

ALEXIAD

(ΑΛΞΙΑΣ)

\$2.00

It is one of life's little ironies that having spent so many years accumulating books Joe and I now find ourselves compelled to start dismantling our collection. This means a lot of hard decisions. I am in the process of reading through the books and proposing candidates for culling. Joe and I are still fairly young but we are not getting younger. I would like to cut the book population down while we are physically able to do so. We have still more than 12,000 books in 1300 square feet, even after I have culled more than 500. Some I have sold to local bookstores, others I have just taken to thrift stores in hopes that there they will have a chance of finding new homes where there will be space for them. I've set a goal of ten books a day, which is perhaps a very small number, but is an achievable one. The grand goal is a thousand books culled by June 18 of next year.

— Lisa

Comments are by JTM or LTM

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The 82nd Running of the Hambletonian (1st leg of the Trotting Triple Crown) was **August 4, 2007** at Meadowlands Racetrack in East Rutherford, NJ. Donato Hanover was the winner.

The 53rd Running of the Yonkers Trot (2nd leg of the Trotting Triple Crown) was **August 25, 2007** at Yonkers Raceway in Yonkers, NY. Green Day was the winner.

The 115th Running of the Kentucky Futurity (3rd leg of the Trotting Triple Crown) was **October 6, 2007** at the Red Mile in Lexington, KY. Donato Hanover won in 1:50.1, tying the record.

The 52nd Running of the Cane Pace (1st leg of the Pacing Triple Crown) was **September 3, 2007** at Freehold Raceway in Freehold, NJ. Always a Virgin was the winner.

The 62nd Running of the Little Brown Jug (2nd leg of the Pacing Triple Crown) was **September 20, 2007** at the Delaware County Fair in Delaware, OH. Tell All was the winner.

The 51st Running of the Messenger Stakes (3rd leg of the Pacing Triple Crown) is **October 27, 2007** at Yonkers Raceway.

The Breeders' Cup World Championships will be **October 26-27, 2007** at Monmouth Park in Oceanport, New Jersey.

Lisa's Birthday is **October 30, 2007**

Our Eleventh Anniversary is **November 22, 2007**. Happy Thanksgiving.

Printed on October 10, 2007

Deadline is **December 1, 2007**

Reviewer's Notes

The office is having its annual United Way drive, and as usual, I trashed the envelope.

What's wrong with all that? Well, first off, it creates two levels of administration; the United Way itself, and the extra administration in the recipient groups to coordinate with the United Way. Then, becoming so dependent on this block grant dries up their own development; they don't build a local support group when there's support from above. Which has other problems . . .

Charity has been taking a beating in general, what with all the revelations about 9-11 donations being used to expand national headquarters buildings and Katrina gifts being sold locally. (They preferred to send corporate donations, which was why Indian Ocean tsunami survivors got boxes of bras.)

Those who help directly don't get acclaim, credit, or respect. All they do is to do something.

Thanks to the thirty other people who nominated *Heinlein's Children* and the sixty others who voted it first place. (Not to mention the eight other people who nominated *Alexiad*.)

RANDOM JOTTINGS

by Joe



Slang is a minor, but often amusing, field of language studies. Slang used by soldiers has its own special, er air. **FUBAR: Soldier Slang of World War II** by Gordon L. Rottman (Osprey; 2007; ISBN 978-1-84603-175-5; \$15.95) gives a spicy selection of derogatory terms for other nationalities, insults towards people in authority, lewd vocabulary, and other such terms used by people who figure they'll be killed anyhow so why the f— care. An interesting picture of how the ordinary soldier saw life around him. (It has too few illustrations by Bill Mauldin and Jon Philpin, and too many by uncredited artists.)

According to a report, a very well-placed fellow didn't like the premature termination of HBO's *Rome*. "They just were starting to get going! Augustus was the greatest emperor of all time, and nobody's ever told his story," George Lucas, a fellow who knows about Republics becoming Empires (and mercifully forgets the TV special *Empire* (2005)), told *TV Guide* (yes, Virginia, there is still a *TV Guide*).

(Oh My Ghod! Titus Pullo meets Jar Jar Binks! Atia seduces Obi-Wan Kenobi! Count Dooku threatens to reveal the dalliance of Octavia and Agrippa! Yoda says, "Semper duos est."! Xena fights Palpatine over Livia! The mind reels!)

Lonnie Dupre has announced the Peary Centennial Expedition, which will spend the spring of 2009 exploring the northern coasts of Ellesmere Island and Greenland. In 2006, Dupre carried out the first summer achievement of the North Pole.

The expedition party will include Inuit descendants of Peary and Henson, and will otherwise honor Inuit culture.

<http://www.pearycentennial.com>

OBITS

We regret to report the death of **William L. Welch** on **August 2, 2007**, father of fellow fanzine fan **Henry L. "Knarley" Welch**.

We regret to report the death of First Fan, mystery writer, and judge **Joe L. Hensley** on **August 27, 2007** of complications of leukemia. Born in 1926, Joe was a First Fandom Dinosaur, someone active in fandom before the NyCon.

He was also a lawyer, an Indiana state legislator, and a Circuit Court Judge in Jefferson County, Indiana, as well as having written twenty novels, of which the Robak mystery series was best known, and about a hundred short stories.

He used to come down to Louisville to speak to the club. He was a very friendly and affable guy, and we'll miss him.

We regret to report the death of **Madeline L'Engle**, author of the Newbery Award winning *A Wrinkle in Time* (1962), on **September 6, 2007** at the age of 88. L'Engle was the author of a number of fantastic works, including the sequels to *A Wrinkle in Time*, and other works of commentary such as *Penguins and Golden Calves* (1996).

We regret to report the death of James Oliver Rigney, Jr., better known as **Robert Jordan**, on **September 16, 2007** from complications of cardiac amyloidosis. Born October 17, 1948 in Charleston, South Carolina, Rigney/"Jordan" was best known for his long-running and intricate *Wheel of Time* high fantasy series; he wrote other fantasy works and, under other names, historical and western novels. He was a Vietnam veteran (two tours) helicopter pilot and had earned the Distinguished Flying Cross and two Bronze Stars.

MONARCHIST NEWS

We regret to report the death of **Sir Walter Francis John Montagu-Douglas-Scott, Duke of Buccleuch and Queensberry, K.T.**, on **September 4, 2007**. Born September 28, 1923, he served in the House of Commons for thirteen years (Edinburgh North (U)) before succeeding to the titles on the death of his father in 1973. He became paralyzed from the chest down in 1971 when his horse fell on him, and became a spokesman for disability issues.

His Grace was Chief of Clan Scott, the largest private landowner in the United Kingdom, and descendant and heir of the Duke of Monmouth. (As you know, Monmouth claimed to have had proof that his mother, Lucy Walter, had married Charles II; supposedly, a Victorian-era Duke of Buccleuch found their marriage certificate.) He was succeeded by his son, Sir Richard John Walter Scott, K.B.E., formerly styled Earl of Dalkeith.

BLAST FROM THE PAST

by Johnny Carruthers

<http://www.xanga.com/janusfiles>

This story begins . . . well, let's just say that it begins a long time ago (although not in a galaxy far, far away). It all began when I received my copy of *Starlog* #52 in the mail, and I started flipping through the new issue's pages.

At the time, *Starlog* had a department called "Quest." This department, which as I recall only lasted a year or two, showcased the talents of some of its readers. These included model

builders (with photos of scratch-built models), artists, cartoonists, and even a poet or two.

Well, in issue #52's Quest, *Starlog* ran a story written by a young lady from Australia. "Invasion Of The Snody Batchers" was inspired by, of all things, the magazine's masthead — the listing of the magazine's staff. The assorted bad guys of SF movies and TV were just a little upset that no one ever cheered for them, and they decided to blame *Starlog* for this. The assorted bad guys also decided to do something about it, and so the *Starlog* offices were attacked by an army of Daleks, Cybermen, Cylons, Imperial Stormtroopers, Romulans, and Klingons. (led by Darth Vader and Ming of Mongo. (This was several years before *Star Trek: The Next Generation*, so Klingons were still the bad guys.) The attack was repulsed by the *Starlog* staff, who created a superweapon to thwart the assorted bad guys — a bionic Harlan Ellison.

The story was hilarious, and *Starlog* also gave the writer's address. I wrote her a letter, telling her how much I enjoyed the story, and that, as they say, was the start of a beautiful friendship.

In the beginning, our communication was snail mail. At that time, personal computers had only been on the market for a few years. The Internet itself was still in its prehistoric era. And with airmail, a letter usually took a couple of weeks to get from Kentucky to Australia. (I think it still does.) About 10 years ago, we added email to our communications arsenal, and more recently, comments on each other's online journals. (Along the way, she was also responsible for my initial meeting with SF artist Bob Eggleton. But that is another story.)

Not too long ago, I was in Half Price Books. I was looking through their magazines, and I ran across a copy of *Starlog* #52. I wanted to be certain that my memory was correct, so I flipped through the pages, and I found "Invasion Of The Snody Batchers," just as funny as I remembered it. I immediately thought of what I hoped would be a great surprise for my friend. I bought the magazine, and I mailed it to her, along with a few other things, such as a copy of *Nth Degree* #14, which published a filk of mine. Once the package was in the mail, I sent her a rather cryptic email, saying only, "Keep watching your mailbox."

When I checked my email yesterday, I had a message from her. She finally received my package — apparently, it had been held up at Customs. She still had her copy of *Starlog* #52, but she described it as being a little tattered, and was delighted to have a copy in good condition once again. If I'm not mistaken, I think she used the words "thank you" at least a half dozen times in three paragraphs. (By the way, you're welcome.)

Recently, she mentioned in her online journal that she had decided that, one way or another, she was going to be attending next year's Worldcon in Denver. As I said in a comment I left, that made me even more determined to attend Denvention 3 as well. We have been friends for a long time; it's time that we finally met face to face.

THE WHITE RABBIT

Review by Joseph T Major of

SETTLING ACCOUNTS:**IN AT THE DEATH**

by Harry Turtledove

(Del Rey; 2007;

ISBN 987-0-345-49247-0; \$26.95)

Sequel to *How Few Remain*,*Great War Series*,*American Empire Series*,*Settling Accounts: Return Engagement*,*Settling Accounts: Drive to the East*, and*Settling Accounts: The Grapple*

(The TL-191 Series)

FREEDOM!

For some values of freedom, that is.

The Confederacy is on its last legs. Atlanta has fallen, Richmond is being bombed regularly, Texas is overrun . . . oh yes, Texas. That's where those camps are, the ones where the colored folks check in any time, but they never ever leave.

Not that the Union is doing all that much better. The Mormon revolt, the invasion of Ohio and Western Pennsylvania have been bad enough, and now there are those rockets pounding Philadelphia.

What we have here is the final grinding destruction of Jake Featherston's Evil Empire, as the Confederacy comes to its final disintegration — both in territory and in morale. The prices turn out to be higher than anyone expected.

This turns into a "bad" game of Civilization; one where everyone says, "Our words are backed by NUCLEAR WEAPONS!" And if you remember that, you remember that the computer-played nations always fired them off, no matter how compliant you were.

In the face of a failed coup (worse even than the coup against Gorbachev), Clarence Potter continues his transition from Oster to Skorzeny, transporting one of those NUCLEAR WEAPONS to the outskirts of Philadelphia. There's a hot time in the old town tonight, but that's only the first of many such nukings.

That doesn't do the failing Confederacy any good, and when Jake Featherston escapes from his refuge, his plane makes a forced landing, and he runs into Cassius, the former slave from Newport. He told the truth (for certain values of truth) just a little too often to be anonymous. Sic semper tyrannus, or "You too, boy?"

And so the war comes to an end. The survivors have to rebuild their lives amid the ruins; not just the radiation and fallout pervaded ruins of the cities and nations, but a world where the fabric of society has been ruined. Not only are they bowling alone, but the bowling alley was blown apart by artillery (and even by NUCLEAR WEAPONS) and smashed under the treads of barrels.

(The interesting bit where we find out that Clarence Potter's smuggling bombs falls under the customary methods of war is remarkably reminiscent of a statement by a certain Frederick Forrest Edward Yeo-Thomas, sometimes known as "The White Rabbit", in

connection with one of AH's favorite bad guys. Now all Potter has to do is to get a job at the building and loan.)

Turtledove has indulged in various ironies and in-jokes, such as when Governor Dewey's running mate holds up a newspaper saying "LaFollette Defeats Dewey". Or in-references, as when he refers to a British writer who writes naval fiction so exciting that you think you're really there: "C. S. O'Brian". [Cecil Louis Troughton Smith and Richard Patrick Russ both wrote under pseudonyms, so there.]

The moral problem is more pointed than even the physical one. The devastation and destruction of atom-bombings, terrible as it is, will pass away, as will the ordinary ruination of conventional warfare. But the victorious Union is marked by other devastations. Their facile acceptance of reprisal killings, for example, where every dead bluebelly is worth ten, then a hundred ex-rebs hauled before firing squads. Will they too be using the death camps?

SO SURE WAS REAL

Review by Joseph T Major of

THE DREAMLAND CHRONICLES: BOOK ONE

by Scott Christian Sava

(Blue Dream Studios; 2006;

ISBN 987-0-9789168-0-0; \$19.95)

<http://www.thedreamlandchronicles.com>

If it had been our hero Alexander Carter who had been strapped into the chair after taking the blue pill, instead of Thomas "Neo" Anderson, when Morpheus had asked the question, "Have you ever had a dream that you were so sure was real? What if you were unable to wake from that dream? How would you know the difference between the dream world and the real world?" he would have said, "But I have, and I wanted to, and I don't."

You see, Alex had dreams when he was a kid. Always the same sort of dream; he and his friends Nastajia the elf girl, Kiwi the fairy, and Paddington Rumblebottom the Third the rock giant, would be flying along, exploring the Dreamland. (Well, it's better than Abe Lincoln and the beaver, from the sleeping-pill ads.) Then the dreams stopped. Now, he's in college, participating in an experiment about dreams.

And when he dreams . . . why, he's back with Nastajia and Kiwi and Paddington. They're all grown up, and, like Abe and the beaver, they've missed him. (Nastajia looks hot in the bare-midriff outfit.) Only . . . he's stuck with a Quest, and Nastajia is an Elf princess. Somehow dreams of wish fulfillment doesn't go over quite so well when the prospect of being killed in the process is thrown in.

Except he keeps on waking up. Then, Alex has to juggle two lives, and both seem to be getting worse at the moment. In the "waking" world, he has to deal with a researcher who is just a trifle concerned that his brainwaves flatline when he's dreaming; his twin brother, who seems disconcerted about the whole situation; and his inability to get a date.

Retreating into the dreamland is not much better . . . Nastajia's parents, King Oberon and

Queen Titania, have disappeared on a quest to find the true history of Dreamland, and she is going to go look for them. (Whatever happened to the old custom of offering half the kingdom and the princess's hand in marriage?) So Alex is dragged through the various and sundry threats and strange places of Dreamland.

It's an amusing story with a nice straightforward adventure plot, without any of the sniveling or sensitivity that has become more common of late. As the man said, "Welcome to the real world." Whichever one it may be.

The book was done in an interesting fashion; the pictures were all computer-generated. First, body images of the characters were created, then animated and dressed accordingly. Think Pixar films as comic books. This is a new method and though I haven't encountered it before, it seems to be becoming popular. It may not be to everyone's taste and it does tend to discourage showing subtle shades of feeling.

(NOTE: The Dreamland Chronicles website has a weekday serialization of the story.)

DIE REISE MIT DER ZEITMASCHINE

Review by Joseph T Major of

THE ACCIDENTAL TIME MACHINE

by Joe Haldeman

(Ace; 2007;

ISBN 987-0-441-01499-6; \$23.95)

The Austrian actor and writer Egon Friedell [1878-1938] wrote a book titled *Die Reise mit der Zeitmaschine* (1946). Translated into English, it was one of the first publications of DAW Books under the title *The Return of the Time Machine* (1972; DAW Book 22). It's a sequel to *The Time Machine*. Now others have done this: *The Space Machine* by Christopher Priest (1976) [apparently substantially superior to Kevin J. Anderson's more recent Grand Unification Book of (some) Wells], *Time Machine II* by George Pal (1981) [which to me looks like an attempt to salvage an uncompleted sequel to the movie (1960)], *The Time Ships* by Steven Baxter (1995), and so on.

Friedell's work was first off the blocks, as it were. It had problems, not the least of which was that he rather ignored the potentials of the ideas in order to write a drifting, aimless story. To be fair, he had other things on his mind. (He went out the window when the SA came in the door of his Vienna flat; something about not being Aryan.)

Matt Fuller of MIT has a little gadget that disappears when he pushes the button. He starts timing it and discovers that the disappearances are coming in an increasing procession; further tests reveal that during said disappearances no time elapses for the gadget. In other words, a time-leaping machine. The gag was, "I have time travel down pat except for fast-forward and rewind." But that was the VHS era. Now we have the DVD and so this is "next chapter". Except that the chapters are getting longer with each use of the machine.

Matt jumps forward in longer and longer leaps. In his first substantial leap, he finds

himself in a very postmodern world — the moral dissolution of decadence has been amended by adherence to faith. Surprisingly, not Islam, but Christianity.

He tries to settle in, but finds that in spite of being accepted, he isn't satisfied. At least Haldeman avoids having an oppression similar to that endured (or depending on how you look at it, not) by Friedell. Oh, did I mention that he's Jewish? Nonpracticing (as we shall see, boy is he ever) but nevertheless as non-Aryan as Herr Friedell. Also a bit of a loser, and somehow it seems a comment on the human condition that the high-technology cyberbook he has contains only pornography. So much for cyberpunk restructurings of the human psyche.

And then he goes on two adventures, of which the other one is the more cosmic. The first one, you see, is that he met a young woman, and she saw him as a person, and not a hookup. They end up travelling forward in time together, taking longer and longer leaps, becoming increasingly unable to control, then even comprehend, what's going on and then . . . it's all a loop.

For all that Haldeman has an understanding of the human condition, he does not seem to want to delve into it, to try to show how first Matt and then Martha (his girl from the Christian century) understand this change. But then, he doesn't go into the really cosmic consequences of his travel. (Like when the biggest thing in *Die Reise mit der Zeitmaschine* was when the Time Traveller was waiting for the room in his house he was in to catch up with the rest of the place.) It's unfortunate.

FALL GUY

Review by Joseph T Major of

THE THREAT

by David Poyer

(St. Martin's Press; 2006, 2007;
ISBN 987-0-312-94854-2; \$7.98)

"A Dan Lenson Novel"

Commander Dan Lenson seems to get into a lot of trouble. This time, he doesn't even have to go to sea.

At the end of our last thrilling episode, *The Command* (2005), Lenson had just averted, at a terrible cost, a cobalt-bombing of Israel. Yes. (The war in *On the Beach* (1957) began with Egypt using cobalt bombs, and presumably Israel would be a target along with its Suez partners.)

But he's not quite a universal hero. He gets an assignment to the National Security Council, with responsibility for the War on Drugs. "Responsibility" in the sense, apparently, that if anything goes wrong, it's his fault.

The portrayal of a nightmarish bureaucracy where endless levels of management ensure that nothing gets done, the answer for which is yet another level of management, sounds straight out of *Dilbert*. But it gets worse.

Lenson begins investigating a peculiar incident — the shipping of empty shipping containers back and forth from Mexico. Those might contain smuggled drugs. It turns out that a shipment contains radioactive cesium (and

Lenson is somewhat sensitive to this). He alerts authorities, jumping the official lines of communication. And after the dramatic capture (taking place at the UPS hub here in Louisville) he — can't take credit, since he was acting outside his authority!

But that wins him a more sensitive if less enjoyable task, as keeper of "The Football" — the nuclear command codes. Like most military men, he has little love for the current president, and contrawise. (The scene where the President and his escorts, doing a "rallying the troops" mission, jump the chow line, gives one an idea of the sensitivity of the President and his advisors.) Oh, there's nothing to do with another draft-escaping president, President De Bari lost two fingers while working as a fireman, and his wife is not doing government work. However there is the incident in Russia where Lenson's wife is briefing the President late at night. Or "briefing" him.

All which makes Dan feel more than a little used. And then there comes the dramatic climax . . .

The idea that the hero, with the glory-light, can merely enter a situation and all opposing forces will fade away, or crumble at the first sign of a duel, is reassuring. Not very plausible, but reassuring. What happens in this book is that Lenson finds himself being used, a treatment that puts his self-esteem to the test. The crucial element is not so much the portrayal of the hero, but the portrayal of those who don't value his values, seeking instead to use them as a means of achieving their ends. The greatest heroism is not necessarily won in great smashing battles against numerically superior enemies who are annihilated at great cost. Sometimes it's done with a pistol (it was a bomb-disposal method).

WILL MRS. HEATH GO TO HELL?

Review by Joseph T Major of

CAMELOT AND THE CULTURAL REVOLUTION:

How the Assassination of John F. Kennedy Shattered American Liberalism

by James Piereson

(Encounter Books; 2007;

ISBN 987-1-59403-188-5; \$25.95)

In a book with the noticeable title (noticeable by me, anyhow) of *Will Mrs. Major Go to Hell?* (1969), Aloïse Buckley Heath (sister of William F., and much of the book was originally published in *National Review*) recounted how her daughter Janet had dramatically announced her solution to the Kennedy Assassination: "Senator Goldwater shot him." [*Will Mrs. Major Go to Hell?*, Page 11]

People older and wiser than Janet Heath believed it, too. But they said it like it was such a negative thing. *Camelot and the Cultural Revolution* describes how the ramifications of a single event led to a massive and radical change of American politics.

Already in the fifties, and then even more so when Jack got elected, American Liberalism

was an active, forward-thinking, optimistic movement. It dominated intellectual and political culture alike, having routed the Old Right and marginalized the Communists. It was forward-looking; the Couéist mantra, "Every day in every way I am getting better and better," was a fact of life for them.

Yet by the end of the decade they had turned against the society and politics they had controlled, and this rejection has by now become institutionalized. Why is this?

Piereson argues that they believed their own propaganda, in effect. There were real enemies, the atrociously bigoted and despotic racists of the South and their somewhat-less offensive associates of other parts of the country.

History taught them that those who struck against the government were of their enemies; i.e., John Wilkes Booth, who somehow believed that the South would rise again from Ape Lincoln's blood. One point Piereson touches on is the hysterical, if not outright grotesque, effort by each community on the route of the funeral train to top its predecessor in mourning Lincoln; see also Andrew Ferguson's *Land of Lincoln* (2007; reviewed in *Alexiad* V. 6 #3).

Therefore when John F. Kennedy was killed, it had to have been one of those people.

