

ALEXIAD

(ΑΛΞΙΑΣ)

\$2.00

We were still grieving Wullie when the call from Dale and Tammi concerning Slim came. My first thought was no, this is way too soon. My second was but this cat needs a home now. An older animal is at a severe disadvantage in shelters. In a shelter they have to compete for slots with kittens. Most people prefer kittens. We are unusual in preferring older animals. We learned with Delenn that we are not really set up for dealing with kittens. Older animals generally are less expensive. More, they generally know what it means to be given a second chance. Wullie was truly a special animal. Sometimes it does mean heartbreak. We had Pericles and Wullie both for far too short a time. However, I would not have traded my four years with Wullie for any destructive little kitten. If I had not taken the oldest cat in the shelter I would have missed knowing a very special animal. There are more risks to adopting strays than there are to getting cats from shelters. Shelter cats have usually at least had their health checked and here in Louisville they are altered before being put up for adoption. Wullie's adoption fee was a bit less than I would have had to pay to get him fixed. You get no such guarantee with strays. I spent several anxious hours waiting to hear from the vet about Slim's health. Although we just adopted a stray who I think is another very special animal, I can't honestly recommend doing so because of the risk of heartbreak. A shelter cat is a much better deal or if you really must have a purebred you can usually find a breed rescue group online. They'll charge more for their animals than a shelter would but as an operator of my own private little rescue I suspect they spend more on their animals than they get back in adoption fees.

— Lisa

Table of Contents

Editorial	1
Reviewer's Notes	1
Cat News	14
Horse News	16
Hugos	
Janet Kagan	3
<i>Soldatensender Calais</i> Calling	3
Tornado Experience	14
Veterans	5
Book Reviews	
JTM Bibeau, <i>Sundays with Vlad</i>	10
JTM Fraser, <i>The Light's On at Signpost</i>	9
JCS Harrison, <i>When Languages Die</i>	16
JTM Hutchinson, <i>Elizabeth's Spymaster</i>	10
RSK Lowe, <i>Poison Pen</i>	16
RES Luciano/Colville, <i>Smokin' Rockets</i>	17
JTM Resnick, <i>Starship: Mercenary</i>	7
JTM Ronson, <i>The Men Who Stare at Goats</i>	9
JTM Stross, <i>Halting State</i>	6
JTM Weber, <i>Off Armageddon Reef</i>	6
JTM Williams, <i>The Foresight War</i>	8
Film Reviews	
JTM <i>Cashback</i>	13
JTM <i>Chobittsu</i>	11
RSK <i>Hogfather</i>	18
Candy Bar Reviews	
JC Brach's Cinnamon Christmas Nougats	17

Fanzines Received	19
Con Reports	
JTM ConCave 28	13
JTM Sherlock Holmes/Arthur Conan Doyle Symposium 27	14
Random Jottings	2
Letters	20
Dainis Bisenieks, Sheryl Birkhead, Sue Burke, Richard Dengrove, Brad W. Foster, Christopher J. Garcia, Alexis A. Gilliland, Marty Helgesen, John Hertz, Robert S. Kennedy, Trinlay Khadro, Evelyn C. Leeper, Lloyd Penney, AL du Pisani, George W. Price, Robert M. Sabella, Alexander R. Slate, Joy V. Smith, Rod E. Smith, Milt Stevens, Jim Stumm, Gina Teh, R-Laurraine Tutihasi, Henry L. Welch, Taras Wolansky, Martin Morse Wooster	
Comments are by JTM or LTM.	
Trivia:	32
Art:	
Sheryl Birkhead	16, 18, 19, 20
Paul Gadzikowski	32
Alexis Gilliland	5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 12, 17, 29
Trinlay Khadro	2, 27
JTM	2, 6, 14, 15

Sir Arthur Charles Clarke, Kt., C.B.E.
Minehead, Somerset, U.K., December 17, 1917 —
Colombo, Sri Lanka, March 19, 2008

*It is lovely to watch the coloured
shadows on the planets of eternal light.*

Pascha (Orthodox Easter) is **April 27, 2008**.

The 134th Running of the Kentucky Derby is **May 3, 2008**.

The 133rd Running of the Preakness Stakes is **May 17, 2008**.

The 139th Running of the Belmont Stakes is **June 7, 2008**.

Conglomeration 2008, Louisville's SF convention, will be **April 18-20, 2008**. The Guests will be **Walter Koenig** (he is, after all, a Friend of Harlan), writer **Ann C. Crispin**, artist **Eric Fortune**, and writer **Michael Capobianco**. Registration is \$40 at the door; they don't take checks.

<http://www.conglomeration.org>

Printed on April 3, 2008

Deadline is **June 7, 2008**

Reviewer's Notes

It is depressing to look at a book's cover and be able to predict the plot. Even assuming it has a plot these days. I've been giving up on novels partway through because, while a lot of stuff is happening, there doesn't seem to be a plot in it. As Churchill said of a tasteless dish: "Remove this pudding! It has no theme!" And so much of science fiction that does have "theme" seems to be drifting.

— Joe

RANDOM JOTTINGS

by Joe



October the First is Too Late Department: According to the *Battle Map and Guide* (2008), published for visitors to the site of the Battle of Hastings, the decisive battle took place between the forces of King Harold II and those of the Duke of Wellington. As the latter once said, "If you believe that, you will believe anything."

This sounds like the sort of thing that would pop up in my one-time favorite cartoon strip, "Freddy", about a cheerfully chaotic, filthy, and ignorant but imaginative boy. He wrote school reports with such illuminating and innovative content as:

The Declaration of Independence was signed by Abraham Lincoln in 1492.

There were times when I wished I could have got away with that.

I got a piece of Nigerian 419 Spam the other day, with the usual shaky grammar and shady finance. What made it interesting was that it was from **James Kirk**. I thought Starfleet didn't use money.

So I'm trying out a new novel, *Sojourn: Time Rovers, Book I* by Jana G. Oliver (Dragon Moon Press; 2006; ISBN 1-896-944-30-2) which is buttressed with praise from mystery critics and romance critics alike. The protagonist is a woman who goes back in time to rescue a lost researcher of the Victorian era and gets tied in with Jack the Ripper.

I was concerned that the author would be perpetuating some romantic and naive views of the Ripper and his victims (these were very cheap streetwalkers in a bad neighbourhood) or carrying on modern views about women's empowerment, but I didn't have to worry about getting that far.

Cynda, the investigator, comes downstairs for breakfast at the bed & board where she is rooming. She gets a plate and sits down:

... As she settled into the chair three of the men rose out of respect. She gave a polite nod. The fourth gentleman pointedly ignored her; head down, working a crossword puzzle with

religious fervor.

— *Sojourn*, Page 53

Not only another time-traveller, but a careless one. Or is this a world where crossword puzzles were invented **before** 1913?

Witch Fire by Anya Bast (2007; Berkeley Sensation; ISBN 978-0-425-21614-9; \$7.99) would be a good little story about Mira Hoskins, a waitress escaping a failed marriage and discovering that the world is not as it seems, that she is a potentially powerful air witch caught in a war between fidelity and corruption, with a new friend who has his own painful ties to both sides. This would be an interesting, new, and contemporary riff on the *Conjure Wife* (by Fritz Leiber, *Unknown Worlds*, April 1943) theme.

And it would be novella length, maybe a hundred pages, but instead it's nearly three hundred. What's the padding? Substantial and extremely graphic descriptions of **Hot Sex™**. Real witches can have really good **Hot Sex™**, it seems, and Mira and her main man Jack have a lot of really intense **Hot Sex™**. Tansy Saylor (of *Conjure Wife*) never had such **Hot Sex™**; it would have seared John W. Campbell's mind.

The Gutenberg Project now has Jules Verne's *Les Anglais au pôle Nord*, Volume One of *The Adventures of Captain Hatteras*, serialized in 1864-1865. The ship involved is named *Forward*. Fritjof Nansen's ship, which conducted a polar drift (1893-1896) as Verne has his ship doing, though Nansen had a much less eventful drift, was named *Fram* — Norwegian for "forward".

The English at the North Pole
<http://www.gutenberg.org/etext/22759>

Russian explorers **Matvey Shparo** and **Boris Smolin** reached the North Pole on **March 14, 2008**, having left Arktichesky Cape in Svernaya Zemlya on **December 22, 2007**. This is the first achievement of the North Pole during the winter.

<http://www.shparo.com>

The murder of David Stevens had the goods of both a modern cop movie and a detective novel. On December 23, 1998, his car was found burning furiously in a San Diego street. When his body was removed from the vehicle, it turned out that the fire was not the cause of death; he had been shot in the head.

The ensuing police investigation required visits to strip joints, just like in the movies. When that failed to turn up the killer, his parents hired a resolute private eye who, scorned by the authorities, set out to resolve this case.

Neither of these turned out to have any connection with the solution. For details, read *No Good Deed* by Tom Basinski (Berkeley; 2006; ISBN 0-425-20960-1; \$7.99), where it turns out that Stevens's death had to do with a one-night stand who had a jealous friend...

OBITS

We regret to report the death of **E. Gary**

Gygax on March 4, 2008, at his home in Lake Geneva, Wisconsin. Gygax was best known as designer (actually co-designer) of the popular and significant **Dungeons & Dragons™** and **Advanced Dungeons & Dragons™** role-playing games. As sometime boss at TSR, he had an up-and-down career. He also wrote a number of novels set in his own role-playing campaign, for what they're worth.

Before shooting to fame and fortune in this new field, Gygax had been known as a miniature gamer and board gamer; it was the combination of those interests that brought about the concept of role playing, though earlier gamers had considered "single-figure wargaming". He was also the co-author of the alternate history *Victorious German Arms* (1973).

MONARCHIST NEWS

People Magazine for March 24, 2008 had an item about a hot new model, **Princess Eugenie Victoria Helena of York**, who in a *most improper* fashion doesn't like being called a princess. Even though she is good-looking. (Her older sister, **Princess Beatrice Elizabeth Mary of York**, is a redhead like their mother.)



God . . . just a minute please? This is Red Wull. He deserved better of life, but we did what we could.

He was a good friend. I guess he didn't look good. The tail? So they dumped him on Animal Control. We had a place for him. He was there, he was one of the guys.

Then he got sick. One thing, and then another. He was skin and bones by then. And the big mass that was eating him.

So he passed from the world. I cried.

You could give him a tail, I guess. He might say no. Got used to it. Lisa might not know him with one. Remind him I cried for him. Please? "Eh, Wullie . . ."

JANET KAGAN

(1946 — February 29, 2008)

by Carolyn Clowes

The SF family lost Janet Kagan in February. She was a lovely writer, won a Hugo in 1993 for her story *The Nutcracker Coup*. She was loved by fans for The Loch Moose Monster, Uhura's Song, and Hellspark, and many of her stories collected in *Mirable*. Her Dickensian Christmas fable *Standing In the Spirit* was a favorite of mine.

We only met once, on a panel together at Marcon back in 1990. She was pretty and petite, with lots of red hair and a wicked sense of humor. She flattered me about my book and made me sign her copy. For a first-time writer, that's the nicest thing anyone can do. A convention weekend of late nights and bleary morning breakfasts began an eighteen year friendship in letters — about writing, politics, writing, her cats, writing, my dogs, writing . . . it was always easier to write to Janet than to write a story. She was kind with criticism and generous with praise, and every struggling writer should be so lucky to have known her.

In early 2001, she called to say I really needed a computer that would get me on the Internet, and she and Ricky were getting rid of some of his, "because Ricky says now everything must be in an NT environment, whatever that means." What it meant was a fantastic computer with enough bells and whistles to terrify and delight me for many years, a computer so fine that some of its parts still live in machines that needed them. Ricky was as generous as she; if not for them both, I'd still be without email.

She had been ill for a long time. Last November, Ricky called to say she was in the hospital, not doing well. A couple of weeks later, I got a message from Ricky that she was home and to give a call. She sounded her old, funny self, except for running out of breath and coughing a lot. But she told me a cat story (there were many, over the years) about kitty Audrey, missing since last April, who came home while she was in the hospital. Seems Audrey was their shaman cat, she'd "danced" several relatives through illnesses, so when Ricky told her of Audrey's return, she knew she was getting better. But Audrey couldn't dance Janet back to health.

The night of February 28th, Ricky phoned to say she was very ill, and they'd called in Hospice. Janet wanted to stay at home. He called again to tell me she died on the 29th. The world is a colder place without her.

BODYGUARD OF TRUTHS

Commentary by Joseph T Major on

BLACK BOOMERANG

(1962) by Sefton Delmer

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

November 28, 1943

In the evening the so-called "Calais Soldiers Broadcast" which *evidently* originates in England and uses the same

wavelength as Radio Station Deutschland when the latter is cut out during air raids, gave us something to worry about. The station does a very clever job of propaganda and from what is put on the air one can gather that the English know exactly what they have destroyed and what not.

— *The Goebbels Diaries*

The quote attributed to Churchill is "In wartime, truth is so precious that she should always be attended by a bodyguard of lies." This book is an example of the opposite; lies so precious that they were attended by a bodyguard of truths. Thus the endorsement from an expert quoted above.

The best-informed radio stations available to German troops in France and the Low Countries were *Soldatensender Calais* and *Kurswellensender Atlantik* (later renamed *Atlantiksender*). They were always on top of what was going on, listing promotions, medal awards, even the results of intramural football games. (No, not that Gottverdamnt Ami thing!) They reported as well on all the news outside of the military, giving the soldiers the latest on what was going on at home. Besides the news, there was entertainment, including songs ranging all the way from "Lilli Marlene" down to hot new stuff by Marlene Dietrich.

From the Nazis' point of view, there was the small problem that these two radio stations were operated by the British. Now, the memoir of their operator, journalist Denis Sefton Delmer (1904-1979), is available on the Net, thanks to the efforts of his daughter.

Sefton Delmer was born in Berlin, and had many ties to Germany. He covered the German 1932 presidential campaign, for example, flying on Hitler's own personal aircraft. He had been on the scene as the Reichstag building was burning out, observing the Führer's reactions at first hand. When he returned to Britain in the aftermath of the Fall of France, he was asked a few questions. Such as what was he doing rejecting Hitler's "Last Appeal to Reason" entirely on his own say-so?

Somehow, in spite of this, Delmer found himself put in charge of the "black" broadcasting effort. Delmer had been with the BBC German Service, providing the Reich with reliable news (thus, the Jew accused of killing a Nazi at ten one evening by bashing his head in and eating his brains, to which he said that a Jew won't eat anything that comes from a pig, Nazis don't have any brains anyway, and at 10 p.m. everyone's listening to the BBC). How things change. Now he was going at it a little differently.

William Joyce, "Lord Haw-Haw" of wireless notoriety, had worked a similar platform. He was not leading the only such effort, and it was not just that sort of effort against the enemy's mind that the Germans were carrying out. British listeners roving the airwaves could tune in on something called the "New British Broadcasting Service", which represented itself as a valiant, persecuted band of freethinkers struggling for an end to this Jew-inspired war.

It was somewhat less successful than Joyce, who was far less successful than the examples given herein.

After a visit to Portugal in 1941, where he met a number of German Jewish refugees (dispatched as Abwehr [German Intelligence] agents, incidentally; Abwehr chief Admiral Wilhelm Canaris was up to something), Delmer was finally hired by the British Political Warfare Executive to carry out a program of "black" propaganda broadcasts.

Delmer began his broadcasts on May 23, 1941. The first station was called "Gustav Sigfried Eins." The ostensible rationale was that The Chief [*Der Chef*], Gustav Siegfried Eins, was the head of a widespread anti-Nazi underground, to which he was sending orders while on the run, and making comments ("*Talent geliehen von Gott!*", perhaps?) about the government while he was at it.

Delmer used other ploys to make the actions of Gustav Siegfried Eins seem plausible. For example, in the first broadcast, *Der Chef* answered some questions that he had received on [nonexistent] previous broadcasts. The idea was to make the listeners think this was an established organization. He issued orders to equally nonexistent subordinates, referring to various incidents in Germany that were known about, which further augmented the plausibility. (It all sounded rather like "Washington calling David Harding, Counterspy!" from the popular Phillips H. Lord show that debuted in 1942, but it hardly seems likely that Lord listened to Gustav Siegfried Eins.)

After passing on messages, Gustav Siegfried Eins went into his commentary, which had to do with the recent Hess flight, and what *Der Chef* had to say was to berate the arrests of various innocent people while the real scoundrels around the Führer went free.

Der Chef found his metier after the invasion of the Soviet Union. Delmer became well enough acquainted with the broadcaster who played him to let the man build a character, with quirks and habits. *Der Chef* never said anything against Hitler, he never berated Nazis, but he called for eliminating the "Parteikommune", the corrupt, Bolshevik-like men who were surrounding and impeding the Führer.

One of the early successes had to do with the alcoholic, dissolute, and inept labor leader Robert Ley. *Der Chef* announced that Ley and other party leaders got special rations and were pigging out. Ley himself had to make a statement to the newspapers (or perhaps had one made for him) saying that ordinary rations were good enough for him or anyone else. (If this sounds like the comments in "If This Goes On —" [NHOLG.011; *Astounding* February-March 1940] about what an honor it was for the faithful to pay for the Prophet's lavish life style, just remember that Delmer probably didn't read *Astounding*.)

It should be observed that the book contains many scenes describing the fine meals and especially wines that Delmer and some of his associates consumed. On the other hand, *they* weren't the ones pitching National Socialist egalitarian *Genossenschaft* ["comradeship"].

Eventually, the program ended its run. Der Chef had to go out with a bang, and they produced an ending straight out of Phillips H. Lord, with machine-gun fire and cries of "Got you, you swine!" Fortunately, no one in Germany seemed to have noticed that the show was broadcast twice, due to a careless technician who was only following orders.

Delmer describes his relations with the various broadcasters of his various radio stations. They were refugees from the Nazis, in various degrees, from the real "Der Chef", a detective novel writer who had fled Germany in disgust in 1938 because of the atrocities against Jews, up to Otto John, the future sometime head of the future Federal Republic of Germany's Office for the Protection of the Constitution (their clumsily-named security service, but the term "*Sicherheitendienst*", "Security Service", had acquired a somewhat negative image).

What made all this possible was that in 1939, the British had acquired an extremely powerful transmitter, with 500,000 (later 600,000) watts of clear channel power, for £112,000. It had been built by RCA for station WLW in Cincinnati, but the FCC had put into place a regulation limiting domestic transmitters to 50,000 watts of transmitter power. (Which was why the rock king of late night Wolfman Jack operated out of Mexico, *American Graffiti* or no *American Graffiti*, on a 250,000-watt station.) This station, called "Aspidistra", was being used by the BBC, but it got handed over to the black propaganda effort after a struggle.

Then in October 1943, Delmer began his biggest effort. *Soldatensender Calais* and *Atlantiksender* began broadcasting using the Aspidistra transmitter. As you can see from the Goebbels quote that begins this article, they became effective very quickly.

Delmer described their strategy as "cover, cover, dirt, cover, dirt". The stations would transmit good music, provide real news on the doings of the *Wehrmacht*, and then slip in something on the order of how doctors were valiantly fighting the epidemic of diphtheria in the camps to which children had been evacuated. (Think of the bit in the 1985 version of *1984* where the viewscreen is heralding the massive reductions achieved in cases of rickets.)

Another such technique was the meticulous reporting of devastation caused by bombing raids. This required coordination of reports by the bombing squadrons of where they hit with analysis by former inhabitants of the targets on what streets were involved. The stations also discussed such petty matters as how soldiers getting transferred were being bilked by vendors selling real eau-de-Cologne — Cologne municipal tap water, that was — and grand matters as how it was not possible to tell if missing soldiers were dead men or deserters.

The stations would always broadcast live speeches by Hitler and other party leaders. It increased their credibility. Other news was produced by traffic analysis; for example, having access to records of sinkings by U-boats, and knowing the standards for medal awards, the *Atlantiksender* would announce the award of the *Ritterkreuz* ["Knight's Cross", the next-

highest step up from the Iron Cross, awarded in various degrees] to a successful U-boat commander. Not to mention the personal items, some of which were derived, some guessed, and some properly acquired.

One thing that helped Delmer do "a very clever job of propaganda" was that he had access to Goebbels's own news bulletins. The German Information Bureau, *Deutsche Nachrichtenburo*, had a special radio system for news bulletins. Their office in London had abandoned their receiver, which had the sinister-sounding name of *Hellschreiber* [named after its inventor, Dr. Ing. Rudolph Hell; what were you thinking it was named for?] when they were repatriated at the start of the war; Delmer acquired it and used its news to advantage. [A nice irony is that the word "*Nachrichten*" has a number of meanings, from "communication" to "intelligence"; when Heinrich Himmler wanted to set up an intelligence service, he ended up getting a naval communications officer to do so, Heydrich being cunning enough not to point out the actual state of affairs.]

Therefore, when Goebbels sent out an all-points news bulletin, Delmer got it too. And recall, most of what was said on the two stations was true. It enhanced their credibility. He would never have informed the enemy that Bart Simpson was sleeping with their wives. D'oh!

As a result, or so Delmer says, the interrogation of prisoners was made much easier. They listened to the *Atlantiksender* or the *Soldatensender*, decided that the British knew everything anyway, and so talked freely, not thinking they were giving away any information. (Given the concern about Ultra security, they likely had to be very careful about covering their sources.)

Here in Louisville, once upon a time, there was a problem in that the local newspaper was owned by the same family that owned one of the local radio and television stations. [We disliked the Bingham. Then they sold out and what happened at the *Courier-Journal* showed what we had had.] Delmer did something like that, producing a newspaper titled *Nachrichten für die Truppe* (in this context, "*Nachrichten*" means "news", hence, "News for the Troops"), which was a print edition of the *Soldatensender* and *Atlantiksender*.

One technique the Nazis used to control Germans' access to radio news was to offer a very cheap radio, the *Volksempfänger VE 301*, ["People's Receiver", and the "301" is for 30 January, the anniversary of Hitler's assumption of power] for the low low price of RM76 (approximately \$18.10). It couldn't pick up non-German stations (though with a little tinkering, sometimes even officially, this could be taken care of). But *Soldatensender Calais* and *Atlantiksender* were thoughtfully broadcasting on such frequencies. (833 kHz, 714 kHz, and 612 kHz, if you really want to know.)

As the German armies were pushed back into the Reich, so did (nominally) the rebranded *Soldatensender West*. Delmer had other tricks up his sleeve as well. When German stations had to shut down, due to air raids, the Aspidistra

transmitter would pick up broadcasting on the same frequencies. Thus they would keep the Aspidistra flying all over the airwaves, from one frequency to another. This made it very easy to introduce black propaganda, and the listeners didn't even have to illegally alter their *Volksempfänger* sets.

There were other stations too. The only thing "black" about Delmer's station "Christ the King" was the pretense that it was in Germany. To quote:

... Father Andreas was a young Austrian of Styrian peasant stock, who had received special permission from his Order to speak on a clandestine radio under my direction. 'Christ the King' was the name of this 'black' station — 'G.8' to the engineers.

What I had been looking for when I first decided to add a religious broadcast to my battery of 'black' radios was someone like Father Muckermann, the intellectual German cleric who used to write brilliantly argued religious articles on social and political subjects for the Ullstein newspapers before Hitler came to power. Instead, I found this simple peasant priest, whose broadcasts, because of the earthy directness of their language, and the beaming sincerity and goodness of the speaker, were among the most moving radio talks I have ever listened to.

Father Andreas usually opened by playing a few minutes of recorded music — Beethoven, Haydn, Bach, or some of Nadia Boulanger's Monteverdi disks. That put his listeners into the right contemplative mood. Then, having announced the name of the station, he would conduct a very brief service with some more music — sacred this time — before launching into his talk. In these talks Father Andreas revealed to the Germans the infamous things that were being done in their name to the Jews, and to the Slav peoples of the East. He described the horrors of Auschwitz, Natzweiler, and Mauthausen concerning all of which Clifton Child was able to brief him from our extensive intelligence reports.

He told of the monstrous 'T-4' action by which tens of thousands of sick persons were being removed from hospitals and concentration camps under the orders of a committee of Nazi doctors and sent to a 'mercy death' in the gas chambers.

He denounced the sadistic medical experiments of the SS doctors with live prisoners, the no less cynical experiments in eugenics of the SS Lebensborn group which mated SS men with unmarried girls in order to produce a Germanic master race. He denounced the Nazi attack on the German sense of family, the party's contempt for all human and moral law. His material for

these talks was factual and accurate. It contained no inventions, no rumours. And his indictment of the 'godless rulers' was delivered with a simple Styrian eloquence, which made it a hundred times more telling than had it been a religious rodomontade of the Abraham a Santa Clara style which I originally had in mind for him.

— *Black Boomerang*

The information was available. One could say at the time that it was propaganda, but this propaganda was nevertheless true.

