

ALEXIAD

(ΑΛΕΞΙΑΣ)

\$2.00

I will start the editorial by confessing that I am a thrift store and used bookstore junkie. I love wandering among the piles of sheer junk in search of unusual things. Today I elected to visit Book and Music Exchange on Bardstown Road. I didn't find the copy of *Pandora Principle* I have been seeking for Carolyn Clowes but I did find the British edition of the superb fantasy, *High House*, by James Stoddard. I would like to know how the completely British edition found its way to a used bookstore in Louisville Kentucky but am reasonably sure I'll never know. Did some passing Canadian trade it or was the book originally sold in some prestigious London bookstore?

Its lack of United States pricing caused confusion at the counter. Finally the manager decided it was a \$7.99 book and it would cost me four dollars to take it from the store. I paid the four dollars and secured my little mystery as well as a book titled *Grey Maiden*, which looked promising. It was a fairly successful expedition, even if I didn't find what I was looking for. The most successful expedition was finding a copy of *Magnificent Barb* in Windsor for a dollar. The Internet is useful but not nearly as much fun as the thrill of finding unexpected treasures. Even among us modern civilized humans there is nothing like the thrill of the hunt.

— Lisa

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The 133rd Running of the Kentucky Derby is **May 5, 2007**.The 132nd Running of the Preakness Stakes is **May 19, 2007**.The 138th Running of the Belmont Stakes is **June 9, 2007**.

Printed on March 23, 2009

Deadline is **June 1, 2007**

Reviewer's Notes

I suppose there's a penalty for being ahead of one's time. Take, for example, Mike Judge's stunning filmic indictment of the dumbing-down of society, "Idiocracy" [2006] (<http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0387808/>). A brutally savage satire of the rise of the stupid, where an ordinary man of today r00lz!

We all read it a long time ago, when it was called "The Marching Morons" (Cyril Kornbluth, *Galaxy*, April 1951).

Or that moving, Hugo-nominated story of the decline and rebirth of humanity, "Children of Men" (2006), where in a world where no children have been born for years, in declining ageing Britain, ruled by local overlords, a woman conceives. Based on P.D. James's [Baroness James of Holland Park] work where she stepped out of her genre, *The Children of Men* (1992).

We all read it a long time ago, when it was called *Greybeard* (Brian Aldiss, 1964).

The Sam Moskowitz method would have been to be all over this; but one can't copyright a basic concept. What one sees now, of course, is quite the opposite, that these ideas are said to be entirely new.

Ah, the pains of being an early adapter!

RANDOM JOTTINGS

by Joe



Diana Wynne Jones's *The Tough Guide to Fantasyland* has been reissued in a new "Revised and Updated Edition". (Firebird; ISBN 978-0-7394-8; 1998, 2006). If you want to find out what the **Management** is up to ^(OMT) this is the place.

I started reading *The Martian War* by "Gabriel Mesta" [Kevin J. Anderson] (Pocket Books; 2005; ISBN 0-7434-4639-9; \$23.00). Before long I got to a scene in which H. G. Wells tells his girlfriend Jane in 1894 that Henry Ford has started mass-producing automobiles (that's about ten years too soon). In a short time, he finds himself in a Most Secret research project with Dr. Moreau, Dr. Cavor [installing Cavorite on HM ships], Hawley Griffin the (sometimes) Invisible Man, Bensington and Redwood and their Food of the Gods . . . at which point I gave up reading. (I looked ahead and saw that Jane saved the day, of course.) Should some people be allowed access to libraries? I think I'll go reread *Sherlock Holmes's War of the Worlds*, which was witty. (Lisa got a copy at SH/ACD.)

The Heinlein Trust made a donation to the Heinlein Society, which in turn made a donation to the members: a copy of *Glory Road* (Tor, 1963, 2004, ISBN 0-765-31221-2; \$24.95) for each. (How I came to receive it I have no idea.) The book is beautifully ironic in that it is presented and developed as a work of pure adventure, and yet it has social

commentary, often biting, a subtle yet effective portrayal of Heinlein's personal views on morality and mores, and is truly novelistic in that the protagonist changes; he finds himself. Pretty good for a story about how the ordinary guy (except that being a Heinlein Individual, he's hardly "ordinary") wins the hand of a princess.

The only problem is the cover. The art director seems to have picked the first thing that came to hand. That ghastly brown! And there's no guy riding a horse or indeed any four-legged animal anywhere in the book.

This isn't a story about nothing. When you watch former "Seinfeld" star **Julia Louis-Dreyfus** (currently in "The New Adventures of Old Christine" on CBS, Monday 8:30) you might want to be aware that her father, **Gérard Louis-Dreyfus**, is a billionaire (Louis-Dreyfus Group), and that her grandfather, **Pierre Louis-Dreyfus**, is a hero (French Ordre de la Libération).

Julia Louis-Dreyfus
<http://www.imdb.com/name/nm0000506/>
 Gérard Louis-Dreyfus
<http://www.forbes.com/lists/2006/10/DDGH.html>
 Pierre Louis-Dreyfus
http://www.ordredelaliberation.fr/fr_compagnon/616.html
 [So it's in French already.]

The Gutenberg Project has finished its task of putting all the out-of-copyright works of H. Beam Piper on the Net. For example, *Space Viking*:

<http://www.gutenberg.org/etext/20728>

See also:
<http://members.iglou.com/jtmajor/Viking.htm>

Now they're going on to do Doc Smith. QX!

We note the death of **Sir George Patrick John Rushworth Jellicoe, Earl Jellicoe of Scapa**, KBE, DSO, MC, PC, FRS, LLD, FKC on **February 22, 2007**. Born **April 4, 1919** to the World War I naval commander Sir John Jellicoe (the first Earl), then Viscount Jellicoe of Scapa, and his wife, the former Florence Cayzer, Jellicoe succeeded to the title in 1935. He was commissioned into the Coldstream Guards and served with appalling and gallant

distinction during the Second World War, rising to the rank of Brigadier and commanding special forces in North Africa and Greece. He held various government posts during the Cold War, having at one point the unwittingly dubious honor of following Kim Philby in a post. He was the last pre-unification First Lord of the Admiralty.

Jellicoe was caught in a sex scandal in the seventies and forced to resign from government, but returned to prominence in the nineties, being given a life peerage (Lord Jellicoe of Southampton) in order to remain in the House. He was awarded a number of honors by foreign governments, particularly the Greeks, and was an Admiral in the Texas Navy. He was elected to the Royal Society in 1990 for his services to science. He was married twice and had eight children. He was succeeded in the title by his oldest son, Patrick.

Thomas C. Mapother IV (5' 7") will star in the forthcoming movie *Valkyrie* as Claus Philipp Maria Schenk Graf von Stauffenberg (196 cm). Come again? There's also a little matter of certain faith-based propaganda, seeing as the Stauffenbergs are still good Catholics and Mr. Mapother, well . . . I don't think it will be very historical to have Claus court Nina by jumping on a couch to declare his love.

OBITS

We regret to report the death of famous faned **Lee Hoffman** [Shirley Bell Hoffman] on **February 6, 2007**. Born in 1932, Lee made her mark on fandom with her publication of *Quandry* beginning in 1950, followed by her "outing" as a femmefan the year after, at Nolacon. She was in addition a pro, having written four SF novels and a number of short stories, including the *Again, Dangerous Visions* contribution "Soundless Evening", and seventeen western novels, one of which, *The Valdez Horses*, won awards and was adapted into a film. She was also editor of the Hugo-nominated *Science Fiction Five Yearly*, which had been published regularly (every five years, of course!) ever since 1951; the assistant editors have announced that Issue #12, published in December 2006, will be the last.

This has not been a good year, folks.

Earl Kemp reports the death of **Elly Bloch** [Eleanor Alexander Bloch], widow of Robert Bloch, on **March 7, 2007**. Earl says, "She was a wonderful light in the world, and the loss of her is being deeply felt."

MONARCHIST NEWS

Crown Prince Alexander of Serbia has stirred up controversy with his plan to move the remains of his father, **King Peter II of Yugoslavia**, to Serbia. The King, dying in exile after the Second World War, in Denver, had asked to be buried among freedom-loving people, in the St. Sava Serbian Orthodox Monastery in Chicago. Alexander wishes to see his father buried with the other Serbian and Yugoslav monarchs.

Check the Crown Prince's website:
<http://www.royalfamily.org>

Prince Charles Napoléon, the Bonapartist heir, is running for the National Assembly, specifically the seat that includes Fontainebleau. The Prince is descended from Jérôme Bonaparte, King of Westphalia and later Marshal of France.

Prince Louis-Alphonse de Bourbon (born **Principe Luis-Alfonso de Bórbon y Martínez-Bordiu**) and **Princess Maria-Margarita Vargas y Santaella de Bourbon** are the parents of a daughter, **Eugénie de Bourbon**, born **March 5, 2007** in Miami. The father is the Legitimist Bourbon pretender to the French throne, as "Louis XX", and is a great-grandson of General Francisco Franco, who is still dead.

Alexander Patrick George Windsor, styled Earl of Ulster, and **Claire Alexandra Booth Windsor, styled Countess of Ulster**, are the parents of a son, **Alexander "Xan" Richard Anders Windsor, styled Lord Culloden**, born **March 12, 2007**. The boy is twentieth in line of succession to the British throne.

Oh, and the **Queen** will be here for the Derby.

LOOK AT ME, MA!

Commentary by Joseph T Major

We are the Pilgrims, master; we shall go
Always a little further; it may be
Beyond that last blue mountain barred
with snow . . .

— “The Golden Road to Samarkand”, James
Elroy Flecker

When I was young I read things like Maurice Herzog’s *Annapurna* (1952) or Sir John Hunt’s *The Conquest of Everest* (1954) [later Lord Hunt, KG, but these things happen], or Ralph Barker’s *The Last Blue Mountain* (1959), about climbing to the top of the world. There were such astounding ideas out there. The area wasn’t quite a blank space, for people lived there, but so much was not known. Herzog commented disparagingly that the maps he had of the Annapurna area were quite wrong.

Beyond that there were the rumors. Was there a mountain higher than Everest, thirty thousand feet high, in the inlands of Tibet? A pilot had seen it, flown by it.

There were strange and unbelievable animals to be found. That was the land of the Yeti, the creature that was like a man and not like a man, some ancestor, or relative, of humanity hiding in the mountain fastnesses. Even the known creatures were interesting, exotic, strange, *different*.

The people were something else. There were religious places a thousand years untouched, entire communities dedicated to saying one prayer over and over again, or counting the nine billion names of God, and behind them a nation of those dedicated to doing what they could with what they had.

Getting there was not your easy gentle ride to the resort. There were long marches, going up and down and up and down, gradually hardening your body to the utmost for the great test. This was an experience on the boundary between religion and exercise.

The climbing itself was the ultimate test. The actual physical act of raising oneself on the slopes was difficult enough, but there were also the challenges of the extreme cold, the extreme ice, the tiny remnant of usable air. Even as you lived you were dying, it was a form of dying that made life more valuable, more vivid.

Then . . . once the top was reached . . . what could be seen would take away what little breath there was.

They were pushing back the envelope in their own way. In the nineteenth century,

British surveyors in India pointed theodolites at far-distant peaks over the border of veiled Nepal and closed Thibet to look at those mysterious massifs. It’s probably just as well that that chief surveyor had an euphonious name, when Radhanath Sikdar concluded that Peak XV was the highest mountain in the world, and his boss Andrew Waugh figured it should be named after the former boss. Sir George Everest had been Surveyor-General of India from 1830 to 1843. Waugh thought it didn’t have a native name. Imagine it being called “Mount Bloggs”.

The men who actually went and saw were honored at the time, and respected now, but in between they fell into obscurity. Kim O’Hara was a signal rarity in his ancestry; the man who would go and see what there really was in Thibet would be the man to whom the society was natural, one of which he was a natural part, even though he used the technology and methodologies of a different civilization. In his many incursions into the history of the place, Peter Hopkirk has played a part in restoring the image of the pundits. See particularly *Trespassers on the Roof of the World* (1982) for this. There’s a science fictional theme in that somewhere.

What are these mighty mountains? They are in an area in Central Asia that contains all the fourteen peaks over eight thousand meters in height, and indeed, is part of the somewhat more expansive region that contains the hundred and nine tallest mountains in the world. It’s all plate tectonics, too; the Indian plate is colliding with the Eurasian Plate, and instead of going down (as with say the North American and Pacific plates, thus the San Francisco quake and Mt. St. Helens, or the Eurasian and Australian plates, hence Krakatoa and the Sumatran quake) the collision area goes up.

There are people who put themselves out. Only thirteen men have climbed the fourteen highest mountains in the world, and not surprisingly the first was Reinhold Messner, beginning in 1970 on Nanga Parbat and ending in 1986 on Lhotse, who moreover did them all without additional oxygen.

The Fourteen 8000-Meter Peaks

Name	Height (m)	First ascent
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Everest [Chomolungma]	8,848	1953
K2	8,611	1954
Kanchenjunga	8,586	1955
Lhotse	8,516	1956
Makalu	8,485	1954
Cho Oyu	8,188	1954
Dhaulagiri	8,167	1960
Mansalu	8,163	1956
Nanga Parbat	8,125	1953
Annapurna I	8,091	1950
Gasherbrum I	8,080	1958
Broad Peak	8,051	1957
Gasherbrum II	8,034	1956
Shishapangma	8,027	1964

E. R. Eddison seems to have been impressed with the sight of Nanga Parbat. The nameless narrator of the beginning of the Zimiamvian Trilogy quotes his boss and hero Edward Lessingham, the Earthly avatar of Mezentius, the Zimiamvian avatar of the God:

. . . I remember, years later, his describing to me the effect of the sudden view you get of Nanga Parbat from one of those Kashmir valleys; you have been riding for hours among quiet richly wooded scenery, winding up along the side of some kind of gorge, with nothing very big to look at, just lush, leafy, pussy-cat country of steep hillsides and waterfalls; then suddenly you come round a corner where the view opens up the valley, and you are almost struck senseless by the blinding splendour of that vast face of ice-hung precipices and soaring ridges, sixteen thousand feet from top to toe, filling a whole quarter of the heavens at a distance of, I suppose, only a dozen miles.

— *Mistress of Mistresses*, Chapter One, E. R. Eddison

There was something majestic and wondrous about even their names; you were struck senseless by their blinding splendor. The lesser peaks had their wonder too; one heard or read of Haramosh or Ama Dablam, Nanda Devi or Masherbrum and some feeling that was more than natural, dreadful and beautiful, pervaded one’s mind. It was a world above and beyond the mundane.

Nowadays the mystery has been blown away. It was inevitable that it would abate, of course; the surveyors who plotted the height of Peak XV made it possible for Mallory & Irvine actually trying to go up the ridges, they in turn led on Hillary & Tenzing making it to the top. Knowledge was going to expand because people wanted to see what was there, they gained the experience and built on the fortunes and misfortunes of their predecessors, and they had the technology.

Technology has advanced also. The Gore-Tex clothing his discoverers wore was certainly more conducive to survival than the Burberry jacket found on George Mallory’s body. Peter Hillary telephoned his father from the top of Everest; one of the climbers who died in the *Into Thin Air* [by Jon Krakauer, 1996, 1997] disaster called his wife and said goodbye.

Everything has a price. Now everyone wants to go and those who are willing to provide a service have found a living. The guides have a mountain, the tourists have money. They can come together.

Even if the result has been “stunts” — a double amputee climbing Mount Everest, a blind man climbing Mount Everest, and so on, all with live Internet coverage and subsequent documentaries, along with fame in their own social groups. What had been the product of immense, sustained, combined effort of teamwork culminating in an individual test of the ultimate in one’s self has now become a trophy won while bowling alone.

And Shangri-La now has a Starbucks, a Seven-Eleven, another Starbucks, a Hilton with wireless internet access and seven pay-TV channels including three that aren’t even porn, yet another Starbucks, four competing chains of sports gear stores, still another Starbucks, a video-game shop, a locally-owned coffee shop with fair-trade brew and stir sticks made from sustainable-growth tree species, and a recreationist village where tourists can see the lamas from nine to five every day.

. . . And there is not now upon Earth any place abiding where the memory of a time without evil is preserved. For Ilúvatar cast back the Great Seas west

of Middle-earth, and the Empty Lands east of it, and new lands and new seas were made; and the world was diminished, for Valinor and Eressëa were taken from it into the realm of hidden things.

... And tales and rumours arose along the shores of the sea concerning mariners and men forlorn upon the water who, by some fate or grace or favour of the Valar, had entered in upon the Straight Way and had seen the face of the world sink beneath them, and so had come to the lamplit quays of Avallónë, or verily to the last beaches on the margin of Aman, and there had looked upon the White Mountains, dreadful and beautiful, before they died.

— Akallabêth: The Downfall of Númenor

(That “mountain higher than Everest”? It was Amne Machin, in Ch’ing-hai [Qinghai], north of Tibet, and it was only 20,610 feet (6282m), first climbed in 1981. The guy’s altimeter wasn’t working, I guess.

(The Nepalese government has officially labeled Mount Everest “Sagarmatha”. Shishapangma is also known as “Gosainthan”.)

FOG MAGIC

by Julia Sauer

Commentary by Lisa Major

The book opens by telling us that Greta loves fog. Her mother does not share her daughter’s enthusiasm for the fog. An older neighbor suggests “mooring her to the apple tree.”

... Greta was ten when she began to sense that she was looking for something within the fog. Until then it had only given her a happy feeling . . . But from the day she had gone alone to find Old Rosie, the cow, nothing had been the same. The village of Little Valley lay on a narrow neck of land between two giant arms of the sea. Like a lazy giant, North Mountain lay sprawled the full length of the peninsula until, at the very end, it sat up in a startled precipice at the sight of the open sea. . . At the foot of the mountain and following the line of its base ran the highway. . . But there was another road — a road less direct — filled with convenient curves — the Old Post Road. . . This Old Post Road was a joy to Greta. A part of it ran through her

father’s land. Even though it had fallen so low as to serve as a mere lane to the pastures, there was something grand and romantic about it still. . . Greta knew every stone, every curve of it for miles. . . This was the road her forefathers had traveled. Surely, she thought, it must lead somewhere worth going.

On the day she goes to look for the cow she hears the Tollerton foghorn blowing “and she knew fog was on the way.” A boy offers to escort her but she refuses. She finds the cow and starts her way home.

... It was just as they turned out of the path to the cove and into the Old Road that Greta happened to look to the south. . . She caught her breath and stared. . . Surely there was the outline of a building. . . Greta’s heart almost stopped beating, but she had no silly feeling of fear. Fog had always seemed to her like the magic spell in the old fairy tales — a spell that caught you up and kept you as safe, once you were inside it, as you would have been inside a soap bubble. But this was stranger than anything she had ever seen before. Here was a house — a house where no house stood!

She has to force herself to take the cow home. She finds her father milking and asks about a house where she had seen the house.

Her father never stirred on the milking stool, but he dropped his hands quietly on his knees. The barn was very still for a moment.

“There’s an old cellar hole off there, Greta,” he said at last. “There’s been no house upon it in my day.” His voice was as calm and slow as ever. And then he added something very strange. “Every cellar hole should have a house,” he added quietly.

Finally one Saturday morning is a very foggy day. Greta gets her chores done in record time. Her mother is reluctant to give permission. Greta tries to explain.

“You — you know the way a spider web looks on foggy days. Strings and strings of the tiniest pearls, all in a lovely pattern. Well, everything is different, too, when — when once

you’re inside.” she finished stumbingly.

“Inside what?” asked Gertrude sharply. “Inside what, I’d like to know?”

“Oh, just inside the fog.” Greta told her. It was no use. She could never get it into words. No one else could see how the fog always seemed to her like a magic wall. You stepped through and walked until your own familiar house was gone. And then, sometime, something strange and wonderful would happen. She was sure of it.

Greta leaves her house and goes out into the fog. Again she sees the mystery house.

For a moment she was tempted to push closer — to explore. Something held her back — and she was always glad that it had. Because the dim shadow of a house there at the fork became, through all the strange months that followed, a sort of magic beacon.

An old man greets her. She returns his greeting and goes on. Some time later “she hears the sound of trotting horses! . . . They were coming towards her!” Their driver, a very well-dressed woman stops and picks Greta up. The sound of the silk swishing brings to mind stories she heard an older man tell about a rich village named Blue Cove. In conversation with the woman the subject of the Tollerton foghorn comes up and Greta realizes she can’t hear it. The woman is taking her to Blue Cove.

They reach Blue Cove and the woman sends her to a girl named Retha Morrill. She encounters a large gray cat which leads her to Retha Morrill. She and Retha are instant friends. Retha’s mother appears “and looked long at her visitor. And Greta looked up at her. She had never seen such blue eyes in all her life before — nor such seeing eyes. They were eyes that would always see through and beyond — even through the close mist of the fog itself.”

Mrs. Morrill instantly recognizes Greta as being from across the mountain and knows which family she belongs to. “Greta . . . knew somehow that she and this strange woman would understand each other without words. In just the flash of a moment they had traveled the longest road in the world — the road that leads from eye to eye.” Mrs. Morrill tells Greta, “It’s the things you were born to that give you satisfaction in the world. . . Not happiness, mind! Satisfaction isn’t always happiness . . .

then again, it isn’t sorrow either. But the rocks and spruces and the fogs of your own land are things that nourish you. You can always have them no matter what else you find or what else you lose. . .”

Retha shows Greta over Blue Cove. They encounter a legless man named Anthony with an air of great mystery to him but Retha refuses to talk about him without her mother’s permission. The fog begins to lift and Greta must leave. Mrs. Morrill gives her a piece of strawberry pie but it vanishes from her pail on the way home. It is weeks before it fogs again and Greta can see her friend Retha again. On the day she returns the people of Blue Cove are salvaging a wrecked ship. The Morrills get some blankets and silverware.

On her next visit Greta sees a girl named Ann who is falsely accused of theft.

On her third visit Greta meets Ardis Stanton, a widow whose land is being claimed following her husband’s death at sea. She plans “to walk to Halifax to get justice.” She refuses the offer of money for a coach. She intends appealing to the Duke of Kent.

Summer ends and school takes up much of Greta’s time. She never quite forgets Blue Cove.

“Most of us live in two worlds—our real world and the one we build or spin for ourselves out of the books we read, the heroes we admire, the things we hope to do.”

On Greta’s fourth visit an exotic, piratical looking sailor is brought to see if he speaks the same language as Anthony, the mysterious legless sailor. He doesn’t and it is spring before Greta can again return to Blue Cove.

Mrs. Morrill notices Greta is growing up and asks when she will be twelve. The way she asks bothers Greta. Mrs. Morrill counters.

“Don’t you want to be twelve?”

“I don’t know.” Greta said honestly. “I always think of my birthday as a flight of stairs. . . Up to twelve it’s been fun to look up. But after twelve — the stairs turn. I can’t see around the bend.”

“I know,” Mrs. Morrill said. “Not now, you can’t. But when you get to that twelfth step you *will* be able to ‘see around the bend,’ as you put it. Seeing ahead, or looking ahead — is something we do with our hearts — it takes nothing but time and courage. The one is given to us; the other we must provide.”

Mrs. Morrill then promises Greta a kitten and sends her to find Retha. Greta finds Retha

down at the beach. A big ship has anchored offshore. She proves to be a ship whose captain died of fever and whose wife insisted on bringing his body home for burial. Greta sees the captain buried on her next visit and on the visit after that the return of Ardis Stanton from her walk to Halifax.

Greta's twelfth birthday arrives and on that day fog comes in very late. Greta hurries to Blue Cove. Mrs. Morrill is dismayed to learn of the important twelfth birthday and goes to get a present for her. "Greta stood in the middle of the kitchen drinking in its warmth, its friendliness." She looks over the familiar things. Mrs. Morrill returns with a kitten. Mrs. Morrill hugs her, wishes her safe passage and sends her home with her kitten. She finds her father waiting for her. She asks if the kitten will keep. He shows her a knife given him at Blue Cove on his twelfth birthday. There is a silence and eventually her father resumes talking.

"I think you'll keep your kitten," he said at last very slowly. "On your twelfth birthday, Greta, you grow up, and you put away childish things. Sometimes you'll wish you hadn't because you put behind you so many things — happy and unhappy. But the next twelve years can be happier still, my girl, and the twelve after that. And try to remember this — none of the things you think you've lost on the way are *really* lost. Every one of them is folded around you — close."

"Then tomorrow there'll *only* be cellar holes — and always, from now on?" she asked slowly. Her father seemed to understand. "Cellar holes, yes. But cellar holes and spruce thickets, and rocks piled high. Old Fundy beating on the shore, clouds blowing overhead, and the gulls mewing. The grandest spot of land on the continent — and your homeland. And back here on this side of mountain there'll be a gray wisp of fur waiting to purr for you. This kitten should bring you a line of kittens that'll last as long as my knife," he ended . . .

"I'll call her Wisp," she said happily. . . And, Father, your knife and my kitten — it's fun, isn't it, to have them and to *know*?"

. . . "Yes, it's fun, Greta, and all that lies ahead can be fun, too — the growing and the living."

"I'm glad I'm twelve and growing

up," Greta thought, "no matter what I have to give up. But I'm going back over the mountain. All my life I'm going back to Blue Cove. I'll take Wisp and *her* kittens, and *their* kittens forever and forever. And I'll let them play in the cellar holes and nap on the stone doorsteps of Blue Cove."

She slipped her arm through her father's. With the kitten held close, they walked down the Old Road through the fog toward the lights of Little Valley and the years ahead.

FACIAM UT ANIMUS MEUS SCRUTETUR — PARS IV

Review by Joseph T Major of
ROME

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

BILIS IN POPINA

Summam coquo laudem tribuo — imperium venefico ingeniosissimo privatum est cum ille scholam coquinariam obire statuit.

Benigne, secundam mensam non requiro, nisi antidotum continet.

— *Lingua Latina Extrema* (AUC MMDCCLVIII), Henricus Barbatus scripsit, Pagina LXXXIV

RESTAURANT 'TUDE

My compliments to the chef — the empire lost a truly inspired poisoner when he decided to go to cooking school.

No dessert, thanks, unless it contains the antidote.

— *X-Treme Latin* (2004), Henry Beard, Page 84

When last we left our gallant band, Atia (Polly Walker) was about to be served some poison, while her son's sometime servitor Titus Pullo (Ray Stevenson) had learned that his children of his "brother" Lucius Vorenius (Kevin McKidd) were alive, but that Vorenius himself was off with Mark Antony (James Purefoy). And now on with the show.

Season II, Episode Four: "Testudo et Lepus"

Pridie Nonas Februarius
(February 4)

"The Tortoise and the Hare"

However, the serving-maid thought the soup smelled wonderful, and tasted it before serving. And when she put it before Atia, the

mistress, complaining of the lack of musicians (she must really be put out over Gabrielle having been crucified) asks her to sing. The poor woman dies for her music, or during it anyhow.

We now learn the ancestry of Alan Dershowitz, as Timon (Lee Boardman) sets to torturing Servilia's spy to get a confession out of him. Eventually he sings (he is, after all, a faygeleh), whereupon Atia orders him killed. Octavia (Kerry Condon) and her friend show up in the middle of all this, and the friend shows herself not a true Roman. Timon dumps the corpse into the sewers (must also be an ancestor of Bugs Moran) and goes home, to have an argument with his brother over working for Gentiles.

Pullo reaches the battlefield of Mutina, where Hirtius, Pansa, and Caesar Octavianus have fought the rebel Antony, as has just pointed out by the Newsreader (Ian McNeice). He starts wandering around the stricken field, looking for Vorenius, but gets interrupted by an old acquaintance.

Evidently Antony beat up Octavian (Simon Woods) so hard that he looks different, but he returned the favor at Mutina. One good turn deserves another and Pullo gets leave to go north and find Vorenius.

Octavian then retires to his tent to meet with his friends Agrippa (Allen Leech) and Maecenas (Alex Wyndham). They note the unfortunate demises of Hirtius and Pansa (sic semper sharecropping writers) and conclude that it's a good idea to tell the army that they are going to be paid and go to Rome.

Vorenius has survived the battle. When Pullo catches up with him, the news gives him a reason to live. They report to Mark Antony, who is planning things while Posca (Nicholas Woodeson) demurs. At least Vorenius is *asking* for leave, instead of *taking* Gallic leave. They head south, while Antony's remnants head for the hills.

Servilia (Lindsay Duncan) is praying to Juno when some people who aren't particularly impressed by Juno interrupt her prayers. Timon and some of the chaverim take her to consult with Atia, who reminds Servilia of that little session back on the Ides of March, the one about slow death, arguing that it's a good idea, just needing to be applied to the right person. She has Timon start in flogging Servilia and the other ones rape her. Then they really get down to hurting her. Finally Timon says enough already. It must have gotten to Atia (perhaps his manhandling her did something) for we see a bloody and beaten Servilia staggering home again. This time at

least she didn't get a haircut.

Out in Asia (Anatolia, that is, or Turkey to us), Brutus (Tobias Menzies) and Cassius (Guy Henry) are mobilizing the troops and raising funds for the big confrontation to come. One should be reminded that communication was not instantaneous and they have no idea of what all is going on in Italia.

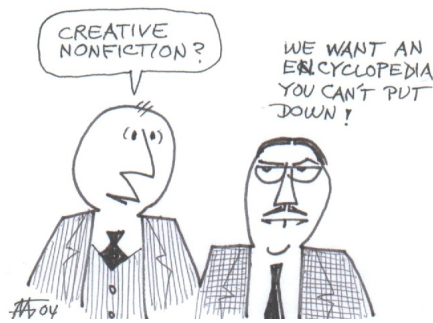
For example, Pullo has been trying to keep Vorenius from going over the edge. He admits that he did kill Evander, the father of Niobe's son, and agrees that Vorenius has the right to kill the boy. However, arriving at the slave compound is enough to drive anyone over the edge. Pullo knows from slave compounds. (As you will recall from last season, Pullo was born a slave and got into the legions somehow.) Remember in "Blazing Saddles" where the worker faints with heat exhaustion and Lyle (Burton Gilliam) fines him a day's pay for lying down on the job? Lyle and his boss Taggart (Slim Pickens) would fit in there just fine. "Equi? Parum dives perdere equas sumus! Lega parem servorum Nubiarum!" ["Horses? We can't afford to lose no horses! Send over a couple o' [Nubian servants]!"] The two crucified slaves they pass are at least out of it for good.

The supervisor is amenable to helping these two agents of Caesar Octavianus, as Pullo talks while Vorenius glowers in the background. He takes them to Vorena *minor* (Anna Fausta Primiano) and Lucius, who are doing kitchen work. (If Kevin McKidd doesn't get an Emmy for the agonizing play of emotions over Vorenius's contradictory feelings towards little Lucius, all done silently, the Gods have deserted us.) Now they have to find Vorena *maior*, who has rather a different assignment. . .

Agrippa has a couple of messages to deliver. One is to Octavia. He delivers it, in a boyish sort of way while trying to get it on with Octavia. She says that any friend of her brother's is a brother (and you remember that last season they were very pharonic). Then he has to repeat himself to a confused Atia. After leaving there, he finds Cicero (David Bamber) in the Senate House, and delivering his message gets some Ciceronian cynicism about young men always saving the *res publica* from the Gods know what.

Vorena *maior* (Coral Amiga) was performing a public service for the slave bosses. Pullo isn't so hot on visiting lupanars any more now that he's married and particularly when it's Vorenius's daughter who is the unwilling public girl. On their way out the supervisor comes out from behind the

curtain over the hallway to the women's cells ahead of them and falls down dead, with Pullo's pugio (dagger) in him; Vorenus takes his children (even the boy) and they leave.



Season II, Episode Five: "Heroes of the Republic"

a.d. III Idus Febrarius
(February 11)

An episode showing how fleeting fame can be. We begin with Timon and Levi at shul, cut to Antony hunting in the woods of Gaul (not afraid of Asterix, I take it), and end up near Rome again, where the victorious Octavian is negotiating with his summoner and patron Cicero (did you know, by the way, that Octavian was born during Cicero's consulate?) over his return to Rome. Octavian wants a triumph, but there are some legal issues, so he settles for the consulship. At the age of XIX. Quite the accomplishment, and as we see Cicero and his secretary Tyro leaving, the great orator opines that it will be a good thing to have a consul he can work like a puppet.

Vorenus and Pullo are bringing the children home. However, the two Vorenas aren't too enthusiastic about staying with this wild and crazy guy, and the only thing that keeps them from jumping out the back is that they haven't any money. They get stopped at a roadblock set up by Octavian's troops. This might cause trouble, Vorenus being Antony's man.

Atia argues with her daughter again over who goes to see whom first. Unable to get Mater to move, Octavia goes to see her brother and that cute guy Agrippa . . . er, her brother. She proceeds to lie like an expert politician.

And so the Consul suffect C. Iulius Caesar Octavianus, chosen to fill the term of the late Hirtius and/or Pansa, takes his seat before the Senate, welcomed by Cicero. He makes his maiden speech, which is a tribute to his late adoptive father, ending with a proposal to declare Brutus and Cassius enemies of Rome.

In case anyone wants to object, a couple of centurions come in to point out that the army liked Caesar too.

A while later, in a now deserted Senate house, Cicero dictates another letter to Tyro, urging that someone come save the *res publica*. He already has a form letter, it's just a matter of changing the addressee.

Maecenas is having a party, and does he ever party hearty. The Romans knew how to party, as the number of naked dancing girls indicates ("I have invited Lancea Armorica and Hiltonia Parisia . . ."). However, Agrippa is a spoilsport, and after pointing out that the Boss has just come out against this sort of thing, leaves. Not without taking along Octavia, who has been toking just a little too much.

Atia is horrified. She knows from public relations and this is not the right time for a blowout. At least Octavia isn't shaving her head or getting tattooed with a picture of a gigantic Helvetian or "CICERO VRSOS MORTVOS FELLAT".

Vorenus brings the family home, speaks honestly about their misfortunes, and says "these are my children." (That's right, he acknowledges little Lucius, even though he admits his background.) Then he goes upstairs and picks up his copy of *Computer* by M. Puzus to read about the Corleonii, so he'll know what to do.

We see the bearded Mark Antony meeting with the Senate's man Marcus Lepidus. Lepidus has a little problem; he was sent north with an army to take care of Antony but the troops deserted to Antony. Very embarrassing. Antony has the courtesy to offer Lepidus the position of number two, seeing as he did bring reinforcements (even though he didn't *mean* to).

Down and dirty in the wilds of Rome, Don Lucius then holds a meeting with the other compatri, to divide up the territory. This is the sort of event which used to be the lead-in to Corleoni Michaelus having all his enemies assassinated. Things went more slowly in those days. Besides, Vorenus figures that they'll chew up each other while he can recover.

At home, all is not well, either. Vorena *minor* is stealing money for their escape. Unaware of their disaffection, Vorenus acts very much the good father, offering a trip to the country, fixing young Lucius's toy elephant (he's actually seen the elephant), and so on. Noting this, Gaia (Zuleikha Robinson), the forthright madam, finally gets into bed with Vorenus, but he still can't take it that she wants him for himself, not as part of the job. And

when she does take the cash, there's less than he thought there was.

The kids finally make their break for it, running to the temple where Aunt Lyde (Esther Hall), Niobe's sister, is now working. She points out that their employment prospects are rather constrained, and the best thing to do is to go home and live with Pater, bad as he is. They have the sense to do so.

Brutus and Cassius are on top of the world; they have a letter from Cicero, and Brutus got one from Servilia as well. It's time to get on the move, and they march the troops into Greece over the Hellespont. They should have remembered what happened to the last guy who marched troops into Greece over the Hellespont. (Hint: his name was Khashayarsha, or in a form Westerners can pronounce, "Xerxes".)

The assassins have an army of twenty legions. Octavian has only four. Where to get more?

Atia arrives at the camp of Antony and Lepidus (riding an Arabian horse, Lisa noted), but she isn't going to be spending the night with Lepidus, now. After a quite vigorous renewal of their old relationship, Antony expresses concern. She shouldn't have come there alone. Well she didn't, she brought family.

And so, under a bright Italian sun, Antony and Octavian reconcile.

The future does not look good for the Senate or for the assassins.

Meanwhile, Vorenus has Pullo & Eirene to dinner, and they're all planning to go out on a picnic in the country. They all agree to stick together. I didn't know that Vorena *maior* was in Skull & Bones. Did they let women in then? (She's making a "devil's horns" behind her back; it's the S&B sign but it's also an ancient Roman curse-sign.)

(Lepidus was on Antony's side from the beginning, and in the bizarre intermarryings of Roman political alignment, was married to one of Brutus's sisters. Another was married to Cassius.)

Season II, Episode Six: "Philippi"

a.d. XII Kalendis Martis
(February 18)

Ant. These many then shall die, their names are prick'd.

— *Julius Caesar*, Act IV, Scene i, Line 1

This sounds so ever more refined than, "Eh, don Lucio, you have your made man Tito go whack Big-Mouth Tully," but it's the same

thing after all. We are finally getting into the scene that comes near the end of all the *Godfather* movies, where Michael has all his enemies murdered.

Antony and Octavian (with Lepidus sitting on the sidelines) are deciding who is going to be killed. They need a lot of money, see. Vorenus gets to play the chief of the killers, assigning his caporegimes to whack various people. This provokes some dissent among them, "He got six rich Senators to kill and I only got two. That's unfair!" One guy meanwhile is reserved for Pullo.

And so the Vorenus and Pullo families go for a day in the country. Not before Gaia has made a very unseemly pass at Pullo. This doesn't bother him that much as he goes off to visit Cicero's villa.

At least the old toady is resolved to die like a proper Roman. He scrawls a hasty letter to Brutus and Cassius telling them that Antony and Octavian have joined forces, something they don't know, and sends it off. Then he waits for Pullo. Who politely asks if he can have some peaches, gently tells Tyro the secretary to put down that machete he's brandishing before he gets someone hurt (when Stephen Saylor gets this far, no doubt he will recount how Gordianus the Finder was utterly devastated by his failure to defend his patron), and patiently lectures his victim on the most convenient way to get offed before putting theory into action.