And when it looked as if it hadn't been, but one of those on the right side of history, if in a bit of a hurry, that couldn't be credible. It had to be a coverup for the real thing.

The results were spread over a number of fields of thought. Conspiracism became institutionalized. What began with Mark Lane and his ilk has now become the mainstream of intellectual activity, with Chomsky, Walt & Mearsheimer, Meissan, and their ilk not only accepted but promoted. Piereson takes for granted the refutations in Gerald Posner's *Case Closed* (1993) [not having available Vincent Bugliosi's *Reclaiming History* (2007; reviewed in *Alexiad* V. 6 #3)] the way that G. Edward White took for granted the complicity of his topic when writing *Alger Hiss's Looking-Glass Wars* (2004; reviewed in *Alexiad* V. 3 #2). (Incidentally, Posner is bringing out a new edition of *Case Closed*.)

The essential depravity of American society became the accepted view. The white AmeriKKkan ways that had struck down JFK and ended their beautiful time were utterly evil and had to be expunged and obliterated.

In short, the Vital Center turned on the country, accepting the views and methodologies of its opposition. Conspiracy theories had heretofore been the provenance of the hopelessly reactionary (i.e., the obsessive cryptographer in John T. Sladek's *The Müller-Fokker Effect* (1974)) but now they showed a proper depth of sophistication. And the New Left had rejected the Establishment, which responded by thoroughly capitulating both physically and intellectually.

The symbol of the change was the concept of "Camelot", the idea of the Thousand Days as some glorious high water of style, beauty, and liberalism that was destroyed by this ugly upsurge of innate depravity. They didn't see it like that at the time, you know. Choosing

Camelot (stripped of its religious overtones, but then the original play did too) led to another difference; it meant that it was all downhill from there. every day in every way things were getting worse and worse.

Was the assassination of JFK quite as mind-altering as Piereson has it? The beginnings of this opposition predate that dreadful day in November. The Port Huron Statement was issued on June 5, 1962. More inchoately, there were expressions of national malaise ranging from the Beat Generation to the Men in Gray Flannel Suits prevalent in the Fifties.

Perhaps it was more a crystallization seed — not powerful of itself, but triggering a mental realignment. There was something abhorrent, blasphemous, squamous, rugose, and cthonian about the Best and the Brightest who under the benevolent leadership of JFK had created the doctrines of bearing any burden and paying any price, under his successors denouncing the Vietnam War, groveling to their juniors, and vigorously presenting themselves as so hip and withit. The Ivy Leaguers were too important and virtuous to work under the leadership of a graduate of Southwest Texas State Teachers College.

(Aloïse explained that if she voted for Lyndon Johnson it would be a mortal sin, because she was informed; but that it might not be for their neighbor Mrs. Major, because of her ignorance. This did not stop them singing:

Tommy's mother went to Hell
On the Donkey ticket
Now she knows a Johnson vote
Is very, very wicked!

— Aloïse Buckley Heath, *Will Mrs. Major Go to Hell?*, Page 257

My father was, and a second cousin of mine is, known as "Tommy Major". My grandmother died in March of 1965, so might have voted, but neither she nor my cousin's mother (who was a Republican poll watcher) lived in Connecticut, where the Heaths did.)

GOTHS

Review by Joseph T Major of
9 AGOSTO 378: Il Giorno dei Barbari
per Alessandro Barbero:

THE DAY OF THE BARBARIANS:
The Battle That Led to the Fall of the Roman Empire

Translated by John Cullen
(Walker & Company; 2005, 2007;
ISBN 987-0-8072-1571-5; \$25.95)

In the movie *The Last Legion* (2007), Kevin McKidd, whom you all remember fondly as Lucius Vorenus, soldier of *Rome* (2005-2007), played Wulfila, a Gothic chieftain. In a sense, this parallels what actually happened.

One of the reasons advanced by Arther Ferrill in his *The Fall of the Roman Empire: The Military Explanation* (1986) for the title topic was the barbarization of the army; the Imperial government had less of its own army and more

of hired warbands of barbarians. Why did they need to fill the ranks that way?

Barbero recounts the long and ugly story of incompetence, corruption, savagery, cruelty, and greed that led to the Battle of Adrianople, the Decisive Battle of the World that you've never heard of. The Roman system had adapted and evolved over the years; the infantryman was not the pilum and gladius legionary like Vorenus, but one with a spear, fighting in phalanx, more like the triarii who had been or the men-at-arms to come. He was accompanied by a powerful cavalry arm, heavy cavalry much like their Gothic foes, the way that the legions had adopted their enemies' weapons when proven effective.

Their leadership was less so. The Empire had survived, somehow, the chaotic years after Caracalla when if a decurion would take two men out to cut wood, they would hail him as Emperor, demand a donative, and kill him when he couldn't pay . . . if it wasn't that bad it was a period when every commander seemed to be in line for the purple, and Rome eroded its resources in fighting itself. The best that can be said of Valens and Valentinian was that they were undistinguished.

Their subordinates were the ones who betrayed the Tervingi, one of the groups that would come to be known under the general term of "Goths". Seeing how the Roman officials responsible for giving the Tervingi aid worked helps one understand where Indian Agents came from. However, their *Genu Vulneratum* ("Wounded Knee") was where they got theirs back!

The Tervingi and other Gothic groups moved into poorly-garrisoned Thrace and began expropriating from the countryside. They couldn't take cities, but they could make them unlivable. Eventually Valens had to Do Something. So he did.

The Goths, under a chief named Fritigern, were outside the city of Adrianople. Valens had scraped up all the troops he could get, some twenty thousand. But his nephew Gratian was coming with reinforcements. This was not to be tolerated, and Valens decided to attack and get all the glory for himself, "Valens Gothicus Maximus, Restitutor Republicae" on the coins.

The sad chronicle of incompetence continued. The attacks of the cavalry and the infantry were uncoordinated; the Roman cavalry was driven off and the infantry was destroyed. Valens disappeared; since the best report of his death was that the Goths burned a house down around him, there'd be no return from Avalon for him.

The story concludes with the efforts at recovery made by Theodoric, appointed successor to Valens. His results were mixed; while he recovered the situation there for the moment, to do so he did things that undermined the long-term stability of the empire. The most significant one was the expansion of the *foederati* system. While the army had been increasingly enlisting barbarians, they had been taken into established, disciplined Roman army units. Now, the order of battle would include warbands of various barbarians, under their own

leaders. The Lucii Voreni and Gaii Philippi who would have put them in order were dead on the field of Adrianople. This methodology turned out to be a less than reliable way of forming a reliable army.

Barbero puts proper stress on the religious context of the battle. The empire itself, as well as their opponents, were all nominally Christians of one creed or another, though all had non-Christian elements too. For example, before the battle, Fritigern sent a priest to open negotiations with Valens.

Similarly, he discusses the sources. As with so much of the ancient era, there is one principal source; in this case, the works of Ammianus Marcellus (the translator has kindly provided a listing of English translations for your own use). This is naturally bolstered by other sources, literary and other.

While this book is hardly detailed, it is a decent introduction to this Decisive Battle of the World that you've never heard of. Vale.

These were the events of the battle that took place five days before the Ides of August, in the year 1131 of the City, in the consulship of Imp. Caesar Valens Augustus for the sixth time and Imp. Caesar Valentinianus Augustus for the second time.

VIEW TO A BOOSTING

Review by Joseph T Major of
AGENT ZIGZAG:

A True Story of Nazi Espionage, Love, and Betrayal

by Ben Macintyre
(Harmony Books; 2007;
ISBN 987-0-307-35340-5; \$25.95)

"I want to diversify," Fleming said, and took a drag from his handmade cigaret, one of the sixty a day from Morland that he consumed, before continuing. "I want to start a franchise. Amis can fill out the plot. The idea is that this bank robber goes to Hungary to do a heist and gets in the nick, where Smersh recruits him to infiltrate Britain. But when he arrives, he goes over and becomes a double agent. I want to have a scene where he offers to assassinate Stalin himself — we can have Bond, as a young fellah, training with him, that's the tie in."

Later on he said to the health-club operator, "Eddie, they just didn't buy it. Damn if I know why, my good stuff has a basis in reality. Is Dusko still coming next week?"

What's missing in the Eddie Chapman story, I think, is the betrayal. According to the current thesis of espionage novels, the greatest threat to the highly successful but distrusted double agent should be his own people, who are more eager than the enemy to bump him off. They should chase him across several nations, with copious concurrent gunfights, never mind such trivialities as customs posts or ammunition supplies, until the final blazing conclusion . . .

But Edward Arnold Chapman was more

Scott Scurlock than Jason Bourne. Or perhaps one of the Timsons, Horace Rumpole's security; Eddie was a safeblower in London in the thirties. As war loomed, he decided to expand into the outskirts, and found himself in the nick in Jersey. Then he got sprung by an unusual set of rescuers.

The Abwehr was profoundly satisfied with the potential of this recruit. He was already at odds with British law and order anyhow. And so they trained him and prepared him, until they infiltrated him, with orders to bomb aircraft-manufacturing plants.

No self-respecting spy novel would have its hero, or even its villain, be captured practically on the spot by a policeman who knew him from their military service. Reality doesn't have to adhere to the standards of fiction.

They knew he was coming, of course, and found they didn't even have to induce him to turn. Like Juan Pujol Garcia (GARBO), Chapman had decided to be a double agent. (By way of contrast, Dushan M. "Dusko" Popov (TRICYCLE) had been a "dangle", a British agent sent to offer himself to the Germans.)

The most amazing part of his subsequent career was that he was exfiltrated and infiltrated again! He was trusted to go back to Germany; they didn't think he would blow the entire plan. (Compared to that, his offer to do a von dem Bussche style suicide bombing to eliminate Hitler sounds almost trivial.)

Personal life had a problem. Chapman had a girl in Britain, a girl in France, and a girl in Norway. That's the sort of behavior that gets a bloke in trouble.

And then the war was over. Would Chapman go back to blowing safes? There was rightly some concern about that. All the same, the security services did cover for him when he got into some dubious scrapes, albeit nothing like he had done before the war, and he did seem to have quit more aggressive expropriations. Finally, he retired to Ireland, where he set up a health club. Oddly successful, strangely honest, Edward Arnold Chapman died in 1997.

As for "blowing the gaff" — Chapman wrote, or perhaps I should say authored, a book (*The Eddie Chapman Story* (1954)) or two (*The Real Eddie Chapman Story*, also titled *Triple Cross* (1966)) about his experiences. He became entangled in the tentacles of the Official Secrets Act. (I suppose Harry Harrison may have read the first book before beginning to recount the wild career of "Slippery Jim" DiGriz, the Stainless Steel Rat ["The Stainless Steel Rat", *Astounding* August 1957 and on from there].) Yet, until the publication of *The Double-Cross System in the War of 1939-45* (1972) he was thought to be an isolated case.

In the end, Chapman proved to be loyal to his buddies. He looked after people ranging from the other robber taken with him (whose war had been a lot less pleasant) to his German control officer. He looked after his country, the odd way that criminals will do (i.e., the lags who beat up William "Lord Haw-Haw" Joyce in prison). Of all the women he romanced, the one he married was the mother of his child.

The afterword to the American edition recounts how several minor characters in the Chapman story turned up after the British edition was published. They had their own insights to offer. Macintyre was given tapes of an interview with Chapman.

And now the book is being made into a movie by Tom Hanks. It may even be better than "Triple Cross" (1966), the movie version of his career which Chapman disliked.

<http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0061647/>

(And speaking of ironies: released in the U.S. on **the same day** was Nicholas Booth's *Zigzag: The Incredible Wartime Exploits of Double Agent Eddie Chapman* (Arcade Publishing; 2007; ISBN 978-1559708609; \$26.99). It seems to have more about Chapman's career at blowing safes.)

THE SONS OF HERAKLES

Review by Joseph T Major of
300

(Warner Brothers; Directed by Zack Snyder; Screenplay by Zack Snyder, Kurt Johnstad, and Michael B. Gordon; based on a graphic novel by Frank Miller and Lynn Varley; 2007; DVD from Warner Home Video; 2007; \$34.98)

THE – SONS – OF – HER-CU-LEEES!

The mighty sons of Hercules once thundered through the years,
These men of steel could never feel
The curse of a coward's fears.

The mighty sons of Hercules were men
as men should be,
They burned with dreams, then turned
their dreams

Into history.
A hundred giants brave and bold, they
ruled the world in days of old.

The mighty sons of Hercules were men
as men should be,
They took the world and shook the
world,

The sons of Hercules.
The mighty sons of Hercules once
thundered through the years,
These men of steel could never feel
The curse of a coward's fears.

The mighty sons of Hercules were men
as men should be,
They burned with dreams, then turned
their dreams

Into history!

— Opening theme song, "The Sons of Hercules"

In my misspent youth, there was a syndicated television show called "The Sons of Hercules". It consisted of Italian so-called "sword and sandal" movies, mostly featuring a character called in the original "Maciste", who would go to a town ruled by a wicked king (who perhaps might have just overthrown a good one), heave his flunkies around, finally dispose of the king, and then on to the next one. Since Maciste was created on the fly, as it were, there

was even less need for historical fidelity than in say *Xena: Warrior Princess*, much less continuity. The films were cut and shown in two hour-long episodes. Fortunately for the viewer with an irregular schedule, because of the lengths of these films, the second episode was filled out with copious recaps of the first, to the point where one need not have seen the first part at all. ("Maciste" means "Rocky". Did Sylvester Stallone see these?)

Silly, indeed. It was easy enough to mock the inadequate acting, the silly costuming (slave girls doing mine labor in nice clean long dresses and fancy hairdos requiring enough hairspray to get into a Bill Rotsler movie and making helmets superfluous). Enough so that it was possible to not notice their evocation of values, of loyalty, decency, justice; of doing the right thing even if it does not lead to instant reward.

Sometimes the reward is not direct.

As the "market" for comic books has grown up, the product has evolved. Fans speak lovingly of the Golden Age and the Silver Age; nowadays, though, is when real stories are the product of this medium. As with Frank Miller, who got a reputation reworking Batman, in *The Dark Knight Returns* (1986). But he'd seen *The 300 Spartans* (1962) and wanted to do the story in his own medium.

The reader and viewer should recall that this is not the actual historical story. The framing story (you remember framing stories: "I had this story from one who had no business to tell it to me, or to any other. ""?) is that Dilios is stoking the old morale before Plataia by telling the boys a story of heroism. What we have is what they wanted to believe (well, a modern interpretation), so we have the Spartans fighting like the figures on pottery, instead of in armor. (Almost like the figures on pottery, but omitting the speedos would have been grounds for a NC-17 rating.) Or the Persians as grotesques, with insanely improbable war animals (I admit the mad attack rhinoceros would be fun, for some values of fun), and the Xerxes as a human gargoyle. Small wonder that the Iranian government has added to its list of insanities the declaration that the whole Persian War never took place, that the Spartans executed Leonidas for his belligerence and sent his head to Khšayarša as tribute.

Well, you know what they say: "When the legend becomes fact, print the legend." Or draw it, or film it.

This legend begins with the harshness of Spartan upbringing (in the scene where he's getting beaten up, Young Leonidas is played by Snyder's son) and segues to the Persian ultimatum. With its historic answer — I don't think the Persian emissary would be a Nubian with enough piercings to whistle in a strong wind (and, as we shall see, Xerxes is even worse) — but aside from that it seems all right. One reviewer made an invidious comment about Leonidas being dominated by his wife, Gorgo, because he looked at her before kicking the emissary down the well, but that was from seeing the trailer. In the movie he looked around at everyone first. Gorgo represented

them all. Remember, “This . . . is . . . **Spaaartaaa!**”

The modern movie-writing field has to set the protagonist in opposition to his superiors; i.e., Sean Connery always had the full support of M and the gang but Pierce Brosnan was having to get the Bond supervillain before the Firm got him. And so, after a dramatic climb to the top of a spire for a consultation with the higher forces, Leonidas finds himself on the outs with the Gerousia regarding a campaign. This doesn't mean he can't go out for a little walk with his 300-man bodyguard.

(The way they filmed the sybil doing that remarkably liquid dance was to have the actress dance underwater. One has to suffer for art.)

And so, the bodyguard set off for its little walk. The moving scene where Leonidas bids farewell to his wife and son, set against a profoundly stormy background (As George VI said to John Piper: “You seem to have bad luck with your weather.”), is counterpointed by the internal intrigue subplot, which kicks off right away, with Theron making his first move on Gorgo.

The Spartans march north and block the Hot Gates (ΘΕΡΜΟΠΥΛΑΙ), and then the fighting begins. The scene where the Persian envoy demands that the way be opened, and Stelios disarms him needs only a “Is there anyone in this rout with authority to treat with me? Or indeed with wit to understand me? Not thou at least! . . . Why, any brigand of the hills can show as good a following!” to be perfect. Alas, the *Red Book of the Westmarch* was not known in Greece then.

Then the fighting begins. This is not for the queasy, and we have bloodshed similar to that found in *Rome*. Recall that this is the story Dilios is telling; the Spartans as they remembered with advantages, not as it took place. (If the real fighting were as is shown here, Decius Caecilius Metellus's strictures on the military inadequacies of Greeklings would have been justified.)

The other betrayal scene is set up here too, with the presence of Ephialtes, a somehow preserved deformed child, who has grown up to look like a veritable Frankenstein-movie Igor. He offers to fight; Leonidas points out that he can't stand in the phalanx but they do need support troops, and Ephialtes throws a tantrum and leaves. Leonidas will never get into the Starship Troopers at that rate.

After storms of arrows, fired at a rate that would have gratified Good King Harry (a fellow who looked either like Lord Olivier or Kenneth Branagh) though rather lacking in penetration, and the giving of a bath to a number of Medes (their equipment is realistic, unlike that of the loincloth, cloak, helmet, and shield clad Sons of Herakles), there is a pause. Shortly thereafter a giant many-legged throne comes up the road. As it gets closer we see its passenger, an epicene multiply-pierced basketball player. No, it's not Dennis Rodman.

Leonidas goes out alone to meet him. The Xerxes explains that they're all reasonable people around here, and Leonidas would make a great Satrap of Hellas. Leonidas politely

demurs; the King of Kings threatens, and his Spartan colleague softly utters defiance.

Balked, Xerxes sends in the Immortals. I didn't think they dressed like ninja warriors, but they still can't beat the Spartans. So they send in the Big Guy. The Big Guy looks like he's been living on a diet of steroids since before the Siege of Troy. The Big Guy is as much danger to his own side as he is to the enemy. Lucius Vorenius (“Lukios Ouorenos”? Never mind) would have known what to do, and Leonidas has a harder time achieving the same end.

After the not so immortal Immortals come the mad attack rhinoceros, the elephants, and more arrow fodder. And the naphtha bombs. The naphtha guys find out there's a reason not to put the stockpile within throwing range of the enemy lines. (I could do most of the other things but I had a hard time finding Mad Attack Rhinoceros on the WRG army lists. Oh Hades: as impetuous “Irregular A” 2-horse scythed light chariot with 1 P.)

At this point Ephialtes finally gets to the Persian camp. From the way he looks now that we can see him in the light, he doesn't seem to have been able to get there any faster. Interrupting some standard-issue Erich von Stroheim or D. W. Griffith debauchery (remember, the Mountain Girl in “Intolerance” is an ancestor of Xena), he offers to lead the Persians behind the Spartan lines. While the girls start embracing Ephialtes's hump (in case you're interested, this is in *Candy*), Xerxes graciously agrees. And speaking of venery, back on the home front, Theron hits on Gorgo.

Ephialtes's treachery works. While the Spartans are patching up their wounds, one of the other Greeks comes up and announces that their position has been turned. Leonidas dismisses the others, sends off the wounded and one-eyed Dilios (giving Dilios a braid of his hair as a memorial) with them so there will be someone to tell the story, and then proceeds to inspire the troops. “**Tonight we dine in Hell!**” (It's not winter. Therefore, Persephone is off seeing her mother, and Hades is, like most married men thrown on their own culinary resources, living on pot pies, microwave pizza, and TV dinners. Small wonder Leonidas isn't thrilled about sharing a meal with him.)

In Sparta, Gorgo makes one last plea to mobilize, calling eloquently in the name of their children, of liberty, of patriotism, and everything dear to the Spartan character, to mobilize the army and march north to fight the Xerxes while there's anything left to fight. Theron responds by accusing her of adultery. She gets ejected — well, almost, for she grabs a sword and stabs him in someplace extremely painful. Particularly when the Persian coins start trickling out on the floor. (Oh, the other painful, too.)

The survivors of the 300 have formed a testudo in the pass, and the Persians have come forward. Xerxes sends an envoy to make one last appeal to reason, offering Leonidas the overlordship of all Greece, if only he will lay down his arms and bow to the King of Kings. He does so. To let another man skewer the envoy. While the Persian archers start shooting

and the Immortals close in a gory battle, Leonidas throws his spear one last time, proving to Xerxes that he really shouldn't get too close to the front lines.

And then Leonidas stands there, dying amid the dead, thinking of his wife . . . as more arrows shower down on him. Blackness.

Gorgo has gone out alone to wait for news. Dilios comes to her. Nothing need be said. He hands her the last relic of Leonidas, and as her son comes to receive the memorial for the future, Dilios precedes on into the polis to tell the story. As others said:

. . . How much better it has been than lounging in comfort at home — what tales you would have for the boy but oh what a price to pay — to forfeit the sight of your dear dear face . . .

— last letter of Robert F. Scott

Take care of my little boy. If the country should be saved, I may make for him a splendid fortune; but if the country be lost and I should perish, he will have nothing but the proud recollection that he is the son of a man who died for his country.

— last letter of William Barret Travis

And then, to rub in a point that won't quite be made for a few years to come, the screen fills with the bodies, Leonidas's in a crucifix pose. (After the real battle the Persians cut off his head and put it on a stake.)

Then, the scene shifts to the field of Plataea. The entire Spartan army has come, ten thousand men and thirty thousand other Greeks. Dilios speaks to the Spartans of the sacrifice of their brothers, of the world of freedom and glory they preserved, and then the charge begins.

Myths tell us what a society wants to believe about itself. The language of “liberty” and “freedom” the characters use can be faulted for its limits. The response offered to it, a myth that exalts the “Other” and reduces the self to nothing, perforce puts a void at its center. Refusing “something” because there are perspectives that differ with it, and accepting “nothing” in its place, leaves the acceptor open to the first firm believer in trash that comes along. Hence all the negative beliefs that have filled in the enlightened culture.

Even shoddy sword-and-sandal movies that believed in “something”, no matter how sloppily they expressed it, are better than that. And small wonder that this movie, having “something”, no matter how comic-bookish, has touched something in people's souls.

As Dilios puts it, “We Spartans have descended from Hercules himself.”

