, the active volcano on the south eastern side of the island (with a caldera of about two square miles) or more properly we could see Kilauea’s lava pouring into the sea from about 5 miles offshore. Multiple streams were active, including one that went drip, pause, drip, and the streams of lava glowed bright orange. Very impressive. We also got to walk through a lava tube — frozen on the outside, with the molten core drained out — which was about 5 or 6 yards in diameter and maybe three or four hundred yards long.

The ship’s food was excellent, but maybe overly available. Lee heard that the average passenger gains 1.5 pounds a day, and watching some of the people eat, I can believe it. Mainly we visited museums and cultural centers rather than going shopping, and the king’s cloak of yellow feathers from a now extinct bird was one of the highlights. I understand that cultural tourists, which is pretty much what we were, are about two percent of the total.

Think of it this way — you have to be careful on such cruises; the

sea air makes your clothes shrink.
 — JTM

What else? I see you used thirteen of my cartoons, so thirteen replacements are enclosed, and I’ll try to do better at letter hacking next time.

From: **Robert S. Kennedy** January 19, 2007
 1779 Ciprian Avenue, Camarillo, CA
 93010-2451 USA
robertk@cipcug.org

Thank you for Vol. 5, No. 6. Incredible to think that you have now completed five years of *Alexiad*. Where does the time go?

My delayed condolences on the loss of Elfling. Our pets can become so much a part of our family that their loss is just like losing a human member of our family.

I hope that all the readers of *Alexiad* will nominate and vote for the HUGO’S. So, here are suggestions for nominations that may sound familiar. Best Related Book: *Heinlein’s Children: The Juveniles* by Joseph T Major (Advent:Publishers, Inc, 2006). Best Fanzine: *Alexiad*. Best Fan Writer: Joseph T Major.

For the eighth time I was the only person in the movie theater. This time it was for *Déjà Vu*. Excellent concept and presentation. Normally, I would have given the movie a 5 on my scale of 1-5. However, I didn’t like it that the main character (hero) was an agent of the BATFE and the bad guy was a Timothy McVeigh clone. For these reasons I considered giving the movie a 3. But, I finally gave it a 3.5.

Having very much enjoyed the movie *Frequency* (2000), I rented it so as to watch it again. The character Gordo Hersch looked familiar. Then it dawned on me that he looked like the person who played Truman’s best friend, Marlon, in *The Truman Show* (1998). So, I looked both movies up at “imdb”. Yes, they were the same actor, Noah Emmerich.

When we saw a bit of *Frequency* at the MilPhilCon Hugo ceremony, it seemed so interesting we got the DVD. If it had come out forty years previously, it would have been a classic *Twilight Zone* episode. And it lost to a chopsocky flick called *Wo Hu Cang Long*. There’s no understanding the voters.

Noah Emmerich:

<http://www.imdb.com/name/nm0001187/>
Frequency:
<http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0186151/>

I taped and watched *The Lost Room* in December on the Sci-Fi Channel. It was six hours, but I was able to spin through the commercials so that somewhat reduced the viewing time. It was rather disappointing and the ending left a lot of things hanging. Overall a waste of my time.

LOSCON 33 over the Thanksgiving weekend was interesting as usual. I drove to the hotel near LAX about 3:00 p.m. on Thursday. The traffic was not bad going South to the hotel.

The Northbound traffic was bumper-to-bumper. Just the opposite was the case when returning home on Sunday. I checked into my room and returned to the lobby. Milt Stevens was there and we had a nice conversation. Then we went to dinner. I went to the following panels: Too Much Data, What’s So Appealing About Time Travel, Did Science Fiction Change The World — and Did Anyone Notice?, Two by Two, Hands of Blue (about *Firefly*), Cultures in Conflict, and Heroes (the series *Heroes*). At *LOSCON* I especially enjoy the Ice Cream Social and the Lux Radio Theater that follows. At the Ice Cream Social they had plenty of ice cream. First I had hot fudge on Chocolate chip. Then, I went back and got another chocolate chip. In the seat in front of me at the theater a woman had a dish with three scoops of ice cream. She then went back and got another three scoops. The Lux Radio Theater was *The Adventures of Rich Dechard: BLADE RUNNER*. The actors and actresses did an excellent job as usual. They obviously put a lot of work in to these presentations. They also had a presentation at L.A.con IV last year. They have a Website (www.luxtheater.com), but it doesn’t look like its been updated for some time.