Back at the picnic, a rider riding like the Kindly Ones (i.e., the Furies) are after him nearly runs down little Lucius. Vorenus teaches him a lesson, and preferring the Furies, the guy rides off. Then Lyde opens up this scroll case and lets Lucius play with the piece of papyrus from it . . . Pullo comes back, hands out these peaches he's picked, and says that all went well.

That night, we see Pullo finishing the job by nailing Cicero's hands to the Senate door.

Timon and Levi are at a meeting where the question of raising money to send to Herod (yes, that Herod) comes up. Arguments among the temple's (not the Temple) finance committee are always fun. It seems that Timon's Jewish name is "Teyve". [Atia: "Timon, how is your family doing?" Timon: "Oy, such tsouris I have, one daughter's going to marry a Gentile, another is going into exile with her husband, and the third is going to Atlantis. Do you know anyone who can play a lyre? We need someone on the roof." Atia: "No, not since Gabrielle was executed . . ." Tradition! Tradition!]

The triumvirs are setting things in order

before their little trip to Greece. Agrippa is trying to get some things resolved too, including how he feels about Octavia, and vice versa. This finally gets somewhere and what else did you expect? It almost makes him late for their departure for Greece. Atia has a great line here, “I didn’t until now.”

Then Octavia’s friend Jocasta comes in babbling that all her family has been killed. (Octavian had added them to the list.) Atia smiles and says yes of course she’s safe here.

Pullo is looking over his old gear and thinking how if he signed up again he could become a *primus pilus* [“first spear”] but decides against it when Eirene tells him she’s pregnant, or pregnant. She mentions something about her past — which has been a bit of a mystery ever since we met her, getting picked up to give the guys with the treasury cart a little bit of fun to go with all their money (Season I, Episode Four “Stealing from Saturn”). He does still have the problem that he only does well in fighting and doesn’t know what to do with himself in peacetime.

Vorenius meanwhile is dealing with a problem regarding his daughter. Due to her unseemly life in the slave pen, she isn’t good enough for any man who’s good enough for her. Not to mention that she’s been painting herself, with the help of Gaia. Gaia even sets her up with a man. There’s something suspicious here. (Perhaps Gaia wasn’t after Vorenius for herself after all . . .)

“There is a tide in the affairs of men,” and against Cassius’s opinion, Brutus decides that here and now, at Philippi in October AUC DCCXI (43 B.C.[E.]) is the time to fight. On the other side of the lines, Antony continues to make fun of Octavian, which isn’t very generous. At least he got a shave.

Now the two armies are met (by each other of course). In this portrayal of battle, now that they’ve managed to train up more extras and piled on the CGI they can get a decent battle simulation, there isn’t any pilum-casting but the wave fighting method (the guys in the front lines got relieved regularly, as we saw back in Season I Episode One) is demonstrated. Antony can’t tell what’s going on so he conducts a charge (as Richard Armour said, “One never knew what he would do next and neither did he.”), which Agrippa manages to join in on, leaving Octavian behind.

Cassius has been commenting that it is his birthday [yes, you’ve heard it before, so did Shakespeare] and now tries to stem a retreat. No luck on his part, and Brutus sees him die, the army disintegrate, and the triumvirs’ force approaching. He commends everyone to the

gods and the triumvirs’ mercies, pulls off his armor, and tackles an entire century single-handed, with the expected result.

As Antony and Octavian discuss what to do with the trophies of the assassins, we see a robber stealing Brutus’s family signet ring. The last of all the Romans, where are you . . .

(During the pre-whacking conversation, Cicero reassures Tyro that he’s freed in the will, but Tyro had been freed some time previously.)

(Like Shakespeare, the producers condensed the two battles at Philippi into one. The first battle, during the Nones of October, saw a division of labor, with Brutus defeating Octavian and Agrippa, while Antony defeated Cassius, who killed himself thinking all was lost. The next engagement was ten days before the Kalends of November (October 23) and was a total defeat for Brutus, who killed himself.

(Also, Atia died in DCCXI but from checking the cast lists it looks like we’ll have Polly Walker around to the end.)

Season II, Episode Seven: “Death Mask” a.d. IV Nonas Martis (March 4)

People are not happy. Servilia, for example, who is trying on her son’s death mask. It rather lacks breathing holes, so her attendant (who, you will recall, back on the Ides of March told Vorenius about Niobe), suggests something else.

Vorenius is not happy. There is unrest amid the caporegimes, and he has to send Memmio down to Ostia to handle the port’s lack of capacity. (“You there with the harbour rebuilding plan, are you some relative of Publius Clodius’s?” “You m-m-might say that,” said Ti. Claudius this that and the other.)

The three rulers are not happy. To take care of that, they propose a division of authority, with Octavian getting the west, Antony the east, and Lepidus getting the gizzard . . . er, Africa. (Antony isn’t afraid to draw steel, much less cut up a perfectly good map, to make a point.) Moreover, they are to get equal shares of the national income.

Posca is not happy. King Herod of the Jews came to town to ask about being confirmed in his position. (Like everyone else out in that part of the world, he’d backed Brutus & Cassius.) Antony offers to do so, for a mere 20k pounds of gold. He won’t even share any with Posca, much less his partners.

Jocasta is not happy. Who would marry a penniless daughter of a proscribed father? Well, Posca, which was why he needed money.

Timon and Levi, particularly Levi, are not happy. They swore on the Books of Moses to take down that shaygets Herod, and Yom Kippur (and the Kol Nidre) won’t hold off forever.

On the other hand, some people are happy. Pullo and Eirene are happy, seeing as she’s pregnant, or pregnant. Even if she can’t put out for him just now. Agrippa and Octavia are happy, they have each other. And Antony and Atia are happy for similar reasons.

Nevertheless, Pullo and Eirene are having problems. Pullo notes that people are using forged grain-dole tokens to get into their grain distribution line. (Vorenius isn’t worried, since people have to eat anyhow.) And Eirene gets disobeyed and insulted (in days of old we’d say “sassed” but now we say “dissed”) by Gaia.

Not having been paid off, Posca goes to Maecenas with the news of Herod’s “gift”. Thus showing that Mark Antony had the sort of gift for relations with subordinates that Dr. Frederick Cook demonstrated by short-changing Ed Barrill, Aapilaq, and Itukusuk. Then, Antony meets with Octavian, who mentions something about this bribe from Herod . . . Maecenas adding that they had forethoughtfully suborned one of Herod’s servants (at least he has the sense to cover his sources). Antony is a little annoyed. Since Octavian is the son of a God, can’t he at least have a little gift to make up for being deprived?

Servilia, having failed to smother herself with the mask, has installed herself outside Atia’s house, caterwauling for Atia to come out for justice. I don’t know what’s in that powder that her servant is sprinkling on her, but she keeps on going through the night, which absolutely ruins Atia’s beauty sleep.

Vorenia *maior* has been romanced all the more vigorously, so she finally slips out to meet with her man. Only to be interrupted by his boss Memmio, back from Ostia (since Ti. Claudius this that and the other won’t be born for a while) who manages to get her to rat out on her father. Well, he is the guy’s made man.

Finally, Atia goes out to shut up Servilia. Who promptly lays a curse on her (including the Skull & Bones sign), then stabs herself to death. Her grieving servant follows. (Was Brutus getting emissaries from Sujin Tenno, the ruler of the Land of the Rising Sun?) Antony observes the bloody mess calmly. (Since rubber hadn’t been discovered yet, Atia was unable to say, “*Quasi cummi sim elasticum, tuque gluten es, omnia quae blateras, a me resilientia haerent ad te!*” (*Lingua Latina Occasionibus Omnibus* (MMDCCCLVII), Pagina XXXVIII) [“I’m

rubber, you’re glue, bounces off me, sticks to you!”] (*Latin for All Occasions* (2004), Page 38)] and deflect it.)

Atia calls the squabbling guys to a meeting, and Antony agrees to be forthcoming about any donations he gets. Then, Octavian proposes that they seal the bargain by having Antony marry into the Julii (even though his mother was one already). When her son says “marriage” Atia politely slips out, after all she has to have time to prepare her wedding dress.

Pullo has to punish Gaia. He goes upstairs and has an argument with her. This segues into a fight and ends up with him throwing her on the table and humping her. Fortunately for her serenity, Eirene doesn’t notice.

Speaking of that, after some vigorous bed performance, Atia suggests that perhaps Antony should lay off her for a change, to make the honeymoon more exciting. Evidently, Agrippa and Octavia can’t even afford a bed, they are going at it standing up.

Then we see the wedding. Of Antony and Octavia. Atia is trying to look happy (whatever happened to the old custom of the mother of the bride accompanying the couple on the honeymoon?) and Agrippa is standing behind Octavia looking utterly heartbroken.

It’s all politics. If it were Antony and Atia, it would be love, or passion anyhow, and that just wouldn’t do. Besides, as Octavian explains to his mother, there’s matters of age; he can have nieces and nephews, but not demisiblings. At least Antony will have a different kind of mother-in-law problem, but he may have to put up with a spousal cry of “*Mater te optimam semper dilexit!*” [“Mother always liked *you* best!”]

After the wedding, the happy couple (well, that’s the tradition) go out on a procession, as traditional, and the prominent guests follow. Including King Herod. Now, Levi says, it’s their time, but Timon no longer has the heart for it. Besides, he has a wife, children, and he’s seen Atia. They have a quarrel and Levi . . . well, has an accident.

Atia wanders out into the street that night thinking of the curse. Antony and Octavia have to do what married couples do, so Antony asks to do it Greek (note, olive oil is better than spit in those circumstances). Then in the morning Gaia goes to an apothecary’s; she missed her courses and needs something to get them started again. Or so she says.

(Lepidus got control of Hispania, which was good recruiting grounds, and was named *pontifex maximus* in succession to Caesar. Africa was a grain-producing province.

(The death date of Servilia Caeponis is not

known except that it was after DCCXI, but apparently her death *was* natural.)

Season II, Episode Eight: “A Necessary Fiction”

a.d. V Idus Martis (March 11)

Herod’s bribe is finally coming to Rome, and everyone wants a piece. Including, worse yet, Posca and Maecenas, who are planning to take a commission they have not been offered.

Meanwhile, Mark Antony is having better relations with his mother-in-law than most guys get, and Agrippa is being like a brother to Octavian (you do remember what Octavia and her brother did). Here everyone gets a piece.

And Gaia is serving up a nice abortifacient brew. I hadn’t known that Eirene could write.

Octavian delivers a moving speech to the assembled Roman matrons extolling the wonders of marital fidelity and family, and then, inspiring generations of politicians to come, informs Livia Drusilla, wife of Tiberius Claudius Nero, mother of one son [the future Tiberius Caesar] and pregnant with another child [the future Drusus Germanicus, father of Ti. Claudius this that and the other], that he would like to marry her. (As you know, of course, Xena could tell us a few things about Livia Drusilla, but she’s on ice right now . . .)

Timon and family leave Rome to go to Jerusalem, passing Posca and Jocasta who are going shopping. She’s going shopping, he’s meeting Maecenas to see about getting their share of the gold. And if he lets his wife get out of his sight to shop, he’s going to be needing all of it.

Things start going to Hades in a handbasket. The gold convoy is ambushed and its escort wiped out. This upsets everybody. Lepidus blames the Gauls. (“Did you see a little blond-haired guy in black and red, and a big guy with red hair in blue and white striped braccæ?”)

Eirene miscarries. As she lies there in bed all bloody and weak, she instructs Pullo how to perform the funeral, and then dies. Pullo and Vorenus take her out and bury her, as she asked, and we find out that she came from somewhere in Germania. Then Pullo begins mourning.

Vorenus resolves to find out who’s responsible for the robbery, so he drops in on Memmio, interrupting a perfectly good orgy. Memmio denies the whole thing with a straight face and Vorenus believes him with a straight face. Then he goes to see Antony and tells him he knows who has the gold.

Octavian invites everyone to dinner and

explains a few things, like how everybody is going to be faithful to their spouses from now on, which is going to be hard when Mark Antony is being sent out East, while Atia and Octavia get locked up at home for a while. How he’s going to explain all this to Claudius Nero, I have no idea. After everyone else has stormed out, Octavian has a nice little tete-a-tete with Livia explaining how he plans to tie her up and whip her every now and then. And now you know why she went out to the garden to tend to the fig tree (see *I, Claudius* for that).

Memmio has a meeting of his caporegimes, who are a little put out. Until he opens a chest and starts throwing around gold coins, which creates a warm and fuzzy good feeling among the boys.

Vorenus finally gets Pullo back to work and they go downstairs to interrogate Mascius, the survivor of the ambush, who delivers a dying speech worthy of Tessio (who you will recall had been the one betraying the Corleones), occasionally interrupted by young Lucius running around screaming and holding his new toy. Vorenus keeps him from interrupting the rubout, only to note the new toy, which looks very familiar. It’s like the ones the girls had at Memmio’s. And Vorena *maior* had it. She was the mole! Mascius lives but Vorena has a very nasty quarrel with her father, including the cry of millions of deceived women throughout history, “But he *loves* me!”

Antony comes to Atia’s house and after some sparring with the security (alas, Timon has indeed made aliyah) gets to say goodbye to Atia; the lovers part with much grief and hopes of reunion at some time to come. Then Atia sends Octavia down to the kitchen, as the poor girl is getting on her nerves. On the other hand, she cheers up very quickly once she finds out that Agrippa is also touring the kitchen. Only, he’s come to say goodbye for now.

Antony has lost Atia but he does have a new guest, and one hopes for the sake of old Rome that he doesn’t want to go Greek; Vorenus comes in to offer his resignation, reassure Antony that Pullo is on the verge of getting the money back, and offer his services on Antony’s staff. Anything to get out of the city just now.

Down in the slums, the gangsters are out n force and it’s a gang rumble, Pistrices contra Exsilienii. Pullo finally calls Memmio to account (Memmio won’t be talking about it, that’s for sure) and the two gangs hold a rather frantic brawl in the mean and dirty streets of Rome. Vorena’s lover gets it, but then Gaia is fighting on Pullo’s side. She’s up to something.

Antony and his staff (presumably including Vorenus) arrive in Alexandria, marching in procession to the Palace, where they meet Pharaoh. Who, like the previous Pharaoh, is acting rather childish, mostly because he *is* a child (look back at Ptolemy XIII Philopator in Season One Episode Eight). Then Antony hears his name called and sees just about everything the boy’s mother has to offer. She steps forward and warmly greets him, and he greets Cleopatra back in like manner. Atia who?

(They seem to have dropped Scribonia, Octavian’s then wife, from the plot, which does save on characters but would help rub in what a *filius canem* Octavian is.

(Antony’s disastrous Parthian campaign and wild life in Athens have been dropped. Plutarch compared Antony to Demetrios the Besieger, who also had a wild life in Athens. Also the reconciliation that brought about the second term of the Triumvirate, in AUC DCCXVI [38 B.C.(E.)] has been taken for granted.)

Season II, Episode Nine: “Deus Impeditio Esuritori Nullus”

a.d. XV Kalendis Aprilis
(March 18)

“No God can stop a hungry man”.

Cleopatra is wearing a brass bra. Really. Antony, however, should ditch the eye makeup . . . it just doesn’t go with his complexion. Antony has gone native with a vengeance. In fact, he entertains the delegation from Rome (their leader is “Balbus” who likely would be Lucius Cornelius Balbus *maior*, the first non-native Roman to become consul, in AUC DCCXIV [40 B.C.(E.)] with a little hunting demonstration. Too bad for the poor slave playing the deer. Cleopatra should have taken archery lessons from Xena, not fashion ones. As for the grain, Antony keeps on jacking up his price. He wants not only triple rates (so much for that deal struck back in Episode Two) but the provinces of Africa and Hispana (which had been given to Lepidus, but he doesn’t seem to count any more).

Vorenus himself now has a woman, and he’s having happy dreams, or are they nightmares, of Niobe being back and in bed with him. Then he wakes up and sees he’s with a Gyppo bint going for the extreme buzz cut look.

The Roman masses are a bit hungry. Titus Pullo is now in quite a predicament, for he’s the one who has to feed the people in the district and, as we now see, he has to think about tomorrow. The granary could be opened

up and full rations of the dole be handed out, but then where would next week’s food come from. (Gaia makes the sort of comment that got the head cut off of the Pannonian princess who was married to the Frankish chief.) By the Dog of Egypt, Pullo’s growing up!

His subordinates are a bit worried, naturally, and he has to meet with them to talk it out. In case anyone gets ideas, the guy in the cage, who looks like he’s trying out for the lead role in *Cast Away*, is an example to the contrary. He won’t be uttering an opinion — I did tell you that Pullo bit out Memmio’s tongue, didn’t I? Having heard out his subordinates, Pullo goes to the boss.

Unlike contemporary leaders, Octavian is grateful to be getting news from the front lines, although the content is not pleasing. Pullo reports to him as he sits in conference with his advisors, Maecenas and Agrippa. They take some steps but the answer lies in Egypt.

Atia and Octavia have been invited to dinner. Octavia’s daughter, Antonia, is as much a bother as children are (as you know, Antonia would become the mother of Ti. Claudius this that and the other), going up on the roof and being about to fall off, but Mother knows best. And the proposal is very simple; Antonia and Atia will go to Egypt to meet with Antony.

That night, after some furious boinking, Livia lies flushed and spent besides her husband and congratulates him on the win-win situation he’s set up; either Antony provides the grain, which will solve the current problem, or he repudiates Octavia, which will turn the Senate against him, and that will also solve the problem.

Caesarion has a new playmate. He wears armor, which takes care of those hard-thrown balls (wrapped leather) that so incommoded the eunuch who had been last playmate. The guy had no fielding, evidently, so Coach Caesarion called up L. Vorenus from the *minores*. Between throws, the Pharaoh begins pumping Vorenus for information about his father.

Atia and Octavia arrive in Alexandria and make the short trip from the docks to the palace. This is as far as they go, though, and we find them sitting in the Egyptian heat, dust, and sunlight, which should do absolutely *horrid* things to their complexions. Finally someone comes out to speak to them; Jocasta, who is wearing an Egyptian wig. It’s the fashion there. (When Cleopatra pulls hers off, she looks as if she’s trying out for the part of that Gallic shepherd girl who received omens from the Gods, but the Britons’ druids sacrificed her, only they couldn’t afford an

entire wicker man . . .)

Then Vorenus comes out and explains the situation. Atia slaps him (there's a lot of slapping in this episode; Livia slaps Octavian, for example, and wasn't *she* supposed to be the bottom?) and tells him that Antony is cowardly scum. Then they flounce off to their ship. (And bloody lucky, too, considering that Cleopatra has been wanting them murdered, their ship pirated, and so on.)

With the report about the visitors from back home, Jocasta has panicked Posca, who has decided to grab this last chance to get away. Vorenus interrupts them, but says only that Posca should take a message to Pullo, for his children. Just before the ship leaves the dock, Posca and Jocasta manage to get there, and ask for a ride. All the way, one hopes. They leave, but one other thing doesn't; Octavia throws her wedding ring into the ocean.

Caesarion wants to know more about his father. Vorenus tells him more about his father. The Pharaoh notices a slight variance from the received story and begins to wonder. Well, we at least remember who had had Cleopatra on that scented evening . . .

The pirates seem to have missed their appointment. (As those of us who have read John Maddox Roberts's novel *The Princess and the Pirates* (2005), ninth in his S.P.Q.R. series, know, its narrator D. Caecilius Metellus, the husband of Caesar's other niece, got rid of them; Cleopatra is there, too.) Unfortunately for the lovers; Posca delivers Antony's last will into the hands of Octavian, who finds it remarkably amusing. The bit about giving Rome and points west to Caesarion, for example, as son and heir of Caesar, while dividing up the East amid their children and declaring himself an Egyptian. Well, Maecenas thought it was very funny.

Besides playing ball with the Pharaoh, Vorenus also delivers the message to Antony, who asks him if he agrees with Atia's evaluation. Vorenus does not think Antony is a coward.

In the streets, we see the Newsreader declaring the wickedness and venality of Antony, who worse yet has gone native. (And if he'd been there when Vorenus delivered Atia's message to Antony, he would have had proof. The dress, for example.) I say! And Maecenas is watching the whole thing with a beaming smile.

In the Senate, Octavian reads out the whole wretched tale, and gets them to vote Antony an enemy of Rome. (As Timon has returned to Jerusalem, he can't join Octavian, Agrippa, and Posca for a chorus of "*Gladios habemus,*

Gladios habent, Omnes filii deorum gladios habent. . .") ["We got swords, they got swords, all the Gods' chilluns got swords. . ."] playing lyres while sitting before the curule chair, with a nice hot meal of duck soup afterwards) Then, alone, he sits down for a talk with Pullo, hoping they can use him to get to Vorenus to get to some of Antony's family. But Caesarion has to be whacked.

Pullo goes home, tells the boys that no messin' around while he's away, is spurned by Vorenus's children, and reluctantly goes to bed. Except that night, he hears something, goes downstairs, and sees that the cage is empty. He gets ambushed by Memmio, who may have been a little crooked up by all that time in the pen, since instead of killing him right away does some gloating, which is enough time for Gaia to come downstairs and attack him. She kills Memmio, but not before he gets in a fatal stab.

As Gaia lies on her deathbed, she has a confession to make, and the weeping Pullo dismisses the healers and slaves. Then he strangles Gaia. She had, you will recall, poisoned Eirene.

And while Eirene got a decent grave, Gaia got thrown in the Tiber.

(By now it's AUC DCCXXI (33 B.C.[E.]), five years after the last episode, approximately. The allocation of lands among Cleopatra's children (we see Alexander Helios and Cleopatra Selene, but not Ptolemy Philadelphus) was worse; it was in a public ceremony, the Donations of Alexandria. No one ever said Antony was too bright.)

Season II, Episode Ten: "De Patre Vostro"
a.d. VIII Kalendis Aprilis
(March 25)

"About your father".

As the seventh hour approached Agrippa said, "I'll amuse the fleet with a signal. Do you think there is one yet wanting?"

Trierarch of the Fleet T. Durus was silent but Trierarch Lignus Niger of the liburnan *Eurylaus* said, "I think the whole of the fleet seems to understand very clearly what they are about."

But Agrippa had crossed the deck already, "Tribune Pasco, I wish to say, 'ROMA HOMINEM QUIQUE OFFICIUM EIUM FACERE CONFIDET.' You must be quick, for I have one more to make which is for close action."

"Dominus, it will go quicker if I say

'EXPECTAT' since that is in the signal book while 'CONFIDET' will have to be spelled out."

"ROME EXPECTS THAT EVERY MAN WILL DO HIS DUTY.' That will do, Pasco, make it directly." Above them the signal flags began to flutter from the mast of the quinquereme *Victoria*.

"Now," Agrippa said, "I can do no more. We must trust to the great Disposer of all events, and to the justice of our cause. I thank Neptune and Jove for this great opportunity of doing my duty." A few minutes later Publicola's flagship *Consul Res Publicae* came within range of the enemy and at the seventh hour Trierarch Baudoinos's *Sphodros* fired the catapult bolt that began the Battle of Actium . . .

Though Actium was a.d. IV Nonis Septembris AUC DCCXXIII (September 2, 31 B.C.[E.]), not a.d. XII Kalendis Novembris (October 21).

The scene fades in on a small boat fleeing a scene of immense naval carnage. (As described by Lemuel Gulliver, who managed to even interview Agrippa in MMCDLX about one trierarch's particular gallantry.) After a while, we can see that the man passing between the rowers with a bottle of water is Lucius Vorenus, and then we see him hand it to Mark Antony, who is sitting in the bow, wondering where the Hades this Agrippa came from. He rationalizes that Cleopatra fled to save the money.

It looks like they're going to Hades, for when Antony gets back to Alexandria, just ahead of Octavian's army, which proceeds to besiege them in the royal palace. A messenger is delivering Antony's reply to Octavian's ultimatum, which is at least printable. (He is addressed as "Hermes", presumably not D. Caecilius Metellus's client-of-all-work, also called "Hermes"; Metellus *hates* the First Citizen.) Then he returns to the palace, gets hoisted up into the place, and finds himself in the middle of an orgy.

"Whores, hermaphrodites, and lickspittles." Antony says of his current command, and those are the crack troops. Well, except for Vorenus, who shows he is no Pullo by standing there, grimly neutral look in his face, watching the entire mess. Having read too many Wargames Research Group rules, and being zonked to the gills besides, Antony decides to settle the war by challenging Octavian to single combat, and proceeds to work out in preparation. Which

was fine when it was with Vorenus, but wasn't so good for the unfortunate flunkey who was so intemperate as to laugh. And having read the transported works of Machiavellus (this mysterious figure known only as "Ho Iatros" brought them) Octavian knows that such challenges are a bad idea.

Back home in Rome, Atia is giving a party when the news comes in. Neither Octavia nor Livia seems particularly unhappy about it.

Among all that message passing was a private one from Pullo to Vorenus, where Pullo informed Vorenus that his children were fine, and sent hopes that his own son would be as well. And Vorenus does reassure Caesarion that all will be well. All unknowing, Octavian explains to everyone (including Pullo) quite cheerfully that while Antony and Caesarion have to get the chop (There can only be One! [son of Caesar, that is]) Cleopatra and her children by Antony can look forward to happy lives under the domination of Rome.

Early in the morning or so, Cleopatra's servant Charmian turns up with a bloody note, which turns out to be a farewell from the queen, with hopes that they will meet on the other side. Since Antony and Vorenus have been talking about life after death, this turns out to be conveniently tragic. Antony breaks down, throws away his sword, praises Vorenus's, and having heard of the mysterious practices of Cipangu (from Xena, or Asterix, or the Iatros, or somebody like that) asks Vorenus to serve as his *kaishaku*, since "thou art a fellow of a good respect; thy life hath had some smatch of honour in it. Hold then thy sword, and turn away thy face, while I do run on it. Wilt thou, Vorenus?" Vorenus doesn't look away as Antony pulls off his blouse and pushes in the old gladius.

Then Cleopatra and her attendants come in and she begins weeping over the sacrifices one makes for one's country. After she leaves to have the gates opened, Vorenus sets about pulling those Gyppo slops off the body and dressing Antony up as a proper Roman officer, dying in the tradition of the Senators after the *Allia* . . .

The gates are opened, Octavian, backed by Agrippa and Maecenas, enters, is respectfully received by the Queen, and they proceed to have a conversation that has the signal distinction of containing not one single word of truth, including "unus" and "ho" (think "a/an" and "the"). After which Cleopatra realizes that she really has to make a sacrifice for the other poor dumb bastard's country. She goes back to the throne room and crawls into Antony's lap, crying, to get up the nerve to end it all. [Did I

mention that someone had had Antony's body set up in the throne there?] Wherein the famous asp, and she manages to get up dying to deliver a final insult to Octavian, who arrived late enough to see the death, but not early enough to avert it.

There is one last matter to clear up, and Titus Pullo gets tasked to hunt down Caesarion and bring him in dead. Since we saw Caesarion leaving a little while ago in the escort of Vorenius, this is going to be a little difficult.

But this is Pullo. He finds them, even though Caesarion has been having grand dreams of how he will indeed be restored to his throne. A little too much of that stuff Antony was taking? Vorenius and Pullo confer and set out to flee from Egypt to Judea . . . there's something cock-eyed here.

Once back in Rome, Octavian comes in to say hello to his mother. Such a *good* boy. And his sister, to whom he delivers Alexander Helios and Cleopatra Selene to bring up. As for the other boy . . .

Two men in a cart come up to a Roman checkpoint. The man in charge says it seems a bit far out for Romans to be, and one of the men says "Huntin' sphinxes." When told that sphinxes are myths, he says ruefully, "Now you tell me." The driver says they're grain merchants, unfortunately the slave kid in the back responds when addressed in Egyptian as "Sacred Majesty". Caesarion, you're going to have to stop *doing* that!

Pullo and Vorenius proceed to dispose of the entire detachment. Not, however, without Vorenius receiving a grave wound. All the same, he refuses to die anywhere but Rome, so Pullo and Caesarion load him up and drive off.

In Rome, about a month later, we pan in on the Newsreader standing in the Forum announcing the glorious triumph of Octavian over Egypt. Inside, the womenfolk are preparing to sit in the family seats with Livia preening herself over being in front. Then Atia, who had been brooding up in her bedroom, pops in, silences Livia with a curt, "I know who you are," [the daughter of Xena, but never mind that; how did Atia find that out, anyway?] and storms to the front.

While the streets of Rome resound with the cheers of the Triumph, Vorenius lies in his home, having somehow survived thus far. Vorenia *maior* is peeping through the screen. Is she gloating? No. The curse seems to have died, and she and her sister and Lucius come in to greet or perhaps say goodbye to her father.

The Triumph resounds through the streets of Rome with a couple of unusual trophies; the

defeated commanders being carried behind the triumphant commander's chariot. Since Antony and Cleopatra are sort of dead, this is just a bit unseemly.

Among the spectators in the First Citizen's box, of course, is Agrippa, who snatches a peek at Octavia. It's been a while, understand. Atia is looking away. Sometimes it's more interesting to strive than it is to attain.

A little later, Pullo comes to meet with the First Citizen. He reports that unfortunately, Vorenius has died, but otherwise it's "Mission Accomplished". After resolving the issue once and for all, he cut off the little bastard's head for verification but it went off and he had to chuck it away. Octavian regrets the news of Vorenius, congratulates Pullo, and gives him a small reward.

Then on the way home Pullo meets a very familiar little boy, who begins talking indiscreetly about his future. Caesarion, you're going to have to stop *doing* that, or you won't have one! Pullo looks down and says, "About your father . . ."

(There were actually a few days between Antony's suicide and Cleopatra's, not to mention about a year between Actium and the siege in Alexandria.)

Multiple dead bodies, wet work, fund raising, some real slavery, wild parties, ancestral mafia, bad luck with the messenger, peaches for everyone, thousands of thousands of peaches, fish fry, saving water by showering with the steady, keeping the old anti-Semitism down, violent femme foreplay, unhappy weddings, discipline for the entire family, hunting simulations, envoy hoists, queens in aspic, trophy time, vomitus fu, desertion fu, xenophilia fu, crucifixion fu, brothel fu, orgy fu, double-dealing fu, reconciliation fu, proscription fu, sicarii fu, mothering fu, bladder fu, cake fu, bribe fu, curse fu, abortifacient fu, mole fu, doll fu, rumble fu, Marie-Antoinette fu, brass bra fu, makeup fu, ring fu, Nemesis fu, will fu, war-at-sea fu, gladius fu, corpse fu, escape fu, Sphinx fu, Triumph fu, paternity fu, forty-one breasts, four beasts, multiple aardvarking.

Check it out.

Vale.

CURSE OF THE VAMPIRES

Review by Joseph T Major of
BLOOD BOUND
by Patricia Briggs
(Ace; 2007; ISBN 978-0-441-01473-6;
\$7.99)

The hot new item in romance novels these days is Highlanders. Not, of course, the real thing, which would have been scrawny, scarred, filthy, odiferous, and given to bellowing "Hush up, wummin!" before giving the Romance Heroine one in the chops after she had had the temerity to express an opinion on anything.

But then Romance and reality have been dissonant for a long time. *Real* Regency bucks would have dumped the forward and sprightly (dare I say anachronistic?) young women of Regency Romances in the alleys behind depraved London stews, having left them poxed, fuddled with laudanum, and pregnant, for example.

Trends are always shifting in the field of Romance Love Object. As I've said, Highlanders are hot these days. Ever since 9/11, Sheikhs have been a hard sell, that blasted inconvenient real world. And, more relevant to our current item, that wise, rich, understanding, experienced, sensitive, and most of all **impotent** figure the Vampire is perhaps on the ebb, though still popular.

So some people might confuse this with another Vampire Romance. Not exactly. Mercy, our heroine and narratrix (how old do you have to be to understand words like "narratrix"?) is indeed involved with vampires, even bitten. She neither changes nor desires to, and understands what is involved.

Well, she does change sometimes. She's a shapechanger, what she calls a Walker — she becomes a coyote. (I doubt she enjoys Road Runner jokes.) As a result she got tied in with the werewolves. Who act like a wolf pack, complete with an Alpha male, who took Mercy under his, er, paw. In fact, Faerie seems to be bursting out everywhere; the Fae are taking over Irish bars, and oh yes there are Vampires.

Not your wise, rich, understanding, experienced, sensitive vampires who fang their way into your heart, either. These vampires kill people. Which makes the vampire doctor who shares Mercy's trailer rather interesting. These have some of the traditional traits, the most relevant one being that of being unable to enter a residence unless asked. Not that that doesn't mean they can do all sorts of damage to the exterior while waiting . . .

For, you see, there are also demons out and about in the world now, and they can even possess vampires. As Mercy finds out when she has to go to a motel where a demon-possessed vampire has killed everyone there, and watch him finish off the last one. She survived, you see, because he was toying with this other vampire who had come there. With

his dog. Well, if it looks like a dog and it's wearing a dog harness, it's a dog, right?

Thus Mercy gets deeper into an intricate world of demons, vampires, fae, and other creatures who have left Fantasyland for a world with flush toilets and regular crops. If nothing else Briggs has built up a complex world, and one would think that the adjustments would have to be even greater than she portrays.

There are some nice in-jokes. "Mercy" is her nickname, her full first name is "Mercedes". She's an auto mechanic. (I don't believe it's specifically stated in the text that she has the tattoos shown in the cover picture of her, wrench in hand, coverall unzipped past her navel, but there are things that can be imputed.)

Perhaps more substantial is the portrayal of the vampires. As I've said, these vampires kill people. They aren't romantic icons; they draw people to them and drain them. The author uses some parts of the traditional vampire lore, often in unexpected but fitting ways. There is something here that is both good and new.

In fact there's no romance, just someone doing a perilous job as best she can, out of a realization that it has to be done.

A CONSPIRACY SO IMMENSE

Review by Joseph T Major of

THE PLOT:

*The Secret History of
The Protocols of the Elders of Zion*
by Will Eisner

With an introduction by Umberto Eco

(W. W. Norton; 2005

ISBN 0-393-06045-4; \$19.95)

Eighty thousand years from now, after the great Cataclysm that destroyed society on lost Terra, after the greater Cataclysm that cast the strange and exotic planet of Tékumel into its own pocket universe, I bet that the peoples and beings of its many mystic and fair cities will sit under the light of its moons and the other planets and read of a conspiracy so immense as to dwarf any other such venture in the history of Man, Pé Chói, Ahoggyá, Páchi Léi, or any of the many other races of the planet, even Mihállí or Hókun. And who, they will speculate, are these strange conspirators who meet in a burial quarter to lay out their malevolent plots, and adhere to neither Stability nor Change? Could they be adherents of the Goddess of the Pale Bone? Or the cryptic One Other? Some Pariah God, even more malevolent than that? Or some deity unknown even to them, and as maleficent to them as those Gods are to the friendly known

ones of Pavar's pantheon?

The cartoonist Will Eisner [1917-2005], unlike most of the leaders of the Golden Age, lived long enough to do graphic novels, and had enough leisure and energy to draw them, along with enough standing to do ones on the topics that concerned him. Best known for "The Spirit", Eisner was a name to be reckoned with in comic circles ever since there was a comics fandom, since the fifties if not before.

Most significant of these works was *The Contract with God Trilogy (A Contract with God and other Tenement Stories* (1984), *A Life Force* (1988), and *Dropsie Avenue* (1995)). Wherein lies the tale; Eisner was a survivor of yet another tradition, the community of *Yiddishkeit* fun New York. Which, in turn, led him to yet another set of circumstances.

The Plot is the tale of a lie, a lie of infamy so black that its perpetrators deserve the maledictions of all honest men. But it began with the man and the moment quite separate.

Maurice Joly was a freedom fighter, penning clever satires aimed at shattering the bourgeois stability of smug Frenchmen. For example, *Dialogue aux enfers entre Machiavel et Montesquieu [Dialogue in Hell Between Machiavelli and Montesquieu]* (1864), where in the classic tradition, the dead, beyond harm or relevance, discussed ancient deeds in terms that were by an amazing coincidence remarkably like more current events. After a long career of non-selective generalized opposition Joly killed himself in 1878, and that should have been an end of the matter.

In 1894 it came to pass that there was a problem in Russia. Nefarious and unspeakable (not to mention blasphemous, abominable, cthonian, squamous, and rugose) talk of Reform was in the air — even in the ears of the Little Father. What to do?

It would have to be discredited. What better way to discredit reform and modernization than to associate it with the dastardly schemes of the international Zhid? Which was where the Okhrana's man came in; a forger and a rat named Mathieu Golovinski. [Actually "Matvei Vasilyevich Golovinski", but see below.] Golovinski had been exiled to France, but that separation provided plausibility. Also access to old books, like Joly's *Dialogue In Hell*. [Ironically, Joly himself plagiarized his work.]

From there it went to Rasputin's chief competitor, Sergei Aleksandrovich Nilus. Grigory Efimitovich was (somehow) attractive to women, concerned about oppressed

minorities, pious (if in an eccentric Russian way), kind to children, and had many other good qualities that were signally lacking in Nilus. Nilus, in other words, was just the man to impress the Tsar with this work. Not that it succeeded in its place and time but . . .

Revolution swept all this away (but not Golovinski, who returned to Russia and became an assistant to of all people Trotsky before his death in 1920). As a result, an explanation of this dire catastrophe, others seized on this handy explanation and it became publicized.

Then in 1921 a Russian emigre in Istanbul approached the correspondent of *The Times*, Philip Percival Graves, with a couple of books: *The Protocols* and *Dialogue in Hell*. He had the story of how Golovinski had been approached to write it. In one of the more limp talking-heads section of the book, Eisner shows Graves and his informant, Mikhail Rasvoley, going over the two books page by page, showing infelicities, clumsinesses, and the dreary line by line tedium of Golovinski's copying of Joly. But it has to be done to show how this lie was embodied.