Sons of Hercules! They are there when the need arrives

There to show that might and right still survive!

On land or on the sea as long as there is need;

There'll be Sons of Hercules!

There'll be Sons of Hercules!
— Closing theme song, "The Sons of Hercules"

MOONSTRUCK

by Edward Lerner
(Baen; 2003, 2005, 2007;
ISBN 978-1416521119; \$7.99)
Review by Lisa Major

While at Archon I chanced to encounter author Edward Lerner and bought his paperback book *Moonstruck* after learning it was a stand alone hard SF with no vampires. For my eight dollars I got a book which kept my interest until the end. It's a first contact novel. The aliens are convincingly described. They're perhaps a shade too human in their psychology but truly alien aliens wouldn't probably be interesting as book characters. I loved the swampbeasts. I wish I'd known about it when it was eligible for a Hugo. So many books, so little time. Think *Independence Day* without the silly mistakes.

CASPIAN HORSES

by Lisa

For the Labor Day weekend we made a special trip to the horse park to see a rare breed called the Caspians. The Caspian is such an old breed that they may have contributed to the makeup of the Arabian. DNA analysis has confirmed that they are the same breed which pulled the chariots of Darius as he fought against Alexander the Great. They were almost extinct when American Louise Firouz found the last survivors in the wild. For a time the Shah helped with her struggle to preserve these historic animals but when the Shah went into exile the Caspian connection to him put them in extreme disfavor with the revolutionary government. Fortunately Firouz had previously sent a small group from Iran. The ones left in Iran were confiscated and sold as pack or meat animals.

The Caspians are surprisingly small but make good mounts for children. They look something like small Arabians. They seldom get above twelve hands. Their temperament can best be judged by the way a pair of newly caught Caspians came up to us and allowed us to pet them, something I wouldn't try with a strange Thoroughbred.

GATO DEL SOL

1979-2007
by Lisa

Gato Del Sol, 1982 Kentucky Derby winner, was euthanized due to frailties of old age. He was 28. His name meant Cat of the Sun and he was a son of champion Cougar II. After the Derby he never again attained the level that enabled him to win the Derby. He did not do well at stud here so his owner, Arthur Hancock, sold him to Germany but he did no better there. After champion Exceller met a sordid fate in a European slaughterhouse, Hancock's wife persuaded him to buy back Gato Del Sol. They bought the horse for \$5500 but it cost more than \$12,000 to ship him back. He spent his last few

years at Stone Farm.

KENTUCKY FUTURITY 2007

Race report by Lisa Major



We got to see a thrilling race in which Donato Hanover trotted home in a record-equating victory. It was the colt's 19th straight victory, making his total better than that of world famous Cigar, who notched 16 straight wins before being beaten. Donato has only lost one race. If he wins his next race his record will match Man o'War's. I will probably not get to see him again. Unfortunately the colt skipped the Yonkers Trot, won in his absence by Green Day, who finished third in the Futurity.

JOHN HENRY

March 9, 1975 — October 8, 2007
by Lisa



Saturday, October 6 at the Horse Park John Henry was clearly ill. I watched him drink water for several long minutes and a brief conversation with staff was not optimistic. Tuesday morning Joe called from work and told me that he had been euthanized the day before. I sat down hard and remembered other times — John dancing around the ring in pursuit of his handler and barely in control, John rearing up and lashing out like a much younger stallion.

When we started going to the Horse Park John had already been there at least ten years. Other horses came and went but John was a constant, the king of the champions, even when the stallion Cigar arrived, always my favorite even if the price of touching him would have been to get thoroughly stomped. He was always to be treated with very cautious respect, was John.

Now he is no longer a constant. The Horse Park will never be the same again. I had hoped

to see him again on my birthday outing, now the odds are that his stall will be empty. Even if they have another champion to put in his stall, the Horse Park will not be the same without nasty, ill-tempered, indomitable little John Henry.

MOONPIE:

Biography of an Out-of-this-world Snack

by David Magee
(Jefferson Press; 2006;
ISBN 978-0971897489; \$19.95)
Review by Johnny Carruthers

I knew this was going to be an interesting book when it opened with the following quote from Steve Almond's *Candyfreak*:

We may not understand why we freak.
We may have no conscious control over our allegiances. But they arise from our most sacred fears and desires and, as such, they represent the truest expression of our selves.

When I saw that quote, I knew that David Magee had it. The Freak. I don't know what else to call it. I'm not even sure if I can explain it. It might be like jazz; if you have to ask, you'll never understand. All I know is that Steve Almond has it. I probably have it, to some degree. And David Magee definitely has it.

Magee begins his book with a few stories from his own childhood about the MoonPie, and how it became a particularly favorite snack for him. And throughout the book, he weaves memories from other people as to how it became one of their snack favorites as well.

As the title suggests, MoonPie is a history of what some might call the quintessential Southern snack; the single product of Chattanooga Bakery. The bakery itself began about a century ago as a spin-off of a flour mill in Chattanooga, as a way to use leftover flour. The MoonPie itself didn't come along until 1917.

As the story goes, the MoonPie was invented by Earl Mitchell, a salesman for Chattanooga Bakery. He was unable to sell very much of any of the other snacks that the bakery then made with stores in rural mining areas. So, in one town, he asked the miners what sort of snack they did want to eat on their breaks. What they wanted was something bigger and more substantial than anything Chattanooga Bakery was then making. (As the story goes, one miner said that he wanted something as big and as round as the moon.)

When Mitchell returned to Chattanooga, he noticed some bakery workers dipping graham cookies into marshmallow, and hit upon the idea of sandwiching marshmallow between two graham cookies, and dipping the resulting sandwich in chocolate. And so the MoonPie was born. Mitchell took samples back to that small mining town. They were so well received that Chattanooga Bakery's other salesmen began taking the MoonPie with them And so a southern icon was born.

Magee follows the MoonPie's history, as it eventually becomes the sole product of Chattanooga Bakery (a little something called World War II was at least partially responsible for that), to the introduction of the Double Decker MoonPie in the 1960s (it fits better in snack vending machines), to the introduction of the Mini-MoonPie in the 1990s.

And in today's world of mega-conglomerates, Chattanooga Bakery is indeed a rarity. It has remained a family-owned operation, which is now being run by the third generation of the same family. It is also a rarity in that it does virtually no advertising. (They do have a website, and that may be the extent of what could be considered advertising.) Chattanooga Bakery prefers to spend its money on producing the MoonPie and improving product quality, relying on word of mouth to attract new and repeat customers. Or to use one of the chapter titles in the book, Chattanooga Bakery prefers to "Under Promote, Over Deliver."

Magee was even able to take a rare tour through Chattanooga Bakery, thanks to one of his neighbors (a member of the aforementioned family that owns the place). He drew comparisons with some of the tours that Steve Almond took as research for *Candyfreak*, and emphasized again the big difference — that the MoonPie is Chattanooga Bakery's sole product (albeit in a variety of forms).

There is a plethora of MoonPie trivia that weaves its way through the pages of MoonPie. Never having attended a Mardi Gras parade anywhere, I didn't realize that at Mardi Gras parades in Mobile, Alabama, MoonPies are as popular a throw from the floats as beads are in New Orleans. (Mobile also has a law which states that no knock-off versions of the MoonPie are allowed. People are just going to ignore those, and the city doesn't want to deal with the cleanup.) In fact, MoonPies are popular at Mardi Gras celebrations through the entire Gulf coast, so much that afterward, a number of newspapers run recipes to help people deal with the overflow.

I don't know if they came from any of those newspapers, but the book does contain several recipes using MoonPies. I will have to admit, they are inspiring me to do a little experimentation of my own. I can think of one or two ideas that are already floating in my head. (Now those are words that for some reason will strike fear in the hearts of some of my friends. Just because I try to violate the laws of physics with the amount of chocolate I add to a batch of brownies . . .)

One last MoonPie trivium. During his research on the book, Magee asked Sam Campbell IV, the current president of Chattanooga Bakery, how many MoonPies had been made since they were first produced in 1917. It was only a rough estimate, but Campbell put the figure at somewhere between three and four billion MoonPies.

That's a lot of MoonPies.

by Natalie Angier
(Houghton Mifflin Company, 2007, 293
pp./indexed, \$27.00, ISBN #
139780618242955)
Reviewed by Jim Sullivan

Natalie Angier, the author, is an extremely knowledgeable and capable science writer. In fact, her writing is remarkable! In this reviewer's experience, having read, over the years, numerous books on science, among other subjects, he's never found a more facile, widely educated, writer. Proof of those facts shows up in every chapter, page, paragraph, sentence, phrase, and, yes, word. The author is, simply put-remarkable! Even those readers who normally don't read science or any nonfiction but instead prefer to peruse fiction, poetry, or pure literature are going to find Natalie Angier an enjoyable, inspirational, humorous, exciting book writer.

And her topics, all scientific, such as probabilities, physics, chemistry, biology, geology, and astronomy, are, as described in the subtitle, 'beautiful,' especially as the author explains them for the reader. Each subject's basics are explained briefly-but understandably.

The author writes, "In sum, I'm not sure that knowing about science will turn you into a better citizen, or win you a more challenging job, or prevent the occasional loss of mental faculties culminating in the unfortunate purchase of a pair of white leather pants. I'm not a pragmatist, and I can't make practical arguments of the broccoli and flossing kind. If you're an adult nonscientist, even the most profound midlife crisis is unlikely to turn you into a practicing scientist; and unless you're a scientist, you don't need to know about science. You also don't need to go to museums or listen to Bach or read a single slyly honied Shakespeare sonnet. You don't need to visit a foreign country or hike a desert canyon or go out on a cloudless, moonless night and get drunk on star champagne. How many friends do you need?"

Natalie Angier is a science reporter for *The New York Times*, where she won a Pulitzer Prize for her work. Her writing has also appeared in the *Chicago Tribune*, the *Los Angeles Times*, the *Village Voice*, and other publications. Her earlier books include *Woman: An Intimate Geography* and *The Beauty of the Beastly*. She and her immediate family reside near Washington DC.

Highly recommended.

DARK CHOCOLATE PEANUT M&Ms

Candy Review by Johnny Carruthers

The first time I saw this new M&Ms variation on the shelves, I was not all that surprised. If anything, once I determined that it was indeed a new product, my first thought probably was something like, "Oh . . . I wonder took Mars so long?" Personally, I think the Dark Chocolate Peanut M&Ms were probably inevitable after Mars made the Dark Chocolate M&Ms part of their regular product line.

At first glance, the Dark Chocolate Peanut M&Ms are lumpy, irregular shapes, rather than the regular, even disc shape of both the Dark Chocolate and Milk Chocolate M&Ms. (Or what used to be called "Plain" M&Ms, until some marketing genius decided to get into the act.) That, of course, is because peanuts are irregular and lumpy, and do not come in even, regular shapes.

The Dark Chocolate Peanut M&Ms start with whole roasted peanuts. (At least, I'm assuming that they are roasted.) The peanuts are coated in dark chocolate, and finished with a sugar shell that makes sure that the chocolate "melts in your mouth, not in your hand." (Does M&M/Mars still use that slogan?) And of course, the sugar shells come in a rainbow of colors (just not purple, damn it!)

Peanuts and dark chocolate are a flavor combination that I have always thought worked well together, and to me, the Dark Chocolate M&Ms are a good example of how good a combination they are. Neither flavor dominates your tastebuds; instead, the two blend together harmoniously. The rich sweetness of the dark chocolate provides a contrast to the slight saltiness of the peanuts. As I said, neither flavor overpowers the other — they compliment each other. The sugar shell doesn't contribute anything in the way of flavor; rather, it adds an interesting crunch that provides a minor contrast to the texture of the peanuts.

Like the Dark Chocolate M&Ms, the Dark Chocolate Peanut M&Ms come in a purple bag. The peanut variety is distinguished by a bright yellow stripe across the bag, and that stripe was what originally brought this new product to my attention. Best of all, it does not appear to be a limited edition, so this is something that should be around for a long time to come.

3 MUSKETEERS MINT

Candy Bar Review by Johnny Carruthers

I was a little surprised when I first saw this new candy bar a few weeks ago. Surprised because I would have expected Mars to announce it with at least some advertising fanfare. But as of yet, I have not seen any print or TV advertising for the 3 Musketeers Mint bar.

As the name so readily implies, this is a variation on the 3 Musketeers bar. Inside, the nougat is a peppermint flavor. And surrounding that mint nougat is dark chocolate.

Now, anything with mint and dark chocolate is probably going to be compared to the York Peppermint Pattie. It might be unfair to the other product, but let's face it, it is something of a classic. You could even call it a standard for judging similar candies. Which is what I am doing, come to think of it.

The mint nougat is as fluffy as the chocolate nougat of the original 3 Musketeers bar. And the peppermint is definitely the dominant flavor in this candy bar. It isn't as strong as the peppermint Altoids, but I would have to say that it is probably stronger than the peppermint fondant inside a York Peppermint Pattie. It leaves an aftertaste that lingers for several

minutes after you have consumed the bar. It's not unpleasant, but it is definitely there.

Covering the bar in dark chocolate was definitely a good call. The flavor of milk chocolate would definitely have been overwhelmed by the mint. As it is, the dark chocolate is almost overwhelmed, but manages to hold its own on your tastebuds. And while the mint leaves an aftertaste on the palate, the aftertaste begins before the dark chocolate's flavor has left your mouth.

The only complaint I have about the 3 Musketeers Mint is the size. For some unknown reason, Mars decided to produce it about half the size of the original 3 Musketeers bar, and with two dainty little pieces instead of one big bar. I found that a little irritating, because personally, I would prefer one really good-sized chunk of chocolate and mint. In addition to the full-size bar (and I use the term advisedly), the 3 Musketeers Mint also comes in bags of Minis.

When I reviewed the special version of Snickers that was released in conjunction with Shrek The Third, I mentioned that tinting the nougat of the Milky Way Midnight bar green would be an interesting idea for St. Patrick's Day. I think tinting the nougat of the 3 Musketeers Mint bar green would be an equally interesting marketing idea for St. Patrick's Day.

BUILDING THE PERFECT SURVIVAL KIT

by John D. McCann

(Krause Publications; 2005; ISBN 978-0-87349-967-5; \$12.99)

Reviewed by Rodford Edmiston

We've all been urged multiple times by multiple sources to have one or more emergency kits. These sources usually provide vague guidelines which include such items as three days worth of food and water, sources of light and heat, a medical kit, and so on. Details, though, are left to the individual or group assembling the kit(s).

There are many "survivalist" books and magazine articles out there which purport to provide detailed, item-by-item lists for the perfect kit. Often these will have several lists, with kits for different circumstances. Some of these are reasonable, others outrageous. However, most do not give much explanation of why certain items are included, as opposed to something similar but with distinct differences. Why a knife with this type of blade, rather than that type?

Some of these books and articles actually are very useful for putting together kits. Finding one of these still in print, though, may be difficult, even if the potential kit-builder has already managed to learn which are useful and which could be worse than just figuring things out on their own.

This book is primarily intended to help people put together emergency travel kits of various sizes. These are the such things as the pack you always carry in your vehicle, or the extra package you put in your pack for what you expect to be an uneventful day hike.

The author both enjoys hiking and earns his

living teaching wilderness survival and selling hiking and survival equipment. It is a mark of his honesty that most of the equipment he recommends must be bought from companies besides his own (Survival Resources).

The book starts out with classifying the basics according to category. The author states up front that this is not a how-to survival book. He strongly recommends both study and experience for those seriously interested in wilderness survival.

The kits he assembles range in size from a few fishhooks, self-adhesive bandages, packets of antibiotic ointment and so forth stuffed into an Altoids tin, to something which could not be carried and instead must be packed into a vehicle. (Note that these include subkits in backpacks for walking out, though the recommended procedure if your vehicle is marooned in an isolated area is to stay with or near it, since it is far more noticeable than a person on foot.)

The main value of this book is not just that he reviews various alternatives but explains why a particular brand or model is better than the alternatives. This way, even if the recommended item is no longer available (the book is two years old as this review is written) you can look for equivalent features in a replacement.

A major resource is the multiple appendices in the back. These include contact information for several companies and organizations from which supplies and training can be obtained. Note that some of the URLs are no longer valid, and at least one of the companies seems to have vanished. There are also typos in two of the URLs.

While he does not address supplies for riding out an emergency in the home, his information could definitely help with some aspects of that.

One shortcoming of the author's recommendations is that his kits contain much less than most people would recommend. He focuses on reducing size and weight, sometimes at the expense of capability. His high level of experience means that he can get by with less than most others would need in the same circumstances. Of course, a pack should be light, but it isn't hard to pack more than the bare minimum and discard (or cache) what the immediate circumstances don't require.

Overall, I recommend this book. Just keep in mind the shortcomings given above.

Archon 31/TuckerCon/NASFiC 2007

Con Report by Lisa and Joseph Major

Joe and I spent an enjoyable weekend at Archon, though the real highlight of the weekend came when Joe's niece Sarah gave birth to her son. Joe spent most of Sunday night calling relatives and letting them know the good news. I got to meet two of the people I met on the AbsoluteWrite board. Larry Smith sold several of *Heinlein's Children* but we still have a slight trade deficit with him. All too soon the moment of packing up came. We bundled our things up.

— Lisa

Wednesday, August 1, 2007 Louisville — Henderson, KY

Even though Interstate 64 was now reopened to traffic, I thought that morning Louisville traffic was not something to enjoy traversing. With this in mind, we did most of the loading of the car Tuesday night. At noon, I loaded most of the rest of the things, and did the final loading before taking off. **Grant** had been informed of our availability, so there was that.

After getting money at the ATM, I picked up Lisa at the library and we were off. The afternoon traffic was not so bad, and we got to our dinner stop at Corydon without trouble. Going on to Henderson was easy enough, and we got there to have a long talk with Lisa's father and stepmother about our lives.

And so to bed.
138.4 miles driven

Thursday, August 2, 2007 Henderson — Collinsville, IL

Gil and Jean understandably did not want to see us go but we said our farewells (we would be seeing them again next month, but that's another story) and were off. We stopped in Evansville at the Lowe's for an attempt at seeing my nephew, Sarah's brother David, but he would not come in to work until ten, and we had to be on our way.

It was interesting seeing the classic cars driving the other way, towards the Classic Car Show in Louisville. The Illinois prairie was thriving and the view was very nice.

I had maps showing the way to Collinsville but the convention center was not the easiest to find. Though, strangely, it was possible to park in front of it. We went in, found our way to the registration line, and settled down to wait.

We upgraded our registration to Attending, encountering **David Herrington** while waiting in line, I got my "Author" ribbon, and we went to the dealers room to find out where we would be staying. **Larry Ullery** got our payment, **Leigh Kimmel** had our keys, and we began a stack of books with Larry Smith. We ran into **Taras Wolansky** in the lobby, where made his usual invidious comment. And then, there was this guy who looked like he'd tried to stifle a sneeze and it came out whatever way it could; **Christopher Garcia**.

The signing was a bit of a flop. No one could connect the name with the book. Oh well. I did reconnect with an old name, **Jack McDevitt**, and find a new one, my partner at the signing, **Allison Stein**.

There wasn't much else to do that day, so we went to the Comfort Inn, got our things loaded, and met our other roommate, **Gary Kitchen**, a friend of Dave's. Dinner at the Ponderosa, where we ran into Lee Muncy from NOTA, the local S.F. club, and his family, and then back to the Comfort Inn to allocate space, which entailed a trip to Wal-Mart for pads, pillows, and blankets with which to settle in for the night.

And so to bed.
200.3 miles driven

Friday, August 3, 2007 Collinsville

Over to the convention center early in the morning, and we went to get various things. Fore xample, I had to pick up the two boxes of copies of *Heinlein's Children* that had been shipped there. (George Price had not been well.)

The center had easily accessible rooms and the con managed to stick to the handed-out schedule, at least as far as the items I went to.

John Dalmas would have done better with a Kaffeeklatsch of his own. No matter what the ostensible topic of the panel was, he talked about his own books. Not that he didn't have anything to say; his explanation of his presentation of a certain science of modern mental health in his books cleared up some matters, for example. But he should have stuck to topic.

There were several panels on Bob Tucker. Well, that was the idea, it was called "TuckerCon". If it weren't for the fact that at the one I got to, the audience was about the same size as the panel . . . The attendees had no sense of history.

I did get to see John G. Henry, and one of the things he had was the cover proofs for the forthcoming third book in the *Lost Fleet* series, *The Lost Fleet: Courageous* (Ace, December 2007; \$7.99), sequel to *The Lost Fleet: Dauntless* (2006) and *The Lost Fleet: Fearless* (2007) [both reviewed in *Alexiad* V. 6 #1]. I didn't get to talk to him, though.

We went up to the nearby Applebee's for dinner, then made use of the hot tub before retiring to our rooms for a friendly chat with our roommates.

The Sidewise Awards were:

Long Form

Merchant Princes (*The Family Trade*, *The Hidden Family*, and *Clan Corporate*) by Charles Stross (Tor; 2004-2006)

Short Form

"Counterfactual" by Gardner Dozois (*F&SF*; June 2006)

And so to bed.

1.7 miles driven

Saturday, August 4, 2007 Collinsville

Larry Smith paid me \$225 for the one box of copies of *Heinlein's Children*. I paid him \$250 for our books. You don't think we wrote too many checks?

We had to round up the participants for our faneds dinner that evening, which turned out to be Chris, Steven, Dave, Lisa, and me. Went over to Ruby Tuesday's and had a talk in the course of which Steven got an article out of me. And the unfortunately absent Guy Lillian wants something too. Whoof. Gene Wolfe and his wife were sitting at the next table, no less.

And so to bed.

1.9 miles driven

Sunday, August 5, 2007

Collinsville — Cadiz, KY — Hopkinsville, KY

We left early, with many fond goodbyes to

Leigh, Larry, and Dave. And then, as we got to the Denny's, two things happened. Gary turned up, to share a pleasant breakfast with us. Then, my brother called. He was a grandfather; I was a great-uncle. Sarah had had her boy, **Wilson Thomas Wortham**, our indomitable Will, at 1:41 that morning. (Since you must know: 7 pounds 12 ounces and 22" high, or long.)

That got us off well to Cadiz. There were a few classic cars coming back from Louisville as we went down to the turn-off for I-57. We traveled past Metropolis, Indiana, which has taken Superman to heart, and Jonathan Creek, Elizabeth Garrott's church organization's retreat site, and through the Land Between the Lakes, a thriving park, to Barkley Lodge. The Thomas-Bridges Family Association Reunion was smaller than usual this year. It had lost its best-known member, Homer Louis "Boots" Randolph, the saxophone player.

