

# ALEXIAD

(ΑΛΞΙΑΣ)

\$2.00

On June 6 I found myself pausing to remember D Day. On our weekly trip to Borders I bought a book about D Day to honor the veterans. There were an estimated 10,000 Allied deaths during the invasion. The lowest estimate of Axis dead was some four thousand. What I hadn't known was that probably more died preparing the way for the invasion than in the actual invasion. Those casualties were nearly 12,000. It adds up to around 26,000 casualties. Henderson, where I grew up, has around 30,000 people. I tried to imagine all but four thousand of them dead and failed. Neither can I really imagine what it was like to wade ashore that day. All I can do is remember and honor their sacrifice as best I can.

Source: <http://www.ddaymuseum.co.uk/faq.htm>

— Lisa

Comments are by JTM or LTM.

Trivia: ..... 27

Art:

Sheryl Birkhead ..... 12, 17, 18, 27

Paul Gadzikowski ..... 28

Alexis Gilliland ..... 2, 4, 6, 8, 10, 12, 13, 19, 21, 24

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The **World Party** is at 9:00 p.m. local time on **June 21, 2008**.

**Breyerfest**, the annual show for lovers of Breyer model horses, will be **July 18-20, 2008** at the Kentucky Horse Park in Lexington, Kentucky.  
<http://www.breyerhorses.com>

**WonderFest**, the show for movie and model fans, will be **July 19-20, 2008** at the Executive West Hotel in Louisville.  
<http://www.wonderfest.com>

**DenVention 3**, the 66<sup>th</sup> World Science Fiction Convention, will be **August 6-10, 2008** at the Denver Convention Center in Denver, Colorado.  
<http://www.denvention3.org/>

The 54<sup>th</sup> Running of the Yonkers Trot (1st leg of the Trotting Triple Crown) is **June 28, 2008** at Yonkers Raceway in Yonkers, New York.  
The 83<sup>rd</sup> Running of the Hambletonian (2nd leg of the Trotting Triple Crown) is **August 2, 2008** at Meadowlands Racetrack in East Rutherford, New Jersey.  
The 116<sup>th</sup> Running of the Kentucky Futurity (3rd leg of the Trotting Triple Crown) is **October 4, 2008** at the Red Mile in Lexington, Kentucky.

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## Reviewer's Notes

I'm on a panel at WorldCon at 11:30 on Saturday, on the topic of growing a Fanzine. I'd like to have support and if any of the other panelists happen to be reading this, preliminary ideas.

In theory, the barrier to fanediting has been getting ever lower. It is now possible to produce a decent fanzine without having to spend endless toil learning the intricacies of mimeograph operation. Distribution costs have become fixed, provided one accepts certain constraints; the faned can email his ish, or merely send it to Bill Burns to be posted on eFanzines. (I don't do that because I publish addresses, in the hope of encouraging contact. This could be changed.)

Yet, where are the new faneds? Or is it all going into blogging, which is so diversified that there's no there there?

And what will my grandnephew have to look forward to? We can find out more, and know less, than ever before.

— Joe

## RANDOM JOTTINGS

by Joe



## BAD COMPUTER NEWS

While I was trying to upgrade my computer to Service Pack 3 for Windows XP, the system crashed and I had to do a recover. All my files were saved except one: my email address book. If you don't get this issue, email and let me know. (That's an e-Irish bull.)

For the terminally curious, here are the symptoms of arthritis in dogs that were posted at the vet's:

- Limping
- Reluctance to climb stairs
- Falling behind on walks
- Repeated licking of a joint
- Difficulty getting up in the morning or after a nap
- Stiffness
- Personality change
- Loss of appetite

Woof! Woof!

**None Dare Call It Foundation Department:** The Computer History Museum in Mountain View, California has acquired a Babbage Difference Engine. When they begin calculating the psychohistorical cliometrics to predict and control the future of the world, Fandom, including *Alexiad* readers, should expect to be given up-to-date reports by Chris Garcia, through the Victorian Internet he is inventing. And now you know the real story.

**Rick Sneary Memorial:** As you know, at the end of Solacon, which has gone down in Fan history as the worldcon provoked by the flip tagline "South Gate in '58!", Rick Sneary, the inventor of said line, walked across the stage holding a sign that said:

## SOUTH GATE AGAIN IN 2010

We are now voting for the 2010 Worldcon. It is incumbent upon us, in the name of timebinding, of Trufannishness, and of everything dear to the Fannish character, to write in a vote on the Site Selection ballot for South Gate.

## VICTORY OR FAFIATION

Now that winter is coming to the Antarctic Continent, we can survey the results, thanks to the Adventure Stats website:

<http://www.adventurestats.com/>

Five expeditions with a total of 28 people reached the Pole. They included 9 Norwegians, 4 Irish, 3 Americans, 3 Britons, 2 Canadians, 2 South Africans, 1 Australian, 1 Japanese, 1 Lebanese, 1 Netherlander, and 1 Swiss. Five were women and two were making a second expedition. Vilaine Sibusiso of South Africa was the first black person to reach the Pole, almost a hundred years after Matt Henson went to (or towards) the other extremity; Sibusiso is also the first black person to climb Mount Everest (June 6, 2005). All came from the Weddell Sea region.

There are twelve people who have reached the Pole twice, the first being Sir Ran Fiennes, and including three women. The first and so far only person to reach the Pole three times is Ms. Matty McNair.

Vincent Bugliosi's *Reclaiming History: The Assassination of John F. Kennedy* (2007; reviewed in *Alexiad* V. 6 #3) has received the Edgar Award for Best Fact Crime.

Christopher Priest has kindly provided an on-line bibliography of the books he read to provide the background for his Sidewise Award nominated novel *The Separation* (2002). He calls the first book (the books are listed by author) "the least interesting" and "dodgy". It's *Hidden Agenda* (2002) by Martin Allen. You know, the guy who snuck forged documents into the British National Archives to "discover" and bolster his theses! Shades of Mark Hoffman, Michel Lafosse, Pierre Plantard, and James Addison Reavis!

What's wrong with CanFandom? The Prix Aurora Award had one (1) nominee in Best Fanzine: Dale Speirs's *Opuntia*. No Award/Pas de Prix won. What the hell!/Que l'enfer?

## OBITS

We regret to report the death of **Danton Burroughs** on the night of **April 30 — May 1, 2008**, grandson and estate's manager of the author of *A Princess of Mars*, *The Land That Time Forgot*, *Pirates of Venus*, *At the Earth's Core*, *The Moon Maid*, *The Monster Men*, *Beyond Thirty*, and their sequels, and also some stuff about a guy in Africa. Burroughs, President of Edgar Rice Burroughs, Inc., maintained excellent relations with his grandfather's fans and was highly respected by them and by others in his community, appropriately Tarzana.

We regret to report the death of **Robert Lynn Asprin** on **May 22, 2008** at home in New Orleans. Born June 26, 1946 in St. Johns, Michigan, Asprin was active in both fandom and

prodom, being known as Yang the Nauseating of the Great Dark Horde and author of the *MythAdventures* series, among other accomplishments in both fields. The SFWA website reported that he had evidently died quickly, as he was found with a Terry Pratchett book in hand.

We regret to report the death of **Algis Budrys** at home in Evanston, Illinois on **June 8, 2008**. Born Algirdas Jonas Budrys, son of a Lithuanian diplomat, on **January 9, 1931**, Budrys came to the United States with his father in 1936. Shortly thereafter he began reading SF, turning to writing it after the war, producing several significant works such as the Hugo-nominated *Rogue Moon* (1958) and *Who?* (1960). He was also known as an editor and as a reviewer.

## MONARCHIST NEWS

DNA tests have identified the two skeletons found some distance from the Romanov burial site in Ekaterinburg as being those of siblings of the identified Romanov children. So much for Mikhail Golenevski, Anna Anderson, &c.

At the upper edge of the board a couple of Publishers' Dummies reposed, having the outward similitude of six-shilling novels; but he he had filled their pages with his archaic handwriting. The first contained thoughts — not great thoughts, nor thoughts selected in any particular principle, but phrases and opinions such as . . . Gabriele d'Annunzio's sentence

"Old legitimate monarchies are everywhere declining, and Demos stands ready to swallow them down its miry throat."

— Fr. Rolfe, *Hadrian the Seventh*, Prooimion

From Prithvi Narayan Shah (1723-1775, r. 1743-1775) to Gyanendra (1950-1951, 2001-2008): "Behold, most Holy Father, how that the glory of this world passeth away." [*Hadrian the Seventh*, Chapter IV]

AND AS HE GAVE HIS  
VICTORY CRY, LORD GREY-  
STOKE WONDERED: WHAT  
KIND OF WINE DOES GO  
WITH LION?



## I'VE BEEN TO LE PARADIS . . .

Commentary by Joseph T Major

At the beginning of *Lammas Night* (1983), by Katherine Kurtz, its protagonist Colonel John Graham has a less-than-savory encounter during the retreat to the Dunkirk perimeter. He finds a French farmyard, filled with corpses — British soldiers, unarmed, massacred, their commanding officer still with white flag in hand.

Given the description of the events, this likely would be the Le Paradis Massacre. But these events deserve more than Kurtz's romantic tale of how the covens of Old England induced H.R.H. Prince William, Duke of Clarence into allowing himself to be sacrificed to avert Operation Sealion and its black-magic phase, the latter lead personally by Hitler in an evil sabbat.

There are a great many criticisms to be made of Kurtz's portrayal. The protagonists come off as rather manipulative, and yet at the same time somewhat blind. ("While you chaps were away at your sabbat, Burgess and Maclean nipped off to Russia with two and a half hundredweight of Most Secret documents. What do you have to say to that?" "Blessed Be.")

While on the other side, far from being a black magic wizard, Hitler ridiculed the True Heinrich's love of occultism. It would have been more interesting to portray Himmler, surrounded by the coven of strange and demented people who made up the *Ahnenerbe* (see Heather Pringle's *The Master Plan* (2006; reviewed in *Alexiad* V. 5 #5) for more on this bunch), working the mighty spell to overcome the psychic defences of Old England . . .

And similarly, there were people with Magikal Connexions to British security. But one wouldn't want to portray that friend of thriller writer Dennis Wheatley. Wheatley worked with the Security Service's "M", the man who directed the infiltration of the Communist Party of Great Britain and the British Union of Fascists alike, Maxwell Knight. In Wheatley's *To the Devil — a Daughter* (1953) and its sequels, the thriller writer Molly Fountain falls in love with, and eventually marries, her former boss from the Security Service, Colonel "Conky Bill" Verney. Maxwell Knight was a homosexual. You don't think . . . But it was more the Honourable Correspondent that would be relevant, the outsider working with the Security Service, though "honourable" is about the last word anyone would use in connection with Aleister Crowley. All the same, it's not surprising that Kurtz didn't bring him in, though she mentions other real occultists of the era, such as "Dion Fortune" (Violet Frith), who had herself taken credit for averting the invasion.

One would think, moreover, that the RAF's Fighter Command, and the RN's Coastal Forces, just might have earned a smidgen of the credit. But back to France. . .

On May 26, the 4<sup>th</sup> Brigade (Brigadier Edward Warren) of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Division (Major-General H. C. Loyd) of I Corps (Lieutenant-

General M. G. H. Barker) of the British Expeditionary Force (General Sir John Standish Surtees Prendergast Vereker, Viscount Gort, VC, GCB, MVO, CBE, DSO ++, MC) was holding a line along the La Bassée Canal, not far from Neuve Chapelle, where there had been one of those big battles in the last war. The 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion, The Royal Norfolk Regiment, was ordered to hold the line of the canal to the last man and the last round.

(The Royal Norfolk Regiment was raised in 1685 to suppress the Monmouth Rebellion. When the regiments of foot were numbered, it became the Ninth Regiment of Foot. The regiment became the 9<sup>th</sup> East Norfolk Regiment in 1782, the Norfolk Regiment in 1881 in the Cardwell Reforms, and the Royal Norfolk Regiment in 1935. Their cap badge was an image of Britannia, the regimental motto was "Firm", and the regimental march was "Rule Britannia". Now due to mergers and downsizing, it is to all intents and purposes "A" Company, 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion, Royal Anglian Regiment of the much-shrunken British Army. Its nickname was the "Holy Boys", due to a notorious incident when a Bible society gave every man in a battalion of the regiment a Bible — and one and all sold them to get money for booze. Rule Britannia. . .)

The Germans attacked and overran their positions by the end of the next day. Company C, holding a farmhouse near the village of Le Paradis, resisted until they were out of ammunition, whereupon the commanding officer, Major Lisle Ryder, informed them that they could go on fighting or surrender. The men voted (and this is the hierarchical British Army?) to surrender.

They threw out their guns, formed up outside the farmhouse which had been their headquarters, and were split off, with some of them marched off to another, enclosed farmyard. That was when things started going awry.

The prisoners had been divided up, and this part of them — ninety-nine to be exact, were in the custody of *Nr. 14 Kompanie, 2. Totenkopffregiment, SS-Obersturmführer Fritz Knöchlein* commanding. The commander was not a happy man. He had taken casualties, though his company hadn't been in on the attack on Major Ryder's unit.

His company was a part of the *SS-Totenkopfdivision*, at that time commanded by *SS-Gruppenführer* Theodor Eicke. Eicke was also the inspector-general of the concentration camp guard units, from which he drew men for his division. It can be deduced that his men would not necessarily be the most restrained or benevolent. Beyond that, Eicke had thoroughly indoctrinated his men in the official Aryan and SS mythologies. In intent, if not necessarily in performance, they would resemble the SS in *The Iron Dream* (1972).

The SS opened fire on their prisoners. When they finished with that, they went in among the bodies and finished off (with bayonets and blows to the head) anyone who looked alive. Three days later, *Reichsführer-SS* Heinrich Himmler visited the area and was appalled. Some of the German troops hadn't

been buried yet.