[Graves seems to have been the sort of character who is too implausible for fiction; he was an entomologist and wrote a history of World War Two when not doing this. Also, apparently Allen Dulles played a role in the debunking.]

And the Gray Lady of Fleet Street published this Big Story. At least when the first of many expressions of confidence that the book will never be taken seriously again is uttered, it's the editor with optimistic hope about the power of the press.

Then there came the Nazis, and there was this book out there that was just in their line. In 1934 Jewish groups sued a Swiss Nazi publisher over his publishing of *The Protocols*. You'd think the defendant would have been able to find eyewitnesses, given that the alleged meeting that drafted the Protocols took place in a cemetery in Zurich, but no, and he lost.

In 1964 a subcommittee of the U.S. Senate Judiciary Committee published yet another debunking of *The Protocols*. Like other conspiracy theories, from the Mendel Beilis Case to *Irving v. Penguin v. One Other* (Lipstadt, that is, not the Tékmueyliani deity), from Jim Garrison's carnival in court in New Orleans to the Oklahoma City Bombing Special Grand Jury (their report rebuked — for wasting their time — the conspiracy theorists who had been depending on the jury to bring forth their Truth), this one can't survive in any forum where it has to answer the questions that

aren't filtered. In spite of all the fatal blows that have come, all the same this one somehow survives.

More justifiably than some writers, Eisner can draw himself into the story at this point, showing himself beginning and ending the research for this work. Including a melancholy hinting of the sorrow and pity of it all.

He shows himself encountering a demonstration of White Nationalists (don't dare show Islamicists, I guess) arguing about this book that shows the true Plot Against America. He repeats in very short form his findings, and one of the protestors responds by saying, "Even if it is a fake! People should read the book because it reveals the Jews!!" [Page 124] In other words, "Forged but true."

And so, Eisner stands there in his trademark mist, watching the protestors march off with cries of "He's only a Jew!"

This is a wondrous epiphany for Eisner to go out on, as it were. Anyone arguing that comic art is inherently non-serious can be thwacked with this, physically too. Its story is a slow but careful demonstration showing the compilation and progression of a hideously murderous myth.

At the same time, there is the problem that it is essentially "talking heads". Whether it be the senior Tsarist bureaucrats plotting the new line in Russia, Rasvoley giving Graves a side-by-side comparison of how the plagiarism works, or even the elderly and concerned Eisner trying to understand the nonsensical claims of young militant activists, it's a book of people talking, not doing. But books of real investigation are boring if they don't get inside the investigator's head.

For more information, Warren Cohn's *Warrant for Genocide: The Myth of the Jewish World Conspiracy and The Protocols of the Elders of Zion* (1967) has been reissued by Serif Publishing (2006; ISBN 1897959494; \$19.95).

Those who appreciated Eisner's art will note with pleasure that he retained his fine, clear line and his mastery of not only sharp images but misty ones. His final legacy to the world is one that will attract the appreciative and lay the foundations for more complex understandings.

RALF EIN DER VORHERSAH FÜR EINEN PLUS

Review by Joseph T Major of
PROJECT MARS: A Technical Tale
by Dr. Wernher von Braun
(Apogee Books; 2006;

ISBN 978-0-9738203-3-1; \$12.95)

The April issue of *Science and Invention* will see the beginning of a wondrous serial of scientifiction: *Projekt Mars* by German engineer Wernher Freiherr von Braun, of the *Verein für Raumschiffahrt*. Doctor Goddard, look to your laurels, for the Germans are on the way to the Red Planet . . .

— Not by Hugo Gernsback

Uncle Hugo had his own definition of science fiction, or as he preferred to put it, "scientifiction". He wanted it to explain science and technology and never mind about plot, character, style, or any of those things. As anyone who has actually read *Ralph 124C41+* (1911) will attest.

In spite of having *Astounding* from the Golden Age available (Willy Ley mailed it to him via Sweden throughout the war) apparently von Braun decided to explain his Mars mission in a manner more acceptable to Uncle Hugo, if not T. O'Connor Sloane.

Thus we have the building of the project spelled out in heavy if not mind-numbing detail. It's like the technical chapters of *De la Terre à la Lune [From the Earth to the Moon]* (1865) but written by someone who has had hands-on experience. This is no small expedition, either, since there are ten ships and seventy men.

Braun is realistic to means if not to scale; this voyage is not the two scientists building the ship in the back garden and then kidnapping a couple of people to sacrifice to the aliens (not even an idiot and a religious maniac). It requires a long-term commitment and substantial funding. There is not just a Martian voyage either, there is a space station (which in somewhat depressing circumstances, played a major role in the war that eliminated Communism and set up a World Republic).

With all this effort, there are setbacks; a cargo launch explodes, another crashes. On the voyage itself there is a meteor strike. The latter is realistically handled and includes a discussion of why armoring the ship wouldn't work. The former, on the other hand, has a result that is incomprehensible to us today; they keep on going, instead of stopping for a long investigation, accompanied by recriminations, reschedulings, and lawsuits.

Other technologies are considered. The expedition is able to remain in radio contact with Earth, just as real-life space probes have done, in spite of minimal power transmitters.

Some matters have been unanticipated; nothing is made of the problem of microgravity.

The Mars they reach is one that is conceptually in the middle of the transition from Lowell's inhabited Mars to the modern-day planet; there are canals, there is plant life on the surface, but that surface is too cold for habitation. The people live below.

Oh yes; the expedition planning has a number of contingencies for resistance, what to do if the expedition is attacked. ("If der Varhoons schnipe at der Kamp, you vill respond as ord-ered.") It is a relief that the Martians are friendly and indeed hospitable. How would the cheery Americans of the American Century respond to this?

If one can get through the abundant technical data presented, this is an upbeat and positive presentation of a future expedition. Cultural shifts that have occurred since then may lead to incomprehension (i.e., there's no case of a seduction gone awry, for example).

This isn't a great work of literature, but it is a window into the way it was seen back then. There is one other disappointment; the expedition departs Earth orbit in 1985. *sob*

(This publisher also offers Garrett P. Serviss's *Edison's Conquest of Mars* (1898), the fan-fiction sequel to *The War of the Worlds* (1897). This is somewhat more of a curiosity; it is also available on Gutenberg.)

AN INCONVENIENT TRUTH

Review by Joseph T Major of

BEYOND THE GAP

by Harry Turtledove

(Tor; 2007; ISBN 978-0-765-31710-0; \$24.95)

Count Hamnet Thyssen got a divorce. Unfortunately, that didn't mean that his wife, or ex-wife, Gudrid left him, though she did move in with and marry someone else. This change of life did leave him free to go on an expedition.

In this new work of fantasy, Turtledove presents a world of ice. Global warming has caused a retreat of the great glaciers to the north from the lands of the mighty Raumsdolian Empire, north even from the tundra lands of the Bizogot tribesmen. And now, the glacier has retreated so far that a gap indeed has opened in the Gap, the great division in the Glacier. Beyond the Glacier — there is another land, or so says the Bizogot chieftain Trasmund, who actually went into it, and then went south to the soft civilized people who live in stone huts, because he reckoned that they might have someone able to

understand it.

So, Count Thyssen, who has a good reason to leave the place of his humiliation, gets chosen to go along with Trasmund. Along with another adventurer, Ulric Skakki. But, they will need a scholar and a wizard. The wizard available has spent the past three years climbing into a bottle to forget how he had seen that his wife burned down and his house died in the fire. As for the scholar, ah . . .

As you recall, Hamnet's wife Gudrid left him and ended up with a scholarly type, one Eyvind Torfinn. This makes relations on the journey hard when Eyvind was chosen to go along. Particularly when Gudrid decided she just couldn't stand being without him, for whatever value of "him", and joined the party.

As if matters couldn't get worse, once the explorers got to the Bizogot lands, Chief Trasmund had to bring along a local expert, his own shaman, Liv. Shamans don't always have to be withered old men in rags, and she would be quite attractive were it not for the pervasive mammoth-dung stench. (Wood fires? By all the gods, that stuff is too valuable to burn!)

Then what they find behind the Gap . . .

What made Jean Auel's *Earth's Children* so cloying, in spite of her immense and well-realized background research, was that she was writing a romance, and had to adhere to the rules of romance. There is the same realization of the harshness and differentness of tundra life here but we are spared Liv talking childishly about "sharing Pleasures", for example. (She just does it.)

There is some lightness, as when Liv and Gudrid have a clash at a reception. Gudrid rather embarrassingly discovers that cutting a shamaness can have inconvenient if not embarrassing repercussions.

Then there is the political problem. Imagine what *The Lord of the Rings* would have been like if Gandalf had had to persuade the nobles of Gondor and Rohan that Sauron even had an army, much less was planning to pick up where he had left off an age of the world ago. The Raumsdolian Emperor and the Bizogot chiefs alike are unconvinced of the threat the people beyond the Gap pose, and the latter at least suffer the consequences.

Some elements of this story are not for the fainthearted. The Bizogots compare the two lobes of the glacier to a woman's legs, for example, and the apex of it . . . yes. And similarly there is violence and cruelty. There's nothing like how Gerin the Fox decided that civilization was not quite his cup of herbal tea

in *Wereblood* (1979), this time the civilization wins.

Hamnet finds himself a new purpose, but it may mean giving up an easy life. At least he won't be alone when the battle is . . . **[To Be Continued]**

DO YOU BELIEVE IN FAERIES?

Review by Joseph T Major of

BY SLANDEROUS TONGUES

by Roberta Gellis and Mercedes Lackey

(Baen; 2007;

ISBN 978-1-4165-2107-5; \$25.00)

Sequel to *This Scepter'd Isle* (2004) and

Ill Met by Moonlight (2005)

"Good Maister Will," Ben Jonson said as they sat together in the back room of the Mermaid Tavern, "whence came this Sayinge thou hast uttered, 'jumping þe Sharkke'?"

Will: Shaksur quaffed a draughte of ale before replying. "Twas said of þe Legendes of þe happie Dayes of Lorde Cunnyngame of þe Launde of Bryweers and his fayre Ladie, theyre good Sonne Sir Richard, theyre Daughter Ladie Joanna, and their Companye, that all was welle.

"Foremosste wythinne þe Sagas of that splende Familie were those of þe good Knyght Sir Arturo di Fonzarelli, the gallant Retainer of Lorde Cunnyngame, and his manie Deeds of Wit and Wysdome. Manie were the Tales demanded of his Workkes.

"Overmuche may be demanded of þe Scrivener, and so it was. Upon that fatal Daye, 'twas told a tale of Sir Arturo, and how he did jumpe his mighty Steede over a Sharkke, þe better to showe his Valour and Myghte. None afterwards could scribe a Tale of like Energie.

"And thus came about the Sayinge, 'to jumpe þe Sharkke.'"

"Master Will, thou art the Card!"

"One Letter off."

Lord Denoriel Silverhair of the Selighe Court has been in the mortal lands overmuch of late, but then he has a job to do; take care that the Elfhome Logres does not suffer the same fate that Elfhome Alhambra did; that place had been interdicted by the Inquisition. Therefore he had to guard a certain mortal child against terrors both faerie and mortal.

Gellis has created a complex interrelation of faerie societies and follows the equally

complex interaction of the crisis-ridden courts of King Edward VI and his Lord Protector, Edward Seymour, Earl of Hertford and Duke of Somerset. Lord Denno (who looks like Lord Denoriel would, if he were disguising himself as a human) has a most difficult world to live in, where murder is a matter of a few pennies in the right pouch and violence an everyday habit. A chap who can't touch iron has to cover very carefully. It's his own sort who get him. (Denno poses as a Magyar nobleman, and sends off any real Magyar refugees who turn up to work for him overseas, in an effort to not get caught out; what he would do with a fellow trader named Francis Ragozy, or some variant thereof, might be tricky . . .)

(I did have some problems with references to people drinking tea. It wouldn't be introduced to England for another century!)

The problems of the Lady Elizabeth's position in and among the court of her father's survivors swell in parallel the development of her mind and body. This leads to some unusual developments.

Such as Denoriel becoming Elizabeth's lover. Jumping the shark, anyone?



THE CRADLE OF THE DEEP

Review by Joseph T Major of

RED STAR ROGUE;

The Untold Story of a Soviet Submarine's Nuclear Strike Attempt on the U.S.

by Kenneth Sewell with Clint Richmond

(Simon & Schuster; 2005;

ISBN 978-0-7432-6112-8; \$25.00)

The plan had the simplicity of sheer genius. How to get one's enemies fighting each other? Make it look as if one attacked the other. Thus it was that the Soviet Navy's missile submarine *K-127* was dispatched on a mission To Be

Preserved Forever; she would sail to the north of Hawaii and launch a nuclear missile against Pearl Harbor. Through clever maskirova it would appear that this rerun had been done by the Chinese; and therefore the Main Enemy would lash out at the deviationists to the south, and all would be well.

In a regular thriller, Clive Cussler would tell Dirk Pitt how to sink the sub (and then Pitt would again completely forget he'd ever met the man), or James Bond and the beautiful GRU agent would as the countdown ticked down set the scuttling charges and slip into the escape pod, or Jack Ryan would send Mr. Clark with a intricately described outfit of fully reliable ultra-high-tech gear to make the missile explode just before launch. But in this one, it was something rather different that caused one of the R-21 (NATO designation SS-N-5 Serb) medium range seaborne ballistic missiles to explode during a launch, on August 3, 1968, in the North Pacific 300 miles from Honolulu, sinking the sub.

This is all the same a quite thrilling story, the authors recounting the mysterious events that led up to the sortie, describing in detail worthy of *Run Silent, Run Deep* the tense events of the mission, and at the climax, as the fiendish plan was just about to go into effect, its catastrophic failure — which they attribute to the proper functioning of a fail-safe device.

The recovery of the *K-127* is an event rather better known, though not as much as it should be. I still recall the glowing article in *Reason* magazine about how Howard Hughes's *Glomar Explorer* was going to revolutionize the mineral markets by mining for ocean-floor manganese nodules. As we all now know, the *Glomar Explorer* was built to recover this Soviet submarine, though so much of the project is secret — amazing, in the U.S. system — that it's still controversial how much of the vessel was actually recovered.

Thus this book, with its vivid if not lurid description of how these top secret projects were conceived and executed. The authors point to the sudden assignment of a new group of men to the submarine; they posit that it was a KGB *osnatz* special warfare team, capable of firing the missile. This project, they believe, was planned at the highest levels, a scheme of Chief Ideologue Mikhail A. Suslov and the new KGB chairman Yuri V. Andropov.

Then, the boat set sail on her magical mystery trip, proceeding to the indicated launch point. Where, as the missile was hoisted into position, Something Happened . . . and a new opportunity came into being.

The recovery, they indicate, was more

complete than was let on. Most of the submarine was in fact recovered, including the section with the cipher machines.

No, it's not a technothriller. But is it likely?

I admit to boggling when the authors talk of the expert corps of petty officers on Soviet submarines (Pages 47-48). You will recall that their surface forces lacked such men, a factor which played a significant role in the mutiny on board the destroyer *Storozhevoy* (see *The Last Sentry* by Gregory Young and Nate Braden (2005; reviewed in *Alexiad* V. 5 #2) for more on this). This does not inspire confidence in the authors' research.

A decision made at such high levels would leave a paper trail. Such paper would pass over the desk of the KGB archivist. You know the man I mean, Vasili Nikitich Mitrokhin, the man who defected to the British with six trunkloads of copies of "to be preserved forever" KGB papers. Yet there's no mention of such a stunning provocation.

One wonders why, if the mission team could launch the missile, they wouldn't be able to launch it *properly*. Allegedly, the missile exploded on launch because they didn't disarm the security charges meant to prevent a rogue launch. They didn't have all the launch codes? This seems rather careless and haphazard.

Indeed, most of the sources for this book seem to lack even the solidity that Mitrokhin had. Anonymous sources have the disturbing habit of being unverifiable.

Why, in any case, would either side be able to keep such a secret as described here? Particularly now, coming up on forty years after the original loss, where the value of revealing what went on outweighs the value of security.

In 1929, Simon and Schuster published a vivid tale of a young woman's life on board a South Pacific trading ship, Joan Lowell's *The Cradle of the Deep*, which speedily became a bestseller. With more stunning speed it was revealed that the book was a total fraud; Joan Lowell had been a student in a California high school during the time she had claimed she was sailing in the South Pacific, and the ship she had said (in a compelling passage) burned to the waterline was moored to a dock. The book kept on selling nonetheless; it was a compelling story, true or invented.

One wonders if these events were lost on Quentin Reynolds, who in 1953 wrote up the story of wartime spy George Du Pré in a book titled *The Man Who Wouldn't Talk*. As with Lowell's story, it was speedily revealed that Du

Pré's vivid tale of his wartime experiences was entirely fictional. (See *Counterfeit Spies* (1999) by Rupert "Nigel West" Allason for more on this.) Reynolds's publisher (Bennett Cerf of Random House) repackaged *The Man Who Wouldn't Talk* as a novel, for the same reason as Lowell's book continued selling.

So is this another such story?

HER MAJESTY'S SPYMASTER

Review by Joseph T Major of
*AT HER MAJESTY'S SECRET SERVICE:
The Chiefs of Britain's Intelligence Agency,
MI6*

by "Nigel West" [Rupert Allason]
(Greenhill Books/Naval Institute Press;
2006; ISBN 978-0-85367-702-1; \$34.95)

Bernard Lee
<http://www.imdb.com/name/nm0496866/>
Dame Judi Dench
<http://www.imdb.com/name/nm0001132/>

Veteran espionage writer Rupert Allason has added to his reputation with this history of the British Secret Intelligence Service, as shown through the careers and lives of its Chiefs, from **Sir Mansfield Smith-Cumming**, the progenitor of so many of its traditions, down to the current "C", **Sir John Scarlett**. The Firm (as it is called) began as a one-man office across from the Army and Navy Stores, growing to the occupancy of a gigantic and hideous building on the south bank of the Thames.

Along the way, Allason tries to rebuild the reputations of such beleaguered figures as **Sir John "Sinbad" Sinclair**, whose tenure of office was blighted by the "Buster" Crabbe affair. Navy diver Lionel Crabbe was tasked with the underwater surveillance of the Soviet cruiser *Ordzhonikidze* in Portsmouth. The minister in charge carelessly let the mission go through, in spite of orders to the contrary, and then Crabbe, in poor health, died during the mission, likely of a heart attack. Embarrassment all round. (Considering the allegation by "counterfeit spy" John R. "Christopher Creighton" Davies that he himself had killed Crabbe (*The Khrushchev Objective* by Noel Hynd and Christopher Creighton (1988)), Allason doesn't bother even mentioning it, perhaps on the grounds that there's no point in kicking a man when he's down.)

Other events have repercussions, and Allason discusses the handling of the infamous Zinoviev Letter. One unusual point he makes is that OGPU chief Feliks E. Dzhherzhinsky

ordered a security check to see how this breach had occurred (Page 39). Even though the letter was forged, it was the sort of thing they might have done (calling for pro-Soviet revolutionary action within the British armed forces). And similarly today, Allason discusses the problems of the runup to the Iraq war, and how the sources for Nigerian yellowcake and Iraqi WMD were dubious, and how **Sir Richard Dearlove** was involved in it all.

The war of defectors also figures, of course. On the Soviet side Allason trots out the usual suspects; Philby and Blake. He is on more reassuring ground when discussing the chaps who went the other way, including Oleg Penkovsky (who was run by **Dickie Franks** [Sir Arthur Temple Franks]), "Viktor Suvorov" [Vladimir Rezun], Oleg Gordievsky [a great asset to **Sir Christopher Curwen**, who also had to deal with the then mystery of his betrayal], and Vasili Mitrokhin.

The gradual change in the culture of the Firm is a minor, yet not insignificant topic. Allason cites how **Sir Stewart Graham Menzies** had managed to recruit people through personal contacts, and had made a policy of personal contacts with his subordinates, even the most ordinary workers. This is contrasted with the personality of **Sir Dick Goldsmith White**, who never quite could warm up to people.

Some of the most startling revelations are also some of the most off-handed ones. For example, the continued resistance of the government of Rhodesia to the UN sanctions was made possible through the energetic covert operations of their intelligence service, the Central Intelligence Organisation. After the resolution of the crisis, and the establishment of Zimbabwe, the new prime minister, Robert Mugabe — kept up the organization and even kept on its director, Ken Flower, who had evidently also been an SIS asset all along!

Spy fiction has seemingly always been interconnected with the operations of SIS, from such writers as Somerset Maugham, Graham Greene, "John le Carré", and the like, to the movies. When le Carré's *Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy* (1974) was adapted into the stunning mini-series (1979, 1980), the retiring Chief **Sir Maurice Oldfield** met with its star, Sir Alec Guinness, and Guinness imitated several of Oldfield's mannerisms for the show (though not his habit of picking up young men). [Some overlap with other roles might have produced interesting results: "Help me, George Smiley, you're my only hope." Or having the mole have to get rid of the eight senior people in the Circus who stood between him and the

director, all played by Sir Alec.]

More romantic fiction has had its part, too. Allason quotes **Sir Colin McColl** that “James Bond is the best recruiting sergeant in the world.” (Page 212). [Surely, “recruiting petty officer”!] And the next “C”, **Sir David Spedding**, invited Dame Judi Dench (who succeeded the late Bernard Lee at playing “M” in the James Bond movies) to the SIS 1998 Christmas lunch.

One interesting item included in the book is a map of London showing where many of the places that feature in the book are located. The SIS headquarters has been moving farther and farther away from Number Ten.

Even when there is knowledge, there’s no reason to believe it will be acted on. In his “world-saving” essay “The Last Days of the United States” (NHOL G.047) Robert Heinlein pointed out:

An efficient intelligence system — Fine! But no answer in itself. The British intelligence was quite efficient before this war. Mr. Chamberlain’s desk was piled high with intelligence reports, reports which showed that Munich need never have happened. This has since been confirmed by high German General Staff officers. But Mr. Chamberlain did not read the reports. *Intelligence reports are useful only to the intelligent.*

Allason describes how **Sir Hugh “Quex” Sinclair** generated that intelligence (even if not quite as efficiently as thought) and how it was ignored. (As shown in Terry Parssinen’s *The Oster Conspiracy of 1938* (2003; reviewed in *Alexiad* V. 2 #4.) “SIS’s unpopularity in Whitehall was in part because his message, especially on the subject of the scale and speed of German rearmament, was unwelcome.” [Page 46] Whereas in more recent times, **Sir Colin Figures** had failed to predict the Falklands invasion, though SIS did succeed in averting an Argentinian covert operation in Spain.

The personal lives of those associated with the Firm have been matters of concern. Alcoholism is a prevailing problem, homosexuality one that is becoming less so due to greater public acceptance, but family ties can always bind. Allason mentions how the arrest and conviction of Charles, the oldest son of **Sir John Rennie**, for possession and use of heroin, led to his premature retirement. Since he had just overseen the grand expulsion of Soviet intelligence officers from Britain, provoked by

Oleg Lyalin’s revelations, that did seem particularly sad.

Currently, the latest dilemma is that of the proposed coup against the government of Equatorial Guinea. (The front cover of the book bears an endorsement by Frederick Forsyth, whose novel *The Dogs of War* (1974) is a fictionalized recounting of a coup against the government of Equatorial Guinea.) The Firm had ties to both the planners and, as mentioned above, to the governments and intelligence services of Zimbabwe and of South Africa, where the various plotters were arrested.

The scope of this work is quite surprising. It would be expected that the SIS would have to deal with James Angleton and his grand observations, but even here Allason manages to cast a new light on it (even as he continues to adhere to his suspicions of former MI-5 deputy director Graham Mitchell first given in his *Molehunt* (1987)). It is a bit more surprising that the Firm had to deal with the Irish Republican Army, and evidently they played a part in the defusing of the threat.

OY OY SEVEN

Review by Joseph T Major of
**CAPTURING JONATHAN POLLARD:
How One of the Most Notorious Spies in
American History Was Brought to Justice**
by Ronald J. Olive
(Naval Institute Press; 2006;
ISBN 1-59114-652-6; \$27.95)

There are times when I wonder if Sol Weinstein wasn’t secretly working for the Mossad. Isser Harel, its first Mnumeh, had been bothered by far-leftist Uri Avnery’s girlie magazine *HaOlam HaZeh* (*This World*) so he set up a competing magazine, for example. How better, then, to make foes underestimate the Israeli intelligence agency than to present it as a bastion of Yiddishkeit, run by a Yiddishe mama, where everyone smokes Raleighs so they can use the valuable coupons to buy equipment, and so on. Weinstein’s “Israel Bond” novels — *Loxfinger* (1965), *Matzohball* (1966), *On the Secret Service of His Majesty, the Queen* (1966), and *You Only Live Until You Die* (1968) — presented Israel Bond, Secret Agent Oy Oy Seven, in some familiar, yet different and comical settings.

Now people trying in real life to be Israel Bond, Secret Agent Oy Oy Seven, are a different matter . . .

The case of Jonathan Jay Pollard has become a cause celebre in some circles. The

seemingly disproportionate sentence, the remarkable suffering Pollard and his ex-wife Anne endured while in prison, the shameful prejudice exhibited by officialdom towards them and their reasons . . . Pollard was one of those swept up in the notorious “Year of the Spy”, when in 1985 several foreign agents, some of them very long-running indeed, were tracked down. Very few people sympathize with Sharon Scranage, convicted of telling a Ghanian intelligence officer about CIA agents, for example, much less with the infamous cipher spy John Walker.

Ronald J. Olive, an investigator for the then Naval Investigative Service (the predecessor of the NCIS) was one of the officers involved in the Pollard investigation. (It is not unreasonable to assume that there were others, perhaps as important, who are not mentioned for reasons of security or self-image.) The portrayal of his topic is not surprisingly rather different to the one more commonly disseminated.

While he does not explicitly say so, Olive describes Pollard as a fantab, a man who desperately wanted to be a Secret Agent, and did his best to be so. In something of a blow to the portrayal of a Hero of Zion, Olive tells of Pollard’s very first attempt to provide intelligence to a foreign power — he approached an Australian Navy officer and offered to sell him information (Pages 43-44). Crikey!

Later on, Pollard also tried to sell material to South Africa. He cultivated an acquaintance with a journalist who worked in Afghanistan and tried to use him as a conduit for selling information to Pakistan. Israel wasn’t his first love, in other words, just his most successful one. As shown by the amount of material passed to them — 360 cubic feet of paper, over a million pages (Pages 213-214). Indeed, when he was arrested, he made a call to his wife with a code word which was a signal for her to dispose of the papers they had with them, and in trying to do so she filled a suitcase with **seventy pounds** of paper (Pages 131-133). Crikey!

Similarly, as for the “prisoner of Zion” approach, Olive says, “At the time [after the arrest], I didn’t know Pollard was Jewish — in fact, no one involved in the investigation, not even his coworkers, knew . . .” (Page 180). He also sees something questionable in Pollard’s not mentioning Israel, but he’d want to be protecting his employers.

What Olive does indict, correctly, is the culture of sloppiness that pervaded American security. Pollard had been rejected by the CIA,

he had failed two lie-detector tests, yet he was able to get a job at the Naval Investigative Service where he could obtain classified material whether or not it was related to his assignment, all without anyone showing any concern whatsoever. (This last should be a tipoff; Alger Hiss also gathered classified information unrelated to his assignment.)

What caused Pollard to be caught? Olive describes an action by an anonymous coworker who noticed some deception with documents, which led to a more thorough search by Pollard’s supervisor Commander Agee, which led to the counterintelligence branch under Olive being called in. It’s fair to note that I’ve read two books about the Aldrich Ames case where one claims he was tracked down by the FBI and the other claims he was tracked down by CIA counterintelligence. And then, one has to think of the Carlos Lehder case, where the CIA put out press releases about how Lehder was found through high technology computer analysis able to detect his location from the lengths of shadows seen in a birthday party video, and then it was revealed that fellow drug overlord Pablo Escobar told the DEA where Lehder was. [See Mark Bowden’s *Killing Pablo: The Hunt for the World’s Greatest Outlaw* (2001), particularly Page 54, for more on this.] Don’t consider this a complete presentation of the investigation, in other words.

Pollard didn’t lawyer up soon enough. He talked and talked and talked, which left him with no real alternative other than to plead guilty and hope he got off better than that one other guy who had spied for an allied, if not friendly, power — Agent LIBERAL, Julius Rosenberg. Well, he got life in prison.

Not surprisingly since then Pollard has waged a public relations campaign to get out. Olive naturally takes a less than approving perspective here. He cites a number of people involved who refer to the great damage that Pollard did, but the details are classified. No doubt this feeds further the feelings, even by others than Pollard, of his being a modern Dreyfus (the original was convicted of treason and espionage for Germans on the basis of documents too classified for the defense to be allowed to see them; some of Captain Henry’s “forgé mais vrai” items, perhaps?)

Those who remember the early days of the case will recall Pollard’s warm and concerned feelings for his wife, Anne, last seen during this narrative trying to dispose of seventy pounds of paper (she failed). During her five years in the slammer she and he protested furiously and in every medium available that

she was cruelly being denied proper medical care. Then she did her time and got released and Pollard . . . got a divorce, later marrying a Pollard groupie.

As of the publication of this book it had been twenty-one years since Pollard's conviction. He constantly hopes for an early release in one form or other, perhaps even a full pardon. (Olive makes it sound extremely negative that Israel pays captured spies. Why shouldn't they?) For then:

. . . if he holds out for a commutation of sentence, or a pardon from the president, and it is granted, it will mean a major victory for Pollard. He will still get all his money from Israel, and at the same time his crime of passing highly classified defense information to a foreign government will be forgiven. Rather than a spy with a tarnished record, he'll emerge from his ordeal a man more sinned against than sinning.

Perhaps this is the reason Pollard is willing to wait for the current or a future president who, for whatever political reasons, will say, "Enough, it's time for a pardon." When and if that time ever comes, it will send a loud message to the world: It's okay to disclose national security secrets of the United States as long as they are given to an ally.

The former convict would revel in that outcome. Why? Because it would imply that he, Jonathan Jay Pollard, was right and everybody else was wrong.

— *Capturing Jonathan Pollard*, Page 260

Suddenly retired KGB Major Stanislav Levchenko gave the indicators for recruitability as MICE — Money, Ideology, Compromise, and Ego. Money is very simple; the example that comes to mind is John Walker, who received two million dollars over his career. Ideology is where his predecessors, Ted Hall for example, come in. Compromise is by contrast somewhat tawdry; the above-mentioned Sharon Scranage, for example, was seduced and used by a guy from Ghanaian security.

But it seems that for Pollard, the primary influence was the last, Ego; knowing that he, Jonathan Jay Pollard, Colonel Oy Oy Seven of the Mossad, had finally received his due recognition as the superspy he had always been in his dreams.

Review by Joseph T Major of
HEYDRICH: The Face of Evil
by Mario R. Dederichs
(Greenhill Books; 2005, 2006;
ISBN 978-1-85367-686-4; \$00.00)

It is possible to obtain a scenario for the popular computer game *The Sims* "which features a family, consisting of 'Reinhard Heydrich' and 'Lina von Osten', together with their children, whose house can be built." [Page 178] Some people just have too much time on their hands.

Not Reinhard Tristan Eugen Heydrich, who during his heyday was usually doing two jobs at once, while keeping up his fencing skills, being a loving husband and father, playing the violin for friends, and visiting Salon Kitty. If you think I'm joking, realize that he did run the *Scherheitsdienst*, the SS Security Service, while being a fighter pilot during the Battle of Britain. Of course, he had no kills and the SD wasn't all that great as an intelligence service anyway.

Indeed, Heydrich's life seems so at odds with his career. He was artistic, from an artistic family (his father was a musician and named him appropriately). He was charming; he romanced Lina von Osten properly. He was polylingual; he qualified as a translator in English and Russian, and also spoke French (presumably he would never tell the English that the Führer carnally desired them). And, as I've said, he was a hard-working multi-tasker.

One of those tasks, though, was setting up the Wannsee Conference. You know, the one to discuss the "Final Solution to the Jewish Problem" by representatives of all the government agencies involved.

And here, it seems, Dederichs falls away from his topic, as it were. Other functionaries of the Nazi State seem to have been fortunate to find themselves with such power; Himmler a failed agriculturalist, Goebbels a failed novelist, Göring a failed civilian and soldier alike. This is a man who seemingly could have been a success at anything he applied himself to, a man of many talents. Why did he do this?

Perhaps it comes down to an absence of morals. Other Nazis seemed to glory in expressing antisemitism; for Heydrich, it was just part of a job. He comes across as the sort of person who would have killed all the bicyclists if the Führer had ordered it. Dederichs quotes a comment by Lina Heydrich which can be reduced to the Shakespearian dialogue: "Where is thy conscience now?" "In the Duke of Gloucester's purse." (*Richard III* Act I Scene 4) The purse need not be a

monetary one.

Given the chaotic, nigh Hobbesian nature of the Nazi state, one wonders how Heydrich could remain a Number Two. Dederichs covers the reasons and besides the usual one, cites Heydrich's approval of the concept of the *Führerprinzip*; the Leader was owed the absolute obedience of all his subordinates, and Heydrich would obey. (And then there is the sinister rumor about his ancestry; sometimes unprovable rumors are a better way of keeping control than provable ones.)

And then, the Czechs had had enough of a governor who governed too well. Is the story [Pages 121-122] about Heydrich crowning himself with the Bohemian crown true? He fulfilled the alleged curse thereupon. His descendants are still unregenerate, while by way of contrast his brother helped forge documents for escaping refugees, even Jews, and killed himself fearing exposure.

This isn't a scholarly biography; but then there isn't one. Could it be that for all his talents, at the core there was no Heydrich, no there there, Lewis's Un-man in real life? It's a disturbing thought.

IN THE GHOST COUNTRY

Review by Joseph T Major of
THE BOYS OF EVEREST:
Chris Bonington and the Tragedy of
Climbing's Greatest Generation
by Clint Willis
(Carroll & Graf; 2006;
ISBN 978-0-78671-579-4; \$27.95)

Come, let us sit on the ice and tell sad stories of the death of climbers.

In the bleak, meagre years after the War, a new ethos emerged amid the climbing lot in Britain, who were themselves a new lot. The old toffs, wot, wot, were now on their uppers as far as the old ready went, so it was up to reg'lar fellers to go climbin'. And bein' as they were, they made a virtue of necessity. Havin' new shoes made a bloke right proper suspect.

Oh all right . . . but a new generation of British climbers did come to the forefront in the early fifties, and they were working sorts, generally. They climbed on the cheap, as it were, with scuffy shoes, scavenged gear, and the like. One could expect that there would be a lot of accidents and more.

One of the leaders, chroniclers, and survivors was not one of their sort; Christian John Storey Bonington was U enough to go up to University College School and Sandhurst, serving as a subaltern in the Royal Tank Regiment before he went up a hill but came

down a mountain, so to speak.

Over the next twenty-seven years, Bonington would organize and lead expeditions to the Himalayas and other high mountains. The "Greatest Generation" broke with the old way of doing things in other ways. Up until then, Himalayan expeditions had been done with massive logistic support; large camps, groups of fifteen to twenty climbers, hundreds of porters carrying in tons of equipment. (When the hapless climbers in W. E. Bowman's *The Ascent of Rum Doodle* (1956; discussed in *Alexiad* V. 1 #3) hired thirty thousand porters, that wasn't all that great an exaggeration). These climbers preferred smaller expeditions, moving quickly with smaller reserves of equipment. Thus, for example, Bonington's attempt to climb the South Face of Annapurna in 1970 (recounted in his *Annapurna South Face* (1971)) was done by a team of eight climbers.

But these smaller reserves meant bigger problems. If a team member broke down, that could severely cramp their efforts. And if one died . . . in fact, it seems that someone died on every climb.

The big feats had been already done; Dhaulagiri was climbed the same year as Bonington's first expedition, to the nearby Annapurna II, leaving of the 8000-meter peaks only Shishapangma to be climbed. What these smaller expeditions specialized in were the difficult climbs, the near-vertical faces and the like, the sort of behavior that a climber would find noteworthy. (Speaking of noteworthy climbers, the index refers to "Messner, Roland" [Page 534] which does not inspire confidence in the indexer. Try "Reinhold", which is got right in the text.)

In the end he switched to doing lower peaks, working on conservation, and the like. Or sitting amid his losses, the widows of his friends, the child who died so very young (he has two surviving children and a loving wife who stayed with him in spite of his being away so often), and the rest of his ghosts. He was knighted in 1996.

Those who would argue that Bonington was immodest should note that he usually was not on the summit team; in spite of being on four expeditions to Mount Everest (and one to its satellite peak Nuptse) he did not reach the summit until his final one, in 1985 (eleven years before the events recounted in Jon Krakauer's *Into Thin Air* (1997)). History isn't necessarily written by those who are right, but it's definitely written by those who are left.

THE TALKING FISH

Review by Joseph T Major of
*VOYAGE OF THE MANTEÑO:
The Education of a Modern-Day
Expeditioner*

by John Haslett
(St. Martin's Press; 2006;
ISBN 978-0-312-32432-2; \$25.95)

W. E. Bowman wrote a sequel to *The Ascent of Rum Doodle* (1956), his classic sendup of mountain climbing tales, titled *The Cruise of the Talking Fish* (1957). In that book, his hapless narrator Binder set out to sail across the Pacific on a raft with a similarly clueless set of explorers. Apparently, it is out of print, but after reading this book, I may go looking for it.

John Haslett had the raft bug. His particular take on it, though, was to sail from Ecuador to Hawaii. Now the first part of his proposed voyage was in fact the most reasonable; even within living memory there had been people who had sailed balsa rafts from Ecuador to Central America. The conquistadores had passed some going the other way, for example.