Going into Hopkinsville revealed a rather dismal sight. Christian County was suffering from a drought and we passed acres and acres of yellow corn. We checked into the Best Western just before the deadline and went to the neighboring Applebee's, where I nearly made an embarrassing scene when I got to the point in *Settling Accounts: In at the Death* where we meet Mr. Jack Carter of the Tarkas Estate. (Turtledove never does let us meet his wife; does she have a good healthy ruddy flush?)

And so to bed.

273.6 miles driven

Monday, August 6, 2007

Hopkinsville — Madisonville, KY — Louisville

We saw a number of my relatives with the good news, then drove up to Madisonville to see the mother and her new son. It was already getting very hot but we went in the hospital and cooed and goosed all over my grand-nephew, already stubborn and annoying like his ancestors and relatives. Finally, about mid-afternoon, we had to get on our way.

Once home, we unloaded the car quickly, went down to Lee's Korean for dinner, and exhausted and drained, we calmed down. We both had to go to work in the morning.

And so to bed.

227.3 miles driven

Total miles driven: 843.2

Tuesday, August 7, 2007

Louisville

Back to work.

The party scene was rather low-keyed. But then, the party hotel was the Holiday Inn, the center of the entire crisis. (The Holiday Inn had gone bankrupt due to poor management, and the trustees were demanding advance payment in full, with a copy of one's credit card on top of that. Many fen were less than enthusiastic about that.)

A lot of people don't find NASFiCs to be "real" — it's WorldCon or nothing. And then there is the kind of fan whose sensitivities are so exquisite that WorldCons are beneath him.. Anyhow, a lot of big names weren't there.

Management wasn't bad, but then Archon is a continuing organization. This is one reason the same groups repeat — they have a core of experienced people. The usual group of volunteers do bring experience, but having a center of locals, people who don't have to come in from the coast (whichever coast) at nearly the last minute, would seem to ensure a more competent level of management.

I was gratified to be wrong about the Sidewise Awards. The problem is that I don't like cosy country-house mysteries where the inspector comes in, flips open his notebook, licks his pencil, and interrogates the Hon. Rupert about whether he had entered the library at 3:26 from the conservatory or the hallway, because such a precise and detailed reconstruction of everyone's actions is crucial to the solution of the crime. There may have been somewhere a real murder like that, though I have my doubts. Meanwhile, Sealion has justly earned its reputation as the paradigm of impossible points of departure. They both lack credibility; Walton's *Farthing* had both.

— Joe

CONGLOMERATION 2007

Con Report by Joseph T Major

Registration was well organized, we zipped through with no problems, buying at-the-door memberships and going right in. In fact, I never saw any problems with the management of the con; the committee is getting to know their stuff.

The biggest problem wasn't their fault; two of their guests couldn't make it, and perforce, the entire burden of being the guest fell on **Ben Bova**, who was a trooper. He spoke nonstop on various topics, bringing an entertaining slice of the history to the attention of those who listened. (He was also interested in this publication. Hope you enjoy it.)

However, much as the staff and the guest alike did wonderfully well, there was a certain debilitation. Membership was down. I'll have to leave it to our dealing recipients, such as **Leigh Kimmel & Larry Ullery**, or **Bob Roehm**, to talk about what sales were like.

There don't seem to have been many parties, either, but then after seeing how they had been opportunities for kids to drink, perhaps it's just as well that we are old fans and tired, and didn't go to what parties there were. Which weren't many (see above about low membership and little energy).

The Masquerade had interesting costumes, albeit too overwhelmingly recreations, and too many prizes (two-thirds of the entries?). At least it did not have the not quite appropriate, not to mention deafening, half-time entertainment that had driven us out last year.

The usual suspects, or the local recipients, all showed up, or at least went to our Saturday Night Dinner at Royal Palace Buffet: **Tim Lane**, **Elizabeth Garrott**, **Jack & Susan Young**, and **Johnny Carruthers**. We had a nice chat.

I had a nice talk with Khen Moore as he was sitting outside the con center, delivering

comments on everything. Then I encountered Bob Embler, who was somewhat bemused that he had been chastised for not putting the name and other details of the con hotel on his con flyers. (Hint: It's not called "Outside Con" because he thinks that's a spiffy name.)

On paper, so to speak, everything seemed all right — competent conrunning, a guest who was entertaining, informative, and historic (both in science and SF), a pleasant location free of the customary problems (guys who park their towing vehicle in one space, their trailer across three more, and the classic car itself takes up a fifth), and so on. But something was missing.

This doesn't look good for the future. See you in April.

Conglomeration 2008
April 18-20

GoH: Walter Koenig
A. C. Crispin
Donato Giancola
Michael Capobianco
<http://www.conglomeration.org>

FANZINES

Askance # 4

John Purcell, 3744 Marielene Circle,
College Station, TX 77845-3926 USA
j_purcell54@yahoo.com
<http://www.efanzines.com>

Beyond Bree August 2007

Nancy Martsch, Post Office Box 55372,
Sherman Oaks, CA 91413-5372 USA
beyondbree@yahoo.com
Not available for The Usual; \$12/year, \$15
in envelope or overseas.

brg 49 August 2007

Bruce Gillespie, 5 Howard Street,
Greensborough VIC 3085, AUSTRALIA
gandc@mira.net

Bits of My Boring Life #2

Rodney Leighton, 11 Branch Road, R. R.
#3, Tatmagouche, Nova Scotia B0K 1V0
CANADA
<http://www.efanzines.com>

The Drink Tank #137, #138, #139, #140, #141,
#142, #143

Christopher J. Garcia, 1401 N. Shoreline
Boulevard, Mountain View, CA 94043-1311
garcia@computerhistory.org
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eI # 33 August 2007

Earl Kemp, Post Office Box 6642,
Kingman, AZ 86402-6642 USA
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<http://www.efanzines.com>

JOMP, Jr. #26

Richard Dengrove, 2651 Arlington Drive,
#302, Alexandria, VA 22306-3626 USA
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The Knarley Knaws # 125 August 2007

Henry & Letha Welch, 1525 16th Avenue,

Grafton, WI 53024-2017 USA

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

LOCS

Brad W. Foster, P.O. Box 165246, Irving,
TX 75016-5246 USA
bwfoster@juno.com
<http://www.jabberwockygraphix.com>

A one-shot of illustrations by a
collection of artists on phrases that begin
with the letters L, O, & C.

Lofgeornost #88 August 2007

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

MT Void V. 26 #5 August 3, 2007 — V. 26 #13
September 28, 2007

Mark and Evelyn Leeper, 80 Lakeridge
Drive, Matawan, NJ 07747-3839 USA
eleeper@optonline.net
mleeper@optonline.net
<http://www.geocities.com/evelynleeper>

Opuntia #63.5A August 2007, #63.5B
September 2007

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

Peregrine Nations #7.1 April 2007, #7.2 July
2007

Janine Stinson, Post Office Box 248,
Eastlake, MI 49626-0248 USA
tropicsf@earthlink.net
<http://www.efanzines.com>

Science Fiction/San Francisco # 49 August 15,
2007, #50 September 5, 2007, #51
September 19, 2007

Christopher J. Garcia and Jean Martin
SFinSF@gmail.com
<http://www.efanzines.com>

Steam Engine Time #7 October 2007

Bruce Gillespie, 5 Howard Street,
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Vanamonde # 693-702

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

WCSEFAZine #1 September 2007, #2 October
2007

R. Graeme Cameron, Apt 72G 13315 104th
Avenue, Surrey, BC V3T 1V5 CANADA
rgraeme@shaw.ca
<http://www.efanzines.com>

The Zine Dump #17

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

<http://www.challzine.net>

HUGO AWARDS

Best Novel

Rainbows End by Vernor Vinge (Tor)

Best Novella

"A Billion Eves" by Robert Reed (*Asimov's*
October/November 2006)

Best Novelette

"The Djinn's Wife" by Ian McDonald
(*Asimov's* July 2006)

Best Short Story

"Impossible Dreams" by Tim Pratt
(*Asimov's* July 2006)

Best Related Book

*James Tiptree, Jr.: The Double Life of Alice
Sheldon* by Julie Phillips (St. Martin's)
GRUMP

Best Dramatic Presentation Long Form

Pan's Labyrinth Screenplay and Directed by
Guillermo del Toro. (Picturehouse)

Best Dramatic Presentation Short Form

Doctor Who "Girl in the Fireplace" Written
by Steven Moffat. Directed by Euros
Lyn. (BBC Wales/BBC1)

Best Editor, Long Form

Patrick Nielsen Hayden (Tor Books)

Best Editor, Short Form

Gordon Van Gelder (*F&SF*)

Best Pro Artist

Donato Giancola

Best Fan Writer [Langford Award]

Dave Langford
But only by one vote!

Best Semi Prozine [*Locus* Award]

Locus edited by Charles N. Brown, Kirsten
Gong-Wong and Liza Groen Trombi

Best Fanzine

Science-Fiction Five-Yearly edited by Lee
Hoffman, Geri Sullivan, & Randy Byers

Best Fan Artist

Frank Wu

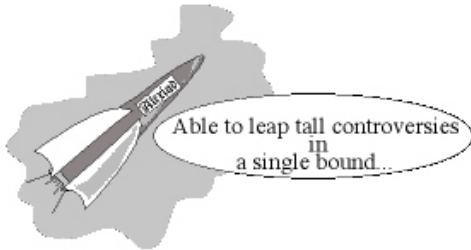
Campbell Award

Naomi Novik

WORLDCON

In a surprise upset, the 2009 WorldCon was won by the **Montréal** bid. **Anticipation** will be **August 6-10 août**. (Strangely enough, DenVention 3 will also be August 6-10.) The Guests of Honour/Invités d'honneur will be Neil Gaiman, Elisabeth Vonarburg, David Hartwell, Tom Doherty, and as Fan GoH, **Taral Wayne**. Congratulations/Félicitation.

Letters, we get letters



From: **Rodney Leighton** June 21, 2007
 11 Branch Road, R. R. #3,
 Tatmagouche, Nova Scotia B0K 1V0
 CANADA

Thanks for the latest *Alexiad* which arrived yesterday; enjoyed reading most of it this issue. Well, it is the first day of summer; longest day of the year. Guess what? It's raining. And I have a fire going. That is mostly to dry things out. I went to work; was having some trouble with the saw and was soaked to the ass so I came home to try to solve the saw problem; I was thinking I might go back but it's raining even harder, and, ah, why bother.

I should do some long neglected housework. Or type some letters. Or even reviews. However, as Alexis Gilliland pointed out to me once, if it ain't fun, I shouldn't be doing it.

Well, here's something which intrigues me. I noted that *Alexiad* was in a smaller envelope and read the comments about new postal regulations and rates; although it was folded in half, I think it was the normal \$1.31. Unfortunately I tossed the envelope in the fire earlier and did not note when it was mailed. Probably June 15 or so? Today brought the April *Peregrine Nations*, large envelope, open. Mailed on June 18 if I read the thing correctly, for 78 pence. I don't have the vaguest idea how that amount correlates to dollars. Much the same size: 32 pages in *Alexiad* and 26 in *P.N.* but Peter uses that Brit paper which is slightly larger, so they probably weigh the same.

78p is about US\$1.60. The smaller envelope thing didn't work, so I went back to flats.

— JTM

It's raining even harder than it was this morning; I guess I will go read the zine. Hey, 2 sf fanzines in 2 days!

June 28

Raining again! Just had a great electrical storm. Thunder, lightning, torrential rain. I was happy I was sitting in my easy chair watching it through the window and not out in the woods.

Weird things going on with me. Some days I don't want to do anything. Typing has become work. Still.

I bought some chocolate bars at the post

office the last time I was there. Fund raising things made by UNIK Chocolate in Montreal. 100 gram bar for \$2. The Almonds Amandes bars are really good, milk chocolate wrapped around bits of almonds, solid bar which takes a good bite to get a piece of and requires chewing unless you want to let it melt. I like them well and chocolate lovers should as well. I had a notion to try to do a review of them but my ability to write reviews seems to have vanished as well as most of the desire and besides they likely aren't available outside Canada. It appears that people who suffer from peanut allergies must be able to eat other nuts; the wrapper has this: "This product is manufactured in a peanut free facility but may contain other nuts." The title is "almonds" in English and French, who would ever guess the bar might contain nuts? Hey, any of your Canadian readers who like chocolate bars should try one!

And, well, I have gone totally weird in my reading. I have something like 28 or 30 books that I have read some portion of and think I will read the rest some time. But frequently when I am headed for the chair to read, I think; ain't nothing there that appeals to me, and go looking for something I might want to read. Re-reading quite a bit. Plucking books out of boxes and off shelves that have been around for ages. Once in a while I find one I like.

After a time when I tossed one after getting halfway through and another one after 35 pages I plucked *The Pledge* by Howard Fast off a shelf. It's a good book. Thought about trying to do a review to send to you. But, then, well, as I said, reviews . . . and, besides, it is a book based on conspiracies and Joe the non-believer in conspiracies will likely not think too much of it. Apparently Fast was hauled up before Joe McCarthy in the 1950s and when complaining about that was told by McCarthy to write a book. And he did.

From: **Evelyn C. Leeper** August 11, 2007
 80 Lakeridge Drive, Matawan, NJ
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Re Lloyd Penney's letter about "The Serial Diners": One problem with going to the restaurants alphabetically is that one can be struck in a single cuisine for a long time (e.g. China Garden, China Palace, China Wok, . . .)

Re John Purcell's comment that his 20,000-mark note from 1922 is not worth the paper it is printed on, when we were in Yugoslavia (June 1992), we were using a combination of "hard dinars" and "convertible dinars". There was a 10,000-fold devaluation from the former to the latter, but the old bills are still in circulation, so you needed to remember that a 20,000-dinar note was worth ten cents, while a 50-dinar note was worth US\$2.50. At the time.

However, there were subsequent revaluations:

Date	Conversion Rate
January 1, 1966	100

January 1, 1990	10,000
July 1, 1992	10
October 1, 1993	1,000,000
January 1, 1994	1,000,000,000
January 24, 1994	12 million

So a 20,000-dinar note from pre-1990 is worth 1/600,000,000,000,000,000,000,000 of a cent.

Or working backward, a new dinar was pegged to the Deutsche Mark, which meant that a Deutsche Mark was worth 1.2*10^27 hard dinars. I cannot recall the DM->US\$ rate, but whatever it was, it makes a 20,000-(hard)-dinar note pretty amazingly worthless.

The lessons of 1923 have not been learned by everyone. Ben Stein, before he let people try to win his money, wrote a book with his father: *On the Brink: A Novel* (1978: ISBN 0-345-27650-7), a sort of economic It Can't Happen Here with a German-style hyperinflation in the U.S.

— JTM

From: **John Purcell** August 11, 2007
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We have a China Panda in town, too, besides all these other "China" restaurants, to say nothing of all the other Chinese restaurants under different ethnic names. Living in a college town is fun for the variety of ethnic restaurants: besides the plethora of Chinese eateries and the expected mountain of Mexican joints, we have Thai, Vietnamese, Philippine, Indian, Greek, French, Italian (new one just opened near our house), and some others I can't think of off-hand. Definitely a fun place for someone who likes variety.

You are right about the value of a pre-1990 dinar being so amazingly worthless. I swear, we Americans have it soft compared to the vast majority of the world when it comes down to the health of our economy. It definitely makes one stop, think, and be grateful for what you have.

September 10, 2007

Hey there, Lisa and Joseph!

A few comments on your latest offering are in order, I do believe. First things first, Lisa's bookstore natter at the beginning reminded me that a few weeks ago I found some goodies at the Half-Price Bookstore here in town. That's my favorite store, obviously. What was so notable about that trip was finding a first US edition hardcover copy of *The Croquet Player* by H.G. Wells (1937; New York: Viking Press) that was in really good condition; heck, it still

had its original dust jacket, and even *that* wasn't torn to bits. I was quite impressed. With my teacher's 10% discount, I got that book for a whopping \$5.40 before tax. It is a pretty bleak short novel, but it was apparently a fairly popular book. There are multiple copies available on www.aLibris.com for around \$2 a copy, before shipping and handling, so it is fairly easy to track down. Still, the one that I found is in great shape, and I am glad I found it.

As usual, you have a wide range of book reviews herein, and I am grateful that you and other contributors take the time to read these tomes and crank out the reviews. My favorite review in here is *My Tank is Fight!: Deranged Inventions of WWII*. Yeah, I may have to read a copy of this. Military conflict has always been the mother of oddball weaponry, sometimes effective, most times ineffective, but always expensive. It is a fascinating sidelight of what a nation's military will do to gain either an upper hand or develop as a last-ditch, desperate attempt to strike a blow against their enemy. This book sounds like a lot of fun to read. Does it have many illustrations? My copy of *The Illustrated History of Modern Warfare* is chock-full of paintings, drawings, and photographs from the last four hundred years of combat, and *My Tank is Fight!* would be a wonderful companion volume.

Technical drawings and a picture section, climaxed by the nuking of New York. Ouch.

Also, Johnny Carruthers' review of *Confessions of a Teen Sleuth* reminds me of when I wrote a research paper on the Hardy Boys and Nancy Drew mysteries for an adolescent literature class at Iowa State University as an undergraduate. The history of these series is very interesting, and it is really fun to learn some of the facts about them. For instance, even though the Nancy Drew books started five years after the Hardy Boys (1932 vs. 1927), they have long since out-stripped the eternal teen-aged youthful detectives in terms of sales figures. Part of me wants to see the new movie out of pure curiosity, but I am afraid it's going to be not very well done. Even so, it's hard to believe that the Hardy Boys are still going strong at 70 years — and still in high school, no less; if they'd stop getting sidetracked on cases they would have both graduated by 1930 — and still very popular books with youngsters. I gave my son (11 years old) my stash of old hardcover Hardy Boys books, about thirty of them, and hope that he enjoys them just as much I enjoyed them way back when.

Another fine issue, Joseph and Lisa. I sure wish we could get together at some convention in the next year or three. Keep the fan fires burning, and take care of yourselves.

It's not too soon to start making plans for Denver.

— JTM

From: Richard Dengrove August 11, 2007

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I enjoyed *Alexiad* June 2007 as I have your other *Alexiads*.

I think Tolkien's problem was that he had been ridiculed for being a goody goody. So, in the *Children of Hurin*, he was a baddy baddy. It is as down a view of the world as the Ring Trilogy is up. On the other, you say it works. I bet because it rings true that people have petty spats while they ignore true evil looking at them in the face.

What also rings true is Taylor Caldwell's *Devil's Advocate*. In actual fact, the novel's conspiracy does not resemble any historical conspiracy nor its revolution any historical revolution. However, that does not mean it doesn't ring true for many people. It certainly does for conspiracy theorists. And there are a lot of those. They fervently believe one side represents good while another evil. In their minds, there is no place for in-betweens or corruption.

Tolkien's and Taylor Caldwell's works are openly myth, like science fiction. John Purcell asks why would Kepler's *Somnium* be the first science fiction and not Lucian of Samosata's *True Story*? Basically, I define science fiction as anything freely associated with science, and there really wasn't what we recognize as science until half a century before Kepler.

On the other hand, I happen to have read Lucian's *True Story*. It could probably pass as a science fiction story today. It is wild, satirical and has something to do with what passed for science then. Of course, that is because whatever that asserted, Lucian contradicted.

At the beginning, Lucian says that not only did the events he mentions not happen, but they couldn't happen. Then he proceeds to make his account as outrageous as possible. It is a very early trans-Atlantic voyage, with a detour to the Moon. On the Moon, the inhabitants have one toe and give birth through the calf of their leg.

Some myths like Lucian's are believed myth; others, like Lincoln's, of Ferguson's *Land of Lincoln*, are myths believed fact. The same thing is the case with the Pilgrims. A friend of mine was the top researcher at Plymouth Plantation, and he pointed out to me plenty of Thanksgiving Myths. For instance, that the Pilgrims wore black and enormous buckles. Or that Thanksgiving was originally at a particular time of year.

Some myths, like Lincoln's and the Pilgrims', every informed person knows is a myth; other myths are in the eye of the beholder. Lisa believes that the Kentucky Derby is a show of good horsemanship. My wife Heidi, an old horsewoman, believes that is a myth. She claims, recently, there have been too many horses in it, over twenty. Over fifteen, as far as she is concerned, is a cavalry charge: i.e., horses win by luck.

On the other hand, not all disagreements need be over fact or myth. Some are over proper etiquette. Like the one between I and E.B. Frohvet. He believes Robert Lichtman's *Trap*

Door should be published more frequently. I don't know whether it lends itself to that. I think in order to publish it, Bob feels, he has to have enough biographical essays. This makes him, to some extent, dependent on other people.

And that reminds me: I have an essay in mind. One of Bob's hobbies is biographical essays; one of mine is money from the early Weimar Republic. Actually, I inherited it from my wife's grandmother, and haven't added to it. The notes in it are even more curious than the 20,000 Mark Note John Purcell has.

After World War I but before the hyperinflation, the Reichsbank closed to avoid paying reparations. Then a lot of localities started issuing their own currency. One piece my wife's grandmother collected has a young man going to bed with a young woman, and it says: "Be happy, go to bed with a friend."

That currency is a reality; so is the Greenland Colony and Global Warming. Joe, you said that the Greenland Colony is relevant to my discourse on Global Warming. I was trying to figure that out. The way I heard it, the climate got colder and the Norse died or went Inuit. A recent novel about it only had them die, but physical anthropology says some went Inuit. In short, they adapted or died.

Global warming is similar in that respect. Global Warming will cause the sea level to rise, and the people who paid mints for waterfront property will have to abandon it and purchase something less pricey inland. In short, adapt or be swamped.

Anyway, is that what you were getting at?

Another reality is the fall of the Soviet Union; the causes are a different matter. I have to admit George Price and Taras Wolansky were specific about what, they believed, Ronald Reagan had done to bring about the fall of the Soviet Union. The main actions they identified are these: (1) creating his Strategic Defense Initiative, i.e., Star Wars, (2) revving up the defense budget, and (3) denying the Soviets a market for their oil.

There are several problems with these factors. First, is there any direct evidence the Russians fell from them? That Reagan revved up the defense budget or added star wars to the international arena is not really evidence either bankrupted or overworked the Soviet System. Some, I have heard, have the contrary theory: it united the Soviets and solidified their system.

That Reagan disrupted the market for the Soviets' oil is not really evidence that he brought the Soviet Union closer to destruction either. Lots of nations have had their economies disrupted and survived. The Soviets had their economy disrupted from Lenin onward.

It is true Taras does discuss one Soviet reaction, the reaction to Star Wars: they were angry. Still, that is not really evidence it contributed.

On the other hand, I remember evidence for a factor Taras mentions in passing, the Soviet Union's involvement in Afghanistan. I recall the demonstrations that caused Gorbachev's ouster started out opposed to the Afghan involvement. For the Afghan resistance, there is no question Reagan gave strong support.