But all good things must come to an end, and as the Third Reich fell into its apocalyptic finale, Delmer had a sort of "going-away" party for all his nefarious deeds. One of the guests was a naval officer who had helped make things possible to begin with, Charles Lambe (who would later rise to the position of First Sea Lord, senior officer and commander of the Royal Navy, and die in office in 1960). Lambe had just been promoted to (Acting) Rear Admiral, and so Delmer himself went on the air to report:

"The Führer," I said in my best Berlinese, "has just radioed a message from his command post in the Führerbunker in Berlin to Grand Admiral Dönitz in Flensburg, authorising him to promote the *Bootsmaat* [Boatswain] Karl Lamm to *Oberbootsmaat* [Senior Boatswain]."

— *Black Boomerang*

Oberbootsmaat Lamm thought the joke was very funny. Delmer does not report whether or not his companion did. Perhaps not: certainly Ian Fleming, who adapted many WWII events into the James Bond books, did not do so with this one, for all that he had been there when it happened.

Like many observers, Delmer is critical of the Unconditional Surrender policy. He has a certain point lacking for most such; the policy meant that divisive propaganda could not be issued by "white" stations. We couldn't openly try to get them to surrender.

This is very much a "How I Won the War" type book, a memoir which stresses heavily the memorialist's accomplishments and highly rates (if not overrates) them. With that in mind, it does cast light on an unappreciated strategem of warfare against the enemy's mind. You will also notice that Delmer is able to admit that he had been wrong.

The U.S. did not attempt black propaganda during the cold war. There were stations broadcasting to the Soviet Union and the Soviet-bloc countries, such as Radio Free Europe, but they were not pretending to be anything but American. I recall, when young, seeing advertisements soliciting donations to Radio Free Europe; they may have received some money from that, but it and the other such stations were CIA-funded. The pose had been that they were supported by private foundations,

but the actual state of affairs was one of the things that came out in the mid-seventies CIA scandals. And in the end they did some good. For example, the Romanian intelligence service targeted the Romanian-language channels of RFE. And now of course there is Radio Márti.

The reader will recall Sir Arthur C. Clarke's story "I Remember Babylon" (*Playboy*, May 1960), about an early proposal for a "black" satellite TV station. One wonders if Delmer read it. Clarke's proposed station uses many of the same principles set forth here.



In some ways, Delmer had bad luck. What with his German connections, in 1939 he was suspected of being a Nazi agent. Then, in the fifties, he was suspected of being a Soviet agent! To quote an old Kentucky saying, "You can't win for losin'." He later wrote one of the first books about Agent GARBO, *The Counterfeit Spy* (1973). It contained a number of errors, some of which were unintentional.

Delmer says he was somewhat annoyed to see a German movie about this British broadcasting effort, and was induced to write this book as a result. He found the supposed chief of the British organization not exactly a likeable or personable character: "The boss is a potbellied fellow with a beery looking ginger moustache, lots of fluffy ginger hair and protuberant hyperthyroid eyes." (*Black Boomerang*). This movie would apparently be *Soldatensender Calais* (1960), based on a novel of the same name by Michael Mohr (1960), and as far as I can tell the "potbellied fellow" was played by Gert Frobe (technically, "Gert Fröbe"), best known in the English-speaking world for playing the title character in *Goldfinger* ("No, Mr Delmer, I expect you to die!").

Soldatensender Calais

<http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0054320/>

**And as year follows year,
More old men disappear,
Someday no one will march there
at all.**

Report by Joseph T Major

We regret to report the death of **Harry Richard Landis** on **February 4, 2008** in Sun City Center, Florida. Born **December 12, 1899** in Marion County, Missouri (thus being a three-century person), Landis joined the Army in October of 1918, but with the war ending when it did, was released before he finished basic

training, but not before he could get the Spanish Flu.

His death leaves **Frank Woodruff Buckles** of West Virginia as the last surviving American WWI veteran (and **Robley Rex**, a "WWI-era" veteran) along with **John Henry Frederick Babcock**, last surviving veteran of the Canadian Expeditionary Force, and also a veteran of the U.S. Army in WWII.

We regret to report the death of **Stanisław Wycech** of Poland on **January 12, 2008**. Born **June 27, 1902**, he was the last surviving Polish veteran of World War I.

We regret to report the death of **Louis de Cazenave** of France on **January 20, 2008**. Born **October 16, 1897**, he was the next to last poilu, having served with the French colonial infantry at the battle of Chemin des Dames, an experience that made him a pacifist.

We regret to report the death of **Lazare Ponticelli**, a veteran of the Foreign Legion and later the Italian army, on **March 12, 2008** in Paris. Born **December 7, 1897**, Ponticelli lied about his age to join the French Foreign Legion in 1914, was discharged in 1915 and joined the Italian Army, moving back to France after the war. As the last poilu of the First World War, he will receive a state funeral.

We regret to report the death of **Yakup Satar**, last surviving soldier of the Ottoman Army on **April 2, 2008**. Born **March 11, 1898**, Satar served in the Baghdad Campaign, where he was taken prisoner, and after his release under Atatürk.

Remaining are:

Australia

Claude Stanley Choules (107) Royal Navy
Sydney "Syd" Lucas (107) Sherwood
Foresters
John Campbell Ross (109) Australian
Imperial Force

Canada

Gladys Powers (108) Womens' Auxiliary
Army Force/Womens' Royal Air Force

Finland

Aarne Armas Arvonen* (110) Red Guards

Germany

Franz Künstler (107) Royal Hungarian Army

Italy

Delfino Borroni (109) Royal Italian Army
Francesco Domenico Chiarello (109) Royal
Italian Army

Poland

Józef Kowalski* (108) Polish Army

United Kingdom

Henry Allingham (111) Royal Naval Air
Service
Harry Patch (109) Duke of Cornwall's Light
Infantry
William "Bill" Stone (107) Royal Navy
Robert "Bob" Taggart* (107) Royal Navy

United States

John Henry Frederick Babcock (107) 146th
Battalion, Canadian Expeditionary Force
Frank Woodruff Buckles (107) United
States Army
Robley Henry Rex* (106) United States
Army

* “WWI-era” veteran, enlisted between the Armistice and the Treaty of Versailles

National totals: U.K. 6+1; Italy 2; U.S. 1+1; Australia, Austria/Hungary, Canada 1 each; Finland, Poland, 1 WWI-era each. Allied & Associated Powers 11, Central Powers 1. British Empire 8+1. 11+4 men, 1 woman.

We went to see Robley on the first day of spring, after picking up Slim the cat from the vet. He was busy, doing his taxes, but always available to see a friend. One of the things he told us was how someone had driven from Wisconsin just to see him. If any of you come up Louisville ways, go see him. Tell him we sent you. He'd also love to hear from you.



Robley Rex
 Christopher East Health Care
 4200 Browns Lane
 Louisville, KY 40220-1523 USA

AFTER THE SECOND LIFE THERE IS NO OTHER

Review by Joseph T Major of
HALTING STATE
 by Charles Stross

(Ace; 2007;
 ISBN 978-0-441-01498-9; \$24.95)
Hugo Nominee

... “The Central Bank just got robbed by a band of orcs, with a dragon flying backup!”

Vimes ran a hand through his hair, yawned, and said, “You woke me up for **that**? The way you were acting, I thought it was something extraordinary.”

— Not by Terry Pratchett

Cyberpunk writing has always had the distinct problem of being well behind the times, but in part that's because of the lag between a writer's knowledge of a field and that of the practitioner's, not to mention the advances that come to pass between the story's composition and its publication. So we have a sub-field where the notable works are at the level of stories about little green men on Mars fighting a guy in a pullover, breeches, and riding boots, and a gal in a brass bra (and panties).

Culturally, too, they suffer from the writer's

background. The kid in mirrorshades is listening to a band so old at the time of the story that it isn't even retro any more. And if he were in the real world, he would be dead in a prison in Nigeria, having flown there to help the widow of an African leader get her husband's money out of the country (admittedly, see pages 350-351 of this book) and run into the hard edge of Nigerian 419 spam. (The most recent version of this that I've been getting is ostensibly from a British barrister, who cannot capitalize or punctuate properly, i.e. referring to himself as “barr.Charles Stross”, and has a non-British email account, who is informing me that someone with the same last name as myself (but he never mentions the name) has died intestate and for a share he will help me get the inheritance, which I thought was solicitor's business.)

Or, for example, an online computer world with real-life avatars. They call this “Second Life” (<http://www.secondlife.com>). Given the way of the world, I suspect it is peaking and something even newer, hipper, and cutting-edge is out there and will be big by, say, Hugo time. But PS Sue Smith (of independent Scotland; oh boy, the Scottish Socialist Republic of Virtue) finds herself having to investigate . . . uh, the robbery of a central bank in an Internet-based world by a band of orcs with a dragon flying backup. Which implies a breach in system security.

And from there we begin cutting from inhabitant to inhabitant of this brave new world, forming images of the pieces of the puzzle. Writing in second person (“*You Don't Want to Be an Internet World Crime Police Investigator*”?) is a difficult and often offputting writer's ploy.

As the investigation proceeds, the break-in turns to be far worse than it seems. (Though Stross indulges in a bit of post-industrial speculation about how EU & China are the future economic powerhouses while the US is a backwater, just like the “Japan, Inc.” stories of the seventies.)

The hacking turns out to have a very old-fashioned reason, with a dramatic ending that suggests that the game where the original robbery took place may not be just that.

In this work, Stross deploys striking insights on the nature of social change; that is to say, the essential nature of science fiction. He then makes them hard to follow through an affectation of presentation, one that leads to a rather different suspicion. Or:

“. . . there's no place like home . . .”
 Dorothy abruptly opened her eyes and there they all were, around her bed, Auntie Em and Uncle Henry, but also Hunk, Zeke, and Hickory, Professor Marvel, and even Miss Gulch, looking slightly damp.

She blinked, thinking, *oh shit, now I'll never ever get to meet Queen Ozma!*

Then a fustian voice drifted through the window. “Mr. Chopper, my good fellow, if you will be so kind as to place

that weapon of arboreal destruction in a situation where it is less threatening to my corporeal integrity, the resultant correlation of forces will be immeasurably more adequate to my equipoise of mind.”

“Weel doggies, Mr. Diggs, don't rightly seem like I kin do that just yet, seein' as you ain't paid me fer what you done rightly owe.”

— Not by Mervin LeRoy *et al.*

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



HEIRS OF EMPIRE

Commentary by Joseph T Major on
OFF ARMAGEDDON REEF

by David Weber

(Tor; 2007, 2008; 790 pp;
 ISBN 978-0-7653-5397-9; \$7.99)

Weber dug into his comfort zone when he created the background for this book. Elements presented in the *Empire from the Ashes* series recur; the implacably, inexplicably hostile alien race, the intentionally technology-restrained world, the superperson from space with the super computer.

Dealing with this race takes a bold and daring leap. Or something of the Party of Postponement's platform, come to think of it. (Why couldn't the Fenachrone beat Seaton & Crane in the *Skylark* series? Because all the factions of the Party of Postponement had bugged out with most of the fleet, if the ones we encounter in later volumes are a reasonable sampling.) While the bulk of the Human fleet fights to the death (which the aliens seem to be

aiming at, given that they won't respond to overtures and destroy every human ship and planet they can find), a colonization fleet will set out far far far into the unknown universe.

Once they find a planet, they will seed it. But with people whose memories have been carefully replaced. And following a religion carefully contrived to keep them from developing any technology that the aliens might observe, while up above the starship crew keeps up a watch and ward. But there is a struggle amid the crew . . . and in the end, only one "person", a set of memories stored in an artificial body (a Persocom as in *Chobits?*), left to set things straight.

The book soon falls into a complex set of political machinations. There is a realistic basis for this; as Darrell Schweitzer observed about the somewhat naïve political attitudes displayed in Robert Silverberg's *Lord Valentine's Castle* (1980), any court is bound to be a snakepit of intrigue. What one gets, though, is a snakepit of people who all have weird names that can't be easily followed. (There was a bit of phonetic drift in the eight hundred ninety years since the first class of colonists were awakened, but it seems to have come in making pronunciation more thorny. And having so many characters with so similar names makes exposition hard to follow. A cast list would help.)

Politics is a hard thing to do properly in fiction. When Ursula LeGuin dismissed Katherine Kurtz's Deryni series as political, that dismissal would stem, it appears, from LeGuin's dismissal of politics in general as Not Nice, the way Mrs. Pritchett, the bird-brained old lady in Philip K. Dick's *Eye In the Sky* (1957), deleted from the world everything she found to be Not Nice, ending with life itself. And in general, LeGuin's handling of political interaction is abysmal compared to Kurtz's, who deals with internal intrigue, ethnic hatred, dynastic dissent, and aggression, even if in an overwritten manner. Politics written by someone who is accustomed to having the hero with the hero-light step in and save the day faces a certain unhandiness of development.

In this case, the Persocom, or as called here, PICA (Personality-Integrated Cybernetic Avatar) is of one Nimue Alban. (Weber has an appreciation for Arthurian myth, apparently.) Nimue finds that she is now the last resource for bringing about the long-term plan to restore humanity, due to a certain disagreement among the long-term staff of the fleet, which led to mutual assured destruction.

Shortly thereafter, we meet Crown Prince Cayleb of the Kingdom of Charis. The Prince is having the usual difficulties with his father. However, the lack of other heirs means that the sudden assault on him by a band of ostensible bandits is probably not an *internal* matter. Things look bad — when someone appears and in dazzling short order polishes off the assailants without even breathing hard. This warrior introduces himself (what were you expecting?) as "Merlin Athrawes". What the prince doesn't know is that this particular model of Persocom, oh PICA, is physically reconfigurable, and Nimue has a sound sense of

history or a weird sense of humor.

Indeed, Merlin Athrawes begins to do many things besides being bodyguard-in-chief to the Crown Prince, and Chief Spymaster. ("He" has available a number of miniaturized spy drones called SNARC, which enable "him" to be many places at once, as it were.) "He" begins developing advanced cannon technology, as Lord Kalvan did in beleaguered Hostigos, and introducing nothing. Er, "zero", as Mysterious Martinus did among the moneylenders of Gothic Italia. Maybe "his" full name should be "Merlin Calvin Basil Martin Athrawes", but who's cribbing?

For every intriguing description of a technical advantage (some of them not even medieval, as when Merlin is playing water polo with a number of naked good-looking men, and reacts to the sight the way a normal woman would, but "his" body reacts the way it should when sexually attracted, with attendant confusion) there are several pages of people sitting around talking about political intrigues. When Basil Argyros had to deal with, say, a Persian attempt to take over a border town ("Archetypes", *Amazing*, November 1985), he didn't, and we the readers didn't, have to endure the Master of Offices explaining the situation to the Master of Soldiers, followed by the Vizier telling an eunuch what was going on from the other side. Argyros saw what was going on, figured it out both technologically and politically, and had a romp with Mirrane too. Johann Gutenberg should have been so lucky.

As when the technological advantages provoke a reaction. Quite a reaction, in fact, and the Church seems utterly furious and burningly determined to expunge Charis. Which would make sense if it were theological problems, but the reaction is presented as if it were political. Calling in all their markers, the Church forges an unwieldy alliance of poor coherence to crush the faith-breakers. Which leads, of course, to a great smashing Decisive Naval Battle (why am I not surprised?).

Weber shows a painfully clear knowledge of the effects of round shot on wood, and of wood splinters on the human body. He might be better off writing about Age of Sail battles; at least his works wouldn't consist of the captain and the doctor explaining everything to each other. His comprehension of the advance and restraint of technology is more interesting than his political intrigue.

Or he could take a lesson from E. R. Eddison.

The King spake and said, "My lords, here's tidings touching the truth whereof I have well satisfied myself. And it importeth the mere perdition of my fleet. There hath been battle off Melikaphkhaz in the Impland seas. Juss hath sunken our ships, every ship save that which brought the tidings, sunk, with Laxus and all his men there with him." He paused: then, "These be heavy news," he said, "and I'll have you bear 'em in the old Witchland fashion: the heavier hit the heavier strike again."

— *The Worm Ouroboros*

It is, however, as to be expected, and from the way the story terminates, more (and given the structure of this volume, "more" is the proper terminology) is yet to come (*By Schism Rent Asunder*; Tor, July 22, 2008, ISBN 978-0-7653-1501-4; \$25.95) when this is . . . [To Be Continued]



CONDOTTAS IN SPACE

Review by Joseph T Major of

STARSHIP: MERCENARY

by Mike Resnick

(Pyr; 2007; ISBN 978-159102-599-3; \$25)

Sequel to *Starship: Mutiny*

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

and *Starship: Pirate*

(reviewed in *Alexiad* V. 6 #1)

Wilson Cole's pressures seem to at least be coming at a higher level. When we first saw him at the helm of the good ship *Theodore Roosevelt*, in *Starship: Mutiny*, he was facing merely the problems of the organization, or why the admiral has two little horns of hair at his temples and puts all the captains in cubicles. In *Starship: Pirate* his problems were more financial, or why the tariffs on exchange for plunder are so high.

Now, for the moment, he seems to have found a use for a warship, namely being a warship for hire. There are a lot of worlds out there on the Inner Frontier that can use a temporary defense, and fortunately Cole picked up a decent business manager, the charmingly eccentric alien ex-fence calling himself "David Copperfield".

"David Copperfield" in fact motivated these events, for he now knew from both sides how unprofitable piracy was (for both sides), so he suggested going into the mercenary line of work. Where, although most of the people are as bad as pirates are, there are some chances for running into a few decent sorts.

Which in fact happens. Wilson Cole and his crew find their perception of loyalty put to the test time and again, learning more about themselves with each encounter. Including a very final one with a competitor who just won't

let go . . .

In addition, he has to consider the moral worth of lives. Not only loyalty to his subordinates, but the lives of those he encounters. Even risking being brought in on those old mutiny charges. There are others, but he isn't the mercenary captain who considerately commits atrocities in order to spare his employer the need to order them.

Resnick has been exploring this universe for many years, and he considers the hard facts as well as the soft ones. Communication isn't instantaneous, ship life is grating, and a great smashing battle in which the opposing force is annihilated while the Good Guys are reduced to one ship, with most of the crew killed and the commander gravely but survivably wounded, is as implausible as it would be unprofitable.

For all that Cole has had his loyalties tested and his strength augmented, he is still a wanted man, struck on the edges of society, and no doubt many more challenges yet to be faced when this is . . . **[To Be Continued]**



AUS FURCHT DAß DUNKELHEIT STURZ

Review by Joseph T Major of
THE FORESIGHT WAR:

An Alternative History of World War 2
by Anthony G. Williams
(Authors OnLine; 2004;
ISBN 0-7552-0156-6; \$14.95)
<http://authorsonline.co.uk/>
<http://quarry.nildram.co.uk/>

. . . One day not long after the story came out in *Unknown*, I had a visitor. He was polite enough; "The name's Montagu, Ewen Montagu," he said. He had some questions about how I had had the idea for *Lest Darkness Fall*, which I was glad to answer . . . When I tried to reach him at the embassy, I was told that no such person was employed there, and as I said to Catherine afterwards, "I've been talking to a man who never was."

— Not from *Time and Chance* by L. Sprague de Camp

Don Erlang has one strange hangover, which is interesting because he wasn't drunk. And he doesn't quite show up in front of the Pantheon after a lightning strike, either. Just down and out in a flat in London on 3rd September 1934. Which was interesting because he had gone to bed on 2nd September 2004.

Anthony G. Williams is an expert in weapons. The technothriller fan may be

surprised, disappointed even, to find out that there is no intimate description of the rifling and autoloading operation of the Besal .303 semi-automatic rifle [Page 29] that the British Army introduces in response to this event. There are rather a number of information dumps of equipment descriptions, but these are relevant, short, and even sometimes manage to be interesting.

Those weapons? Well, as we said, Dr. Erlang woke up seventy years before he went to bed. Instead of thinking of stealing the ship *Horst Wessel* and setting up as an independent monarch (but he'd have to be in the States, on Nantucket), much less to go break the Derby mutuels so he can get the cash to go to Vienna to shoot a man who is in Munich at the time (as in Jerry Yulsman's *Elleander Morning* (1984)), or merely go totally mad, he sets out to do as best as he can. It's not the pocket change that he can do well with (since, unlike Martin Padway of *Lest Darkness Fall* (1939), his coins have only token value), though a 2002 one-pound coin has certain uses. In the right hands, it can be persuasive.

This is, one has to accept, the Man who Knows How. More or less. And the Establishment is curiously persuadable; as much so as James McGregor the editor of *Astonishing* was persuaded by the calculator that Michelle "Mark" Gordian had, in "Hindsight" (*Analog*, Mid-December 1984) by "Eric Iverson" [Harry Turtledove].

Dr. Erlang was forty in 2004, and so grew up under the shadow of what had been. It may surprise the reader to learn that some of London had not yet been rebuilt after the blitz even in 1964; and certainly the memories of that, of the austerity years, and the political decline, were all too strong.

He has his own credibility. Carrying under one's arm more computing power than exists in the entire rest of the world can do that. One might wish that he had done more with the computer stuff, but Williams has his own points.

The British changed war effort begins to make progress. But then, the other side reacts; as when Erlang asks if the *Scharnhorst* and *Gneisenau* have been launched yet, and discovers that they were never built. Something is going on. And sure enough, it turns out that he's not the only one in his position.

It would be too facile to make the German Padway a raving neo-Nazi, or even an Afrikaner with a Macintosh and an StG-44, handing out *Die Gewehre des Nationalsozialisten* to those he hoped to make the allies of his *Volk* to come. Konrad Herrman had lived in the East, had suffered one blow after another from Communism (one even right at the ultimate last moment), and now, finding himself back not long before he was born, has the chance to strangle the Soviet Bloc in its cradle; if he can live with the cost in innocent lives, or avert it.

So, with both sides on the jump, as it were, the buildup to war begins with trembling speed, as each side tries to figure out what the other knows. It's not all one side over the other (unlike, say, the incredible Axis rationality and efficiency displayed in John Birmingham's *Axis*

of Time series (2004-2007), much less the infamous *Victorious German Arms* (by E. Gary Gygax, 1973) Syndrome), there are surprises and setbacks on both sides.

And when Herrman finds out he has not entirely done what he set out to do, he has to emulate another man . . .

There is rather more technological detail than some would like, but again, the author is a weapons expert. One can set against that the modesty that Erlang and Herrman exhibit; Erlang is not "The Man Who Came Early" (Poul Anderson, *F&SF* June 1956), overcome by his hubris regarding his technological superiority over these primitives (a common theme in Anderson as well as in Turtledove, e.g. the galactics finding out that primitives can indeed wipe out an overconfident spaceship crew and set off on *The High Crusade* (1960)); he is more like Padway, trying to find a connection and offer what he can.

As is Herrman, with his own painful choice between hell and damnation. And it turns out he's not the only one to have to make such a decision, as when the British have to decide on the right time to tip off the American Pacific command that the Japanese really are pulling off what the high command is thoroughly convinced they can't do.

One can quibble over minor matters regarding unrelated issues, such as whether or not the *Yamato* would really be sent out so soon after she commissioned [Pages 200-204]. Williams has his own perspective on the people who would be involved. He has down most of the German people who would be involved, including the all too neglected Hans Oster. However, his British types seem glossed-over, he has advanced armoured warfare but no Hobart, for example. And presumably Admiral Hugh "Quex" Sinclair and Colonel Stewart Menzies of the Secret Intelligence Service would be involved. They might even send someone — Ewen Montagu, say, one naval officer to another naval officer — to question L. Sprague de Camp about where he got the idea for *Lest Darkness Fall*. Another reviewer chided Williams for not mentioning Martin Bormann or saying much about Hess's flight to Britain. These have been made far too much of. There is an understandable but deplorable tendency to "hit the high spots" on events. The book could easily be twice as long, and I wish Williams had done that.

It is possible to scant Williams for having chosen a print-on-demand publisher. At least it wasn't called "PublishBritain". The book does seem adequately proofread, and does manage to hold the reader's attention. It might not have sold to a more advanced publisher because it doesn't have the "cool" ideas of Nazi victory, British collaboration (see Gavriel D. Rosenfeld's *The World Hitler never Made* (2005; reviewed in *Alexiad* V. 5 #1) for how that concept is seemingly an editorial mandate in British-written alternate histories), and the like. Perhaps publishers can't take any longer the thought that someone might change the world a little for the better, without either

ghastly failure or gross megalomania, but only painful loss and somber honor.

FRASER: FROM THE FRASER PAPERS

Review by Joseph T Major of
THE LIGHT'S ON AT SIGNPOST
by George MacDonald Fraser
(HarperCollins; 2002;
ISBN 0-00-713647-1; £8.99)



In the Tourist Trophy motorcycle race on the Isle of Man, when a contestant is about to finish a lap, passing Signpost Corner, the race stewards turn on a light next to his name on the scoreboard. "The light's on at Signpost" has come to mean the end of a race — or by extension, the end of anything. For Fraser, then, *The Light's On at Signpost* because his life was nearly over. To quote one of those people that those schoolmasters tried to dun into Flashman's head at Rugby: "And now, O men who have condemned me, I would fain prophesy to you; for I am about to die, and in the hour of death men are gifted with prophetic power."