With the help of the Manteño people of Ecuador, then, in 1995 Haslett set out to build his raft, which he called, in tribute to Thor Heyrdahl, the *Illa-Tiki*. And so, with all the resources of humanity both ancient and modern, the valiant crew of the *Illa-Tiki* set forth.

Well, maybe not so valiant. One crew member, recruited rather casually, had tropical sores, or so he said. It was hard to tell, given his method of treatment, which seemed rather extreme, and aside from saying that it used up all the peroxide and antibiotics I really don't want to say more.

But then the raft turned out to have a similar problem; when they stopped off in Costa Rica, an inspection revealed that the balsa logs of the raft were completely riddled with teredo worm.

Three years later, he tried again. This time, he called the raft *Manteño*, paying tribute to his mentors. At least this time they didn't have problems with deranged self-mutilating crew. The *Manteño* reached central America in spite of virtually nonexistent steering, only to be grounded due to — you guessed it, teredo worm boring.

Haslett looked for a mentor in how to recruit people, and decided that Shackleton's way was the key. The man who had used up their hydrogen peroxide, for example, hadn't seemed right to begin with, but they had to

have someone. Accordingly, with the third-time-pays-for-all spirit, he called his third raft *Endurancia*. This time, Haslett concluded, he would do what all the other raft-builders had done and hadn't bothered mentioning; he would coat his balsa logs with tar.

The *Endurancia* didn't even get away from Ecuador.

Balsa raft expeditions, and the like, have become problematic the more that they have been done. The expedition always seems to require modern technology to function, whether canned rations, GPS, tar, or whatever — equipment, technologies, and concepts not even available to the original indigenous people. More and more the voyages themselves wind up with the explorers being rescued or otherwise falling short of their goal. They know that there is something out there; presumably the original Manteño who sailed up to Central America knew that, but would the people who were supposed to be sailing across the Pacific know that there were islands out there?

But Haslett's adventures were harmless and affordable; the person injured most on them did it to himself. Maybe he ought to lay off rafting for a while and go climb Mount Rumdoodle (which is in Antarctica, near Mawson Station; the guys who named it had read the book).

But Haslett's adventures were harmless and affordable; the person injured most on them did it to himself. Maybe he ought to lay off rafting for a while and go climb Mount Rumdoodle (which is in Antarctica, near Mawson Station; the guys who named it had read the book).

**THE REMARKABLE MILLARD
FILLMORE:**

**The Unbelievable Life of a
Forgotten President**

by George Pendle
(Three Rivers Press; 2007;
ISBN 978-0307339621; \$13.95)

Review by Lisa Major

This is a very strange, quirky book and one of the funniest things I've read in quite some time. It is a very highly fictionalized biography of Millard Fillmore, best described as a combination of Flashman and Forrest Gump. Since my copy is a review copy I'm not allowed to quote from it, much as I would like to. However, the sections detailing Fillmore's friendship with Edgar Allan Poe and his trip to Japan with Perry are especially memorable. It was quite easily the best of the review copies I picked up from Carmichael's. I'm surprised Bob let this little jewel slip through his hands. (Joe says the author is totally insane. I say he's just fannishly strange.) If you like strange, bizarre, quirky humor you will probably like this book.

**THE TEN THOUSAND:
A Novel of Ancient Greece**

by Michael Curtis Ford
(St. Martin's Paperbacks; 2002;
ISBN 0-312-98032-9; \$6.99)

Review by Lisa Major

Recently I found a copy of *The Ten Thousand*, by Michael Curtis Ford, in a thrift store. On impulse I put it in my shopping basket and paid fifty cents for it. I expected at best to finish it and toss it into the cull pile with all the other historical fiction that had failed to measure up to Rosemary Sutcliff and Mary Renault. Within a few pages I was solidly hooked on this modern retelling of Xenophon's march to the sea.

The book is narrated by Xenophon's childhood slave and later squire, Theo. It begins with an attack on a mountain fort being held by a rebel named Thrasybulus. After injury ends Xenophon's part in the fighting, the book goes back to Xenophon's childhood, when he was called Aedon. He becomes a pupil of Socrates after a chance encounter in the street. Aedon becomes Xenophon after killing another youth attempting to steal in the belief the youth was an assassin. His innocence dies with the youth he kills.

Xenophon defies his father to go to the Persians. He joins up with Cyrus and remains with him until Cyrus is killed. He meets a Spartan general named Clearchus, an enemy of Xenophon's father. Xenophon stays with Cyrus until Cyrus is killed in battle. The Persians then turn on the Greek army Clearchus had built and kill Clearchus during a truce. Xenophon comes up with a plan of action. Xenophon makes a speech and gains command of the ten thousand Greeks. The epic march to the sea begins. Its ending is marvelously described. There is perhaps twenty pages of epilogue to clear up loose threads. In the very back I learned this book is a first novel. It doesn't read like one.

If you have any interest at all in reading historical fiction about Greece, *The Ten Thousand* is well worth eight dollars. With Steven Pressfield sadly gone, Ford is probably the best writer of historical fiction about ancient times still around. He's not the equal of Sutcliff and Renault (who is?) but *The Ten Thousand* is a first novel, after all. He may come to match them in time. I have every intention of building a collection of Ford's work.

BERNADINI & BARBARO

by Lisa Major

I looked recently at the horse racing news to see how Bernardini was doing and learned that the first mare had been pronounced in foal to him February 12. I sat back and stared at the screen, very pleased to see that no matter what there would probably be little Bernardinis running around in eleven months.

And then I remembered Barbaro, who didn't get the chance my favorite horse now has. I reminded myself again that in view of Barbaro's break through the gate it was doubtful that Barbaro could have beaten my favorite horse in the stretch.

In addition to all this, even had Barbaro not been injured in the brush with Brother Derek, Solis, Brother Derek's jockey, would have undeniably claimed foul and the stewards would probably have allowed the claim. I had thought that it had been the broken leg which caused Barbaro to skitter across the track and into Brother Derek but the stewards said it was the brush that caused the injury. Since they undeniably know more than I do I'm confident their version is the correct one. All I saw was that Barbaro went clear across the track and Solis had to yank Brother Derek hard to get out of his way. Brother Derek lost all chance of winning at that instant. Bernardini appeared to run very cleanly and never got close enough to other horses to bother them. Certainly no other horse came close enough to Bernardini in the stretch for him to interfere with them, nor would that happen until he came up against the bigger powerhouse named Invasor.

LET'S DO LUNCH

Trip Report by Joseph & Lisa Major on
**The Twenty-Sixth Sherlock
Holmes/Arthur Conan Doyle Symposium**
"Food & Drink in the Canon"
Dayton, Ohio, March 9-11, 2007

Friday, March 9, 2007
Louisville — Cincinnati — Dayton

We had made the usual preparations, including arranging with Kim, Lisa's friend, to tend to the cats. Her son, James, is getting bigger and bigger, changing from "cute" to "charming", and Kim is as patient and understanding as ever.

I had also printed out maps, got various descriptions off the Internet, and in general used the breadth of modern technology to increase my life. (Instead of using my life for being so connected that I know and do nothing, which seems to be the deal.) We had brunch at Dooley's Bagels, buying food for Saturday, went down to Tim's and Elizabeth's, loaded

their stuff into our car, and were off.

The repair work was done for and we got to Cincinnati easily, a little before three. It wasn't hard to find the Cincinnati Art Museum; just follow the arrows and orange banners. Parking and admission are free.

Cincinnati Art Museum

This has been financed by various grants and such. The people of the Cincinnati area ought to use more of this large resource. The place has eighty-eight galleries, they say, and we could not give even the ones we did see entirely sufficient time.

To be honest, the collection tends to run to minor works of major painters, and minor painters. There is nevertheless a high level of quality among the exhibits. Some of the items were indeed surprising, such as the various murals from a fourteenth-century Spanish church, along with a tomb effigy. One could see the Gothic influence on this portrayal of the old Spanish don.

The Colonial Dames of Ohio had sponsored a display of Early American furniture. The only issue I might have had with them is that these are the pieces that weren't used, the pieces that survived. Sort of negative selection.

(I fear I did get rather irreverent at times. Thus a small bronze of the Rape of the Sabines was "Rome Needs Women!", a marble of the Wedding of Hiawatha was, "The casino is *this* way," and a figure of Bacchus and a Bacchante, with Cupid, became, "If you eat right, you too can pick up girls." — he was holding a very large bunch of grapes.)

They had considerable local pride and for example exhibited a number of ornamental pots made by a local firm that seems to have had quite some vogue and verve. Another local artist had done paintings of the Old West, specializing in the Indians. (With the usual presentist claptrap in the commentary, as when a Plains Indian using a rifle to shoot a buffalo is said to be yielding to the white man's culture. Hello!/? He is using the best technology he has available.)

On our way out we went by the Ancient Art section and there was one display that made an impression on me. They had a set of ancient Greek toy animals. Even then, they had farm sets.

This is a marvelous place. I wish we had had more than two hours to go through the place.

Chihuly's marvelous glass piece hanging overhead in wild blue creativity unleashed..

Benjamin West. Seeing things legendary Egyptian queen Hatshepsut might have touched. El Greco's marvelous icons. Canaletto's disciplined mastering of light and shadow.. Oosterwijk. Greek exhibit. Catholic iconostases.

— Lisa

The museum closed at five, so we went through some busy Cincinnati traffic (I had thought it would be hard to get on I-71 going south, and the signs were sometimes obscure, but we managed) over to Covington, to have dinner at Wertheim's. Which we had to ourselves, almost, but then that meant there was only one waitress for the whole place, and besides they were out of some of the menu items.

Went on to Dayton, and checked into the Super 8 Inn I had found through AAA. It has a Tim Horton's next to it. You know — the Canadian doughnut shop chain? But Krispy Kreme is moving to Canada, so I guess they can open up shops here in the U.S.

There is a reception given by the Agra Treasurers, the Dayton scion society, every Friday night before the Symposium, but this was the first time we had come in early enough to go. Getting there did involve driving at night and I missed the first turnoff, so we circled around, which was another problem, before finding the road to the Holiday Inn where the Symposium was held. We were greeted by everyone, and even picked up a new recipient, Martin Arbagi (hi there) who corrected our Greek.

Things broke up around ten and we went back to the Super 8 for the night.

And so to bed.

Saturday, March 10, 2007 Dayton

The motel has a decent continental breakfast, which helped save us money and time. However, it was raining. We drove carefully in the direction of the Borders bookstore, which as you may recall had moved from its previous site. Did a little shopping and decided to go by Best Buy, which was right across from the road to the Holiday Inn. I got "Borat" (the box says "БОЯДТ" which is actually "Boyadt" but then there was "My Big Fat Grssk Wedding", not to mention "APPAЯATЧИK" ["Arrayatsnyk"]) . . .), "Idiocracy" (think "The Marching Morons" *without* the smart people), and a couple of other DVDs.

We still could not get directly into the road

to the Holiday Inn and had to go down and around and back up again. But once we got there, things were jumping.

Roy Pilot had the good news that he had found out what "stohwassers" were, so he could fix that note in *The Annotated The Lost World* for the second edition, which would also fix the currency conversions. Moreover, *The Annotated The White Company* will be ready to go to the printer in three months or so.

One of the people there was Regina Stinson, and I asked both her and her husband if they knew Jan. No luck.

Then Cathy called us to order for a nice preliminary item:

"Karloff In Twilight"

Gord Shriver

Who did it in character; a short Life of Karloff as told from his own point of view. Find your niche and go for it. An impressive presentation and there are cons all over crying out for this sort of thing.

We spoke at the break. He had some comments about Bela Lugosi out of character, and I told him about Elly Bloch's death.

Cathy then called the Symposium to order and went through the usual start-up business. The first item of the first session followed.

"A Casual Discourse: The Canon Mentions Food and Drink — It May Not Be the Things You Think"

Roy Pilot, BSI

Mostly Vin Mariani. Which, you may recall from its discussion at previous Symposia, was a solution of coca leaf in Bordeaux wine. This was *extremely* popular and was endorsed by a number of public figures ranging from Jules Verne to H. G. Wells, as well as a bunch of mundane types.

Such drug use was quite common then. (Take that, Bill "Bet-a-million" Bennett!) Roy is talking to his strength here, as he is a (retired) pharmacist. He also discussed the use of morphine tablets, the origin of heroin, and other items, including the original formulation of Coca-Cola.

"An Appeal for the Impoverished"

Lorraine Reibert

Who movingly described the plight of the needy in that great sump of the Empire, London. The Symposium has always been very strong on the real background of the stories, and this description of poverty in late-nineteenth century London, as if the speaker were actually a woman from then soliciting donations for Good Works, is an example of

this policy. The listeners could gain additional understandings of the stories.

"Arsenic: It's What's for Dinner"

Jacquelynn Morris

Or why they call it inheritance powder. Morris discussed the history and usage of arsenic and arsenical compounds.

"The Underworld of Sherlock Holmes"

Marcy Mahle

What went on under those tweeds? This was another of those background items, touching on some items that weren't usually mentioned in polite society, namely umentionables, er underclothes. She explained what jaegers were (the name of the guy who decided that wool underwear was best), how much support women got, and other such intimate matters.

"Wines in the Canon, or Sipping Through the Tales"

David & Janet Bensley (presented by William Cochran

This paper, complete with Power Point slides, discussed all the types of wines that people consumed; which ones, where, and why. Admittedly, the use of brandy was as a stimulant, which makes the modern days of ammonia and ephedrine seem prosaic.

"My Merits as a Housekeeper: Sherlock Holmes and the Manly Art of Making a Home"

Cathy Gill

Cathy has retired (are we seeing a trend here?) and discussed the staffing issues for Mrs. Hudson's lodgers.

"Sherlock Holmes and the Secret Code"

Robert Czerwony

His idea for getting schoolkids interested in the Canon was to get them personally involved; they would decipher messages using techniques displayed to them, and be led to further items of interest. [While going fractal, listening to their iPods, text-messaging each other — "HES A LAMER" "LOL" — and shooting vlogs of picking their noses.]

"Sherlockian Myth-Busters: Thor Bridge and Engineer's Thumb"

Steven Doyle, BSI

Steve should wear a cool beret like Jamie on "Mythbusters" does. Otherwise, they did what the Mythbusters do; recreate scenes, from the Canon in this case, and look for ways to see if they could work. Thus we could see how

Mrs. Gibson's weapon could disappear and the way in which the colonel could chop at his disappearing contractor.

"Thirty Years a Sherlockian"

William Cochran, BSI

Who returned to the front to speak of his time in the field; how he first discovered Holmes, found a particular liking, then discovered that there were others who did so, groups of them. Some of the group stories were interesting. For example, there was the BSI leader who assigned seats as the annual dinner. It seems that, previously, Asimov's friends would hog his table. And other cliques emerged. By breaking these up, this managed to spread out the companionship.

Bill talked of how scion societies vanish, of how the journals, the *Baker Street Journal*, Steve Doyle's late *Sherlock Holmes Review*, and so on were actually profiting from this, since the good writing went to them instead of minor scion society journals, and other organizational matters. Then too, there was this meeting, founded by Roy Pilot and the late and sadly missed Al Rodin.

And with that the program wound up. Elizabeth had fallen and injured a muscle in her leg, so she didn't feel like walking much. The reception was by the pool, down the hall, and then we ate in the hotel restaurant during the banquet. But then there came the Readers' Theatre presentation, "The Noble Bachelor". A splendid time was had by all (except perhaps Lord Robert . . .).

That done, we drove back to the Super 8 and looked over our purchases. Lisa had got a copy of *Sir Nigel* and I had *The Complete Napoleonic Stories*.

And so to bed.

Sunday, March 11, 2007

Dayton — Louisville

Having lost an hour, we were a bit slow to get going. But we managed to check out and get down to the Sunday quiz. I won a copy of the *New Annotated Sherlock Holmes* — the short stories, which is two-thirds of the whole, but I do believe I made my membership back.

Elizabeth was still feeling uncomfortable, and we were all tired, so we made our departures and drove home, omitting the Cincinnati Museum Center. Maybe next year.

Which will be **March 7-9, 2008**. More as we hear the news. Some had wanted to hold it a week later. That's when they have the Final Four regional subfinals (every other year in Dayton, but). Here in Louisville we have

learned a hard lesson: **You don't put anybody in the same hotel as basketball fans.**

A splendid time was had by all and we thoroughly recommend the Symposium to all our recipients and friends in the area. I had previously tried emailing Frank Bynum and even, once we got there, calling the number for him in the Greater Dayton phone book. No luck. Frank, we want to hear from you.

FAMILY TIES

Trip Report by Joseph & Lisa Major on
2007 USS *Bush* Reunion
Pensacola, Florida, April 3-6, 2007

On April 6, 1945, the destroyer USS *Bush* (DD-529), was participating in the invasion of Okinawa by serving as a picket ship to provide early warning of Japanese raids. She was a vessel of the *Fletcher* class, the largest single class of destroyers ever built. As destroyers are in the US Navy, the *Bush* had been named after a naval hero, in this case Second Lieutenant William Sharp Bush, U.S.M.C., who had been killed during the battle between USS *Constitution* and HMS *Guerriere* on August 19, 1812. She had been launched on October 27, 1942 and had served in the Pacific throughout, from Alaska to Australia.

On that day, the *Bush* was struck by three suicide bombers and broke in half. There were 227 survivors, including a man who had celebrated his twentieth birthday two days before, a Kentucky boy named Gilmer Haydon Thomas, who seventeen years later would become Lisa's father.

The survivors and their descendants have been meeting annually, usually on the anniversary. This year it was in Pensacola.

Sunday, April 1, 2007 (Palm Sunday)

Louisville — Nashville, TN

This year, East and West are in harmony; Easter and Pascha are both April 8. Accordingly, we did not leave until Lisa got home from Palm Sunday service. I spent the morning doing the final packing. The cooler was cooling, ready to accept my medicine.

Then Lisa arrived, we gave Grant final instructions, and set off to Arby's to get lunch. Only to have to go back to Arby's almost immediately, as they had forgotten one of my roast beef sandwiches.

We had decided to get started in stages, getting used to longer drives. Our drive to Nashville was unspectacular. We checked in at the motel, unloaded things, and went off to Davis-Kidd Bookstore to do some shopping.

Wonder of wonders, they had two of the Hugo nominees that I didn't have: *Glasshouse* by Charles Stross and *Rainbows End* by Vernor Vinge. After eating dinner at O'Charley's across the parking lot, we went to see my cousin Bill Wadlington. I felt ashamed because he and his wife, Anna, were so glad to see us, though they were both recovering from strokes. We stayed until sundown, then returned to the motel to check in with Grant.

And so to bed.

Distance driven: 197.3 miles

Monday, April 2, 2007

Nashville — Huntsville, AL — Guntersville, AL

Breakfast was at the Cracker Barrel so conveniently down the street, and then we were off to the south some more. The Alabama Welcome Center on I-65 has a full-scale model Saturn IB as signpost, and also has their Korean War and Vietnam War Memorials.

From there it was not that far a drive to Huntsville, where a similar place was marked by an **even bigger** replica rocket. (See Rocket City.)

U.S. Space & Rocket Center

(<http://www.spacecamp.com>)

They have here representative models (on a 1:1 scale, of course) of most of the significant rockets in the American space arsenal, including a replica Space Shuttle, made to see if the thing could be driven down roads.

American rocket development was initially assigned to the U.S. Army; an extension of the Coastal Artillery task. (More on *that* later.) The Redstone Arsenal in Huntsville had a great many qualities, including that it was beyond the range of any Nazi or Red carrier aircraft and was conveniently near a power supply (the Tennessee Valley Authority). The history of the competing aerospace organizations is too well known to need recounting, but the most significant example of this is on display. That is, not only the model Saturn V rocket, but one of the real things. (Which is having an indoors display being built for it; like the U-505 it is not taking the outside climate very well, so much for dreams of using it to launch an Apollo capsule to Titan.)

Other historic displays include Wernher von Braun's office, though I don't think he had the flat-screen TV. His Hugo is on the desk.

There is a large display of Women In Space, the American female astronauts. The pictures looked as if they had been rearranged, with substantial areas of empty space on one wall. Very sloppy.

Lisa noted the Energy Depletion Zone behind the museum building. The Space and Rocket Center is the location of Space Camp, where children come to be exposed to the wonders of space flight. (Where, I fear, they endure another of those sooo booring things those mysterious creatures called Adults like to inflict on them for their own good.)

We left mid-afternoon and drove down to Guntersville, where my cousin the Reverend James T. Alves and his wife Lucy were waiting for us. We were joined by their daughter Mary Beth and his nephew Mac Alves, and discussed many interesting things about the Alves and their role in founding Lisa's hometown of Henderson, and about the Reverend's mother, Black-Eyed Susye, a dead shot with a .22 rifle.

And so to bed.

Distance driven: 171.1 miles

Tuesday, April 3, 2007

Guntersville — Pensacola, FL

We had a long way to go and the Alveses saw us off with gladness and sorrow. The ride south was uneventful and towards sundown we crossed into the state of Florida, having to stop to receive a call from Gil.

The Holiday Inn Express was theoretically easy to get to and if they hadn't been repairing the stretch of road between it and the exit from Interstate 10 theory would have been practice. We checked in, after a little room problem, and discovered we didn't have a refrigerator.

The con suite (that's what it was) was filling up with veterans, their spouses, descendants, and guests of various sorts. There were the usual what-have-you-been-doing-since-last-year conversations, door prizes, and other rituals of greeting. After a while Lisa's sister Norma and brother-in-law Brad showed up.

And so to bed.

Distance driven: 320.2 miles

Wednesday, April 4, 2007

Pensacola

Business Meeting today. It was in the adjoining Holiday Inn, but then the Holiday Inn Express had no function space. The meeting began with the bosun piping the crew to order. This isn't a figure of speech, either; one of the survivors was a Boatswain's Mate, and he saved his official "pipe" when he went over the side.

The survivors resolved to hand things over to the "Second Generation", that's us, their children, at least as far as doing the work went. Then, one of the guests spoke. He had been an officer on the LCS-61, one of the landing craft

which had rescued survivors, and he described how he had taken care to take a bearing so he could bring the ship back to the site of the sinking.

Next year, the reunion will be in San Diego. It will interest historians of Fandom who recall the CruiseCon bid to note that the proposal to hold the reunion on board a cruise ship foundered on logistical grounds, namely what about people who had to arrive late or leave early.

We ate dinner at a local restaurant called the Shrimp Basket, then went shopping afterwards at Books-A-Million, and back to the hotel.

And so to bed.

Thursday, April 5, 2007

**Pensacola
National Museum of Naval Aviation**
<http://naval.aviation.museum/home.html>

Since every naval aviator trained at P-Cola, by an amazing act of obviousness the Naval Aviation Museum is at Pensacola. It must have been an error of judgment.

The museum was founded by private funding, though the one substantial government investment was an \$8 million air-conditioning system. It is stuffed full of sample planes from Naval Aviation — all obsolete, retired ones, no government gifts (e.g., the B-2 in Dayton) involved. And some are quite noteworthy.

For example, there is a U.S. Navy Sopwith Camel. Really. The U.S. aviation industry dropped the ball during the Big One. However, they had the N-4, the flying boat that had crossed the Atlantic long before Lindbergh. Richard E. Byrd was involved in the planning for this, by the way.

They had also had some great seminars, which we had not even known about at the time. Imagine a panel on spaceflight with Alan Shepard and Neil Armstrong! (But the guide said, “the first man in space” and Yuriy Aleksandrovich had died in 1968, while the seminar was in the nineties.)

The selection of WWII planes, by way of contrast, was quite extensive, including a F4U Corsair painted in Pappy Boyington’s colors. Other types were represented, and upon seeing the Catalina on display, one attendee mentioned his long trek flying back and forth over the Pacific in them trying to catch up with the *Bush*.

One later plane was particularly interesting; a spotter plane which wasn’t quite Navy but which did make a carrier landing. The pilot, a South Vietnamese officer, when his country was crumbling round his ears, packed his wife

and family, five children, into the plane and flew it out to an American carrier, where he could (with a little help from a thirty-knot ship and a ten-knot wind) land the plane at the same speed as the ship. Oh yes, the plane was a two-seater, which indicates that your family trip in the car was nothing by comparison.

Lunch was at the museum café, which is a carefully disassembled-and-rebuilt bar from the Philippine base where naval aviators had let go before going on service. And yes, one of the memorial plaques on the wall, taken along with the rest of the decor, was for the USMC Black Sheep Squadron in the seventies.

(It is worth noting that the Naval Aviation Museum giftshop had more adult books on space than the Huntsville Space Museum giftshop, which dealt mostly in coloring and sticker books. I didn’t buy any of the Naval Aviation space books, tempting though they were, because I was too busy snatching up all I could find on *Fletcher* class destroyers for my World War II United States destroyers collection.

— Lisa)

Afterwards, we visited the old coastal forts. Fort Barrancas, on the coast, is part of the old defenses of the entrance to the harbor. Somewhat better known is Fort Pickens, on the barrier island of Santa Rosa, which was held continually by the Union, but since they had an informal truce with the Confederates in Fort Barrancas, it’s not as well known as Fort Sumter.

(I got some neat pictures here — Lisa)

After our return, we went to a nearby Circuit City, where we got blank CD-R’s and cases, with the intent of handing out our pictures of the reunion, and to the nearby Walgreens, where I learned to my dismay that they would have to order in one of my prescriptions.

That night’s dinner was not overly worthwhile. Gil, for example, observed as a veteran of meat-judging contests that the “prime rib” they were serving couldn’t have been much more than “good” at best.

Then, that night, there was a dire flash and a burnt smell. It seemed that the converter for the cooler had burned out. I got the other cooler filled with ice and put the medicine on it.

And so to bed.

Distance driven: 4.0 miles

Friday, April 6, 2007 (Good Friday)
62nd Anniversary
Pensacola
Veterans Memorial Park

<http://www.pensacolawallsouth.org/>

I woke up very early in the morning and drove to the nearby Wal-Mart for a new converter. They also had DVDs of the *Black Stallion* TV series, which I got for Lisa. Then, the new converter didn’t work either . . . or, rather, the circuit breaker in the socket had jumped, so pushing it in re-started the cooler.

(This morning we went out to the Veterans Memorial Park. This was for the memorial service for the eighty-eight men of the *Bush*’s crew who didn’t get to come home. I took several pictures here which I really need to send to the second generationer who is now in charge. Afterwards we went to a place named Flounders. It was crowded and there was some wait for the food. My chicken supreme was not a bad sandwich.

(When the meal was over we went with my sister and Brad to the beach. I got some interesting shots at the beach. I also learned it might not be a bad idea to have a cheap camera as well as a nice one. I could have gotten some good shots had I not been afraid to risk the nice camera wading in the ocean. And next time I will not assume Florida is going to be warm.

— Lisa)

After we got back from this trip I went to Walgreens and got the last of the prescription, and then took a brief nap before the farewell dinner. It was a bit of a shock when we finally noticed the time, and braved the chill to walk over to the Holiday Inn. As we went down the hall to the banquet room my cell phone rang. I answered it, walking on and in, to stand behind my father-in-law who was asking, “Where are you?”

I told him.

The dinner was adequate if not great, and then we all said our goodbyes. We had arranged our baggage again so the main bags (now full of dirty clothes) could be put in the car the night before, and that’s what we did then.

And so to bed.

Distance driven: 7.4 miles

Saturday, April 7, 2007
Pensacola — Nashville

In fact, we did get to say goodbye again to Gil and Jean, as we left at the same time. We loaded our “day bags” into the car and after filling ourselves up at the motel’s free breakfast, were off north.

With a stop at the Wal-Mart on the way out of town to get one last long-sleeved shirt. We drove with a stop for lunch north of Montgomery and got to Nashville about four in the afternoon to check in — whereupon we

went out to eat! And then to Borders’ in Nashville, which is across the street from Centennial Park.

And so to bed. Very gladly, for it had been a long and exhausting drive.

Distance driven: 457.7 miles

Sunday, April 8, 2007 (Pascha)
Nashville — Hendersonville, TN —
Pembroke, KY

We were afraid everything would be closed, but fortunately the Cracker Barrel was open, and we had a late breakfast or early lunch. After going by the homes of two of my cousins who are lawyers (and both named “Lackey” — Mrs. Larry Dixon writes under an old married name, I fear) we went to see a widow.

My cousin Bennett Major had known me all my life. His father was a friend of my grandfather; we lived around the corner from his sister. I’d stayed with them a time or two after a Kubla Khan.

Bennett had prostate cancer; it metastasized and the treatment weakened the bones the cancer had lodged itself in. Two days before his sixty-third anniversary, Bennett went into a coma; he died on March 10.

Lisa and I went to see his widow, Edwine. She would turn ninety in four days; he would have reached that age himself on June 1.

We talked to Edwine for a while and then went to Pembroke (outside of Hopkinsville) to see Lisa’s Aunt Delta.

And so to bed.

Distance driven: 111.1 miles

Monday, April 9, 2007
Pembroke

Lisa went out shopping with Delta and I went to see various relatives in Hopkinsville, including the son and successor of the cousin who had run the kindergarten I went to — he still lives in the house that his mother had run the school. I also saw Cousin Howard (Major) & Aunt Daphne (née Thomas). Got home about five, had dinner with Delta, and then began doing the laundry.

And so to bed.

Distance driven: 36.6 miles

Tuesday, April 10, 2007
Pembroke — Madisonville, KY — Louisville

We couldn’t really leave until mid-afternoon, because, you see, we were meeting my niece, her husband, and his parents for dinner. And their son, of course, but he was only there in potentio or in utero however you want to put it. So I spent the morning going to

see my cousin Rob Meacham, who was related to both my mother and my father and in fact had just retired from the job my father had had in Hopkinsville.

But we loaded up the car, said goodbye to Delta with many thanks, and went up the highway to Madisonville, to dine with Sarah and Jeff and his parents. Mr. Wortham the elder (who, you will recall, is also distantly related to me and of course his daughter-in-law) was quite pleased to get all the information, and Sarah and Jeff were splendidly tolerant of the foibles of these like old folks.

And so we returned to Louisville, to face a week and a half of mail, a couple of days of email (419 spam, phony surveys, tiny berries that make your Rolex bigger, and so on), Grant, and five cats whose affections weren't alienated.

And so to bed.
Distance driven: 231.7 miles
Total distance: 1537.1 miles

Thanks to Gil & Jean Thomas, Grant McCormick, James & Lucy Alves, Delta Shelton, Sarah & Jeff Wortham, and all the others who helped; and spare a few thoughts for the heroes of the USS *Bush*, April 6, 1945.

The Byzantine Empress Confronts Her Enemy, The Grand Logothete

They walked together in the garden, like the lovers they'd been rumored to be almost fifty years before, now exchanging pleasantries, until at last she said, "Sir, I am tired. Must we continue to quarrel over things which will be quite useless, when you and I dwell among the angels, should either of us get that far?" He laughed softly, and replied, "Lady, the vanity of the world, is like a golden cloak, heavy and difficult to put off." "I remember the songs of my youth," she said, "and I would like to hear them again. How long has it been since you or I gazed upon a sunset and truly appreciated how splendidly wrought are the works of God?" More such speech they shared between them, and laughter, and weeping, and quiet remembrance. Before they parted, they embraced one last time,

amid reassurances that now, at least, they could find some rest during their last few years on earth.

But as soon as she was out of earshot, he said to his man, "She is weakening. We must swiftly bring our plans to their completion." And she said to hers, "Kill him. Immediately."

— Darrell Schweitzer

JUNIOR MINTS INSIDE OUTS

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

I can't recall if I had ever tried Junior Mints before I saw the Inside Out limited edition. Before I could write a thorough review of the Inside Out mints, though, I realized I needed to sample the original for proper comparison.

I found that the original Junior Mints remind me of miniature versions of the York Peppermint Pattie. (And I am sure that this will probably make the people at Tootsie Roll happy. They are the ones who make Junior Mints, and I'm sure they will enjoy having their product compared to another company's product.)

The original Junior Mints are small disks, flat on the bottom, and dome-shaped on the top. Outside is a dark chocolate shell, which I believe has been given additional rigidity with a glaze, because there is a certain extra resistance when you bite into one of these mints. Inside is a soft mint filling — the package refers to it as "flowing," but it's not that soft.

The mint filling is slightly overpowering. It doesn't have the intensity of an Altoids peppermint (then again, I don't think there is any other mint that does), but it does overwhelm the flavor of the dark chocolate. At times, it is almost impossible to detect the flavor of the chocolate, because it gets lost in the mint.

As you might guess from the name, the Inside Out Junior Mints switch things around. The outer shell is a white candy. Not white chocolate — the shell is a pure white color, and white chocolate is actually more of an ivory color. Inside, the filling is a chocolate mint flavor.

Now, let me make something perfectly clear. The filling is chocolate flavored. Not chocolate — chocolate flavored. I checked the ingredients list, and the Inside Out Junior Mints contain absolutely nothing from the cacao tree

in them. (By contrast, the shell of the original Junior Mints is real chocolate.)

The lack of anything resembling real chocolate in the Inside Outs is noticeable. There is something that resembles the flavor of chocolate, but it's obvious that it isn't really chocolate. The mint flavor isn't as intense with the Inside Outs as it is with the original Junior Mints, which again is a disappointment. A mint flavor that would overwhelm the artificial chocolate flavor might be a distinct improvement here.

For once, I'm glad that this was a limited edition. If Tootsie Roll made some improvements — such as actually using some product of the cacao tree in the candy — I wouldn't mind seeing a return of the Junior Mints Inside Outs. As it is, though, I hope this is one limited edition that doesn't make a return engagement.

TWIX MINIS MIX

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

This is another Minis limited edition that Mars brought out during the summer. As I think I may have mentioned once or twice in previous reviews, I think that either the back to school shopping season or Halloween would have been better choices for putting them on the shelves. But, Mars didn't bother consulting with me.

Like the 3 Musketeers Minis Mix, the Twix Minis bag contained three different versions of the Twix bar. The first of these is the Original Twix — caramel on a vanilla cookie, covered in milk chocolate. The second is the Dark Chocolate Twix that Mars released a limited edition last year, and which I have previously reviewed.

The third version is the Triple Chocolate Twix. This variation is something that, as far as I can tell, Mars created just for this limited edition. Like the original Twix bar, the Triple Chocolate Twix is covered in milk chocolate. Instead of a vanilla cookie, though, the cookie base is also chocolate. I'm guessing that the caramel in the Triple Chocolate bar is a chocolate caramel. That is the only thing that would make any sense out of the "Triple Chocolate" name. It does appear to be a darker color than the caramel in either of the other Twix bars in the bag.

This is where the Mini size becomes a problem in reviewing. The Minis are really too small to make a careful and thorough analysis of how the different components blend

together. I almost have to go through the entire bag to form even something of an opinion.

I did find myself wishing for two things while sampling the Twix Minis Mix. First, I really would love to see the Dark Chocolate Twix back on the shelves permanently. Second, I wish Mars had released the Triple Chocolate Twix as a full size bar.

THE JOY OF HIGH TECH

by Rodford Edmiston

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

Battleship vs. Battlecruiser

As an engineer I know the importance of the correct use of terminology, and one of my pet peeves is the casual — and incorrect — use of words which don't mean what the user thinks they mean. Half the time when some unlearned person uses the word "battlecruiser" the subject is a proper battleship. The other half it is an actual cruiser, or some other class not a battlecruiser. Contrarily, most of the time when someone unfamiliar with proper use of military vessel terminology refers to a true battlecruiser, they use another word entirely.

Part of the reason for this is that relatively few battlecruisers were built and they only operated for a few decades. This was primarily due to two factors; the development of technology and naval tactics in the Twenties and Thirties, and politics. The Washington Naval Treaty of 1921 set limits on the sizes of ships of various classes, as well as the size of armaments such ships could carry. The London Naval Treaty of 1930 further split some of these classes, and included a formal distinction between light cruiser, cruiser and heavy cruiser. Note that there is some overlap between battlecruiser and heavy cruiser, because they were designed for similar tasks. However, neither is a true battleship, and the heavy cruiser is generally smaller and more lightly armed than a battlecruiser.

Also, as time progressed new ships for a class grew, in both size and capability. A late-built heavy cruiser is larger and better armed than a battleship built before the Great War, besides being faster. However, except for the fuzzy line between them and heavy cruisers, the distinction between what is and what isn't a battlecruiser is quite clear. It all boils down to the reason behind the concept.

The basic idea of the battlecruiser is simple; provide a ship with more punch than a cruiser and more speed than a true battleship; speed

enough for cruiser task force operations. Battlecruisers are less weakened battleships than they are strengthened cruisers. As originally proposed, these ships would be used with other cruisers for scouting, commerce raiding, engaging enemy cruiser task forces and making hit-and-run flank attacks to harass an enemy force in large engagements. They were supposed to use their superior speed to avoid direct engagements with true battleships.

Achieving this speed required starting with something the size of a battleship, but with fewer main guns, smaller main guns, less armor protection, less range, or some combination. This to make room in a battleship-sized hull for enough machinery to push the huge vessel through the water at cruiser speeds.

The first to put the idea into extensive practice were the British, but many other nations with large navies also built their own versions. As a rule, the British gave their battlecruisers the same guns as true battleships, gaining speed by sacrificing armor. The German battlecruisers, meanwhile, had true battleship armor and smaller-caliber guns. Both types of craft achieved the goal of being faster than the equivalent battleships, and both had heavier guns and armor than typically found on cruisers of the day. The high turn of speed let the battlecruisers select their engagements, either avoiding true battleships or making slashing attacks which provided the latter with little opportunity to respond during large operations. Meanwhile, their heavier guns provided a significant advantage over ordinary cruisers.

People who today discredit the entire concept of the battlecruiser ignore the fact that the type of ship was very successful when used as originally intended. When a battlecruiser squadron went against a conventional cruiser squadron, the latter lost.

HMS *Hood* was the last of the British battlecruisers built for the Great War, not even being completed in time for that conflict. Once the British Navy realized the war would end before she was likely to launch her construction was slowed and her three sister ships were cancelled. In large part this was due to the expectation of making design changes based on what was learned by the “failure” of the British battlecruisers at Jutland.