Taras, you Joe and I had a similar exchange over the Fall of Rome. Taras believed lack of patriotism must have caused Rome's Fall. He argued this from the general principle that empires fall for lack of patriotism. Also, Taras pooh poohed that patriotism had anything to do with morality.

However, Rome's morality was civic morality and its gods were civic gods. When morality fell with the Republic, so did patriotism. However, as the empire, Rome expanded for several centuries. So, in Rome's case, Taras' general principle falls.

Then, Joe, you had theory that the rise of Christianity caused the Fall of Rome.

No I didn't.

This sounds like what I have heard about Gibbon's theory in the *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*: capable people turned away from the state and war craft and toward religion. Something a good son of the Enlightenment would say.

While the time frame was right for the Western Empire, the Eastern Empire, which was also Christian, survived about another thousand years. Maybe Gibbon has some explanation for this, but I don't know what it is.

I have heard, however, that there is evidence for one theory: i.e., that crop failure in Gaul was a factor in Rome's fall. It would explain why Rome could no longer bribe or coopt the barbarians; and why the Eastern Empire wanted nothing to do with the Western Empire. You will not hear much about crop failure in Gaul, though. It is the type of mundane, unromantic explanation very few wish to defend.

A last word to Taras Wolansky: I didn't say that Fundamentalists were low-grade morons because they have proclaimed that there is one truth and it is God. I said quite the opposite: intelligent people are quite capable of doing the same if pressed. It is easy enough for us humans to say one thing and do something else. It is no big deal that many Fundamentalists say God is the one truth and practice a whole different epistemology?

From: **R-Laurraine Tutihasi** Aug. 12, 2007
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Sorry this is a bit late. I don't remember whether we mentioned when we had lunch with you that Mike would be retiring soon and that we'd be moving. Anyway that's basically the reason we've been busy with other things. We made a brief visit to Tucson, where we'll be moving to, in July to scout around. It was a pretty fruitful trip. We learned a lot and joined a credit union there; I hadn't expected to be able to join until after we'd moved. Since then we've been busy getting our house ready to sell; it went on the market a couple of days ago, and we've been fairly busy with realtors and their clients coming to see the place.

It was very nice to see you in Louisville. I

only wish we'd taken a group photo. That was also a very nice lunch.

It was nice to meet you, too.
Our spheres of action are so far apart.
I am pleased that you enjoyed the visit.

— JTM

Lisa hinted at a fate worse than death being suffered by dalmatians and Jack Russells but didn't go into details. Please do tell.

PLANET EARTH was originally narrated by Richard Attenborough. I believe you can have that option on the DVD set. Unlike Robert S. Kennedy, I didn't think Sigourney Weaver's narration was so bad; but I am curious to hear Attenborough's version.

September 9, 2007

We're stressing out, because we're still waiting to find a buyer for our house. We've had a nibble but no bites. My stress complaints are the usual muscle spasms and need for extra sleep. Mike has been unlucky. He suffered an actual injury from moving some furniture. By itself it might have healed without our even knowing about it. Unfortunately the activities he engaged in after the furniture-moving incident has caused the injury to worsen. It's been bothering him now for two weeks, and my sister the doctor thinks he should see his doctor. He's also had an allergic reaction, probably to an insect sting or bite, that was probably worsened by stress. When he sees his doctor, we'll see what she says about both things.

I'd like to hear more from Sheryl Birkhead about Dasuquin, Cosequin, and Seraquin — the ingredients in each, comparisons.

Having read only the first book of the Temeraire series, I can state that it says there that the French were given the Chinese dragon egg because France has an emperor. I don't remember the part about France being far away from China. I enjoyed the first book, which I read for the Hugo voting, enough to want to read the subsequent books. I've put them on my amazon.com wish list, which is way too long. There's one good, I think, consequence of having such a long wish list. By the time I get to some of the books on it, I find I no longer want to buy them. Also sometimes when I add a book to it, it's only available in the expensive hardcover; but when I'm ready to buy, the mass market paperback is out. On the other hand, sometimes books go out of print and are available only in expensive used copies. You win some and lose some. I rarely feel justified, though, in spending too much money on used books.

Am I really in the
Alexiad lettercol...?



From: **Martin Arbagi** August 14, 2007

Same complaints I had when I first saw the "hard" (printed) copy of your periodical:

1. Insufficient leading (space between lines of type) creates a cluttered look and makes reading at best difficult. (Depending on the state of a person's eyes, reading *Alexiad* can be next to impossible. I am in the "merely" difficult category.) Unlike using a typeface that is too small, insufficient leading is not the kind of thing that is solved by increasing magnification. It looks just as bad at 250% normal size as it does at 100%. (I have a 22" monitor.) Since you're publishing electronically, paper usage is irrelevant. Whatever program you use (Word Perfect, Micro\$oft Word, Adobe Page Maker or In Design, etc.) should have the proper leading (or close to it) for most typefaces built in.

2. More important: WHAT'S THE DAMN THING ABOUT? You must have some central focus other than your whimsy. Yes, in Victorian times we do have such periodicals as *Smith's Gentlemen's Miscellany* or *Jones's Ladies' Miscellany*, but if you read them, you'll find that, despite the word "Miscellany" in their titles, they did nonetheless have a central theme or themes, if nothing else, articles, fiction, and reviews of interest to ladies or gentlemen.

Still, I found the item about the new (?) Belgian edition of the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion* of interest. We live in an age when cranks have become respectable. The *Protocols*, Afrocentric history, the belief that "Wicca" (witchcraft) is some sort of ancient religion, algar, denial that the National Socialists ever killed any Jews, etc., all have their proponents in the academic world. It's like that justly obscure story by Edgar Allan Poe (not one of his better ones) where the inmates take over the French lunatic asylum. Don't know if you've ever read the old book, *Warrant for Genocide* by the late Norman Cohn. He traces the text of the *Protocols* to an internal memorandum of the Czarist Secret Police in pre-revolutionary Russia.

I've got Cohn's book. I even read that Poe story, "The System of Dr. Tarr and Prof. Fether", back when there wasn't a Sexy Vampire novel on every other rack at the drugstore. Darrell Schweitzer once produced a really funny Frivolous Literary Theory to explain the varying quality of Poe's stories. It involved a floating coffin...

— JTM

From: **Darrell Schweitzer** August 20, 2007
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In response to Taras Wolansky's question about the Roman Empire expanding during its period of decadence (p. 22), the one-word answer is "no." Most of the expansion was

indeed under the Republic, when morals were pretty loose and the political corruption was reaching a maximum. Under the early Empire, there was a lot of consolidation, Tiberius putting down revolts in the Balkans, that sort of thing. The various client kingdoms of Asia minor became provinces. Arminius successfully kicked the Romans after half of Germany, but this was compensated for by the conquest of Britain under Claudius. After that, the only significant expansion was into Dacia under Trajan in the 110s AD. Trajan also pushed into Mesopotamia all the way down the Persian Gulf, but Hadrian withdrew from that territory and Roman emperors periodically invaded it for centuries to come, but never held it.

During the centuries of the Empire's decline, its boundaries contracted somewhat. The northern frontier of Britain was definitely pushed back to Hadrian's Wall. The Antonine Wall was definitely abandoned. The Rhine/Danube angle was abandoned during the chaos and invasions of the 3rd century, as was Dacia. The Rhine/Danube area (the sources for both rivers) is the area that Marcus Aurelius spent much of his reign trying to control. But his son Commodus didn't follow up on the hard work needed to consolidate it. If we define "decadence" as the pursuit of pleasure or short-term gain at the expense of responsibility, then Commodus, like Nero before him, was as decadent as they come, but was pretty close to being the LAST decadent Roman emperor, as opposed to ineffectual or incompetent ones.

After Commodus, the Western Empire went on for more than half of its total history, close to 300 years. As the Empire seriously declined, public morality actually improved. The orgies were over. Even the rights of slaves were somewhat protected. The slaughters of human beings (but not animals) in the Colosseum were ended once and for all by Honorius about 405. Society became obsessed with religion, its morality quite "Victorian." The late Empire has been rightly compared, I think, to Russia just before the revolution, resplendent and brittle, with increasingly powerful rich people using their wealth to get richer and avoid any social responsibility. During the "immoral" days of the Republic, you will recall, all the Roman military leaders and virtually all the troops were actually Romans, and the command positions were reserved for senators. In the late Empire, no senator would be likely to have any military experience at all, nor would he be interested in getting any. He would use his influence to make sure his tenants did NOT get drafted into the army, because he needed them to work his lands, on which he did not pay taxes. At the very least he would bribe army officials to accept only the most incompetent or physically useless peasants as recruits. The army, therefore, became made up entirely of barbarian mercenaries.

Meanwhile the frontiers contracted. Julian lost a lot of eastern provinces after his disastrous (and fatal) invasion of Persia in 363. Then the Rhine frontier broke in 406. This meant the effective loss of most of Gaul and Spain. Britain was cut off and lost. The Vandals

moved through Gaul and Spain and took the province of Africa, then turned pirate and seized the Corsica, Sardinia, and various other islands. The Roman control of Sicily became uncertain. All this while everybody was very chaste and prayed a lot. The emperors of this period, Honorius and Valentinian III were pious twits, although Valentinian's personal morality has been called into question, possibly by hostile propaganda. It is safe to say that *political* morality had not changed much, that people staged coups and revolts and murdered to stay in power, but at the same time emperors in particular made an impression on the world by building churches. As for the territories, they kept shrinking. When the end came, the Western Empire consisted of Italy, Sicily (sort of) and parts of Gaul. Once Romulus Augustulus was deposed, a former emperor (Julius Nepos, still recognized in the East as legal) still controlled the area around Salona in the former Yugoslavia and there was a Roman governor holding out on northeastern Gaul.

The story of Syagrius, the dux par Gallias (r. 464-486, d. 487), is one that could bear more interest. And Kevin McKidd ("Lucius Vorenus") just appeared in a movie called *The Last Legion* in which Romulus Augustulus flees to Britannia. He played a Goth.

Some American politician was recently quoted as saying that the symptoms of America's decline are like those of Rome, starting with moral decline. The symptoms are somewhat the same, although the politician did not cite any of them. The chief symptom is that the rich get so rich and the poor get so poor that these two classes no longer feel they have anything in common and neither cares to uphold the state. I envision the Fall of the Roman Empire as being rather like that scene of the peasants in *Monty Python and the Holy Grail* in which one peasant says, "Oh he must be a king or something." "How can you tell?" "He doesn't have shit all over him."

Imagine those peasants mucking about in a field with shit all over them. One of them looks up and says, "Look, the Visigoths are burning the manor house." Another shrugs and says, "I hope they get the tax records."

As for the roundness of the Earth (Helgesen, p. 23), yes this was well-known in Antiquity and famously calculated by Eratosthenes. This is one reason why the symbol of universal dominion in royal and imperial art is always a globe. You can find common coins of the emperor Aurelian as "restitutio orbis" (restorer of the world) on which he is being handed a globe by a god. Christians tended to put a cross on top of the globe, this having become the common way of depicting the power of a Byzantine emperor by Justinian's day. The cross-topped orb that Elizabeth II held at her coronation in 1952 is directly descended from this. You will notice that nowhere is a king or emperor depicted holding a flat plate, symbolizing a flat Earth.

Columbus knew the world was round, of course. So did the people he was arguing against. Columbus was actually *wrong* in his arguments. His detractors were correct. The argument was not whether you'd fall off the edge of the world, but whether you'd starve to death trying to cross 6-8000 miles of ocean between Spain and China. Columbus's idea was that China was only about 2000 miles away. His estimate of the size of the Earth was off by a third. He was only saved from proving his critics right by the fortuitous discovery of America.

So much for the Bugs Bunny cartoon, "Hare We Go" (1951).
"It's-a round, like-a my head!"
POW "It's-a flat like-a you head!"

<http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0043620/>

As for religions inclined to do socially unacceptable things, well, many modern Muslims deny it, but for many centuries the "Jihad" which was one of the Pillars of Islam and the obligation of every able believer was exactly what it sounded like. A true believer had a religious obligation to expand the realm of Islam by warfare. This is why contact between Muslim and non-Muslim was almost always violent, part of a vast war between Islam and non-Islam in which the Crusades are but a small episode and a Christian counter-attack. Many "radical" Muslims today (who should more properly be called "reactionary," because they are deeply conservative in their rejection of the modern world) still believe this. This is why Hamas or Al Qaeda always express themselves in religious terms. It's no different from Thuggee. Next to this a little bit of Mormon polygamy is pretty innocuous, at least if the ladies are consenting and protected by civil law. But the basic principle holds that "freedom of religion" is NOT protected when it runs counter to civil law, as in Thuggee, suttee, the need to kill the infidel, or human sacrifice.

True, and some people think "separation of mosque and state" is a nonstarter.

— JTM

From: **Christopher J. Garcia** Aug. 20, 2007
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Good to run into ya at NASFiC, and it's always a joy to get to hang with a bunch of Fan Editors at a con.

It's not too soon to start making plans for Denver. (Have I heard that before?)

OK, let's go on to the zine at hand!

You know what I do to choose what I read? I look at the cover. How often am I wrong when I ignore a cover and read a book that has a cover with a chick in a corset and neck ruff, I am

always proven right. It is very easy to judge a book by its cover. Here's my code: corsets usually signal bad book, unless it's a Lesbian Period Romance. Vampires on the cover is a good sign that it sucks . . . pun partially intended. And here's the biggest one: a character staring up towards a star-filled sky. It even happens in movies. *A.I.* was the worst.

How about a Valiant Woman Warrior holding a two-handed sword, but her arms are narrower than its blade?

I really enjoyed Tuckercon, especially the paneling. Lots of good stuff that came from a bunch of the kinds of people who I go to cons to meet. Young folks were all around, especially at the Podcast panels, and I love that.

We're down three more WWI Vets now. There are 24 or so left in the world. I met a few of them in my time. There were lots while I was in High School and three in our town alone. They all came and talked to us every year. One had served in the US Navy, another was a Royal Navy, and one was with the Hun. That was kinda cool. They all had good stories.

I was very bummed to hear about the death of Roger Elwood. You know, I've heard all the arguments that he killed the anthology market with his stuff, but he was responsible for the Laser Books series. Yes, not the best stuff out there, but they were cheap and exciting and had some of the best covers in the history of SF. Plus they opened the world to the works of Tim Powers, among others. Go figure.

We lost Walt Daugherty. I associate with him. The concept of the Daugherty Project applies to much of my planning over the years. He was one guy who tried to do everything. Another legend I never got to meet.

The death of the King of Afghanistan is a big deal that didn't get enough coverage. He was a significant figure and his stance on the Taliban and the invasions made him a very interesting figure in the history of that part of the world. He was a long-lived man and he was King, even if only in name, for more than 70 years. To put that in perspective, his theoretical reign was longer than all but 4 Kings in history.

What about Otto I & IV (1922-present)?

I hate Kushiel. I'm no fan of Jacqueline Carey and I've read a couple of books and was so very disappointed. No more.

Troublesome Young Men was one of those books that I wanted to read. It's a story of the most important moments in the history of Modern England. The last time that England really mattered was in those days and English politics seldom has impressive stories like this to tell.

MUST GET *The Government Manual for New Wizards!* It's an awesome concept and I love the way books like this tend to apply black humor to the concept of magic and wizardry.

I have to say that one of my favourite things about *Alexiad* has to be the candy bar reviews.

I gotta give it up to Johnny Carruthers for this one. I really want the Snickers Mix. I haven't been able to find them. I gotta find them and eat them and love them beyond. The Snickers Almond Dark is supposed to be very good, because the almond works better with the dark. I might have to try that. I have to find the Hershey's Dark with Macadamia Nuts. I love Mac nuts, I really do, and dark chocolate is tasty too. Still, I've got enough of the Cocoa Reserve left over that they gave us at the Sonoma Valley Film Festival.

I liked Dave Langford's *The End of Harry Potter*, but I have to say that the two of us both got things right and wrong in our speculations. I love the way he writes little pieces in it, and in general. Since I'm up against him for the Hugo this year, I must say that I'm totally against him on everything!

Join the club.
— JTM (Best Fan Writer Hugo nominee 1996 & 1998)

From: **Evelyn C. Leeper** August 23, 2007
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Re postage rates (in your comments on Joy V. Smith's letter): The USPS web site defines a letter-sized envelope as a maximum of 6-1/8 inches by 11-1/2 inches, so your 6"x9" envelopes should have been passed as okay. Or were they just a bit over 6-1/8"?

Re Jim Stumm's letter: Jim seems to imply that the only two Presidents with connections to Buffalo are Fillmore and Cleveland. What about McKinley? He was, after all, fatally shot there. (Though I could understand if Buffalo is less than eager to play up this particular Presidential connection. :-))

From: **Martin Morse Wooster** Aug. 27, 2007
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Many thanks for *Alexiad* 34. Yes, the new postal increases are incredibly irritating. I think the single most irritating increase in a whole slew of irritating increases is the notion that if you take a large envelope (for which you have already paid fifty cents more than you used to) to a mail clerk to mail, they then declare that the envelope is a "parcel" and charge you even *more*. It's as if the people at Postal Service headquarters said, "Well, people use email instead of letters, anyway, so let's just shaft our remaining customers as much as we can."

Of course, this big increase is a big blow to traditional fanzines. I suppose we must all soldier on and give more and more of our money to the post office. But I think one reason why fanzines are in trouble is that we've lost most of our traditional venues for telling people that fanzines are interesting. The question every fanzine fan must ask is: what are we doing to tell new fans that fanzines are interesting?

Genealogy question: So, Joe, how exactly are you related to Nancy Astor?

We are seventh cousins once removed, being descended from Robert Beverley [1641-1687] and his first wife, Mary Keeble [1637-1678].

Working IX to V sounds like an interesting, if silly book about Roman history. But Joe mentions funeral clowns, but what about orgy planners? What was the Latin name for an orgy planner? Did they have specialties — or exclusive deals with caterers?

Henry Welch says that "you can't copyright stock characters." No, but you can trademark them. The Ian Fleming estate, for example, has trademarked James Bond, Miss Moneypenny, and Ian Fleming. Tarzan is trademarked. And as I understand it the image of Ayn Rand is trademarked and owned by the Ayn Rand estate, so that if you are an Ayn Rand fan and decide to do a painting of your favorite writer, the Rand estate will sue you. An article I read in the *Financial Times* notes that some literary estates are turning to trademarking as copyrights expire so that they can retain control over famous characters.

Sometimes, though, the estate isn't in charge: Tolkien's characters are copyright, not by the Estate, but by Tolkien Enterprises, a differently-owned firm.

—JTM

Since you mention John Julius Norwich, can I pass on the one encounter I had with the man? In 1989 the *New Yorker* mentioned that he published an annual chapbook with quotations that he had gathered during the year. (He has since collected several years of these chapbooks into real books.) I wrote to him asking where I could buy one. (This was back in the 20th century when we actually wrote letters.) He sent a nice note and a sample chapbook and told me about the one bookstore where the chapbooks were sold. I've kept the note — and the chapbook — ever since.

From: **E. B. Frohvet** June 21, 2007
4716 Dorsey Hall Drive #506, Ellicott
City MD 21042-5988 USA

In Washington, in 1810, the socialite Margaret Bayard Smith had occasion to entertain two gentlemen who had recently arrived from the West to take their places in Congress. Tea was served, and Mrs. Smith's teenage daughter played the piano. The two men were thoroughly amazed — because they had never seen or heard such a thing. Susan Smith opened the lid, and the guests examined the mechanism with "childlike wonderment". Neither mother nor daughter could get the men to grasp the concept of reading music; they supposed that "all Susan's sweet melody was drawn by chance or random from this strange

thing.” This amusing, and probably true, anecdote affirms that the old SFnal definition of magic as “any insufficiently understood technology” predates the genre.

I’m sure I’ve mentioned this before, Lisa, but horses figure prominently in Elizabeth Moon’s “Heris Serrano” series, and there’s a horse on the cover of *Winning Colors* which is the third book of the sequence. Horses also appear often in the works of Andre Norton, especially in the “Beast Master” series and the “Witch World” books. Hosteen has a stallion called Rain-on-Dust from his color of red spots on grey; and Tani has a mare who is a mixed breed between originally-Terran horse, and Astran duocorns — no, I don’t care to argue the biology of that.

Concerning the lady who works at the National Institute on Drug Abuse: We Americans don’t believe in inherited guilt.

Bizarre military inventions: It falls under “contingency planning” — among the nut jobs, it also gave us radar, the turbojet engine (tweaked since, but still a late-1930’s idea). Of the proposed ship which could not enter any German harbor: the Germans expected to control nearly all of Europe for a thousand years, so the ports of France would have served nicely as they did for existing submarines. Also they expected to have all the resources of Europe to pay for such things.

My bad, on the royal titles.

Let me rephrase: Were I voting on the Lost Causes, my vote would go to *Banana Wings* “by default” because it’s the only one of the nominated fanzines I receive which, IMHO, is deserving of the award. *Challenger* is also deserving, but I’ve been dropped from the list of recipients.

John Purcell: Shakespeare is adaptable enough that directors have refigured the casting, settings, and costumes without damage. I’ve seen *Macbeth* done by an all-female cast; and I know of one director who staged one of the comedies with a few tons of sand dumped on the stage, and a cast in bathing suits. If they don’t tinker with the dialogue, I don’t mind. If there are no live productions available, there’s always Zefirelli’s *Romeo & Juliet*, arguably one of the best filmings of a play.

What are you asking for the kid?

Jim Stumm: In David Palmer’s *Emergence*, they launch a shuttle to high earth orbit (from Vandenberg of all places) by equipping it with **four** solid fuel boosters, and stripping every gram of excess mass. Does that sound plausible to you?

George W. Price: Many years ago at a Worldcon (don’t recall which one) I had coffee with A. Bertram Chandler while he tried to explain to me the Mannschen Drive. I confess that neither at the time, nor since, have I grasped the concept.

At the last rate increase, postage for international airmail went up from 84¢ to 90¢. Having some 84¢ stamps left, I asked for some 6¢ stamps. “We don’t have any!” Did they have some 3¢ stamps? Well, yes, of course, why didn’t you say so in the first place?

Dainis Bisenieks: The problem with

reprinting “classic” SF by small press publishers is, who gets to decide what is classic? You tend to get a particular editor’s taste. The old Ballantine Adult Fantasy series is a good example: what you got was Lin Carter’s taste for pompous overwritten Victorian fantasy. On moons, I recall once hearing Hal Clement gamely trying out chemical theories to explain why the moons of Darkover were all those improbably pastel colors, instead of grey. Andre Norton had a weakness for oddly-colored skies, overlooking that most likely any breathable oxygen-nitrogen atmosphere would be blue. (Credit Where Due Department, Philip Wylie & Edwin Balmer made an attempt to explain the green skies in *After Worlds Collide*.)