Eicke's commanding officer was disgusted for a different reason. But then, *General der Kavallerie* Erich Hoepner had never been quite overly fond of the SS. (In the planned coup of 1938 — see *The OsterConspiracy of 1938* (2003; reviewed in *Alexiad* V. 2 #4) his orders would have been to keep the SS from marching on Berlin.) And Hoepner was even more put out when the *Totenkopfdivision* was assigned to his *Panzergruppe* for the invasion of the Soviet Union. You don't think someone had guessed.

The SS had conscripted local Frenchmen to bury the bodies. When that area of France was liberated in 1944, and a British graves registration team took charge, only fifty of 97 bodies were identifiable. There is a British war cemetery there now.

They missed a couple. Private William O'Callaghan was slightly wounded in the firing, and played dead. When the SS had left, he extricated himself and found one other man, Private Albert Pooley, who was more seriously wounded. They got out of the field as best they could, finding a pigsty to hide in. Three days later they surrendered to a German Army unit, which turned out to be a little more old-fashioned in how it treated prisoners.

Pooley had suffered four bullet wounds in one leg and could barely walk. After a long hospitalization he was repatriated in April of 1943. He repeated his story and . . . wasn't believed.

O'Callaghan remained in German prisoner-of-war camps until the end of the war. He also told his story and . . . wasn't believed.

The wheels of justice grind exceeding slow. In 1948, Pooley and O'Callaghan (Pooley had made a return visit to Le Paradis and then spoken to a war crimes investigator who finally believed him, O'Callaghan had got married) were called to participate in a trial. Fritz Knöchlein, who had risen by then to the rank of *SS-Obersturmbannführer und Oberst der Waffen-SS*, commanding a regiment in the *11. SS Freiwilligenpanzergrenadierdivision "Nordland"*, was put on trial for this war crime.

Knöchlein apparently had considered three possible lines of defense:

- 1) He hadn't done it.
- 2) It was a legitimate act of war.
- 3) He had already been punished by the SS.

Which one did he chose? All of them. Not that any of them worked. For example, both Pooley and O'Callaghan had picked him out of lineups, and both French and German witnesses identified him as being in command. And, to forestall the German excuse, it's unlikely that the Royal Army Ordnance Corps supply trains transported forty-year-old ammunition all the way from India. (Knöchlein had, and his supporters have, claimed that the Norfolks were using "dum-dum" ammunition, which was last issued around 1900, in India.) As for the "already punished", that amounted to a pointless if not self-serving claim that other officers in the *Totenkopfdivision* had wanted to challenge him

to a duel.

Knöchlein was convicted and sentenced to death. His attorney offered the plea in mitigation of sentence that Knöchlein was married and the father of four children and their sole wage-earner. The stone-hearted occupation authorities closed their ears to the pitiful cries of family, and on January 28, 1949, Knöchlein was hanged.

Pooley continued to suffer from his leg injury until his death on February 9, 1982. O'Callaghan died in November of 1975. After some weeks they were buried in the Le Paradis cemetery.

As for their commanding officer, Major Lisle Charles Dudley Ryder's family had its ups and downs. One brother, Ernle Terrick Dudley Ryder, was killed in the defense of Singapore in 1942 (there were three Territorial (reservist) battalions of the Royal Norfolk Regiment involved).

The other brother went into the Navy. He had what one might call an adventurous career, sailing the ketch *Tai-Mo-Shan* from Hong Kong to Dartmouth in 1933-1934 (by way of the Kurile Islands, where among other things he reconnoitered Hitokappu-wan, the base from which the *Kido Butai* would set out for Pearl Harbor a few years later), and serving on the British Graham Land Expedition in 1934-1937 as captain of the expedition ship, the schooner *Penola* (which, like the *Tai-Mo-Shan*, was powered by sail only).

His wartime career was, well, different. He had his first two ships sunk under him, one by a torpedo, one in a collision. And then . . .

ADMIRALTY  
*Whitehall,*  
21st May, 1942

The KING has been graciously pleased to approve the award of the VICTORIA CROSS for daring and valour in the attack on the German Naval Base at St. Nazaire, to:

Commander Robert Edward Dudley Ryder,  
Royal Navy.

For great gallantry in the attack on St. Nazaire. He commanded a force of small unprotected ships in an attack on a heavily defended port and led H.M.S. *Campbeltown* in under intense fire from short range weapons at point blank range. Though the main object of the expedition had been accomplished in the beaching of *Campbeltown*, he remained on the spot conducting operations, evacuating men from *Campbeltown* and dealing with strong points and close range weapons while exposed to heavy fire for one hour and sixteen minutes, and did not withdraw till it was certain that his ship could be of no use in rescuing any of the Commando Troops who were still ashore. That his Motor Gun Boat, now full of dead and wounded, should have survived and should have been able to withdraw

through an intense barrage of close range fire was almost a miracle.

— Supplement to the London Gazette Of  
*TUESDAY, the 19th of May, 1942*

Ryder remained in the Royal Navy, rising to the rank of Captain before his retirement in 1950. He then entered Parliament, serving for five years as Member from Merton and Morden (C). He died in 1986 while on a sailing trip to France. Merton is now a district of Greater London; but to a sailor, it would be best known for having the home of Lord Nelson and Lady Hamilton. Nelson was from Norfolk too.

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**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 **Franz Künstler** on **May 27, 2008** from complications of intestinal surgery. Born in Soost, then in Hungary, now in Romania, on **July 24, 1900**, Künstler entered the *Honvédség*, the Royal Hungarian Army, in February of 1918, serving on the Italian Front. He was among those expelled from Hungary after the Second World War, obtaining German citizenship in 1946. He was the last surviving soldier of the Central Powers.

**John Henry Foster Babcock**, last surviving Canadian veteran of World War I, has been granted Canadian citizenship after a request to the Canadian government. The government have already approved a state funeral for the last surviving Canadian veteran (i.e., Babcock).

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 (109) Womens' Royal Air Force
- Finland**  
Aarne Armas Arvonen\* (110) Red Guards
- Italy**  
Delfino Borroni (109) Royal Italian Army  
Francesco Domenico Chiarello (109) Royal Italian Army
- Poland**  
Józef Kowalski\* (108) Polish Army
- United Kingdom**  
Henry William Allingham (112) Royal Naval Air Service/Royal Air Force  
Henry John "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 Foster Babcock (107) 146<sup>th</sup> Battalion, Canadian Expeditionary Force  
Frank Woodruff Buckles (107) United

States Army  
Robley Henry Rex\* (107) 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, Canada 1 each; Finland, Poland, 1 WWI-era each. British Empire 8+1. 10+4 men, 1 woman.

**Robley Rex** received a special Governor's Award for his Hundred and Seventh birthday.

On **June 1, 2008**, various veterans' organizations held a service at the River Valley Cemetery in Louisville, honoring the twenty-nine indigent veterans who had been buried there. A large contingent from the Patriot Guard Riders (biker veterans who attend veterans' funerals to honor the dead) was present, as were the Veterans Honor Guard.

The Missing in America Project, one of the inspirers of the ceremony, is a private organization dedicated to finding the graves (or other; some were cremated and the ashes left in cans in storage) of veterans. For information check their website at:

<http://www.miap.us/>

O thirty million English that babble of  
England's might,  
Behold there are twenty heroes who lack  
their food to-night;  
Our children's children are lispng to  
"honour the charge they made —"  
And we leave to the streets and the  
workhouse the charge of the Light  
Brigade!  
— "The Last of the Light Brigade", Rudyard  
Kipling

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**TUNNEL IN THE SKY**

Review by Joseph T Major of  
**THE LAST COLONY**

by John Scalzi

(Tor; 2007;

ISBN 978-0-7653-1697-4; \$23.95)

Sequel to *Old Man's War*

(2005; reviewed in *Alexiad* V. 5 #3) and

*The Ghost Brigades*

(2006; reviewed in *Alexiad* V. 5 #3)

**Hugo Nominee**



You would think there would be something questionable when the colony planet is called “Roanoke”. And they can’t even raise tobacco to compensate.

Scalzi is a better writer than David Weber, because you can read the character names here without your brain seizing up and the planners don’t spend all their time explaining things to each other. I suspect he could do a naval battle better than Weber, too. He does seem to be retreating down the list of Juveniles, which makes me wonder what his take on *Rocket Ship Galileo* will be like.

John Perry (from *Old Man’s War*), Jane Sagan (from *The Ghost Brigades*), and their adopted daughter Zoë are settling down as administrators and family of a new colony. Naturally things go off on a tangent when they get the prospect of pioneering.

Now Rod Walker ended up adding a diversified education to his hard-won field experience, and John has a somewhat more settled background to draw on. Even so, being on Roanoke Colony bothers him.

Then things start going really hairy. The real Roanoke Colony turns out to be somewhat different. Once they get settled in, more considerations impose themselves; there are, it seems, vast power blocs out there, and the Roanoke colony is a tiny pawn in their game. It all sounds reminiscent of what Brin’s *Uplift* series was before it jumped the shark.

The two sides turn ruthless. One of the nicer more decent galactics is at least offering the colony the opportunity to pull up stakes and become expatriates, as compared to the others who offer vaporization. There are lots of hidden surprises in store, for all sides, however, and John has to deal with supporters who are as powerful, devious, and unexpected as are his opponents.

The reader might be annoyed by the constant irruption of unforeseen powers that people keep on deploying. It does reveal a disdain for foreshadowing, recalling Asimov’s stricture on SF mysteries, where he observes that the detective can deploy a new technology that just happens to provide the evidence needed to solve the crime, violating the rules. While it’s reassuring to see everyone get theirs, such surprises weaken the plot.

John, Jane, and Zoë lead a cast of really likeable people. If I have to mention this, it’s because so many SF works of late have specialized in having characters you just don’t care about. And while some of the higher-ups are less than honest, they do show an awareness of the problems and an attempt to actually solve them. Even if some of their justifications are less than totally sound. Thanks to everyone for taking the joint and several wisdom of Rupert Allason, late M.P. for Torbay (C), Professor Sir Martin Gilbert, C.B.E., and the late and sadly missed Professor R. V. Jones, F.R.S. [Page 307].

### GAT HIS YOUTHE AGOON

Review by Joseph T Major of  
**ROLLBACK**

by Robert J. Sawyer  
(Tor; 2007;  
ISBN 978-0-765-34974-3; \$6.99)  
**Hugo Nominee**

“Of JURGEN eke they maken mencioun  
That of an old wyf gat his youthe agoon . . .”  
— *Jurgen: A Comedy of Justice* by James  
Branch Cabell (1919, 1926)

Though in all his arching career that led this son of one of the heroes of of dom Manuel’s Fellowship of the Silver Stallion from pawnbrokerage through monarchy to sitting on the very throne of God, he never had to deal with anyone unrelated to Earth. Figures. However, with his skill at delivering riddles that needed to be unriddled, this monstrous clever fellow might be called upon in this case of alien communication.

Well, perhaps not. If Jurgen were told:

***Ha Inq Hb: ? x 2x=5***

he might find even that too recondite for such a monstrous clever fellow as himself to resolve.

[The answer is: *Hb Inq Ha: 5/2*  
*Ha Inq Hb: Ben*]

Sarah Halifax is in a situation where she could use Lincos (the language that message is in), Cosmic OS, or even more advanced forms of communication. In 2009 a message was received from Sigma Draconis. She deciphered it and sent a reply. That was replied to, arriving at Earth in 2047.

However, Sarah was already of an age when she first answered the message, which means that by 2047, she is even more elderly. But there is an answer; she can get a Rollback, a rejuvenation process, a fiercely expensive one. (Gad, imagine The Donald suddenly twenty-five again!) They give it to her.

However, while she had kindly asked that her husband Don get it too, one little problem emerged. Hers didn’t work. And his did.

The subsequent plot works on a two-track progression, chapters set at the time of the original message alternating with chapters set at the time of the reception. (There are ways this could be made clearer, such as dating every chapter. As a result of this omission, one reviewer criticized the book for a lack of extrapolation, pointing to a character’s annoyance at opening an email with a large pdf file, saying that this wouldn’t be any problem in 2047. But the chapter in question is set in 2009.)

The 2009 chapters are almost perfunctory, as if First Contact would be a trivial thing. Allusions to others seeking to respond float over the Halifaxes’s horizon, as it were. At least Sawyer has spared us “Satan beguiles us with temptations from space” comments, which given the level of Canadian opinion, wouldn’t be all that unexpected to have coming from down south of there.

The message itself is a curious one. Once it gets past the “*Ha Inq Hb*” part, the basic explanations of its language, it turns out to be a questionnaire on various moral principles. Now

“lifeboat” situations were (and for all I know still are) the bane of what passes for moral education as passed down by value-neutral educators. (My observation is that determining who gets voted off the island, er boat, doesn’t do much good in getting the little brats not to do some happy slapping just cuz they wuz bored.) There is some concern that if we don’t give the right answers, Remulak MoxArgon, the Overlord of the Ultra-Galactic Empire, or whomever, is going to get out the proton beams and come down to get us.

Since Mother Sereda is not going to take away Don Halifax’s new youth, he is going to have to make certain accommodations. Then he finds that combining the wisdom of age (“There’s no fool like an old fool; you can’t beat experience.”) with the vigor of youth leads to various predicaments. As when he finds out that May — December relationships have physical concerns when she’s December. And then he gets into yet a different entanglement.

Sarah, meanwhile, needs to channel Elizabeth Smith Friedman, for the message from Sigma Draconis is encrypted. Their concerns that the moral questionnaire was a “Are You Qualified to Join the Galactic Federation” don’t seem to have been the case, the Patrol is not coming to slag Earth. In fact, it turns out they are playing strictly according to Hoyle; the message, once decrypted, is instructions for building an artificial womb and filling it. It’s as easy as *A for Andromeda* (1962).

But then more complications, personal and corporate, ensue, and before long Don has to endure a great deal . . .

Sawyer writes from a Canadocentric perspective. Since the idea of SF is to explore strange new worlds, to seek out new life and new civilizations (or even a decadent old one), er, it’s refreshing to see that different view. He is perhaps a bit too optimistic regarding certain trends in Canadian society and government.