However, the main problem at Jutland was that while British battlecruisers were made to run away from superior opposition, British captains weren't. British battlecruisers had the size and guns of a true battleship, but couldn't take the same punishment. At Jutland

battlecruisers fought with true battleships in the British line against German battleships. Three were consequently destroyed in very dramatic fashion.

The *Hood* was modified following this operation, both during initial construction and subsequent refits (on her final voyage she carried a number of civilian workers who were finishing the work of her last refit) but she still blew up very quickly and dramatically in one of the first major naval engagements of the Second World War, the Battle of Denmark Strait. To put it bluntly, she was overmatched, largely for political reasons. Additionally, the true lessons of Jutland simply hadn't been learned by the Admiralty.

There is more than the thickness and toughness of the armor to consider when evaluating how well a ship is protected. Even battleships only put heavy armor where it will protect vital areas; magazines, engine rooms and such. Other parts of the ship are less protected. Also, the actual armor is within the hull, and has a shape only vaguely determined by the exterior shape of the ship. The internal armor layers are angled with respect to the expected path of incoming shells, which greatly increases the effective thickness. These angled walls of interior armor may also be intended to direct plunging fire — shells coming in at close to vertical — back out of the ship.

As the *Hood* was slowly brought to completion her armor was upgraded. Claims were made when she was launched in 1918 that she was now a full battleship, though that only worked if you considered older battleships. While the added protection was substantial, the improved portions covered less of her volume than was true on an actual battleship. She was still fast, but because the added armor was not fully compensated for by weight reduction in other areas she was overweight her entire career. Worst of all, there was little improvement in training those who tended the enormous appetites of the main guns.

She should have done better at the Denmark Straits. The reason she didn't was the same reason those earlier battlecruisers blew up at Jutland. To increase rate of fire safety measures in ammunition handling were bypassed. This left substantial amounts of propellant powder with a direct path of ignition from a hit in the right spot. And the Germans found the right spot.

The US got a late start on building battlecruisers. Indeed, most of those she started or planned during the Great War were never completed. The *Lexington* and *Saratoga* were

instead converted to aircraft carriers during construction. Interestingly, these *Lexington* class ships if completed as originally planned would have been closer to the later concept of the fast battleship than to the battlecruisers of other nations during the period. (Isn't it just like Americans to not only want it all, but to get it?)

One supposed distinguishing factor between the classifications of battleship and battlecruiser is that the former can resist the effects of guns similar to those it carries, at least in the “citadel” where armor protection is concentrated. This is known as a balanced design. However, the resistance to shells depends more on the state of the delicate balance between offense and defense which exists at the time a ship is designed than it does on overall design philosophy. The *Iowa* class battleships had excellent armor protection, but would have been considered under-armored against an opponent with guns equivalent to their own. However, the *Iowas* were true battleships. They just happened to have what were probably the best (though not the biggest) large naval guns ever deployed. Those guns were very accurate, had very good range and the armor piercing shells they fired were very good at their job.

As the Second World War progressed, the job of the battlecruiser was split between the heavy cruiser and the fast battleship, with the *Iowas* being excellent examples of the latter. Such vessels were made possible by a combination of a better hull form — which offered less drag — and new steam boilers and turbine engines which provided more power in less volume with less weight. (Note that the *Iowas* also had excellent safety measures for keeping flame from a hit away from exposed powder. Something which may have saved the *Iowa* herself when a faulty powder charge destroyed the inside of one of her turrets, late in her career.) With true battleships now as fast as cruisers, there was simply no need for the battlecruiser. If your cruiser task force needed a heavier punch, simply add a heavy cruiser or, for really deciding the issue, a fast battleship.

The battlecruiser as originally conceived made good tactical sense. It just happened that they were the best tool for the job for only a relatively short time.

HISTORICAL NOTE

by Joe

The battlecruiser concept was devised by Admiral of the Fleet Sir John Arbuthnot Fisher, Lord Fisher of Kilverstone, the great and

terrible naval reformer. “Jacky” Fisher took over a confident and somewhat somolent Royal Navy, faced by a new threat, and shook it until its teeth rattled.

Among the multiplicity of new ideas was that of a ship to go between the dreadnought, his new upgraded version of the main line combat ship, and the cruiser, the principal sea control ship. The battlecruiser would have the guns of a battleship but armor more like that of a “armored cruiser”, with the speed of a light cruiser. Fisher's idea was that “speed is armour” — a ship moving fast would be harder to hit.

The first battlecruiser, HMS *Invincible*, was laid down not two months after the *Dreadnought* herself, on April 2, 1906. She had a similar gun armament — four twin turrets with 12" guns (as against the five on the *Dreadnought*) — but her armor was only about half the thickness of that on the *Dreadnought*. To compensate for this, the *Invincible* had a top speed of 25.5 knots, against the 21 knots that the *Dreadnought* could make. Somewhat belying her name, *Invincible* blew up from a German shell hit at the battle of Jutland.

However, when Graf Maximilian von Spee's Pacific Cruiser Squadron had won a surprising victory against a British squadron at the battle of Coronel, *Invincible* and her sistership HMS *Inflexible* were dispatched to the South Pacific to defeat the Hun. Spee had two armored cruisers, SMS *Gneisenau* and SMS *Scharnhorst*, named after the two Prussian military reformers of the Napoleonic wars. These were the ships that the battlecruiser was designed to beat. (The USS *Maine* (ACR-1), sunk at Havana, was another example.)

The British admiral, Sir Frederick Charles Doveton Sturdee, was not given to “getting the wind up”, which meant he functioned well in a crisis, even if some lack of foresight on his part had got him into it in the first place. His ships were coaling in Port Stanley harbor in the Falklands on the very day that Spee decided to bombard the British colony. But then, there was also an old battleship, HMS *Canopus*, moored in the harbor, able to shoot back. Spee didn't have a chance to win, but he might have got away, except that *Invincible* and *Inflexible* could both shoot harder and outrun his ships.

One has to conclude that Doveton Sturdee was the sort of chap who could make his own luck.

Fisher had become quite enthusiastic about battlecruisers. His last idea in that line was for a vessel he called HMS *Incomparable*, which

would take the notion beyond anything that existed; she would have six twenty-inch guns and a top speed of thirty-five knots.

Aside from paper studies, there were two ships that were actually built, HMS *Repulse* and HMS *Renown*. The haste in which they were built and the weakness of their structure led them to be called *Repair* and *Refit*. Then there was the *Hood* . . .

In 1940, though, two old names popped up again. After assuming power, Hitler had called off the *Panzerschiff* project, which had produced the so-called “pocket battleships”. (One was named *Graf Spee* — which has been in the news lately, with proposals to raise her from the bottom of the Rio de la Plata between Argentina and Uruguay.) Two ships ordered under that program were completed to a new design, larger and faster, but not that much better armed, and were named *Scharnhorst* and *Gneisenau* after Graf von Spee’s ships. (The British sailors, ever disrespectful (see above about *Repair* and *Refit*), called them “Salmon and Gluckstein”. Salmon & Gluckstein was a London tobacconist’s firm.)

On April 9, 1940 during the Norwegian Campaign the *Scharnhorst* and *Gneisenau* encountered HMS *Renown*. The two German ships were somewhat better armored and newer, but *Renown* had more powerful guns; six 15" guns against the German ships’ nine 28.0 cm guns each. The Germans did not stay around.

They had nine 12" guns and cruiser speed; not really powerful enough to fight big ships. There was little enough to do with them, and of the six ordered, three were never laid down and one of the other three was never completed. (USS *Hawaii* (CB-3); the two that served being USS *Alaska* (CB-1) and USS *Guam* (CB-2).) They were a tool for which no real job existed. However, in keeping with this, the Japanese changed the design of their proposed “Super A-Type” large cruisers to have three triple turrets with 36cm guns.

POCKET CHANGE

by Taral Wayne

A few nights ago I had out a pile of old Mercury head, and Canadian, dimes. Around 115 of them.

The thought occurred to me (as it had before) that this was about half what a common legionary was paid annually. (In early Imperial times it was 225 denarii, paid in three 75 denarii instalments). 115 dimes was quite a handful of silver, but you know . . . it was just a handful. It didn’t seem much to risk your life for, let alone put up with the unspeakably harsh conditions and a 50/50 chance of surviving your 25 years of service.

Then I wondered if a familiar dime was really the equal of an Augustan or Flavian denarius. I looked at some books and discovered that the Mercury dime weighed 2.5 grams, and a Canadian dime just over 2.3

the average purity of early imperial silver.

Robert confirmed that the denarius tended to be about 3.5 grams, though he thinks the heavier samples were more likely to be melted down later, leaving us with a slightly lighter average. He surprised me just a little by stating that purity ranged from 90% to 95%, and suggested an average of about 92%. So on the whole, the first century denarius not only weighed more than the modern silver dime, but it’s silver content actually averaged just a little higher than the Mercury head.

Conclusion? If legionary Josephus Piedus Militus were to be paid in a large handful of modern silver dimes, he’d be justified if he felt significantly short-changed.

From the second century A.D. onward, the imperial mints diminished the silver content of their denarii, hitting rock bottom (zero) around 265 A.D. and lasting until the Diocletian reforms after 285. Coins that were once fine metal became bronze slugs whose molecule thin silvery coatings soon wore off. They had token, but very little intrinsic, value. With worthless coins, prices of everything from shoes to wine to slaves soared. Was it any coincidence then that the armies repeatedly rebelled throughout the third century, overthrowing one emperor after another, and that whole regions of the empire broke temporarily away?

Of course, that can’t happen today . . . can it? It can. We’ve long gotten over the need to stamp dead presidents and reigning monarchs on our coins, and could you possibly buy less for a buck or a loonie anyway? Forget silver and gold, though. Think about paper. It is just as easy for a mint to print the numeral 100 on a paper bill as it is a 1 or 5.

In 1923 the German Weimar Republic gave in to temptation to pay war reparations, by inflating the Mark. The result of this improvidence was hyperinflation that shot the price of a loaf of bread to billions of Marks, and led to the ruination of the Weimar economy. Arguably the Nazis would never have come to power without the catastrophic

multiplication of zeros on pieces of paper. The temptation is always with us.

In recent years we see the C-Note as the currency of the world. Because of a famous “fix” with OPEC, oil from the Middle East has been priced in U.S. dollars for decades. To pay for it, oil-importing nations have had to keep huge reserves of U.S. Dollars. You cannot buy oil from the Middle East in Francs, Rubles, or Yen. The demand created for greenbacks has given them value they don’t have, and supported American prosperity for two generations. Suppose a barrel of oil could be paid for in other currencies though. The U.S. is in debt as it’s never been before, and the only thing balancing the flow of goods and services into America has been the outflow of paper. If the value of the paper is no longer measured by oil, those millions and millions of C-Notes that have been the world currency could possibly drop to vanishingly little worth. Let us hope that, should it come to that, we don’t see another economy ruined and another republic go bad.

Maybe we should go back to silver... Unlike paper, it’s always worth *something*.

The coins and 100,000,000 Mark note illustrated are from my own collection. The coins are denarii of Augustus, Tiberius, Nero, Galba, and Hadrian, in that order.

THE LAST FRONTIER: Imagining Other Worlds, from the Copernican Revolution to Modern Science Fiction

by Karl S. Guthke, translated by Helen Atkins

Cornell University Press, 1990
Reviewed by Richard Dengrove

A colleague of mine was asked about extraterrestrials and he said that he didn’t go in for that Buck Rogers stuff. In his time, no one had ever heard of it. When I pointed out that Buck Rogers was from the 1920s, it went over his head.

However, he is like quite a number of people: for them, science fiction, including extraterrestrials, is about the future. Even when they know it has a past, they would prefer to dwell there.

How old are our ideas about extraterrestrials? I am sure everyone knows that H.G. Wells’ *War of the Worlds* was first published in the 1890s. Fewer realize Wells incorporated a quote from Johannes Kepler, which had to come from the early 17th Century. In short, the idea of extraterrestrials is



While the United States Navy had the *Iowa* class battleships (one, never completed, would have been USS *Kentucky* (BB-66)), it also had a class of ships that fell in the category of upgunned cruiser; the *Alaska* Class of “Large Cruisers”. These vessels were larger versions of the two successful cruiser classes the Navy had introduced during the war, the *Cleveland* class of light cruisers and the *Baltimore* class of heavy cruisers. They were built after some concern that the Japanese were building their version of *Panzerschiffe*.

grams. The average first century denarius seems to have weighed around 3.4 grams, so was respectably heavier.

Then again, the Mercury dime was 90% silver (the rest copper), and Canadian dimes were for more than 60 years 92.5% silver, in 1920 falling to 80%.

What, then, was the purity of a first century denarius? If less than 90%, then the greater purity of modern dimes well balance their lower weight. I asked my favourite coin dealer (Robert Kokotailo of Calgary Coin) if he knew



a lot older than many of us suspect.

In recent decades, several authors have pinpointed how old the idea of extraterrestrials is, and traced its history. I could have reviewed Michael J. Crowe's *The Extraterrestrial Life Debate 1750-1900* (1999). However, his book is encyclopedic and I could not do it justice. Also, I could have reviewed Steven Dick's *Plurality of Worlds: the Origins of the Extraterrestrial Life Debate from Democritus to Kant* (1982). However, I have not read that book — yet.

Guthke's book was first published in German in 1983. It is a history of literature and ideas. Sometimes, he is up in the clouds; sometimes, he is down to earth and hits the mark.

He does pinpoint the first person to talk about extraterrestrials, Nicholas of Cusa. Also, Guthke details what Nicholas said in his book that introduced the topic, *De Docta Ignorantia* (1440), usually translated as Learned Ignorance. Furthermore, I, and other writers on the subject, have to agree with Guthke that Nicholas arrived at the idea by taking the popular Medieval doctrine, the Great Chain of Being, to its logical conclusion: God could not even leave outer space without intelligent life. On this basis, the doctrine was known as the Plurality of Worlds.

Guthke takes one speculation of Nicholas' too seriously. I suspect Nicholas' tongue was firmly planted in his cheek when he said the beings of the Sun and Moon reflect their planet's astrological attributes. The beings of the Sun are noble and spiritual and those of the Moon are crazy.

Nicholas' speculations about our own Earth, I have to admit, were not as tongue-in-cheek. He said we Earth men are gross and material. That could be nothing but a compromise with Church doctrine.

Guthke is right when he says Nicholas gave the idea of Plurality of Worlds a philosophical basis. Then he goes on to discuss the person who helped give it a scientific basis, Copernicus. Copernicus presented evidence that the planets, including the Earth, circled the Sun. Thus, they could resemble the Earth in other ways, like having intelligent life.

Then, Guthke becomes bogged down because he feels he has to associate the Plurality of Worlds with all the main currents of the time. It is hard to see the relevance of some of these, like the belief that matter is made of atoms.

Presently, Guthke discusses Giordano Bruno, who wrote about the Plurality of Worlds starting in 1584. In addition, Bruno

gets us farther toward the right ball park concerning extraterrestrials. For Bruno, the stars are suns with planets moving around them, and there are an infinite number of stars. Close enough to our modern doctrine. Therefore, Bruno says, there are an infinite number of extraterrestrials.

Later, Guthke mentions Thomas Digges, the English writer, who advocated the same doctrine, only earlier, in 1576. Guthke fails to mention what others writers have noticed: namely, Bruno is likely to have obtained these ideas from Digges.

Guthke does not only discuss the advocates of the Plurality of Worlds; he also discusses its opponents. He does not necessarily find them stick-in-the-muds either. He points out that the Heliocentric Theory was not proven conclusively until Newton.

He fails to point out, however, that the doctrine that the stars are Suns was not proven until 1838, by the German astronomer Friedrich Wilhelm Bessel. Bessel proved that one nearby star, 61 Cygni, was a sun.

The Plurality of Worlds doctrine did not end with Bruno; many have commented on it. Guthke includes, among the notables doing that, Philip Melancthon, Martin Luther's successor; John Donne; John Milton; Robert Burton, in *Anatomy of Melancholy*; Robert Boyle; Cyrano de Bergerac; Edmund Halley; Thomas Paine; Percy Bysshe Shelley; Alexander Pope; Immanuel Kant; Christian Huygens; Edmund Spenser; Gottfried Leibniz; Emanuel Swedenborg; Voltaire; Sir Humphrey Davy; and Alfred Russel Wallace, the co-discoverer of Evolution with Charles Darwin.

Guthke does not mention Benjamin Franklin, however, and his one youthful quotation about extraterrestrials.

As well as giving us extraterrestrials as philosophy and speculation, Guthke gives us extraterrestrials as science fiction. Like other writers, he pinpoints the first science fiction as Johannes Kepler's *Somnium*. A version of it was in manuscript by 1609 and another was finally published in 1634.

This work, Guthke discusses in detail. Also, he points out what makes it science fiction, and not satire: it is based on the science of the time, such as it was. In fact, a good part of it is a scientific treatise about the Moon. On the other hand, magic plays a part and Kepler does not truck to speculate about humanoid Moon men. Unlike other authors, Guthke omits a choice tidbit, how rumors about the manuscript got Kepler's mother accused of witchcraft. It took lots of political influence on Kepler's part to keep her from being convicted and burnt at the

stake.

Kepler's *Somnium* was followed by a number of "romances" about intelligent life on other planets. Most seem to have been set on the Moon. A good percentage of the others on the Sun. However, the main thrust of thought about extraterrestrials remained in non-fictional works, in philosophy, speculation and primitive science.

That is where a feature of 20th Century science fiction cinema first appeared, the invasion from outer space. In a 17th Century tome, a Charles Sorel speculated about it. Strangely enough, he is best remembered for his fiction. Another thing about Sorel's work is that it was forgotten. I doubt there is any connection between it and the movie *The Thing*.

More and more, however, it was in fiction that our ideas about extraterrestrials were formed. During the late the 19th Century, there was a spate of Mars novels. There, an Earthman somehow travels to Mars and he finds people who look very much like humans.

Guthke as usual, tries to tie these novels to the currents of the time. He talks about dual evolution. What this means is the evolution of planets determines biological evolution. For example, popular theories of the time, like the Nebula Hypothesis, might ultimately help determine a Darwinian Evolution. However, I doubt that. The novels better reflect 18th Century ideas about progress, man and reason. Guthke finds, in turn, these Mars novels were, in much modified form, the inspiration for more recent novels, such as Edgar Rice Burroughs', Ray Bradbury's *Martian Chronicles*, Arthur Clarke's *Childhood's End*, and Robert Heinlein's *Red Planet* and *Stranger in a Strange Land*.

That is as much about Guthke's book as I want to give. In the end, I have to say I have problems with it. Nonetheless, it is a good book for anyone interested in looking backwards at extraterrestrials.

THE LITTLE BOOK OF PLAGIARISM

by Richard A. Posner

(Pantheon Books; 2007; 116 pp.;

\$10.95; ISBN 9780375424755)

Reviewed by Jim Sullivan

The author, a distinguished, well-known conservative, and outspoken U.S. appellate jurist, draws a distinction herein between plagiarism, otherwise referred to as 'literary theft,' and copyright infringement. Often, the public confuses the two.

In the latter offense, if a piece of writing is under copyright, one may not legally copy from it for publication elsewhere, without permission. If such is done, the person who copies becomes subject to a copyright infringement suit in a court of law. There is an exception to this under the so-called 'fair use' doctrine. That is, the law does allow for a segment of copyrighted material to be used without permission, provided it is properly credited. It must also be fairly brief, perhaps a paragraph or so (the law here is vague).

As to plagiarism, it means, for the purpose of this book, to use someone else's written words, or a close paraphrasing thereof, regardless of the length of the excerpt and even if out of copyright, without giving due, or any, credit to the original writer. If the original was still under copyright, the copying person, of course, could legally be in trouble. If the work quoted was out of copyright, copying then publishing, without attribution, is still frowned upon as a shameful act. In many professions, though oddly not within the judicial system, plagiarism charges can ruin one's career.

The author writes in his slender volume about the difference in the two wrongs: "Obviously, not all copying is plagiarism — not even all unlawful copying, that is, copyright infringement. There is considerable overlap between plagiarism and copyright infringement, but not all plagiarism is copyright infringement and not all copyright infringement is plagiarism." [That certainly should clear things up.]

Posner goes into some recent examples of plagiarism, mostly committed by historians, Harvard academics, and, naturally, political liberals. Deceased writers who conducted literary theft, too, are exposed. The author also covers academic cheating, primarily, though not exclusively, by students. Nowadays, those attending high school or college can easily be caught with a computer software program **Turnitin**. More and more schools are using it every year. Essay assignments and other papers written as class work can effortlessly be compared against a vast amount of earlier writing to look for plagiarized work. Many individuals have already been caught and had suitable punishment meted out, one would hope.

Uniquely, the jurist discusses the case of a William Shakespeare who evidently borrowed heavily from past writers, without attribution, for his play subjects. Plutarch was a favorite target. Yet, the Bard of Avon got away with this because it was more the custom then to do so or to improve upon earlier writing.

Besides sitting on the U.S. Seventh Circuit Court of Appeals, Richard A. Posner lectures at the University of Chicago Law School. He has also written numerous books, mostly concerning the law.

Recommended.

GLACIAL LAKE MISSOULA AND ITS HUMONGOUS FLOODS

by David Alt

Mountain Press Publishing Co. \$15.00

Reviewed by Alexis A. Gilliland

When I was a kid the family would go out to Harrington, Washington, to visit my grandmother, and one year we went out to visit Dry Falls (which I found boring,) so I'm kind of familiar with eastern Washington, which is where the author gathers a lot of his evidence. A minor thread of the story is that of the geologist J Harlan Bretz, who published a paper in 1923 examining the scablands of eastern Washington, in which he concluded that they had been shaped by an enormous flood. An anti-consensus sort of idea rejected by all right thinking geologists, who had been taught that landscapes were not shaped by catastrophes of any sort, and especially not by floods of biblical proportions. It is agreeable to report that Bretz outlived all of his many detractors. J.C. Gilluly, one of Bretz's most severe critics, finally visited Palouse Falls — a tiny creek flowing down an immense valley into a proportionately immense plunge pool — and after studying it for awhile asked how anyone could have been as wrong as he had been. (A recantation which never made it into print, alas.) Eventually Bretz saw his derided flood theory becoming the accepted geological wisdom. The major thread of the story is how that flooding came to pass.

Glacial Lake Missoula in western Montana was impounded by a glacier that advanced to form an ice dam as much as 30 miles across, and since the lake lacked outlets it rose and receded with the seasons. As the ice age was ending, the lake became higher and higher, and an ice dam will fail when the water behind it becomes high enough to float the ice. Alt meticulously details what I am about to summarize: He and a graduate student found evidence of 36 varve sequences separated by layers of sand, that showed 58 annual layers at the bottom and 9 annual layers at the top. Which was interpreted as the glacier's ice dam becoming progressively thinner as the last ice age was ending, so that the ice dam became progressively easier to float, and therefore each succeeding flood was smaller than its

predecessor. This series of floods took place approximately 15,000 to 13,000 years ago, well before the rising world ocean drained into Black Sea, a one time event which inspired the biblical account of Noah's flood. Three non-random statistics will give a sense of the scale of these events: (1) The ripples in a river bed may be a few feet long and a few inches high. The ripples at Camas Prairie, below Markle Pass and Wills Creek Pass (identified by examination of aerial photos) are thousands of feet long and 35 feet high. (2) The peak discharge through the Wallula Gap was about 1.66 cubic miles per hour. (3) In the earlier events, the failure of the ice dam created a wall of water 2,000 feet high, with as much as 500 cubic miles of water behind it. By way of contrast, the Johnstown flood was 72 feet at the dam, but only 23 feet coming into town.

Since Alt follows the flood water as it makes its way to the sea, the story has a lot of geographical information but lacks human interest. Nevertheless I found it engrossing, even as I learned what kolks were (high energy vortexes in fast moving water), how erratic boulders got deposited by icebergs far, far from the ocean, and why hackly basalt is more resistant to erosion than columnar basalt. Since the book is in its fourth printing after being published in 2001, it would appear to have some popular appeal.

THE ASTRONAUT FARMER

Directed by Michael Polish

Screenplay by Mark & Michael Polish

Released by Warner Brothers

<http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0469263/>

Review by Dr. Bill Breuer

Try to get hold of "Salvage One" somewhere! It was far better conceived!

Unfortunately, last time I looked (a while back) I couldn't find it. I don't think it's been released yet.

FANZINES

Askance #1

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Banana Wings #29

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Best Fanzine Hugo Nominee

Beyond Bree February 2007, March 2007, April 2007

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<http://www.ccp.unt.edu/bree.html>

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

Challenger #25

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Best Fanzine Hugo Nominee

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Best Fanzine Hugo Nominee

Best Fan Writer Hugo Nominee

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The final issue — but he'll be back!

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The Resplendent Fool #61B The Letters, #62

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Science Fiction/San Francisco #38 February 1, 2007, #39 February 21, 2007, #40 March 7, 2007, #41 March 21, 2007, #42 April 4, 2007

Christopher J. Garcia and Jean Martin

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Best Fan Writer Hugo Nominee

Vanamonde # 668-672

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Best Fan Writer Hugo Nominee

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2007 HUGO AWARDS NOMINATIONS



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

The Nippon 2007 Hugo Nominations committee has announced the Hugo nominations for 2007:

Best Novel

Michael F. Flynn, *Eifelheim* (Tor)
 Naomi Novik, *His Majesty's Dragon* (Del Rey)
 Charles Stross, *Glasshouse* (Ace)
 Vernor Vinge, *Rainbows End* (Tor)
 Peter Watts, *Blindsight* (Tor)

Best Novella

Robert Reed, "A Billion Eves"
 Paul Melko, "The Walls of the Universe"
 William Shunn, "Inclination"
 Michael Swanwick, "Lord Weary's

Empire"
 Robert Charles Wilson, "Julian"

Best Novelette

Paolo Bacigalupi, "Yellow Card Man"
 Michael F. Flynn, "Dawn, and Sunset, and the Colours of the Earth"
 Ian McDonald, "The Djinn's Wife"
 Mike Resnick, "All the Things You Are"
 Geoff Ryman, "Pol Pot's Beautiful Daughter"

Best Short Story

Neil Gaiman, "How to Talk to Girls at Parties"
 Bruce McAllister, "Kin"
 Tim Pratt, "Impossible Dreams"
 Robert Reed, "Eight Episodes"
 Benjamin Rosenbaum, "The House Beyond the Sky"

Best Related Book

Samuel R. Delany, *About Writing: Seven Essays, Four Letters, and Five Interviews*
 Joseph T Major, *Heinlein's Children: The Juveniles*
 Julie Phillips, *James Tiptree, Jr.: The Double Life of Alice Sheldon*
 John Picacio, *Cover Story: The Art of John Picacio*
 Mike Resnick & Joe Siclari, eds., *Worldcon Guest of Honor Speeches*

Best Dramatic Presentation, Long Form

Children of Men
<http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0206634/>
Pan's Labyrinth
<http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0457430/>
The Prestige
<http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0482571/>
A Scanner Darkly
<http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0405296/>
V for Vendetta
<http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0434409/>

Best Dramatic Presentation, Short Form

Battlestar Galactica, "Downloaded"
<http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0519766/>
Doctor Who, "Army of Ghosts" and "Doomsday"
<http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0756449/>
<http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0756450/>
Doctor Who, "The Girl in the Fireplace"
<http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0562998/>
Doctor Who, "School Reunion"
<http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0562993/>
Stargate SG-1, "200"
<http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0784558/>

Best Professional Editor, Short Form

Gardner Dozois
 David G. Hartwell
 Stanley Schmidt
 Gordon Van Gelder
 Sheila Williams

Best Professional Editor, Long Form

Lou Anders
 James Patrick Baen
 Ginjer Buchanan
 David G. Hartwell
 Patrick Nielsen Hayden

Best Professional Artist

Bob Eggleton
 Donato Giancola
 Stephan Martiniere
 John Jude Palencar
 John Picacio

Best Semiprozine

Ansible
Interzone
Lady Churchill's Rosebud Wristlet
Locus
The New York Review of Science Fiction

Best Fanzine

Banana Wings

Challenger
The Drink Tank
Plokta
Science-Fiction Five-Yearly

Best Fan Writer

Chris Garcia
 John Hertz
 Dave Langford
 John Scalzi
 Steven H Silver

Best Fan Artist

Brad W. Foster
 Teddy Harvia
 Sue Mason
 Steve Stiles
 Frank Wu

John W. Campbell Award

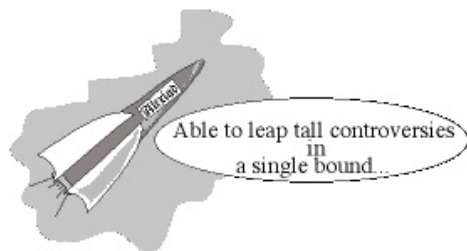
Scott Lynch
 Sarah Monette
 Naomi Novik
 Brandon Sanderson
 Lawrence M. Schoen

They were delayed by the need to translate all the Japanese language nominations — and then there was an error in the ballot counting so the ballots had *Pirates of the Caribbean: Dead Man's Chest* in the BDP:LF category. Congratulations to Mike, Claire & Mark, Guy, Chris, the Cabal, John, Steve, and Brad.

Congratulations to **Alexis Gilliland** on his winning the **2006 Rotsler Memorial Fanzine Artist Award**.

Earl Kemp reports that **Forrest J Ackerman** has broken his hip and is in the hospital, and observes that Ray Bradbury is now wheelchair bound and can neither hear nor see. And the rest of us aren't getting any younger.

Letters, we get letters



From: **AL du Pisani** February 8, 2007
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 South Africa
du.pisani@telkomsa.net

I am well. Still at the same job. Still the same frustrations. Just some added ones. The bank where I work got taken over by a foreign bank last year, and they are being absolute pests with all their new compliance regulations. Sarbanes-Oxley or SOX, have now been extended to South Africa. Thanks a bunch, Enron.

I had a very nice holiday. Could go down to the coast, and visit my family. For Christmas, my mother had all her children present. And we actually like each other. Which is a huge blessing.

South African politics: Still messed up. Still crime, still corruption. I recently read an article in the local *Financial Mail*, detailing corruption in the ANC. It looks as if moving to Kentucky style corruption might actually be an improvement.

Silly season was very silly, and to be quite honest, I have lost such interest in official news, that I rarely bother to watch more than the news headlines. At least one of which is not really anything I am interested in being aware of, much less interested in a two minute talking head "news" item.

I have read an article about coelacanths and South Africa. It seems that there have been a lot of new discoveries off the east African coast, once the South African group was found. The South African government even had a maritime science outreach to east African countries, with the coelacanth as theme.

The recent South African discovery gets more interesting, the more I found out about it. Sodwana Bay is the South African dive mecca, since it is warm there all year round. Which

means that aspiring divers can practice there all year round. The area is also interesting, from a diving point of view, which helps a lot. And there are some underwater canyons.

It was in one of these that a diver was on a training dive, when he saw a coelacanth. He managed to convince some buddies that he knew what he was taking about, and they went on a diving expedition to take photographs. I do not know how long it took before they found and photographed a coelacanth, but once they did have a photo, they approached a maritime research institute. The researchers managed to outfit a boat, and get a German submersible and crew on site within a year. Thereafter the discovery was official.

I understand that originally the type specimen of *Lafimera chalumnae* found in 1938 was thought to have somehow swam or been carried down from the Comoros, which was where the next few specimens were found. Marjorie Courtenay-Latimer, the museum curator for whom the fish was named, died in 2004 at the age of 97.

— JTM

I am still saving up for Japan, and should reserve my flights soon. I expect this year to be better than last year, even though it have started badly. (My car urgently needed expensive repairs.) And even at work, there seems to be a lot more light, and new possibilities.

I still want to come and visit again. It will just take a bit longer than I had hoped.

Good luck, and good health.

April 1, 2007

It is said that a change is as good as a holiday. This is not true, as I can attest. But it may give hope. So it is with me. I have not yet been able to find a new job, but we have relocated, to a building a bit away from where I had worked before. A building with a much better feel, and one where I am not a frustrated as before.

I feel that I must make a huge break with my current situation, but also need to generate income, as this planned trip to the Worldcon in Yokohama is proving to be a bit more expensive than planned. And, as so often happens, once you have saved up a little, something urgent comes up that goes and eat your savings. Still, I plan to be in Japan in

August.

Years ago, a local group, The Radio Rats, released their debut album: *Into the night we slide*. It was about the despair of living in Apartheid South Africa. And had a vaguely SF related hit song: ZX Dan, about a space man.

Unfortunately, the album could be released again, and again sums up feelings of despair.

For some reason, a lot of South African musicians are singing under fake names. In some instances it is understandable, James Phillips singing in Afrikaans as Bernoldus Niemand. In others, not so, such as Ralph Rabie singing as Johannes Kerkerrel. (The latter which can be translated as John Church organ.) A bit strange, but accepted.

So it was last September, when Louis Pepler released a song under the name of Bok van Blerk. Called "De La Rey", it used imagery of the Anglo-Boer War, in which General De La Rey did fight, calling for a new leader for Afrikaners. Released at an arts festival, in a somewhat conservative area, it became an immediate hit. Granting Bok van Blerk a conservative fandom, draped in the old SA flag. (One which he does not quite know what to do with.)

This song is still popular, and you can regularly see advertising for events (shows, art festivals and the like) at which Bok van Blerk is one of the main attractions. Which has lead the more intemperate to ask that the song be banned. One pub chain even tried to ban the song from being played on their premises. Once they found out how unhappy that made their customers, they recanted.

But this had lead to talk in parliament that the song should be banned. Which, in one way, is actually a symptom of the irrelevance of parliament in making decisions about SA's future.

And that opportunist, Jacob Zuma, running hard for nomination as ANC, and later SA, president, has suddenly found a reason to talk to Afrikaner leaders about the issues that worry them. Casting himself as a man of the people who is willing to listen to the people. Both of which are accusations that the current President, Thabo Mbeki, is not.

This is leading to a very interesting Presidential race, in which the current front runner is running against the existing President, and most other candidates have not announced their candidacy yet.

Turning back to SF: I hope that I am wrong, but I am currently experiencing a drought in SF books. Not that they are not being published, but that the ones I hear about and can buy locally, tend to be stuff I am not interested in.

I have to make an annual Amazon order, to fend off starvation. (It is annual, because of the shipping costs, which tend to double the price of any order I make.)

And just about the only US publisher that is publishing anything I am interested in, and can find locally, is Baen. This gives me a significantly different picture of the market for SF than the one you are experiencing.

Still living in hope, one of which is that I will meet some of you in Japan.

From: **Christopher J. Garcia** Feb. 9, 2007
 1401 N. Shoreline Boulevard, Mountain
 View, CA 94043-1311
chris@computerhistory.org

I should be getting ready to go to Corflu. I should be, but sadly my flight got cancelled. These things happen, but I'm still not on a flight yet to Austin and they don't have much hope of getting me there before things start at the con. But, on the up side, I've got a bit to do some LoCing, so here you go.

It's a shame about Barbaro. I made a lot of money on the Derby, not so much on any of the other races. A fine horse to watch and had real Triple Crown potential.

Damn right systems make me more productive! And maybe my production makes other more productful I love that word!

As 1/8 Ohlone Indian (and my Grandmother would slap me if I said Native American) I hate it when folks say that anyone discovered America unless they happened to wander over a land bridge. There were people here and they had governments and bureaucracies even! It just rubs me raw. —Rant Over-

My grandfather had the same proportion of Indian blood as you do. His was Cherokee. I think my Scottish border lords ancestors could have taught the Cherokees much about being proper savages.

— LTM

I was saddened to hear about the fire in David Eddings's house. At least his original manuscripts were in the basement and survived.

Hillary's trip to the Pole made some small headlines, but he does that every so often. I have to agree that the British Gov should be in on the restoration and upkeep of the site, but they seem uninterested. Some of the most important huts are in surprisingly good shape

and sites of note, including many related to Shackleton, are still visible. Global warming will put some damper on those sites.

We lost two more WWI vets. Mercado del Toro, the oldest man in the world, passed and that was sad because there hadn't been a Male oldest person in the world for a few decades. The last front-line vet passed as well. I figure myself lucky to live in an age where, with the extended lifespans many seem to be enjoying, that the past still lives with us.

Yes, we went to see Robley Rex (our WWI vet) in the rehab home and he was worried about being home alone at the age of 105 — 106 in May. (It probably seems unbelievable that he is distantly related to Lisa and step-related to me, but that's our part of Kentucky for you.)

Add another name to those veterans of fandom who have passed. I'm sure you'll cover Lee Hoffman's death in great detail in the issue this will appear in. It does put a damper on Corflu, which I've got to rush to the airport to try and make. My flight's in 40 minutes!

I'll write more later.

Congratulations on your Hugo nominations.

— JTM

From: **Richard Dengrove** February 9, 2007
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I enjoyed the *Alexiad* Dec. 2006 as I have other *Alexiads*.

About your review of Susan Clancy's *Abducted*, why are people proud to have been abducted and humiliated by Grey Aliens? They have had the central experience of the era: the ultimate in being treated like garbage by beings whose rationale is the ultimate in reason. In comparison, bosses are pikers who treat their employees like garbage for profit or to deflect blame and whose rationale is always similar view of reason.

Another central experience is parents making us nuts. Trinlay Khadro had a good comment there. She said that even though parents make us nuts, we still love them. Of course, it is because we love them that they drive us nuts. It is amazing what humans can get themselves involved in.

Another central experience of our time is

cardiovascular disease. I would tell Sheryl Birkhead to change her cardiologist. As a gastroenterologist told me once, cardiologists tend to be fanatics. It sounds like hers is.

She should find one that will tell her how low an ldl is low enough, and one who won't deprive her of chocolate covered raisins. I can't conceive chocolate covered raisins have anything to do with heart problems. They would my problem, diabetes, but that is another story.