The December 10, 2006, episode of *Numb3rs* (CBS) had one of the main characters on the space shuttle. When he was preparing to leave to go to the shuttle there was a cameo appearance by Buzz Aldrin. Neat! Now he has appeared on *24* as a major supporting character. We’ll have to see how long he remains missing form *Numb3rs*.

Some Golden Harbor by David Drake (2006) was obtained from Interlibrary Loan. #5 in The RCN (Daniel Leary) Series. I usually don’t care for series that go on this long. In this case Drake can continue the series for as long as he wishes.

On January 1st I watched the Rose Bowl Game. At the start the Referee referred to the Rose Bowl Parade. I screamed at my TV—“YOU STUPID IDIOT. THERE IS NO SUCH THING AS THE ROSE BOWL PARADE.” The parade is The Tournament of Roses, or you can call it the Rose Parade. The parade started well before there was a football game. Hopefully, someone has straightened out the Referee.

Joseph T Major: Excellent reviews of *Shattered Justice* (p. 12) and *While Europe Slept* (p. 14). I too recommend them highly.

Marty Helgesen: OK—instead of “None of the Above” on Oscar ballots, they should use the same system as is used for HUGO ballots and have a line for “No Award”. I add my recommendation to yours for *The True Stella* Awards and to *This Is True* newsletter available by e-mail.

Randy also has a blog:
<http://www.thisistrue.com/blog.html>

— JTM

From: **Sheryl Birkhead** January 19, 2007
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 20882-3422 USA
catsmeouch@yahoo.com

I don't have a lot to say about this. Remind readers that if you are eligible to nominate for the *Hugo* that, as it is a new year, start thinking about your nominations for *Nippon* — it will be interesting to see what the home town advantage does for the slate and, eventually, the winners!

I am familiar with the *Lakota Sioux* but not at all with the *Nokota*. I'll have to keep that breed in mind the next time I get online with some time to spare.

Watching a horse rack is an interesting experience — smooth and flat is supposed to be the action of the day.

I have been **very** good about following the dietary suggestions made by the cardiologist (and the omega diet he suggested), but after being good for so long, I had high hopes that someone would give me a nice big bag of Kisses — and I fully intended to eat them . . . all. One problem — I guess I was too good at telling people I was trying to follow a special diet . . . and no one gave me any chocolate. So, after all that, I didn't get to go crazy . . . and I still resent it! I know I cannot deal with relying on myself for portion control — so, unless I can come up with a tiny bag of Kisses . . . (sadly, they no longer carry the snack sized bag — and I am not sure if the smaller candy coated ones count . . .). Oh yeah, and since no coffee (but that's okay since I don't really care for the stuff), even the coffee dark kisses are off limits . . .

I did not realize *Target* had their own brand of candy — I rarely check out the candy there — but maybe I ought to look a bit more closely.

This is going to be very short — mainly because I want to whittle down the stack of zines I have sitting here — not an auspicious start to '07 if I can't even start out keeping up!



I have managed to not fall too far behind myself, but haven't got the energy to start many new locking relationships. Example: Chris Garcia and John Purcell.

— JTM

From: **Alex R. Slate** January 23, 2007
2555 NE Loop 410 #1602, San Antonio,
TX 78217-5677 USA
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Re crudzines — as far as the younger generation is concerned, no, they will not

tolerate crudzines (which is not to say that we old fogies won't tolerate crudzines).

Which means, as I feared, that the bar is set too high. But then, so many of the younger generation are bowling alone — cons are passing away for lack of organizers, clubs withering, and fanzines drawing from the same pool of contributors.

— JTM

Sorry about Elfing. Our family lost Peanuts when I was up in Ohio. Peanuts was the youngest of the cats. He was the only one of the feral kittens we kept from the litter that was there when we moved to the Lasater house. Don't know why he died. He just keeled over. He didn't take to the Ohio move at all. A new kitten has moved in. His name is Oreo (black and white) and boy is he a card and very affectionate. He actually seems to be able to get along with all the cats in the house at least part of the time. He loves to get into things and loves being carried around in a bag (any kind of bag).

Milt Stevens re the Arab refugees. The squalid camp thing was not only because of the PR for the world sympathy but also because the Middle East is also very tribal in thinking and these refugees were not of the right clan. I.E. they really didn't care. Anyone who thinks otherwise can look at the mess in Iraq as a prime example. They're killing each other more than they are killing coalition soldiers.