Fraser recounts here his experiences in working in the movies. Scriptwriting seemed to have done well by him, not only financially but in putting him into the company of interesting people. The story of how Ilya Salkind's production of *The Three Musketeers* (1973) got spun out into a sequel, *The Four Musketeers* (1974), and then yet another, *The Return of the Musketeers* (1989), got made, is a quite unusual story of a story that was actually driven by continuity instead of individual hype. Not to mention such things as the inimitable description of Raquel Welch's royal curtsey in a dress that seemed sprayed on.

And he worked with some interesting guys, too. There are striking pictures of men from Oliver Reed to Charlton Heston, Harrison Ford to Robert Shaw . . . he worked with a fabulous list of actors, the sort we won't see again.

In between movies, Fraser grumps on the decline and fall of nearly everything. Some of his statements misfire — he shows a lack of comprehension of the nature of the Islamic activists who attacked us. Many are all too painfully close to home. His comments on capital punishment, for example, which contain the sort of observations that its opponents like to ignore. Or his observations on women in combat, which wouldn't have gone over well in certain quarters.

Literary matters are not ignored. Fraser

describes how he came to write about the expelled bully of Rugby, and how that great brutish mass of greed, cowardice, lechery, and knavery, who gets dragged kicking and screaming into every catastrophe that ever befell the British Empire, yet somehow emerges hailed as a hero, having had a leg over some passionate woman in the process, came to stalk the pages of literature. Fraser gleefully enjoyed the famous inability of American reviewers to realize that *Flashman: From the Flashman Papers* (1969) wasn't a memoir.

One thing I regret about only finding this book now is that I can't write to him and clear some things up. "I would bet heavily that Tolkien never heard of Conan," Fraser says [Page 54] and I would gladly take that bet, then point him to L. Sprague de Camp's *Literary Swordsmen and Sorcerers* (1976), with the comment by JRRT confessing to "rather liking" the stories.

One of the parts of screenplay writing is the ones that get away, the projects that fall through for one reason or another. There's one that I suspect some of our readers will find to be of interest:

Another that unfortunately ended at the discussion stage was Richard Dreyfuss's excellent idea for a film based on the premise that the American Revolution never happened, thus enabling the most famous private eye, Sir Samuel Spade, to investigate a modern mystery.

— *The Light's On at Signpost*, Page 284

The Two Georges (1995), screenplay by George MacDonald Fraser. Weep for what never came to pass.

Colonel Blood walked down the hill towards the beach, whistling softly to himself. One backward glance he took, as the sound of female voices carried down to him, and then he was striding across the sands, and far out on the shining sea the tall ship was standing away down the moon's track with all her canvas spread, and very faintly across the water he could hear the pirates singing:

*Farewell and adieu to you
Fine Spanish ladies,
Farewell and adieu to you
Ladies of Spain . . .*

And for all I know, they may be singing still.

— George MacDonald Fraser, *The Pyrates*, Pages 404-405

BLIP KRIEG

Commentary by Joseph T Major on
THE MEN WHO STARE AT GOATS
by Jon Ronson
(Simon & Schuster; 2004;
ISBN 978-0-7432-7060-1; \$14.00)

The James Randi Educational Foundation

(JREF) has announced that its Million Dollar Challenge will be discontinued in 2010. They have generously provided support and documentation for this decision on their website (<http://www.randi.org>). The applications that may be viewed there begin with the incoherent and run to the dangerous, the psychotic, and the outright deranged. By way of contrast, the people Ronson writes of come across as more organized and sensible. Yet none of the people in this book tried to Win Jim Randi's Money.

Habitues of the Randi Forums will be familiar with some of the people that appear in this book, such as old Randi target Uri Geller, Professor Courtney Brown of Emory, and Major Ed Dames. In his investigations, Ronson ran across them and more.

But he begins with a general convincing himself that he can walk through a wall and setting out to do that. Since General Albert Stubblevine III failed to develop the powers demonstrated by (say) Barry Allen, more commonly known as The Flash, he hit the wall with a bump.

From there, Ronson describes a bizarre and absurd voyage through the fringes of psychidom, fuelled by federal money and mystic hype. Unfortunately for the budget and the cause of sanity, General Stubblevine was chief of Army Intelligence, and he seemed to be working hard to prove the term an oxymoron. Psychic warriors worked on the virtues of subliminal messages, the power of remote viewing, the wonders of mental killing. That last is where the goats that men were staring at came in; the idea was that psychic warriors could learn to kill by will alone, and they had to practice on animals they couldn't bond with. (The lawyers must have charged too much.)

Some of these psychic voyages wandered off the fringe. Ronson makes a connection between these mind games and the Heavens Gate mass suicides.

Others led to more "blip krieg" (see *My Tank Is Fight!* (2006; reviewed in *Alexiad* V. 6 #4)) for more of that) such as the sticky foam that proved profoundly undetering to a Somali mob. Now procurement intellectuals hardly need psychic powers to provide useless equipment at excessive cost (a thesis John Sladek explored in *The Reproductive System/Mechasm* (1968, 1969)), but the rationale has its own problems.

In an even-handed fashion, Ronson draws connections to Abu Ghraib and Waco alike, where evidently psychic warrior techniques of persuasion were used in vain. Some of the Iraqi prisoners had to watch Barney the Dinosaur twenty-four hours a day. That must be illegal. They were fortunate not to be able to understand English.

Dealing with the collection of lunatics, weirdos, jerks, fruitcakes, and oddballs who make up psychic warriorism can be frustrating. Frustration can lead to odd results.

Ronson seems to have taken up the habits of his subjects, as he jumps from topic to topic, while casting grandiose and vague theories of connections. As a notorious riverboat pilot once observed, "There is something fascinating about

science. One gets such wholesale returns of conjecture out of such a trifling investment of fact.” (*Life on the Mississippi*, Mark Twain)

YOU ONLY LIVE TWICE

Review by Joseph T Major of
ELIZABETH'S SPYMASTER:
Francis Walsingham and the Secret War That Saved England
by Robert Hutchinson
(Thomas Dunne Books (St. Martin's); 2006;
ISBN 978-0-312-36822-7; \$27.95)

... Señor Bondo, the saw is very sharp and will resolve our problem, and you, speedily enough.”

Fra Dedo de Oro looked down on Bond, the round red face framed in the cowl a gleam with pleasure. Bond looked down the length of his body and beheld the circular saw creeping ever closer between his legs, as he felt the hum of its turning by the two donkeys on the treadmill. Then he looked up at the Inquisitor. “Do you expect me to talk?”

“No, Señor Bondo, I expect you to die!”

— Not from *Dedo de Oro* by Juan de Flanders

The life and cheery times of Sir Francis Walsingham have been discussed quite recently in *Her Majesty's Spymaster: Elizabeth I, Sir Francis Walsingham, and the Birth of Modern Espionage* by Stephen Boudiansky (2005; reviewed in *Alexiad* V. 4 #6). In this volume, we have a story of his biggest struggle, and the means and ways that it was carried on.

Hutchinson describes as much the net as the spider who ran it; the agents who gathered the information and the men who parsed it. Whether they be such cryptic figures as “Henri Fagot” (and Hutchinson for one seems to take it for granted that “Henri Fagot” was the philosopher Giordano Bruno [Page 103]) or such decryptive figures as Thomas Phelippes, the decipherer [Walsingham's Government Code & Cypher School] who put the axblade to the neck of Mary Queen of Scots, they were a varied and often unpleasant crew.

The context was a hard one. Hutchinson describes the means that Sir Francis used. Waterboarding would have been considered too merciful, and any knave who questioned using the Question would have been dismissed as a Papist. Richard Topcliffe, the torturer at the Tower had some remarkably lewd comments about the Queen, but the source for this is a guy who had been one of his clients, so it just might be a bit dubious [Pages 76-77]. Then too, there is such a thing as erotomania, which would make him the Elizabethan equivalent of the woman who kept on breaking into David Letterman's house.

Lest you think this was one-sided, Hutchinson begins the book with a gory description of the St. Bartholomew's Day Massacre. (Indeed, there is enough bloodshed in the book to make the reader think of one of Bill Gaines's original EC comics, the ones that got banned by the Comics Code.) They were

ruthless men in those days, and if they had had YouTube they would have posted videos of their bloody deeds. That'll show the heretics!

Walsingham did not have to suffer some of the problems that his successors did. There was no Philby in Mr Secretary's household, and indeed, the only gay Cantab working for him had a fatal problem regarding the payment of a bar bill. On the contrary, Walsingham had a number of agents in the Spanish fleet and was provided with intelligence as up to date as it could be.

When young and impressionable, I read Frank G. Slaughter's *Buccaneer Surgeon* (1954), about an agent of Walsingham, a deep-penetration illegal in the Main Enemy, who can pass because his mother was Spanish. The book stuck to Slaughter's rule that the hero sees both the Good Girl and the Bad Girl naked, but only beds the Bad Girl, though in the end he marries the Good Girl, who in this case stripped to a singlet and swam out to a reef to rescue him... er, none of Walsingham's agents seem to have been *quite* that fortunate, but he did have that level of information and its collectors.

The book does have perhaps a little too much detail about the legal maneuverings regarding the trial of Mary Queen of Scots. Evidently it was just good clean jolly fun for her to write letters to naive young men telling them how wonderful it would be if they blew away the English whore, but any reaction was an intolerable offense to her status. Some things remain the same across the years.

And then the Felicitous Armada found a most infelicitous greeting. Sealion fans will be interested to learn that Medina-Sidona was relying on Rhine barges to ship Parma's army across the Channel [Page 334]; but before he could put *Operación León Marino* into effect, his ships were knocked about quite severely. In Blighty, Walsingham, knowing his number would be up if the Dons came, was organizing the supply of munitions to the fleet. Sir Francis Drake had an opinion of the man:

I will not flatter you, but you have fought more with your pen than many have in our English navy fought with their enemies, and but that your place and most necessary attendance about her majesty cannot be spared, your valour and desserts in such place opposite to the enemy had showed itself.

— Quoted, *Elizabeth's Spymaster*, Page 235

And then, broke, health destroyed, exhausted, Walsingham passed away. Hutchinson discusses in (again) rather more detail than is perhaps necessary the personal life of Sir Francis, Lady Walsingham, and their daughters, including the widow of Sir Philip Sidney, whose second husband Robert Devereux, Earl of Essex would die of natural causes (an ax fell on his neck, which in those days was a natural cause), and whose descendants include both Charles and Di, and Porchy Carnarvon (George Herbert, Earl of Carnarvon) of Tutankhamen fame, and the Earl of Cardigan (James Thomas Brudenell, Earl of Cardigan) of the Charge of the Light Brigade.

Elizabeth's Spymaster paints a broad picture of the crisis and of one means taken to deal with it. This grim time summoned forth grim men to deal with it.

I AM . . . BLASKO

Review by Joseph T Major of
SUNDAYS WITH VLAD:
From to Transylvania, One Man's Quest to Live in the World of the Undead
by Paul Bibeau
(Three Rivers Press; 2007;
ISBN 978-0-307-35278-1; \$13.95)

Bibeau must be pretty convincing. He got his wife to take their honeymoon in Romania, and they're still married.

This is an elementary introduction to the vast and complex, indeed one might well say Byzantine, structure of Vampire interest in the world today. Bibeau skims over a broad spectrum of elements, covering things from the condition of Castle Dracula in Romania (it's dreadful) to the problem of ingesting blood.

He cheerily points out the curious tics of the structure. For example, what is the horrific beginning of the real origin of all this, Bram Stoker's novel? Jonathan Harker complaining about his train connections. Stoker was Henry Irving's manager and had to worry about such things. And indeed, there is much of Stoker's own life in the book. Write what you know.

From there, he goes on to cover the historical elements, such as the strife-ridden life of Vlad Dracul “the Impaler”, and how he managed to lose friends and impress people negatively. His head is somewhere in Istanbul, maybe.

He goes on to touch briefly on the life and true death of Béla Ferenc Deszo Blasko, later known as “Lugosi”, from Lugosh in Romania. (Well, it is now.) This involves discussing intellectual property, a significant decision concerning which was brought by Bela G. Lugosi — the son, preserving his father's image. Bibeau touches on the problems and rights involved here.

Then we go to modern actors. Live Action Role Players, that is. Bibeau visits a Vampire LARP convention here in Louisville at the Executive West, noting all the structure and clannishness. He also cites some people who forgot where play ended and reality began; the vampire murderers in Murray, Kentucky.

Finally, he recounts his encounters with really devoted internet vampire communities. Which are like communities among the living.

The topic is so broad and so deep that one can easily find material that was not mentioned. While Bibeau mentions other early vampire novels and movies such as *Nosferatu*, he doesn't go into the more recent stuff. The discussion of intellectual property might well be enriched by for example bringing up the matter of the *Sisters of the Night* series about Dracula's Wives (the three vampiresses who tried to work in Harker, remember?) which I believe fizzled out after two, and were written by a fan and Chelsea Quinn Yarbro. But trying to encompass, much less comprehend, the **Sexy**

Vampire™ trend du nuit does not lend itself to the tone of this work.

Similarly, no doubt for everyone Bibeau mentioned, he forgot a half-dozen people. Like Forrest J. Ackerman, never once mentioned here. Can one stand for this?

It is to be noted most decisively that Bibeau uses wit (and abundantly), not humor here. He does not look down on, ridicule, or make fun of the different and eccentric people he meets. He can't. A guy who hunts down rare *D&D™* and *Advanced D&D™* stuff on eBay, and is unashamed to tell of it, won't do that.

This is an enjoyable look at a vast part of a fandom we know by its roots.

NOMENCLATRIX

Commentary by Joseph T Major on

CHOBITSU

(*Chobits*)

(Chobits Production Committee; 2002; Geneon; 2003)

<http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0326672/>

... "So Caesar has freed his nomenclator Posca?" I asked Julia.

"Indeed, and Posca has become quite the entrepreneur," she said. "He is their principal distributor. After they gave Uncle a sample, everyone else in the Senate is getting one."

We were going down the street in her litter, and around us the ebb and flow of normal Roman life was stirring. I said, "But Posca didn't create them."

"No, it was this Eastern wise man, Kokobunius Minoru he's called. Very young, but clever. However, that young advisor of his, that Vulpes Iaso, has a strange sense of humor. But Uncle is coming the other way, and you can see what I mean."

I stuck my head out the other side of the litter. Caesar was approaching, with his *nomenclatrix* behind him. She — or it — was in the shape of a woman, as most of them were. One could tell them from humans by the lacquered oval shapes that occupied where ears were on humans. Otherwise, the long black hair, the blazing blue eyes, the leathern corselet and skirt were familiar. The strange jest that had made *nomenclatrices* so popular had been in making Caesar go about with the very image of Xena the pirate woman at his shoulder...

— Not by John Maddox Roberts or CLAMP

Chobits is a manga and animé from the CLAMP group of manga artists/writers. The story was originally published as a manga in Kodansha's weekly magazine *Yangu Magajin* ("Young Magazine") between February 2001 and November 2002. It was adapted as an animé in 2002.

The world in which it is set is what one might call "Manga-Land" — the culture is Japanese (though there's no English or even English writing to be seen) but the people have

that sort of blandly European look about them. Except, of course, for the Persocoms.

In the days of *Rome*, the personal assistant was a slave with a good memory, such as Posca in the series. Nowadays, we have had to do with Personal Digital Assistants in the shape of small flat boxes with keys and a screen. Persocoms (*pasocom*; which is the Japanese equivalent of "PC", as in "personal computer" *pasonaru conpyuta*) do many of the things that PC do in the real world (whatever that is), and are installed in advanced human-shaped robots, human-shaped except for the cable housings on the sides of the head, where people's ears are.

However, our protagonist, Hideki Motosuwa (*Motosuwa Hideki*), can't even afford one. Motosuwa is a young student from the country, who has been turned down by his university of choice. As is happening in the U.S. today, Japanese universities have astonishingly stringent entrance qualifications, but once the student gets in, he is guaranteed of graduation. If he didn't graduate, the test would have been wrong and since the test is never wrong... (here, of course it's the combination of work, public service, outside interests, sports, and exalted academics appearing on the application that would take several extra years, several people, or Hermione Granger's Time-Turner to accomplish in a young person's life-span). So Motosuwa is a ronin, which used to mean a masterless samurai but now means an unaccepted student. Perhaps Japanese society hasn't changed all that much.

His only recourse is to go to the Big City, to a cramming school. So he gathers up his worldly goods, leaves the farm, and set off to Tokyo. The wonders of the Big City astound him, and having seen for the first time the heralded Persocoms, he wants one. Until he sees the price, which is on the order of ¥600,000. This is more than he happens to have at the moment, or perhaps can hope to have.

He gets an apartment. (This demonstrates how minimally one can live in Japan; Motosuwa sleeps on the floor and in fact has no furniture except for a couple of tables.) His neighbor, Hiromu Shinbo (*Shinbo Hiromu*), comes by to say hello. Shinbo has a Persocom; it is small enough to ride on his shoulder. Sumomo (*Sumomo*; "Plum") is dressed genie-style and can be very annoying. How would Xena feel if Gabrielle were about a span tall and woke her up in the morning by blowing a whistle and leading her in a morning workout? Nevertheless, Motosuwa is consumed with envy. This seems to be a small world, since Shinbo is also a student at the cramming school.

And then, one evening, coming home from school, he looks down an alley and sees someone who looks hurt. Upon closer inspection, "someone" turns out to be a Persocom, one with long blonde hair, wrapped in a few strips of cloth. It's been thrown away, Motosuwa thinks, and with considerable effort hefts it and staggers back to his room.

Now, he has to take up the question of how to turn the thing on. Becoming increasingly embarrassed as he progresses with the task, Motosuwa inspects almost every square

centimeter of the thing's skin, and finally, writhing in shame and dread, reaches between the Persocom's legs. (Considering the fun Asimov had with the TV show *My Living Doll*, which had the guy in that position almost jump out of his own clothes every time the robot "living doll" tried to take off her undergarment, it is charming to think of what he might have said about this.)

And that turns it on. The Persocom begins to stir, to sit up, and to have what little it has on fall off. Naturally, Shinbo drops by just then. Motosuwa manages to hide her for the moment, which makes it seem that Shinbo is either not very curious or very careful about dealing with an avatar of hysteria.

Motosuwa manages to put a shirt over her — it's probably to the point to say "her" now — and begins to ask some questions. Sumomo is pretty forthcoming, if not annoying, but this one is profoundly passive. Finally, after a long silence, she utters something: "Chi?" Worn-out by it all, Motosuwa decides to call her "Chi" (*Chi*) and gives up.

Soon enough, Shinbo does see Chi, and delivers some vague computer jargon. Well, they are PC's, only with different cases. She has been deprived of her basic programs. Chi will have to be taught how to relate to humans.

Then, Shinbo, who is far more suave than his neighbor, not to mention better connected, suggests they see his on-line friend Minoru, an Internet guru. He's never met Minoru himself. They get the address from him and set out there.

Minoru lives in the sort of neighborhood where the Plutocratic Police arrest people for not having enough money. They get to his mansion and meet his staff; a half-dozen or so Persocoms dressed in the highest Victoria's Secret style. Then they meet this little kid, about twelve years old or so. No, this isn't Minoru's son; this is Minoru Kokobunji (*Kokobunji Minoru*) himself, the rich and powerful "M" of the Net, Japan's answer to Jason Fox of *FoxTrot*. It's better than being a mirrorshaded Kid who's poor but honest (except when it comes to taking drugs, invading privacy, or acquiring the equipment of big companies).

Minoru has a particular Persocom, who is dressed like a French maid, if French maids had long purple braided hair. Yuzuki (*Yuzuki*) turns out to be more than just Minoru's computer. It seems his beloved elder sister died a few years ago, and Minoru has been trying to make Yuzuki into a replacement for her, by telling her everything he remembered or could find out about her. (The sister is a character in another manga and anime series from CLAMP, *Angelic Layer*. From what I could tell, in that story Kaede Saito (*Saitō Kaede*), the sister, is not said to have siblings, but then her parents are divorced.) This explains why she calls him "Lord Minoru", I guess. (Imagine what a Persocom built and programmed by Jason Fox to replicate his sister Paige would be like. It wouldn't be pretty.)

He wants to help out Motosuwa. This involves a long Internet search, and it's interesting to see how it works. All he needs is a screen (a meter-wide flat screen, I said he had

money) and a keyboard, which are plugged into Yuzuki, who stands there beside his desk, the cables running into her opened ear-shells. It all looks rather piquant.

There are rumors of powerful Persocoms out there, called “Chobits”. But all that is hidden in the fog of the Net. And, with this inconclusive result, but a useful friend on tap, Motosuwa and Chi and Shinbo and Sumomo head back home.

Strangely enough, there are some real women involved. Their landlady, for example, Chitose Hibiya (*Hibiya Chitose*). [Those who recall their WWII naval history will wonder if she has a sister named “Chiyoda” — *Chitose* and *Chiyoda* were two Japanese aircraft carriers. And yes, I checked, and the names are written with the same characters.] Chitose is friendly to Motosuwa and to Chi, in a motherly sort of way. Evidently she can tell that having a Persocom in your room is not the same as having a woman.

At the cram school, the teacher is Takako Shimizu (*Shimizu Takako*). It must be hard enough being a woman telling young Japanese men what to do. Not to mention having Motosuwa having his various ties and antics. (As for Shinbo, the prospect of having a device that can memorize and communicate answers while hiding in a shirt pocket opens up vast new prospects for cheaters.)

Then too, Motosuwa has to get a job, ending up as a server at a restaurant called “My Pleasure”. The owner’s daughter Yumi Omura (*Omura Yumi*) is young, shy, and looks up to Motosuwa as a big brother. Her father is also supportive, as when he loans Motosuwa a DVD player so he can watch, er, his favorite flicks. One of the running gags of the show is that Motosuwa is a deprived young man who buys risqué (doesn’t that word date me?) DVDs and magazines, and then has to cover them up when Chi asks about them or when Chitose comes in.

Then there was the time Chi had to get some clothing. Some very personal items of clothing that Motosuwa is too embarrassed to buy himself, or even go into the shop where they are sold. And Chi *will* get lost, but fortunately Sumomo has street guidance software. As a result, in that particular episode we have Chi walking down the street, chanting, “Underpants . . . underpants . . . underpants . . .” as if in some Xanth fanfic, while Sumomo shouts out directions with more energy and more sense than your usual GPS. And in the end it turns out that Motosuwa could have got them somewhere else.

However, Chi also buys things for herself, like a comic book featuring a bunny which has ears shaped strangely like Chi’s sweeping long blonde hair; it’s titled “The City With No People”. The bunny searches through the City With No People — the lights are on but no one is home, a state of affairs with other connotations — in search of the One Just for Her. There is more to this than it seems.

Oh, jobs. Short of money, Motosuwa considers a second job. There is a Persocom at the My Pleasure. Finally putting 10 and 10 (binary, you know) together, Chi gets the idea that she should get work. After getting tricked into appearing in a stimulating live-action

interactive show, she finally finds more ordinary work at a bakery run by Hiroyasu Ueda (*Ueda Hiroyasu*), who appreciates her demure deference, her quick learning curve, her fine grasp of the art of cooking, and speaking of curves the fact that she looks hot in a low-cut short-skirted Tyrolean outfit.

(All involved should be glad that MangaLand uses SI measures, or Chi might do strange things if the temperature got too high in degrees that were “Fondly Fahrenheit” [by Alfred Bester, *F&SF*, August 1954]. However, if Chi started dancing around the bakery ovens, twisting her fingers, singing, “Oh, it’s no feat to beat the heat . . .” Motosuwa, not to mention her employer Mr. Ueda, should start worrying. “Charmingly Celsius”?)

The first few episodes, as one can guess, are more comic in nature. Motosuwa is exploring the limits of his new possession, while Chi is trying to learn about the world and herself. The highlight of each episode seems to be Motosuwa writhing in agony over some personal problem, with everyone else offering advice. But all the people around them have their own problems and weaknesses.

The series takes a darker tone towards the end, as the characters reveal their inner secrets. Or why Takako came to the apartment house, put away two six-packs of beer, and spent the night crashed on Motosuwa’s floor. It seems that before she started teaching, her husband had left her for a Persocom. (Then, she goes off with Shinbo, which leaves Motosuwa with the custody of Sumomo.)

There is a lot of that going around. Ueda is famous, it seems, having been married to a Persocom at one point, until she suffered a hard drive failure and lost memories. Yumi has a crush on him (though he is twice her age) but she also thinks he has a crush on Chi. Maybe the outfit was too suggestive.

Moreover, there’s reasons that Chitose doesn’t let anyone into her apartment, and only one of them has to do with the one mat that lifts up to let her into the high-tech surveillance center in the basement. It seems that she was barren, so she and her husband bought and configured two Persocoms, Freya and Elda. Then Freya burned out, and Elda, well, had her own problems to deal with.

And then there was the epic Net search that made Yuzuki crash, which led to Minoru having his own kind of crash . . .