As with so many works, the focus gets too narrow. Would it be just Don and the guy who paid for the whole thing mixing it up over raising the new Draconian?

Sawyer’s handling of the human scale of the story, the painful loss and new birth that is involved, brings the reader into the story. Love is nothing if it can’t bring heartbreak.

Oh, the Lincos message?

*Ha* says to *Hb*: What is the  $x$   
such that  $2x = 5$ ?

*Hb* says to *Ha*:  $5/2$ .

*Ha* says to *Hb*: Good.

Has *Ha* read this book yet?

### O PRÊMIO DE PERIGO

Review by Joseph T Major of  
**BRASYL**

by Ian McDonald

(Pyr; 2007; ISBN 978-1-59102-543-6;  
\$25.00)

**Hugo Nominee**



On the 151<sup>st</sup> day of my quest, I found the Wizard of Bling.

“Yo, sup.”

I told him that to reach the mountain citadel, I needed a wizard who could fly. It was said he possessed that power.

“Naw, dawg. I only **look** fly, know’m sayin’?”

I was deeply discouraged. But then, my horse suddenly whinnied. It began to bounce up and down rhythmically. It grew wings, and its teeth turned to silver and diamond!

“Cracka has no idea m’bouta pimp his ride.”

— Robert T. Balder, PartiallyClips “Wizard of Bling” (2008):  
<http://www.partiallyclips.com>

Robert Sheckley’s story “The Prize of Peril” (*F&SF*, May 1958) is apparently the first appearance of the concept of reality TV. But even then, Jim Raeder, the very desperate contestant, was not the criminal, only the target. Not to mention their own nascent quiz-show scandal . . .

And so this starts with a thrilling story of a reality show on the basis of if the randomly self-chosen contestants can keep their stolen car for a half-hour, it’s theirs. Then it precipitately jumps to a Cyberpunk Kid in the gritty underworld, facing the other gangbangers with their quantum knives, trying to get quantum computers. After which it flashes back to an Irish Jesuit swordfighter and a mysterious Frenchman surveying the wilds of the Amazon.

Eventually some sort of plot emerges, as best as can be told amid the interjumpings from one thread to the other. None of the characters really seemed to bond (at least so it seemed to me, not the way we learned that Jim Raeder was playing a role in a sham, and we felt for him). Much of the action seemed random, at best.

This is meant to be a story of an exotic culture, in the real world and exotically different, the way McDonald did in the Hugo-nominated *River of Gods* (2004). Yet somehow it doesn’t quite come across, as if he had the words but not the tune.

### THE YIDDISH POLICEMEN’S UNION

by Michael Chabon

(HarperCollins; 2007;

ISBN 978-0-00-714982-7; \$26.95)

**Hugo Nominee; Sidewise Award Nominee; Nebula Award Winner**

#### AMENDMENT XIV

**Section 1.** All persons born or naturalized in the United States and subject to the jurisdiction thereof, are citizens of the United State and of the state wherein they reside. . .

In Michael Chabon’s world, the quixotic campaign for President of the United States of America by journalist and politician Alexander Boris de Pfeffel Johnson (born NYC June 19, 1964) will never happen. Instead, after the horrors of the Nazi massacres (over two million killed!) and the collapse and conquest of the short-lived State of Israel, the last refuge for the Jews was the Sitka Enclave in Alaska, established in 1948.

It has become a paradise of *Yiddishkeit*, but now it is about to come to an end, and the Jews will be cast out to wander the world again. You see, just because they were born in the United States, that doesn’t make them citizens. Presumably, though Mayor Boris was born in the USA, born in the USA, in this world he won’t be a US citizen either.

Meyer Landsman, detective in the on-notice Jewish police force of Sitka, finds himself dragged into a mysterious crime, the suicide or was it murder of a man who once had had as promising a life as a hereditary rebbe as he had had as a chess master, but threw them both away. Which leads Landsman into depths of moral murkiness, international intrigue, and sheer terror.

In short, the typical “I love/hate Yiddishkeit” novel popular with New York literari, crossed with the noir detective novel. The arts of the authors who write with immense loathing and immense attention to detail about that life of the immigrant community combining with those hacks who knock out yet another tale of the alcoholic cop surrounded by corruption and crime, investigating yet another gross offense against the law even though nothing matters and no one cares, that is.

Chabon doesn’t like these people. The principal conspirator, a Chasidic rabbi, is a gross glandular freak; all he needs is “VILLAIN” (in Yiddish, of course) tattooed across his forehead to make it complete, except then there would always be the possibility that Meyer could foil the villains’ fiendish plot by obliterating one letter from the word. And the other Jews are no better. Oh I forgot to mention those other bad guys in the background, those Christian fundamentalists who want the Jews to go back to Israel.

Somehow, as with Martin Gidron’s Sidewise Award winning *The Severed Wing* (2000; reviewed in *Alexiad* V. 2 #2), there is a straddle of nostalgia and contemporary politics. Without the Original Sin of the founding of Israel, the Jewish people might be pure and untouched by

evil, working out their Yiddish-speaking, forever rootless destiny. The dream of the Jewish Labor Bund (which imagined a worldwide socialist state, with a separate-but-equal Jewish community of parallel organizations speaking the national language of the Jewish people, Yiddish, and I wonder how they would explain that to the Sepharadim of Greece or Baghdad?) come to pass, in a sense. Now that the malicious hatred of Israel for the crime of succeeding has become the progressive paradigm, this sort of thought is bound to look better in the right circles.

Not only that, there don’t seem to be any native Jewish organizations in the U.S. There is an “ourselves alone” attitude in the Sitka Enclave. One might well think that they find familiar the situation in the backstory of Robert Ferrigno’s *Prayers for the Assassin* (2006; discussed in *Alexiad* V. 5 #4), where the only acknowledged Jews left in the world are on a ship that sails from port to port, forbidden to make landfall. “*The Flying Landsman*”?

Chabon has cleansed genre cliches to make them suitable for literature, most notably in *The Amazing Adventures of Kavalier and Clay* (2000), which made the history of comics fit for literature professors to read. He conveys the attitude that this is something childish, done by people he is superior to. And so, by plugging the cliches of detective fiction into those of alternate history, he has made a pretty picture for award days. Oh, look, a literary novel (written in present tense, oooh, isn’t that so transgressive!) by a literary author who doesn’t sneer at us!

#### DARK HORSE

Review by Joseph T Major of

**ELEANOR VS. IKE**

by Robin Gerber

(Avon/HarperCollins; 2008;

ISBN 978-0-06-137321-3; \$13.95)

. . . “Vilaine,” Dr. King said to the little boy. “That’s an unusual name. A family friend?”

“No,” the little Obama boy said. “I’m named after the first African to climb Mount Everest!”

“The registrar spelled it ‘Hussein,’” the white woman who evidently was the boy’s mother said. “These bigots. We have to go see the Doctor now, Barack. Come along. It’s been a pleasure to meet you, Dr. King.”

As the two of them turned and left, the little boy said, “Can I play with K-9 again?”

— Not in *King vs. Nixon vs. Wallace*

In 1972, Democratic Presidential candidate George McGovern found out as one of the many embarrassments of the campaign that his vetting process had not been sufficiently thorough. The ignominious burden of the Eagleton affair demonstrated that Nixon’s paranoia-fueled campaign illegalities had been superfluous.

Also that year, political novelist Fletcher Knebel, coauthor of *Seven Days In May* (1962),



#### THE SEVERED WING

Review by Joseph T Major of

fortuitously took up a similar circumstance. *Dark Horse* (1972) is the story of a catastrophic event in a campaign, and the startling response. When their presidential candidate dies just twenty-two days before the election, the party needs someone at the head of the ticket. As none of the other leading candidates is both available and suitable, the party leadership picks a promising but low-level official — Eddie Quinn, a New Jersey highway commissioner, albeit destined for higher things, and this way he'll get some name recognition for the future. Quinn, rather a colorful character, proceeds to run an independent-minded, very off-the-wall campaign, grabbing attention in the brief period before the election. (As for his personal life, let's just say that it's probably a good thing he doesn't have to worry about blue dresses.) Then things get really strange . . .

In the time twenty years before all this, political writer Robin Gerber, author of *Leadership the Eleanor Roosevelt Way* (2002), has set a story of a different kind of "dark horse". That year, America was bogged down in an unpopular foreign war, riven with internal security concerns, and going through a strenuous campaign to replace a no longer popular President.

Our heroine, though, is busy being active in her own interests, trying to participate in Democratic (and even democratic) politics as keeper of her spousal legacy. Then, just as she is ready to lend her part to the ticket, to be among the supporters of Adlai Ewing Stevenson (for what it's worth, grandson of a Christian Countian), a very unanticipated event eventuates; he drops dead going up to the podium to give his acceptance speech.

Everybody was all fired up to hail Adlai. So now what do they do, now that he's dead? The party needs some Leadership the Eleanor Roosevelt Way — and she accepts. (Of the other major candidates, Estes Kefauver had won primaries but was not in the favor of party leaders, Richard Russell was too much of a segregationist, and Averill Harriman was Truman's choice but almost no one else's. Still, Gerber does seem to be reaching.)

Gerber's portrayal has a very peculiar gap at its heart. She has put a lot of effort in recreating the attitudes of the fifties. It was not as single-mindedly oppressively children-kitchen-church as modern writers would have it; it did have attitudes that were appallingly cruel. The guy who gives Eleanor the opportunity to emulate her uncle, for example.

She has a great affection for and knowledge of Anna Eleanor Roosevelt Roosevelt. (Yes, it was her maiden name too; I said she was Teddy's niece.) As a result, it seems Eleanor can do no wrong, while her opponents indulge in all sorts of dirty tricks. Mind you, this was the woman who did her best to link her cousin Ted, Jr. to the Teapot Dome scandal, and then when he won the Medal of Honor on Utah Beach, and died, she was so maudlin. An Eleanor character who was as forceful and scheming as that would be a more complex and interesting character. The characterization ends up rather like that of Bobby Kennedy in

Mitchell Friedmann's *A Disturbance of Fate* (2002, 2003; reviewed in *Alexiad* V. 2 #5), too saintly to be of this Earth.

(One notes the encounter between Mrs. Roosevelt and a very young fan [Pages 102-103]. Of course.)

The climax of the campaign is again a reminder that some things have changed very much and others not at all. This election may not have had hanging chads or hacked voting machines, but it still highlights the features of the electoral college . . .

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### TERRA NULLUS

Review by Joseph T Major of

#### OPENING ATLANTIS

by Harry Turtledove

(RoC; 2008;

ISBN 978-0-451-46172-2; \$24.95)

The oarsmen lifted their oars in perfect sequence and the boat grounded. The bold explorer Captain Bernhard Rogge stepped over the prow, planted the Dannebrog in the soil of the new world, and said, "In this year of grace MCCCCLII, I claim this land in the name of King Christian, by the Grace of God King of Denmark, Sweden, Norway, the Wends and the Goths, Duke of Schleswig, Holstein, Stormarn, and Dithmarschen, Count of Oldenburg and Delmenhorst."

From the stern of the boat, Lieutenant Mohr said, "What shall we call the land? And the new settlement?" He looked eager to search for ores, so he could blow something up.

"We shall name the settlement after our ship, of course, and the land itself after our gracious king, or as grandmother used to say, der Alter Kocker."

Naturally the clerks in København got it backwards . . .

For what it's worth (probably about 2*d*), I'm descended from Sir Thomas Hoo [Pages 33-35]; it's the line that runs through Sir Thomas Wyatt the rebel down to Isaac Garrott (Elizabeth Garrott's ancestor, duh!) and thence to me.

For a change, Turtledove has begun with alternate geography, or introducing a tectonic plate that runs down the line of our world's Appalachians. (Hey, a Harlan County where they can have labor-management shootouts at the beach!) Thus, Atlantis bears a surprising resemblance to the American Atlantic coast, but it lies in the vicinity of our world's Mid-Atlantic Ridge, which means it can be reached a bit earlier than whatever this Genoese or whatever named Colom is thinking. Yet, it's far south enough that Ottar, Barney Hendrickson, and the production crew with *The Technicolor® Time Machine* (by Harry Harrison, 1967) could land at L'Anse aux Meadows and not notice.

Edward Radcliffe, fisherman of Hastings in England, has a chance encounter with some Bretons in the year of grace 1451, who tell him of this strange land out in the Atlantic, with all

kinds of giant and unusual birds (the moa the merrier), but no people. Yet. He takes a look-see and decides here's the place to be.

His overlord, 17x great-grandpa, evidently not having heard of the wonderful success Sir Roger de Tourneville up in Lincolnshire had had when he went off on *The High Crusade* (by Poul Anderson, 1960), is not particularly thrilled with the idea, but doesn't block Edward and his people.

What follows is a generational saga akin to John Masters's stories of the Savage family in India, as one generation after another of the Radcliffes (in divers spellings) deals with the unusual problems, both human and other, of this great land in the middle of the Ocean. Edward, for example, has to deal with the problem of a spillover of the Wars of the Roses, or how to fight a bear and ragged staff in this new world.

The next section deals with the struggles of his descendants; William Radcliff the merchant and Red Rodney Radcliffe the pirate. As if the settled New York merchants had to deal with the wild men of Port Royal. And then there's Rodney's daughter, and the destiny of Ethel the pirate's daughter is one to put Shakespeare in love with the paths of its fate. As they said in the original, **bortaS blr jablu'DI' reH QaQqu' nay'** ["Revenge is a dish best served cold."]

The third and final section (at least in this volume) has the conflict in Europe spill over to Atlantis. Victor Radcliff finds himself a colonial officer, learning the adequacies and lacks of the chaps from Blighty, and they in return figuring out how to deal with a strange new world. Facing him is Roland Kersauzon of *Atlantis française*, a descendant of the original Breton who told Edward Radcliffe about a place where you could *Salt* (2002) down *Cod* (1997) (by Mark Kurlansky) and find some tres grande birds, and the family regretted it ever since. They fight out their war amid the strains of slavery, the problems of being a colonial, and the constraints of conflict, until a very bad end comes to pass for some.