The adder joke? Ouch! But funny!

From: **Jeffrey Allan Boman** January 23, 2007
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QC H4V 2Y9 CANADA
croft@bigfoot.com

This is Jeff from Jericho (before the bomb fell) . . .

All my deadlines came together last issue: NaNoWriMo ended 12 hours before the December 1st deadline 2 zines ago. I couldn't read it all within those last few hours (it's suggested that anything that could distract you from your writing be avoided).

This year was more challenging for me. This year I actually have a day job, so I couldn't stay up late to write every day. I got passed the 50,000 word mark at 9:55 PM on the 28th though (yes, I'm anal retentive enough to clock it). I continued to write after that because I wanted to finish my story. My final novel count was 53,536.

I have a 300k+ novel under way but it's taken about two years to get thus far. I have had other calls on my time.

We had our largest turnout for launch this year, about 230 people. 213 of them stayed to the end, and over 60 of us made it to the finish. We had an over 30% success ratio 4 of us are now 4-time winners, 3 5-time, and 1 new Ace (3 kills. It's an aviator term that you may already

know).

I took up lulu.com's offer to make one copy of the book. One of the advantages of COMICOPIA is that I have a pool of artists to draw on to create the cover image.

Chris Baty (creator of NaNoWriMo) is launching a new competition this June, Script Frenzy. With me being a graduate of film school with no use of his skills in 17 years, this will be a good kick in the rear to actually use what I know. This may even lead to the embryo of a salable script.

I'll try to come back with a more substantial LOC in a few days. At least this is a start.

January 31, 2007

This is Jeff from Jonestown (don't drink the Kool Aid!) . . .

Before I begin, I have to mention a news report that you likely already mention earlier this zine: a few days ago as I write this, Barbaro was announced as euthanised, after 9 months of attempting to heal.

I'm not a fan of horse races, but the fact that a horse is so strong that it was tried to save him for so long after a tragic accident speaks volumes.

I'm giving Lloyd a run for his money on getting to my LOC late here. Let's see how far I can get:

Elfing was a beautiful kitty, based on that photo. My sympathies.

Concerning Trinlay's comment about name spellings: my original family name from Poland was Bojman, pronounced 'boyman'. My grandfather decided not to anglicize it, so he just removed a letter. / I never got to see any of Sherman or Kletch Park the two times I was in Milwaukee, unfortunately. Now you have me more curious to see them. / Two years ago I fractured my left knee, and neither of my cats stepped over it on my bed either.

Jason K. Burnett: Welcome to the world pf freelance writing!

Alex Slate: Another reason teens don't do zines (though I've found a surprising number who do. Perzines seem their thing): devoting that much time to any one thing can feel dull to them.

R. Laurraine Tutihasi: Ironically, one of the members of my APA COMICOPIA also hails from Arizona. Regardless of the lack of DST, I wouldn't move there. Nevermind the fact it's in a different country, I also understand the heat there in summertime can be intense. High heat and me don't go together well. / I liked *The Martian Chronicles* and *Fahrenheit 451*, but the rest of Bradbury's work just doesn't float my boat. His short stories in *The Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction* several years ago seemed too heavy on emotion for my tastes.

I'll have to stop here to make the cut. See you next issue, hopefully.

From: **John Hertz** January 22, 2007
236 S. Coronado Street No. 409, Los
Angeles, CA 90057-1456 USA

Rather than fuss whether teens do zines, I

think we should make friends where we find them. It does take a little looking.

I read the Laura Hildebrand book *Seabiscuit* but haven't seen the movie. You know horses, how does it look?

The movie was pretty good, mostly accurate. There was one minor inaccuracy; War Admiral wasn't any eighteen hands high. He wasn't even as tall as his legendary sire, Man o'War, who didn't even stand seventeen hands. The only warm blooded horse that stands that high that I know of is the Trakehner. As movies go that's a pretty small fault.

— LTM

From: **Sue Burke** January 28, 2007
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Massive police force prevented an armed neo-Nazi "hunt" of immigrants in a poor suburb of Madrid last night. It would have been a repeat of the riots there last weekend, and riots in a different neighborhood last summer, and elsewhere throughout Spain and Europe over the years: against Latin Americans, Muslims, black Africans, eastern Europeans, or Asians, sometimes in gangs a thousand strong terrorizing a neighborhood, sometimes a few "friends" attacking an unlucky individual.