The subculture of young, unemployed, stay-at-home Japanese men has come more into the public eye of late. The Japan, Inc. which due to its seamless interfacing of public and private interests, its proactive awareness of technology, and its innate links to its storied past, was going to take over the world and go to the stars with space colonists in kimono with daisho running quintillion-yen enterprises, founded in the real world sometime back in the nineteen-eighties. It wasn’t quite what was it was imagined as. And somehow, encouraging these rootless young men to find large dolls to serve as companions seems rather like a limited emotional response.

Though in this one case . . . the Internet

legend that Minoru finds is that the “chobits” would break through and achieve human feelings. This connects to the “one just for me” that Chi reads about. And it turns out that there is a connection between Chi and Chitose Hibiya. If you thought Edgar Rice Burroughs went to extremes with coincidence . . .



The art style is not the highest, though considerably better than the standard American television animation that I grew up with. There are employed what seem to be some standard clichés of animé drawing that irritate, but it’s not as if I can do anything about them. As opposed to, for example, the exquisite detail of Chi’s work dress at Mr. Ueda’s Tyrolean Bakery. Ah so, torte with sake, ja?

There is a “cyberpunk” attitude in the plot, the way that there don’t seem to be authorities around. Chi is stolen or kidnapped twice, and instead of going to the police, Motosuwa sets off to find her personally. Not “alone”, he has Sumomo in his pocket calling out directions (Persocoms are also cell phones), with Minoru tracking the search using various search paradigms and technologies.

The second theft/kidnapping was by yet another net denizen, Yoshiyuki Kojima (*Kojima Yoshiyuki*), screen name “Dragonfly”, who has even more Persocoms than Minoru, including his own mini-Persocom, Kotoko (*Kotoko*) programmed to always tell the truth. (Since Persocoms can talk, and since Chi cooks they can build fires, I guess they have to be considered sapient.) As the comments put it, Kotoko thinks everyone in the Motosuwa household is crazy, showing that she does indeed always tell the truth. (I suppose it’s just

a coincidence that the WordPerfect spell checker suggests that "Motosuwa" should be spelled "Madhouse".)

Then too, there are the two Persocoms introduced in the last few episodes, who turn up at the climax and face off with the problem that Chi is now doing what she does under stress, which is to levitate and glow. She has to find herself and come to terms with the world and people around her, and that may be interesting.

THE GUY, THE GOLD WATCH, AND EVERYTHING

Review by Joseph T Major of
CASHBACK

Produced, Directed, and Written by Sean Ellis
(2004, 2006)

<http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0460740/>
Amazon.com price: \$14.98

Being able to stop time in its tracks, as it were, is an established science-fictional trope, though the physical problems would tend to militate against its being very useful. Those with that ability had different uses for it. In "The New Accelerator" (by H. G. Wells, 1901), the users mostly observed, though the narrator did boast that he had written the story in less than five minutes real time. Sometimes, the means might put its user in a trap, as in "A Kind of a Stopwatch" (*The Twilight Zone*, script by Rod Serling, October 18, 1963). Of course, sometimes the user might *want* that, as in Sir Arthur C. Clarke's "All the Time In the World" (*Startling Stories*, July 1952). And not all the effects were benign, as R. A. Lafferty demonstrated in "The Six Fingers of Time" (*Worlds of IF*, September 1960), not the sort of thing you would expect from him. And of course, there was the ordinary lucky fellow who got *The Girl, the Gold Watch, and Everything* (by John D. MacDonald, 1962; and of course its movie adaptation (1980)).

Ben Willis (Sean Bigglerstaff) hasn't read any of this, though. He's too busy studying art — and breaking up in a spectacular fashion with his girlfriend. The first sign that his life isn't going to be quite what it had been was that he quits sleeping. With eight extra hours a day, he becomes less productive, because when he isn't sleeping, he's worrying about why he isn't sleeping. Then he puts his asomnia to good use, getting a job as a night stock clerk at a local branch of Sainsbury's [a real grocery store chain, run by a rich British family that got started importing frozen meat from Argentina, and stayed that way through some imaginative fiddling with their tax residency status].

His co-workers are to put it mildly a bit loutish, with practical jokes, horse play, and offensive pranks. Except for Sharon (Emilia Fox), a cool and serene young woman who longs to go to South America. [Obligatory Royal Tie-In: Emilia Fox is the daughter of Edward Fox; Edward survived playing Sir Brian Horrocks in *A Bridge Too Far* under the observation of Sir Brian Horrocks, and his half-brother is Daniel Chatto, who is married to Lady Sarah Armstrong-Jones, the daughter of Princess Margaret.] As for looks, you could

plop the lot of them (even Sharon) down in Louisville and until they opened their mouths no one would notice, thus proving the ancestry of Kentuckians.

But one night, Ben discovers that he can stop time. Sometimes he uses this ability in prankish ways himself, as when their supervisor is clumsily hitting on Sharon, and he transfers the man to the back room, where two of his mates are throwing bottles of rancid milk at each other. At least they had been throwing milk bottles at **each other**. Other times he uses it to get models to pose without their having to worry about muscle cramps. Or even knowing they are posing.

There is something perhaps a bit creepy about Ben, since he undresses his models (again, without their even knowing or noticing) to sketch them. But then, his young life has been sexualised, one might say, as he recounts various events of that nature, from the Swedish au pair who got out of the shower and went upstairs to get dressed, to his best friend's parents' stack of issues of *Hustler*, to the girl in the class who offered to show herself for 50p (Hogwarts this isn't). This may be offputting to some people and is perhaps a bit bothersome.

The supervisor wants to bond with the guys, and in a sense with Sharon too. After a football game that they lost 27-0 [real football, not that bloody *American* thing] he decides to throw himself a birthday party, and tasks Ben with hiring the stripper. In self-defence, Sharon asks Ben to be her date for the party.

Indeed, it's a small world after all, as the stripper is the girl from Ben's school, now charging a bit more than 50p (gor blimey, in the old days you could 'ave 'ad the bird 'erself for a tanner [50 decimalised pence equals ten pre-decimalised shillings, a "tanner"]). His best friend (the one whose parents had all the magazines) is the one who knows where to hire the stripper, so he gets to go. (The scene where he's, ah, warming up for the party is very symbol-laden.) And Ben's ex is also at the party, dating the brother of one of the other stock boys.

Naturally, Sharon sees the ex trying to reconcile with Ben at just the wrong time, and flounces out the door, except from Ben's point of view. That is, he stops time and spends two days (from his perspective) trying to figure out what he can do, looking at her as she heads for the door, frozen between two clicks of time. In the end he gives up and lets her go.

At least he has his art. Indeed, he has an invitation to go to a gallery. Issued by two of his workmates, all unknowing to the gallery owner. But his luck has taken a turn, for when Ben shows up, unannounced, the gallery owner says "As long as you came here . . ." and after looking at several pictures of Sharon (he had had all the time in the world to sketch her, recall), decides that this is his lucky day.

And when Sharon gets the invite to the show (if you stop the DVD at precisely the right place, though I didn't have to, you can see that the date of the show is "Friday, November 3 1st" which is what it would have been in 2006) it's others' lucky days . . .

Interestingly, *Cashback* began as an 18-minute long short subject, which was nominated for the Best Short Film, Live Action Oscar in 2006. Ellis managed to reassemble the entire original cast to do the expansion. Those appreciative of some of the more outré features of the British media will be interested to learn that one of Ben's unknowing models in the store is played by Keeley Hazell of *The Sun's* Page 3.

The Hugo Award it won is from the Chicago International Film Festival. It didn't even get on the Honorable Mention list for our Hugo.

One can find the story less than plausible (from the clothes-burning in "The New Accelerator" to the progeria in "The Six Fingers of Time", neither of which seems to affect Ben) and its protagonist less than ideal (all that stripping; he even has a daydream of Sharon doing a pole dance). It is a fairy-tale story with a fairy-tale ending, but then fate should give a bloke a good turn every now and then, what?

NO COUNTRY FOR OLD FEN

Trip Report by Joseph T Major on
ConCave 28

February 22-24, 2008

Back in the old days, when I was in Bowling Green in the Western Kentucky University Science Fiction Society (WKUSFS), there was a con at Cave City, with the logical name of "ConCave". There still is. It's grown, while I've merely gotten older. For the past few years, Gary Robe, once also in the WKUSFS, has been running it, with the able help of his wife Corliss, another sometime WKUSFS-er.

We always meant to go, but it was not well publicized, and we'd usually find out the date after we had already made other plans. This year, though, they had a special guest of honor, the Editor of *Challenger*, **Guy H. Lillian III**, and his able assistant, **Rosy Lillian**. We were so close, Guy insisted that we come, and kindly told us when. So we did, even though we didn't get the notice until just before the rates changed, and then there was the problem of deciding.

So, on Saturday morning, we went away with our friends . . . drove down to **Tim Lane's** and **Elizabeth Garrett's** place, changed cars, and set out southwards, with a breakfast stop in Elizabethtown. The hotel was right by the expressway. One could miss it, I suppose, but it would take considerable effort.

Gary has been holding a lottery for rooms at the hotel. Like with the resort back when, the hotel fills up, and they are no doubt glad to have full (indeed, over-full, the parking lot was always all taken) rooms in the off season. In spite of this, we managed to find a place, and went in.

Pat and Roger Sims were there, up from Florida, and enjoying the place, places, tremendously. Gary told us that registration wouldn't open for another hour and gave us Guy's room number. We went there and had a happy reunion. Guy lamented the inability to print as many issues of *Challenger* as he liked, Tim complained about the problems of vision (his vision was getting to where he couldn't read *FOSFAX*, which is bad when you think about it),

and we just worried.

Guy wanted to go see Wigwam Village, so we went down to register while they were getting ready. Corliss was quite helpful in getting us registered. There were over three hundred members of the con already. The dealers' room was small but it had Larry Smith, so wasn't entirely bad. **Bob Roehm** was also there and we had discourse on various matters. **Joel Zakem** had the Nebula nominees.

Then it was off to Wigwam Village. The place is getting a bit run down. The heating in the office was out. It's off the main drag, so doesn't get much business.



Back in the fifties, Mom & Dad piled the kids into the car and drove from motel to motel, seeing America, seeing places like this. It was the American Century, they had survived the War, and a great new world was in the making. Perhaps there would even be a bit of space for Buck Rogers girls in tight silver suits . . . okay, Mom, I stopped that.

Now a motel has to have internet access, an in-room refrigerator . . . we are old fans and tired, accustomed to our comforts, sometimes needing them, and it's not what Seaton & Crane and Arcott, Wade, and Morey said in the IPO.

We walked around the place for a while after talking to the manager (who remembered Guy) and took some pictures. After melancholically returning to the con hotel, we talked to southern travellers Steve & Sue Francis, and then **Tom & Anita Feller** made an appearance. Tom has become a dirty pro, he writes for a living, and indeed solicited Tim to do some writing work for him.

As day turned to night, we took over a section of the con suite, which had borne a suspicious resemblance to the motel's breakfast room, and discussed various things with various people. Guy and Tim and Tom and I spent a little time recruiting Randy Childers, a guy from Bowling Green who had come by with a sketch pad of his work, some pretty good stuff. I saw my old friend Annette Carrico, still running the con suite, recovered from her bout with cancer.

We couldn't stay much longer, but did go to the LibertyCon party, which started first, and had a nice talk there with Tom and with the hostess, who had a beautiful Egyptian-theme tattoo across her shoulders (and she said more farther down her back). But all good things must come to an end and we had an hour's

difference and an hour's drive to make, so we left. (And Lisa and I ended up closing out the Texas Roadhouse where we finally had dinner, but that's another story.)

It was fun.

QUICK, WATSON, QUICK

Un-Trip Report by Joseph T Major on
**Sherlock Holmes/Arthur Conan Doyle
Symposium XXVII**
"The Year of the Yard"
March 7-9, 2008

When Cathy Gill called me Friday night and said she was still in Cincinnati, I figured we were not going to be making the drive up from Louisville to Dayton Saturday morning. Then I had to cancel our room reservations.

There was a storm in the area, understand. Now there had been a record of storms in the area during the Symposium; indeed, many was the time we had driven home as the flakes fell. But there was a blizzard going on. Louisville had over a foot of snow, with more northwards.

According to reports, some people did make it, or more likely had already been there. The sessions went on, but the Saturday night Reader's Theater didn't. Cathy had the scripts. The Sunday Morning Quiz took its place.

Cathy had wondered, "Why is the Symposium being held in **March**?" Al Rodin's widow told her it used to be held in *January*. The next one will be held **May 15-17, 2009**. Fortunately, the Preakness's post time is after the ending of the final session. The topic will be the long-suffering and much-underestimated Dr. John H. Watson, M.D., late Army Medical Detachment, and the title is "**The Merry Wives of Watson**". The game is afoot!

SUPER TUESDAY NIGHT

by Lisa

Last night the Angel of Death passed very close to my house. Just as we were preparing for bed news came of dangerous weather. My first thought is -This is February. We're supposed to have snowstorms, not tornadoes!

We decide to stay up instead of sleep. I go downstairs when the upstairs feels too windy. Downstairs I can hear the storm sirens screaming their unearthly wailing message. I look outside but do not see anything too bad. I sit down and put my back to a bookcase to wait for the all clear. It does not come. Instead the sirens grow more frantic. I bum a flashlight off Grant and he gets a second more powerful one out just in case.

Abruptly there is a bumping at the outside door and a definite cool draft blowing in sharply through the inner door. I open the door but there is no cat on the other side. This is not good. I shut the door and when the bumping happens again I ignore it. Whatever is on the other side I now damned well know is most decidedly not something I want in the house, something far worse than a whole herd of opossums.

Then the air changes, becoming eerie and floating. My skin prickles and my ears turn uncomfortable. It's not actually painful but it

doesn't feel good. Time seems to suspend itself, putting us in limbo.

It is perhaps no more than thirty seconds after that when I hear the noise. For a second or two I'm not sure what I'm hearing. I've always heard that tornadoes sound like freight trains. This sounds instead like a very large, very angry animal with a very, very deep, deep growl flying over just down the street. And then I realize it has to be the tornado Grant's radio is blaring about. Fear lurches at my stomach.

Our instincts are geared for fight or flight. Fighting a tornado is absolutely suicidal. Running from it only marginally less so. I know this very well, know that my best hope of safety is staying where I am. Instinct still demands that I either fight or run. I suppress it with the Trisagion hymn from the Orthodox liturgy.

The cats and I all stare at each other. I can see the reflection of my own terror in the cats. C'Mell licks my arm with frantic desperation while Sarang and Gemellus mill around close to me. The cats know that this is the valley of the shadow of death.

Subjectively it is an eternity before the noise moves on. The clock says it is not more than two minutes before I only hear normal wind noises. I relax back against the bookshelf as the radio announces it has passed through my area and is heading on to terrify some "other poor dumb bastard."

It is several minutes before I can make myself head upstairs in my now safe neighborhood. I expect to lie awake the rest of the night but I'm asleep within an hour, very quick for me.

I know as I drift off to sleep that we have been very lucky this night to sleep in our own bed in our own house. Many will not have been so lucky. Many will have lost their lives. But just right now, I'm too emotionally exhausted to feel anything but a dull marveling at having survived being this close to the monster. My last thought before sleep is that the next time I hear the storm sirens I'll take my chances with the spiders in the cellar out back.

RED WULL

c. 2000-March 10, 2008

It was October of 2003 when Lisa decided it was time to fill poor Perikles's slot. Not replace him, you couldn't replace any cat, but you could put another where he had been. She went to the animal shelter, to succor the poor cats that had been cast away.

He was older than the others; four and a half years old, they guessed. A big marmalade tabby, with a white bib, and white paws; a handsome cat. Except, somewhere, he had lost his tail; an accident, a fight, or maybe even a matter of birth. There was just a little stump left on his kitty cat prat. Between one thing and the other, that may have been enough to put people off.

Lisa hadn't brought a big enough carrier. They lent her one. Now that she had the cat, she had to consider a name.

She liked the book *Bob, Son of Battle*, as you will recall (*Alexiad*, V. 2 #4 — V. 2 #6).

The one old sheep herder there has a dog, a big dog that lost his tail somewhere. In the end, the dog is killed in a fight, and the old herder takes him out on the moors. They are found the next morning.

The tailless dog is named "Red Wull". The old man always says to his only companion, "Eh, Wullie?" That was enough for Lisa, and she named the tailless cat "Red Wull".

He didn't seem to be put out over being named for a dog. Red Wull took his place in our hierarchy of cats. They would all lie in a heap of fur on our bed during the day, with him in with the rest of them. He would come up and lie on the floor beside me. Then, he would pull open a cupboard door with one paw and climb in.

But then, as time passed on, he kept on getting sick. First it was fleas. Then, it was that he took a dislike to the food. By then, he was spending his nights on Grant's legs, or on the couch back up above Grant's legs.

When he stopped eating, and got so very thin and listless, we knew something was wrong. The vets said what it was; a great mass in his liver.

Lisa held him, I petted him, and they helped him slip away. We buried him in the back yard that night, under the snow, next to Elfling.

— JTM

SLIM



That was Monday.

A week and a day later, Grant got a call from our loyal recipients Dale & Tammi. A large Siamese cat was on their porch, looking lost and lorn. Did Grant happen to know anyone who had a warm heart (and a soft head) to take him in? Well . . .

Lisa was going to go there Wednesday morning to pick him up, but the cat didn't show up Tuesday afternoon. Wednesday morning, Dale called with the news that the cat had finally shown up; they had him coralled. Grant printed up a map and directions.

Indiana really has to start marking streets better. I missed the exit ramp, took an alternative route, when I got to where I should have taken the turnoff decided I was lost, went almost all the way back . . . and finally got to their place.

He was a big chocolate-point Traditional Siamese, almost Birman (he has the cobby build but not the white paws). Lisa loaded him into the carrier, we thanked Dale & Tammi, and had to be off quickly, because the vet's closed in an hour. On the way we discussed names.

Field Marshal the Right Hon. Sir William Joseph Slim, Viscount Slim of Burma, KG, GCB, GCMG, GCVO, GBE, DSO, MC [1891-1970] was a writer and a general. (A chap without an income had to support himself somehow in the 6th Gurkha Rifles.) He was a large and resolute fellow. Therefore we called the cat "Slim".

After waiting for a long time at the vet's we got to see a doctor. We arranged for all the tests and shots, not to mention neutering. We couldn't breed from him anyhow; no papers. (There is a famous British Army evaluation that includes the line "I would not breed from this officer.") Slim had some rather untoward scars, including one that ringed his right foreleg as if someone had tried to bite it off. The doctor looked at his teeth and estimated he was about a year and a half old; he's obviously grown, since he weighed over twelve pounds.

They called about nine that evening. No leukemia, no FeLV. One more cat. Apple-headed Siamese have long lifespans, so we might have him another fifteen to twenty years. Watch this space.

Thursday we went out to pick him up. He had been neutered, got his shots, and they did something about the wound. Also raised the age estimate to about four years. We took him home, sang the "We are Siamese" song from *Lady and the Tramp* for Grant, put Slim in the downstairs bathroom, and decided to wait on events. He gets one cubic centimeter of Clavamox (insert some joke) in the morning and evening. Lisa and I got it down him the first night and in the morning (and thereafter) I did it all by myself.

As Slim recovered, he became more energetic. "Energetic" defined as "He's got out of the bathroom again!" Finally, a week after we brought him home, we let him out. He eats at the food bowls, drinks at the water bowl, and gets along with no more than the usual temporary disagreements.

— JTM

We filled Wullie's slot more quickly than we ever have. We were not looking for another animal. But the word passed quickly of Wullie's death from Grant to Tammi, who just happened to have a homeless animal show up on her porch. She had said he was an applehead Siamese but I had thought she was exaggerating. I did not, therefore, expect to see an animal very like the one in Disney's *That Darn Cat*.

(Run an unofficial rescue and you'll hear all kinds of fantastic claims. I've even been offered a shorthaired Persian.)

Appleheads, also known as Traditional Siamese and Thai, were once the standard for Siamese before today's ultra slim standard. We heard about the cat Monday night. Tuesday I met with Tammi for a few minutes. She told me the cat had a damaged leg.

I had thought I would get the cat Thursday afternoon but decided to act earlier. We picked the cat up Wednesday afternoon late and took him to the vet. They kept him overnight for the neutering. For the first time I felt some regret at doing this. His kind are rare these days and they are truly historic. But without pedigree papers I knew no reputable breeder would even consider using him as a stud, no matter his appearance. I have no intention of getting into breeding. Without those papers Slim, as we named the cat, is just another older stray.

I spent Thursday afternoon preparing the bathroom for its new occupant. I moved harmful things to hiding spots, installed the bed and dishes after I cleaned the litter box. I picked up the fifth bowl and tears came to my eyes as I remembered Wullie. I shook away the regrets and put the bowl in the bathroom. I closed the bathroom door to keep the other felines out but opened the bedroom door in exchange.

Joe came home from work and we went off to pick up our new animal. Slim is well behaved considering all the changes he's had to accept in the past two days. I was surprised at how quickly he accepted being confined in the carrier. Ours know us and they still make their displeasure known all the way to the vet's. Wullie, normally a sweet gentle cat, would yowl all the way there. Slim quit yowling when he saw it was futile. I can't say this difference makes me too unhappy.

Slim has already shown signs of a curious, exploring nature. He escaped from the bathroom this morning and got to the kitchen before Joe could catch him. I hope he is content to stay in the house. His life outside was not easy.

The vet says the damaged leg was an old wound mostly healed. He has numerous other scars from fights, typical for older intact strays. He had debris in his feet that cannot have felt good. From these, I think it likely he had been on his own for quite some time. The vet first said he was a year to a year and a half old, then moved the age up to four, only a little younger than Wullie was when we got him. We have no way of knowing how purebred he actually is. My guess, based on his appearance, is that he is the real thing.

Sarang has been batting at Slim from under the door, which Slim nobly ignores, giving me hope that at least he did not start the fights that left him scarred. He could quite easily have pounced and done damage to Sarang. Things may be different when we open the door Thursday night. I don't think Sarang will find Slim as easy to bully as Wullie was. Gemellus and Delenn seem to have him on ignore. C'Mell has actually shown eager interest. It's almost as though she remembers being Siamese among Siamese and knows that here is another of her kind. I expected her to hide instead of acting as though she was welcoming home a long-lost cousin. Since Slim's arrival I have spent time looking up appleheads and have learned that the formal name for them now is Thai and the breed has a fascinating history. I will have to change their listings to Thai, easy enough when the

animals are pet quality, not show animals.

Slim is undeniably the fanciest of all the strays. He is very much classic Siamese look, very regal, even more regal than my little gray lion was. His coat is still rough but getting softer. The fur on his chest is already as soft as C'Mell's. Fur has already covered the worst of his damaged leg. His coat is decidedly woolly looking but maybe he's still wearing his winter coat.

It was far sooner than I would have liked to bring another animal into the house but perhaps it is as well. At least this way I don't have to pick just one out of all the desperate little faces in their shelter cages. I very much doubt the shelter staff are that unhappy at not getting to put Slim in one of their cages. I'm pretty sure they feel they have more than enough animals in their cages.

He has already discovered it is fun to sit on the couch and look out the window. He has already begun the cat habit of stretching out in inconvenient places, such as the top of stairs. He was on his own long enough to pick up quite a few scars from fights but not so long that he has not readapted to domestic life with surprising ease.

He is surprisingly not aggressive considering how recently he was an intact tom. He seems to prefer deflecting aggressiveness by ignoring it unless the hisser actually makes physical contact. He has already come into the bedroom and stretched out on the floor. He is now easily the biggest of the cats, in contrast to C'Mell's smallness.

— LTM

WINNING COLORS

February 14, 1985 — February 17, 2008
by Lisa

I visited the Blood Horse web site recently and froze in shock, for the headline announced the death of Winning Colors, 1988 Derby winner. My mind went back to the Distaff she so narrowly lost to the great Personal Ensign in a race which is the stuff of legends. On the day of the Distaff her career had tailed off sharply after the Derby so that nobody expected her to be a serious threat until she arrived in the paddock. I caught my breath at my first sight of her, for if a horse could have breathed fire that day she would have done it. She was a big strapping horse, bigger than most of the colts she raced against in the Derby. One announcer commented that she ought to give the smallest colt weight. (Derby fillies carry 121 pounds to the 126 the colts have to carry.) At one point said smallest colt had lined up next to her which gave him an unfortunate resemblance to a child's pony.

She never passed along her speed and will to win combined to her offspring. Compounding the tragedy, the 23-year-old mare was in foal when she developed the fatal colic. This foal might have been the one to inherit her quality but now will never have the chance.

One by one, the great horses of my youth are slipping away.

MY DERBY HORSE

by Lisa



I'm going to go out on a limb here and pick my Derby horse far earlier than I like to. There are some good colts running this year, like War Pass and Big Brown. But I was sold on Pyro when I saw his picture in the Juvenile last year. He didn't win but he gave me something of the same feeling I had when I watched Bernardini come powering down the Preakness stretch nearly two years ago. It is not surprising that he should remind me somewhat of Bernardini. Pyro's sire Pulpit is by Bernardini's sire, A.P. Indy. In the Juvenile Pyro's picture showed a big colt who needed time to grow into himself. It is, of course, still more than a month to the Derby but it is getting close enough that anything which throws Pyro off training will put him out of the Derby. The Derby is after all, "the chance of a lifetime in a lifetime of chance." A horse must be ready to go that first Saturday in May. There must be no getting pocketed, no making a run too soon or too late.