Marty Helgesen: I have indeed heard it said explicitly that the Bible is the final authority on all subjects, whether or not they are mentioned therein.

From: **Joy V. Smith** August 30, 2007
8925 Selph Road, Lakeland, FL 33810-0341 USA
Pagadan@aol.com
<http://journals.aol.com/pagadan/JoysJournal/>

Thanks for all the news and reviews. *Ascent* by Jed Mercurio sounds intriguing for those who know the moon/cosmonaut background or want to know more. *Troublesome Young Men* sounds like an enlightening look at pre-WWII England. What is the time frame?

It covers the last part of the thirties and up to the fall of the Chamberlain government, with comments about what happened to them afterwards (i.e., Macmillan chasing Boothby's letters to Lady Dorothy all over his garden).

— JTM

How funny is *The Government Manual for New Wizards*? It doesn’t sound as funny as *The Tough Guide to Fantasyland*. *My Tank is Fight: Deranged Inventions of WWII* sounds even more interesting than the earlier-mentioned historical books. And then there’s *Warrior Heir*, history for younger readers. Thanks, Lisa, for bringing that to our attention, along with the others. (We’ve got to share more books with kids.) And I enjoyed your piece about what attracts you to new books.

The Confessions of a Teen Sleuth (Nancy Drew, et al) sounds good. Thanks, all, for the reviews, including the book of feary cartoons by Nicola Cuti, whom I’ve never heard of. I learn so much from these reviews! The candy bars review was enjoyable also. Btw, I recently saw an ad for raspberry M&Ms.

While the LOCs are always interesting, I especially enjoyed Sue Burke’s report on the other bull fights in Spain. And I liked your Siamese cat mention, Lisa. Well said. And the Matrix/Ring hybrid on the last page was fun.

From: **Trinlay Khadro** September 3, 2007
P.O. Box 240934, Brown Deer, WI
53224-0934 USA

<http://www.trinlayk.etsy.com>
<http://stores.ebay.com/Silly-Kitty>

I’ve been a bit ill this summer, but doing ok. I think it was mainly triggered by a slew of family obligations early in the summer starting with Memorial Day weekend.

I’ve been excitedly been getting some items ready for the Art Show at Windycon, which I intend to actually get to! I’m also working on a packet to send to the Art Show for ConStellation, that one is going to get mailed in.

(Of course, you can still get my work at: stores.ebay.com/Silly-Kitty and trinlayk.etsy.com and see my photos at: flickr.com/photos/trinlayk. Including photos of me in my yukata for the “We can’t go to Yokohama” pity party we had with a few friends in Milwaukee.)

One might think the AP reviewer for *Exposure* hadn’t even seen *Blade Runner*. Though one somewhat wonders if in 2017 whether people will have any idea who Humphrey Bogart and Clark Gable were, besides movie buffs.

Bogland: We’re there people role playing GOR not so long ago? If the characters are seen as tough, or having admirable qualities, we’ll see people R.P.ing them... We even see people R.P.ing villains from Japanese tv shows that haven’t yet aired in the US.

I almost bought the “Manual for New Wizards” and may have to go back and get it.

All the Time in the World: Nothing says you can’t be “Uncle Johnny” to other people’s children, or help new fans find their feet... Parenthood has it’s down sides too. The pukes in the middle of the night, or the illness the doctor can’t be bothered to find out the source of, and blows off as “anxiety”/“school phobic”.

On the other hand, eventually they reach the age where at 7pm they say “Going to see a movie with friends, BYE...”

And when you call them at 1am are told “I’m at so&so’s house watching videos, be home soon.” And when you call at 6 am are told “I’m on my way home now.” :-) (It’s really OK, I trust her AND the friends she was with.)

Moonchild, and Others: I’m going to have to order that... and see if he’ll let me preorder #2 and #3... I’ve never seen them, but just KNOW they’re pretty cool. :-)

Martin Scriblerus: Also looks like fun. Though I don’t think I’ve ever quite managed to get my hands on a full length copy of Gulliver.

Alexander Slate: I like the term “First Nations” too. I’m also tickled by the idea that every now and then archeologists find something completely new... either about the First Nations, or others who came and ‘discovered’ them. I recently (well within several years) heard about a village in the Pacific Northwest, that had been buried in a landslide some time before 1800... among the artifacts, Japanese steel blades. Shipwreck? Trade? Who knows.

I heard that the burial was c.1490. Likely explanation for the knives: drifting fishing boat.

EB: My experience with insufficient information from the phone line, whether it's the Government or merely Customer Service, is that they now have to deal with me 3 or 4 times, if they haven't solved my problem appropriately the first time. Handling things as they come to you, and really getting it taken care of, actually reduces the work load!

This might mean having an aggravated customer IN THE OFFICE, asking for a manager when the phone call wasn't sufficient. (Isn't the phone there to reduce the walk in traffic?) Or an email, or a paper letter to the management when the website that everyone sent me to when I called didn't have a way to solve my problem.

If this is a customer service situation, I'll find another source to purchase from, (bad for Business for #1) and I'm likely to talk about my bad experience. I might not tell all my friends about a good experience, but I'll certainly tell them about my bad one!

John Purcell: Don't forget to put me on the mailing list for your zine! Especially if you decide to use the artwork I've sent.

Dainis: Most likely the girl from Africa, wouldn't think of the place she lived as "Africa" but rather "The land of the ___ fill in Tribal name here ___ people." Or by the name of some local geographic feature, by what ever it's local name is.

Alexis: Kinko's has that form, an their policy, that even though it's just a copy for your wall, out of a book you bought... they'd been sued (mid 80s ish) about copying copyrighted material. In particular, there seemed to be hassle about professors copying a chapter out of a book as hand out material for a course, rather than having students purchase the whole book. I was in school when it went suddenly from, "Here's the only copy out of this book we'll need" or "the only 4 pages you'll need." To "We can't do that anymore, go to the library, sit there, and read those 4 pages. . ." and the Professors leaving things reserved at the reference desk for us.

Jim Stumm: I suspect MOST people don't really care if other people engage in polygamy. (Or for that matter, much of any other sort of marriage, really affects most people.) However, in some rather high profile cases, out west, (not sure if they were actually in Utah or just someplace equally remote.) there were attendant issues of one Polygamist forcing his teen, underage daughter to marry one of his much older friends. She yelled, and Child Protective Services got involved. Another included a man with several wives and a school full of children, but that a large % of those children and wives were on AFDC. Yeah, sure, "dad" is around, but there's no way anyone can afford that many children and have stay at home moms.

At the same time this story aired, there were people who were scolding me for being a single mother, never mind that I was divorced and didn't have an ex who was going to pay child support. Somehow, needing occasional assistance, and having to go to work and leave a child in day care was entirely MY fault . . . and somehow affected them deeply, even

though it wasn't their life to deal with. If you go to work and have to send your child to day care, you are abandoning your child . . . If you stay at home and go on assistance, you are lazy and a leech on society. Never mind the other parent who decides to disappear and evade the court ordered support of that child.

Right now the CPS scandal du jour is about a British woman who will lose her child after birth. A paediatrician who never saw her personally wrote a letter saying she would be at risk for Munchausen Syndrome by Proxy, and so the children's services there ruled that she would lose the child.

Milt Stevens: If I use a pseudonym on line, it'll be one my friends know . . . but not necessarily something my employer would stumble across and presume was me. Not that I'm posting anything incendiary or indecent.

Employers can have strange biases, many of my hobbies (SCA, fandom) are just too weird for some of them. (yes, fandom tends to freak a lot of "normal" people out...) If I were still able to work, I don't think I'd want an employer or prospective employer thinking I'm any stranger than they already do. Come on gee! I actually used my breaks and lunch to read! Who does THAT anymore?

Me.

— JTM

Drive Safely: OMG! That was my grandmother! When she passed a car along to us kids, she'd TAUGHT it how to speed. ("It was the car officer, Grandma taught it to speed . . . really!") It was a great car.

Hope to see some of you at Windycon!

From: **Rod E. Smith** September 3, 2007
730 Cline Street, Frankfort, KY 40601-1034 USA
stickmaker@usa.net

Lloyd Penney mentions Brooke McEldowney's comic strips. I have only seen those online, and have been enjoying both *Pibgorn* and *9 Chickweed Lane* for years. And, yes, Brooke insists he's actually male. :-)

Jim Stumm mentions a story in which an Orbiter is modified to fly to the Moon. As he notes, that's nonsense, for several reasons.

The Shuttle's main engines burn hydrogen and oxygen from the external tank. Once that is jettisoned they are shut down for the remainder of the mission. From then on, all acceleration, deceleration, attitude control and so forth are handled by much smaller engines burning non-cryogenic storable propellants. (IIRC these are mixed hydrazines for the fuel and nitrogen tetroxide for the oxidizer.) Not only can the three main engines not burn these, there's no plumbing to bring those propellants to them. And there is nowhere near enough of the storable propellants on board to put the Orbiter

into a Lunar trajectory. Even if you filled the cargo bay with extra tanks that wouldn't be enough. The Shuttle is just too massive. (Look at the Apollo service module and command capsule. Only the latter actually landed safely back on Earth, and it was a fraction the size of the service module. Which was mostly propellant tanks.) The whole concept of taking an Orbiter to the Moon is, frankly, stupid. An Orbiter has things useless for such a mission (such as wings and wheeled landing gear) which would have to be taken along or cut off (And then what do you do when you want to land?). It also lacks sufficient heat shielding to survive reentry from a Lunar return.

There are small amounts of H2 and O2 on board to run the fuel cells and provide electricity, but even if you could get those to the main engines that wouldn't be enough for those massive burners to even get properly started.

The way you use the Space Transportation System (aka The Shuttle aka the Space Shuttle) to get to the Moon is to make two or three flights to put a command module and lander and the propellants they need for the mission in LEO. Use atmospheric braking on the return to save fuel, but leave the command module in orbit (with the lander in lunar orbit) for re-use. Bring the crew the rest of the way home in the Shuttle.

Just learned something interesting. One suggestion for combating the rising CO2 level is to fertilize the oceans. Small amounts of minerals — especially iron — have a vast stimulating effect on plant plankton. A few thousand tons of finely divided iron spread over large areas of deep ocean could result in the capture of millions of tons of CO2.

However, it now looks like this is happening naturally. Ocean biologists noticed plankton blooms around icebergs in the North Atlantic. It turns out that many icebergs — especially those which are now from areas where the glaciers have retreated onto land — have a significant load of rock, scraped from the ground by their passage or fallen onto them while they're still in steep-walled valleys. This includes a large amount of fine material from thousands of years of grinding between the ice and bedrock. This rock is literally fertilizing the oceans around glaciers as they melt.

I was looking at Sir Wally Herbert's *Polar Deserts* (1971), particularly where he discussed how human-generated pollution was causing the Earth to cool off.

— JTM

From: **Sheryl Birkhead** August 31, 2007
22509 Jonnie Court, Gaithersburg, MD
20882-3422 USA
catsmeouch@yahoo.com

I have been playing with software and trying to figure out just what you can use to play with *Photoshop*. So far I am still quite clueless about what stuff is appropriate for *Photoshop*—but I keep playing. I tried using *Alexiad* as the title — and thought I would go ahead and print out on

the backs of some of my attempts. I still do not have it figured out yet, but . . .

I read the candy bar reviews with gusto (if one can do so) and then went looking for the products. As of today I have not been able to find any of them. I will continue to look.

I just saw *The Last Mimzy* (uh-is that supposed to be an s?) as a *Netflix* choice and really like it as a modern day fable. Then, just saw the little girl that played the co-star — in a commercial, so she (or at least her representative) is taking advantage of her marketability. Of course I now wish I had seen the movie before this. It had the dubious distinction of being one of the few movies I might actually buy so I can review it.

I get seven of the fifteen zines listed — not too bad.

Alexander Slate — welcome to the DC area — traffic and all!

I was just reminded that, if I can get online, there are worldcon reports starting to appear. I have absolutely no idea of where, but maybe if I can get online and just Google the con, something will pop up. Of course, by the time you get this, the Worldcon will be history, but in this moment I need to hunt and see what I can find out about this groundbreaking first. . . .

Um . . . your 6x9" envelope **does** meet the new postal regulations, at least by the clerks here. What your mailing did not meet was the thickness — they said it has to be less than 1/4" thick. So, if you can tuck the zine in the envelopes and then load on the anvils to flatten them out, you just might be able to get that lower postage. They really did know how to make big increases in the charges while looking as if they were actually reflecting lower costs. Heck, they actually say that the new fees are actually price lowering and there is no one watching to see just how much nose growth there is!

I see the mention of the current show *Siamese* — just locate a breeder of the appleheads to find the felines with more room in their brainpans. I cannot speak to their other attributes and they certainly will not be winning at catshows, but they **do** look like cats and not caricatures.

That's what *C'Mell* looks like.



C'Mell

— JTM

I just checked out the worldcon information and apparently it is (right now) about 10 a.m. on Saturday September 1 — and if I could only stay awake another 9 hours into the wee hours here — I'd be able to see who the new *Hugo* winners are. So, I guess I will be waiting until tomorrow to check. I might as well go ahead and add my congratulations to the winners and I just have to wait and see who they are!

John (Purcell) — not that you want to hear this (and yes, advisors are not all created the same!) for my Masters — my advisor kept me two hours after the rest of my committee had passed me! Yeah, and I thought he was supposed to be on **my** side!

I've been casting greedy (but broke) eyes at the new *iMac*. I simply cannot believe them it is simple a thin screen and a keyboard — all the guts are nearly contained in the "screen". It is soooooo pretty. At \$1499 it is cheaper than the tower I am trying to patch up. If I can figure out the patching software so I can access my records with the new *Mac*, then I start saving. The thing I need to remember is that these new *Macs* do not have the built-in modem — but I don't need a monitor. Ah, the highest end actually has a 1 TB hard drive! To avoid the problems that caused the system corruption (the thing is complicated), it is suggested that I get *DSL*. There is a catch — I cannot **get** *DSL* — it is not offered here. Okay, next is *FiOS*. *Verizon* is not playing fair! They say I **have** to change back to their phone service and they forget to mention that if you sign up for the service, they cut the copper lines going into your house. So, if the current goes out, you **really** do not have any phone service (i.e., you can not call to tell the electric company). All in all, I need to decide that if I have to stay with the dial-up, is it worth all the changes? My *ISP* tells me the line is only at a maximum of 26k instead of the purported 57k — and the company managing the lines agrees, but no one is willing to do anything about it. Caught between a rock and a hard place, with no one offering a pillow! I guess it is all academic at this point with the costs involved.

One of the young ladies that helps me with the *SPCA* cats took a *Harry Potter* tour/vacation. She brought me back a very nice photo of the *Hogwart's Express* and explained they took a two hour ride on it. I would imagine such a tour would be like a con on wheels.

Sue Burke — the *Lynches* just got back from almost two weeks in *Italy* and said they had not seen any of the much-publicized feral cat populations — wonder what you saw?

I see that you mention that *Lloyd Daub* is still collecting and sending out various little interesting tidbits. I've maintained for quite a while that he should pub his ish. If it would make any difference at all, I would promise to help out in the art/fillo department. It's worth a try!

From: **Alexis A. Gilliland** Sept. 1, 2007
4030 8th Street South, Arlington, VA
22204-1552 USA

Thank you for *Alexiad* 6-4 delivered by

timely Owl. I graduated from the radiation oncology course on August 29th, and Dr. Hanlan seemed quite happy to be delivering my grades to me. One detail will do: Instead of having my psa tested quarterly, he thinks testing every six months should suffice. Cool! Going to the dentist I was struck at how brief and puny the dental x-rays were compared to the anti-cancer radiation. Well, you say, brief can be understood, but puny? How do you figure puny when you can't feel anything? Possibly the size of the respective machines had something to do with it, not to mention the function the radiation was being applied to. Dental x-rays are nothing.

My new computer seems to be working fine, albeit there remains some going up the learning curve. However, the current plan is to put up a website for me, which involves scanning in the cartoons that have accumulated over past 30 or 40 years. About three thousand (including a few hundred collaborations with Rotsler) which I dug out of various piles, a mass of material which necessitated the purchase of an Epson scanner to cope with all that heavy lifting. Lee has been using Photoshop to clean up those scanned images, and right now I am redrawing the cartoons in *The Waltzing Wizard*, because it was printed on cheap paper, resulting in significant show-through, and it is faster and easier for me to redraw the cartoons than it would be for Lee to clean them up. At this point I'm about 3/4 done, and should finish up by Labor Day. Getting the website up should be done by the end of the month, and (given the labor of volunteers involved) surely no later than Halloween. If you happen to have my originals still on hand, returning them would be a kindness. Am I going to sift through all those boxes of fanzines to extract my cartoons manually? Not bloody likely.

The crisis dujour, if you make allowance for the fact that (a) it took place over several days, and (b) it has been pending for several months, was that Lee's desktop (circa Feb. 03) had been acting up, and when Photoshop stopped working, (under the strain of all those cartoons) she decided to reformat the hard drive. A tedious tactic, which had however, worked well in the past. Alas, she backed everything up on discs, but when she started to uninstall, the hard drive refused to permit uninstallation. Total bafflement, all the way up the line, and eventually the senior supervisor's supervisor said: "Wow. If that didn't work, I guess you'll have to buy a new hard drive." We decided it would be easier, and probably cheaper, to buy a new computer, if an XP could be found, so she asked around-more precisely she asked her computer guru to ask around, and there was this obscure geek shop unto which she and her computer guru wended their weary way, where they built a new XP to her specification while she waited. The said XP is now sitting up in her study, to be installed in the near future.

Mixing *The Matrix* with *The Lord of the Rings* worked surprisingly well, possibly because the melodrama of *The Matrix* is compatible with *TLoTR*, at least in small doses. ** George Price suggests that John D. MacDonald offered a most convincing

explanation of the conspiracist mindset in *Condominium*. Well not exactly, what he did offer was a very convincing portrayal of a conspiracist hiding from reality (the coming storm surge, his terrified wife) by immersing himself in the familiar texts of his conspiratorial fantasies. The scene and the character felt exactly right, but as a theoretical basis for anything, MacDonald's particulars don't generalize worth a damn.

As I get more experienced, I appreciate more John T. Sladek's works, such as *The Müller-Fokker Effect* (1974) with its conspiracist cryptographer who made his biggest ever decrypt — finding the secret message hidden in the value of pi, an order sent to a Soviet submarine off Odessa.

— JTM

In Joe's review of *Kushiel's Justice* by Jacqueline Carey, he says that the emphasis on magic and sexuality obscures its lack of significance to the plot. While I understand that plotting isn't every thing, sexuality can also obscure just about everything else, as the writer finds herself on the slippery slope leading to pornography. What magic obscures depends on the magician rather than the writer.

From: **Robert A. Lichtman** Sept. 5, 2007
11037 Broadway Terrace, Oakland, CA
94611-1948 USA
robertlichtman@yahoo.com

I was a little surprised to read your comments to Joy Smith in the August *Alexiad*: "I thought 6"x9" envelopes would beat the limit, but the post office said otherwise." I'd of course noticed that your issue before this one came folded in a 6x9 envelope, but hadn't paid attention to how much postage was on it. And this one came in the more usual 9x12. Did you run afoul of the quarter-inch thickness limit? I have of course a personal reason for wondering about this since *Trap Door* is sent in a 6x9 and I was looking forward to a decrease in cost from 87 cents apiece to 75 cents. I haven't taken a sample copy down to my local post office to check it out, though, and if I get information counter to yours I'll certainly let you know.

On the same subject Sheryl writes, "It looks as if I will be visiting the PO more frequently until I have the kinks worked out of the system." Unless there's something marginal about a specific piece of mail, I see no need for this. The rules and rates are pretty clearly spelled out at the USPS Website.

The clerks seem to have more uncertainty about them.

— JTM

From: **George W. Price** September 6, 2007
P.O. Box A3228, Chicago, IL
60690-3228 USA
price4418@comcast.net

August *Alexiad*:

I just noticed. As of the April issue, on page 1 the spelling of *Alexiad* in Greek letters changed to *Alexias*, ending with a sigma instead of a delta. What gives?

Martin Arbagi pointed out that it should.

* * * * *

Ah, that Harry Turtledove is a sly devil.

Item: In his Crosstime Traffic series — right now I'm reading *The Disunited States of America* — the home timeline inventors of crosstime transposition were Galbraith and Hester. I take this as a tribute to H. Beam Piper, in whose Paratime series the First Level inventors of transposition were Ghaldron and Hesthor.

Item: I recently read Turtledove's latest Videssos novel, *Bridge of the Separator*, (spoiler alert!) in which the renegade priest Rhavas sells himself to the powers of darkness. I was disappointed that at the end Rhavas does not get his comeuppance, but is set to live an unnaturally long life as a servant of Skotos, the god of evil. And that reminded me of something. The story seems to take place well before the time of *The Misplaced Legion* and its sequels. The master villain of the Legion series is the "deathless wizard-prince" Avshar. He ultimately suffers a terrible fate: in *Swords of the Legion* Marcus Scaurus and Viridovix send him off to eternal torment in the Ice realm of Skotos. As I was looking this up, I realized that "Avshar" is an anagram of "Rhavas." So he revised his name, and then got his comeuppance after all! That makes me feel better.

And he also goes by "Harvas" — another anagram!

* * * * *

Alexis Gilliland seems a bit dubious about Taras Wolansky's claim that "wage rates were kept artificially high during the Depression, . . . thereby causing the under demand for labor" (and thus high unemployment). He asks, "What was the mechanism that kept wages perniciously high?"

Well, there were several mechanisms.

There was massive government encouragement of unions, which exist primarily for the purpose of forcing wages above the level set by supply and demand. And I mean "forcing" literally, since back then a major way that unions made their high wages stick was by violently driving away workers who were willing to take lower pay. Federal and local governments tacitly cooperated by failing to protect the "scabs." (By the way, note that "scab" is a negative euphemism: it's a nasty term designed to make a good thing sound bad, like saying "nigger-lover" to mean anyone who is not a racist.)

There was the Davis-Bacon Act, which required that Federal contractors pay the "prevailing wage," invariably interpreted to

mean union scale. It was frankly stated at the time that this was specifically to stop poor blacks from "undercutting" the wages of whites. Otherwise black competition would lower wages to the level where everybody, white and black, could find a job.

There was the National Recovery Act, which used any number of ways to keep wages high. My knowledge of the NRA is scant, but I believe that in order to receive certain subsidies and other benefits, businesses had to promise not to lower wages. It was eventually declared unconstitutional, but did a lot of damage first.