In this saga, Turtledove demonstrates the expansion (some might doubt that "advance" is quite the proper phrase) of civilization, as the wild country, with exotic beasts, is overrun by adventitious flora and fauna, followed by adventurous human settlers. The progress of this community is due to go on, of course, considering that "Audubon in Atlantis" (*Analog*, December 2005) and "The Scarlet Band" (*Analog*, May 2006) are not included, and indeed the publisher has announced *The United States of Atlantis* for this December, so this story is indeed . . . **[To Be Continued]**

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### THE STEEL BONNETS

Review by Joseph T Major of

#### THE REAVERS

by George MacDonald Fraser

(Alfred A. Knopf; 2007;

ISBN 978-0-307-26810-5; \$24.00)

. . . he chuckled malevolently, "he will alter the county boundaries, then decimalise the currency, make them

drink beer by the litre, introduce comprehensive education, bring in hordes of asylum-seekers, subvert the heretic Church of England with gospel singers, undermine the national diet with garlic and peppers, cause psychedelic music to be played in their pubs, dribble away their sovereignty to foreign powers, and even" his voice sank to a grating whisper, "install a baseball diamond at Lord's." A gasp of awe-struck amazement greeted this diabolic proposal. "The fibre of the English will be shredded to tatters! They won't know who they are, even!..."

— *The Reavers*, Page 58

As you have noticed, the long twilight struggle has resulted in the victory of the villains in this epic saga. Nevertheless, something worthy of note could come to pass ere the final triumph of the Shadow, and so this tale endures.

Er... once upon a time, there was a Private Fraser, G.M. in the Border Regiment, as could be noted from his *Quartered Safe Out Here* (1992). Noting the source of his mates, this displaced Scotsman (who eventually fled to the Gordons, producing as a result *The General Danced at Dawn* (1970), *McAuslan in the Rough* (1974), and *The Sheikh and the Dustbin* (1988), three stumbling-blocks to *Starship Troopers* (1959; NHOL G.140a) but that's another story) learned summat abah the history of that district, and produced a history (*The Steel Bonnets: The Story of the Anglo-Scottish Border Reivers* (1971)) and a novel (*The Candlemass Road* (1993)) concerning the place.

He turned to other things, including a bunch of Mary Sue-ish fan fiction, well, in a sense, but also *The Pyrates* (1983), an example of what happens when you learn history thoroughly and then stir in whatever you please without any concern for consistency, anachronism, sense, or plausibility. Not that readers notice this, because they are too busy laughing and enjoying the book.

So, Fraser decided to do it again, this time for that wild and uncouth division of England and Scotland. (Speaking of Mary Sue, I'm quite certain the Border Reivers would have just loved the Christian Army from Leo Frankowski's "Conrad Stargard" works, particularly the bit where they get a five-mile wide strip along the borders between nations; och, mair *foreigners* tae plunder.) The social dynamics of the Border are fascinating, in a fashion that is best observed at a decent distance. The folk of the Border were quite law-abiding. It was just that the laws they abided by were rather different to the laws most of the rest of the land, if not the world itself, thought were proper.

In *The Pyrates*, Fraser had the cliches of pirate movies to draw on. Here he has to make do. So we have stolid, bold, capable English secret agent Archie Noble, Bonny Gilderoy the dashing, gallant Scots reiver with a heart of gold, the "wilful, headstrong, passionate, and proud to busting" [Page 25] beautiful Lady

Godiva Dacre, and her loyal, charming, subordinate companion Mistress Kylie [not Gaby Kylie, sigh], along with a comic lot of Borderers, facing the devilishly beautiful La Infamosa and her gang of Spanish agents, Scots traitors (couldna any of them hae been Macleans?), and the preposterous Nixon (yes, that was a real Border name) clan.

Indeed, Fraser even begins this with a historical retrospective remarkably like that in *The Pyrates*, just to show off his style; he learns everything about the era, then throws in anachronisms (Lady Godiva's Van Cleef baubles, or Archie's issue SAS cloak) and views it with the sardonic realism of the Absurdity of It All.

Outrageous wit, blatant anachronisms, insidious fourth-wall shattering, out-and-out nonsense, and side-splitting humour await. What ho, it's off for the Border we go!

### GIVE ME A DOUBLE

Review by Joseph T Major of

#### SHOOTING STAR

(1958) and

#### SPIDERWEB

(1954) by Robert Bloch

(Hard Case Crime; 2008;

ISBN 978-0-9439-5960-4; \$7.99)



This back-to-back pair of short novels gives the reader some interesting pictures. I mean, besides the covers, which feature lush women not quite as in the text.

Bloch was under some interesting constraints here. These are mystery thrillers, the sort where there is another one coming out next week, going speedily from writer to publisher to newsstand to dump. At the same time, Bloch couldn't quit being insightful; he saw that evil was human.

As in *Spiderweb*, which tells the story of a psychological counselor. What makes it interesting is that the counselor, the narrator, is actually a front man, a good-looking but failed actor hired to do work in the borderland between psychics and psychiatrists. *Without a Clue* (1988) for the pop-psy era, that is.

There are the makings of a really deep work here, touching on the painful intricacies of the human condition, the faddish ways of Hollywood, and the way by which the weaknesses of the rich and gullible can be exploited. Sadly, this work wasn't meant for that audience; but the traces of it combine with

a vicious blackmail scheme that works to a dramatic finish...

The front half, *Shooting Star*, features an unlikely detective; because he's a literary agent. This agent turns out to have unexpected depths and darknesses, and is in a circumstance where getting his ten percent (it was only ten percent in those days) seems to entail getting beaten up a lot. Does he think he's Jim Rockford?

Namely, what happens when actors start getting shot? The connection turns out to be one for getting pot, and this gives the modern reader an insight into the drug culture. (Nowadays it'd be cocaine, and then what?) Along the way there are some painful insights into self-image, doubt, guilt, and the like... I ended up thinking that Bloch was writing above his target market, as it were.

(There is one neat joke about "the top producer in Hollywood" (Page 64), one who has lavish props, huge and grateful audiences, etc. etc.; his name is "Hamilton Brackett". As in Edmund and Leigh, and if you don't know who they are write and let me know before Captain Future blocks that kick or the Empire strikes back. While N. K. Stouffer fans, provided there ever were any, would note with pain that all the stoners are busily buying and smoking "muggles". "But that's not like in the Potter books!" Neither were hers.)

### THE LEGATE'S BATTLE

Commentary by Joseph T Major on

#### EAGLE IN THE SNOW

by Wallace Broom (1970)

This has a General Maximus fighting for Rome in Germany. And I've now listed all it has in common with the movie *Gladiator* (2000) [which was instead a remake of *The Fall of the Roman Empire* (1964) and it didn't even have Sophia Loren!].

Wallace Broom was an officer in the British Indian Army. I suppose that gave him the background to write about the decline and fall of an empire. (I reviewed one of his other books, *The Legate's Daughter* (1974) in *Alexiad* V. 4 #4.) He only wrote one other book before he died in 1990; our loss.

The theme is of a nation that has lost itself. Local commanders grasp at the Purple even though their chances of success are nil and their fate certain. At the center of things, powerless boys given the style of Augustus and the radiate crown of Domitian give pretext for the rule of Germanic commanders, leading men barely one generation themselves away from tribal living. They preside over a government where everyone squirrels away money for himself and clings to power in his domain; while outside those without press constantly.

The army is ruined; it has had a great hole torn in it (See Alessandro Barbero's *9 Agosto 378: il Giorno dei Barbari* [Day of the Barbarians] (2005, 2007; reviewed in *Alexiad* V. 6 #5 for the story of how this came to pass) and must patch the rent with mercenaries, barbarians with no allegiance save to their own leaders. The latest of those commanders, Flavius Stilicho (and yet if you'd asked him, he



would have called himself all Roman, and rightly so), here takes a step to repair the rent; he tasks a subordinate with restoring the old ways.

The legion described is not quite the old one of Vorenus and Pullo. For one thing, its men are archers and mounted infantry as well. (Presumably Broom read the *De re militari* of Vegetius, which likely was written about half a century after the events of this novel; it proposes some of the elements of such an army.) And, for *Operation Chaos* fans, or those who found a copy of Ruth Downie's *Medicus* (2006; reviewed in *Alexiad* V. 6 #6), the legion in question is *legio XX Valeria Victrix*.

But the story is of its general, Paulinus Gaius Maximus. Who begins with a very large obstacle to advancement; he is a Mithraist. Indeed, Maximus is quite openly scornful of Christians and Christianity; which is why he is posted to the back end of nowhere, along Hadrian's Wall in the north of Britannia. The acting centurion Iunio who took a very long trip (in *Have Space Suit — Will Travel* (1958; NHOL G.136)) out of the Empire now lies to the north, his grave now in the again-barbarian lands.

The establishing-sequence is brief. Maximus has and loses a wife; he does not go into the details but for all that he dismisses her (she was a Christian) it is clear that the loss scarred him emotionally. Just as he loses a friend, who plots treason and is exiled.

Indeed, there is much grasping for the purple. Constantinus of Britain, for example, greedy for power and unconcerned for government. (The story of the rise and fall of Constantinus and others of the trumpety Augusti of Britain is presented in Alfred Duggan's *The Little Emperors* (1951), a story of more sordid deeds than those recounted here.)

It is with some relief that Maximus is ordered to Italy. And then, after several years of campaigning against the Vandals (slighted in the book), he is ordered to hold the lower Rhine at Moguntiacum.

The bulk of this novel is, then, the story of that campaign. It is the year AUC MCLIX. Looking back, we call it AD 406. Maximus can rely on his own men; it's the others outside that fail him. The bureaucracy is pointlessly but self-affirmingly paper shuffling. Other commanders have other demands on their services, some of them for real. The civilians are supportive, or not, to various degrees.

As I said, Maximus is an outsider, a Mithraist in a Christian world, and one of the people he has to deal with is the Bishop of Treverorum. It would have been easy, particularly today, to have presented him as a bigot denouncing this pagan, or particularly back then, as an evangelist seeking to save his soul. Bishop Mauritius is neither; he is a firm believer in his God, and doesn't have to burn or coerce.

Thus, with his unit, and whatever local units there are, Maximus and his subordinates (such as his old comrade Quintus, another Mithraist from the Wall days) have to hold back the German horde. The story here turns to a

melancholic tale of decline, limned by images of withdrawal and loss, and in the end encompassed by cold, for the desperate German tribes cross the Rhene when it freezes, on the last day of 406. This is followed by a grim story of battle, of prolonged last stands without even the prospect of hope, of suffering without reward or even acknowledgment.

Broom constantly makes the contrast between the few who still believe in a wider span of civilization and the many who see only their own, from the petty bureaucrat who can't hand out more than five supply vouchers at a time all the way up to the trumpety Emperor Constantinus III. The images of loss, and loss on behalf of people who don't even care are particularly painful to read.

There are considerations. The legionary organization described is, while something that could have been done, is not attributed. The one female character who appears on stage (as it were) never has a name.

The last hideous battle, at the end of things, is described in painful images, as the desperate tribes press on and on, seeing triumph beyond the carnage. And then, having somehow survived, maimed, Maximus sees the last dregs of defeat; Gaul plundered and then Rome itself sacked, Stilicho executed in a dirty bit of court intrigue, and the meaningless ways enduring and prevailing. Bereft of even his hope, he returns to the part of Britain whence he came, to clean up the final obligations, to see the ruins where once there had been civilization and tell his story to the last who might care to know. Having finished telling his tale, he is just going outside and may be some time:

"I, also, have a journey to make."

"Where do you go?"

"To the Gods of the Shades."

The tall man nodded. He said, formally, "Then may you live in God."

Maximus bent down and then straightened up, the sword resting in the crook of his arm. He raised his head and turned his eyes upwards to the sun. "What is the end of it all? Smoke and ashes, a handful of bones, and a legend. Perhaps not even a legend."

They watched him go through the broken gate, heard his feet, heavy on the flint strewn path. "He is going to his temple in the woods," said the tall man. "Listen."

There was a long silence, and then a deep voice cried "Mithras!" and the cry echoed back across the hill. And after that the silence went on for ever.

#### DIS MANIBUS

P GAIUS MAXIMO FILIO CLAUDII ARELATICI  
PRAEFECTUS I COH TUNG LEG XX VAL VIC  
DUX MOGUNTIANCENSIS COMES GALLIARUM  
ANN LVIII CCCC ET Q VERONIO PRAEFECTUS  
ALAE PETRAE PRAEFECTUS II COH ASTUR  
MAGISTER EQUITUM GERMANAE SUPER ANN  
LVI CECIDIT BELLO RHENO CCCCVII  
SATURNIUS AMICUS FECIT  
— *Eagle in the Snow*, Pages 316-317

[To the Gods of the Shades: Paulinus Gaius Maximus, son of Claudius of Arles, Prefect of the First Cohort of Tungrians, Legate of [Legion] XX Valeria Victrix, Duke of Mainz, Count of the Gauls, aged 57, [died in] 410, and Quintus Veronius, Prefect of the Petrean Ala, Prefect of the Second Cohort of Asturians, Master of the Horse of [the Province of] Upper Germany, aged 56, [died in] the Battle of the Rhine in 407. Saturnius their friend made this.]

If you wanted to describe the Dark Ages, it seems to me that there you have it: "And after that the silence went on for ever."

#### FROM THE NORTH TO THE NORTH

Commentary by Joseph T Major on  
*UNKNOWN SHORE:*

*The Lost History of England's Arctic Colony*  
by Robert Ruby

(Henry Holt and Company; 2001;  
ISBN 0-8050-5214-3; \$15.00)

Given that Scalzi is working backwards, it seems to me that John Perry and Jane Sagan, in the sequel to John Scalzi's *The Lost Colony* (2007) will colonize a cold planet named "Kodlunarn".

The first English attempt at a colony in the New World was not the Roanoke Colony. The first colony preceeded that by eight years, and was in an area that lacked tobacco, and indeed any agriculture whatsoever. It did, however, have gold. At least they thought it had gold.