WHEN LANGUAGES DIE: The Extinction of the World's Languages and the Erosion of Human Knowledge

by K. David Harrison
(Oxford University Press, 2007,
292 pp./indexed, \$29.95,
ISBN 139780195181920)
Reviewed by Jim Sullivan

The whole book is a plea to stop the loss of several of the languages on the globe. According to the author, 6,912 different human languages were spoken in 2001 worldwide. He goes on to state that many of his fellow linguists believe that at the end of the 21st Century, half those languages will have been lost.

To prove his point, Harrison cites the fact that 204 languages in use currently have fewer than 10 speakers and 344 other languages have only between 99 and 10 users.

Sadly, when the languages disappear, the knowledge they have behind them will be lost, too, along with their vocabulary, grammar, and everything else connected with them. The author tells many stories about various obscure languages around the world such as Ainu in northern Japan, Tuvan in southern Siberia, Lenape a Native-American language, and numerous others from around the world.

Linguists, of course, are trying to record speakers of these obscure and dwindling languages. The academics have done so with many, but no where near enough. Making it all the more difficult is that few of these languages exist in written form.

Countries that have a lot of speakers of a major language, like English, Spanish, or Russian, for example, often have government officials who persuade, or compel, people within their borders to stop speaking a native language and to use the better known and primary one in that country. That has led to the loss of many languages already. Think of all the Native American languages lost in the U.S. alone. Yet minor languages have stores of lore and legend behind them. Many of the words and phrases, also, will never be found in the more widely spread languages.

An interesting sidelight to all of this is the fact that there are 121 identified different sign languages in use by deaf people around the world. Users of anyone of those systems are not understandable by users of other sign languages. Many of these languages are disappearing, too.

This volume wallows in the minutia of the various lesser-known languages. Some of it includes discussions about how many vowels and consonants a particular language has, the number of dialects, locations where used, and how numbers, among other matters, are articulated. Reading about such matters requires concentration. Fortunately, each chapter is relatively short. And portions within them are sectionalized and brief. The entire text is well mixed with photos, graphs, and charts, too. The author treats his subject sincerely with passion. Consequently, he tends to belabor his plea to save the languages' from their fast disappearance. Otherwise and despite the foregoing, this is an important book with a dire message that must be acted upon as soon as possible.

Harrison writes in his Preface, "When ideas go extinct, we all grow poorer. The voices of the last of many languages are now fading away, never to be heard again. Linguists like me, too few in number, rush to record these tongues, while few native communities struggle to revive them. Some of these last voices will be preserved in archives, in print, or as digital recordings. Those last speakers who have generously shared their knowledge with others may see their ideas persist a bit longer, perhaps published in books like this one. Most ideas live on only in memory, and with the extinction of languages vanish forever."

The volume's author, K. David Harrison, teaches at Swarthmore College where he is an assistant professor of Linguistics. His specialty is Siberian Turkic languages. But he, also, has worked in other nations around the globe. His efforts in Siberia are featured in *The Last Speakers*, a film documentary.

Recommended.

POISON PEN: Death Lies Between the Lines

By Sheila Lowe
(Capital Crime Press; 2007;

ISBN-13: 978-0-9776276-0-8;
 ISBN-10: 0-9776276-0-8; \$14.95
 Reviewed by Robert Kennedy

I read somewhere that Sheila Lowe is a famous graphologist so I obtained her *The Complete Idiot's Guide to Handwriting Analysis* and *Handwriting of the Famous & Infamous* from the library. They were interesting. But, in three of the analysis in the second book her political bias was abundantly obvious. Then her novel *Poison Pen* was obtained and then, yes, her political bias rises again. Now, with the nitpicking out of the way, what did I think of her novel? I enjoyed it very much.

Claudia Rose is (surprise) a graphologist who is well known and sometimes works with the police. Lindsey Alexander, a one-time friend, is found dead leaving what may or may not be a suicide note. The police are sure that it is a suicide note. But, a business associate of the deceased doesn't think that it was a suicide and asks Claudia Rose to analyze the note to determine if Lindsay actually wrote it (or more accurately printed it).

That's just the beginning and the story takes off from there. There are more dead people. Someone tries to kill Claudia. A better police detective becomes involved in the case and, naturally, he and Claudia become sexually involved. (The actual sex is off-stage and there is no explicit sex.) Here is another quibble. Lowe obviously does not understand the suicide clause in insurance policies.

As I read the novel I picked first one, then a second person who was the probable murderer. (You knew it was murder and not suicide, right? Why else would it be a mystery?) As the end of the book neared I had to choose one or the other as my choice for the murderer. So choose I did the second person and that person did turn out to be the murderer. (A little pat on the back for myself.)

Despite my nitpicks and quibble, I very much recommend *Poison Pen*. It is well written and holds ones attention. I look forward to the second book in the Claudia Rose Mystery series — *Written in Blood* — that is due out in September.

You can check on Claudia Rose at <http://www.claudiaroseseries.com> and on Sheila Lowe at <http://www.sheilalowe.com>

**SMOKIN' ROCKETS:
 The Romance of Technology in
 American Film, Radio and
 Television, 1945 - 1962**

by Patrick Lucanio and Gary Coville
 (McFarland & Company, Inc.; 2002; ISBN-
 13: 978-0-7864-1233-4)

Reviewed by Rodford Edmiston Smith

Despite the somewhat facetious title this is a (mostly) serious analysis of the interaction between science, science fiction and society. Also, despite the date in the subtitle some of the materials covered are both older and newer than those years. It also covers pulps and novels, though far less extensively than the media mentioned in the subtitle.

I quite enjoyed this. It is by no means comprehensive, and skips several SF stories and even magazines and radio programs which would seem to me to be more important than some which were included. For example, I was a little outraged that there was no mention of *Forbidden Planet*, while *The Twonky* received detailed coverage; actually an entire chapter. Still, many of my favorites were discussed, as well as some I had heard of but had little personal knowledge of, and a few which were new to me. Also, some of the discussions of familiar books, magazines, radio shows and movies (and a few early TV shows) contained details I was previously unaware of.

For example, in the examination of the Mercury Theater version of *War of the Worlds* the authors describe how adaptations later made for broadcast in other countries produced similar results to the original.

Such cultural phenomena as the mass panics produced by the *War of the Worlds* radio plays, the flying saucer craze and how public perception of nuclear weapons and power generation have changed are studied. So is how the portrayal of various types of characters has changed through time.

I personally greatly appreciated the discussion of early TV science programs. Not merely the Disney stuff, but the Bell System Science Series, some parts of which I saw in grade school on a film screen. I had never known where those came from.



One caution: this book may be hard on your budget. The Appendix and Filmography motivated me to place a large order with Amazon. :-)

The authors know science, SF in general and the specific topics of discussion well, and write in an easily accessible and entertaining fashion. Their sociological conclusions seem generally sound, if occasionally a little indirect. I recommend this book to anyone interested in how science has driven SF and how SF has affected culture, as well as in how SF has driven the pursuit of science.

One final note, a few bits of trivia. The cover illustration is taken from the early German SF movie *Die Frau im Mond*, which could be taken as the first hard SF film. Fritz Lang had members of the *Verein für Raumschiffahrt* (members of which would go on to develop the A-10/V-2) help him with the technical aspects.

Willy Ley and Hermann Oberth received screen credit for their work on the research. The artist for the movie poster the cover is taken from saw the model they built (it flew, but on a primitive black powder charge instead of using liquid propellants as originally planned) and thought the hollow fins were extra engines; hence the flames coming out of them. The hollow fins themselves came from a mistaken belief that such structures would produce less drag for the same stability as flat, conventional fins.

This movie, by the way, also introduced the launch countdown.

BRACH'S CINNAMON CHRISTMAS NOUGATS

Candy Review by Johnny Carruthers
<http://chocolatescifi.livejournal.com/>

I think it should be obvious by now that I have a deep and abiding affection for all things chocolate. At the same time, though, I do have an appreciation for candy where there is no sign of chocolate. One flavor that I particularly like is cinnamon, and these nougats from Brach are delightfully wonderful. (Or should that be wonderfully delightful?)

Brach actually produced three different varieties of Christmas nougats — peppermint, spearmint, and cinnamon. But as I think I have mentioned, I am more or less indifferent to peppermint, and I absolutely detest spearmint. So, we're going to concentrate on the nougat flavor that I do like.

The Cinnamon Nougats are round. Well, I think they start out as being round. They are soft enough that, during what I assume is the entire process of packaging and shipping them to stores, some of the individual candies get a little squished to the point where they are only sort of round. They are primarily pink, with red stripes around the edge of the candy, and a green Christmas tree in the center.

More than anything, the nougats remind me of beads made from polymer clay. It looks as though different colors of cinnamon-flavored nougat were shaped into incredibly long logs, then sliced into individual pieces.

Now, I did mention that the Christmas Nougats were soft enough that some of them became a little squished in handling. I should emphasize that they are not super-soft by any means. These nougats stay firm until the right amount of pressure is applied — say, as when they are between your teeth as you bite down on one. It is then that they become increasingly soft as you chew.

The cinnamon flavor is not immediately noticeable when you first put one of the nougats in your mouth. It is only as you chew that the cinnamon flavor is gradually released over your tastebuds. The cinnamon flavor is rather mild, compared to other cinnamon candies. It is not the "curiously strong" cinnamon flavor of a Cinnamon Altoids, nor the flavor you find in Red Hots or Hot Tamales. The nougats do have a nice cinnamon zing to them, but it isn't overpowering. I have one friend who doesn't like any of the other cinnamon candies mentioned above, because she finds their flavor

too strong. I think she might actually like this cinnamon candy, though.

Since these are packaged as Christmas Nougats, you can guess how long they will remain on the shelves. I would hope that Brach's will also make similar versions available at other times. I have always thought that cinnamon candy was an ideal match for Valentine's Day.

Terry Pratchett's HOGFATHER

(Genius Entertainment; DVD;
Science Fiction Book Club - \$19.99;
Amazon.com - \$9.99)
Comment by Robert Kennedy

For fans of Terry Pratchett this movie is a must. Having previously read the book will probably make the movie even more interesting. But, if you're a reader of Discworld novels it is not absolutely necessary. The movie starts with showing Discworld being supported by the four elephants on the back of the turtle. Magnificent! Pratchett himself was involved in the making of the movie and says that they got it right. Warning—You will have to set aside some time as the movie is 3 hours and 9 minutes long and there is a bonus of an approximately 12 minute interview with Terry Pratchett. Why the SFBC is selling the movie for \$19.99 is hard to understand. Amazon.com indicates that the list price is \$14.95 and their price is \$9.99. I rented the movie from Blockbuster. *HOGFATHER* is highly recommended.

2008 HUGO AWARDS NOMINATIONS



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

The Denvention 3 Hugo Nominations committee has announced the Hugo nominations for 2008:

Best Novel

The Yiddish Policemen's Union by Michael Chabon (HarperCollins, Fourth Estate)
Brasyl by Ian McDonald (Gollancz; Pyr)
Rollback by Robert J. Sawyer (Tor; *Analog* Oct. 2006-Jan/Feb. 2007)
The Last Colony by John Scalzi (Tor)
Halting State by Charles Stross (Ace; Orbit)

Best Novella

"Fountains of Age" by Nancy Kress (*Asimov's* July 2007)
"Recovering Apollo 8" by Kristine Kathryn Rusch (*Asimov's* Feb. 2007)
"Stars Seen Through Stone" by Lucius Shepard (*F&SF* July 2007)
"All Seated on the Ground" by Connie Willis (*Asimov's* Dec. 2007; Subterranean Press)
"Memorare" by Gene Wolfe (*F&SF* April 2007)

Best Novelette

"The Cambist and Lord Iron: a Fairytale of Economics" by Daniel Abraham (*Logorrhea* ed. by John Klima, Bantam)
"The Merchant and the Alchemist's Gate" by Ted Chiang (*F&SF* Sept. 2007)
"Dark Integers" by Greg Egan (*Asimov's* Oct./Nov. 2007)
"Glory" by Greg Egan (*The New Space Opera*, ed. by Gardner Dozois and Jonathan Strahan, HarperCollins/Eos)
"Finisterra" by David Moles (*F&SF* Dec. 2007)

Best Short Story

"Last Contact" by Stephen Baxter (*The Solaris Book of New Science Fiction*, ed. by George Mann, Solaris Books)
"Tideline" by Elizabeth Bear (*Asimov's* June 2007)
"Who's Afraid of Wolf 359?" by Ken MacLeod (*The New Space Opera*, ed. by Gardner Dozois and Jonathan Strahan, HarperCollins/Eos)
"Distant Replay" by Mike Resnick (*Asimov's* April/May 2007)
"A Small Room in Koboldtown" by Michael Swanwick (*Asimov's* April/May 2007; *The Dog Said Bow-Wow*, Tachyon Publications)

Best Related Book

The Company They Keep: C.S. Lewis and J.R.R. Tolkien as Writers in Community by Diana Glyer; appendix by David Bratman (Kent State University Press)
Breakfast in the Ruins: Science Fiction in the Last Millennium by Barry Malzberg (Baen)
Emshwiller: Infinity x Two by Luis Ortiz, intro. by Carol Emshwiller, fwd. by Alex Eisenstien (Nonstop)
Brave New Words: the Oxford Dictionary of Science Fiction by Jeff Prucher (Oxford University Press)
The Arrival by Shaun Tan (Arthur A. Levine/Scholastic)

Best Dramatic Presentation, Long Form

Enchanted
<http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0461770/>
The Golden Compass
<http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0385752/>
Heroes, Season 1
<http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0813715/>
Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix
<http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0373889/>
Stardust

<http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0486655/>

Best Dramatic Presentation, Short Form

Battlestar Galactica "Razor"
<http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0991178/>
Dr. Who "Blink"
<http://www.imdb.com/title/tt1000252/>
Dr. Who "Human Nature" / "Family of Blood"
<http://www.imdb.com/title/tt1000254/>
<http://www.imdb.com/title/tt1000256/>
Star Trek New Voyages "World Enough and Time"
<http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0990932/>
Torchwood "Captain Jack Harkness"
<http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0898830/>

Best Professional Editor, Short Form

Ellen Datlow (*The Year's Best Fantasy and Horror* (St. Martin's), Coyote Road (Viking), Inferno (Tor))
Stanley Schmidt (*Analog*)
Jonathan Strahan (*The New Space Opera* (Eos/HarperCollins), *The Best Science Fiction and Fantasy of the Year, Volume 1* (Night Shade), *Eclipse One* (NightShade))
Gordon Van Gelder (*The Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction*)
Sheila Williams (*Asimov's Science Fiction*)

Best Professional Editor, Long Form

Lou Anders (Pyr)
Ginjer Buchanan (Ace/Roc)
David G. Hartwell (Senior Editor, Tor/Forge)
Beth Meacham (Tor)
Patrick Nielsen Hayden (Tor)

Best Professional Artist

Bob Eggleton
Phil Foglio
John Harris
Stephan Martiniere
John Picacio
Shaun Tan

Best Semiprozine

Ansible edited by David Langford
Helix edited by William Sanders and Lawrence Watt-Evans
Interzone edited by Andy Cox
Locus edited by Charles N. Brown, Kirsten Gong-Wong, & Liza Groen Trombi
The New York Review of Science Fiction, edited by Kathryn Cramer, Kristine Dikeman, David Hartwell & Kevin J. Maroney

Best Fanzine

Argentum edited by Steven H Silver
Challenger edited by Guy Lillian III
The Drink Tank edited by Chris Garcia
File 770 edited by Mike Glyer
PLOKTA edited by Alison Scott, Steve Davies, & Mike Scott

Best Fan Writer

Chris Garcia
David Langford

Cheryl Morgan
John Scalzi
Steven H Silver

Best Fan Artist

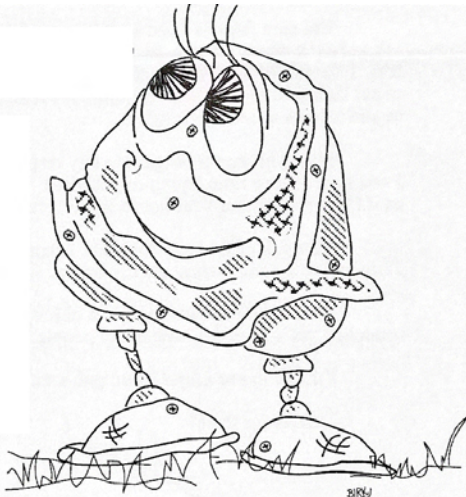
Brad Foster
Teddy Harvia
Sue Mason
Steve Stiles
Tara Wayne

John W. Campbell Award for Best New Science Fiction Writer

An award for the best new writer whose first work of science fiction or fantasy appeared during 2006 or 2007 in a professional publication. Sponsored by Dell Magazines.

Joe Abercrombie (2nd year of eligibility)
Jon Armstrong (1st year of eligibility)
David Anthony Durham (1st year of eligibility)
David Louis Edelman (2nd year of eligibility)
Mary Robinette Kowal (2nd year of eligibility)
Scott Lynch (2nd year of eligibility)

Congratulations to Mike Resnick, Diana Glycer, Steve Silver, Guy Lillian, Chris Garcia, Mike Glycer (His & Her rockets, w00t!), Brad Foster, and Tara Wayne.

FANZINES

Egoboo is the currency of fandom ...
be a Bbig Spender!

Askance #7 March 2008

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

Beyond Bree March 2008

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.

Bouncing Out of the Burrow

Nancy Martsch, Post Office Box 55372,
Sherman Oaks, CA 91413-5372 USA
beyondbree@yahoo.com

Beyond Bree humor issue (February
2008).

Chris Garcia's Little Thing

Christopher J. Garcia
garcia@computerhistory.org
<http://www.efanzines.com>

A one-shot of apology.

Best Fan Writer Hugo Nominee

The Drink Tank #161, #162, #163, #164

Christopher J. Garcia
garcia@computerhistory.org
<http://www.efanzines.com>

Best Fanzine Hugo Nominee

Best Fan Writer Hugo Nominee

The Drink Tank Third Annual

Christopher J. Garcia
garcia@computerhistory.org
<http://www.efanzines.com>

Best Fan Writer Hugo Nominee

eI # 36 February 2008

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

Feline Mewsings #31

R-Lauraine Tutihasi, 2173 Rio Vistoso
Lane, Oro Valley, AZ 85755-1912 USA
lauraine@mac.com
<http://www.weasner.com/>

New Address

File 770: 152 Thirtieth Annish

Mike Glycer, 705 Valley View Avenue,
Monrovia, CA 91016-2446 USA
Mikeglyer@cs.com
<http://www.efanzines.com>

Best Fanzine Hugo Nominee

Journey Planet

James Bacon and Christopher J. Garcia
garcia@computerhistory.org
<http://www.efanzines.com>

Best Fan Writer Hugo Nominee

A one-shot for Eastercon.

The Knarley Knaws #128 February 2008

Henry & Letha Welch, 1525 16th Avenue,
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<http://www.msoe.edu/~welch/ttk.html>

Lofgeornost #90 February 2008

Fred Lerner, 81 Worcester Avenue, White
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MT Void V. 26 # 32 February 8, 2008 — V. 26
#39, March 28, 2008

Mark and Evelyn Leeper, 80 Lakeridge
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<http://www.geocities.com/evelynleeper>

Opuntia #64.1C February 2008, #64.3 March
2008

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

Pablo Lennis #243 February 2008

John Thiel, 30 N. 19th Street, Lafayette, IN
47904-2950 USA

Peregrine Nations V. 7 #3 and V. 7 #4

Janice Stinson
The last issues.
<http://www.efanzines.com>

Science Fiction/San Francisco # 59 February 6,
2008, #60 February 20, 2008, #61 March 5,
2008, #62 March 19, 2008

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

Best Fan Writer Hugo Nominee

He's such a busy little beaver!

Trap Door #25 February 2008

Robert Lichtman, 11037 Broadway Terrace,
Oakland, CA 94611-1948 USA
locs2trapdoor@yahoo.com
<http://www.efanzines.com>

Vanamonde # 723-732

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

Visions of Paradise #125, #126

Robert Sabella, 24 Cedar Manor Court,
Budd Lake, NJ 07828-1023 USA
bsabella@optonline.net
<http://www.efanzines.com>

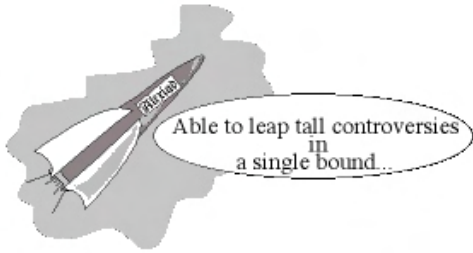
WCSFAzine #7 March 2008, #8 April 2008

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

Alexiad



Letters, we get letters



From: **Christopher J. Garcia** Feb. 6, 2008
chris@computerhistory.org
Best Fan Writer Hugo Nominee

So here I am, enjoying my time on the web at 7:52 on Less Super Wednesday, and I'm confronted with something that I've been trying to deny. You see, I recently moved and with the way my personal economy is, I had to make sacrifices. Three of those sacrifices were phone, cable TV and the Internet.

That's right, at home I have no access to the net, and thus the question of what life without the internet is an easy one for me. It sucks. I often have questions like what other movies the girl in *Balls of Fury* did in 2007 or where was WrestleMania 7 held and the only place to find that is on the internet. Well, that's not true. I do own the *Pro Wrestling Illustrated Book of Lists* and that told me that WrestleMania 8 was held at the Hoosier Dome, but I digress. It's rough, especially having to wait until I get to work to check my eMail, which is my preferred form of communication. Not having work to surf at would be far too much, especially when you consider that it was eZines that brought me into pubbing and I really couldn't do anything near my own zine if it was all print.

I don't get Tolkien fandom. I've got friends like Jean Martin, my co-editor at *Science Fiction/San Francisco*, who are big into it, but single author fandoms seem strange to me. There's the Heinlein people and the Browncoats, who are sort of tied-in with Fandom in general.

Note for the rest of us: if you can believe Wikipedia (and sometimes that's a big "IF"), "Browncoats" are fans of *Firefly*, called that after the people in the show. I've mentioned how one year RiverCon would be teeming with *ElfQuest* fans wearing paired name badges, another with Whovians in their long scarves, another with would-be dragonriders each with stuffed cute lil' fire lizard on shoulder... a fad for a year and only for that year.

There's the big George R. R. Martin fandom that is stranger still. Don't even get me wrong,

they're all good stuff, but I still don't get it.

And I have to say, I found a couple of those Degler sheets a year or so ago and they're some of my prizes. Yeah, they're not great, but what a wonderful snapshot of the time and the dregs of fandom.

Of course, I had heard about Pratchett, but I had no idea about Pournelle's brain tumor or Ballard's cancer. In fact, I thought Ballard was long-dead. Tells you how up I am on most writers these days. I wish them all well, especially Terry.

I was very saddened by the death of Sir Edmund Hillary. The guy was a legend. While I still believe that Mallory was the first man to stand atop the Mountain at the Top of the World, Ed was right when he said getting down alive was the important part. I was on a big Everest kick a couple of years ago.

I've got a lot of ideas for getting together in Denver. I'll be working the Fanzine Lounge (some say I'll be running it, but I think it runs itself!) so I'd say we could gather there on a specified day and then go for food at one of the places along the street off to the left hand side of the Convention Centre.

I liked the *Archimedes Codex*, though some of it made my eyes cross.

There's no better way to get me excited for a book than to go into the areas of history that are actually exciting. *The Book of Lost Books* is one I have to track down. That seems very appropriate.

Call of Cthulhu is in the Cinequest Film Festival this year so I'll be seeing it and writing it up, as always. There are a lot of good Sci-Fi Flicks in this year, which is odd as they always told me we had too much when I was working on programming!

I can not argue with you at all about *Challenger* getting named for the Hugo. Just a great year for a great zine!

From: **Rod E. Smith** February 13, 2008
 730 Cline Street, Frankfort, KY 40601-1034 USA
stickmaker@usa.net

Darrell Schweitzer comments on the "all time classic" award proposal. Specifically, he mentions the work of EE Smith. He says that Doc never learned to write.

Actually, he changed his style considerably over the years. He tried to change it more, but the editors wanted the bombast and hyperbole because they felt that's what the readers wanted. Some of this later works — such as the Family d'Alembert and Subspace Explorers series — were much less extreme than the worst of the Lensman and Skylark series. We can only wonder what he might have produced had he lived longer after retirement from his Day Job.

There is not that much by Smith about the Family d'Alembert; only a novella. It was adapted into a series of ten novels by Stephen Goldin, which result taught me that different people perceive the same work different

ways.