There were numerous other techniques, since it was the proudly declared policy of the Federal Government to prevent wages from falling.

The thing was, hardly anybody except a few economists (who were scorned or ignored) understood that wages *needed* to fall, to bring them in line with the smaller money supply resulting from widespread bank failures. After all, if people are suffering from poverty, it is obvious that they will benefit from keeping wages high, right? This is a prime illustration of the old dictum that for any problem there is a solution that is simple, clear, and wrong.

* * * * *

Jim Stumm says that in the 1950s he "read about Federal agents raiding some peaceful polygamists" who were doing no harm and he was outraged. He asks, "Where in the Constitution, in which of the enumerated powers, is the Federal Government given any authority at all over marriage relations?" Well, the Constitution doesn't authorize any such thing, any more than it authorizes any Federal sway over abortion or health or education. All the same, we have Roe vs. Wade and Medicare and No Child Left Behind. When our benevolent rulers really really want to intervene, excuses can always be found. Or invented.

I seem to recall that the Federal Government only indirectly suppressed polygamy among the Mormons, by refusing to admit Utah to the Union until Utah amended its laws to forbid polygamy. (And by hinting that otherwise there would be war.)

Mr. Stumm also says, "It's not that I think polygamy is that good an idea, but it's the private business of the people involved." I'm not so sure of that.

First, I strongly suspect that polygamy will almost inevitably lead to treating women as second-class citizens, if not as outright property.

Second, since males and females are born in equal numbers, for every man who has, say, four wives, there have to be three other men with *no* wives. This might make little difference if polygamy is restricted to a very few rich or powerful men. But if it is so widespread that there are large numbers of young men who cannot expect to find wives, there just might be some undesirable social effects. One possibility is that the surplus men might be ripe to become troops for aggressive leaders bent on dictatorship at home or conquest abroad.

Strangely enough, these comments have also been made in regards to a certain widespread belief-system notorious of late. Then too, I've read of young men being kicked out of Rulon Jeffs's Mormon Fundamentalist [polygamist] sect because there are no wives for them.

— JTM

Finally, at the emotional level, polygamy is so completely out of step with the basics of our society that those who practice it cannot expect to be treated with anything but loathing. This opens the question, to what extent can a society justly forbid something, not because it has specific harmful effects, but simply because it is disgusting and repellent to the great majority?

From: **Henry L. Welch** September 10, 2007
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<http://people.msoe.edu/~welch/tkk.html>

Thanks for the latest *Alexiad*. The new postage rates are not entirely solved by folding a letter-sized zine and using 6x9 envelopes. The envelope also has to be thinner than 1/4 inch.

In reading E.B. Frohvet's story about the mourning dove. My initial impression was he was going to tell us that the dove had used him for excretory target practice.

From: **Dainis Bisenieks** 8/24-9/10, 2007
921 S. St. Bernard Street, Philadelphia,
PA 19143-3310 USA

The Oxford Dictionary of the American Language, 2nd ed., has geas, don't know about the first. Under a different spelling, the word was in the old OED, but all the citations had it as an Irish word being explained; it was not *used* as a word in English. It is so used in Cabell's *Figures of Earth*, 7th chapter:

"I do not know," said Manuel, "but I suppose it is because of a geas which is upon me to make myself a splendid and admirable young man in every respect, and not an old man."

But what, then, is Cabell's source?

I've added a cheaply got (two bits) *Domnei* to the row of Kalki editions; it's remarkable how eye-catching those brown covers are, unlike in aspect to any other books of that era. Those I have (lacking only the novels of recent times, like *The Rivet in Grandfather's Neck*) have a look of actually having been read. Not quite all of them, as yet, by me.

Three consecutive Juno Press fantasy novels had something wrong with their moons. One was too complicated to describe; in another, successive moonrises came earlier; in the third, full moons were less than a week apart. (Oh, I gave an account of the first already; anyway, three in a row. The editor is not ungrateful . . .)

Going off to college, Hilary requested a

small set of books for leisure reading. I was happy to oblige with *Lyonesse* (his introduction to Jack Vance); *A Wizard of Earthsea* (intro to Le Guin, and an antidote to Harry Potter); *To Say Nothing of the Dog*; *Poseidon's Gold* by Lindsey Davis (not the first, but this was like the others a handy lending copy); he was already in the middle of *Titus Groan*. I found his bookmark at the scene where Steerpike, Cora, Clarice, and Dr. Prunesquallor are talking about birds. But the episode I most want to allude to, once he finished reading, is the Flay — Swelter finale, my favorite literary tour de force.

Since you mentioned them in proximity, what do you think of Vance's lunar arrangements in *Marune: Alastor 933* (1975)?

I had been thinking that Peake's characters are least likely to have counterparts in the real world, though indeed I have met a very nice Prunesquallor, allowing that Peake's portrayal is in every way a caricature. But upon reading a magazine article on Putin. I realized — he is Steerpike! An unburned and sane one, insofar as anyone aiming for absolute power can be considered sane (Caligula, Hitler, Bokassa, Idi Amin, Shaka). Whether or not he privately gives way to little fits of glee cannot, of course, be known.

I was startled and pleased, a while back, to get a letter from the daughter of my Polish correspondent, a known sharer in the books I send from time to time. The works of "Ellis Peters" had already been supplied and, though no request had ever been made, I was sure that Edith Pargeter would also be of interest. When an omnibus edition of the "Brothers of Gwynedd" novels, a library discard at 25¢, came to hand, I duly sent it. Meanwhile she had been trying, and in vain, to get this same from England; then, on a visit, she was surprised and pleased to see the book sitting on the table and promptly claimed the right to read it first. A true booklover! But the book was not unannounced, and indeed I had previously sent an odd volume of the set, of which no word ever came back to me. What's Polish for "You never told me."? In my own family I have long encouraged the volunteering of information.

Belatedly reading the Sept. 2005 *Smithsonian*, I learned that what Marcus Didius Falco and his companions discovered (in *The Iron Hand of Mars*) has lately been rediscovered, namely the site of the last encampment and defeat of the legions of Varus. With the rediscovery of classical texts, knowledge of the victory of Arminius ("Hermann") helped to make the Germans feel full of themselves. In the 19th century, they built a large, ugly monument, not missing the true site by too many miles.

After WWII my father was in a labor troop recruited from Displaced Persons. A photo shows a bunch of them, small against the base of a colossal monument; I had wondered if that was it or something else. A frieze in high relief has a central horseman; a lot of writing beneath

it cannot be read except for the larger bottom line with the famous "watch on the Rhine" words. Beneath that is an unmistakable river god.

I've been reading this and that on WW II, mostly from the library. *Miracle at Midway* by Gordon W. Prange tells me a lot, including the Japanese side, that I had not known, but offends with its profusion of cliches. I much preferred the dry style of Roger Hesketh's *Fortitude: The D-Day Deception Campaign*. It was fascinating to read about double agent GARBO and his merry crew of sub-agents and informants, all of them imaginary. It came to mind that *National Geographic* (June 1943) devoted a whole issue to insignia of the U.S. Armed Forces, later revealed to include fictional units that could be deployed as necessary.

Ghost Army of World War II by Jack Kneeece was diffuse and badly written; it could have been boiled down to some 10,000 words. In Normandy and beyond, this unit flitted hither and yon with its sound trucks and other devices, causing the Germans to weaken other sections which were then hit by genuine forces.

What I read about Hungary and occupied Ukraine I will not relate. Nothing that I experienced was the stuff of nightmares.

Throwing out more ballast, I have achieved what must really now be the shortest short story in the world; but you have to know the allusions.

NOT THE THING
"Snake!"
Korzybski . . . paused.

Also too clever is this "Knock, knock" joke:

". . . Ottorino."
"Ottorino who?"
"Otorhinolaryngologist."

While the King Tut exhibit was on, security personnel outside the Franklin Institute could be seen on those wosname two-wheelers, and I thought: science fiction! More specifically, the Hubert Rogers cover for "The Roads Must Roll". The Rogers cover came to mind, too, when I recently re-read *Methuselah's Children*.

So Heinlein predicted the Sedgway, the way he predicted the cell phone (in *Space Cadet* (1948; NHOL G.070)).

But I am happy enough not to be burdened by my onetime collection of zines. Whatever in them is for me re-readable (and a few things about which I am of two minds), I have in book form. Meanwhile I am reading the space operas of Elizabeth Moon . . . which have a tendency To Be Continued. For that matter, Bujold's *The Sharing Knife* is also To Be Continued; the second book had no proper resolution. To be sure, life does tend to go on; I can think of a number of Jack Vance novels in which the principals, having utterly changed the conditions of their existence, look at the future with a certain perplexity.

The last paragraph of *The Book of Dreams* (1981), is to my mind the best example of this.

A name tag dropped on the sidewalk caught my eye: Aquila Hwan Lee. Adding to my delight is my knowledge of a fictional Aquila. Also not bad is the name of Numa Droz (quoted in a History of Switzerland that I have).

At wakeful moments I caught glimpses of the recent lunar eclipse, something I'd just as soon not miss. My favorite is the partial eclipse seen as I was climbing up Masada by the Snake Path, some forty years ago. The date, if one cares, is easily found.

The recent lunar eclipse was in Saros 154, which began on July 19, 1917 and will end on August 25, 3179.

— JTM

From: **Jim Stumm** September 11, 2007
Post Office Box 29, Buffalo NY 14223-0029 USA

George W. Price: What the Founders may have intended doesn't matter. They disagreed among themselves and had numerous different aims and goals. But they settled on one sequence of words, and what matters is the meaning of the words they wrote in the Constitution. The wording of the First Amendment is absolute, no exceptions, but it originally applied only to the Federal Government: "CONGRESS shall make no law . . . abridging the freedom of speech or of the press." This says nothing about what State legislatures may do. Libel, slander, in fact all common crimes, were to be left to the States to deal with. The Federal Government was given powers mainly concerning interstate and international affairs. Domestic affairs were to be left primarily to the States. But for all that, newspapers in the Federal period were full of libels and slanders against political opponents.

Pornography was not a concern as long as it was so expensive that only rich gents could afford it. It wasn't until printing became much cheaper towards the end of the 19th century, and photography was invented, leading almost at once to filthy "postcards", that a great moral panic ensued. Then some people began to fear that the undisciplined lower classes could have their passions aroused by this stuff, leading to who knows what sort of riotous behavior. Enter Comstockery.

Hence the Tumble-Bug in the passage added to the second edition of *Jurgen* (1919, 1926), who cries, "Now, by St. Anthony!"

As for polygamy, it's the Tenth Amendment rather than the first, that outlaws any Federal Government prohibition: "the powers not delegated to the United States . . . are reserved to the states respectively, or to the people." Marriage regulations are among the innumerable powers not delegated to the

Federal Government. This is entirely a matter for State Governments. The only Federal interest is the "full faith and credit" clause, which means that any change in status — e.g., marriage, divorce, contracts, debts — which is legal in one State, must be accepted as valid in all States.

Richard Dengrove: I assume that the Martin Scriblerus book doesn't use the term "Siamese twins", since Chang and Eng Bunker, 1811 to 1873, who were born in Siam, were the first conjoined twins to be called that, as far as I know.

They have a large number of descendants in North Carolina:
<http://engandchang.twinstuff.com/>

Alexis A. Gilliland: Among the measures that the New Deal used to keep wage rates high were the National Industrial Recovery Act of 1933 that had as one of its provisions that companies that enrolled could not lower wage rates. Another was the National Labor Relations Act of 1935 that gave Unions monopoly bargaining power, enabling them to secure above market wage rates for their Union members, thus benefiting the haves, Union members who had jobs, at the expense of the unemployed have-nots, 1000s of whom were black workers, since the Unions of that era were extremely racist. Also, the Davis-Bacon Act required excessively high wages in Federal contracts, especially after it was amended in 1935 so that contractors bidding on public works projects could not offer lower wages in order to permit a winning lower bid, although an army of unemployed would gladly have worked for far less. The first Federal minimum wage law was the Fair Labor Standards Act of 1938, so that didn't affect the early New Deal.

And if you want to see the NIRA Eagle, watch the Marx Brothers' movie "Duck Soup" (1933). Rather goes against the movie. Or maybe not: "The last man nearly ruined this place, he didn't know what to do with it, if you think this country's bad off now, just wait 'till I get through with it."

<http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0023969/>
— JTM

Other measures were used to keep prices high, such as plowing under 10 million acres of cropland, and discarding 6 million farm animals, thus destroying food and driving up food prices while millions were hungry. This did aid farm owners, but it increased unemployment among landless farm workers, especially blacks in the South. So the New Deal put into place wage and price controls aimed at keeping both from falling, the opposite of the wage and price controls Nixon put into place in 1971 to keep both from rising. These government interventions, although perhaps well-meant, always have unintended bad consequences.

From: **Robert S. Kennedy** Sept. 18, 2007
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Thank you for Vol. 6, No. 4.

At approximately 1:00 a.m. on Thursday, August 9, I was awakened by a shaking house. Still more asleep than awake my mind said "earthquake". It stopped and I went back to sleep. It was a 4.5 and centered in the same general area as the 6.5 1994 earthquake in Northridge. That's 30 or 40 miles from here. The 4.5 shakes things a bit, but no damage.

In Vol. 6, No.3, I mentioned that during the summer here we have Concerts in the Park. The park is next to the City hall and has a band stand. They sometimes have a movie and on August 25 the movie was *Galaxy Quest*. Lots of families, lots of children, many people brought dinner and/or snacks. It was very enjoyable.

A lady friend of a friend of mine (who was once in Army Counter Intelligence) gave him a copy of *Term Limits* by Vince Flynn (1997). He mentioned it to me and I obtained a copy from the library. I have never previously read one of Flynn's novels and actually never heard of him. (It should be mentioned at this point that about the only non-SF that I read on a regular basis is Dean Koontz.) Anyway, I had a hard time putting the book down. I recommend *Term Limits* highly, especially if permanent term limits might interest you. I have now read the first six books in the series with three more to go, there being nine novels in the series with *Term Limits* the first and the just issued *Protect and Defend: A Thriller* (2007) the latest. One can only wish that the CIA were as well lead and as competent as depicted in Flynn's novels. Of course a number of years ago Congress, to a large extent, emasculated the CIA. So, Congress has a lot of the blame.

Having enjoyed John Varley's *Red Thunder* (2003), I looked forward to reading *Red Lightning* (2006). Came page 6 and my reading was brought to a complete halt. One of the characters is using a communication system and signs off with—"Over and out." This is completely incorrect usage and always stops my reading. I've covered this previously in several publications, but will do so again. "Over" means that it is the other person's turn to talk. "Out" means that's all, finished, goodbye, no more talking. The two phrases cannot be used together because they are mutually exclusive. So there! Also, he used "me" when it should have been "I"; but that may have been purposeful. On page 55 he refers to Boulder Dam. Well, that was its original name because (as I understand it) FDR did not want it named after his predecessor, a Republican named Herbert Hoover. The correct name, and what it is called now, is Hoover Dam. On page 89 he is a bit off concerning Christopher Columbus. That's especially the case if Simon Wiesenthal is correct. (See *Sails of Hope: The Secret Mission of Christopher Columbus* [1973]). Then he uses "sci-fi" on page 214, something that always bugs me. So, anyway, I did not

enjoy *Red Lightning* anywhere near as much as *Red Thunder*.

I finally got around to reading Orson Scott Card's *Empire* (2006). I had a problem with what must be considered a glaring omission. Averell Torrent received the presidential nomination of both the Democrat and Republican parties. He went on to be elected President by the largest ever popular vote. However, there is no mention of a Vice President. That would have been a problem between the Democrats and Republicans.

Our War on Drugs is a "Trotskyite movement?"—Excellent!

Thanks for mentioning *Habitable Planets for Man* (1964) being available as a free download from the Rand corporation. However, it's 169 pages and that's too much for me to print.

Excellent review of *Saxons, Vikings, and Celts: The Genetic Roots of Britain and Ireland* (2006) by Bryan Sykes. I have the book and recommend it highly to anyone interested in the subject. "We all came from the same beings, so racism is hating your relatives." Last year while waiting at the dentist I was discussing the subject with the Black receptionist. I commented that we all go back to the beginning whatever the beginning may have been. She said that makes us all brothers and sisters. I said no, that makes us all cousins. But, I and the world could do without some of the cousins.

Johnny Carruthers: "All the Time in the World"—I found it rather depressing.

George W. Price and Marty Helgesen: I would hardly compare polygamy with human sacrifice, Thuggee, and Suttee. I'll agree with Jim Stumm's comments to me on the subject (p. 19). I obtained *Under the Banner of Heaven* (that was mentioned by Joe in comment to Jim) from the library. Upon opening the book it was immediately obvious that I had read it previously. (Probably the result of Joe's review in V. 2 #4.)

Marty Helgesen: I agree with you concerning Hate Crimes. The crimes to which they refer are already covered by laws. And, as you say, Hate Crimes are "applied selectively" (especially by race).

Joseph T Major: Thank you for identifying the destroyer across from the *Constitution* as the USS *Cassin Young*, a Fletcher Class. I should have made clear that my brother John was also with me at my ship reunion in 1998. He was very disappointed that only limited access was allowed to the *Cassin Young*. This was, of course, made up for in 2005 in Buffalo when he was able to crawl all over *The Sullivans*.

It took us so long to get down from Toronto that we never got to do more than step on the deck of *The Sullivans* before the man told us it was too close to closing time. (We went on to Erie, and spent the night in the same Red Roof Inn that E. B. Frohvet had been in not too long before.)

— JTM

From: **Jason K. Burnett** September 22, 2007
4903 Camden Avenue North,
Minneapolis, MN 55430-3544 USA
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Not really a LOC here, as I don't really have any comments this time around. I just wanted to drop you a line and let you know that I had read and enjoyed the latest *Alexiad*, even if nothing particularly inspired me to comment.

From: **Taras Wolansky** September 26, 2007
100 Montgomery Street., #24-H, Jersey
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Alexiad, August 2007:

H. Beam Piper's Lord "Kalvan privately disdains religion"? Not how I remember it. He doesn't believe in any, but considers some of them socially beneficial. In particular, he likes how worship of the war god restrains soldiers from committing atrocities.

John Purcell: "As a result, we're stuck with videotapes, DVDs, and reading the text" of Shakespeare's plays. I gather that the published versions were intended to be read, not performed. Especially *Hamlet*, that big Russian novel of a play (four hours in Kenneth Branagh's version), in which the first editors collated material from several different performing versions.

E.B. Frohvet: Just to be clear, the line about evangelicals being "low grade morons" was quoted, with disapproval, from another correspondent.

Lloyd Penney: Curious how people throw around the label, "fascist". Some years back I had an interesting exchange with Don D'Ammassa about his using the word to describe the society of Heinlein's *Starship Troopers*. He eventually admitted that, by his standards, both America prior to 1920 and Switzerland up to the 1970s were "fascist" countries. Because they didn't let women vote!

Misreading the novel, D'Ammassa imagined or extrapolated that few women would have the right to vote, which qualified as fascism in his mind.

Similarly, the regimes of Franklin Delano Roosevelt and Woodrow Wilson were more "fascist" than the current administration. Take a look sometime at the hardly inflammatory speech that got Eugene Debs sentenced to ten years in prison under Wilson's Sedition Act. Debs was imprisoned in 1919, even though the war was over by then, and stayed in prison until Wilson's Republican successor commuted his sentence in 1921.

That's a pretty idiosyncratic definition of "Fascism", even by modern standards. For a description of Wilson Winning the War for Democracy, read the chapters of Jurgen set in Hell, Cabell commented subtly.

George W. Price: "[JFK conspiracists] don't want to live in a world where a

worthless sack of [manure] like Lee Harvey Oswald can bring down the most important ruler on the planet." As somebody recently pointed out, another factor was that JFK's killer being a dedicated Communist did not fit the developing narrative or myth of JFK as the Parfit Gentil Progressive. Few people chose to remember that JFK had attacked Eisenhower and Nixon as soft on Communism, during the 1960 election. (Or that his brother, Bobby, had Sen. Joe McCarthy stand as godfather to his baby daughter!)

Alexis Gilliland: "What was the mechanism that kept wages perniciously high [during the Depression]?" In *American's Great Depression*, Murray Rothbard quotes public statements in which pols and business leaders pat themselves on the back, because unlike previous (short!) depressions, *this time* they were not letting wage rates fall, and contribute to "underconsumption". Like Cyril Kornbluth's "Luckiest Man in Denv", they were doing their best to save civilization as they knew it. Later, of course, unionization was imposed and minimum wage laws passed.

An unemployed worker is an economic resource lying fallow. Thus, the next question must always be: why doesn't some greedy capitalist "exploit" him to make money?

Dainis Bisenieks: "A black slave girl [in a novel manuscript] was asked where she was from. Africa. No, no, I remarked, such a one would not know if Africa was a man or a horse." Actually, she would have picked up the name pretty quickly, I expect.

Review of Harry Turtledove's The Gladiator: "The intent of the game store was to infiltrate free-market ideas into this world." Reminds me of a subplot in Donald Kingsbury's *The Moon Goddess and the Son* (1986). A computer game subtly teaches that communism must be abandoned if the Soviet Union is to thrive. (Turned out the Soviet military had figured this out for themselves, around the time the book was published.)

Review of Bujold's The Sharing Knife: "Imagine Jed Clampett having to be the front line of defense against Cthulhu." Jed Clampett? Natty Bumppo, rather! This book is a kind of Gothic romance, in which the sweet young thing marries the powerful older man with dark secrets, navigates unfamiliar mores, and overcomes opposition from his family.

Natty Bumppo is a lawyer in Kentucky.

— JTM

From: **Jeffrey Allan Boman** Sept. 27, 2007
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QC H4V 2Y9, CANADA
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Hi this is Jeff from Jasper . . .
(I looked up a list of city names for this. So far I'm doing airports.)

I wanted to make the last deadline, but putting together and marketing my zine took up all of my time. Speaking of which: croft@bigfoot.com hasn't been working

properly for months, so if any of you e-mailed me there I didn't get to read it. I've created a dedicated gmail address for it that works: theoriginaluniverse@gmail.com.

I've got issue 2 ready to copy already, but not for the best reasons: my older cat has jaundice, and in-between feeding the poor beast I had to get my mind elsewhere. Then I realized this deadline was also approaching, so I'm writing this.

This LOC will be 3 issues worth of catch-up. Some of it will seem very dated; I have answers to some of Lloyd's comments on the Montreal 2009 Worldcon bid for example, and it won the bid in Japan. Still, it would feel rude for me to leave other folks writing in the dust.