I bring this up in response to the review of *While Europe Slept* in last month's issue. I believe the situation is more dire than Bruce Bawer seems to. Islamic immigrants are the tip of the iceberg, and the elite are not in a state of denial. They are actively covering up their malfeasance.

Immigrants are pouring into Europe from all over the world because it is rich and they are poor, but the Muslims have been there the longest, imported decades ago as cheap labor, especially in France and Germany. They were treated as second-class human beings and shoved into ghettos, sometimes as de facto discrimination but often de jure. In spite of that, they didn't go home when they were not longer needed or wanted, and now there are third-generation Muslim immigrants, still second-class human beings in the land where they were born, frustrated by their situation and returning hostility with hostility.

However, immigrants have kept coming from all over the third world, sometimes legally, "different" and therefore never equal since Europeans define "equality" as similarity. Immigrants work cheaply and under the table, taking risky or unpleasant jobs while living in slums or cardboard shantytowns under bridges. The prostitution industry would collapse without foreign girls — who often work as slaves for organized crime.

Politicians know this but do nothing, since to act would expose their complicity. They let the far-left wing engage in foolish acts of supposed multiculturalism knowing that it will keep

immigrants isolated. They let right-wingers fulminate against head scarves as sign that women are not equal to men in Islam, but they make sure no one asks why the daughter of an Islamic immigrant is not equal to the daughter of a native European — equality would give an unhappy Muslim girl an escape route into the larger society.

Meanwhile, homeless immigrants sleep on the street. A few — but it only takes a few — turn to crime, backed by globalized gangs, sometimes simply seeking easy money like the Latin Kings, sometimes with terrifying ideological bents, like Al Qaeda. Most immigrants are poor, and due to job discrimination, they remain poor. Culturally and politically, they are excluded and resentful. Even if Europeans wanted to assimilate them, they don't know how.

The only politicians listening to the fears — legitimate or xenophobic — of native-born Europeans are on the far right. Enough of them have just been elected to the European Union Parliament to constitute their own political party, led by Jean-Marie Le Pen of France and Alessandra Mussolini, granddaughter of *el Duce*, of Italy. They will give voice to tacit supporters of the neo-Nazis, skinheads, and other organized thugs who terrorize poor neighborhoods, orchestrate racist insults and riots at soccer games, occasionally beat people to death, and whose existence is denied by mainstream politicians. The new party's name is Identity, Sovereignty, and Tradition.

Nazis organized the Holocaust as a means to solve Europe's immigrant problem of the early 20th century: the Jews who were driven out of Russia by the pogroms and whom Europeans had no desire to assimilate. Though Nazis get the blame, they found collaborators everywhere.

Today, even with mainstream politicians in power, concentration camps for immigrants already exist in Europe. The Red Cross is particularly concerned about the ones in Malta and Libya (you can offshore anything), which they aren't allow to visit.

Bawer fears Islamist extremists, but I also fear European ultra-right extremists: two cancers feeding off each other, and if Europe falls deathly ill from those two plagues, the rest of the world will be in big trouble.

You would probably find David Pryce-Jones's *Betrayal of interest*, even though he is writing about France. Franco stuck to Primo de Rivera's policy about issuing Sephardic Jews Spanish passports, but then "Franco" and "Bahamonde" were known *converso* names and some people had their suspicions.

— JTM

From: **Milt Stevens** January 30, 2007
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In *Alexiad* V5#6, Joseph suggests that the original four *Lensman* novels be reprinted in

their original form but as one volume. That hasn't been done before. However, there was a special edition of the extended series published in the early fifties as a boxed set. It was titled *The Story of Civilization*, and if I am recalling correctly, it was a limited edition of 500. As far as I know, there are only two copies of the book in Los Angeles. Forry Ackerman has one and Roy Lavender has the other. I saw the one that belonged to Lavender some time in the seventies, but my memory of it isn't all that clear at this late date.

For a long time, the rights to E. E. Smith's works was controlled by his daughter Verna Trestrail. She died several years ago, and I don't know who may own the rights to his works now. When I was working on the program for L.A.con II in 1984 I was approached by a man who claimed to be in contact with Verna Trestrail about making a movie out of the *Lensman* Series. He contacted me only a month before the convention, and the program was already completed with no vacancies. He threatened to sue me if he wasn't put on the program. From the way the guy had been talking before that, I suspected he was a fraud. The threat of legal action made me sure of it. As you may notice, the fellow never did produce a movie from the *Lensman* Series.