As for the first Skylark story, the originally published serial version of *The Skylark of Space* is now in public domain and available online, from places such as Project Gutenberg. The differences between the writing in that version and in the novel version are quite different, with the latter actually being much improved. Much of that might be due to having a co-writer on the original, though, and more due to differences in the styles of writing between the two eras and publishing media. Oddly, I find that the old version contains some information I have long wondered about, additional details on the ship designs and how the copper technology worked.

On a related note, with that original version of *Skylark* in public domain, I'm thinking about a fan project inspired by it. Not fanfiction, but something different. Assume that Great-Uncle Edward (no, not really) based the first part of the story on something he heard about second- or third-hand. That the actual explorers disappeared on their first flight into space, the families were so distraught that they stored the equipment and papers away, and that those were rediscovered about a century later. (That is, now.)

I hope to see it soon, but better late than Nevvia. You could call it "A Strange Manuscript Found In a Copper Cylinder".

— JTM

As an engineer, taking the technology as described in the first part of the book and postulating developments based on it has a strong attraction. Like a twenty-pound bar. :-)

From: **Martin Morse Wooster** Feb. 12, 2008
 Post Office Box 8093, Silver Spring,
 MD 20907-8093 USA
mmwooster@yahoo.com

Many thanks for *Alexiad* 37. You know, if you have letters from 30 different fen in your issue, you can hardly complain about a lack of fannish energy. But why did you print the letter from **Roger and Pat Sims**? That was obviously a Christmas letter and not specifically a letter for *Alexiad*.

Pat Sims said we could.

I read Robin Roberts's biography of Anne McCaffrey and thought it was sort of OK. Let's compare it to Julie Phillips's excellent biography of Alice Sheldon. Both books are feminist biographies. But Phillips had very good archives to work from and is a good writer. Roberts's book is far better than Todd McCaffrey's biography, which is really little more than a souvenir book. But Roberts is an academic who writes soggy. And if she didn't know about the Campbell letters, she wasn't doing her homework. But I did get a lot of fun facts from it, including the Asimov-McCaffrey affair and McCaffrey's rebuffing a pass from MZB. Then there's that crystal that McCaffrey

wears underneath her shirt “to absorb the energy’ of her fans’ demands.” Finally, there is the fact that McCaffrey and Bobby Kennedy dated each other at Harvard, which leads to all sorts of curious alternate-universe scenarios. (But what are the references to Conadian and DraConIs? The McCaffrey connection to these two cons isn’t clear to me.)

McCaffrey was Pro GoH at Conadian and, as I said, there was an elaborate set built for an Impression of PernFen. It was stopped at the border by Douane Canada Customs. In 1988 she had been GoH at the PernFenCon DraConIs, here in Louisville. They unpleasantly discovered that you DON’T share a hotel in Kentucky with basketball fans.

I’m not as skeptical about fantasy winning Hugo Awards as is **Darrell Schweitzer**. I’m currently reading *Jonathan Strange & Mr Norrell*, and (at least up to page 340) it seems like the sort of big, serious book that ought to win our highest honor. On the other hand, it’s now clear that the prize for *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire* was a major mistake, since I’m not sure if Rowling ever received the Hugo or even knew what it was and because the prize was given to one of the weaker books in the series. I haven’t read the Bujold fantasies that won the Hugo, but I did enjoy *The Curse of Chalion*, which is the only Bujold fantasy I’ve ever read. I don’t mind fantasy or even horror winning the Hugo (i.e. *American Gods*) but the books have to be very good and not just run-of-the-mill word-wooze.

Ansible says that there is some talk about abolishing the semi-prozine Hugo. I hope advocates of this effort don’t propose that fanzines and *Locus* compete with each other. The problem here is that four of the five nominees will almost always be *Locus*, *Ansible*, *Interzone*, and the *New York Review of Science Fiction*, and that *Locus* will almost always win at a US-based Worldcon. More variety — and perhaps a *Locus* withdrawal — would ensure the continued popularity of this prize.

The question is whether “fanzine” will be defined as we define it, publications like this one here, or as it is defined outside our circle, as a professional publication for people interested in a field.

— JTM

From: **Sheryl Birkhead** November 24, 2007
22509 Jonnie Court, Gaithersburg, MD
20882-3422 USA
catsmeouch@yahoo.com

I thought I had finished up a loc on V6 #6 — this is all tidy in the envelope, carefully turned to the last page — which (usually) tells me I am working on a loc and reached this point. But, I looked everywhere and cannot find anything in

writing — so I will start over . . .

Candy mention — I have found it very difficult to locate the new mint *Three Musketeers* bar — in its regular size (which is really the size I should be eating if I am going to indulge at all). Most of the stores seem to carry the bag of minis — but that only slows me down, it doesn’t stop me. Now I see coupons for 100calorie packs and the picture says *three Musketeers*—and I have yet to see that, but I’ll bet it is only the original bar — but this gives me something to look for. Not sure — it would be ironic if the 100 calorie packs are merely a few of the minis tossed into a bag! As far as pumpkin marshmallows go I don’t have to wonder since (unless specified as vegetarian) marshmallow is not vegetarian friendly and I never give the peeps (etc.) a second look. I’ll have to look for the Razzberry *M&Ms* — I like the mega sized candies over the regular sized. Somehow they seem to taste more like what I recall chomping on as a kid — and the regular sized ones seem to have too much candy shell compared to the chocolate inside.

Congratulations on the new laptop — I hope you will all be happy together. I priced the new Mac desktops (the one I looked at \$1200 — no modem or peripherals, of course) and then looked at the new laptops — \$1099. Well, it doesn’t hurt to look.

I didn’t see or hear much about *Pearl Harbor Day* this past year — only remembering it after the fact. I did note that the movie was on TV recently — but, if memory serves me correctly — it was in January not December, so maybe it was only to fill the slot and not commemorate.

I see multiple mentions of yearly shots . . . I hope the vet has spoken with you about how “annual” vaccinations are no longer the norm and how a schedule should be tailor made to fit the cat’s age and lifestyle. visit aafponline to see the recommendations of the Feline Practitioners for vaccinating guidelines. In a simplistic nutshell — avoid *adjuvanted* vaccines (which leaves you with only two manufacturers for the rabies vaccine for cats — *Merial* or *Intervet* — all other manufacturers use an adjuvanted vaccine); follow your state’s guidelines for rabies vaccination; titer annually for *panleukopenia* (distemper) or vaccinate every three years unless there are risk factors; vaccination for diseases such as *FeLV* and *FIVare* indicated only in specific instances based on risk factors and possibly age. Yearly “shots” should not be a routine happening — the only yearly shot (singular) should be against rabies. In Maryland the state law requires rabies vaccination and that is the only one politically mandated — i.e. distemper etc. are “voluntary” and should be decided upon following guidelines and not just done each year without thought as to why. I shall now climb down off my soapbox.

It would be interesting to know what the two skin lesions were . . .

I only get 7 of the zines listed. It is pretty obvious that the batch I do not get lean heavily into the electronic camp. No matter how one examines it, the list looks pretty healthy —

whether I get a look at them or not.

Rich (Dengrove) I have had to forget about the scanning problem for a while — corrupted files (all my tax information for 2007) are taking up my time. Luckily I backed up on December 26th — but all my year end stuff and final analyses were unobtainable. I took the computer, zip drive, and disc in to see how much of the material could be recovered. Suffice it to say that this is keeping me busy . . . rebuilding the information so I will be able to do my taxes . . . just to prove to the *IRS* that I didn’t actually make enough money to pay any taxes (honest — here is the unopenable disc to prove it!).

I just did the calculation — I do not have cable. Currently I am paying \$50/month for phone and Internet. Any other service would have to come in at or under that budget and I have not been able to find it. *Verizon* does not offer *DSL* here and I suspect that the same green boxes would be needed no matter who is providing the service. I am not within 1500 feet of such a box. I do not have *Verizon*, but my provider told me that there is no way to get *DSL* (but this is still a phone service, so maybe there is a loophole there and a cable company has a way to do it — but none of the cable services can match the price I am paying now.

Brad — I’ve not read a whole lot about shingles — but what I recall attributes outbreaks to stresses. Oh yeah, sure, just remove stress from your life! I have a friend who had her first outbreak last year and the problems it caused with her eyes were tremendous.

“Admiral Halsey notified me, he had to have his bath or he couldn’t get to sea” because he had shingles, caused by all the stress of the Pacific raids after Pearl Harbor.

Oh, just remembered I need to go online and see if there is any way to get a PIN for the *Devention* nomination ballot. I recall getting a postcard but didn’t realize the number would not be on all the envelopes . . . as if has been in the past. So, now that I am getting ready to fill out the nominations . . . I am ‘fraid I won’t be able to file it!

My condolences to *Jeffrey (Boman)* on the loss of *Boots*.

March 7, 2008

If I am remembering correctly, I just got around to sending a loc and here I have another *Alexiad* — agh just getting “behinder and behinder”. Let me see if I can get this done in a timely fashion and off to you. Sigh, I still have a few pages of sketches I need to get to — but they continue to sit on the desk as they have for the past few months — must be a better way to find longer days! (No, the change to *Daylight Savings Time* does not count — in fact in the spring it makes that first day an hour shorter.)

(sigh — just lost a three page loc — I thought I was saving and apparently not — I am too tired to try to recreate it)

Okay shorter version of what I previously explained — had to get a new credit card last October forgot to tell my ISP — which charges me annually in late January. While trying to do my taxes I could not connect to the Internet — took two days for the tech people to realize the account was “suspended for non-payment”. They said I had to talk with billing — which did not reply to any of five phone messages and four emails (courtesy of the library one hour a day . . .). I finally gave up and hunted for another ISP and paid them for a year. Then I found out none of the access phone numbers they had for my area will work. They say it’s my Mac. I say it’s not . . . not after eight years with no connecting problems. Apple says it’s not my Mac — but that the ISP has to make the problem go away, The ISP rooted out what they call a **really really old** number and it-sorta-worked. Several more go-rounds. Finally a “second level tech” person talked with me and had me change some settings — eureka. Why couldn’t they have done that from the start? No one apologized to anyone and I have spent the last 8 days simply trying to get this sorted out. I cringe at the thought of any problem with this one remaining phone number . . . and that they do not have tech support 24/7 — but it is the best of the providers I could find. It just dawned on me why the new (and ooh so lovely) Mac doesn’t have a built in modem . . . because that is rapidly becoming technology of the past. Just because I can’t get DSL (etc.) doesn’t mean the rest of the world can’t!

Not sure when *Chris Garcia* makes his *pond* hop — but know he will have a terrific time. Hope to see trip reports — both formal and in — when he gets back.

He published an issue of *The Drink Tank* on March 11, just before he left. He may overwhelm them.

I have been looking at all the candy shelves hunting for the raspberry (razz?) *M & Ms*. I am feeling a bit like an idiot every time I ask a clerk . . . I have found the candies in a dark blue purple bag, but that is all dark chocolate. I am guessing that the raspberry candy is in an actually pink-purple bag and I have never been able to find those. So — pretty please, do they exist? Sigh, I can’t locate them if they do. (*Stop the presses! Just got back from the local Weis grocery store and while walking up and down the aisles found a temporary cardboard display stand for CHERRY M&Ms! Unfortunately, all the reddish bags were sold out and someone had tossed regular and regular peanut varieties into the bins. The display said a limited edition. For a good candy I’ll go that extra mile — I asked at the service desk and was told this had just shown up as a promo and they did not expect any more . . . and no there was not another display anywhere else in the store. To make it even worse, the manager said that people who had bought them said they tasted like chocolate covered cherries — yeah, go ahead and rub it in. So, now I need to look for both raspberry and cherry flavors!*)

Hope all who were eligible to nominate for *Denvention 3’s* Hugos did so. I barely squeaked in under the line and still managed to forget a few I intended to add.

I just saw *The Martian Child* (via *Netflix*)— and enjoyed it. My only change would have been to have one last camera shot of the observatory that showed the absence of the child’s suitcase — leaving it to conjecture as to the mechanism of its disappearance. It was interesting to see the additional information that included talks with the “real” child and his feelings about the world . . . that lead to the movie.

Now, if I could only remember all those gems that filled out the loc that magically disappeared from the desktop. I am sure it was solid gold!

Postal rates go up as of May 12 (I think that is the exact date) — so anyone familiar with the *Forever Stamp* ought to consider buying more of them and saving (at a minimum 1¢ each). I sincerely hope these rapid increases are not going to be routine — each increase to keep up with revenue lost to the Internet alienates ever more people! At least that is **my** take on it.

May 12 is right before when my family newsletter comes out, with 460 copies to stamp and mail. What do we do if the USPS stops selling Forever Stamps a month or so before the change?

— JTM

From: **John Hertz** February 11, 2008
236 S. Coronado Street No. 409, Los Angeles, CA 90057-1456 USA

“There does not seem to be in the story of the capture of Rome by the Vandals any justification for the charge of wilful and objectless destruction of public buildings which is implied in the word ‘vandalism’. It is probable that this charge grew out of the fierce persecution which was carried on by Gaiseric and his son against the Catholic Christians.”

— *Encyclopedia Britannica*, 11th Edition, 1929

Unless you mean the old DC Comics villain Vandal Savage.

Patricia’s evil twin brother?

— JTM

February 28, 2008

Thanks for *Alexiad* V. 7 #1. It’s physically easier than ever to do fanzines. It remains for us to do them.

The comedy of the liberal arts is that reading and writing can be worth doing. As Mark Twain said, “The difference is that a cat then won’t sit on a cold stove either.”

From: **Henry L. Welch** February 15, 2008
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Thanks for the latest *Alexiad*.

I have never been too fond of “all time best” awards. There is entirely too much subjectivity in trying to make that choice. Given the broad variety in any category, how do you really pick a favorite? Whenever I’ve looked over a “100 best _____” list I will see entries I agree with, others I completely disagree with, and still others that I have no opinion about because I’ve never seen them.

E.B. is correct regarding double jeopardy. The idea applies when you are tried for the SAME crime (i.e. the murder of person A) by the same sovereign authority. There are some rare cases when you can actually be tried in two courts that have independent jurisdiction. This crops up, for example in crimes tried in both state and tribal courts. This generally isn’t a huge problem when you realize that tribal courts cannot impose large fines or jail sentences and the federal courts preempt so-called major crimes. (You really don’t want to know any more details as criminal jurisdiction in Indian country is a veritable minefield of rules and complications.)

Michael Kurland once gave as the ultimate example of overlapping jurisdictions the case of a civil rights worker found dead on a college campus with drugs in his pocket, which would have six or more police agencies on the case.

— JTM

From: **Evelyn C. Leeper** February 16, 2008
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Re Smoke, Mirrors, and Murder: I suppose that Manzanita is an unusual first name, but it did not strike me as such — it just sounded like a diminutive of manzana (apple), and if Clementine can be a name, why not Manzanita?

Re Chris Garcia’s LoC: I have to agree, there must be more than 2000 living WWII vets. I know of two in my family (my father and my uncle), and my family doesn’t represent 0.1% of the total population. (I’m assuming you mean American WWII vets — if you add in European and Asian vets, the number grows even higher!)

Re Martin Morse Wooster’s LoC: I don’t think that one can say that “the Duke of Buccleuch was a closer descendant of Elizabeth I than Elizabeth II was,” unless there is some peculiar definition of descendant that includes people who do not have you as an ancestor.

Re E. B. Frohvet’s LoC: I find some store brands of saltines (e.g. Shop-Rite/Price-Rite) just as good as the national brand.

Re Lloyd Penney’s LoC: “Any Worldcon would be ecstatic to have memberships in the five figures.” On the contrary, I think any Worldcon would be horrified with that. For

starters, no Worldcon has ever gotten facilities that could handle memberships in the five figures. But even if they had, the one-shot (volunteer) nature of a Worldcon could never scale up to that. The largest Worldcon so far had 8365 members, and that undoubtedly included non-attending members.

As I've said, the problem there is that at that size, the con-goers cease to be participants and become consumers.

—JTM

From: **Brad W. Foster** February 16, 2008
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Best Fan Artist Hugo Nominee

I liked your opening comments on the internet. I, too, have found it to be incredibly convenient to have this instant tool, reference source and communication device at my fingertips whenever I need it. If I was just using this for checking email now and then, or to look up a movie or something, no big deal. But it is almost constant as far as a source of quick info. Hard to imagine what it was like in pre-InterWeb days!

Cindy and I have stripped most of the bookshelves around the house, and now have stacks of books everywhere as we attempt to get all of this organized and then re-shelved in some sort of logical method. Already have found a number of duplicates we weren't aware of, not to mention books we are putting on the re-read list, or authors we have forgotten that we now want to search out new works by. When done, should even have some new shelf space opened up, and room for so many of the titles you folks have recommended through reviews over the years.

I was a bit disappointed not to find any candy bar reviews from Johnny this issue, as I was planning on using that as a hook to let me mention having just read the wonderful *Candy Freak* book by Steve Almond. However, looks like I managed to work it in anyways!

E.B. Frohvet has no birthday? Hmm, the list of possible other origins boggles the mind!

I also feel it needs pointing out, re Earl Kemp's comments about how his daughter "... has been plagued with bad feelings of neglect . . ." that because her birthday is on top of Christmas, she doesn't get full attention to both events. Well, I think, going by his comment that "everyone" gave her one present saying it was for both days, that she suffered more from "bloody absolute certainty" of neglect, no nebulous "feeling" at all. Shame on them! My sister-in-law and nephew both have birthdays close to Christmas, and it's never been any problem to pick up something for them to cover both days.

Or you could pick a related day. My mother used to give me gifts on her own father's birthday. I was

named after him.

— Joe McCord, er Major

From: **Alexander R. Slate** February 20, 2008
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(Gasp!) Two whole issues in a row locked. That is sort of a recent record for me.

A number of people talk about series. I think one of the problems with awarding a best series award nowadays is the question of 'original' vs 'expanded' series. The Dune series for instance, where do you draw the line for the series? With the first 3 books? The first four? How many series were really intended to be series in the first place and were/are not the result of a successful first book? And how do you judge a series anyway; does a great series have to include a great single volume among them (such as in the Dune series), or is consistency across the series more important?

Particularly nowadays when a series is even more likely to be a corporate enterprise, not written by a single author, or even directed by a single editor. If the Dragonlance™ series wins, who gets the Hugo?

E.B. Frohvet: I never said that *The World Without Us* by Alan Weisman was necessarily an original topic. What I found fascinating is the depth that the author went to and also how he tied his speculations to several things, such as current and/or recent work on history, sociology, anthropology and ecology.

Klezmer music is very interesting, it really started with Eastern Europe and the traveling bands who would commonly play in the shtetls at weddings and the like. But it has evolved, particularly with the influence of American jazz. Nowadays, it has become its own genre of music, and is seeing a great deal of popularity, particularly amidst the American Jewish communities.

And one small, sort-of correction. I believe you are referring to Channukah. There was nothing about virgins, but rather virgin oil. And the book of Maccabees isn't included in the Jewish canon of the books of the bible. I believe that the Christian version does include it, and so my question, is it really part of the bible as a result? However, Chanukah isn't the only holiday not based on biblical sources. Technically, Purim isn't there either. The Megillah, or the scroll of Esther, is a scroll on its own right. Although Esther is considered in the canon.

First and Second Maccabees are in the Orthodox and the Catholic canon, but not in the Protestant.

You are also correct in that your murder scenario wouldn't be considered double jeopardy. You cannot be tried twice for the same crime. The murder of X is a different

crime than the murder of Y. The problem will probably end up being different procedural issues, such as how was the information regarding the murder of Y (the new case) come about, and possibly finding a jury who didn't hear about it during the original trial, yadda yadda and so forth. But, Henry Welch is a lawyer among us, what's his take?

Roger and Pat Sims: Roger, best wishes concerning your fight against Parkinsons. My father-in-law suffered from that disease. He was misdiagnosed several times and as a result, probably suffered a greater amount of symptoms than I hope you do. He was also not the type to exercise either.

Re *The Wheel of Time*: Laurel tells me that the next book (the one you mention is supposed to be completed by someone else) is supposed to be the last. Does anyone know if that is the case? I personally think it will take two books to unravel what is going on.

I thought that all it would take to end the series would be for Rand to call an assembly of all the characters and representatives of all the groups, and say to them before leaving, "I can't solve your problems. You'll have to do it by yourselves." Though listing all the characters (and having each perform his or her characteristic tic) and enumerating all the groups might take two volumes . . .

— JTM

Biopsy result on all of the polyps was benign.

Trinlay, welcome to the ranks of homeowners (to be). Now the work really starts.

Well, that will do it for now . . .

From: **Robert M. Sabella** February 23, 2008
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Thanks for *Alexiad* Dec 07 and Feb 08, two enjoyable issues. Although I enjoy historical fiction, I have never read anything by George MacDonald Fraser, assuming his fiction was too frivolous to be anything but the lightest reading. But he has gotten obits in several sf publications, so maybe I should try one of his books, perhaps starting with one of his serious works (*The Candlemass Road* has always intrigued me) and, if I enjoy it, trying one of his *Flashman* books.

Try his memoir *Quartered Safe Out Here* (1992) first. If you like that, get *The Steel Bonnets* (1971) or *The Hollywood History of the World* (1988, 1996). The *Flashman* books are meticulously researched and an excellent introduction to the history of the period.

— JTM

I chuckled at your "Monarchist News" since Italians don't recognize monarchies, even when they're under the rule of one. (

Johnny Caruthers' "Time to Reconsider?" was interesting. I recall that "Best All-Time Series" Hugo Award way back when I first discovered the existence of fandom through Lin Carter's column in *Worlds of IF*. At that time there were relatively few acclaimed sf series worthy of being nominated for that award. Now, since nearly every novel published is at least part of a trilogy, there must be hundreds of such series, so such an award would be more meaningful. My favorite series is still Marion Zimmer Bradley's *Darkover* series, although I also particularly enjoy Jack McDevitt's *Alex Benedict* series, Jack Vance's *Galactic Cluster*, Poul Anderson's *Polesotechnic League* and C.J. Cherryh's *Union/Alliance*. Note that I tend to favor series containing stand-alone novels which tell individual stories but together create a well-developed world/universe.

From: **Lloyd Penney** February 23, 2008
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Thank you kindly for *Alexiad* 37. I'm getting a jump on responding . . . my current daytime assignment has ended, and I plan to take some time off to get caught up on things, check lots of jobsites, and relax a little sleepwise. You're right about us being Internet junkies. It's shrunk the world that much more, and gives us the information we want and need almost at will. If we were suddenly without it, we'd suffer withdrawal.

I would put more into my fannish writings if I didn't have to spend so much time finding more work. The Internet facilitates my sending my letters, my LiveJournal archives my letters, and I have a Facebook page I half-heartedly maintain. I find that while it might be the current fannish rage to maintain LiveJournal, Facebook and MySpace pages, they are pretty and shallow, and keep you away from the heart of the matter, the writing itself. I may be sounding like an old coot right now, but I'd rather be writing than playing with the graphics of a particular online page.

Sir Edmund Hillary was one of the people I had wanted to meet. He referred to himself as Ed, and he was probably the most famous unassuming people around. He was happiest pottering around in his garden. He had been to Toronto several times, and had a number of friends here.

I put the message out on the Fmzfen list . . . does anyone know who is running the fanzine lounge at the Denver Worldcon? I didn't want a huge responsibility in Montreal, so I asked to run their fanzine lounge, and I got it. Lots of time to plan for it, but I do have some things in mind, and I hope to get lots of positive feedback on what other rooms have done well, and what we could do here.

Chris Garcia is right, fanzine fandom must change. It will anyway, and changed whenever

any of us got involved and started to get involved. Fans snubbing other fans? Now there's something that hasn't changed. Greetings to John Purcell! . . . True, those who prefer to read are greatly outnumbered by those who like to watch. Science fiction, of course. What did you think I meant? Many of do both, but I'd rather read. I haven't seen sf on television in some years now, and I can't say I miss it. I'd rather be active than passive, and a number of local fans here must think we're missing out on a lot. I would differ, of course.

Hello, Earl . . . my mother's birthday is December 26, and she got the same thing your second daughter got, this is your Christmas and birthday present. Yvonne's birthday is on the 19th of December (Harry Warner's birthday), and I make sure there's a birthday present to go with all the Christmas presents. Greetings to Roger and Pat, and I hope you're both well in your new residence. Stay well and active.

Greetings to Gina Teh in Singapore! I don't recall seeing anyone from Singapore in any zine I've received. Welcome, and have fun. There might be some culture shock involved, but I've tried my best not to let it get to me. I comment on what I can, and carry on from there.

It's official, Blu-Ray won the war over HD-DVD. While I have no real way to gauge which is better, why am I thinking of the war between Beta and VHS? The better format lost that war . . . is it the same thing here, or did the better brand win for once?

My loc . . . true, we're not Muslim, but if we could try to look through their eyes, or even ask them, we might learn something about them, and about the way we think in the West. Perhaps we may learn to ask why in the fullness of time. I hope that fullness is soon.

Sayyid Qutb, Egyptian leader of the Muslim Brotherhood, joined up because he was utterly convinced of the innate depravity of Western society, as he himself had seen at a Lutheran church reception ("animal-like mixing of the sexes").