Sir Martin Frobisher was an example of upward mobility, being from a wide place in the path called Altofts in Yorkshire. (The Frobisher family has a large and thorough genealogy, tracing their ancestry back to the thirteenth century, showing the family as having come from Scotland.)

He was one of those who was searching for the Northwest Passage. Exploring in the frigid seas of the Davis Straits, he came across an island with black rock that sparkled with golden flecks. The prospect of having gold in the morning concentrates men's thoughts wonderfully, and on his return, Frobisher couldn't stop the applications.

The return was marked by massive mining operations, tons of ore were loaded upon the ships. They had built the foundations for a colony, but some of the ships with the equipment had gone missing, so they had to give up the colony for the winter and go home, to untold wealth and ease.

Except, of course, that the gold ore turned out to be hornblende, with little flecks of mica in the black rock, and less gold than could be found in a rock picked up at random. So they never went back to the island called Kodlunarn.

Frobisher went on to be a squadron commander in the Battle of the Armada (an interesting situation; Lord Howard and Drake developed their squadron organization during a pause in the battle). He died after yet another raid on Spain.

Three centuries later, someone from a more successful colony came by. Charles Francis

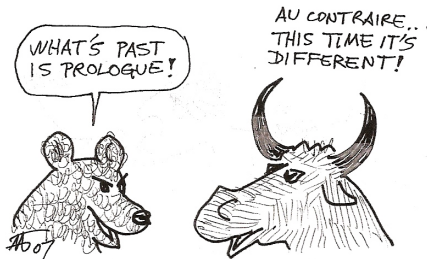
Hall of Cincinnati, Ohio was more interested in finding Sir John Franklin, and yet he did manage to poke around and find a little about Frobisher. The Inuit still had stories about their encounter. Hall went on to break new ground, including being apparently the first expedition leader murdered in Greenland.

Ruby himself investigated the remnants of Frobisher's colony on the tiny island of Kodlunarn in Nunavut, finding such strange things as ballast weights that had originally come from Russia and kegs of rations buried against the next time. One thinks his search could have been a little more careful. He also found out what happened to some of the more foolish than fools' gold ore.

The book is written in a haphazard pattern, jumping from one era to another without notice. At least he tells each individual story in a straightforward way.

### STALKING THE TERRORIST WITH GUN AND CAMERA

Review by Joseph T Major of  
**HUNTING THE AMERICAN TERRORIST:  
The FBI's War on Homegrown Terror**  
by Terry Turchie and Kathleen Puckett  
(History Publishing Company; 2007;  
ISBN 978-193390934-9; \$24.95)



This book is a first-hand observation by two of the FBI's agents tasked with investigating two of the most notorious crimes of the period, the search for the Unabomber and the search for the Centennial Park bomber. Now the FBI has taken a "broken-window" attitude towards crime, focusing on notorious high-profile crimes as opposed to, for example, large-scale white-collar crime. (Like the PartiallyClips cartoon where the bank clerk patiently explains to Billy the Kid that he himself had embezzled more money from the bank that month than the Kid had stolen in that one robbery, without worrying about the prospect of encounters with the gallows: "I ain't never been paradigm-shifted like this." "The Dalton gang actually cried." (Robert T. Balder, Partially Clips, "Billy the Kid" (March 10, 2002)).) Seeing flamboyant crimes go unpunished does erode respect for the law, and allowing bombers to strike where they please threatens security.

The authors, for all their institutional pride and demonstrated efficiency, and a meticulous description of an organization relatively free of bureaucratic sclerosis, were too honest and

straightforward. Reading this book left me with several observations on the efficacy of American law enforcement.

**Profiling has failed of its promise, miserably so.** The vaunted values of psychological profiling promised quick and easy solutions to mysterious crimes. At first, it worked. Yet, in just the cases here, they erred, grossly. The authors themselves quote the profile of the Unabomber, which identified him as a high-school graduate with perhaps some college or trade-school education, who lived in Chicago. Profiling also identified the Centennial Park bomber as a man living with his family who was a law-enforcement groupie, thus enabling them to target Richard Jewell quickly.

Theodore John Kaczynski, Ph.D. and Eric Robert Rudolph no doubt got an ego-boost from these conclusions. Later on, of course, profilers assured law enforcement that the Beltway Sniper was a white man, acting alone. John Allen Muhammad and Lee Boyd Malvo gained a security from that description almost as great as that gained from the exhaustive search for the famous white van. Like many in the psychological professions, too many profilers seem to have a one-size-fits-all diagnosis. There's no established curriculum or quality control in that field.

**Mobility and low profiles favor the criminal, again.** The famous gangs of the American West, from the James Gang to the Hole-in-the-Wall Gang, operated with high mobility across multiple jurisdictions (they rode horseback across state, territorial, and county lines, that is). The famous gangsters of the nineteen-thirties did so in automobiles. (Clyde Barrow made an endorsement of the Ford V-8 for its mechanical reliability and quality of driving.) Each group was eventually denied its mobility by advancing technology, the telegraph and then the telephone and radio.

Both cases here had men who lived in the back country and traveled anonymously. In spite of the vigorous effort put into tracking them, neither was caught by that effort. The Search For Unabomber involved tracking down everyone in academia named "Wu" or with the initials "R. V.", simply because of a note found in a bomb. None of this proved effective.

Thousands of police from multiple agencies, not to mention many renowned and highly skilled trackers and wilderness rangers, were dispatched into the wilds of North Carolina to hunt down Eric Rudolph. In the end, he was caught by accident, digging through dumpsters.

**Militias were all talk and no action.** One could find thriller novels where "The Militia" rose in its might against the New World Order, a united, devoted band of patriots defending the American Way against the enemy, or a fanatic fascist force aiming at wiping away the present and bringing back the past. Yet these crimes were committed by people who were loners. For those in groups, talk and the perpetual promise of The Day when they would face The Man was enough. Timothy McVeigh for example (he was on the same cell row with Rudolph and Kaczynski for a while) left militias for just that reason, they were all talk and no

action, he would never get the chance to be Earl Turner. (One suspects this flaccidity would hold true for other revolutionary groups, from *Night of Power* (1985) to *Alongside Night* (1979).)

In short, for all this organization and deployment of skill and technology, the efforts described here were virtually irrelevant to the solution of the crimes in question. Were it not for the fact that criminals are even more inefficient, incompetent, and absurd, there would be problems on a grand scale.

### GUINNESS AD

Commentary by Joseph T Major  
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eXf93CEI4t0>

It is a monochromatic, sparse, barren land of white, across which one small figure treks. The caption says much in little:

Antarctica, 1912

The man walks across rough ice fields, over snowy hillocks, his boots crunching in the snow. He pauses, raises his head to look, and sees a blizzard blowing up. He is caught in it, staggering along in the whirling drift. At one point he falls to his knees, then he pulls himself upright and makes his way into an icy cave, safe for the moment from the storm. He sits on a rock and looks out into the blowing snow. A few flakes float around him, in suggestive threat of what they could do. His face is ravaged, his nose black with frostbite, rime frozen on his beard; his body slumps in exhaustion and despair.

It is February 18, 1912. Thirty-five miles from safety, from their base, two men are depending on this man to bring them rescue. One of the men collapsed with scurvy; the lone traveler and the other man have been dragging him for ten days, ten exhausting miles a day. He lies in his sleeping bag now, knowing that he is in his grave. The man we see has volunteered to travel to the base, alone, with only one day's food to go three days' journey. If he does not reach the base the other two will die.

He looks at the mouth of the cave, into the swirling snow. It begins to turn brown, as if it were beer foam.

And then, without any transition, there is life and color. The man is now standing at the counter of a pub, in a pubkeeper's outfit, serving pints of good Guinness stout. The pub is full of people, singing, calling out, and laughing. The man looks around, somewhat bewildered amid all the exuberant joy, and he sees a dart contest going on, the board beside a calendar that says "January 1927".

For a moment we go outside his perspective, and see the outside of the building. Now we have a name: on the outside in great letters is:

SOUTH  
POLE  
INN

and over the door a man's name:

TOM CREAN

Someone comes in, ordering two pints, the order gets rung up and served, and the man picks up his pint to take a drink as the singers sing even more exuberantly. Snowflakes begin to swirl around him as he drinks, repeating, "Two . . ."

And then with a snap he is back in the cave, in black and white. There's no place like home but Dorothy would find this worse than the tornado. The man staggers to his feet, singing the song the singers were performing, slowly at first, then with more energy. He strides bravely out into the storm again, and below the figure on the screen more words appear:

Tom Crean  
Explorer 1901 - 1920

The bottom line fades out and is replaced by:

Publican 1927 - 1938

Crean marches proudly along in the storm, singing about the Kerry Dancing, as a word appears on the screen:

**BELIEVE**

(with the "V" replaced by the Guinness harp.)

There is nothing to indicate that Crean had the Sight while heading to the Ross Island base to find help but then he didn't every say much about himself. It does make for a good tale, does it now?

Crean reached the hut on Ross Island after a march of eighteen hours nonstop. The expedition's physician went out with a dog team and found William Lashly and Lieutenant Edward Evans, the man dying of scurvy. In a pointed reminder of what had gone wrong, they reached the hut again in three hours. To the south, Captain Scott had just buried Petty Officer Evans, and had himself only about a month and ten days to live.

Edward Evans rose to the rank of Vice-Admiral in the Royal Navy; he carried out one of the last boarding operations in naval history during the First World War on the destroyer HMS Broke; he was made a peer in 1947 as Baron Mountevans of Chelsea; and he always remembered, admired, and honored Lashly and Crean.

Crean himself went on the

Imperial Trans-Antarctic Expedition with Sir Ernest Shackleton. In 1916, after sailing from their marginal repose on Elephant Island, he crossed South Georgia Island with Shackleton and Frank Worsley. The island had never been crossed before; it has never again been crossed so rapidly. After retiring from the Navy he fulfilled his dream and opened a public house in his home town. He is buried there.

The South Pole Inn still exists, in Anascaul, County Kerry, Ireland.

**MEMORIES YET BROWN**

by Joe

It was the summer of 1965. I was in the Rexall (I think it was a Rexall) drugstore out on the Versailles Road in Frankfort. Looking for new books, I find a big fat thick one in the bookrack. But it's Part Two and there's no sign of Part One anywhere.

At least there's a summary in the front. Part One told the story of an adventurer from Earth, and how he learned to use the Ten Rings of Power . . . But there was no Part One to be seen, so I put it back. And besides, it was 75¢, far more than I felt like paying for a single book.

But I remember the cover very distinctly; mustard-yellow, with a guy on a flying horse. And the title: *The Two Towers*.

Yes, it was the Ace edition of Tolkien! Now how did I get the summary so confused? And really, somehow, I'd like to read that book, the book I thought I was looking at. Wollheim had produced an anthology titled *Swordsmen in the Sky* (1964), of sword-and-planet adventure, and I wished there were more.

For what it's worth, *Swordsmen in the Sky* contained the following stories:

"The Moon that Vanished" by Leigh Brackett

*Thrilling Wonder Stories*, October 1948

"A Vision of Venus" by Otis Adelbert Kline

*Amazing*, December 1933

"Kaldar, World of Antares" by Edmund Hamilton

*The Magic Carpet*, April 1933

First of a series about this guy, who was a somewhat less fugitive version of Robert E. Howard's interplanetary adventurer Esau Cairn [*Almuric* (1931)].

"Swordsmen of Lost Terra" by Poul Anderson

*Planet Stories*, November 1951

"People of the Crater" by André Norton

*Fantasy Book*, July 1947 as by "Andrew North"

Revised (to make Garan a Vietnam veteran, for example) and published in *Garan the Eternal* (1972) with a sequel, "Garan of Yu-Lac" and two Witch World stories.

I was very pleased to find Andy Offutt's *My*

*Lord Barbarian* (1977). I mean, a sword and planet thriller novel where the climax is a philosophical discussion about the nature of civilization and barbarism?

**CAT NEWS**

by Lisa

What a strange time the month of March was. First came the grief of burying Wullie after having given the order to end his life. A week later came the call from Dale and Tammi in which Slim entered our lives. We would have said yes had he been the most ordinary looking of tabbies instead of the beautiful, regal animal he is but I don't deny it gives me a certain satisfaction to own a beautiful, historic animal. Had I had the choice I would not have given Wullie's life for the privilege. Yet oddly the grief and wrestlings I've had with the price paid have not really interfered with my enjoyment of my relationship with Slim. The sound of his voice reminds me of Elfling even if their voices are completely different. None of the others enjoy vocalizing the way Slim does. The keen, nearly human intelligence in his eyes reminds me much more strongly of Digger the Doberman, my companion more than twenty years ago. Elfling was very intelligent also but his was a cat's intelligence. I only hope he doesn't spoil me for lesser cats the way Digger spoiled me for lesser dogs.

Of course, if he does surfing has revealed many Siamese in need of homes. A Siamese cat, after all, needs much less space than an adult Doberman, lack of space being the reason I didn't try to convince Joe we really needed a Doberman. I see no moral difference between purebred rescue and moggy rescue. Slim's damaged leg testifies to his rescue status. The vet says a cat considerably bigger than Slim dealt the damage. I still flinch inside at how close the other must have come to killing Slim before we even knew he existed. It doesn't seem to bother him much, though. He and the other four felines have been working out the pecking order. It did not take Slim long to decide we were quite suitable to be his people, even if we were not the ones he had picked out originally. Don't let anyone tell you an older cat can't bond to you or won't be truly yours. Slim, at four, bonded to us within a week.

At my last trip to the vet I took my place among the other cat owners. Once I would have been in the dog section, preferably with a large, sturdy dog, the preferred animal where I grew up. Before Elfling, I did not understand why people got so attached to cats. I do now. I have had cats bond with me as thoroughly as any dog could. My bond with Elfling was as strong as that I had with Digger.