Still another central experience is politics. I am glad Taras Wolansky, asserts his ideas rather gives them some elaborate defense. The reason why we believe many political and ideological ideas is that they hit a chord. The defenses come after, and usually use completely dreadful logic. That goes for double for intellectuals.

Let's take the beliefs presented here individually. The destruction of patriotism ruining the country? When it comes to patriotism, any departure from the Conservative line is ruining the country. This is a view that is very heartfelt. However, in defense of it, people point to the Ancient Romans, a people with a rather long lived empire as empires go.

Another belief presented here is that Fundamentalists would never say that the Bible was not the final authority on all subjects? I understand that he wouldn't want to think fellow Conservatives are low grade morons.

They aren't, of course. The vast majority of them would not act as if the Bible was the authority on all subjects. However, such is their respect for the Bible they have to say it is.

A third belief presented here is that Reagan was responsible for the collapse of the Soviet Union. I am sure that this belief is heart felt. It may even be the case. However, all the explanations of it I have seen have been vague generalities. Something about toughness, or the Russians bankrupting themselves on the weapons race. There are not many facts people point to.

I frankly admit that many liberal views are heartfelt but without facts. However, pointing those views out is your department.

A fourth political belief presented here, except by you Joe and George Price, has been the Arab/Israeli Dispute, and people are very heartfelt about it. So heartfelt, in fact, I am surprised that both of you are willing to agree with me that the Israelis did prevent the evacuated Arab Palestinians from returning to their homes after the 1948 War. Of course, you justify it because the Arabs expelled the Jews from their lands.

In short, two wrongs make a right. What makes both wrongs even wronger is that, ever since, the exiles have caused nothing but headaches for their exilers.

Strangely enough, Israel has done well by the expelled Jews; in 1977, for example, the Likud win was based on the Sephardi vote.

The biggest central experience of our time, and any time, is not politics, however, but religion. That is why Marty Helgesen is wrong when he says facts are important when it comes to God. Facts are a coverup. What is important is the hope and the meaning for mankind that are the core of religion.

Can things not a central experience be made a central experience? Definitely. The introduction of New Coke and its rejection by the populace was not a central experience of its time. It is true that Christopher Garcia tried to convince Harry Turtledove it was and to write about an alternate world where New Coke took off. Of course, Harry could not see New Coke as a central experience.

I can't either. What I can see, however, is the possibility of a central experience, or of central experiences, that would make New Coke take off.

That's it for this time.

March 26, 2007

I, of course, enjoyed the *Alexiad* February 2007. That can be seen in my comments.

My first comment concerns your review of Rome, the continuing series. It says, at one point, the year was 3717 in Judea. That is the date it would have been had the Modern Hebrew Calendar been in use. However, I thought it didn't come into use until much later. Some say Rabbi Hillel II and the 4th Century A.D. Others, not until the 9th or 10th Century.

My second comment has to do with your review of Jung Chang's and Jon Halliday's book, *Mao: the Unknown Story*, and Melanie Phillips' book, *Londonistan*. You are uneasy that they can find nothing good to say about Mao, or the West's defenses against the Islamic horde. You're right: a person can prove anything by just presenting the evidence for it and by ignoring the evidence against it.

Also, there are practical considerations. You note Mao would have to have had something going for him to become ruler of China. Also, I get the impression the West would have to too or it would have become

Islamic shortly after the modern rot set in. Whenever it did set in. . . Come to think of it, if we in the West are such wimps, what are we doing in Iraq?

A third comment of mine, Joe, concerns your review of Étienne Cabet's *Icaria*. I have to admit that some of his ideas were pretty crazy, but he couldn't hold a candle to Charles Fourier. Fourier asserted when his utopia was installed, the seas would turn to lemonade and we would grow an invisible trunk for detecting cosmic undulations. Whatever cosmic undulations are.

You forgot the anti-lion, which would become the new riding animal. I take it Fourier never kept a cat.

— JTM

I'm sure it would be an exhilarating experience just getting such an animal bridled and saddled. Once you had the animal properly tacked up you could then tend your numerous scratches before either going on a truly wild ride or just sitting on a sulkingly inert animal.

—LTM

A fourth comment of mine concerns Trinlay Khadro's words on the virtues of valium. I think you joined in. The problem is that the fellow I was disputing with did not doubt you should take valium when you needed it. In fact, he was thinking that since we had valium, we didn't need religion.

A fifth comment of mine concerns what you said about your name and what I said about my name. You said your name was originally Norman. Was it anywhere near "de Mauger"? Whatever the original name, it became "Major."

I said my original name was Turkic. In fact, the librarian/translator at the Library of Congress said it was "Gender," Turkic for "wide open spaces." Later, it became russified into Genderovsky. In America, my Uncle Sam found an anagram that americanized it into Dengrove.

A sixth comment of mine concerns your words and Rod E. Smith's words on Señor Wences, who is best known in this country for performing on the Ed Sullivan show. At one point, you say "S'aright?" What the disembodied head in a box said during his act. Of course, I much preferred it when Señor Wences kissed his own hand.

A seventh comment of mine concerns what E.B. Frohvet said about Robert Lichtman's

Trap Door. He said it has vanished into the mists. My problem with that is I just got a new issue. However, I can see where someone might say that; *Trap Door* did take a long time in coming.

My last comment is to Rodney Leighton. He says that a computer would make his letters cleaner and neater, but the typos would remain. Would they if he had spellcheck? That is something a lot of wordprocessing programs come with these days.

From: **Taras Wolansky** February 13, 2007
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Alexiad, December 2006: I see I missed the deadline again.

Review of *New Destinies*, Oct.-Dec. 1979: **"It seems to reverse evolution, that [Roger Zelazny] should go from poetic mythologizer to pulp producer."** It's known as "quitting your day job"!

Interesting, the odd role of Woodrow Wilson in SF. In Heinlein's *Methuselah's Children*, Mary Sperling immediately realizes Lazarus Long must be the oldest member of the Howard Families, when she learns his birth name was Woodrow Wilson Smith. Because he had to have been named before Woodrow Wilson ceased being the man who "kept us out of war". And then you mention Jack Finney's *The Woodrow Wilson Dime*: from a time-line, perhaps, where he kept us out of war and made it stick.

Review of *Witchling*, by Yasmine Galenorn: How do you know the book's description of the heroine's "38 DD boobs" was "not written by a guy"? Some leading romance writers have been men under pseudonyms. Indeed, the review make the author sound like an able hack, exactly the type to pull something like that. The book also seems like it started out to be a spin-off novel from the TV series, *Charmed*. Which really had nothing going for it except the décolletage.

Check:
<http://www.galenorn.com>
If that's a guy, it's a damned good drag outfit.

Judging from what I would see on the shelves of a (recently defunct) Waldenbooks at a local mall, all literary genres are gradually collapsing into the romance novel. Which is, indeed, where they emerged in the first place,

a few centuries ago.

Roald Amundsen's "willingness to learn from the Inuit": I have long believed the reason John Speke got the source of the Nile right, while Richard Burton didn't, was that Speke listened to the black Africans. While Burton despised them and preferred the company of the "civilized" slave raiders.

Review of *Nell Gwyn* by Charles Beauclerk: Don't confuse Charles Foster Kane's mistress in *Citizen Kane* with Marion Davies, who has a good reputation among film critics as a comedienne. For that matter, don't confuse Charles Foster Kane with William Randolph Hearst. For that matter, don't confuse *Citizen Kane* with real life.

What about Citizen Hearst (by W. A. Swanberg)? No, I was thinking of the stuff like "Operator 13" where she plays a spy, or "Hearts Divided", where she plays Jerome Bonaparte's first (American) wife. Nell knew her metier and didn't let anyone, even Old Rowley, push her out of it.

— JTM

As cinematography it's a great piece of work, but it's a very silly film: "Rosebud", indeed! Psychologically, and politically: the stuff about how the working class will no longer depend upon wealthy people to represent it. Somebody should tell that to Teddy Kennedy, John Kerry, Jon Corzine, Herb Kohl, Nancy Pelosi, etc.

Finally, *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* **"struck me as just another sitcom — clever, talented, stylish, elegant young women; dull-witted, oafish, sloppy, crude boys; and clueless adults."** Though the show was very uneven, especially from season to season, I would be hard put to recognize any episode from that bizarre description!

One rule of thumb: if Buffy is still in high school (i.e., the first three seasons), it will usually be very good. What happened after that, aside for the loss of the show's central metaphor (high school is hell), is that its creative forces were diluted by a second show, *Angel*, and later by a third, *Firefly*. Another way of putting it is that creator Joss Whedon had less and less to do with the show.

I started watching *Buffy* in its fifth season, when it just barely held my attention, mostly because I thought Michelle Trachtenberg, as envious kid sister Dawn, was funny. Writing in her diary:

Everybody cares what she thinks, just 'cause she can do backflips and stuff. Like that's such a crucial job skill in the real world. Plus, Mom lets her get away with everything, "Your sister's saving the world." I could so save the world if someone handed me superpowers, but I'd think of a cool name and wear a mask ...

But then I had the good fortune to stumble upon the third season in daily syndication and became a believer.

April 6, 2007

Alexiad, February 2007:

Review of Jack Campbell's *The Lost Fleet*: I feel guilty about my quote that seems to belittle these books. I gobbled them up as fast as I got them!

The thing about Campbell's space battles that I (and some of the quote providers) found most intriguing is that they take account of the speed of light. Thus, Capt. Geary must restrain himself from sending orders and advice to subordinate commanders, because he knows that what he is seeing actually happened minutes ago, and any orders from him will take additional minutes to arrive. And when he detects enemy ships at a distance, he has to guess where they are now and where they are going, to formulate a tactical response.

Review of John M. Grissmer's *The Ghosts of Antietam*: After the death of President-Elect Abraham Lincoln, Pres. Hamlin **"defuses the crisis with a proposal for compensated emancipation."** It's not the "hard-core Abolitionists" but the Southerners that I can't imagine going for this, barring imminent military defeat.

They had seceded, not because Lincoln was planning to attack slavery where it already existed, but because he wouldn't let slavery expand into any new states. And note that the war was almost over before they finally agreed, in desperation, to begin enlisting black troops.

In general, southern whites did not believe they could safely live alongside freed blacks. ("I tremble for my country, etc.") Thus, for there to be even a chance of Southern agreement, emancipation would have to be followed by deportation. But the dilemma was, that would eliminate their labor force. If they had known how race relations in the South would actually develop after 1865, on the other hand, they would not have feared a free black population so much.

Lisa: I thought the *Seabiscuit* movie was

most inaccurate in its picture of jockey Red Pollard as a loser. When you stop and think about it: if he was a not-very-successful prizefighter — how many jockeys are prizefighters? In fact, he was a dominant figure among the jockeys, laying down the law and keeping the little boys from being abused.

Also, War Admiral was the smaller horse, as I recall.

TV Review of *Ghost Whisperer*: Vanity, all is vanity. Statuesque Aisha Tyler ("Mother Nature" in the "Santa Clause" movies) is replaced by hefty Camryn Manheim, to make JLH look thinner. In general, the second season is an improvement over the first, story-wise. And (vanity, vanity) JLH's makeup artist is doing a better job of making her look good.

TV Review of *Jericho*: I watched only the first episode; I got annoyed when, with America destroyed, the episode milks a routine car crash for suspense.

There are a number of SF stories and novels (Kim Stanley Robinson?) in which the U.S. is destroyed, and the world is the better for it. This is plausible to people of a certain political tendency. (But don't you dare call them unpatriotic, you McCarthyite swine!)

Thus, episode 10: **"Shipments of food from China are dropped over Jericho by Russian airplanes"**. Gosh, we really misunderstood the peace-loving and humanitarian Chinese and Russian governments!

Richard Dengrove: As I'm sure you understand, "If we fight [global warming] and it proves not to be a threat," a hell of a lot of "harm will be done".

A few things I'm sure of: 1) The Kyoto Protocol will be almost totally ineffective, as even its advocates admit. 2) The media are deceptive about #1. 3) Scientific opposition to the global warming consensus is substantial. 4) The media are deceptive about #3.

Darrell Schweitzer: Indeed, there's a link between SF and skepticism. SF writers Isaac Asimov, L. Sprague de Camp, and Carl Sagan were among the founders of the Committee for Skeptical Inquiry (formerly CSICOP).

Trouble is, those three writers have something in common: they're all dead. There are no living SF writers on the list of CSI Fellows (in Wikipedia). Which suggests that skepticism in the SF — or "SFF" — community may be limited to aging boomers like you and me, who got into it before Star Wars and generic fantasy took over.

Your words about the relative importance of Jack Williamson and Nelson Bond were prophetic. In the Lunacon dealer's room a

couple of weeks ago, I heard someone say that, aside from the panelists, *not one person* showed up for the "Tribute to Nelson Bond". But you probably know that: I see here that you were scheduled to be one of the panelists.

"Others never learned to write above the Gernsback standard": Lloyd Arthur Eshbach told me that, when Campbell started demanding rewrites, he simply didn't bother. The pay wasn't enough to justify the extra work. Years later, he regretted it, though: he might have been one of the notable writers of the Golden Age.

Joy V. Smith: **"Stories about people running free and naked in nature"**. In Heinlein's *Beyond This Horizon*, the man from the 1920s dumps cold water on back-to-nature enthusiasm: **"Have you ever had a mule step on your foot?"**

George W. Price: No, no, no, no, no!!!! I was *attacking* the preposterous notion that Hiroshima was spared conventional bombing to provide better A-bomb data. This is how myths get started: some people will read your LoC but not my response.

From: **Rod E. Smith** February 16, 2007
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Another nice zine. Thanks.

Taral Wayne mentions a trip to a Canadian aviation museum, and specifically the Avro Arrow. This was one of those great potential aircraft sabotaged by misplaced politics. An administration thought it would be cheaper to buy planes from the US and Britain than for Canada to build its own, and cancelled this and other programs to buy foreign goods. Then subsequently saw almost its entire best and brightest in the aviation industry go south to work in the US, and a major industrial base crumble to nothing, costing billions in potential income.

Canada certainly isn't alone in suffering from such problems. In the US the SR-71 was taken out of service (after being mothballed once and having to be brought back because nothing else could do the job) largely by the efforts of one man, who justified his actions with the fact that the SR-71 didn't have real-time satellite uplink capability. Ignoring the fact that he, himself, had previously sabotaged an effort to provide this. Now, we still don't have anything to replace it. Commanders in the field need data, but reconnaissance satellites aren't flexible enough and are too predictable, and drones are too low and slow and get shot

down.

Britain has a long and dishonorable history of canceling aerospace programs just before they would have delivered significant results (or, in some cases, just after they do so). There was a British research project which would have put a man past Mach 1 in a jet before Chuck Yeager did it in a rocket. The plane had thin, straight wings and was sabotaged by a bureaucrat who had seen some of the captured German data on supersonic flight and knew a supersonic plane had to have a delta wing and therefore this vehicle couldn't possibly succeed. Of course, the Bell X-1 had thin, straight wings . . .

Like the history of the space program, which has seen one vehicle after another developed and then canceled before use because there was some new technology that had made it obsolete!

— JTM

There are still rumors that Avro employees hid the final prototype in a barn, somewhere, and substituted a test mule to the scrappers. There's even fanfiction about this, and the plane's subsequent saving of Canada or even all the world. :-)

Darrell Schweitzer asks why space aliens don't abduct fans, and figures it's because they'd ask too many intelligent questions. Along similar lines, in one of his *What's New* strips years ago, Phil Foglio pointed out that fen would be the obvious ones to greet these strange visitors from another planet. The strip showed a horrendous alien stepping out of a flying saucer, and while everyone else is fleeing in screaming panic a fan is calmly asking "Have a nice trip?"

And, of course, as shown in *Footfall*, fen and SF writers are the ones to consult when the aliens prove unfriendly. ;-)

From: **Lloyd Penney** February 16, 2007
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I've missed *Alexiad*, and finally realized that an issue hadn't arrived in my inbox in quite some time. I thought I'd ask if I've missed any issues, and I sure have. I'm not sure how I fell off the e-mailing list, but it's time for catch up. Here's some comments on issue 28 of *Alexiad*.

Why don't teens do zines? They have

technology that makes communication much more rapid between any number of peers, they want and need something faster than publishing, and frankly, I think they have less to say than we ever did. We wanted to communicate, and we wanted to communicate in detail, plus we wanted our publications to look pleasing to the eye. Publication design was part of my own training in journalism school, so zines that look good and facilitate its reading are tops for me. Choice of design is rather limited in a blog, but I don't think too many care how the blog looks, as long as there's messages back and forth. Perhaps our time is past, and we do what we do in an effort to keep it alive and relevant, at least for some. Comments?

They have blogs. Which, I've noted, are so easy to keep continually updated that after a while the bloggers quit entirely. Or mutate. (Such as the one famed faanish fanwriter of the nineties whose blog now consists of mosaic pictures of construction cranes.)

Back in the early 70s, I used my old camping knapsack to transport my books to high school while keeping my hands free. Today, I don't think there's a kid who doesn't use a knapsack to bring his or her books to school I just wish they'd take off and carry them by the handle when they're on public transit. I've been bashed several times by kids who don't know how far the knapsacks protrude off their backs. Dora the Explorer has made sure everyone's got a similar bag with everything in it. I don't have many post-apocalypse books on my shelves, but I do have the Robie McAuley book you list here. Escapist literatures usually consists of utopian visions, not dystopian, but there's a market for every vision.

My condolences on the death of Barbaro this shows how fragile a horse can be, even showing its strength and endurance. Taral's article reveals that *Wind in the Willows* will mark its 100th anniversary in a couple of years, and I would hope that the celebrations are even now in the preparation stages. I believe this year's Aurora Awards will be held in Vancouver at V-Con 31 in October. There's no confirmation yet on the Aurora Awards website, but there's still lots of time. I hope Dennis Mullin will continue with his administration of the Auroras, as he's done for close to 15 years, if memory serves.

Hi, Jeff I got tired of Hotmail eating my accounts when I wasn't looking, so I signed up for a Gmail account myself. Now to figure out what to use it for, I had two Hotmail accounts for other activities, so I think the Gmail account will serve the same purposes, should those purposes arise. I have not been a supporter of the Montreal in 2009 Worldcon bid, mostly because we'd sworn off Worldcons. However should Montreal win, we might be persuaded to go. No promises.

Second Cups are good, although a Timothy's opened just down the street from where we live, so Timothy's are number one here, by just a shade. Good luck on keeping your hair, Jeff, I think my luck is running out, and my bald spot is expanding.

My loc: Yvonne and I finished up all our agent-like commitments to all Lacon IV members, including getting registration packages to those who couldn't go, and refund cheques to all who participated in programming or convention management and volunteering. Yvonne is no longer chairing the Toronto ISDC bid for 2009, but will be helping to make it happen. She'll be going to the ISDC this year in Dallas; I hope I can join her.

Personal stuff you might know from other fanzines, but in December, I had a serious eye problem. My optometrist, in an examination to get a new prescription, detected a detached retina in my right eye, and past the incompetence of two local hospitals, finally got me connected with an ophthalmologist, and I had an operation to correct the problem on December 5. I've been healing ever since, and got some good words from the ophthalmologist on January 31 the eye looks good, and sees good, too. Finally, I might be able to get new glasses?

The data entry guy at work had a detached retina. They ended up having to remove the eye. Ouch.

Well, that's comments on 28.

February 26, 2007

The catch-up continues . . . here are some comments on *Alexiad* 29.

Just seems lately so many big names in our little hobby are leaving us, like Tucker, and now, Lee Hoffman. It does get depressing, but it may be a signal to take the initiative, and remember them in your own fanac. Who knows, fans may soon be mentioning you the same way they mentioned Tucker, Hoffman,

brown, Shaw, and many more.

The deplanetization of Pluto . . . I saw something about the year's new words, and one was "Plutoed", to be demoted in status by consensus. What I'd like to see is a current map of our solar system. I suspect an old one would look familiar, but seeing the whole system's gone in for renovations . . .

Elfling sounded like the perfect lapcat, and the perfect outdoor cat, too. Most cats aren't that versatile, and some cats just plain don't like strangers. We may be visiting old friends this summer, and if we do, I'll be sure to spend a good portion of it with Momcat purring on my lap. I've said it many times; our pets have much to teach us, about love, and about how to deal with death and grief.

He was a perfect armful, and had such long pretty fur.

Elfling was not a lapcat. He would strop around your legs for some time but he disliked being held.

— LTM

There are so many sports Americans claim as their own, like baseball, football and basketball. (I won't mention the Blue Jays in 1992 and 1993, and James Naismith.) For us, it's hockey, and in some areas, lacrosse and curling. Not why so many make fun of hockey; if they knew its history, they'd think twice.

To Martin Morse Wooster . . . where does Jerry Uba live now? Buffalo was the last place I knew, but by the looks of it, he's long gone from there. I hope his health has improved in the intervening years. To Milt Stevens . . . the fourth-floor fanzine lounge was indeed a good place to be.

Greetings to Joliette Jeff! There is a dearth of conrunners indeed. We learned early that in order to make the good times happen, someone had to work hard to create them. Some of us found that we could have an even better time if we worked and created the convention, and that's why Yvonne and I were on committee at Ad Astra for 25 years. We're tired, and there's other things we'd like to do. Ad Astra 2007 will be the first AA we're just attending as just members.

I should have waited for another day to do this . . . it's not much of a loc. Anyway, it is another issue done, and I will get to issue 30 as soon as I can. See you shortly.

March 1, 2007

The mass catch-up continues into the month of March! Here's a loc on *Alexiad* 30.

I hope your birthday was a good time. Yvonne's birthday is on the 19th of December, and my mother's is on the 26th, so I know all about birthdays around Christmas, and how difficult they can be for others to understand.

Yes it was, we got to see my niece (my birthday is also her birthday) and her husband. Sarah will have us some news around NASFiC.

I still have all my Trek books, and so does Yvonne. We're both in fandom about 30 years now, but Trek was a fine introduction to the world of fantastic literature. We can laugh at it a little now, but still, it provided strong characters, great adventure and something to get excited about, and provide that precious goshwow. Of course, we also found novels and anthologies where many, many more strong characters had their great adventures. Are you saying that the fanfic we see online today may be a modern expression of legend writing of the past? Some of the grand characters of legend have been proven to be fictional; perhaps that was fanfic written about a man or woman of the time, and blown up into epic proportions for an enhanced adventure with a message within.

The Direct Credit Society Alfred Lawson set up sounds reminiscent of the old Social Credit movement in Canada, as you say. Social Credit has pretty much disappeared from our own shores, but took up residence in New Zealand.

I've had the pleasure of meeting Joe Haldeman a few times, but never did get to meet his late brother Jack. I went to my bookshelf to see if I had anything by Jack, and all I could come up with is a couple of old Trek novels. The only one I could find offhand is entitled *Perry's Planet*.

Yvonne and I are members of the Canadian Space Society, and Yvonne is a member of the NSS. The word about various space endeavours gets out, and they produce nice publications . . . I'd have to ask Yvonne about anything else they do. At least, they're not as bad as The Planetary Society, where Louis Friedman seems to do nothing with your membership money but produce fancy pamphlets asking for more.

The Jack Finney novel, with the protagonist that focuses on a dime to travel to parallel universes . . . there was also the Richard Matheson novel, *Bid Time Return* (converted into the excellent movie *Somewhere in Time*) where the protagonist, a playwright,

accidentally focuses on a modern-day penny that wrenches him from the time he wanted to be in to the modern day of the movie. At least, that's what happened in the movie.

Alex Slate's assertion that Jesus never claimed to be the Messiah . . . well there's a Monty Python movie that backs that up, and I won't go into being a naughty boy or anything. The latest assertion from a movie crew, backed up by James Cameron, that the tomb of Jesus and his family have been found might also back up the assertion. Now to see how this is handled, and whether the contents of Jesus' tomb will remind anyone of Geraldo Rivera breaking into Capone's vault.

Which I saw on TV. As for Cameron, he seems to be publicizing ossuaries with common Jewish names that may be of that period, which doesn't prove anything beyond that. It seems to be a publicity stunt, says everyone from Rotten Tomatoes to the MoxArgon Group.

Greetings to Lee Gilliland! I hope the UNCLEcon went well. Long-distance conrunning isn't easy, but Worldcon committees seem to do it well, either by having the wherewithal to go to meetings from that distance, or chat on a website.

All the discussion of fan fund trip reports got me thinking of the one Yvonne and I did for CUFF years ago. I had seen that many people would run portions of their trip report in various zines, and that a whole stand-alone publication seemed to be the most desired. We did our CUFF trip report as a stand-alone, and it was eventually popular. After a print run of about 60, we've got only a few copies left. It truly revitalized the CUFF treasury, although no one's gotten the idea to do this kind of report since.

For all the chocolate fans reading this . . . in the pretty town of Smiths Falls, Ontario, not that far from Ottawa, is the Hershey's plant for Canada. It's not as complex as Hershey, PA, but it is a fun place to go, especially for inexpensive chocolate to take to a party. It is also the main employer in Smiths Falls. There are demonstrations outside the plant now, mostly because Hershey wants to shut the plant down, throwing about a thousand people out of work. The federal and provincial members of Parliament are working to stop Hershey from doing this, but the company has already announced that the shutdown will be coming, and is irreversible.

Well, getting there . . . after this I only have one issue of *Alexiad* outstanding, and that will be the latest issue. After that, I am certain I can produce more detailed locs. Until then, take care. This weekend is our local litcon, Ad Astra, and an enormous snowstorm has just moved in. I can't see across the highway, it's snowing that hard. See you once I get to issue 31.

March 7, 2007

The rest of the catch-up is now here. Follows are comments on *Alexiad* 31, and well ahead of deadline, too.

I read and watch far too many comic strips and cartoon shows, but I have dived into the vast pool of webcomics, and found some of them irresistible. Ozy and Millie, Namir Deiter, Sabrina Online, Vicki Fox, Wapsi Square . . . lots of interesting stories, and it's probably no coincidence that many of the characters are furry.

I have seen some interesting things by the side of the road, too. Years ago, on our way to Midwestcon, we spotted small rockets mounted by an overpass on the interstate. I checked the map, and sure enough, we were driving past Wapakoneta, Ohio, hometown of Neil Armstrong. The rockets were from the local Armstrong museum. We returned to Midwestcon a few years later, and the rockets were gone. The overpass was under construction, and the Interstate seemed wider, too, so I imagine the rockets had to be moved to accommodate the wider roads.

We knew that it was on our way home from ChiCon via Detroit, so we stopped off. Fascinating place! They have the Gemini 8 capsule.

Ad Astra '07, our own local SF convention, took place this past weekend, and both contenders for the 2009 Worldcon were there, Montréal and Kansas City, both staging parties. It has been a friendly race, even with some in the Kansas City party stating that Montréal would be incapable of staging a Worldcon because they can't even stage a convention of their own. I have enjoyed Con*cept every year I've gone, but they do have some challenges in finding people willing to work their convention and help run it.

Reading Trinlay Khadro's loc reminded me that at Ad Astra, we were offered something of great price. I have written here and elsewhere about staying with friends in Essex County,

just across the river from Detroit, and spending a weekend with them and their affectionate elderly cat Momcat. Well, this past weekend, Momcat was offered to us. She is having difficulty with a cat adopted by those friends a couple of years ago, and as she reaches the age of 13, Momcat needs a place to be by herself. Any time we visit, Momcat just loves us, and so we might take the giant leap, and take Momcat home with us the next time we're there. Yvonne and I love dogs and cats, but we've never had a pet of our own, so this will take some thought and planning, plus some thorough cleaning and rearranging at home.

I agree with something in Rich Dengrove's letter . . . if global warming is a threat, and we fight it, we will benefit our air and water and environment, and our planet. If it turns out not to be a threat, the air, water and environment still benefit. Cutting down on our output of pollutants is a benefit, no matter what. Will our economy be hurt? Possibly. To paraphrase David Suzuki, the "eco" in ecology and economics mean the same thing, home. Why can't the two be connected? If we save our ecology, our economics will be improved, as well. Are those who believe in global warming gullible? No, they are careful, and they know what as a whole, we can damage our environment.

To Brad Foster . . . Murray Moore brought back my FAAn Award from Austin, Texas, and presented it to me at Ad Astra this past weekend. Colourful and nifty, and thank you for your good work!

Looks like Paul Gadzikowski might have been a little rushed . . . and yes, they do smell bad on the inside.

All done, and all caught up, with weeks to spare. Off it goes to you, and to my LiveJournal loc archive. Take care, stay well and warm, and after the weather we've had . . . That. Groundhog. Is. Dead. Meat.

With natural gas prices such as they are I don't mind mild winters; i.e., the picture I took of Lisa in a t-shirt standing in front of Mr. Tud's planes — on the first day of winter.

— JTM

See you both soon.

From: **Brad W. Foster** February 18, 2007
P.O. Box 165246, Irving, TX 75016-5246 USA
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Best Fan Artist Hugo Nominee

I love unexpected art. Seeing something huge when you are driving down the road, an unexpected sculptural bit. So loved your discovery of the planes in IN, and even more so that you gave us the full address to check it out on Google maps! The arrow for the address was actually pointing to a neighbors house, but then most of the map services tend to get "close" more often than exact, especially for rural areas. But there was no mistaking what I was looking for as I scanned off to the sides. We DO live in the 21st century, here I am easily accessing incredible satellite imagery with just a few clicks of a keyboard in my own home.

We have lots of pictures of the planes from ground level. Want a few?

Hope your opossum was just a one-time visitor. We had one around here for a year or two, terrorizing the outside cats, eating up their food and messing things up. Finally it got trapped in an outside work shed, and city showed up to take it off. I know the tales of how wildlife can adapt to man, but still amazed at the variety of things we live with without knowing about them for the most part, smack-dab in the middle of this concrete jungle that is the Dallas/Ft Worth metroplex.

It could have been considerably worse. A raccoon would probably have shredded my face before I knew it was there.

— LTM

You Can Get Arrested For That is another of those fun books I'd love to track down. Often the "mock it" system of pointing out how silly certain systems (laws, etc) can be works so much better than learned discourse. And, it's more fun to watch!

I've been a fan of Donald Westlake for years, and have read a couple of the "Dortmunder" books, but I had no idea he had done so many with the character, as Dainis Bisenieks revealed in the locs. Another project to track down the titles, then track down the books. Could Dainis possibly supply a list of the specific titles that the Dortmunder stories are in?

Speaking of books, still doing additions and updates to the website, trying to get it in shape where I can officially say it is "ready". One of the fun sections is to transfer my reading list

there. Started in 2001 to simply be a memory-job for myself on which books I had already read (helpful since would often be at a bookstore, pick up a book, and then not be sure if I remembered it because I had indeed read, or simply because I'd read about it so many times.) First lists started out as just titles and authors, then moved to a few words to add to the memory job, and recently now a sentence or two on each. Certainly not "reviews" in any sense of the word, but for those with lots of spare time and copious idle curiosity, you can access that section directly at:

<http://www.jabberwockygraphix.com/readlist.html>

That's the main page for books this year, with links to pages for the past six years.

Congratulations on your Hugo nomination.

— JTM

From: **Joy V. Smith** February 19, 2007
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Interesting about the upcoming Pacific War what-ifs. Were all the titles you used in the paragraph after the list other Alternate History books? Btw, I enjoyed *Pacific Empire* a while back. So, Sir Edmund Hillary is still alive? I didn't know that. He seems so historic.

As a matter of fact they were all AH books about the war in the Pacific. Sir Ed is still going at age 87. He was born July 20, 1919, fifty years to the day before the first Moon landing — and he said Neil should have said something natural like "Jesus, here we are." (If he had, Madelyn Murray O'Hair would have sued NASA.)

The big model airplanes along the road sound like a fun opportunity! And the opossum story was exciting; it's those unexpected things that make life interesting. So the opossum destroyed the ceiling after getting in through the wall?

I enjoyed your reviews, especially those of Abraham Lincoln, Mao Tse-tung/Zedong, and the bio-domes (which I've always been curious about) books. I learned lots, as usual. The candy reviews make me look forward to Easter. The Joy of High Tech (battlefield weapons)

article is impressive; it makes me think twice about flitting about in a time machine, lest I land in a battle!

I also enjoyed the other reviews (I haven't seen *Jericho*, but it sounded intriguing; I recently reread *Alas, Babylon*, btw), Taral Wayne's visit to the aerospace museum, and the other articles.

LOCs: Speaking of Nazis, also fantatics and gullible people, (Richard Dengrove's LOC), I saw in the news (or a documentary) on TV that the neo-Nazis are recruiting and indoctrinating kids, including a pair, as I recall, of blue-eyed, blonde-haired twins. Scary.

The Holocaust Controversies blog had an age analysis of known deniers a few months ago (May 12, 2006 entry) and cheerfully concluded that they were all elderly. Then there came Prussian Blue, the singers Lynx & Lamb Gaede, who were born June 30, 1992. And now there's Eric Hunt, the guy who tried to kidnap Elie Wiesel. Indeed, the troofers movement (9/11 conspiracy) has brought in some younger Deniers.

<http://holocaustcontroversies.blogspot.com>

— JTM

I was glad to hear that Trinlay has adopted a new kitten, Seimei. Scritch his little ears for me. E. B. Frohvet, I will keep my eyes open for *The Ra Expeditions*, also *Kon-Tiki*. We seem to have lost our old copy. And I enjoyed Lyn McConchie's *Key of the Keplian* and have reread it.

I also enjoyed the nice selection of illos, including the one about Bling Kong.

From: **Jason K. Burnett** February 20, 2007
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Alexiad was interesting and informative, as usual. Congrats on making it through five years of pubbing this zine, and here's wishing you many more.

Books reviews were excellent - far too many tempting titles, far too little time to read. The review of *Team of Rivals* was particularly insightful, as was the review of the Mao biography. (Of the two I'd be more likely to read the Mao, by reason of knowing less about that topic. Not that I'll be starting any new nonfiction reading anytime soon — I'm about halfway through the first volume of Churchill's

history of WW2, with the rest of the series awaiting my attention.)

The dual review of *Londonistan* and *Betrayal* gave me at lot to think about, as did the review of *Travels in Icaria* — real dystopias and imaginary utopias within a few pages of each other. It definitely appears that we are in for interesting times.

Kudos to Rodford Edmiston for the article on swords and spears — I don't think there was anything there that I'd never heard somewhere else before, but he did a wonderful job of gathering all the information into one place and presenting it an organized fashion.

Robert Sabella: I too remember exactly where I was when I heard about the *Challenger* explosion, but I couldn't remember the date. In fact, if they hadn't named the event for the date, I couldn't have told you the date of September 11, 2001, but could tell you exactly where I was when I first heard the news.

Alex R. Slate: re crudzines: Being one of the younger generation, I think it's not so much that we're unwilling to tolerate crudzines as that, thanks to computers, home-published things **can** look so much more like professional publications, and consequently we've adopted the idea that they **should**. Having seen scanned copies of fanzines of yore, I think we've totally missed the boat — focusing on the packaging rather than the contents.

It has become so easy, in fact, to do a professional-looking package that the temptation is to do more and more flash and never mind the content. Compare *Science Fiction Five Yearly* with other current fanzines for an example of what could be put in a zine.

— JTM

Jeff Boman: Thanks for the congratulations. Since my last appearance in *Alexiad*, I've had another article (on chess variants) and some more reviewed published in *Knucklebones*, and have a few more in the can. I guess now the next step is to branch out to other markets.

Sue Burke: Very interesting to read your report of events in Europe. Please send more, and be careful.

Well, that's all I've got time for now. Now it's off to bed, then back to the transcription grind tomorrow.

From: **Evelyn C. Leeper** February 21, 2007
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Regarding the long-running candy reviews: Mark looked at them this time around and said, "Now why didn't I think of that?" He thought about doing pizza reviews for the *MT Void*, but decided they were too local.

Regarding E. B. Frohvet's letter on fanzines. He mentions quite a few that have been going on for several years, but omits *Ansible* (well, I guess it's a semi-prozine now) and the *MT Void* (which I suppose he doesn't know about).

Mike Glycer recently talked in *File 770* about a fanzine reaching 100 issues. The *MT Void* reached 100 issues on May 20, 1981. Of course, it was not called the *MT Void* then — it was just the *Bell Labs Science Fiction Club Notice*. (In fact, we have only recently stopped referring to it as "the Notice".) We had not quite gone weekly by then, but we were close. We reached issue 200 on December 14, 1983, and were definitely weekly. We just published issue #1428.

A problem is that so many fanzines are now heavily if not exclusively on-line. Note that so many of the fanzines listed in the "fanzines received" column are from the efanzines.com site. It saves on mailing and printing costs, but there is the problem of ephemerality to consider. If the site goes down or dies, for example. And besides, there are so many circumstances under which one can't read an online zine.

— JTM

From: **E. B. Frohvet** February 16, 2007
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City MD 21042-5988 USA

Congratulations to Maryland's own Kimberly "Kimmie" Meissner, world figure skating champion, and now U.S. national champion. (Yes, it's possible to win a world or Olympic title without having won one's national title; Sara Hughes won the Olympic gold medal at a time when she was considered the third-best American skater.)

I find myself increasingly in sympathy with the woman in Asimov's *The Caves of Steel* who makes a scene over a robot clerk: "I got a right to have human beings wait on me." Nowadays one can't call the doctor's office, or

the phone company, or the Social Security Administration, without spending several minutes arguing with a computer. (Interesting that the early SF writers, Asimov and Simak and that ilk, all saw robots as mechanical systems rather than information systems.)

In the interest of fairness, I should point out that of those fanzines whose lack of production I criticized, *FOSFAX*, *SFC Bulletin*, and *Argentus* put out issues in December or January.

Also *Trap Door* in February. Lest I disavow my own point, it still appears to me a valid criticism, to observe that a fanzine nominally defined as "active" has passed an entire year or more without publishing. I'm aware that some don't agree with me.