— JTM

Page and a half isn't bad, and not bad at all for late in the evening. Take care, many thanks, and looking forward to seeing the next issue. If you have any suggestions for a good fanzine lounge, pass them on to me for my reference. I plan to check with Chris Garcia to see if he's running the lounge in Denver. Seeing he's having a good time doing them in the BAarea, I wouldn't be surprised. See you again soon.

From: **Alexis A. Gilliland** February 21, 2008
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Thank you for *Alexiad* 7.1. To attribute the Great Depression to a single cause, such as too high wages is an oversimplification, possibly intended to support some half-baked (Libertarian?) economic theory. Unions, the then most likely supporters of high wages were in decline, the United Mine Workers falling from

500,000 in 1920 to 75,000 in 1928, and the American Federation of Labor falling from 5.1 million in 1920 to 3-4 million in 1929. If one can't blame those evil high wages, what else might shoulder the blame? There were a lot of causes, not the least of which was the fragility of the economic infrastructure. Banks, for instance were mostly small and local and all of them lacked deposit insurance. (My grandfather Gilliland was a farmer and banker — founding the Harrington National Bank with three other men in Harrington, (pop. 2500) WA, ~1910. The bank went bust ~1930 and he would have lost the farm if the man foreclosing it hadn't driven in front of a train. My grandfather died in 1934, but the farm stayed in the family, albeit much reduced.) In early 1930 there were 60 bank failures a month, which meant that people were losing their savings right and left. The real GDP of the US fell by 29 percent from 1929 to 1933, as the stock market lost 89.5 percent of its value. Putting that in today's terms, since 1959, all five of the declines in the GDP put together come to 4-4 percent, and it is reasonably expected that the stock market won't lose more than 20 percent of its value from last year's somewhat inflated high. (Indeed, the Federal Reserve Board has been lowering interest rates in the face of inflation currently at 4.28 percent to keep the economy humming along.) Our current unemployment rate is 4.9 percent, but from 1929 to 1939 unemployment averaged 16.6 percent, peaking in 1933 at 24.9 percent. Given that what moves the economy is greed and fear, it is obvious that by 1933 there was a lot of well-founded fear around, providing the context for FDR's statement: "The only thing we have to fear is fear itself."

Despite agreeing with me that the attempt was a fiasco, George Price goes on to say I blame Hoover for keeping farm prices high. Alas, alack and no, that attempt was a miserable failure; Hoover's Farm Bureau did indeed corner the market for wheat and cotton, but that action destroyed the export market, resulting in a huge glut in the domestic market that drove prices below the cost of production. So that farm prices in 1932 had fallen 53 percent since 1929, and they weren't that great in 1929. He also says: ". . . farm prices are farmers' wages." Incorrect, a farm hand gets wages, while a farmer owns land and equipment, so that the price he gets for his produce is the return on his capital investment. The attempt to keep farm prices high was made so farmers could keep paying off mortgages held by their local banks. With falling farm prices the price of farmland also fell, often below the value of its mortgage. Since George also finds the wages I cited hard to believe (calling them starvation wages, and his point is?) he should Google "Wages 1932" and see what he finds. To his credit, when he goes into economic theory more deeply, he appears to back off the notion that letting wages fall would have shortened the Great Depression. In contrast, Taras Wolansky kind of evades the issue, praising a new book by Amity Shlaes and saying that FDR was experimenting, and that "experimentation and planning are diametrically opposed." Given that FDR was muddling

through a really difficult situation, where Hoover had already shown the conventional wisdom to be useless, what sort of planning did Taras have in mind? He points out that the New Deal ran the worst deficits (as a percentage of GDP) in the last 80 years, except for World War II. Since WWII is generally credited with ending the Great Depression, it could be argued that the New Deal's deficits weren't nearly big enough. About *No Clear And Present Danger* a little history is in order. After Pearl Harbor, Hitler declared war against the United States on December 11, 1941, and in early 1942 German U-Boats were sinking a lot of ships off the east coast. FDR never had the option of not entering the war against Germany.

Not quite, since the Old Right style argument was that FDR was provoking the Germans by getting involved in this foreign war.

— JTM

Nice to see you guys using a bunch of my cartoons.

From: **Joy V. Smith** February 25, 2008
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Lisa, life without the Internet? Without Google? Nooooo . . .

I enjoyed the article on "The Swoose" and Swoosie Kurtz and the mention of Kay Kyser. (You never see his movies any more.) Thanks, Joe, also for the info on the USS *Robin*/HMS *Victorious*.

Much less hear about Kay Kyser's Kollege of Musical Knowledge. But then, he became a Christian Scientist after the big band era. Times and tastes change.

— JTM

I guess I'll skip the Anne McCaffrey biography you reviewed. Thanks for the background. I learned a lot from the other reviews too. The movie version of *The Call of Cthulhu* sounds intriguing.

LOCs: Picking an all-time best series would be hard! Btw, a consistently good series is Sharon Lee's and Steve Miller's *Liaden* stories. So many, as has been pointed out, taper off. I gave up on *Dune* and *Amber* after the first books. The *Foundation* series was good, though it's been a long time since I read it. And *Lord of the Rings* is a classic. I recently read the penultimate Pip and Flinx book — very disappointing.

E.B. Frohvet: Hey, I know what you mean about saltines. I wanted some for a spread a month or so ago, and someone first bought home some saltines (I forget the brand) from a convenience store. I threw them all out. Sue Burke: Congratulations on your story in *Asimov's!*

I always enjoy the illos, but I especially liked your use of The Swoose patch.

From: **George W. Price** March 1, 2008
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February *Alexiad*:

Darrell Schweitzer theorizes that the atomic bombing may have saved the Japanese as a people, because they were prepared to fight to the death quite literally, and the U.S. might well have exterminated them if they did.

Many years ago I saw it asserted that the Japanese government did not intend the Pearl Harbor raid to start an all-out war. They wanted only to give us a bloody nose which would persuade us to stop interfering with their conquest of China. Having thus gotten our attention, they would then sit down with us at the conference table and divvy up Asia and the Pacific in a mutually satisfactory way. They did not expect us to be so enraged that we would set out to destroy them.

Admiral Yamamoto understood us better than that, and he warned the militarists against awakening "the sleeping giant." They could not pull it off unless they defeated the U.S. so thoroughly that they could "dictate peace in the White House," he said — and he didn't think Japan could do that. He was overruled, so he saluted and went on to do the best job he could.

Standing against this interpretation is the fact that the Japanese invasions of the Philippines, Dutch East Indies, Southeast Asia, and the Pacific islands had to have been in preparation well before Pearl Harbor. So perhaps what Yamamoto really accomplished was to convince the militarists that a mere bloody nose wouldn't work — and rather than back off, they went the whole hog. They decided to wake the giant. I wonder what Yamamoto would have thought if he had lived to see the outcome of the war?

Near the end of the war Japan may have been ready to quit even before the A-bombs. When we got into the Japanese archives after the war a story surfaced that early in 1945 the Japanese government had sent peace feelers to Washington via the Soviet Union (which was not yet at war with Japan). Presumably the Japanese wanted to know if they could settle for anything short of unconditional surrender. Those feelers never got to Washington; Stalin sat on them, and told the Japanese that the Americans had spurned their overtures. Stalin did not want the war ended until the USSR was ready to attack Japan, share in the spoils, and help Mao seize China. I do not know if this episode has ever been confirmed. But it sure sounds like Stalin.

Their terms were that there should be no occupation, they should conduct their own demobilization, and each side should try its own war criminals.

Pause for raucous laughter.

* * * * *

Speaking of Pearl Harbor, I wonder how the war would have gone if so many of our battleships had not been knocked out? Their loss forced us to adopt a carrier strategy. What if those ships had survived, and the "battleship admirals" had prevailed and relegated naval aviation to a mere supporting role? Might the war in the Pacific have been a series of Jutlands? I suspect that the battleships would have performed so poorly against Japanese air and submarine attacks that eventually the carriers would have come to the fore. But the war would have been much longer and bloodier while we were learning that battleships were obsolete.

* * * * *

Jim Stumm asks if I "have any proof that the Founders meant 'freedom of speech' as a term of art with notable exceptions." No, I don't, except in a negative way. That is, the Founders did not behave as they should have if they had meant to forbid any Federal restrictions on speech or press, even against obscenity or libel, etc.

As I have said, the District of Columbia was the perfect test case. From the start it was ruled directly by Congress, so there was no question of how rights should be divided between Federal and State jurisdictions. Everything was Federal. So I will toss the question of proof right back to Mr. Stumm. Let him cite any evidence he has that the District of Columbia did not have the customary prohibitions against libel, slander, obscenity, pornography, "fighting words," etc. Could one really say or print just absolutely anything and not be called to account? (Other than by a challenge to a duel!) Has any history book mentioned such an anomalous situation?

Most of the Founders lived for many years after D.C. was founded, so they had plenty of opportunity to say "Hey, that's not what we meant by the First Amendment!" if and when Congress established the usual laws against libel and obscenity, etc. I have never heard that any of them said any such thing, and I don't believe they did. Nor have I heard that Congress did not set up such laws. If Mr. Stumm has different information, let him set it forth.

* * * * *

Mr. Stumm also notes that some claim that it was Pope John Paul II who was responsible for the Fall of Communism. He certainly played an important role. In particular, the way he inspired the Poles and other "captive nations" made it plain even to the Kremlin that Communism was being rejected by the rising generations, and could only be sustained by brute force. So maybe the Pope and Reagan should be given more or less equal credit — the Pope for moral inspiration and Reagan for presenting the Kremlin with a military danger (Star Wars) that the system could not handle without being liberalized. And it couldn't be liberalized without collapsing.

Richard Dengrove chides me for not giving more proof that it was Reagan's proposal of Star

Wars that led to the Soviet collapse. I really don't see what more can be added. If he insists on having the influences on Soviet decision making explicitly stated, he'll have to wait for a massive opening of Soviet archives or a frank admission in Gorbachev's memoirs — neither of which I expect to see any time soon. And maybe it was all just sheer coincidence. Maybe the Soviet system would have collapsed right at that time regardless of what outsiders did. But I don't believe that for a minute. There is no historical inevitability.

Robert S. Kennedy says he has a problem with Eric Flint's *1824: The Arkansas War* — Flint should have said who was Vice President and how he was chosen. I had a different problem. Flint has U.S. senators being chosen by popular election. In our timeline, senators were chosen by state legislatures up until the 17th Amendment in 1913. If Flint planted a note in the earlier book (*1812: The Rivers of War*) that this had changed, I missed it. All the same, a good story. I expect that the series will have independent Arkansas becoming a state, but not until the U.S.A. abolishes slavery.

I don't recall anything such in *1812: The Rivers of War*. Sounds like Flint messed up. As RAH said about the calculations for *Space Cadet*, "This was 1948."

— JTM

From: **R-Lauraine Tutihasi** Jan. 12, 2008
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Before I forget I want to ask about something I saw by the road a couple of days ago. We drove by a place that keeps horses. Two horses were on the ground, which I thought unusual. What I really thought was unusual was that one of the horses was completely lying down with its legs extended in front of it. Both legs were on the ground more or less. Is this normal?

I think it does happen, but it's unusual.

— LTM

One more thing. I just wanted to let you know that we have a buyer for our California house, and we've been busily interviewing builders and contractors. I'm thinking of being my own contractor with the help of a facilitator.

Now to your zine. To keep up with what's happening on each TV channel that interests me, I check their web sites. Some of them have e-mail you can subscribe to that alerts you to upcoming shows. Other ones I actually have to check regularly. I regret the passing of the days when *TV Guide* was actually useful.

Even with the house building on our front burners now, we still hope to get to the

Worldcon. Assuming we do, I think getting together there would be great — a party, a meal, whatever.

I enjoyed reading your article about WWII, especially the mention of Swoosie Kurtz. I watched her on HUFF, which I was sorry to see Showtime cancel.

I saw her in "Love, Sidney". My mother liked that show. As you will recall, Tony Randall's character in that show, "Sidney", was gay. That didn't seem to bother Mother.

Love, Sidney

<http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0081896/>

— JTM

I was sorry to hear of the deaths in your family. Death is bad enough, but murder is devastating. My condolences.

Sue Burke's letter was eye-opening. I had no idea that there were people out there who were fearful of the US having a Black president. At this point in time, of course, it could go any way. Although McCain seems clearly headed for the Republican position, Clinton and Obama are still duking it out. What would happen if it's McCain vs. Clinton/Obama or Obama/Clinton?

AL du Pisano's letter was also very enlightening. Watching *Life Is Wild* on the CW doesn't show you the downsides of South Africa. I'm sorry to hear that there are so many problems there. I see he has an e-mail address, but that's problematical if the electric service is unreliable.

From: **Jim Stumm** March 1, 2008
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Richard Dengrove: About the Fall of the Roman Empire: The problem with your idea of climate change leading to crop failures lasting for centuries is that you need to explain why this would have affected the Roman Empire and not their barbarian enemies who continued to thrive and breed like rabbits. Crop failures going on for centuries is hardly possible anyway since farmers would not keep planting the same crops the same way and watching them fail year after year for centuries. For one thing, they would soon die of starvation and the crops wouldn't fail because there would be no one to plant them. Survivors would soon change their ways to adapt to any permanent climate change. And for any theory you put forward, you should cite some evidence.

I suspect the nature of the Roman economy was a large factor in its fall. It may have been that the Roman Empire lasted as long as it did because it received periodic infusions of new wealth from newly conquered provinces. We read of that particularly re Egypt and the gold mines of Dacia. Rome had to expand or die. When the expansion stopped, with no more new provinces to loot, the Roman Government tried to live on their own internal resources by vastly expanding taxation. But that provided only a temporary respite in the West.

Lisa: If the internet disappeared, it would be

a boost for small zines, more people writing for them, publishing, and subscribing. All that energy that used to go into zines now goes into the internet.

Years ago, if you had a viewpoint you wanted to promote, you would start a newsletter. Today you set up a website instead. I used to publish a directory of libertarian periodicals. Just about every state party and many cities and counties published newsletters. Now hardly any of them do, but they all have websites. There's no need for a libertarian directory anymore. Just google "libertarian party" for instant access.

And yet, I don't wish the internet were gone. Any question that I have, I can turn to the internet and usually quickly find the answer.

JTM: The date and location of that legionary bank record makes a difference, whether it's early in the Empire or late. In later days, inflation had so reduced the value of Roman money that a legionaire's pay was perhaps not worth drawin~out, despite several inadequate pay raises. Instead food and other goods were increasingly taken from civilians and given to the army when the cash economy failed.

I have not yet read a book about banking and finance in the Roman Empire, if any such book exists. Michael Grant, in *The Climax of Rome*, says a lot about high taxation and debased coinage in the years 161 to 337. But I don't know much about how the Romans handled their private finances. Legionaires, as you note, could deposit money in a legionary bank. (Since Rome had no paper money, and all payments were in coins, did this legionary bank consist of a chest of coins?) I know legionaires also had burial societies. But were such services available to civilians? Borrowing money was possible, so there must have been something in writing concerning these loans. It was possible at least for magnates to invest, usually in real estate, maybe in shipping or other ventures. But could small savers make deposits that could be invested? Was there anything like insurance? How were big purchases made, with huge chests of coins? I know that banking was far less developed in the Roman Empire than it would be later, but it wasn't non-existent.

Related to that, I wonder how the ordinary legionaire handled his swag when he looted a conquered enemy. I believe a baggage train followed the legion and I suppose that's where the loot was carried. Did each soldier have his own "duffel bag" in the wagon train to hold his stuff? How was this safeguarded when he had valuable loot, while he was marching up front in the ranks? Merchants might have followed the legion to buy loot and carry it away. Another possibility is that loot might have been held in common by the entire legion, to be shared out after the campaign when they returned to their home base. But that seems unlikely. Tales of pillage give the impression of soldiers eager to grab the best items for themselves. I find it hard to believe they'd so readily gather up loot just to put it into a common pot.

Understand, a fair bit of the loot was self-mobile.

George W. Price: While I have no information about people supposedly paid 2 or 3 cents an hour in the 1930s, logically people will not work for a wage far below subsistence for more than a brief time, if that. Voluntary, free workers must make at least enough to survive on, or they won't do it. Only forced, slave labor can be made to work for starvation wages or less, chained to their workbench, beaten or killed if they slack off.

Like I said, self-mobile loot.

— JTM

From: **Trinlay Khadro** March 13, 2008
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TRINLAY KHADRO

<http://store.s.ebay.com/Silly-Kitty>

Wow, I should be doing better at keeping up with LOCs and stuff. Sorry to hear of your Loss. Megumi and Seimei send their Purrrs.

Thank you.

I'm still unpacking and cleaning in the house, and helping my landlord put electronics stuff from the basement up on Ebay. There are lots of radio tubes going up soon.

Monday went with friends to the Milwaukee Public Museum, tired myself out but had fun. Next week Saturday is my auntie's 80th birthday party, and I am just now recalling I need to tell people I can't give them a ride to something, as I've got the commitment to going to my auntie's party.

I've been busy crocheting critters for some commissions as well as for my shop.

<http://www.trinlayk.etsy.com>

I've shown work at Capricon, and making plans to go to Odyssey con early in April. (And I gotta call and make carpool plans, and crash space plans.)

As usual taking photos of anything and everything and putting them up on Flickr . . .

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

Not much news, spring is coming. It's up to 54F today! wow.

Off to organize my house some more . . . take care everyone.

We had temps in the twenties and a foot of snow the weekend before Red Wull died. Today, it's sixty-five Fahrenheit and I walked to work after lunch without

a coat.

— JTM

From: **Robert S. Kennedy** March 18, 2008
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Thank you for Vol. 7, No. 1.

On February 9th the A&E Channel presented *True Lies* (1994) starring Arnold Schwarzenegger and Jamie Lee Curtis. Being that this is a movie that has been previously enjoyed, I taped and watched it. I thought that I recognized the person who played their daughter. Yes, it was Eliza Dushku — she of *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, *Angel*, and *Tru Calling* fame. I haven't seen her lately and hope that she has not vanished.

IMDB lists twelve roles since the end of *Tru Calling*. Like Betty Sorensen in *The Star Beast*, she divorced her parents, but it was so she could work more hours.
Eliza Dushku
<http://www.imdb.com/name/nm0244630/>

It appears that psychotherapy has come up with something new to treat — Global Warming Anxiety. (*Ventura County Star*, February 20, 2008.)

For those of you who have taken some interest in the Duke Lacrosse case (where members of the team were falsely charged with rape) and who have hopefully read *Until Proven Innocent: Political Correctness and the Shameful Injustices of the Duke Lacrosse Case* (reviewed by Joe in Vol. 6, No. 6) will perhaps remember the cabdriver, Moezeldin Elmostafa. Elmostafa had two of the players in his cab at the same time as one of them was charged in the rape. Despite intense pressure from the scumbag District Attorney Mike Nifong, Elmostafa refused to change his testimony. Well, each month the *Reader's Digest* prints an article about people whom they consider to be heroes and Elmostafa was one of the twelve during 2007. Then, they ask readers to vote on which of the twelve they consider to be the Hero of the Year. I voted for Elmostafa, but didn't expect him to win. Surprise, in their April issue, *Reader's Digest* reported that Elmostafa had won by a wide margin.

Humorous commentary about Representative Mary Bono (R-CA). Now that she has married Representative Connie Mack IV (R-FL) she calls herself Mary Bono Mack. Mary, as everyone should know, is the widow of Sonny Bono. (She was Sonny's fourth wife. Donna Rankin was his first wife, Cher his second wife, and he was married very shortly to a third wife whose name I cannot determine.) At Sonny's funeral Cher (an ardent Democrat) told Mary that she should run to replace Sonny in the House of Representatives. Apparently, Mary had not thought of running for Sonny's seat in Congress. However, she then did so and obviously won.

The third wife (1981-1984) was named Susie Coelho.

Susie Coelho/Susie Bono

<http://www.imdb.com/name/nm0168736/>

In 1988 I happened to view a TV broadcast from Palm Springs. It was a debate with the candidates who were running for Mayor of Palm Springs. Sonny was one of the candidates and he wasn't present. The Moderator made a big issue of the missing Sonny. After awhile Sonny appeared. He tore into the Moderator saying that the man knew Sonny's wife was ill, in the hospital, and that Sonny had been at the hospital. I found myself cheering for Sonny against the Moderator who had obviously been trying to trash Sonny. Sonny went on to be elected Mayor from 1988 to 1992. In 1994 Sonny was elected to Congress. He died in a terrible skiing accident in 1998 and Mary was elected to replace him.

Interesting comment about how our planes were destroyed on the ground in the Philippines by the Japanese. In my reading it was claimed that MacArthur's air commander had requested approval to bomb the Japanese on Formosa and was refused. The weather had caused the Japanese to be unable to take off and they would have been caught on the ground. Instead it was our planes that were caught on the ground. For unknown reasons MacArthur did nothing for some time despite knowing about Pearl Harbor. Also, interesting was your comment about how LBJ received a Silver Star for taking a plane ride. LBJ was a strong supporter of Roosevelt and FDR wanted him back in Congress. So, FDR had LBJ awarded a Silver Star and put him back in Congress.

They launched, stooged around waiting for a target, then all landed to refuel. It was Brereton's fault.

Good commentary on the USS *Robin* (R38). I have never heard about it before.

Thanks for the two HUGO recommendations.

Christopher J. Garcia: It was nice meeting you at *Loscon34*. Your comments about the McMartin case indicate how appalling it is that McMartin children (now adults) still believe that the dreadful things actually happened to them. The charges against the McMartin defendants were ridiculous and impossible. That the "children" actually still believe it clearly indicates the great evil done by Kee McFarlane and others persons involved in the **persecution** prosecution. The defendants were finally found not guilty by a jury. But, that didn't help the woman who died in jail. It may have set the other defendants free, but their lives and livelihoods were destroyed. I highly recommend the book *The Abuse of Innocence: The McMartin Preschool Trial* by Paul & Shirley Eberle (1993/2003). It is available in numerous California libraries (including a number near you). Also, from Amazon.com for \$23.00.

George W. Price: Excellent commentary on

the Great depression and economic theory.

Joe: In response to the question by **Lloyd Penney** about “what did we do that would cause [Islam] to think of this and actually do this” — You correctly answered because “we’re not Muslim”. I would add one more — Because our society is successful and theirs is not.

Sue Burke: You indicate that Spain’s “political parties chose their candidates behind closed doors (no primary hoopla) . . .” Oh, if that were only the case here. I have long advocated not having primaries and the political professionals choosing candidates. No massive monetary expenditures. No going through months and months (maybe years) of all the political crap. If only. Think of the peace and quiet.

From: **Milt Stevens** March 18, 2008
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In *Alexiad* V7#1, Lisa registers shock at the thought of the internet disappearing overnight. The internet is useful for some things, but I could easily live without it. It would just be a matter of printing out letters, putting them in envelopes, and attaching stamps, or making a phone call. The internet has eliminated 95% of my telephone calls. I still rely on the postal service to deliver fanzines, and I still pay most of my bills by mail.

There are some people at LASFS who think I don’t love the internet sufficiently. My referring to it as a playground for crackpots and perverts may have had something to do with that perception. It may be useful, but that doesn’t mean I think highly of all the things that may wash up from it or all of the people who participate in it. I am a definite believer in editorial control.

The cost of sending out what would have been junk mail, much less swindling mail, has now declined precipitately in comparison to the return. Last year or so, I read a novel about a guy who was pulling off the “Spanish prisoner” scam by mail to targeted middle-class people who would have enough money to send but not enough to go there (it was set in the fifties). Then one of his targets had an unexpected inheritance and a bump of curiosity. And nowadays we have people who bait 419 scammers.

Word processing is something I would miss far more than the internet. I probably typed millions of words on an Underwood-Olivetti portable typewriter between 1966 and the early nineties, but I wouldn’t want to go back to using a manual typewriter. I think the muscles in my hands have deteriorated. The fact that the muscles everywhere else in my body have also deteriorated is beside the point.

Unlike Joseph, I was around when the

interest in Tolkien began appearing in fandom. It was entirely different than the Harry Potter phenomenon. For one thing, Tolkien was published in the UK years before it was published in the US. British fans read the books first and began praising them to the skies in their fanzines. They even sent copies to their American friends who had developed a second hand interest. American fans liked them too. This resulted in a number of Tolkien fanzines being published in the US before the books even appeared here. Star Trek is widely credited with helping to close the gender gap in fandom in the sixties and thereafter. Fred Lerner pointed out that Tolkien also attracted more females into fandom. I agree that it did.

Joseph wonders where is all of our fanac energy is going these days. Let’s see, I think I’ve lined up a hotel for the Nebula Weekend for next year. It’s the Doubletree Hotel, San Pedro. It’s located in the Cabrillo Marina, and it’s quite nice. I did a user requirements document for the LASFS website (www.lasfs.info). I think I have a line on a designer for the website, but one thing bothers me. The designer I’m contacting is far too good for us. He has been teaching graphic design at USC for years, and he is really, really good. He is also a police officer who I first met at Van Nuys back in the seventies. It’s been several weeks since the USPOD dumped the entire US part of the FAPA mailing back on my doorstep because we were under suspicion of being suspicious. The Van Nuys Main Post Office is definitely no fun anymore. Just for that, I’m going to take my surreptitious business elsewhere.