Because of my dog-loving background, I tend to interact with the cats as if they were dogs. There are differences in their psychology, of course. A dog cannot be left alone in the house overnight. I tried to teach Elfling to walk on a leash but was balked by his flopping down on the sidewalk and refusing to move. No amount of coaxing would persuade him to walk on the leash. I finally had to carry him back into

the house. He was so clearly miserable that I didn't repeat the experience. A dog would have fought the leash a bit but could have been coaxed into accepting it.

They say Siamese are bad about bullying other cats. Slim's presence has actually seemed to cut down on the bullying. Sarang the domestic tabby has not bullied nearly as much since Slim chased him from the bathroom. Gemellus is still wary of the intruder, as is Delenn. Slim and C'Mell have begun grooming each other occasionally.

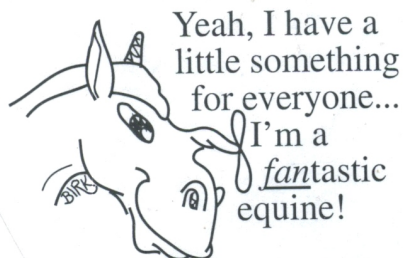
### TIMELY RIPPED

by Lisa

I was finally able to learn how to use the MP3 player Grant generously bought me. Grant has also generously backed my cd collection up onto our private network so that now if anything happened to them I would not totally lose my music collection. It is not easy to damage a cd but it can be done. I've found two broken ones and sighed as I threw them in the trash.

### TRIPLE CROWN NEWS

by Lisa



### Kentucky Derby

Sober fans at Churchill Downs got a good look at the brutal side of Thoroughbred racing yesterday.

When I heard the filly had fallen my heart sank. When I saw her lying in an inert, unmoving mass on the track I went cold all over. I knew then that she was dead but I didn't want to acknowledge it. I clung to hope even when I saw the look on Dr. Bramlage's face. Seconds later he had announced the filly's death. It seems so unfair. She had made it through the race, through that incredible jostling mass at the start that had me holding my breath, knowing as I did that one misstep, one miscalculation by a jockey and there could be a huge pile of dead and dying jockeys and horses all over the track.

Perhaps now the Churchill management will put in Polytrack, which seems to counter somewhat the effects of breeding animals without the necessary soundness to do safely what is required of them. Big Brown himself has not raced soundly. He's suffered from quarter cracks, which are cracks in the hard part of a horse's hoof that add stress to those terribly thin legs, and after his spectacular win breeders will be eager to send their mares to him, if he doesn't

end up in an inert mass at either Pimlico or Belmont.

On a side note, I saw no sign that Saez was pushing the filly unduly during the race. He made one run against Big Brown at the top of the stretch but then let the filly run at her own pace. Moreover, the accident happened well after the race was over, when there would have been no reason to be pushing a potentially very valuable broodmare. I think it unlikely that a jockey who valued his job would have been risking any harm to his valuable mount after the race. It was a freak accident.

### Preakness

Big Brown won the Preakness against second string opponents. There was an attempt to trap him in a pocket but Desormeaux quickly took back and sent Brown to the outside. The race was over when he asked Big Brown to roll. He never once used his whip.

### Belmont

There is no joy in Mudville.

Big Brown now has the dubious distinction of having the worst finish of any Triple Crown hopeful. He's checked out healthy which was a real relief. Longshot Da'tara ran off with the race. Desormeaux eased his colt when he sensed something wrong. He just wasn't the same colt he was at Churchill Downs and Pimlico. When I heard the announcer say he was being eased all I could think of was Eight Belles so horribly still on the track. My guess is that Big Brown was another of those horses who peaked too soon. Many horses can't stand the closeness of the Triple Crown races. It is very difficult to keep a horse functioning at peak condition through three races so close together. Only eleven horses have managed to bring home the Triple Crown. Maybe next year in Elmont.

### SHAKEN, NOT STIRRED.

by Lisa



I wake when the bed shifts under me about 4:30 a.m., going sideways first then up and down. My first thought is what the bleep is C'Mell doing to shake the bleeping bed so bleeping much at this bleeping hour? Then I hear the deep rumbling coming out of the ground and groggily realize no housecat ever born could make that sound. My eyes snap

open and I slam upright. C'Mell is sitting frozen on the bed, her blue gaze locked on me in a silent demand to stop this craziness. I ignore her in favor of listening to what is happening outside. I can hear no buildings crashing down in the neighborhood. I conclude that while the quake was fairly powerful, it has done no serious damage and is not likely to. (I learn later it was a 5.4.) It is not nearly as scary as the tornado but there is no point in trying to sleep now.

### THESE OUR REVELS NOW ARE ENDED

ConGlomeration 2008

April 18-20

Report by Joseph T Major

Did the earth move for you? We were given a wake-up call on Friday morning by a 5.2 magnitude earthquake in Illinois.

But then, things had begun going off beforehand, with the sad news that **David Herrington** would be unable to make it. We wish him luck.

After being shaken awake that morning, we did not rest well. I had the day off, and took Lisa to work before going home to nap. What with all the confusion, I did not get any money from the ATM.

Apparently there was trouble with the wireless connections in the convention center—which meant that not only couldn't they take checks, they couldn't take credit cards. So I had to trek down to the front of the hotel to get cash there. Once we settled that, we said hello to **Tammi Harris**, who was there with the Southern Indiana Writers' Group. Their table was right across the way from the one the guest of honor occupied during his signing sessions.

**Leigh Kimmel** and **Larry Ullery** were set up in the corner of the Dealers' Room. Leigh had the further problem that she had to get some student papers back to their authors, and while she was using the convenience of the Internet to do so, being without a functioning internet connection sort of left her worse off than before. **Bob Roehm** and **Joel Zakem** were about halfway along the wall, and as usual Larry Smith had the place by the door. We greeted them all and began to talk purchases.

**Tim Lane** and **Elizabeth Garrett** showed up about then. An aftermath of the recent rains and flooding meant that they would be eating in, so Lisa and I departed in time to eat at Longhorn Steakhouse and use the 25% off coupon and the 5 Borders Bucks at the adjacent Borders.

We rejoined Tim and Elizabeth for the **Opening Ceremonies**. The guests included Michael Capobianco and Ann (A. C.) Crispin, but I suppose most of the attention was on Walter Koenig ("Chekov", "Bester").

More traditional fandom had its place as DUFF delegates Steve & Sue Francis reported on **Fandom Down Under**. Or more precisely, how they had had the very devil of a time getting there.

**Tom** and **Anita Feller** turned up, much to everyone's surprise. Even they hadn't been sure they would come. They were nevertheless a



nice addition to our con experience.

We didn't do much in the way of parties at the con, mostly because the big ones were Xerps and Hobbit Hole, both of which featured loud music and drinking. Khen Moore wasn't there; he was not feeling well, and his absence took a lot of the joie de vivre out of the party scene.

Our Saturday Night dinner took place at the 8 China Buffet across the road from the hotel. **Johnny Carruthers** met us there, and **Jack & Susan Young** went along. We had at our table Tim & Elizabeth, Tom & Anita, and Tammi. Dan Caldwell was with the others, and Sue ran around taking pictures of everyone.

The Masquerade was not all that large, only ten entries, and only one child, albeit a very cute and disciplined one. The winner was, 4SJ will be pleased to hear, doing Maria/Futura from "Metropolis". Now if more companies were to provide that sort of distraction from labor organization . . .

The majority of Ann Crispin's panels had to do with piracy, one way or the other. She is writing the first grownup novelization about Captain Jack Sparrow of the *Pirates of the Caribbean* series. She is expanding some of the ideas of the movies in an interesting fashion, and has done a substantial amount of research on real piracy. She was very interested to learn of Frank G. Slaughter's *Buccaneer Surgeon* (1954) and *The Deadly Lady of Madagascar* (1959), two of the swashbucklers he wrote as "C. V. Terry", and George Macdonald Fraser's *The Pyrates* (1983) and *The Hollywood History of the World* (1988, 1996).

Many of the literary types have been feeling more disenchanted with ConGlomeration, due to its gaming concentration. And yet, when I looked into the gamng room, it was not quite full. Dealers' sales are also on the decline; for example, Leigh Kimmel apologized to me that we probably wouldn't be seeing each other for a while, because they just didn't make any money there, and for various reasons DenVention is out of the question. (She didn't mention the prospective difficulties with Douane Canada Customs, but I suspect they won't have improved since 2003.)

The next ConGlomeration will be **April 10-12, 2009**. Membership is \$30 now and \$40 at the door.

Membership: 522.

### SCIENCE ILLUSTRATED

Magazine Review by Johnny Carruthers  
<http://purpleranger.livejournal.com/>

I guess it was about two or three years ago that I lamented the fact that there hasn't been a good general interest science magazine on the stands since *Omni* folded many years ago. Before you say anything, yes, I am well aware of *Discover*. I see it quite regularly, and I even look through the occasional issue at the library if something on the cover catches my eye. But for some reason, *Discover* never really grabbed me, never really caught my attention the way

that *Omni* did. It just doesn't have the right spark. For lack of a better term, it doesn't have that sense of wonder.

I expressed my lament while reviewing a short-lived magazine called *Phenomena*. While *Phenomena* did grab my attention, it unfortunately covered the sorts of flaky, fuzzy-minded New Age thinking that *Omni* usually reserved for its "Antimatter" column. (It also lasted only four issues.) But recently, I spotted a new magazine on the stands that might actually embody the same sense of wonder that I once found in the pages of *Omni*.

That magazine is *Science Illustrated*. According to the editorial in the premiere issue, this is the US edition of a Danish magazine which is the largest-circulation magazine in Scandinavia. (I would like to see data to back up that claim, but I'm willing to accept it for now.)

In that debut editorial, Editor-In-Chief Mark Jannot describes *Science Illustrated* as "a visually spectacular gateway to the world of science and discovery" and "a feast of information for anyone with a passion for understanding the world and for understanding that understanding with others." I love enthusiasm like that. It's infectious. If the man at the top has this enthusiastic sense of wonder, I feel confident that it will trickle down to the rest of the magazine's staff as well (assuming that it isn't already there).

Three departments appear at the front of *Science Illustrated* in rapid succession. "Bull's-Eye" is a gallery of two-page spreads, each spread showcasing a different aspect of science, be it technology, medicine, nature, or culture. "Science Update" reminds me of *Omni*'s "Continuum" department more than anything else. It's a collection of ultra-short articles that really don't require longer, separate pieces. The difference here is that "Science Update" is much more lavishly illustrated than "Continuum" ever was. And I think "Ask Us" should be self-explanatory. It's Mr. Wizard and Bill Nye The Science Guy in print form.

Three other departments appear at the back of *Science Illustrated*. I think I could maybe best describe "World Of Science" as the answers to all of those puzzling little questions that my nephew (who's just about to turn 9) and niece (age 5) would pose just out of curiosity. Included in this section are factoids on the different chemical elements. (They aren't going in order, and I was a little disappointed that the first issue covered oxygen, and not antimony.) And "Trivia Countdown" and "Brain Trainers" bring back fond memories of *Omni*'s "Games" column.

The main articles are sandwiched between these sets of bookending departments. Simply, these articles cover every branch of science — or they will, assuming that *Science Illustrated* stays on the stands long enough. Topics covered in the first two issue's articles include snake venom, penguins, building a bionic eye, the possibility of limb regeneration in humans, and tracking icebergs.

As I mentioned earlier, *Science Illustrated* is illustrated lavishly, befitting the magazine's title. That's the main difference between it and

*Omni*. If you were a reader, you will remember that *Omni* was text-heavy. I'm not saying that one is better than the other; I'm just pointing out the differences.

(Yes, I realize that I'm making more than a few comparisons between *Science Illustrated* and *Omni*. That's the best standard for comparison I have at present. A decade from now, I could easily be comparing another new science magazine to both.)

*Science Illustrated* is published bi-monthly. Individual issues cost \$4.95 on the newsstand, while a one-year subscription costs \$24.

There is a website for the magazine, at:

<http://www.scienceillustrated.com>

Unfortunately, at present it is little more than a page describing *Science Illustrated*, and a page for subscribing. Maybe in the future, the website will include teasers for articles in the current issue, or maybe even an archive of past articles.

Now, if they could just consider the possibility of running a science fiction short story in each issue . . .

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### COPERNICUS' SECRET: How the Scientific Revolution Began

by Jack Repcheck

(Simon & Schuster, 2007, 239 pp./indexed,  
\$25.00, ISBN # 139780743289511)

Reviewed by Jim Sullivan



Born into a wealthy Roman Catholic family in 1473 in Prussia, not far from today's Gdansk, Poland, Copernicus lacked for little in his youth. Nevertheless, he was an unspectacular child and school boy.

He eventually went to several universities, studying for church work. He soon, thanks to his uncle, a bishop, became a canon in the church. He would also complete studies as a medical doctor, which became his second job as a canon.

Though he had taken the initiation rite, or first orders, into the Catholic clergy, he never took his final vows to become a full-fledged priest. No one knows for sure why. Still, he made his entire adult living from church work.

Over the years of those efforts, he found time to do his astrology and astronomy observations and studies of the stars and planets. The Catholic Church didn't object then to the subject of astrology. Early on, he made an

Earth-shattering discovery with his observations: the sun did not go around Earth, rather it was the other way around, Earth went around the sun. This was a contradiction in how the Catholic Church saw it. This religion accepted it the way Aristotle and Ptolemy had reported it to be: the Earth stood still while the sun revolved around the planet.

Copernicus knew full well his words would be considered heretical. But he didn't worry about that. His main problem through most of his life was what to do about his housekeeper/girlfriend. One of his fellow canons had tattled to the bishop about the situation. So he ordered Copernicus to end this illicit liaison. Though agreeing to do so, Copernicus couldn't or wouldn't and didn't! But he wasn't the only one. Two other canons of the group of 16 he worked closely with over the decades were involved with lovers, too. In fact, one had already sired a child. To make matters worse, during these times (1517), Martin Luther posted his 95 theses to Wittenberg's Castle Church door. Thus started the Protestant Reformation that quickly led to the Catholic Counter Reformation. A lot of hatred ensued and blood was shed over these causes. Though Copernicus remained Catholic, many religious and civil leaders in the general area, converted to Lutheranism. This became a reason for being put to death.