Yamamoto had correctly realized that battleships were next to obsolete and the future of naval warfare was aircraft carriers. (The *Hood/Bismarck* encounter of May 1941 was the last major shoot-out of battleships.) Had Yamamoto commanded the Pearl Harbor expedition, he might well have stayed on in an attempt to find the U.S. Navy carriers, which were at sea during the attack and thus survived to win at Midway.

Second Guadalcanal (November 14-15, 1942), North Cape (December 26, 1943), and Suriago Strait (October 25, 1944). As for the other we shall see.

I imagine the opossum was hungry — perhaps it smelled cat food and decided to help itself to lunch?

Candy seasons: It's all a matter of bottom line, Johnny. It used to be the custom back in the Stone Age that Christmas decorations were not put up before Thanksgiving. No one cares about that sort of thing any more. And I'm sure if you asked anyone, they would just say that's what they were told to do in putting out the next holiday early. Company policy — which brings us back to bottom line.

A very interesting article on weapons technology by Rodford Edmiston. However, he has overlooked one key point: It takes much less time to train someone to use a spear, that to use a sword. (Similarly, at least one of the reasons the firearm replaced the bow, even though its rate of fire was initially much slower, is that teaching someone to use a rifle/musket takes much less time than developing the subtle skill of an archer.)

Does anyone ever watch the "Dr. Phil" TV show? I think it gives a false picture of what

therapy does, or is supposed to do; principally because the suckers hand-picked for the show all have problems which are the direct result of amazing stupidity.

Interesting that my review of *Jericho* came out just as the show returns to the air after a long absence. My guess is that they initially made only a limited number of episodes, and were surprised when enough people watched the show to justify continuing.

"Please have your recommendations for the Hugos . . ." Well, we've all been saying this for years, but Steve Stiles for Fan Artist (Sheryl Birkhead did get nominated a couple of times, and I suspect was relieved not to win); *Challenger* or *Banana Wings* for Fanzine (presumably Guy was not interested in my suggestion that he decline a nomination); anyone but the King of Shameless.

Brad Foster: An ex-neighbor had a cat named "Sable" who liked me (the cat, not the neighbor) but they moved away.

The DAW paperback of Biggle's *The World Menders* says, "by arrangement with Doubleday & Co." So there may have been a hardcover edition edited by Campbell. I still think it's a rather good story.

The original stories were published in Analog.

— JTM

Footnote to Taras Wolansky: The Southern Baptists have not only denounced all forms of psychotherapy, but also any form of religious counseling which does not explicitly state the Bible contains all information needed to deal with any problem.

I know several vegetarians in fandom: Sheryl Birkhead for one.

John Purcell: I agree with you. Most writers are willing to talk with fans knowledgeable about their work. (I can think of some exceptions, notably one GOH who gave one speech — taking no questions — and otherwise disappeared for the whole con.) It's fair that pro writers mayor may not care to discuss writing in general; that's what panels and workshops are for.

Dainis Bisenieks: Appears to be describing the phenomenon called in sociology "offsetting behavior", i.e., the tendency to perform an act more carelessly in direct ratio to the risk being reduced. Specifically, submitting a manuscript without proofreading because it had already been through a "spellcheck" program. Which would not pick up any of the errors described.

Snow — bad. Coffee — good. But I would gladly discard both for an opportunity to go

straight to May. If I had a time machine I would use it to skip winter. (Even as I write: thermal underwear.)

From: **Dainis Bisenieks** February 21, 2007
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Only the other day I was re-reading parts of *The Brutal Friendship* by F. W. Deakin, about the Duce and the Führer, in which there is a chapter “Operation Mincemeat”. Comes the new *Alexiad*, and there is an allusion — “that do with the corpse” — to the same. Deakin explains nothing — only an end note directs the reader to Montagu’s *The Man Who Never Was* — but it is obvious to the reader and eventually to the German and Italian High Commands that they have been snookered.

Though indeed the code name had slipped my mind, I found that I had a remarkably thorough recollection of the book, last read umpty-ump years ago. In marked contrast to a great deal of other reading matter, both fictional and real. (I was charmed by the ploy with the ticket stubs.) What do I remember of the skiffy I read in my youth? The best and the worst; oddments. The offog was the official dog, far less than the patsies had been led to believe. I could easily re-read the story in a Hugo Winners volume . . . Yeah, I should have written, “unless it was George Price.”

Have you read Montagu’s sequel, Beyond Top Secret Ultra (1977, 1978)? It has some material on Agent TRICYCLE, that charming Ragusan rogue Popov, Dusko Popov.

Yeah, dressed only in her eyeglasses. The rest of the Hebrew can be rendered, “What knockers! Like watermelons . . .” This was remembered from a movie, about a young woman accidentally ending up in Israel. (She didn’t get off the plane where she should have.) I snickered before the subtitle came on.

That sounds like a movie I enjoyed but cannot remember its title.
— LTM

Rodford Edmiston classifies and classifies without touching on the opposition of different, or else similar, kinds of weaponry. Oman, for instance, tells us that spearmen are helpless once sword-and-buckler men come to close quarters. I have only a small selection of his work, for medieval times — in which, alas,

“ordnance” is misspelled, as it so often is.

Nazi bigots were against *all* Jews, including those most assimilated in Germandom. The existence of Jewish war veterans, indeed of decorated ones, was an embarrassment they managed to overcome.

Like, for example, expunging Wilhelm Frankl (20 victories, Pour le Mérite) from the official victories list. I have a copy of Ernst Udet’s Ace of the Iron Cross (1970), [Mein Fleigerleben (1935)] that does so, for example. Wilhelm Frankl:

<http://www.theaerodrome.com/aces/germany/frankl.php>

I will take note of the Lensman lapse and make the fix. For years I have inveighed against the reprehensible and medieval practice of making copies of copies of copies. Nor should it even be assumed that the text originally printed is correct and self-consistent. A simplr reading for sense should eliminate such things as swinging censors, martens’ nests, and vulpine wolves. Traditional proofreading should prevent skipped lines and paragraphs, yet such occur. I am usually given only the new setting of type, but I alert the folks at the office to probable lapses, and the rest is up to them; likewise, the making of the corrections that I indicate.

In one of those Leinster books, the hero was preparing to descend planetside, and in the next line one of the locals was speaking to him. Actually, that was okay, all it needed was a line space to mark a new scene. Did we need all the foofaraw about him landing, opening the hatch, stepping out, and going into town until he met the official he wanted, and announcing his business? Useless ballast! But I wouldn’t be surprised to learn it was there. I do not, in this case, care.

Now and then I re-read Vance’s “Demon Princes” books, of which I have the original editions. (For 1-3, actually cheap UK hardcovers reproducing these.) They are not error free: what, for example, is the given name of Carphen, a writer quoted here and there? A two-volume, fairly recent edition has not been seen by me; have the errors been edited out? Betcha not. *The Dying Earth* omnibus shares errors with the Lancer pb of *The Dying Earth*; I don’t know if those go back to the original edition. The *Alastor* omnibus has a botched chart of the combined lights of multiple suns. So it goes.

And there are people hereabouts, friends of my late wife, who’ve never learned how to

spell my name.

Loved “The Phoenix on the Bayonet”! Nice REH pastiche, complete with a dig at “civilized background” — almost it reconciles me to the real thing, as done by REH and other masters of old. But, hmm . . . “cited” is more the word for the assassins; and we can’t have Abe as a “natural killer”, can we now? How were frontiersmen to govern themselves? As governments like those they had left behind in the East were established, the quintessential frontiersmen moved on, until there was no frontier left. Their nature has been well described by Bernard De Voto in *Across the Wide Missouri*. In a more comprehensive work, *The Course of Empire* — see the chapter “The Iron Men” — he cites instances of “the disregard of death and the will to use force without stint regardless of the consequences which the civilized mind could focus instantly but to which the primitive mind could be worked up only by a long series of religious exercises.”

These exemplary “civilized” men are of course self-selected, and further selected in the field. We need not worship force, guile, and success, only observe and ponder. How does “civilized” overcome “primitive”? To the primitive mind, there is a Thunderer, and a myriad other bogeys. An eclipse is an omen of awful portent. (What stories, fact or fiction, do we have of white men who exploited their knowledge of the almanac?)

Well, Christopher Columbus for one; during his fourth voyage, while marooned on Jamaica, he used the lunar eclipse of February 29, 1504 to great advantage. (The eclipse was in Saros 105, which began March 27, 499 and ended May 16, 1779.) Then there was Sir H. Rider Haggard, who had no idea how long a solar eclipse lasted . . .

When such shackles fall away, an Individual can arise. If Conan was such a one, his was a simple faith: Crom helps those who help themselves. Whatever he — as spokesman for REH or not — thought about the relative strengths of civilization and barbarism, it must be true that a civilization will sustain itself for some generations, some centuries (so earning the name of civilization); the history of barbarism, fated to be forgotten, is of the rise and fall of warlords. A task of civilization is to foster the leaders of the future and to educate the upper crust to service, not to

conspicuous consumption.

Think of all those Ottoman sultans whose first order of business was to hunt down and strangle all their brothers. Or of those despotisms that *deliberately* made the upper crust ineffectual; the Shogunate, for instance.

To climb down from this subject . . . I had been considering the *Tough Guide* and its entries on boots and on socks. How can Arwen not have knitted socks for Aragorn? But literary decorum forbids any mention of them. Least of all can we have any donation scene. For something so down-to-earth as socks, only down-to-earth words will do: “. . . made for you.” But for Arwen, only High Speech is fitting.

Boots. I have just inaugurated new (ankle height) winter boots, bought actually at seasonal clearance price a couple of years back. Sandals, my most usual footwear, are bought that way, too, with the additional motive of allowing the fresh-plastic smell of the soles to dissipate. When the mounting smell of the leather parts can be discerned at the altitude of the nose, it is time to put a new pair into service. I loathe all-synthetic sandals; they acquire a loathesome smell.

March 6, 2007

Had *TLS* failed, for once, to review the new “Falco”? No: publication was late, and now in the UK they have *Saturnalia* by Lindsey Davis. It has, so we are told, a meeting with the German prophethess; I must wait for US publication — when?

Does she raise the spirit of D. Caecilius Metellus to advise Falco? Or of Gordianus?

The reviewer thought the story lost momentum with the description of unimportant characters; something I’ve noticed in past volumes. But I do not see any contradictions in Falco’s character. He has few if any illusions, but one illusion he does not have is that there are no gifts and that everybody has his price. Like Sam Vimes, he has a loathing of murder. And he loves Rome the way Vimes loves Ankh-Morpork — there’s a passage I could quote if only I could find it.

Chronicles of proofreading. One new novel, in which romantic interest resides in a real hunk of a vampire — who, to give him credit, is on the water wagon. Alas, I tend to giggle, having read Pratchett on the subject.

But all vampires are on the

water wagon! "I never drink . . . wine."

The other, a fantasy set in Rome of the 2nd century B.C., leaves me with this thought. If various gods in the tale really exist (as do lesser supernatural creatures) and manifest themselves at least to some chosen few by sendings and visions, but also if there are charlatans, how can truth be told from falsehood? Then this: the focus of the story is finite and narrow, but the world is wide, and many nations held by their own peculiar deities; and which of them might have been deluded? At least the Jews in their monotheism were mistaken about the various other gods. Baal, on a famous occasion, could have been having a bad day. "Either he is musing, or he has gone aside, or he is on a journey, or perhaps he is asleep and must be awakened."

I felt obliged to swot up the Roman calendar and discovered a need for a fix here and there. It had ceased to be a purely lunar calendar before the Julian reform — the intercalary month varied in length — so there was no question of the new moon always falling on the Kalends. But, alas, the moon was out of kilter, and it is sad to record that nobody since original publication had spotted this, so that changes could be called for. Never trust an author with moons! Another little thing, the weight of large sums in silver or gold is not to be taken lightly . . .

Does supernatural petrification extend to the contents of the intestinal tract and suchlike? Oh, I'm full of teasing questions like that.

And Bob Kennedy sent me a "One Big Happy" strip where the little girl concluded that Rip van Winkle must have had a big diaper.

— JTM

From: **Trinlay Khadro** February 26, 2007
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I'm still terribly behind on almost all my co-respondence and behind on several art projects as well. I'll try to catch up over the next few days, since my hands need some time off from knitting & crochet for a bit, I have quite a few items for sale at:

<http://www.trinlayk.etsy.com>

mainly toys, (lots of bunnies for Easter/Oester/spring) including some that are somewhat fannish. As usual, email or drop me a line if you want something special, like a HP scarf or Jayne's hat, or even something I haven't thought of yet. I'm still posting about a dozen to 2 dozen photos to flickr every week or so.

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

For the past 3 almost 4 weeks, my B.I.L. has been in the hospital. His diverticulosis caused complications, leading to perforation, infection, and then surgery to fix the problems. He had MORE complications, probably due to his excess weight and his smoking. After 3 weeks in the ICU he is again conscious, and off the respirator. It may be another month before they can send him home. Thank heavens they have good health insurance. This has also caused me to hire a friend to take me out to Madison 1x/week, usually on Wednesdays to see my sister, drag her to lunch, and generally try to cheer everyone up. This is somewhat exhausting for me, but it's bearable.

Of course, being winter in Wisconsin, we've had nearly 20 inches of snow since Friday night. This doesn't help creaking joints or sore muscles.

Since my last LOC, my dentist had a heart attack, heart surgery, and rehab and is now back to work part time. I had a pleasant appointment with the hygienist for a cleaning and no new cavities... it looks like just the temporary filling over the root canal to be fixed and I'm done till the next cleaning. I gotta drag KT in for a cleaning too soon. I know she has some dental problems she's in denial about, but they've gotta get taken care of before they become something really bad. Fortunately, she also now has health insurance, that should take care of most of it.

One of the comics we really enjoy is *Get Fuzzy*, in particular the way the cartoonist has pinned down cat personalities, and a particular ferret's personality quite well. Bucky's "Lemonade" stand in the hallway, selling Rat-On-A-Stick . . . for example.

Seimei has had an interesting few days . . . Friday he went to the vet for a vaccination and to prepare for his trip to the vet today to get F-i-x-e-d. He's back home now, and acting just like he was last night, bouncing around everywhere. While he was at the vet, Megumi was worried about him, and looked around the apartment calling for him . . . now that he's

home she keeps going up and hissing at him. I think it's "How dare you give me a scare like that!" Just as on Friday, he was flirting with the vet, and all the vet techs. Such a loverboy. Dr. Katie and the vet techs have decided he's at least part "Burmese", which was a surprise to me, apparently my little "shelter cat" may be a breeder's "reject", as he has little specks of white here and there. When I looked up the breed on the Internet he has the right shape, and the gold eyes, but is more "licorice" than "chocolate" . . . he definitely has the Burmese personality, he's a talker, a lovey lap kitty, who FETCHES (more like playing "throw" I think), among other traits. He adores Megumi and is something of a pesky little brother sometimes, but she also obviously loves him to bits too, washing him and snuggling with him even when I'm handy. ☺

The only thing that makes me think that C'Mell isn't a pure Siamese is that she is quiet. Aside from that she is a cute little lynx-point. If you're a roll of paper towels or toilet tissue, you won't agree on the "cute". She gets her little claws into them and rip rip rip. Then there was the time Lisa turned on the vacuum cleaner and Delenn reacted . . .

One of our friends at the cat club had Burmese. I put my foot in my mouth big time by admiring the cute little white spot on a kitten's chest. Fortunately the breeders knew the remark came from ignorance, not malice.

— LTM

Both kitties are HUGE fans of *Meerkat Manor*, I still haven't figured out if it's for the "tasty looking critters" or the "soap opera" angle. Megumi will sit on the coffee table and stare at the screen throughout the show.

KT and I are really enjoying *Heros*, our favorite is Hiro Nakamura, he's an Otaku (fanboy) like us! IMHO casting George Takei as his dad was wonderful, even if it's not a major part of the plot. We've also spotted a cameo appearance by Stan Lee! (As a bus driver with one line.) This show has also provided some interesting pondering, as well as conversation with local fen.

As Lisa is taking more and more photos she may consider doing something like a photo blog, or putting some of her shots up someplace like flickr. I've found this a great

way to make some online friends, share photos with friends & family, and even get some great input from other photographers. A regular flickr account is free, and if one is taking LOTS of photos (like I do) it might be a worthwhile \$24 annually to upgrade to a pro account.

Someday, the Possum Encounter, will be just another funny story to tell . . . Maybe as soon as a couple of years from now. My mom has a bizarre story about finding a neighbor's front door open, no one home, and then calling the police, WHO SENT HER IN FIRST . . . "You'll know sooner than we would if anything is out of place." No one had broken in, but there did turn out to be a squirrel running loose in the house . . . Cops fled the squirrel, my mom, used to life-in-the-woods and not scared of much of anything, chased it out with a broom. She was angry about it when it happened, but now laughs about the big brawny well armed cop being scared of the "tree rat". I often find myself inspired by the urban wildlife I see near my apartment complex . . . sometimes right on the step!

Anansi Boys: Perhaps the name "Fat Charlie" is a wish for prosperity for his child, rather than intended as child-abuse/humiliation. I recall a neighbor, who joked that he was an "old man" since the day he was born, having been named "Alter" which means "Old" (German? Yiddish?) his parents lived a few doors down, in the other direction, so I knew them too. It wasn't till I was in High School that I realized that he wasn't their eldest child, but rather their eldest LIVING child . . . I suspect that this sort of "magical naming" is more common than we might expect it to be.

He was renamed "Alter" [which means the same thing in both languages] to throw off the Angel of Death, who happened to be looking for a very sick, about-to-die, little boy and not an old man (and presumably wasn't very observant).

Currently, I'm really enjoying the Japanese TV series *Shinsengumi*. Lisa Mason is burning them to DVD for me. Rather inspiring characters. I find myself wondering how well they tv representations reflect historical reality. Kondo Isamu has more than his fair share of screen charisma, Okita Soiji is adorable . . . and I wonder if my gut-scar is more impressive than Sanosuke's. I find myself not really noticing he subtitles . . . though today I watched 8 episodes.

Darrell & Joe: The author/artist of the *Kaze*

Hikaru manga follows up each issue (in the bound versions) with a description of how she did the research, and how she discovered that in earlier versions of her work, her use of movies, TV and other manga gave her flawed information . . . like the use of the same sets for Edo era Kyoto and Edo, so that variations in the architecture, cultural details and lay out of the two very different cities was lost all together.

It's real easy to write an AH novel if you use one book. If you've read more than one, though

. . .

Christopher Garcia: It's EASY to say "The information/images want to be free." If you aren't the person doing the original work. As a student many years ago, an art student in another class lifted from MY work to fuel a project of their own . . . Not really fair to me IMHO, and the instructor was Not Amused (having graded my piece only about a week prior). Use a fragment of one of my images in a collage, to make something completely new, and I won't mind . . . use my idea and just redraw/repaint it, and I won't be happy. Redo or just manipulate my work and then get PAID for it, and I'll be seriously unhappy. Making a print out of a photo of mine, to frame for *your* home, or to put on the fridge as a pin up for *your* cat, and I won't mind that . . . Make a print out, frame it, and gift it to someone, and that's really questionable.

If I send a zine ed a drawing, they are being offered the use of the piece . . . (in exchange, theoretically, for credit and a zine) If a zine lifts one of my works from another zine, or uses my work without my permission, it's copyright violation. It's especially a touchy issue when I make something with an intent to sell it . . . eventually I hope to be getting enough art income that I won't have to worry about bills so much. So when someone would "borrow" an idea of mine, it might hit me in a way that really really hurts. (Especially since I can't hold down a "real job" anymore.)

Fan art, and fan fiction is kind of a fine line, what's a parody? What's a homage? What's "stealing". If everyone involved realizes the source, and respects the source, and is just having "silly fun" with it, I'm thinks it's OK. I don't think ANYONE can make an argument that it somehow detracts from the original work, or reduces sales of the original works. At a certain level of fame, a character or motif might become a "pop culture icon" . . . Though the idea of slash just makes me laugh.

My folks went out west some years ago on vacation, and one of the places they went was Winchester house. I hear admission is rather steep, and one friend recommended making sure one used the loo before going there.

Me: I'm loving the new camera, but just the other day I cracked the screen on my cellphone. ERK! I'm somewhat distressed about having to replace it, but maybe it's actually fixable for a reasonable price. If not I may be relying on a phone that works fine as a phone, and not so well as a legible phone directory, until I can save up the \$\$\$ to get it replaced.

I have a bunch of new drawings, but have not yet managed to get to KT's computer to scan them. I will try to get it done Real Soon Now.

Friends use things like Advantage & Revolution on their dogs and free-range cats, and it does rather well at keeping the bugs away from the fuzzi-butt. Sheryl probably knows more about it. Megumi and Seimei are indoor cats, but have gotten the full range of vaccinations, and microchipped "just in case". Seimei is really friendly, so I hope if he ever did get lost, he would find nice people to help him find his way home. Megumi is mostly "I love my humans, but I'm really uneasy about anyone else."

Joe: I fractured a tooth as a teen and needed a root canal in my late teens. I went to a dentist in the town where I went to school, and it was quite a different experience than my home town dentist. I seem to have a lot of dental anxiety since then. Recently I made it through the cleaning without sedation, but anything with the injections in the gum or jaw and I need something to keep me from panic and not going to the dentist at all. The biopsy this past summer was a real nightmare, no sedation or local anesthesia, after talking to friends who have been through that process, we ponder the likelihood that a similar biopsy on a male would have full anesthesia, and post procedure pain medication. (Don't get me started on the clearly different levels of care I saw my uncle get as opposed to the medical care my grandmother received . . . often with similar symptoms and complaints. My gut pain, and rapid dehydration, for example <with my appendix> got me sent home from the ER with them saying "something viral", my B.I.L. went to the ER with nearly identical symptoms and they were NOT going to send him home till they found out what was wrong. Of course MY ER didn't run the simple blood test that would have shown my massive infection.)

Hiroshima: Earlier in early-contact days,

the locations that welcomed foreign visitors were less restricted than they later became. At one point there were quite a few Daimyo (and then their vassals) converting to Christianity . . . Apparently, Hiroshima was one of the early locations where it was very popular. One of the largest churches ever to BE in Japan was built in Hiroshima. There was even a real threat at one point of the Christian counties rebelling against the Shogun and separating from the rest of the country. After so many decades of nearly constant civil war, this doesn't seem like a positive thing. A castle was taken over (when I'm motivated to get off the couch I may remember to look up where it was) and held until the Dutch were enlisted to blow it into gravel.

The Shimabara Rebellion of 1637-8. Ivan Morris discusses it and its leader Amakusa Shiro in *The Nobility of Failure* (1975).

Looking at Japanese history from the usual Western "quick overview" angle, the exclusion acts and policies on religion look rather extreme . . . Looking a little deeper, or from the Japanese angle, how close Japan came to just being "Philippines North" (impoverished colony of Portugal or Spain) makes things seem much more proportional. Sea captains declaring things like "Our king will soon take over your country, with the nice paved road of our converts." Would make me rather cross, and rude in response as well.

But that was standard operating procedure; upon arriving, the Spanish would inform the pagan natives that God had put their king in charge of this land, and was giving them the opportunity to accept Spanish dominion and Catholicism peacefully, before they started shooting. (They must have got it from the Muslims.) If they felt like it, they even did it in the local language.

As I make progress (slowly), on the Ieyasu biography, I see reasons besides "meanness" for policies and actions, for which I had no context based on all my prior reading. One wonders how much information about the religious strife/competition going on in Europe at the time, was described to Ieyasu. (Probably by William Adams/Miura Anjin, even if the Jesuits, Franciscans and Dutch weren't already

being a pain in the posterior about their differences.) The solutions might not be the one's I'd choose, or the one's I'd come up with, but the choices of action aren't just appearing out of thin air.

If anyone gets to go to Worldcon Yokohama, I can't afford to go . . . please bring me some post cards ☺ Take lots and lots of photos! I wish I could go!

Richard Dengrove: I have a friend who is a glaciologist, she's semi-regularly in places like Antarctica. Her observations are that the glaciers are vanishing in a wide spread manner, as well as the polar ice caps changing . . . Polar bear range now over laps with the ranges of other kinds of bears, in ways it never did before. (Recently a hunter in Canada shot an apparent Polar Bear that turned out to be part grizzly!) Apparently even the experts don't really know yet if it's a man made event, or one of those things that's part of a long term "climate arc" . . . No one knows how extreme the melt-age will be, or what comes next.

When my daughter was in grade school, Tina emailed KT in response to a concern, that there really isn't an "expiration date" stamped on the bottom of the planet.

I find that I'm only moderately curious about how my DNA profile would turn out . . . \$110 is more than I'm willing to spend for it at this point. It really wouldn't be "important" in anyway, other than to satisfy some curiosity. I wonder what the likelihood is, that race/ethnicity turns out to be meaningless in the long run. Humans apparently, are always looking for greener pastures, and not necessarily staying put for centuries at a time.

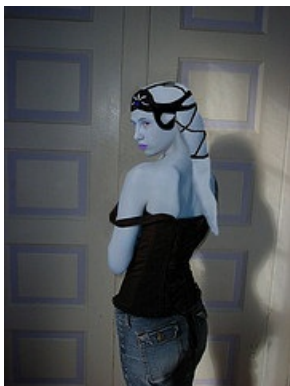
I suspect that a lot of people have "forgotten Jewish ancestors" not an ethnic group that's had an easy time of it, or the chance to really stay put for long periods of time.

Darrell: What's a loon, and what's someone just having fun making up a wacky story while hanging out at a con?

Brad: Sorry to hear about Vlad. I'm not really sure how WE come up with pet names, usually there's some kind of pattern. When we had rats, they all had Chinese names (Mushu, Wushu, Tika and Shan Yu) since the person we adopted them from gave the momma rats Chinese names. Prior group of cats (18-20 years ago) all had Elvin names . . . and both my ferrets were named Elric . . . Current cats have Japanese names, Megumi from an anime character (means "Blessing") and "Seimei" (Life, or a Proclamation) after Abe No Seimei a wizard in a series of stories of which a couple have been made into movies which we

enjoyed. Seimei is such a talker, that if we were going to write his name in Kanji, I think I'd use the one for "Proclamation". He's always saying "Hey pet me!", "How about a hug?" or "throw the ball Pilleeaaassse." ☺

EB: Which term for SF I use sometimes depends on my audience, if mostly fen, I'm likely to say "skiffy" and spell "SF" . . . if "mundanes" or fans unaware of fandom, I have to say SciFi (spelled that way), as "SF" and "skiffy" get, at best, confusion. (San Francisco? Maybe???) Something on the Discovery channel, or maybe it was History, covering SF and fandom (and featuring 4E and his peers), had an elder fan mentioning that he first used the term in a sort of reference to the then trendy "hi-fi". Being rather newish to fandom, I recall being confused by the phrase "Fans are Slans" until I ran across the book *Slan* at a used bookstore and snatched it up. Soon I may be knitting a hat for my daughter so she can have Tw'lek (Star Wars) tendrils . . . She's even photoshopped herself into a Tw'lek . . .



If you read *Slan*, suddenly the metaplot of the first three *Star Wars* movies makes a lot of sense.

— JTM

Henry Welch: I was kind of surprised that Lisa hadn't decided to cut her hair, and save her braid or donate to some thing like "Locks of Love" prior to chemo.

Bambi is delicious. I don't think I could be a hunter myself unless I HAD to, but I have hunters in the family and can get venison on occasion.

Rodney: Hi, I hope I wrote that letter to you that I promised in my LOC. Life has been a bit odder than usual this past year or so.

Robert Sabella: Condolences on the loss of your mother. When my paternal grandmother passed away, it was really hard on my dad, who had lost his father when he was still very young. When my maternal grandmother passed away, my uncle felt completely lost in the world, then again she lived with him as

long as I can remember.

Congratulations to everyone with new adoptees, and to the adoptees . . .

Condolences to everyone with losses.

From: **Henry L. Welch** March 2, 2007
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Thanks for the latest *Alexiad*. As usual I enjoyed the issue, but have little to comment on.

The Lost Fleet series sounds interesting and perhaps that is reflected in my more recent preference for lighter space opera type reading.

From: **Martin Morse Wooster** Feb. 26, 2007
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Many thanks for *Alexiad* 31. I saw "The Adventures of Luke Skywalker" at ConJosé. I knew there was something wrong with the production when the announcer began by saying, "And now, here's your host, Ceecil B. DeMille!" (The man thought his first name was pronounced Cehcil.) Also, a real Lux Radio Theatre adaptation would have trimmed everything down to a neat 52 or 53 minute package with probably no more than five actors, not the ten or 12 that took part in the version you reviewed. I remember at ConJosé the speculation was that Lucasfilm allowed the production as long as it was uncut. That amounted to two hours of tedium watching it live. I'm sure it was more fun listening to it at home.

Johnny Carruthers's idea for more media-related Hugoes is a bad idea for two reasons. First, I know there are a great many media tie-in novels out there. Can Carruthers name any that have been great masterpieces worthy of a Hugo? Or any of these novels that was superior to a writer's non-genre work? And while I enjoy reading silly media magazines as much as anyone, they're really something peripheral to the field. I see the "Short Form" TV Hugo has already degenerated into an outlet for fan parodies and shameless logrolling. These new Hugos, should con committees have the bad sense to implement them, would degenerate even more quickly.

In response to **Robert Sabella's** question, I remember where I was when I heard about the Challenger disaster. I was at the student union at the University of Maryland, ready to

grab some lunch before heading off to the library, when I saw the shuttle blowing up over and over. I also remember where I was when I found out when President Kennedy was shot; I was in first grade, and getting off the bus to go home when one of my classmates said, "The president's been shot!"

I was in fourth grade at the time, except I had the day off because I had had eight teeth removed, and was sleeping from the pain medicine. Then I came downstairs and heard, "It has been an hour since a priest pronounced President John F. Kennedy dead."

Vincent Bugliosi's book Reclaiming History: The Assassination of President John F. Kennedy, a thoroughgoing refutation of assassination conspiracy theories, will be out from W. W. Norton on May 29 for \$49.95.

— JTM

I agree with **Joe** that Spider Robinson's effort to campaign for a Hugo for *Variable Star* is more than a little tacky. First off, any campaigning for Hugo nominations is bad form unless, like Somtow Sucharitkul, you're amusing about it. (I think I still have my "Somtow in '80!" button somewhere.) Second, given that Heinlein wrote, at most, five percent of this novel (I have heard that the outline Robinson used was incomplete).

About the Jung Chang review: isn't it true that until recently we weren't sure how many wives or kids Mao had? That one or more of the wives was as legendary as, say, Robert Heinlein's first wife? Didn't Chang find out some things about Mao's family that weren't previously known?

From: **Rodney Leighton** December 27, 2006
11 Branch Road, R. R. #3,
Tatmagouche, Nova Scotia B0K 1V0
CANADA

Thanks for the latest *Alexiad*. Came a week later than the Visa statement this time.

Enclosed is a couple of sheets. Yesterday I convinced myself that I should go to the town of Truro, for other reasons, and also convinced myself that I should fill out the one sheet and get some copies made of the four pages, so I did: 20 copies, \$6.84 at Staples, God may know how many times I will change my mind

on this but basically I plan to write some sort of letter/note and include a copy of the letter supplement thing.

I also did a bit of shopping. Zellers had advertised cases of Mr. Noodles for a low price, something like 16¢ per pack. I like Mr. Noodles sometimes. Went to take a look. Being Zellers, they did not have them. They did have something similar; 12 packages in a flat, for something like \$3.00. But only one kind; all beef or all shrimp or like that. I declined.

There and also at the grocery store I noticed some smallish packs of Kisses. Considered buying one and shipping it to Maryland. But I don't know if ugly old hairy guys like me should be offering kisses to a saint.

Dick Geis is in terrible shape. One of the items from Steve was *Taboo Opinions* #88.

Geis has been in terrible shape since I started getting The Alien Critic back in the seventies. And also predicting that the Owners are just about to assume total power.

— JTM

Steve did some book reviews, presumably not just for me. They might need a bit of editing to fit *Alexiad* but would fit in there very well in my view. I have suggested that he take a look at a copy and consider submitting reviews.

Hey, I am reading a Koontz novel that I rejected on about three occasions, *Hideaway*. I started this years ago, put it aside after a dozen or so pages as being junk, kept it because, well, I once considered Koontz the best author still alive. I really enjoyed *Shattered* even though it was the second time I had read it. Thinking about what to read, it occurred to me that I had a Koontz novel in a shelf upstairs that I had never read . . . well, I have three or four like that but they are hardcover and they are only good for occasional time I am not smoking my pipe. So I dug this out, started it, remembered why I rejected it three or six years ago and each of the times since but kept going and it is getting better. It is more in the latter day Koontz style of too much detail; too over-written. But it is worth reading. Doubtful I will keep this one, as I have those that I kept and have reread recently.

About time to listen to the cable guy tell me whether Les Canadiens won or lost in NYC last night; have some breakfast, wash some dishes, maybe watch a bit of TV news, go cut some

trees.

From: **R-Laurraine Tutihasi** Feb. 13, 2007
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Your "Things by the Road" interested me. We will be going to Indiana May-June. However, I checked your description of the location; and it looks way out of our way. We will be visiting central Indiana. My husband is from Seymour and went to college in Bloomington. Maybe another time.

The Lux Theatre shows have been presented at Loscon since at least the mid-nineties. I've seen several and have found them enjoyable.

I'm happy to hear that Trinlay Khadro's SSD was approved. I've read horror stories about the ordeal some people have gone through to get it. I gave up on it, but maybe I was right to. Since I started my gluten-free diet last July, a lot of things have improved. The first thing to go away was the dyspepsia, but lately I've noticed a certain type of pain has not bothered me for at least the last three months. Since this is a pain that has bothered me off and on since I was eleven, I'm happy to see it go. The doctors called it arthralgia since no organic cause could be found for it. The chronic fatigue also seems to be gradually going away.

I just checked out *I'm Just a Cat Mattress* at the amazon site. It looks like a cute book. I've added it to my miles-long wish list of books to buy when I have spare cash (ha, ha).

Darrell Schweitzer's "I suspect that a predictor for UFO abductions would be a brief in a wide variety of fantastic things: the Bermuda triangle, Bigfoot, and Loch Ness Monster . . ." reminds me of the time I was a member of Science Connection, a sort of pen pal singles group. I met my husband through the group, but before that I received a letter from someone complaining that he'd been kicked out. Science Connection is for people interested in science or engineering. This person swore he was interested in science; after all he believed in UFOs et al. I doubt I bothered to reply. What would one say to someone like that?

I must add to Brad Foster's praise of Sheryl Birkhead. Last year when I was stressing out over one cat's (Fluffy) health problems, she provided me with lots of information and even consulted specialists on my behalf and called me. Wow. She provided a shoulder for me to

cry on. Ultimately Fluffy's problem turned out to be Inflammatory Bowel Disease, which is treatable if not curable. But he had to undergo numerous tests to make that determination. I tend to worry, so I did until we knew the result.

And now Red Wull is getting treated for arthritis. This means that we hunt him down at bedtime, I put a little medicine in a syringe, Lisa holds him and I squirt it down his throat, Lisa lets him go, and he stalks off growling at the cruelty of humans.

My memory is even worse than Robert Sabella's. I couldn't have told you the year or date of Kennedy's assassination, though I guess my mother would remember the date since it's the one right before her birthday. I remember exactly what was happening around me, though. I think it was just before a history class in high school when I began to hear rumours. I didn't know for sure until my mother picked me up after school and I turned on the car radio. Then I burst into tears. The school play scheduled for that weekend was cancelled. However, the science fair, which I attended, was not. When I was not at the science fair, I remember watching the funeral cortege on TV.

I couldn't have told you the date or year of the *Challenger* disaster, either. There is one event whose date is etched in my memory. 18 May 1980 is when Mt. St. Helens erupted. I just thought it was a rather spectacular way to celebrate my birthday. As for the year, I probably find it easy to remember because it is an even decade.

Heinlein's *Time for the Stars*, along with *Johnny Tremain*, was a favourite growing up. I read both books several times. I haven't read either recently, though, so couldn't say how I'd feel about them now.

Like all the rest of them, *Time for the Stars* (1957; NHOL 6129) is discussed in the Hugo-nominated *Heinlein's Children*, available from NESFA or directly from Advent.

—JTM

As Dainis Bisenieks observed, isn't it awful to see typos in published books? I review books for an online site, and many books are submitted as uncorrected proofs and mistakes are expected. But right now I'm reading a book that appears to be a finished publication, and it

reads like a first draft.

Alex R. Slate observes that the Middle East is very tribal. The head mechanic at my Jiffy Lube store is from Afghanistan. I asked him how he felt about the recent events there. He said that's the way things have always been. Maybe that's why he doesn't live there any more.

Please tell Jeffrey Allan Boman that there is no period in my name. It's a hyphen.

From: **Alexis A. Gilliland** March 13, 2007
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Shortly before Valentine's Day *Alexiad* #6.1 arrived, followed by a winter storm serious enough to be worth mentioning. Arlington was on the southern edge of it, and was mostly spared, suffering mainly what the weatherman called "a wintery mix" in which snow and freezing rain laid down a couple of inches of stuff which was difficultly removable, even before it froze solid, the last few days being very cold indeed. We had theater tickets for the 14th, but chose to stay home, a decision I do not regret. Locally the sidewalks are passable, sort of, and here and there some energetic soul has cleared off a walkway.

But a few miles to the north and west, people suffered major power outages and icy roads, not to mention closed schools, while upstate New York was digging out from serious snow. The Pennsylvania Turnpike had a traffic jam lasting two whole days after the Valentine's Day storm, while North Tonawanda (suburban Buffalo, where my father-in-law lives) got ten feet. And on the 25th, they got an additional two and a half feet on top of the twenty six feet already on the ground, en route to the 17th thirty foot snowfall on record. Snigger-smirk.