Good luck with the Nebulas.

— JTM

From: **Dainis Bisenieks** March 19, 2008
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Life without the Internet, which in my case I do not have? How might my life be advanced if I did have it? If I weren’t such a stick-in-the-mud? Let me, however, pose this riddle. Here is a sampling of graphic and verbal art that, over the years, proved to be just my cup of tea. The novels of Jasper Fforde. The cartoons of Geratd Hoffnung. *The Cats Gallery of Western Art* by Susan Herbert. *ShrinkLits* by Maurice Sagoff. *The Eating in Bed Cookbook* by Barbara Ninde Byfield. The graphic work of Mervyn Peake. It might be possible to find somewhere in the globe one person who knows most if not all of these and is willing to tell the world about it. But how can I identify the person who *would be* delighted by these if only they were first revealed to him or her?

A first-person narrator in fiction conventionally has perfect recall in addition to a fluent narrative style (and don’t tell me the exceptions). So it is with Marcus Didius Falco. Convention dictates that we not inquire too closely into the mode, context, and distance in time of the narration. Here and there distance in time is explicit; we even learn that Falco has lived into the reign of Trajan. It is amusing,

then, to note that at one point in *Saturnalia* he harks back to the events of *A Dying Light in Corduba*, and just like you and me, he can’t rightly recall names and faces.

He had had assistance. When it came time to scribe down the scroll, he paused at that point and said, “Helena, what the Hades was that man’s name?” and she told him.

Recent proofreading, a collection of stories by Rafael Sabatini, quintessentially pulpish and entirely in keeping with that series of reprints. A copy of Frank Gruber’s *The Pulp Era* passed through my hands (and was passed on), mostly a catalogue of his early failures and eventual success but shedding light on the editors and publishers of his time. I reflected that a lot of the science fiction of the 1930s and ‘40s was written by hacks to whom all was grist, and who cares about them and their work now? Howard Browne, reminiscing in *Amazing* (“A Profit Without Honor”, May 1984), listed some stories he’d written under various bylines. “But in their defense I can say this: not one was ever anthologized.”

His piece was done on a typewriter which had large and small capital letters.

There’s a book of reminiscences by Browne which I’ve glanced at but never was moved to get and read.

I re-read bits of *The Oxford Book of Military Anecdotes* (of which I find I have a duplicate), in which I the Oxford U.P. has hit some kind of low in proofreading. Meinertzhagen comes out as “Meinertzhagen”. It has a few pages from *Ill Met By Moonlight*, a book I’d be pleased to read some day. A far, far better anthology is *The War In the Air: the Royal Air Force in World War II*, ed. by Gavil Lyall (Morrow, NY, 1969, prior U.K. publication 1968). But then, flying stories, by those who survived to write them, are the best kind.

Ah, to have been a fly on the wall when Galland met Bader. (On the ground.)

And this April 21 is the ninetieth anniversary of MvR’s death.

In *The Economist* was an article about a French railway executive. What is prose without figures of speech? But instead of putting him at the throttle, they had him on the footplate. American locomotives had roofed cabs pretty much from the start. Horses and their management, and pre-modern firearms, have not departed from our language, though one wonders how many people understand those figures of speech. A phrase does not have to make sense to express a meaning: “hair-brained” and “hare-brained” say the same thing, or “cut the mustard” and “come up to muster”. But what I wonder is: what 20th century expressions will persist in the language after their referents have vanished?

The thought came to me that Lovecraft has won respectability by inclusion in the Library of America — but *we* have Cthulhu hand puppets.

Which is the more sincere tribute?

Wrong question. Which is the more abhorrent, blasphemous, abominable, squamous, rugose, eldrich, unspeakable, and cthonian tribute? Iä! Iä!

The past now and then returns to haunt me. Steve Sneyd in Britain insists on seeing merit in my youthful poetic effusions, published in *Starlanes*. Now when I was dispersing my collection in 1959, I found no cash customers for my copies of that zine, so I sent them, along with a lot of other stuff, to Ken Slater. How many other copies can have reached that scepter'd isle? Chances are that I have been hoist by my own petard.

A recent Latvian paper had a page of pictures selected from those available on a web site, showing the lives of Latvians in postwar D.P. camps in Germany. And there was the very place in Augsburg where my mother and I lived, the bomb-damaged end of an apartment block with improvised repairs. Whatever happy memories I have from that era, they are not associated with that exact place.

In Europe some decades later, I went for a quick look-see: everything had been seamlessly restored, adjacent fields had been built on.

My lending copy of Thacker & Earnshaw's indescribable book *Musrum* has been circulating among my son's friends. As is always the case, they never knew until the merest chance revealed it that here was a book just for them. Has the Internet worked any great improvement? What little I've seen of "readers of this will also like" lists, however compiled, they are lacking in subtlety, apart from being generally restricted to books in print.

Hmm . . . what books would be recommended to an on-line purchaser of the work of Jasper Fforde? It would depend on what other purchases were made by other buyers of Fforde. Lindsey Davis gives me somewhat the same satisfaction; would Lindsey Davis, in fact, appear?

More likely if you had bought John Maddox Roberts or Steven Saylor. By the way, *The Triumph of Caesar* by Steven Saylor is to be released May 13.

— JTM

From: **Richard Dengrove** March 30, 2008
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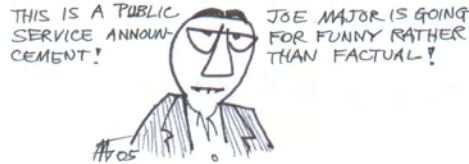
Another zine, February 2008's, filled with comment hooks.

In your discussion of The Swoose, you seem to blame General MacArthur when Clark field in the Philippines was unprepared for a Japanese air assault. MacArthur's reputation always suffered in Liberal circles, but is it suffering in Conservative circles as well?

See my response to Bob

Kennedy. Do I have to use this all the time?

SATIRE ALERT!



Anyway, even if he hadn't been remiss, he still didn't earn the \$1,000,000 a year I hear the Filipinos's were paying him. How could any general?

It was a one-time bonus of \$500k. See *Old Soldiers Never Die* by Geoffrey Perret (1996), Pages 271-272.

Joe, while you discuss Gene Wolfe's *Pirate Freedom*, you mention the improbability of a modern being a Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court. I agree. He would have to take modern technology with him, and modern expertise. Also, the modern infrastructure, which electricity, cars, the web and cell phones depend on. Otherwise, the people of King Arthur's time: or, as in Gene's novel, the pirate era: would be more able. They would be used to living without such conveniences and being generalists.

E.B. Frohvet complains that Guy Lillian's *Challenger* arbitrarily dropped him from its mailing list. I think, except for his contributors, Guy has gone to the web. A paper zine like *Challenger* proved too expensive for him to publish. Of course, he should at least notify his old mailing list when a new issue comes out on the web.

I bet I could get you a copy of *Challenger* if you wanted.

Also, I have a second comment for E.B. About Klezmer music, I thought Klezmer was the Yiddish name for the clarinet, as well as for a form of music. The Wikipedia, on the web, disagrees: according to it, Klezmer means any musical instrument in both Hebrew and Yiddish. A form of music too. I guess I will have to accept that.

George Price claims that things are not as they seem: during the Depression, deflation hid an aggrandizing wage sector. That aggrandizing sector crowded out the investment sector. Employers could not afford to invest because wages cut into their profit. Thus, By encouraging higher wages, Franklin Roosevelt, far from being a hero of the Republic, proved a menace to the Republic.

The problem with this is it doesn't make sense. An aggrandizing wage sector causes inflation not deflation. Supply is lower than demand. Employers can increase prices because they have fewer goods to supply and there is enough money out there to command the higher prices.

By contrast, a decreasing wage sector causes deflation, i.e., conditions during the Depression. Demand is higher than supply. There are lots of goods but employees do not have the money to buy them.

In addition to analyzing the Depression, George analyzes World War II. He claims that, during World War II, inflation actually hid that the wage sector decreased. Taras Wolansky follows him up with specifics. George concludes this decreased wage sector insured prosperity then. Nonetheless, Franklin Roosevelt, while being damned for his economic policies during the Depression, gets no kudos for them during the War.

I am not going argue that a decreased wage sector didn't happen during World War II. I agree it did. Instead, I am going to point out that something else was chasing up demand, which could be as bad as wages, an increase in the military sector. It was a war. The government needed guns, planes, submarines, battleships, etc.; and industry had yet to supply them.

That is what I meant when I said the markets had, nonetheless, increased. Traditionally, the view has been government spending has increased demand as effectively as wages, hasn't it?

To Jim Stumm, it is a good question whether the Evil Russian Empire fell or changed it stripes to better integrate itself into the international economy. Russia was ruled by a mafia of Soviet operatives before and is now run by a mafia of economic royalists. It just took some time for one leader to beat out the other capos.

Is Rodney Leighton a fan? It's hard to tell from self-identification. The members of the MIT Science Fiction Society have a motto: "We're not fans. We just read the stuff." If they were not fans, I don't know who is. I remember, from the '70s, they had gone to a lot of trouble to read it too. They assembled a whole library. Also, I know they passed around fanzines, which they made no secret of.

Knowing Rodney, though, I have to say he isn't a fan. I don't know whether fellow traveler would be a better appellation either. Maybe I better just say he is an interesting person.

To Jeffrey Allan Boman: we Jews turn up in a lot of unexpected places: Iraq (pre-Israel), Arizona, India and the Medieval Riviera.

Or the Mountain Jews in the Caucasus.

— JTM

From: **Sue Burke** March 31, 2008
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Thanks again for the interesting articles about WWII and other military events. Madrid is about to celebrate the 200th anniversary of its uprising against Napoleon's troops on May 2, so I've been looking into that event and the Spanish War of Independence, which involved

six years of fighting and 1 million dead, and required the intervention of Wellington for victory. The more I study that history, the more admiration I have for the US military, both its leaders and the average GI Joe: smarter, more disciplined, more professional, and not venal. The fates of nations can hinge on those factors.

Are you impugning the honour
of Rifleman Sharpe?

Of course, history was made on March 19 with a death that made headlines here. My favorite Spanish essayist and philosopher, Fernando Savater, wrote fondly of his discovery of Arthur C. Clarke at age 15.

“The most beautiful thing about literature is that it acts as a pharmacy with remedies for all our ills (except death),” Savater said. “Clarke made a variety of potions for that strange ailment, nostalgia for the future.”

Savater ran for Congress in Spain’s March 9 elections, and I would have voted for him if I could. I even saw him at a rally. He didn’t win, but his party, the centrist Union, Progress and Democracy Party, founded only six months ago, managed to get one seat. On the whole, the election was quiet, with only one Basque terrorist assassination and a few small bombs, and nothing from Al Qaeda. The incumbent Socialist Party came in first.

The fascists didn’t win, despite having four parties among the 92 that fielded candidates: the Falangist Movement of Spain, the Spanish Falange of the Joint National-Unionist Offensive, the Spanish Front, and the Authentic Falange. The Judean People’s Front, People’s Front of Judea, and Popular Front of Judea were not on the ballot, of course, but given the popularity of Monty Python here despite the language barrier, they might have done better.

¡HENDEDOR! [“splitter”] I
wasn’t expecting — Nobody
expects the Spanish Inquisition!

— JTM

In the further adventures of His Majesty don Juan Carlos, he was at the winners’ podium at the MotoGP motorcycle race in Jerez yesterday, where he physically forced feuding Spanish racers Jorge Lorenzo and Dani Pedrosa, who came in third and first respectively, to shake hands, urging them to declare a truce. They managed not to insult each other during the subsequent press conference: a small royal victory.

From: **AL du Pisani** March 31, 2008
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Greetings from a very wet Johannesburg.

This summer has been wet and somewhat cold. Some weeks I did not see the sun at all, as a fine soft rain rained for the week. And some

times it was the hard rain, with thunder, lightning and hail, as the rain which fell yesterday.

My congregation had just finished building a chapel. The two things we know about it: It is built on rock, and the roof does not leak. And after years of trying, we finally found something that keep our church roof from leaking. And this summer threw a lot of water against both buildings. The building was at one stage delayed for a month, due to rain, and holidays, and other things which cropped up.

I have settled into my new job, and will hopefully start to grow soon. It took months, but I am over my old job. Or as over as you can be, with anything in life, really.

Turning to other matters, the story of Vernon Koekemoer. Now Koekemoer is one of the funny surnames we inherited from the Dutch, and it roughly means cake beater, as in hit. Recently a local newspaper published some photos of some event. In it, there was a white guy, with a mullet, wearing a tight muscle shirt and shorts, with a beer in one hand. For some reason this resonated with a bunch of people, and they decided to make him famous. Dubbed Vernon Koekemoer, he soon started appearing in jokes and photoshopped pictures. When the “Make Vernon Koekemoer Famous” Facebook group get closed down by the founder of the group, it had 1200 people that claimed that this was their mission. They recycled last year’s Chuck Norris jokes, and retold them with Vernon Koekemoer as the hero. I even saw a 1980 era photo of Chuck Norris with a Vernon Koekemoer tattoo, as the photoshop kids broke loose.

They gave up on van der Merwe?

And the moral of the story: Nothing much, but it is nice for news to come from South Africa which is not depressing.

Unfortunately, this brings us to the Power situation in the country. We still have electricity supply problems, and recent indications are that it will not be for the next 4 years only, but may last for another couple of years after that.

After the country’s mines were shut down for a week in January, Eskom and the mining houses has come to some agreement for future electricity supply. But it required an immediate 10% reduction in electricity use by the mines. This has been the pattern for other agreements: You will cut your electricity consumption by 10%, and you will pay more for your power. Eskom had a 15% increase in price earlier this year, and have asked for a 60% increase. With at least one person saying that we will have to get used to price hikes like that for the next three years, as we can expect the electricity price to double over that period.

This brings up the question of alternatives to Eskom, and the answer is not likely: Our government believes in central planning, and that electricity is something too important to leave to capitalism.

You can look into solar powered water heating systems, which should cut your electricity use by an estimated 40%. And it is

expected that subsidies to encourage people to switch, will come into place later this year. It is expected that a household system of about R25,000 cost, supplying about 200 liters of hot water, should receive a R6,000 subsidy. This however requires 2 hours of sunlight per day, to run without falling back to using electricity, and with the rains we had this summer, we have had periods of two weeks at a time in which we saw no sun at all. And apparently the biggest bottleneck in switching to solar is that most plumbers in South Africa have never been trained to install, connect or fix solar geysers.

All of the bad news about electricity came as the government assured people that it will have no effect on the economy. As people were seeing effects, some of them have admitted that there will be minor effects. I expect the biggest effect economically will be a much more subtle one: Enough people’s confidence and trust in the government was broken by the electricity affair. So much so that we are seeing a upswing in emigration.

And, in one of the more interesting analyses of the events which lead to the breakdown in supply of electricity, a group of people looked at what results the bosses of Eskom were being judged by, when calculating bonuses. Not one of them had anything to do with the organisation’s prime focus, supplying electricity. How much they were employing “previously disadvantaged” people, using suppliers with the right ownership, etc would count. Doing their job, would not.

Which brings the whole concept of “Social responsibility” and social justice scorecards into disrepute. Or should, if there people pushing such agendas were not so stubborn in failing to learn what they do not want to hear.

So endeth the First Lesson.

— JTM

In any case, there is always Science Fiction, to bring us into places of new hope.
May it go well with all of you.

From: **Taras Wolansky** March 31, 2008
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Review of *The Lost Fleet: Courageous* by “Jack Campbell”: It was suggested to you that **“this might have begun as a *Battlestar Galactica* (current series) tie-in.”** I find that hard to believe; “Jack Campbell” hardly needs a TV series to inspire him to write about a space navy! Also, the books don’t reflect the TV show’s sophomorically dark view of human nature (assuming any of the characters are supposed to be human beings, of course).

Review of Stuart Kelly’s *The Book of Lost Books*: **“Shakespeare’s plays weren’t really meant for anything beyond use at the theater!”** The published versions, which sometimes collated various performing versions, were the media spin-offs of their day. Still, as his career progressed, Shakespeare would know an eventual book publication was likely, which

gave him the freedom to write passages he did not expect to be performed. Like the modern film director who shoots scenes for the inevitable DVD.

Jim Stumm: I don't know that much about the later Roman Empire, so I can't answer your question about why the Empire couldn't "find Romans willing to enlist in the army". Or even affirm that's a true statement: I would instead have wondered if the late Empire's declining economy made it unable to support a large-enough standing army.

After centuries of failing to settle Texas, why did Mexico finally bring in American immigrants to do it, with the results we all know? Possibly, having disarmed and subjugated their peasants for hundreds of years, the Mexicans lacked the kind of armed yeomen they would have needed. Maybe the Romans had the same problem.

Richard Dengrove: As I don't think lack of patriotism caused the fall of Rome — it would surprise me if this were a major factor — I see no reason to respond to your arguments against this position.

You meant to say crop failure *for centuries*; but you actually said "crop failure in Gaul was a factor in Rome's fall." To me, climate change is a likely suspect whenever a civilization falls.

AL du Pisani: Speaking of falling civilizations, it's a good idea to move out of the way of the disaster, if possible.

Darrell Schweitzer: Very interesting alternative history scenario, wherein the absence of the A-bomb leads to the virtual extinction of the Japanese people in a prolonged conventional war on the Home Islands.

John Purcell and Jeffrey Allan Boman: If you like Zelazny's "Amber" series, you should take a look at the books that probably inspired it, Philip Jose Farmer's *The Maker of Universes* and *The Gates of Creation*, the first two parts of Farmer's "World of Tiers" series. Zelazny wrote an unsolicited rave introduction to the third book in that series.

Neither Zelazny nor Farmer could sustain the initial impetus of the concept in the subsequent volumes of their works. At least Zelazny had health reasons; Farmer fell prey to self-indulgences (like Heinlein, he fell under the insidious influence of Caleb Catlum).

— JTM

From: **Marty Helgesen** April 1, 2008
11 Lawrence Avenue, Malverne, New York 11565-1406 USA

Lisa is correct. Life without the Internet would be unthinkable. If I, typing in my cellar late at night, wanted some obscure information I probably could find it in a matter of minutes. I know I managed without that ability for most of my life, but this way is much better.

Speaking of which, Joe mentions that Buccaneers were a specific group (so all pirates were not buccaneers). The OED2 says of

"buccaneer"

1. orig. One who dries and smokes flesh on a boucan after the manner of the Indians. The name was first 'given to the French hunters of St. Domingo, who prepared the flesh of the wild oxen and boars in this way' (E. B. Tylor Early Hist. Man. 261). Obs.
2. (From the habits which these subsequently assumed:) 'A name given to piratical rovers who formerly infested the Spanish coasts in America' (Falconer Dict. Marine 1789).
3. By extension: A sea-rover who makes hostile incursions upon the coast, a 'filibuster'.

And the verb "buccan" means "barbeque". The verb "buccaneer" means the same, although it can also mean, "To act as a buccaneer".

The OED is not available free on the web. I have access to it because the library where I work subscribes to it.

William F. Buckley wrote an essay some thirty years ago where he described a computer-driven, automatically updating OED.

— JTM

Joe quotes a passage from Gene Wolfe's *Pirate Freedom*, which he is reviewing, that mentions priests molesting boys. I think it's worth mentioning that although those priests frequently are referred to as pedophiles, most of them aren't. In the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (not on the web at all so far as I know) the American Psychiatric Association defines pedophilia as a sexual interest in pre-pubescent children. Some pedophiles (male and female) are attracted to boys, some to girls, and some to both sexes. Most of the victims of predatory priests were boys in their teens, too old for pedophiles. The priests were just homosexuals. Some people say they are ephebophiles, but while that word is in the OED it's not in the DSM. The OED says it applies especially to homosexuals.

My sympathy to Lisa for the deaths in her family.

E. B. Frohvet is correct about double jeopardy. It is defined as "the placing of a person in jeopardy twice for the same offence, against which there is a common-law immunity". The words "the same offence" have to refer to one specific incident. Otherwise anyone, for example, convicted of one burglary would be free for the rest of his life to commit other burglaries with impunity.

He says to me, "On changing the oil, isn't there the account of the virgins and their lamps which miraculously burned a very long time? I think there's a holiday based on that miracle . . ." He is conflating the Hanukkah miracle, in which a menorah burned for eight days although it had only enough oil for one day, which is recorded in the Talmud, not the Bible, and the parable Jesus taught about the wise and foolish

virgins (Matt. 25:1-13)

From: **Gina Teh** April 2, 2008
Singapore
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Hi, it's a little past the deadline due to my umpteen computer problems. I actually had to print out *Alexiad* 37 at a library just the other week. I had not realize that the pdf was fixed to print on US paper size. Luckily, I tried a testing page. After much tinkering, the zine was finally printed on A4 papers but it does look weird now with big empty top and bottom spaces and narrow sides. Still, it is now something which I can carry to all my boring classes to read and share among my classmates. Most of them have never heard of fandom/fanzines etc before but a few are the basic sf fans (star trek readers and all). They were really amazed at the effort put in the zines (I had an old copy of *The Knarley Knews* with me too). As I am still in the midst of reading the zine, I don't really have any comments yet but I am having trouble finding the books you reviewed in my local stores . . . perhaps I have to venture online.

Good luck at being persuasive.

— JTM

Since I am at the topic of fandom, just from what I know, there is mainly two big sections — science fiction and postal games. The sf bit seems to have fare much much better than the postal games bit. In terms of paper/pdf medium, it seems that both are equally affected.. While some games zines are strictly on paper only, there are a few online.. The rest seems to have died off during the transition from paper to computer. This seems to be quite true for sf too? But at the very least, for sf, there is still a common portal, efanazines.com, to allow better facilitating by newbies.

Okay . . . I admit my train of thought has a ulterior motive. I am more interested to see if any one plays in a zine but fandom history is really interesting. Is there any great informative articles on it or is anyone going to write one?

Happy April's Fool to all! I have been good and not played any pranks on anyone.

WAHF:

Lloyd Daub, with various items of interest.

Carolyn Clowes, Earl Kemp, and Alexei Panshin with condolences.

Dale Speirs, who sent a campaign brochure for Arthur "Scud Stud" Kent.

Anyone wanting dinner in Denver write so we can start making arrangements.

TOM SAWYER, EXPLORER

... "Now Tom Sawyer," I said, "Let me get this here idee right straight now. If'n they's gold and di'monds just a-lay'n on the ground in South Afriky for anyone to pick up, why ain't there folks with enough money to buy guns there first?"

Tom gave me one of his smiles. "Huck Finn, ain't there a lick of sense in that head of yourn? The gold and di'monds ain't just where anyone can get them. You got to go into the wilds of Afriky, where the eternal queen's a-livin', and ro-mance her so's she lets you have the key to her treasury. All her slaves done gathered up the gold and di'monds, and put them in her vault, and there it be, a-waitin' for bold fellers like you and me."

I figgered that would put an end to Tom's dreams, but no, he had us tickets on a river boat down to New Orleans and a ship a-sailin' to South Afriky, some place called Cape Town.

We was a-go'in' to take Jim but he said, "No way, M— Huck. The last time Tom had one of them ideas, I ended up bein' nigh scalped by Indians! I hears them fellers in Afriky don't take kindly to fellers claim'in to be brothers." So he didn't go.

Warn't two months later that we fetched up on the dock in Cape Town. Tom, he went a-lookin' for a guide, and that was when the trouble commenced . . .

I am by nature a peaceful man, and have never killed anyone save in self-defence. However, there have been people who have given me cause to ponder the limits of that restraint.

This expedition I was guiding, for example. The clients were two rich Americans, a couple of young men named Sawyer and Finn. They rather reminded me of the Boers, the ones from so far back in the veldt that they had never seen another human being for years. At least they spoke something approaching English.

Their goal was something I would rather have stayed as far away from as possible, after what had happened. That Sawyer made it sound attractive all the same. "Mr Quatermain," he said, "you're the only man there is who can lead us to the city of gold and diamonds."

I wanted to tell them that the queen Ayesha was not as easy to fool as they thought, even if she was full of queer beliefs about immortality, but the two Americans hardly seemed interested in being disabused of their errors, and as long as they were paying for the pleasure, I was not in any sort of financial status to protest. My last trading venture had not proven as profitable as I had hoped, even if the Yank Morgan had paid his fees up front. Transporting an electrical apparatus into the wilds of Africa was no laughing matter . . .

— Not by Samuel Langhorne Clemens or Sir Henry Rider Haggard, KBE

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Writers, Staff: Major, Joseph & Major, Lisa

Art: What we are mainly looking for is small fillos. Your fillo will probably be scanned in and may be reused, unless you object to its reuse.

Contributions: This is not a fictionzine. It is intended to be our fanzine, so be interesting.

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