Despite what Copernicus had learned about the heavenly bodies in the sky, he did not publish his discoveries. Oh, he discussed them, fearlessly, with other church members, academics, and scientists who were friends. Copernicus even wrote and circulated a short treatise on his findings. He wouldn't publish his primary book for decades.

That wasn't, as many think, because he was afraid of persecution from the church or society. Rather it was his feeling, fear more exactly, that some of his observations and/or calculations were faulty. In fact, some were. His concept, for example, that the planet's orbits were circular rather than elliptical, as is now known, was, and remained, in his calculations. But in the main, he was correct.

In any case, he was getting older and he still hadn't published his magnum opus. And despite strong urging from friends, many churchmen among them, he continued to put off publishing. He was close to taking his secret to the grave.

Then a strange thing happened. A young scientist, named Rheticus, learned at his alma mater and teaching post, the University of Wittenberg, a bastion of the newly formed Lutheranism, about the astounding work being done by a Catholic churchman named Copernicus. Rheticus decided he just had to take a short, temporary leave of absence from university teaching of mathematics and astronomy and go meet his new hero, Copernicus. So Rheticus ventured forth to Frombork, Prussia, near the Baltic Sea where Copernicus lived and managed church property with his fellow canons.

By then, what with the Protestant Reformation on, Catholic Church authorities had condemned to death any Lutherans found in

Catholic Prussia. Still, Rheticus dared flaunt the law and visited the world's leading authority on astrology and astronomy in Catholic territory.

Of course, the canon didn't know the man who was knocking on the door. Quickly, however, Copernicus saw how bright Rheticus was. They discussed their favorite topics, astrology, astronomy, and math way into the night. Rheticus stayed a week, then a month, next a year, and, finally, three years!

During that time, he convinced Copernicus that even though some things in his work might be in error, his main contentions and proofs thereof had to be published for the world's benefit. People were clamoring for the book. Surprisingly, Copernicus went along with the idea (from a Lutheran no less!). And he and Rheticus went to work polishing the material.

First, Rheticus wrote and had published a brief treatise concerning Copernicus' book before it was actually printed and ready for sale. This publication only increased the interest in Copernicus' findings. At long last, with editing help from Rheticus, "his teacher's" (this is how he referred to Copernicus when talking to others) book, entitled *On the Revolutions of Heavenly Spheres*, was ready to be printed. Arrangements were made, and Copernicus gave Rheticus the manuscript to take to Nuremberg to have it published by the best printer then known.

But because of delays, thanks in no small part to Rheticus, *On the Revolutions* manuscript didn't get to the printer for over half a year. Then Rheticus had to go out of town on other business. He left someone he thought was a trusted person to oversee the printing work's accuracy and completion. Unbeknownst to Rheticus, this trusted person had the audacity to append to the book an unauthorized and unsigned preface stating that the work therein was merely a hypotheses.

This was a slap to the face of Copernicus and Rheticus. Anyone reading the book came to the 'hypotheses' statement first and dismissed the book's authenticity. But the volume was already in print.

Sadly, near this time, Copernicus suffered a severe stroke and was dying. He did get his hands on his book on the very day he died, May 24, 1543. Copernicus was 70. He apparently had been too sick to read or comment on his lifetime's work. He was buried in the church in Frombork.

Interestingly and regrettably, the book's dedication, written by Copernicus, had omitted crediting Rheticus's for his help. Nobody to this day knows why this happened. It doesn't appear to be a mere oversight or a simple typo.

For years, Rheticus took umbrage at that seeming slight. But finally, he paid homage in public to his teacher.

The author writes about Copernicus' tome:

The first printing of *On the Revolutions* was only about four hundred copies, which was a standard print run for a technical book in the sixteenth century. It was very expensive — about 1 florin. To put that price in perspective, Rheticus made 100 florins a year as a

professor at the University of Wittenberg. If it is difficult to imagine that only four hundred copies of a book changed the world, recall that an equally important but more accessible book, Charles Darwin's *On the Origin of Species*, sold only 4,250 copies in its first few years. Copernicus' work was intended for the relatively small number of well-trained mathematicians and astronomers in Europe. Copernicus and his publisher, [ ... ], never expected the book to be a best seller.

A Pennsylvania resident, Jack Repcheck, the author, is an editor for the publisher W.W. Norton & Co. He has also authored *The Man Who Found Time: James Hutton and the Discovery of the Earth's Antiquity*.

This short, highly readable, page-turner is strongly recommended!

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### **AN ACRE OF GLASS: A History and Forecast of the Telescope**

by J. B. Zirker

(The Johns Hopkins University Press; 2005;  
ISBN 0-8018-8234-6)

Reviewed by Rodford Edmiston Smith

It's amazing the ambitions people who observe the universe can develop. Perhaps because what they study is so grand, their plans for instruments and procedures are as well. This book explores these dreams, impractical fantasies and successful accomplishments.

The book is full of names such as the Large Binocular Telescope, the Navy Prototype Optical Interferometer, the Center for High Angular Resolution Astronomy, the Very Large Telescope (four 8-meter telescopes tied together optically to produce the equivalent of a single 16-meter mirror), the Very Large Optical Telescope (a segmented mirror 20 meters across), the Giant Magellan Telescope (a segmented mirror 22 meters wide), the California Extremely Large Telescope (thirty meters), and the Overwhelmingly Large Telescope (perhaps 100 meters aperture).

The secondary mirrors for some of these telescopes are larger than the primary mirrors of any telescope currently in existence. The largest of the instruments discussed approach the size of big radio telescopes. Most of these concepts will never go beyond a preliminary proposal, of course. Some have already reached the detailed planning phase. A few will be completed. Note that while radio telescopes and detectors for X-rays and gamma rays are also covered, that the emphasis of this book is on optical telescopes. That is, those which cover the spectrum from the infrared to the ultraviolet.

The first really large telescope was probably Christian Huygens' 37.5 meter long refracting telescope, completed in the mid-Seventeenth Century. This was the culmination of a series of increasingly larger refracting telescopes built by Huygens, which allowed him to make spectacular discoveries. His accomplishments inspired many others to build similar

instruments. However, refractors have several problems which are exacerbated with size, the main one being chromatic aberration. That is, the colors of the image don't line up after passing through all that glass. Also, truly large lenses are difficult to make and very heavy; hanging one out on the end of a telescope is a major engineering problem.

The first large reflecting telescope was probably created by William Herschel. He built an increasingly larger series of these, eventually creating one with a mirror 122 centimeters across, in a mount over 12 meters long. Each increase in observational capability brought an increase in knowledge. And the new knowledge brought both improved understanding and further questions. Questions which required new and larger telescopes.

This progression continued for literally centuries. Due to a number of reasons — in large part the stunning success of the Hale, still a premier optical instrument more than a half century later — after the completion of the 5 meter telescope at Palomar there was a long lull before the next generation. Even then, the first telescope larger than the Hale had serious problems even a second mirror didn't completely address. Finally, though, new ideas began to be tried. First in smaller telescopes (though even these would have been considered giants before the Hale) and finally, after decades of planning, fund raising, small-scale trials and engineering, a new series of larger telescopes began to be built.

Momentum picked up. The old rivalries between institutions and nations resumed, and to these were added new ones, driving the development of larger and larger instruments. Today there are many telescopes with far larger apertures than the Hale in operation with more being planned.

A large part of the stimulus for this continued growth is the number of important extra-solar discoveries made in recent years, in part due to the first of the new giants. We know now that other stars do have planets, and the size of planet we are able to detect is slowly approaching that of the Earth. We even know that some of these worlds have water in their atmospheres. This is generating speculation, and hope, that other stars may have life-bearing world around them.

This book is heavy on technology. It gives clear explanations of often complicated and highly specialized equipment and techniques, though in many cases a good understanding of the basics of physics, engineering and optics are expected rather than provided. The author provides a personal touch by relating histories of the work and ambition of several people involved in the efforts to build large telescopes. There are tales of triumphs, tragedies and even a few farces.

Overall, the book gives an account of competent optimism and confidence in the ability of people to create new and wonderful things with which to explore the universe.

There is an important lesson in this book, one not actually spelled out by the author. If we don't think big, the best we can do will be

mediocre.

## **STORIES FROM OTHER PLANETS**

or

### **A HONEYMOON IN SPACE**

by George Chetwyn Griffith-Jones.

2000 [1900-01]. Edited by Marcus L.

Rowland. Forgotten Futures Library.

Reviewed by Richard Dengrove

In this novel, intelligent life is not only prevalent throughout the universe, but nearly every heavenly body has, will have or has had it. That includes Mars, Venus, Saturn and Ganymede. Even an asteroid.

Actually I shouldn't speak of one novel but two. I do not think the editor, Marcus Rowland, ever explains it; but I read this elsewhere. The first novel, *Stories from Other Planets*, was serialized in *Pearson's Magazine* for six months in 1900. Then it was edited and expanded into a similar but not matching novel, *A Honeymoon in Space*, which was published in 1901.

In both the novel and the serial, science plays a big role. It is true where it interferes with a great plot, Griffith does not pay too much attention to it. For instance, you do not know that heavenly bodies have different gravities, except for weightlessness in space and nearly being pulled into Jupiter.

Where science makes for a great plot, Griffith pays close attention to it. In 1900, science accepted that the nearby planets were habitable. Only a minority of astronomers believed they weren't. For instance, Stoney, an Irish scientist who studied the escape velocities of gas, claimed that oxygen would escape from Mars. Also, Campbell, in Berkeley, claimed that the spectroscope showed that Mars' atmosphere more closely resembled the Moon's than the Earth's.

However, acceptance of their conclusions was a decade in the future. The only consolation for doubters was that Galileo's finding had finally sunk in. It was universally agreed that the Moon's surface had neither atmosphere nor water. Scientists had not always believed this. Early in the 19th Century, most believed that the Moon was habitable and inhabited.

Thus, the author, Griffith, would have had scientific backing in writing that Mars and Venus at least were livable. For instance, water was no problem because most scientists believed Mars had oceans just like on Earth. In fact, scientists might back him that conditions were better than on Earth; that the atmosphere of both Mars and Venus could be actually invigorating.

Another accepted theory that Griffith pays close attention to makes his plot, as it had the plot of other authors. It incorporated the Theory of Evolution; and, I bet, Lord Kelvins' finding that the Earth was losing heat.

I wonder if he got it from a book by that tireless promoter of life on other planets, Camille Flammarion. Griffith mentions his *The End of the World*

The theory says that all planets go through a similar evolution. They are at first warm and wet, and primitive life forms evolve. Then they

become cold and dry, and more intelligent life forms evolve. While H.G. Wells has this ending in octopus like creatures, most writers opted for humanoids, and the belief humans represented the highest development of reason.

This is the theory. To Griffith's credit, there are variations on it due to different choices and different conditions.

To show how he applied the theory, I have to tell you the plot. Basically, three characters set out to explore the solar system. First, there is the hero, the dashing but domestic Earl of Redgrave, Rollo Lennox Smeaton Aubrey. His new bride refers to him as Lennox.

The second character is the bride and heroine, born Lilla Zaidie Rennick. The Earl refers to her playfully as "her ladyship" or as Zaidie. She is an American. In the Victorian fashion, she does faint on occasion. That does not mean she is weak. Given the dangers of this cruise, she must have guts. In addition, from what I can see, she is certainly someone with strong opinions.

Third, there is the faithful servant Murgatroyd, who disapproves of this cruise as the work of the devil but is going on it to protect his master. He is a one note character both always obeying and always disagreeing. He is not alone; the extraterrestrials seem to be one note characters too.

How do these three fly into outer space? Zaidie's late father, Professor Hartley Rennick, figured out the science and theory for an antigravity ship, and the Earl of Redgrave had it built. He calls it the Astronef. It uses gravity to attract and repel. Scientists believed such a ship was possible until Einstein showed that gravity was very different from other forms of electromagnetism. One writer I read, claimed he had shown the scientific world that by 1910.

Besides the antigravity ship, the three use the technology of their time. For instance, the Earl and Zaidie communicate on the Moon through telephones wires attached to their space helmets. This does not mean radio communication was unknown. It had existed since the 1880s; and, in 1901, Marconi made the first transatlantic transmission. By 1906, audio signals were being sent.

The three first land on the Moon. Griffith accepts the science of the time that the surface of the Moon lacks the air and water for intelligent life. However, he does so reluctantly. He claims that it had both at some time in the past. The hero and heroine find skeletons of its last dying inhabitants and the ruins of their cities. Also, the Moon has air and water underground. The two find water and degenerate aquatic humanoids there, who can barely hold their own in this dog eat dog world.

Next, the three travel to Venus. Venus is inhabited by humanoids with wings. The Earl speculates they evolved from bird like creatures. Venus is an exception to the theory of planetary development. It has evolved the way it did because it has lots of mountains. In addition to having wings, the Venusians have a bird like language. Zaidie is able to communicate with them by singing. The songs she sings come from her American heritage: for instance, the

one that goes “Way Down Upon the Swanee River.”

That they look like angels was not lost on Griffith. Nor is it lost on Zaidie. She decides they better leave Venus, lest they corrupt these pure beings.

Next, the three travel to Mars. While the Venusians had developed their emotions at the expense of their reason, the Martians had done the opposite, and developed their reason at the expense of their emotions. This is shown by the Martians’ appearance. They have large bald heads, for reasoning, and possess thin bodies, paralleling the poverty of their emotions.

In the Mars novels of the era, being overly rational was the usual problem with Martians. The explanation is that Mars was considered an old planet. In the novel and the serial, not only is it shown by overdeveloped reason, but a lack of mountains on Mars. Erosion had eliminated them.

However, unlike some authors, Griffith has a difficult time painting a consistent picture of what being overly rational means. It makes the Martians both aggressive and passive at one in the same time. That does not make sense.