(from Vol. 6, No. 2)

AL du Pisani: As messed up as South African politics are right now, at least they no longer include the racist crap of Apartheid. / You mention Baen books. I'm guessing they include tributes to the late Jim Baen now.

Christopher J. Garcia: Most of my writing deadlines and other projects are on a personal Getting Things Done wiki. Systems fill my life also. / Canada lost one of its 3 surviving WW I vets. I don't remember his name, so I'm not sure if you mentioned him.

There is one surviving Canadian WWI veteran and one WWI veteran in Canada. John F. Babcock (CEF) lives in Seattle, and Gladys Powers (WAAF) lives in Abbotsford, B.C. Powers is the last surviving female veteran of the war.

Richard Dengrove: Everything about the creation of Israel bothers me. The idea of human bombs killing innocents doesn't sit well with me either. Another case of two wrongs not making a right. I'm a little biased, granted: I have family there, including my sole living Great Aunt.

Taras Wolensky: 'Rosebud' is the name I gave to a chair in my home, actually. / 'Jericho' got better than that first episode as it progressed. The car crash wasn't as important though; the schoolbus of innocent children was.

Lloyd Penney: I actually put more design thought into my blogs. / I'm 40, and I still use my knapsack. When I'm in a bus though I take it off, and put it on my lap. / BTW, I may have said this before, but I'm glad your surgery is over and went well. / Keeping my hair . . . the funny thing is that at my salon I go to the boss (I've known her for more than 20 years now) always laughs when I think I'm losing hair, when she's had to cut more than many folks have.

(Feb 26)

I only started to attend ConCept again in 2005, after 6 years on the con.com. Ultimately I found con-running too stressful; I can enjoy a con more now.

(March 7)

I mentioned to Tamu about Kansas folks bad-mouthing Montreal when I saw her 10 days before Nippon. She was upset, to say the least. Anyway, comparing the bid to Con*cept was silly, since they aren't done by the same people. René was actually the con chair in 1995, one of our most successful in fact, when we had Spider Robinson as GoH. The next year we had Terry Pratchett; I won't go there . . . but it's true that we desperately need new blood to run our con. René was Programming chief as a last-minute favor last year. We hopefully won't need that again.

Steve Francis said that if Louisville had won the 1993 bid, he would have conscripted every fan in town to work on it.

Jason K. Burnett: I need to get off my behind and get more work out there myself. I didn't do much last year because of a computer crash, but outside of faanish stuff, I haven't got back on that horse still.

R. Laurraine.Tutihasi: Hopefully I'm still writing your name properly now. ☺

Alexis A. Gilliland: I have a colonoscopy scheduled next June (joy.bliss). Now that I hit 40, this will be a regular event for men.

Robert S. Kennedy: Speaking of Eureka, the second season has been picked up on *Space* here in Canada at least. One of my friends was in the 10th episode last year (he was the big guy who chased a regular character from his garden); he's returning to the role in season 2.

Re: The Doctor and the Grail . . . man I feel for that unfortunate statement. It works on several levels.

Sept. 27, 2007

Murphy's Law (more likely bad organization on my part) struck: at the moment I can't find issue 3. As a result I'll jump over to 4.

Congratulations Joe and Lisa on the new member of your family! To the parents as well, of course.

Christopher J. Garcia: Congratulations on your nominations! I guess there might be nominations for comic zines like mine. Maybe in San Diego (the major comic con). Mind you I'm just interested in a vibrant letter section and a big mailing list.

Joy V. Smith: Speaking of sexy vampire stories, Tanya Huff's *Blood Ties* TV series fits that bill.

Lloyd Penney: Two webcomics I recommend are *PVP* and *Penny and Aggie*. Their science fiction quotient is nil, but they're both well-drawn and entertaining. / My reunion was 23 years later. I talk about it briefly in my next zine. BTW: thanks for providing my first LOC.

Alexis A. Gilliland: I know too well the headaches of a computer going down. I sympathize.

Robert M. Sabella: I try to be an amateur mythology buff for China, but that subject covers a lot of ground.

George W. Price: The 300 was a film version of Frank Miller's graphic novel, that based on the old stories. They likely have no veracity; it was just fun to watch.

Milt Stevens: I operate several blogs and a Livejournal. None are under assumed names; I have a nickname on Livejournal but everything on my profile is real.

Robert S. Kennedy: Before the network became the CW (it was a WB here) they cancelled *Angel*. It's really not known for maintaining good shows. In that it's nearly as bad as FOX.

Marty Hegelsen: Me, a snake? I think of myself more similar to a mephit or an ibis, actually. Those animals aren't similar; they reflect different aspects of my personality.

Re: The Ring Reloaded . . . heaven help us if the Wachowskis got their hands on *The Lord of the Rings*!

Couldn't have been worse than when 4SJ made a stab at it.

— JTM

This is already a long LOC. See ya'll soon!

From: **John Hertz** September 24, 2007
236 S. Coronado Street No. 409, Los Angeles, CA 90057-1456 USA

When Frohvet said "Nobody remembers who finished second," I was surprised two classicists like you didn't refute him with the Themistocles "Best Admiral" poll.

How lonely must those teens be who are not as the mass media (self-servingly) portray them. How alert we should be to currents pressing us away from taking the trouble to put forward anything of substance.

Thanks as ever for the horse and candy-bar reviews.

Japan was wonderful.

From: **Milt Stevens** September 27, 2007
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In *Alexiad* V6#4, Lisa discusses why she buys particular books. Since my house is already full of printed stuff, I don't buy that many books anymore. I still subscribe to all the paper prozines, and I buy the Hugo nominated novels every year. Any other purchases are on the basis of hearing of something. Since space is limited, I have to hear of something quite a few times before I actually am likely to buy. For instance, I've been meaning to buy a copy of *Last and First Men* for about the last thirty years. One of these days, I will probably actually buy it.

Joseph mentions that *Children of Hurin* might be nominated for the Hugo next year. It could be, but I doubt it will be. All I've heard locally is that it is mostly a book which would interest Tolkien completists. Nobody seems to feel it is all that good a book. Since the people I'm hearing say this are somewhere in the neighborhood of being Tolkien completists, the

book doesn't seem very likely to wow a general audience.

The movie *The 300* was mentioned a few times. I didn't bother with the film for a somewhat unusual reason. I don't like the way it looks. I don't even know what you call that process they used in the film, (I didn't like it is *Sin City* either.) but somehow the look of it utterly repels me.

That is an interesting datum that the most common words in the titles of bestsellers are Diet, Sex, Man, Woman, and House. In the right context, it might seem rather sinister. I seem to recall *Naked* was one of the selling words in book titles. People must have gotten used to *Naked* but still have to Diet in order to have Sex around the House. It all sounds pretty dull when you put it that way.

There was a period where "Naked Coed <whatever>" was a big thing on t-shirts around college. Mostly XXL t-shirts, and those under lower-end strain, too.

— JTM

I notice in my July 20 letter I mention working on the program for Loscon 34. I'm still working on it. I've been working on it pretty much continuously from then til now. I've finished idea development and am beginning on scheduling. Now, I have to develop some software so I can print out individualized schedules and also get the same schedules on 2" x 4" labels for the back of the name badges. Then I can work on doing the pocket program. I'm not going to do this job again next year.

From: **Lloyd Penney** September 29, 2007
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Another issue of *Alexiad*, whole number 34, has arrived, and time is at such a premium these days. This was the first week of my new job with the Canadian National Institute for the Blind in Toronto . . . such a good place to work, I am looking forward to being there quite a while, and I've never been able to say that about any job I've had. But, to make sure I am not without work at any time, I shall keep my Globe and Mail job until I have been at the CNIB for three months. So, there's not much time to write letters of comment . . .

Congratulations and good luck.

The Yokohama Worldcon . . . didn't go, of course, but heard lots of good things, and the usual complaints from people who went halfway around the world, only to find that things weren't like they are back home. You're in Japan, duh . . . At long last, the Japanese fans had their chance, and from all I've read, they've done a fairly good job.

I'm still amazed that young congoers won't do anything to facilitate their good time. I must admit, though, that during my first Worldcon in

1982, friends came to Chicago with us, and complained there was nothing to do. Even back then, they wanted to be entertained, instead of participating to enhance their good time. I can blame Creation Conventions, too, but I also blame television for making us demand our fun instead of making it ourselves.



I must wonder if anyone at Harlequin's Toronto head office even remembered Roger Elwood and his Laser Books. I remember authors like Jeter and Resnick in that series; they might have been among their first novel publications. I think Harlequin has since attempted SF or fantasy, but usually with a romantic flavour to them, definitely for the bored housewife rather than the SF or fantasy reader.

Their new Fantasy Romance line is Luna Books. They published *Laura Resnick's Disappearing Nightly* (2005; reviewed in *Alexiad* V. 5 #1) but they've also done a lot of stuff I found boring.

Your mention of ships to the moon remind me that I hope American viewers will get to see a quite good SF drama of the first manned mission to Mars called *Race to Mars*, produced by Discovery Channel Canada and British and French interests.

True, Franklin W. Dixon was a pen name for the Hardy Boys series of books, but there were at least some real people behind those pen names. Only a short time ago did many of us find out that that the most proficient and best regarded of all the Hardy Boys writers was Leslie McFarlane from just outside Ottawa. The best adventures of the all-American boys were written by a Canadian . . . and he also write some Nancy Drews under the pen name Carolyn Keene, too.

Letters . . . the fact not only is postage going way up, but the regulations for mailing stuff is changing rapidly, is one reason why the internet is so appealing for many, but it works the other way, too. The internet is appealing, which is why postage rates are going up. Post office has to get the money to finance itself.

My high school made Shakespeare extremely dull and boring. We'd slice and dice up two tragedies each year, with no variation. It got to the point we all developed a hatred for Shakespeare's works, and with something different in our final year of studies, we all did

well working on something else.

I saw Robert Zubrin at a local special event staged by Discovery Channel Canada, promoting that new *Race to Mars* I mentioned earlier. Zubrin knows his stuff, but he always winds up being the butt of the joke. He never seems to know when to shut up or let others speak, and he was no different with his visit to Toronto. *Race to Mars* posits a team of six people from the US, Canada, Russia, Japan and France making the trip and making it to Mars in spite of crooked companies making deficient components for the Martian lander, and the Chinese sending unmanned probes to find water and maybe life.

That is, not too unlike von Braun's *Project Mars* (2006; reviewed in *Alexiad* V. 6 #2). It was apparently written in the fifties. The publisher also has books by Zubrin.

— JTM

I have seen personal sites on MySpace and FaceBook . . . only those who really want the world to know who they are, what they are and why they are put all that personal information on their sites. Lonely? Poor self-esteem? Desperate for friends? All of the above?

A quick note to the Stargate fans here . . . rumour has it that there will be a third Stargate series. Not sure how much truth there is to it, but I know some people will be pleased at the prospect. Now to see how good that source is.

The Mormon religion has not permitted polygamy for many years now, but still people connect Mormons with polygamy. It was true once, but that was a long time ago.

Greetings to Paul Gadzikowski . . . just got through the entire archive of *Arthur, King of Time and Space*, and thoroughly enjoyed it, you're a sick man, thank you very much.

All done . . . took me long enough to get this done, too. Take care, and see you next time.

From: **Sue Burke** September 30, 2007
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Rome's Castel Sant'Angelo is the ugliest castle I've ever seen. My husband and I visited the caput mundi during early August, and the castle is symptomatic of the eternal city. It's original glory was lost when the monument, like many others, was neglected, abandoned, reused, altered, remodeled, and eventually renovated without necessarily much respect, interest, or even knowledge of its previous uses. Sometimes this creates a certain charm, but not in this case.

The castle began as Emperor Hadrian's mausoleum, completed in 139 A.D., a massive stone-clad earthen tumulus 64 meters in diameter, with the ashes of the emperor in a niche in the center. Three centuries later, now more a natural feature than a building, the cylindrical lump was incorporated into the city's

defensive walls against the gathering barbarian menace; five centuries later, it became a Vatican fortress; subsequent Popes, who used it as a residence during sieges, stacked rectangular living quarters onto the top, renovated previous additions, then added more improvements, resulting in a labyrinth of rooms, stairways, and corridors, some better preserved than others.

Still, it's fascinating to visit, and although the Emperor's niche is empty, we paid our respects: Ave, Caesar! Like all my favorite castles, it has a bar, located in the columned gallery Pope Paul III had built all around the upper perimeter of the tumulus. It's on the west side, under a trellis of grape vines, with a fabulous view of St. Peter's Basilica. My husband and I enjoyed tall mugs of Heineken and a late afternoon breeze. When you're inside looking out, you can't see the castle. Carpe diem.

About a kilometer southeast of the castle across the Tiber River, the Area Sacra is a square-block excavation of Republican ruins, the oldest in Rome, discovered in the 1920. The remnants include four temples and the entrance to the Curia of Pompey, where Julius Caesar was killed. Curiously, the Area is also used as a stray cat sanctuary, with adoptions available. The exact spot of the caedes dictatoris has yet to be excavated and lies under the tracks of Trolley Line 8.

The mortal remains of Divinus Julius were cremated on a pyre in the Forum Romanum, and the ruins of the altar erected to him on that spot have been uncovered archaeologists: a dusty pile of bricks protected by a roof and fence, and when I saw it, several bouquets of fresh flowers had been left as offerings. Apotheosis endures.

And that is why Brutus said to Cassius, "What are we doing down here with this Judean?" Judas was to chus end out so couldn't say why.

— JTM

And that's what I did on my summer vacation: veni, vidi, verbi.

From: **AL du Pisani** September 30, 2007
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Firstly my apologies for not writing sooner. I kept on forgetting deadline dates, and being very surprised that I had missed another.

Life had been hectic, and I was preparing to go to the Worldcon. Now that I have returned, I finally have some time for myself.

I have a new job. After two years of looking, I have a new job, and shall start on 1 November. And perhaps some of the grim resolution I had to muster to go to a job that had lost all hopefulness, will flow out of my life.

I have not been able to gather up enough enthusiasm to try and follow SA politics, through one disaster into the other, so I shall not try and tell you about it. Knowing that it looks as if we are sliding into the night, and hoping to

change course.

Now for a brief report of the recent Worldcon in Japan. In short, I enjoyed it, although it left me with a bit of the mutters, as I can see how and why both the Worldcon, the Hugo awards, and even the SFWA, are slouching towards irrelevance. And I really want to go back to Japan, and experience more of the country.

Japan was hot and humid. For somebody living a mile up, the contrast with the sea level humidity, and the heat, was terrible. In Yokohama, I could end up covered in sweat, after I stood still in the shade for five minutes. I can now see why there are vending machines on just about every street corner, most selling cold drinks. Including the oddly named, but refreshing, Pocari Sweat.

The venue was mostly very good, with only the functions held in the Exhibition halls being far away. Unfortunately, the functions in the exhibition hall included the art show (which I did not manage to see), dealers' room and games area. On two evenings, parties were held on the far side of the exhibition area. This was too far away from the main convention centre, to work well.

Programming was held from 10h00 to 18h00, with rare events in the evenings, and some of those were optional cost extras. The only extra event attended, was the tour to the Studio Ghibli museum. I enjoyed it thoroughly, and find it a pity that I did not even have time to get around to the museum shop.

Panels went to a large extent as panels go: Some are good, some are interesting, and you wonder why you even wanted to attend certain panels. I learned a lot, and found respect for some people I had not met before. For instance, Geoffrey Landis was an interesting speaker, and a better moderator. I also met a couple of people I lost a lot of respect for, for instance David Brin.

Language was a barrier. I have been taking Japanese lessons, and, while helpful, was not as helpful as I had hoped for. Events where there had to be translation, was most often marred by people ignoring the clear instructions given, which was that you should speak a couple of sentences, and then pause for translation, before continuing speaking. At the Hugo awards, Robert Silverberg was one of the few people who managed this incredibly difficult task, and used the time taken by translation as part of his performance. Too many others reeled off their story, accepted the awards, and often had already left the stage, before the poor translator could finish translating.

Which brings me to the Hugo awards. Joe asked me to be his acceptor, should he win. This granted me access to the pre-Hugo gathering, prime seats at the Hugo awards, and access to the post Hugo party. For a variety of reasons, one of which is that I can be painfully shy, this was an ordeal. To a very large extent I felt an outsider to a clique, which would welcome me, on their terms. (This was not a universal experience. Some people were kindness themselves, and made me welcome.) It was however clear that this was a meeting of people

who already know each other, and who were not interested in meeting unknowns.

What I found bad about the Hugos, were the following: That there were so few award winners attending. (As far as I can remember, only Naomi Novik, and 2 winners of Hugo awards, were at the ceremony. This may indicate that the Hugo awards ceremony should stay in the USA. Which open up other cans of worms.) That in certain categories, the people that have been winning for years, won again, without any indication that they will ever have enough Hugos to satisfy themselves. This in contrast to the Best Professional Artist category, where yet another artist had won and said that he had won enough.

However, some of the people attending gave me hope for a better future.

Parties: This was the most disappointing Worldcon I had attended, party wise. (The best was Buccaneer, in 1998. At Toronto, 2003, I only enjoyed the party our group threw.) Part of the reason was that there were very few parties, in part due to the cost. The cost was one of the reasons why we did not throw a party ourselves. In fact, cost was such an issue, that I did not sleep in any convention hotel, but was sleeping on the floor, in a youth hostel. (The main reason I was sleeping on the floor, was that is where the bed was.)

I was making jokes about tube hotel tubes going for \$200 per night per person, double occupancy. Now I'm becoming afraid they weren't jokes.

Buying stuff. The convention and dealers' room did have some nice stuff for sale, but most of them I saw late in the day. At first, I was blinded by the number of items for sale for the Japanese customer, so that I did not see the stuff for the international customer. But I did in the end buy some clothing, for myself and my family, and CD's. There were very few books in English, and none that I was interested to buy. And for a convention in Japan, the recent top export for fans, namely anime, was also in short supply.

Was it worth it? Yes. Shall I visit Japan again? Yes, once I have scraped up some money, and once I can speak and understand a bit more Japanese. Shall I go to a Worldcon again? Yes. I think the next one I attend, should be in the USA. Denver is too soon, so it may only be by about 2011 that I attend another.

The only 2011 bid is for Seattle. How about 2012?

— JTM

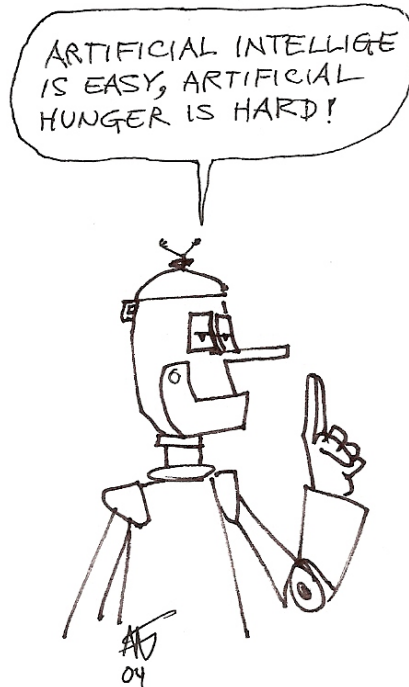
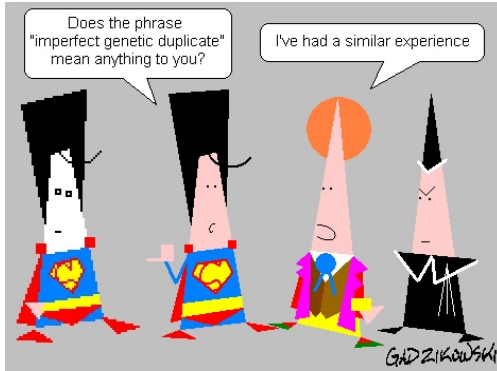
In any case, it is with more hope that I had in a long time, that I end this letter. Good luck to all reading.

WAHF:

Lloyd Daub, with various items of interest.
Patrick McCray, with thanks.

BIZARRE

by Paul Gadzikowski

**TOO MANY AGENTS**

... "A beer for Mr. Popov and another for myself," Wolfe said when Fritz came in the door. Then they resumed talking in Serbo-Croatian.

The doorbell rang and I excused myself to answer. There were two men there on the stoop, a bearded, balding fellow and a sly-looking man with a thin moustache. "I'm here for my appointment with Mr. Wolfe," the second guy said. He had a British accent.

"Myself also," the first man said; he sounded Spanish.

I led them into the office, saying, "Mr. Chapman and Mr. Garcia have arrived."

"Pujol," Mr. Garcia, or Pujol, said.

Popov turned and looked at them, "'Allo," he said, cheerfully. "How do you like New York?"

"It is a very fine city," Pujol said as he took one of the yellow chairs. "There are many famous people here. I hope to see Garbo."

"The shops are very nice, too," Popov said. "All the rationing and for export only goods back home . . . I'm going to go to Macy's and buy my son a tricycle."

Chapman had taken a seat and sat there looking rather cocky. He said, "I 'ad one of them when I was a nipper. Used to ride it all over the garden from 'ere to there and back again in a zigzag."

Wolfe listened to this banter, his lips moving in and out. Then he said, "Pfui. Gentlemen, my client Dr. Hall has asked me to question you regarding the break-in at his office at Sloan-Kettering. Archie, your notebook."

He threw questions at them for an hour. Pujol was the least guilty-seeming of them; he explained that he was doing translation work and meeting with a publisher here in New York. Popov and Chapman were, as they both put it, "pursuing business opportunities". All three of them had been to meet someone at the institute and gone by Dr. Hall's office prior to the break-in. They all had good reasons.

It was dinner and the doorbell rang. Wolfe was declaiming over the shallots on the topic of how the character-based nature of the Chinese languages facilitated their investigation of such mathematical topics as topology. Fritz had gone to answer the door, for he came in and said, "Mr. Goldfus, sir."

"Confound him!" Wolfe burst out. "He knows my hours!"

"He said it was most urgent."

"Bring him in, serve him a small portion, and he will not be permitted to talk business until after we have finished eating."

Dr. Hall's partner in the invention project entered. He was, as usual, rather disarrayed; weedy-looking, tall, thin, balding, and owl-eyed.

He took a seat at the table and said, "I beg your pardon for this, but Teddy was almost frantic for any news. He is such an eager youngster; I hope to make my mark in inventions and he works well with us. I happened to be in the area anyhow and I told him I would see you."

Wolfe glared at him until he began eating, then resumed the discussion of characters and their relationship to mathematics.

After Goldfus left, Wolfe stared into the air, his lips moving in and out. Then he said, "Pfui! All those people have something to hide. Archie, call Saul, Fred, and Orrie, have them here at nine in the morning. And Dol Bonner. I suspect Mr. Popov will be more responsive to a woman's wiles . . ."

— Not by Rex Stout

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