Driving was possible — though getting in and out of my unshoveled driveway was tricky — but walking was unpleasant and dangerous to boot. Thus I chose to skip my constitutional until the condition of the sidewalks improved (On the 17th the county had a team of 5 or 6 guys cleaning the sidewalks along the local park, which was helpful for getting the morning paper.) and for amusement I played Minesweeper. Enlivening the game by not flagging the mines, so that at the end there is this long hunt for the last open space which hasn't been cleared and then — the best outcome — either all the mines are marked with their little flags, or (my personal favorite) the misguessed mine is highlighted in red next

to the last remaining space.

Cats. We got Pest and Smoke from the animal shelter maybe six years ago, and Smoke — then a full grown cat — turned out to have epilepsy. A condition which, alas, deteriorates with age. We were giving her half a barbiturate pill every other day, and this controlled it until recently, when she had a second seizure in a week. So we took her in for a checkup and the vet recommended going daily. Since last year she also had weight loss — 0.5 pounds, or 6.3 percent — and the blood work was suggestive without being conclusive. So we keep an eye on her and hope for the best, which is probably replacing her later rather than sooner.

Inevitably feline mortality reminds me of my own. In January I went in for my annual (well, a procrastinator's 16 month annum) check up, and the doctor wanted some extra tests. On the 20th I had a colonoscopy — my first in about 20 years — in which several polyps were removed. All of them were benign, but even so they'd like my return business in a couple of years. We'll see. As a procrastinator I should easily be able to stretch it out to five, and with any luck I could die of something else first. Coincidentally on the 22nd I went in to see the lawyer about signing and notarizing my will, the said document — the culmination of a process started back in September, as a result of hitting a numerically significant birthday in August — is now reposing in my safety deposit box.

Colonoscopies. If I'd known they would be so popular . . .

What else? We had some people over to talk about science fiction. Not a replacement for WSFA, but a pleasant diversion. We may hold a similar session again next month. And next week is Lunacon, back at the Escher Hilton again. Some cartoons — and a book review — are enclosed for your contemplation and possible use.

March 20, 2007

An update. A week after the colonoscopy, I also had a biopsy on my prostate, and the week after that there was good news and bad news. The bad news is that I have prostate cancer, the good news is that it is in the early stages, and therefore treatable. The doctor who did the biopsy thought my prognosis was good, discussed the various treatments available, and referred me to the doctor who will do it for me — or to me as the case may be — probably a course of focused beam radiation treatments, which is the least invasive of the several

options available. Stay tuned.

Ghood luck.

— JTM

We also drove up to Lunacon last weekend, through rain and wintery mix up to Bordentown, NJ, where we had lunch, and then snow on the Jersey Turnpike, which held the driving speed down to 35 mph. The shift to daylight savings meant that we reached the Rye Town Hilton while it was still light. Lee and I both had four program items, but hers were better attended. Friday night they repeated the "How To Get Laid At A Con," using the same stellar cast that had been such a success at the two previous Lunacons before an audience of 50 or 60 people. While on Sunday my panel on the fanzine of future, with Ed Meskys, John Hertz and Saul Jaffee was so brilliant that the audience gave me his card. The highlight of the con was Lee interviewing Charles Pellegrino about his new book, "The Jesus Family Tomb." A lowlight of the con was more snow, which had to be cleaned off windshields, and in some cases shovelled out from behind the tires, but the trip home was pretty easy.

From: **George W. Price** March 19, 2007
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February *Alexiad*:

Richard Dengrove wonders if global warming is a fantasy for the gullible. He says, "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."

He should say to that someone, "No, a lot of harm will be done." All the remedies proposed for global warming involve rigorous controls over the world's economy — a recipe for slow growth at best and crushing the economy at worst. (I suspect that some of the crazies would be delighted if we devolved to a pre-industrial economy — though they might not enjoy the starvation and disease that would surely follow.)

They don't make the connection.

As I observed a couple of issues ago, if we try to stave off global warming by preventing the industrial growth of the poorer parts of the world, we can expect brutal conflicts and perhaps all-out war. The Chinese and other

poor nations have absolutely no intention of stinting themselves on energy use just to cater to the fantasies of rich environmentalists. Nor should they.

Global warming does seem to be real — the principal argument is over how much is human-caused and possibly human-preventable. Instead of crushing the economy to reverse the irreversible, we should be preparing to live with the consequences of higher temperature and rising sea level. For one very obvious example, we should *not* rebuild the below-sea-level parts of New Orleans. Instead we should raise low-lying areas where practical. Other possibilities are left as an exercise for the reader.

I am dubious about Dale Speirs' comment — relating to C. H. Douglas and the Social Credit movement of the 1930s — that "the Great Depression could be cured by increasing the money supply instead of reducing it as the governments of the day did." My impression is that the fall in the money supply was not directly due to acts of governments; it was because after the inflation of the 1920s many banks failed and the inflationary checkbook money that they had created vanished when they did. (To be sure, the original inflation was due to the misconceived policies of governments.) What then prolonged the Depression was that the U.S. government (I don't know about Canada) did its considerable best to prevent the general level of prices and wages from falling to where it would match the newly reduced money supply. So the Depression hung on until the government began inflating the currency in the run-up to World War II, and the amount of money in circulation rose to more or less match the amount of business to be done. That is, the wartime prosperity was not because of the war *per se*, it was because the government was no longer preventing the supply of money from matching the demand for money.

For Us, the Living (2003; NHOL G.004) and Beyond this Horizon (1942, 1948; NHOL G.033) both promote small-s social small-c credit ideas. Douglas, Lawson, and Heinlein seem to have failed to take into account the velocity of money; the theory presumes that all the stock of goods produced in a year are instantaneously available and can be instantaneously bought. But the same dollar can buy more

than one item, when the seller turns around and becomes a buyer, so "issuing enough currency to buy the year's national product" is going to leave too much money chasing the goods.

— JTM

From: **Sheryl Birkhead** March 18, 2007
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For the first time in a loong time I did not nominate for the Hugos. I have no ghood excuse — I even had the ballot all filled out several weeks before the deadline (well the real deadline — I actually had the entries done three weeks before what I **thought** was the deadline). So, when I got around to trying the Internet nominations . . . I was actually four days after the deadline. Ah yes, all the best of intentions . . .

I have an opossum story — doesn't everyone have at least one? I was shopping at the (at that time only) Blacksburg mall and saw an opossum, doing what they do best. I got out to take a look and figured that someone had hit it and left it in the parking lot. I gave it a little thought . . . how to get it into the car — picked it up gingerly by the scruff and put it on the passenger's side of the floor in front. I was driving a Celica with a floor shift. Got in and heased back to campus and the teaching veterinary hospital. About halfway there the opossum suddenly realized it was safe and came back to life. Man those buggers have a million sharp teeth. I reached to shift and he reared up with an open mouth hissssss at me and I hastily decided I could complete the trip in second gear. When I got to the hospital, I got out and ran in asking for the senior student on call. On the walk back out I explained what happened. We both stood outside the car looking in at the opossum looking back out at us . . . trying to figure out what to do now that it was awake . . . and not at all happy. All I could think of what what I have seen on TV, so I gingerly reached in from the side, coming up behind the animal and grabbed it by the tail. To this day I do not know if that is the **right** thing to do or not, but it was all I could think of. Walking rapidly, I followed the senior inside and put the (really pissed) animal in a cage, said thank you, and left before I could be asked to help. The story did not have a good ending. I called in a few hours later and was told the opossum had died from shock and pictured the little animal clutching at its chest

and giving an overly theatrical rendition of keeling over and expiring. I am sure they really checked for a heartbeat . . . right?

A few years later, while working in a clinic, I got a call from a neighbor saying there was some animal hit by the side of the road. It was after dark, so I took a technician and started driving slowly in the area described. The tech got all excited, saying she saw it . . . she saw it! I stopped my car and she got out to pick it up so we could take it back to the clinic. She stopped dead and came over to the driver's window, muttering that she thought it was a big hairless rat. I couldn't help myself and started laughing — nope. She was Canadian and did not realize it was an opossum (I have never checked the habitat range to see if she just was not from the "right" area or if they don't range that far). We both checked and in car versus opossum — score one for the car — so there was no reason to take it back.

In Canada, opossums are found only in southern Ontario, the Windsor-London area, and in the Fraser valley of British Columbia.

Then, last year, I saw a mother opossum waddling as fast as she could across the back yard with her babies like grapes, seeming to hang from her tail and fur — I had only seen pictures of that . . .

Gave in (I tried . . . oh I tried to resist) and bought a bag of the dark chocolate Raisinets, hoping to locate the small bag but finally just buying the big one. I am not a fan of dark chocolate, but this seems about right. I can taste the dark chocolate (more than I taste the milk chocolate on the original Raisinets) but the raisin flavor moderates it in just the right amount. So, since I find it about right, I'd bet that those who like dark chocolate will find it understated. We'll see.

The *Today Show* ran a story yesterday about a retirement community for lab research chimps. The catch was that all the males, supposedly, had had vasectomies and the staff had noticed a while ago that one of the females was carrying around a newborn! They did DNA testing on the three males most likely implicated (just by name, the reporter was rooting for Magnum) and the winner was . . . Conan.

I enjoy Lyn McConchie's writings — so I need to remember and look for *Key of the Keplian* at the library.

I thought I heard one mention that the postal rates are going up. I guess I need to ask and find out to what and when. Heck, I'm still

using 37¢ stamps and upgrading!

The new rates go into effect on May 14. They're 41¢ for the first ounce and 17¢ for each additional ounce, which will make it cheaper to mail this, but more expensive to mail my family newsletter.

— JTM

That's it for now. I am trying to download the most recent Mac OS upgrade (going from 10.4.8 to 10.4.9) with a slow computer — last night it said it would take 12 hours so I left it doing its thing and went to bed. This morning — offline — but incomplete download (and it starts all over). I set it up again three hours ago and it said then 11 hours, so I need to go check and see if it is at least progressing . . . then, as I did the last two times, think about going to the local Apple store and have them burn a cd for me.

From: **John Purcell** March 26, 2007
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Interesting issue. I say that because I was reading through it without really finding anything of real note to say. Then I got to "The Joy of High Tech" by Rodford Edmiston, and that was quite interesting. His research is quite extensive, and he makes a good case for why the sword has been held in such high regard over the centuries. Face it, beyond its obvious utilitarian value on the battlefield or in duels, the sword has also been an object of fine workmanship. Just this past weekend at AggieCon 38, my son and I were admiring the detail work on various pommels, hilts, and blade engravings, to say nothing of the balance of well-crafted swords of various types: short, medium, and long lengths; broadswords; epees; scimitars; celtic; even samurai swords. Lots of cool stuff on display this year.

Dan's bedroom is decorated in a knights and dragons motif, and he already has one lovely dagger displayed that we bought for him at the big Texas Renaissance Festival a couple years ago. This past weekend, Dan bought a set of three matching swords — oriental design of three lengths — with stand for less than \$40 (his own money). They don't really match the decor in his room, but they are still beautiful swords (sheathed, of course), and will probably be displayed in the living room.

By the way, just in case you're wondering

about what kind of parents he has, even though he's 11 years old, Dan thoroughly understands the respect he must give these swords, and doesn't take them out unless one of us parental units are present. He's very good with the rules, and someday he's going to have quite a collection.

Anywho . . . Edmiston's article was very good and I enjoyed it a great deal. He's quite the researcher, ain't he? Quite informative.

As you know, I'm an English teacher, and would rather not teach Shakespeare if I can help it. Not that I don't like him, but when I teach a general Brit Lit class, I pretty much skim through Willy, leaving students to sample him a little bit; if they want to study Shakespeare, there's a two-semester course of study they can pursue if so desired. So *Reduced Shakespeare: the Complete Guide for the Attention Impaired* found a receptive mind here. This might just work for getting teenaged readers interested in pursuing Shakespeare in more detail. I may have to check this book out.

The problem is that out of a class of thirty kids, twenty-seven don't care, and one has read an Oxfordian web-site and wants to argue that (Baconianism is like soooo five minutes ago, the failing of Connie Willis's "Ado").

— JTM

Back in your loccol, I think I may have to send a copy of my new zine to Trinlay Khadro to see if I can coerce some artwork from Trinlay. Always in the market for filloes and cover art.

Speaking of which, *Askance* #1 is posted to efanzines.com, so if anybody wants to see it that way, go for it. I am also printing out a limited number of copies for mailing for the folks who prefer the dead tree version. (By the time *Alexiad* #6.2 hits the mails, my second issue might be out — the May issue.)

Overall, this was another nice zine. Lots of book reviews and all sorts of goodies in this issue. Thanks for that, and I look forward to your next effort.

From: **Robert S. Kennedy** March 27, 2007
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Thank you for Vol. 6, No. 1, the start of your sixth year.

I finally obtained *Prayers for the Assassin* (reviewed by Joe in Vol. 5 No. 4) on

Interlibrary Loan. It's basically about an Islamic takeover of most of the United States. It is well written and held my attention. However, it is unrealistic even taking into account its basic premise. I had several problems with the novel. Lapsed Muslims living in an area with Catholics? I don't think so. The penalty for leaving Islam is death. The book is placed in S.F., but I don't think that is the correct category. On the other hand, I'm not sure in what category it belongs. The author mentions "Small plastic sci-fi robots..." (p. 315). I don't like the use of "sci-fi". (Yes, I know who coined "Sci-Fi". But I still don't like the phrase.) I can recommend the book because it is a good read. But, if Islam were to take over this country, the control would not be as depicted. If you do read the book, also read Joe's excellent commentary.

Europe is well on the way to becoming Eurabia. If it doesn't wake up soon it will be too late. An interesting, and rather frightening, book may be showing the future for the United States—*America Alone* by Mark Steyn (2006) that I obtained on Interlibrary Loan. That could be if we are lucky and maybe include Australia and possibly New Zealand. ("Islam has youth and will, Europe has age and welfare" p. xix.) But, the United States may be going down too if we don't rid ourselves of some lunacies like the twin insanities of Political correctness and Multiculturalism. If you obtain *America Alone*, read at least the Prologue "To Be or Not to Be" and the last chapter (Ch. 10) "The Falling Camel: Last Legs". In opening *Prayers for the Assassin*, Robert Ferrigno quotes an Arabic proverb—"A falling camel attracts many knives". Let us hope that Western Civilization is not a "falling camel".

Because I enjoyed *Time and Again* (1970) by Jack Finney, I obtained *The Woodrow Wilson Dime* (1968) that was commented on by Joe (Vol. 5 No. 6, page 8) from the library. It was ok, but it didn't really impress me. *The Wheels of If* it isn't.

I finally got around to reading *SPIN* by Robert Charles Wilson (2005). By about the middle of the book I was getting rather bored. But, finish it I did. I don't really understand why it won the HUGO last year. Maybe it's just not the kind of Science Fiction that interests me that much.

Eureka was an excellent series on the Sci-Fi Channel. It appears to have been dropped like the Sci-Fi Channel does to too many of its best programs. *Special Unit 2* was a new series on the Sci-Fi Channel that I rather enjoyed. It reminds me somewhat of a previous series, *The*

Chronicle. *The Chronicle* was quite enjoyable. But, it didn't last long. Hopefully *Special Unit 2* will not suffer the same fate. But, why do they show three one-hour episodes in a row on Fridays? Well, now it's missing and may also be gone.

My rule about not watching any movies made especially for the Sci-Fi Channel was broken. I taped and watched *Earthstorm*. The acting was a magnitude better than their past movies that I've watched. It had a lot of hokey scenes like a Space Shuttle making it to the Moon and something taken from *Star Wars*. Nevertheless, I thoroughly enjoyed the movie.

Question—If everyone knows that Jack Campbell is actually John G. Hemry, why is Hemry writing *The Lost Fleet* series under the pseudonym of Jack Campbell? Also, the page behind the Title Page states that Jack Campbell is John G. Hemry. (Sometime back Lloyd G. Daub told me what the page behind the Title Page is called. It's something simple. But, I've forgotten.) OK—I've finished the first two books in the series and look forward to the next book.

Writers get classified into genres and book distributors order on the basis of the last book. Ask H. N. Turtletaub or Dan Chernenko (both available c/o Harry Turtledove) for further explanations.

Excellent reviews of *Londonistan* and *Betrayal* (p. 13). I highly recommend both books.

More outstanding commentary by Rodford Edmiston, "The Joy of High Tech" (p. 18).

Thanks for the "HUGO Recommendations". I just wish that there had been more. Hopefully, after the actual nominations are known you will have voting recommendations in time to be useful in voting.

E. B. Frohvet: After reading your review of *Ghost Whisperer* (p. 23), I watched three episodes. Yes, it is very simple and it's actually rather boring. I will not be watching any more episodes.

Rodney Leighton: Enjoyed your comment about *Dark Rivers of the Heart* by Dean Koontz. You may remember that it is my favorite Koontz book.

Dainis Bisenieks: Your mentioning Harold Lamb reminded me how much I enjoyed a number of his books years ago. In the 1970's I wrote him suggesting that he write a book about Constantine the Great. He responded

saying that it was not really an area of his interest.

Sue Burke: But, what are the ethnic Spaniards going to do when the Reconquista is in full force?

From: **Timothy Lane** March 29, 2007
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The notion of using the arguments of *Mao: The Unknown Story* to prove that Braxton Bragg was actually a Union mole is amusing, and has a nice pedigree. In the musical of *Li'l Abner*, which I saw on TV back in the 1960s sometime, it turns out that the statue of Dogpatch's Confederate hero, Jubilation T. Cornpone, was declared a national monument due to Cornpone's (presumably unintentional) services to the Union. This in fact proves to be a crucial plot point.

Rodford Edmiston, discussing weapons over the millennia, notes that one reason for using spears instead of swords was that the former use a lot less scarce metal. In fact, Richard Powell makes exactly this point in his novel of the Trojan War, *Whom the Gods Would Destroy*.

The use of axes as weapons may have largely disappeared centuries ago, but during the War of the Rebellion, Colonel John T. Wilder had his brigade equip itself with hatchets in order to improve its performance in hand-to-hand combat. Ouch. (And he came from Indiana, nowhere near Fall River, Massachusetts.) Presumably this was before he converted the brigade to mounted infantry armed with Spencer repeating rifles, since at that point their hand-to-hand performance largely became irrelevant.

And besides, Lizzie Borden was born in 1860. The colonel could have known her father, though.

Richard Dengrove makes an interesting point in discussing the lack of scientific rigor in John Nebel's skepticism. As he says, it probably was appropriate for such a show. But even in ordinary life, there is a point for it. In the absence of scientific proof, one must have some basis for separating the ridiculous from the possible. Note, too, that "absence of proof is not the same thing as proof of absence." There may be no particular reason to believe in the Sasquatch (or the Loch Ness monster, for example), but they remain open questions.

Indeed, a recent *Skeptic* makes some very similar points, pointing out in its editorial that

"skepticism is a method, not a position." An even more striking point is that it describes "water dowsing, ESP, and creationism" having failed the tests of proof sufficiently that they can be "provisionally" considered invalid. When it comes to theories, there are few absolute certainties in science. That, after all, is the difference between a theory and a fact.

That makes this a good time to deal with Dengrove's wonderment in his letter that even global warming skeptics such as Rodford Edmiston (in his superb article in the previous issue) are reluctant to say that the global warming litany is absolutely false. The skeptics basically have the scientific mindset, whereas the more determined adherents basically act as an apocalyptic cult — complete with its own litany, high-living cult leaders, condemnation of heretics, remission of sin by way of indulgences (called "carbon offsets"), and total faith in their religious dogma.

And while I'm at it, the Pascal's Wager argument **may** be valid in one's personal life (though it's been pointed out that those compact fluorescent bulbs contain mercury vapor, and thus can be a serious environmental hazard of another sort), at least to the extent that it's more economical; but it's clearly false when it comes to public policy. The costs of the zealots' demands there are quite high, which is why the only countries to meet their Kyoto requirements are those (such as Brazil, China, India, and Mexico) that have none to meet (which is why they love the treaty).

I have no strong objection to someone campaigning lightly for a Hugo, as Spider Robinson did (unsuccessfully) for *Variable Star*. But he should have the honesty to admit what he's doing.

Per contra George W. Price, but Taras Wolansky was quite right that Curt Lemay avoided targeting Hiroshima and Nagasaki (as well as Kokura and Kyoto) in order to save them for *Enola Gay* and *Bock's Car*. Don't forget, the bombing of Japanese cities didn't begin until 1945, and it was mid-year before it became fairly general. By then they had a good notion that atomic bombs might be available for use soon.

I do like his notion about voting. Anything that allows negative votes is probably desirable. The interesting possibility would be that the winner in some cases might be some unknown candidate who receives a handful of Yes votes, but hardly any No votes. This would effectively encourage third-party candidates, and might also discourage excessive negative campaigning (which might lead to both the campaigner and the target

receiving large negative votes).

But the scatological joke at the end of his letter leaves me in a quandary. I definitely find the engineering solution better (or more precisely less bad) than the mathematical one. But when I majored in computer science at Purdue, that was part of the division of mathematical sciences. Sounds like another ouch.

I think I have to disagree with Dainis Bisenieks about the *Jeopardy* question on what country Berlin was in in the year 1500. Theoretically, the margraviate (and electorate) of Brandenburg was the equivalent of a state, so the HRE would indeed be the country. Indeed, his own example ("Philadelphia, USA") actually matches this: the USA is the country, and Pennsylvania the state.

I note the various comments about pet problems. One of our cats, Shadow, recently had a serious misadventure. As best I can tell, she got one of her front claws stuck in her mouth, and couldn't remove it (she sometimes seems to be a little weak on retraction). Fortunately, I happened to be right there, and was finally able to pull it out despite all her desperate clawing. (At least she never broke the skin, unlike what Neville did to Elizabeth when the window suddenly sprang down on one of his paws, and she rescued him. Since then, whenever I open that window, I put a spare book underneath so that if it springs down again, it won't have such a catastrophic effect.)

There was the time we put the harness on Red Wull and he got it trapped in his mouth.

— JTM

From: **Sue Burke** March 30, 2007
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I'm currently reading *Juglar (Minstrel or Jongleur)* by Rafael Marin, a genuine sword and sorcery novel by one of Spain's finest genre writers and a friend of mine. I say genuine because it's set in the time of El Cid, who wielded a real sword (La Tizona, a small-scale copy of which is my letter opener), and because the story's narrator, a minstrel/sorcerer in service to El Cid, practices the kind of magic that historically was said to exist in Spain in those days (and still may, according to rumor). *Juglar* was a runner-up for the 2006 Minotauro

Prize, a contest for a lucrative book deal sponsored by a publishing house.

El Cid (c.1043-1099) fell out of grace for a while with King Alfonso VI. Some of King Juan Carlos I's royal patrimony dates back to this time: seven residential palaces and two dozen other sites, including monasteries and a castle or two. Martin Morse Wooster wanted to know. See:

<http://www.patrimonionacional.es/>

The Royals also own a few apartments here and there, but you learn about them only by word of mouth. The Prince has one at Plaza de la Independencia in Madrid, but you didn't hear it here.

Spain has several thousand castles, of which about a hundred are still used as residences. Most are big time fixer-upers, but the one advertised in today's newspaper, a 12-century hilltop castle in Foixà, north of Barcelona, is fully renovated, with 11 bedrooms, 7 baths, lush gardens, museum, stocked wine cellar, and spectacular view from the tower. US\$9.4 million. Phone (+34) 972-456-440.

Many castles, either restored or in ruins, are open for visitors or used for municipal purposes. Central Spain is called Castile for all those castles, and the Castilian language developed from Latin within those stone walls as, castle by castle, century by century, Spain's reconquest inched south, pushed on by men like El Cid and Alfonso VI. And maybe a forgotten magician or two.

Speaking of the Royal family, Princess Letizia's younger sister, Erika, committed suicide on February 7, but the media, ordinarily bare-knuckle brawlers, treats the Royals with such kid gloves that I had to confirm by word of mouth that her unexplained death was a suicide. I learned from an English-language publication that she had suffered from stress-related illnesses and perhaps a feeling that she would always be "the Princess's sister" rather than herself, and she had ingested "a massive amount of pills, possibly tranquilizers." Doña Letizia was a commoner, so her family didn't grow up in the stress of the limelight. Erika wrote letters to her family members saying goodbye — as far as we know.

It was very sad. The Princess is pregnant with her second child and still skinny as a rail. Anorexia? It's a rumor, but officially she is suffering from gastric problems with this pregnancy. She should give birth to another girl during the last week of April, and is trying to maintain her official duties as best she can.

Still dressed in mourning, she, the Prince, and the King and Queen inaugurated a monument to the victims of the terrorist bombing on March 11, 2004, in front of the Atocha train station in Madrid. As it turned out, the monument is ugly, but that's not why politicians were booed at the inaugural, and we neighbors weren't allowed to attend anyway. I explain it all in the April home page article at my web site, www.sue.burke.name.

Little Princess Leonor, the future queen of Spain (should all go as expected), who was born to don Felipe and doña Letizia on October 31, 2005, is now a blond toddler. In early March, she and her young cousins went to the *Disney on Ice* show in Madrid, accompanied by her grandmother, Queen Sofía. So much for a royal education.

In other news, you may be interested to know that the movie *A Prairie Home Companion* opened in Spain in late March. Several reviewers thought it was about a country-western music station in St. Paul, Texas.

Well, in Texas ever'thin's 'bove average.

(And ah wuz named in honah uv ah famous Texan, Gin'ral Two-Gun Joe Cohen uv Galilee County, Texas, biggest li'l county ever. He writ fur them thar furriners under the handle uv "Flavius Josephus".)

— JTM

From: **Jeffrey Allan Boman** April 3, 2007
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This is Jeff from Jeromeville . . .
(Actually, Jeff from Burlington, VT doesn't have a ring to it . . .)

I'm currently here with my parents to celebrate Passover with my aunt here. This has been my family tradition since I was little, but it's also a bit historic: at the end of April, after about 30 years here my aunt and uncle are moving to a level townhouse. My mom is helping her sister pack in between meals and seders.

I'm doing my geek thing right now: my aunt uses her computer for bookkeeping; instead of downloading my applications here and deleting them after, I'm using a suite of programs on a USB Key called Portable Apps. When I'm done I just unplug my key and

nothing here is changed.

My wiki for FanAc:

<http://fanselfpub.wetpaint.com>

has been getting a bit more activity lately; I invited a bunch of people as members and content providers. Now I'm no longer the sole content provider, so I no longer feel like a big ego-suck there.

Reading the review of **Pretender** really made me flip out when it mentioned it as the eighth book of a trilogy. Obviously some authors favor money over math there . . .

I used Jericho in my last LOC, now E. B. Frohvet reviewed it! // The bombs couldn't trash every radio STATION, but the radio towers that transmit them can be messed up enough to make them unreachable, plus an EMP pulse hit the air about 6 episodes in, so the towers would not function any more near them, what few were left.

Letters:

Christopher J. Garcia: One of our 3 surviving WWI vets in Canada died over a month ago. When you have so few left, the losses feel greater.

Victor Lloyd Clemett,
December 10, 1899 — February
21, 2007, ex-RCAF. "As year
follows year, more old men
disappear, someday no one will
march there at all."

Trinlay Khadro: I try not to think of the day I have to say goodbye to a pet myself, but with cats of nearly 16 and 18, the day will come sooner rather than later. // Adam Curry (often called the Pod-father) got caught editing the Wikipedia article on podcasting to remove his co-founder's name. That might be what you heard. Now comes the discovery that one of the Editors for the site lied about his credentials; the site is being hit from all sides now. // I've been reminding my sisters about HPV for a while now.

Richard Densgrove: Author Michael Crichton is a major global warming denier . . . after the first green Christmas in my memory I suspect he's wrong.

Rod E. Smith: I'm late to read your climate change article in full, I'll backtrack to it soon. // Welcome to your new cat Michael! // One of the author guests at Westercon in 2005 was also retired, and had at least 5 novels out now. It sounds like you have a very good start.

Brad W. Foster: My deepest sympathies about Vlad.

(I just remembered: my aunt's cat Webigail was buried in the back yard a few years ago. I want to pay her respects before we leave tomorrow, since it'll be the last chance.)

Hey, I've made a zine shtick. Cool!

E.B. Frohvet: My doctors are careful to ask me how I'm doing save when I actually intend to bring something to their attention. Otherwise, if I'm angry or upset, I'll tell them exactly why! // I've tried to explain to a friend why "sci fi" doesn't mean the same thing as "SF". He thinks I'm just being intolerant for nothing. Mundanes . . .

Robert Sabella: I'll never forget my actions the day the *Challenger* exploded either . . . it's burnt into my brain.

Dainis Bisenieks: Your mention of recovering funds from discarded pennies reminds me of the time I did the same after my *whie* died in 1988.

Alexis A. Gilliland: Yours is another pleased review I've read of LOSCON. If only I could have afforded it.

Alex R. Slate: A lot of the zine folks I currently talk with seem to make what I would view as crudzines — mind you, I'm not a teenager like they are, so what do I know?

(I guess that also answers the fact that [some] teens do zines.)

When I get home April 4th I'll try to make a LOC for volume 5.6. *Comicopia* 100 is my biggest project this month, but hopefully I'll get this done as well.

April 7, 2007

Back again. This is Ffej from Ellivnoscxaj . . .

(I'm traveling back in time for this one, so the sign-in fits.)

I'm a bit antsy at the moment; in 39 days I hit the big 4-0. I don't drive, so a mid-life crisis involving a sports car would make no sense. A hot girlfriend, on the other hand . . . I'd have no problems with that!

Enough ruminations. This is a LOC for volume 5, issue 6.

I have several volumes of *Destinies* in my book library, still unread. I hope to get to them soon, so that I can give an accurate opinion of this critique. // I still have to get accustomed to significant differences between Canadian and US Thanksgiving. For us it's just a meal; for you, football is a big tradition, as is the shopping you mention. I have to soon get larger capacity memory cards for my 5 Mega-pixel camera. 2 32 MB cards doesn't allow enough photos.

The shopping aspect comes

from it being the run-up to Christmas. But holidays start earlier and earlier these days, as when, on the way to ChiCon, we found Halloween stuff on sale!

— JTM

I suspect if I began a reading list it would start big. I'm way behind on my reading piles. // Reading the tribute to Elfling made me think of my older cat Boots. He also dashes out my front door when it's open. I hope he dashes to me in the afterlife also.

Reading the history of the Big Heart award, I have to agree — maybe they should create a specific award to honor Forry, not lead people to forget the person it initially honored.

Trinlay Khadro : Re: Sherman and Kletch parks . . . with more description, my interest in seeing them before the Star-shmucks types get their hands on them.

Re: emotional support from fen and family . . . it was 11 years ago for me; I hear you.

Jason K. Burnett: Re: Family Matters...It is sad that this show also wouldn't be harmed aired out of order as *Firefly* was, as there was nothing sequential about it that would be harmed. // Welcome to the world of freelancing. Seems you had a good start!

John Purcell: Squeaky is a cat I've taken care of since she was 6 months old. She'll be 16 in May. Boots is nearly 18. I raised him with my sister until he was 1 ½. I took him in again about 11 years ago when he proved to be nasty and surly to my nephew. It took him a day to get used to me again. I dread the day I have to say goodbye to either of them.

R-Lauraine Tuthasi: Re: Ray Bradbury . . . I'm not a big fan of his, but I have to admit that all of his stories in *F&SF* the past 6 years have struck an emotional chord for me. // Re: Robert Silverberg... I'm a huge fan of his work, all the way back to the novel *Shadrach in the Furnace*. In person though . . . you call his words sarcasm; many found it more a case of him seeming full of himself.

Now, 2 issues of TKK to LOC, then momentous issue 100 of *Comicopia*, and in June the Script Frenzy competition . . . No rest for the prodigious!

From: **Milt Stevens** April 6, 2007
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In *Alexiad* V6#1, Joseph reviews a book titled *You Can Get Arrested For That...* After reading the review, I considered how easy it is

to put together a book like that. Politicians get political brownie points for enacting legislation that may do something about something or other. They don't get any points for repealing laws that aren't doing a darned thing about anything. So law books keep getting thicker. I recall years ago having a phone conversation with a citizen who was quite irate because she had realized there were laws which weren't being enforced. I told her as far as I knew there were hundreds and possibly thousands of such laws. That didn't improve her mood, but it was true anyway.

While it is mildly amusing to know it is still illegal to advocate Criminal Anarcho-Syndicalism in California, it doesn't have any practical impact. If you consider that anarchists were what terrorists are today, it doesn't seem all that silly. We still have a law against sending a minor to a variety theater. That certainly seems out of date. However, we also still have a law against tattooing a minor. That still seems to have some point to it.

After reading "Bids to Come," I knew about more potential worldcon bids than I had previously. How many of them will actually make it to the ballot? Who knows? I don't pay much attention to bids until the year before the actual vote. If bids are still showing some signs of activity at that point, they have to be regarded as real possibilities.

Johnny Carruthers' idea for an award named after Forry Ackerman is never going to go anywhere. There is the minor matter that the science fiction world doesn't even need as many awards as it already has much less any more awards. While that should stop the proliferation of awards, it doesn't always work. However, you can count on people resisting the idea of slipping any more awards in with the Hugos. There is also the matter of balloting. Counting the Hugo and Campbell ballots is already complicated and time consuming enough. Worldcon committees really don't want to expand this workload. Contrary to some opinions, there is no imperative to give

an award for every conceivable form of activity that anyone in the science fiction field might engage in. Really!

Which would encourage the movement to drop all these obsolete categories like Best Fanzine.

— JTM

From: **John Hertz** April 2, 2007
236 S. Coronado Street No. 409, Los Angeles, CA 90057-1456 USA

Thanks, but renaming awards is the road to the Chaos of Unhappy Nothingness. History does not begin with one's own birth, nor does the world end at the tip of one's nose.

Too many think otherwise, though.

— JTM

I confess that when I came to "Three Bars" I thought it was the first candy review.

"Known as a famous secret agent" recalls Fleming's *From Russia With Love*, in which the cover of the head of the British Secret Service in Istanbul is that he's the head of the British Secret Service in Istanbul.

Congratulations on the Hugo nomination.

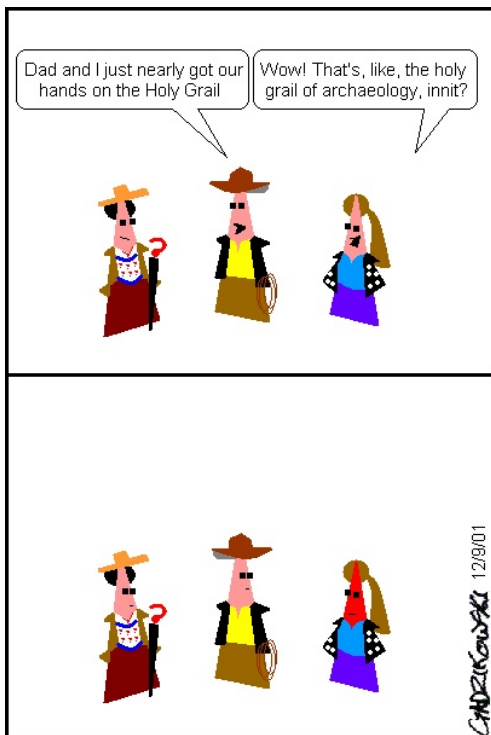
WAHF:

Lloyd Daub, with various items of interest.

Alexei Panshin, Evelyn Leeper, Bob Sabella, David Herrington, Carolyn Clowes, Janine Stinson, and Bob Roehm with congratulations.

THE DOCTOR AND THE GRAIL

by Paul Gadzikowski



LEO VENEFICA VESTIARIUMQUE

"Now what's that?" Titus Pullo said.

Vorena the Younger looked at the box that stood against the wall, then at the soldier who was Pater's brother-in-arms, and said, as only a girl can say, "That's a wardrobe, silly. You put clothes in it."

"I know that. But what is it doin' here?"

She shrugged. "Mater had it delivered, now that Pater is a magistrate and all that."

Pullo listened. "Then why is it makin' that noise? Sounds like a damned pipe."

He jumped to his feet, after a moment dashed over to a trunk and recovered his gladius, and said, half to himself, "You never know what could be in these things."

The door of the wardrobe opened easily, and a slight chill afflicted the warm Roman night. Puzzled, Pullo stepped forward, and some more and some more . . .

He stopped and scratched his head. "This place seems just a bit too big for this here thing." Then he looked down and saw snow beneath his sandals. There was no light behind him; but he could see a light before him, so he went that way through the trees, gladius in hand, ready for any attack.

When he reached the light, he was even more bewildered. There was a pillar of iron, and in a cage on the top a light burned, brighter than any torch, but without flame or smoke. "By the Dog!" Pullo said. "Never seen your like before."

"It's called a *lychnuchus*, a lampstand." A skirl of pipe music accompanied this declaration, delivered in a Greek accent.

"Greasy Greeks . . ." Pullo said as he turned around, ready to confront the speaker. Then his jaw dropped.

"I am Tumnus, at your service. And you are . . .?"

He straightened up and dropped the point of his sword towards the snowy ground. "Legionary Titus Pullo, ex-Thirteenth Legion," he said, thinking, *this is the queerest drunk I've ever had in my life*.

Tumnus gave a toss of his head, and the dark curls bobbed around his horns. He raised the pipe to his lips and played a skirl, dancing, leaving little hoofprints in the snow as he circled Pullo and the strange light.

Pullo looked around the forest. "Now just how am I s'posed to get back to Rome? And where am I, anyway?" he said, scratching his crooked head.

"This is the realm of Narnia," the satyr said.

"Bollox. Narnia is in Umbria, up north of the City. I been there. There ain't no lampstands with lights like that there, or these here trees, or anythin' of the sort." *Including satyrs*, he thought.

— Not by C. S. Lewis

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Art: What we are mainly looking for is small fillos. Your fillo will probably be scanned in and may be reused, unless you object to its reuse.

Contributions: This is not a fictionzine. It is intended to be our fanzine, so be interesting.

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