Verna came to RiverCon a time or two, once in 1991 when Lois McMaster Bujold was Guest of Honor. The only movie she ever talked about, as I recall it, was the pirated anime "*Lensman*".

— JTM

After reading the review of the biography of Alfred William Lawson, I found myself thinking that the twenties and thirties were the boom time for secular cults. On second thought, I think that's probably incorrect. I can think of a fair number of secular cults all the way back into the 19th century. I can also think of others in later decades. I guess I regard such movements that existed in the past as harmlessly quaint. I think I seriously ignore such movements that exist at the moment and in the recent past. If I thought they could really make any difference, I suppose I should pay some attention to them. However, I don't really think they can make any difference, and paying any attention to them gives them more honor than they deserve.

I didn't know James Hogan supported either Velikovski or Holocaust Denial. On checking, I found I have only one of his novels in my collection, *The Genesis Machine*. I think it has something to do with exotic physics, but that's all I remember about it. With exotic physics, it seems the more unlikely the idea seems the more likely it is to be the accepted theory. That being said, it doesn't seem that reading *The Genesis Machine* encouraged me to buy any further James Hogan novels.

WAHF: **Lloyd Daub**

“How the Brigadier Met the English Colonel”, or: Flashman and the Frog
(Part Five)

It was the old Brigadier who was talking in the café.

Tavernier, have you some ouzo? I would wish a stronger drink this day, for the word from Greece, the homeland of our thoughts, is ill. You are a most noble heir of the Grecian legacy of thought, sir.

You must know, then, that after the liberation of our Empire in Africa, the arms of the Allies were about to be employed in the invasion of the mainland of Europe. It was vital that the enemy gain a false impression of where our troops would land, for then he would fortify and keep reserves elsewhere. As you will recall from the history, the landing was in the Island of Sicily, the most obvious and closest place; and thereby the one that must have the enemy's attention diverted from it at all costs.

It was decided in the high councils of our leaders and those of our allies that a diversion would be made in the direction of Greece. Those emissaries and agents who would be dispatched to the resistants there would have to be of the most brave and most wily, for they would have to encourage them yet disappoint them, knowing that their contribution to the liberation would be indirect.

It was a grave duty indeed, but a soldier must go where he is ordered, and so it was that I set out in the submarine of the English to be transported to the land of Greece. It was fortunate that I knew at least one of my companions on that fateful journey . . .

I hate it here on Hoth.

GADZIKOWSKI

I had somehow found myself on the staff of that arch-prig Montgomery, who neither smoked nor drank and I wondered about the paternity of his boy. My complaints of disgust turned out to be a little too loud, and before I knew it SOE had packed me off to set Greece ablaze.

Not that it was the only such mission going on at the time. You've probably heard of that do with the corpse. In spite of what the rabble-rousers would say, he was indeed a deader, understand. Any service that topped its own chaps for no good reason, or any at all, would find all the survivors dashing off to t'other side without so much as a by-your-leave. These days, they'd go to the Press too, but the Press was more loyal, or more stupid, in those days.

Admiring the Greeks went back to Byron and all that, gushing with enthusiasm over ancient Greek culture, but it looked to me like the bit of ancient Greek culture they admired the most had to do with boys. Not that I entirely blamed them, after seeing the Greek women. When I encountered something that was as tall as me, broader, and had a big thick mustache, I showed my finer qualities by politely but abruptly departing. Then on the way out I ran into her husband.

The Greeks were too busy tearing themselves apart with quarrels going back to the Turks, or maybe the Trojan War, to be of much help. Had I been listened to, which of course I wasn't, the Huns would have had the pleasure of sorting them out, which would have been an immense benefit to all sides.

That was bad enough, and being stuffed into a submarine was no better, but when I slid down the hatch and heard that familiar voice crying, “Alors, if it is not the good Commandant Flashman!” . . .

The ways of the submariner are not those of the soldier, and while were all indeed allied in one common cause, our relief was mutual when our boat — you must know that the men who go beneath the oceans style their vessels “boats”, no matter what the size — surfaced and we were transferred to an actual boat of the Greek resistance, what they call a “caïque”. Undetected by the German surveillance, we sailed to the Grecian mainland, where, surrounded by constant reminders of their noble history, a history that in some ways approaches that of France herself, I and Commandant Flashman set about our task . . .

— Not edited (or “edited”) by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle or George Macdonald Fraser

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