The Martians send a fleet out to intercept the three, and commit other hostile acts. Fortunately for the Earl, for people with large heads they aren’t very bright because the anti-gravity spaceship outmaneuvers them.

However, the Emperor of Mars is not angry at all. In this case, overly rational means that a person isn’t hostile. To show there is no hard feeling, he offers some money for Zaidie, which the Earl, of course, refuses. In describing the Emperor, Griffith shows the prejudices of his time: the Emperor sometimes acts very Chinese.

That the Martians are hostile or passive doesn’t appall Zaidie, however. Neither does the emperor’s offer to buy her. No, what appalls Zaidie is that the women dress the same as the men.

Next, we see that what happened to the Martians was not inevitable: they made some wrong decisions. The inhabitants of Ganymede, a Moon of Jupiter, whom we see next, had made the right decisions. They have had the more balanced development of the philosopher. In fact, their rulers are philosophers. You can see this balanced development in their appearance, which is noble and resembles the Ancient Greeks and Romans to some extent.

Per the theory, Ganymede has aged beyond Mars in becoming colder and dryer. Its inhabitants have had to retreat to domed cities, the natural evolution of a planet. There they live a life of wealth, except for a few servants, who are not as noble in appearance.

Because of this balanced development, the Ganymedeans have not lost all curiosity or daring. Out of scientific curiosity, a few Ganymedeans go with the Earl on his approach of Jupiter. Perhaps too closely because the planet threatens to suck the spaceship onto its boiling hot surface. I imagine, per the theory, Jupiter was considered to be at an early stage of development. Later, it would get cooler and dryer, and life would develop.

The Earl and Zaidie go it alone to Saturn.

There they find a good part of it, like Venus, is an exception to the theory. Scientists, these days, know the ring to be nothing. They may have even known then. However, in both the novel and serial, it exerts a very powerful gravitational force at the equator of the planet. That creates an atmosphere so dense that it resembles a sea. There creatures part dragon part jellyfish float around and fight each other.

At the poles, the idea is that development has gone on according to the theory. There are dinosaurs and mastodons living there. I doubt that scientists, even then, believed they were contemporaries; but it is OK because I got the idea.

The ideas, I suspect, have been the main draw of this novel. It is a very attractive idea that all the nearby planets are or were inhabited by intelligent humanoids. It shows we are not alone. Also, attractive in itself is the idea of Evolution as a theory that makes sense of the past and the future.

Something else made the novel very attractive at the time: it was up-to-the-minute. The Wikipedia article said that Griffith was a journalist. This much news and scuttlebutt seems to indicate that.

A big story in the news then was British noblemen marrying American brides for the dowries their rich fathers could provide. Zaidie and Lennox are example enough of American women marrying British aristocrats. In the novel, there is more about it. There, we first see Zaidie traveling to Europe with her chaperone, a Mrs. Van Stuyler. An uncle is paying the dowry for her marriage to another nobleman. However, we find he is a cad and a bounder. Fortunately, the Earl picks her up in his antigravity ship. Mrs. Van Stuyler at first protests, but not after she finds the two know and love one another.

Another story in the news at the time was war and talk of war. There is much of it in the novel. Before the Earl gets married and travels into outer space, he carries a message to the American President from the captain of Zaidie’s ship. It helps prevent a world war from occurring. Britain’s enemies, Russia and France, would not go against America too. Nor would they go against a fleet of antigravity ships. Both the threats of America and new technology later proved to be vanities, but people believed them through the ‘50s.

On the other hand, I do not know if Griffith’s politics made him any more popular with Americans. In the 1890s, he had been banned in American for his revolutionary socialist politics. Did it make him more popular that he was now championing the Gold Standard, a plank of the Republican Party?

I bet there was another reason why the tale was popular as a serial. As opposed to the novel, it had illustrations. And great illustrations they were, mostly by Frank Wood. They really added to the serial. In fact, I suspect the author fleshed out his complete novel with details inspired by the serial’s illustrations.

Now we go from why the serial and novel were wildly popular to why people merely might have liked them. For one thing there is the

banter between the Earl and Zaidie. It was credible enough, a sort of mock formality. I bet that’s how the upper upper class, which threatened to be buried in formality, got around it.

In addition, I bet readers liked the stiff upper lip. Since there was so much of it in the British action literature of the time – if memory serves me right – readers must have eaten it up. The Earl and Zaidie show a lot of it. Both show it by merely carrying on their domestic lives while surrounded by the dangers of interplanetary travel.

I have to admit it rubbed me, personally, the wrong way. It seemed crazy. Almost a parody of the English, even though Zaidie is supposed to be an American. As far as I am concerned, the only one with a lick of sense was Mrs. Van Stuyler, who refused to travel the space lanes, even with the prospect of making a million dollars.

While I bet the British of the era liked Griffith’s characters, they couldn’t like his suspense. Much of it concerns how the anti-gravity ship works. He keeps making up the specifics so that he can get a moment of suspense. Also, at the end, it is even impossible to tell what is happening? Why did the ship get to Mercury from Saturn, and bypass Earth and Mars? Also, why is a newly born star affecting the anti-gravity drive? One would think it would be too far away to affect anything in our solar system.

Even with these weaknesses, I love both the serial and the novel even when they are poorly written or partisan. I would like to live in a universe where intelligent life was practically next door. Where we would not be alone. Some people have flying saucers to do that for them; I read books like this.

POSTSCRIPT: There is one additional thing I have to comment on. Marcus Rowland, the book’s editor, went even more ape over the novel, the serial and all Edwardian science fiction. In fact, he has ideas for role playing games based on Edwardian science fiction. In the back, he advertises three books to help you play them. Among other things he talks about the “mysterious ‘Zaidie Hypotheses.’” Before I would get the books, though, I would check out his website:

<http://www.forgottenfutures.com/game/ff2/>

I have found much of material in the books, and much more, at that site.

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## FANZINES

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*Beyond Bree* April 2008, May 2008

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

*The Drink Tank* #165, #166, #167, #168, #169,  
#170, #171

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*MT Void* V. 26 #43 May 2, 2008 — V. 26 # 49  
June 6, 2008

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*The Nanton Lancaster Society Newsletter*  
Spring 2008

The Nanton Lancaster Society, Post Office  
Box 1051, Nanton, Alberta ToL 1R0  
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*No Award* #17 Spring 2008

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*Opuntia* #64.5 April 2008, #65 May 2008

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*Pablo Lennis* #245 April 2008

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*Plokta* #38 March 2008

The Cabal

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*The Reluctant Famulus* #64 January-February  
2008

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*Science Fiction/San Francisco* #63 April 9,  
2008, #64 April 23, 2008, #65 May 7, 2008,

#66 May 21, 2008

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*Vanamonde* #733-747

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*Visions of Paradise* #127 March 2008, #128  
April 2008

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*WCSFAzine* #9, #10

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## WORLDCON NEWS

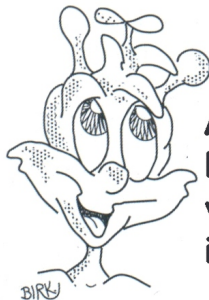
A committee has been formed to bid for the  
Worldcon in 2011 in **Reno, Nevada**. Their  
proposed dates are apparently the second  
weekend in August.

<http://www.rcfi.org>

A problem is that they are, in a sense, a  
“Portland for Reno” bid, with no committee  
members living in Reno.

## HANDICAPPING THE HUGOS

by Joe



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

**Best Novel**

- 5) No Award
- 4) *Brasyl*
- 3) *Halting State*
- 2) *Rollback*
- 1) *The Last Colony*

**Best Fanzine**

- 6) No Award
- 5) *PLOKTA*
- 4) *The Drink Tank*
- 3) *File 770*
- 2) *Argentus*
- 1) *Challenger*

**Best Fan Writer**

- 3) No Award
- 2) Chris Garcia
- 1) Steven H Silver

The deadline is **July 7, 2008**.

## SIDWISE AWARD NOMINEES

**Best Short Form:**

- Elizabeth Bear, “Les Innocents/Lumiere” (in  
*New Amsterdam*, Subterranean Press)  
Michael Flynn, “Quaestiones Super Caelo Et  
Mundo” (in *Analog*, 7/07)  
Matthew Johnson, “Public Safety” (in *Asimov’s*,  
3/07)  
Jess Nevins, “An Alternate History of Chinese  
Science Fiction” (in *No Fear of the Future*,  
May 17, 2007)  
Chris Roberson, “Metal Dragon Year” (in  
*Interzone*, 12/07)  
Kristine Kathryn Rusch, “Recovering Apollo 8”  
(in *Asimov’s*, 2/07)  
John Scalzi, “Missives from Possible Futures  
#1: Alternate History Search Results” (in  
*Subterranean Magazine*, Winter 2007)

**Best Long Form:**

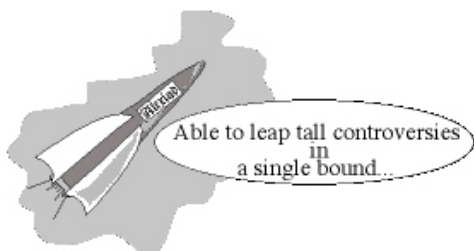
- Michael Chabon, *The Yiddish Policemen’s  
Union* (HarperCollins)  
Robert Conroy, *1945: A Novel* (Ballantine  
Books)  
Mary Gentle, *Ilario (The Lion’s Eye and The  
Stone Golem)* (Eos)  
Jay Lake, *Mainspring* (Tor Books)  
Sophia McDougall, *Rome Burning* (Orion)  
Jo Walton, *Ha’penny* (Tor Books)

The winners will be announced at  
DenVention.

## THE NEBULA WINNERS

- Novel:** *The Yiddish Policemen’s Union*  
by Michael Chabon  
**Novella:** “Fountain of Age” by Nancy  
Kress  
**Novellette:** “The Merchant and the  
Alchemist’s Gate” by Ted  
Chiang  
**Short Story:** “Always” by Karen Joy Fowler  
**Script:** Pan’s Labyrinth by Guillermo del  
Toro  
**Norton Award for Best Young Adult Novel:**  
*Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows*  
by J. K. Rowling.  
**Grand Master:** Michael Moorcock

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**Letters, we get letters**


From: **Martin Morse Wooster** Apr. 14, 2008  
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[mmwooster@yahoo.com](mailto:mmwooster@yahoo.com)

Many thanks for *Alexiad* 38. **Milt Stevens** wonders if people can live without the Internet. Well, I am in the middle of an interesting experiment where I have been without a phone for ten days due to a recent move (*thank you, Verizon Communications!*). I've only had home Net access for three years but I miss being able to look at my email every day. There are all sorts of party announcements and invitations, for example, which I only find out about reluctantly because of limited email. Stephen Bates had an essay in *The Weekly Standard* in 1995 which was unfortunately titled "Smash the Internet!" but more reasonably pointed out that older form of communications find their niches as better forms of communication supersede the existing ones. The chief virtue of the phone now is that it lets people chat at great length. Themail is now used for long-form communication (magazines and fanzines that are longer than *Ansible*). Letters and mailed press releases are twentieth-century artifacts.

**Chris Garcia** says, "I don't get Tolkien fandom." What I don't understand is only being interested in one writer. I have some interest in Tolkien, for example, and am a member of the local chapter of the Mythopoeic Society, but I couldn't imagine being only interested in the Inklings. I went to two meetings of the local chapter of the Wodehouse Society and found them pleasant evenings, but I couldn't imagine only reading Wodehouse. (Even Wodehouse said you shouldn't read more than three of his novels at once.) The point is that fen should be interested in all sorts of things and shouldn't limit themselves to one genre or to one kind of fandom.

I got Mythlore for a while in the seventies. It struck me that they imagined a "mythopoeic" school of writing that was more apparent to the viewers than to those actually writing (i.e., Tolkien didn't think much of Charles Williams, and they fawned on Dorothy Sayers, who was famous, but not invited, while ignoring E. R.

Eddison, who had been invited, but wasn't renowned).

**Evelyn C. Leeper** caught my British royal bloop; of course Elizabeth I had no descendants. What I should have said was that the Duke of Buccleuch was a closer descendant of James I than Elizabeth II was. Of course, if the Act of Succession of 1701 is repealed, then of course we will have to deal with the Duke of Bavaria being an English king . . .

**Joe's** comments to **Marty Helgesen** reminds us of William F. Buckley's interest in computing. I remember in about 1985 that Buckley donated the floppies of one of his books to a university library with the explanation that in the future we wouldn't collect manuscripts; just computer disks. This was about the time that we found that Stephen King and Peter Straub sent copies of the draft of *The Talisman* to each other via modem and that Sir Arthur C. Clarke mailed a computer disk of his latest novel to Del Rey. Isn't it interesting how antique all of these news items seem now? Heck, even the idea of "mailing a floppy" seems antique!

It's not all so good. **Stanley Schmidt** reported on an academic who deplored the loss of knowledge about the growth of a work coming from the disappearance of physical first drafts, and proposed that authors should print out and store drafts of their work at every step of the writing process, for the convenience of later academics.

— JTM

I'm not so sure about this. I just finished a very rough first draft. I have severe doubts about whether any eyes but mine should ever see the thing. The most important thing I learned during this process was how much I have to learn.

— LTM

From: **Brad W. Foster** April 16, 2008  
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<http://www.jabberwockygraphix.com>  
**Best Fan Artist Hugo Nominee**

Sorry to hear of the passing of Wullie, but congrats on bringing a new furry into your homes and hearts. Our outside cat population has grown by two more sweethearts recently, while the two inside girls refuse to allow anyone else to enter their kingdom here.

Your note about the Nigerian Spam from "James Kirk" reminded me of something I read several years ago while doing research on the whole 419 Scam thing. Evidently a number of these goons hire people to write the actual emails for them in English, and some of those ghost writers, in order to relieve the tedium of their jobs, will often use the names of characters out of books and movies where ever a name is required. ("Sure, you're paying me to do this

and putting your own name on it, but you'll never destroy my artistic soul as a writer!")

And I found the 419 Baiter who carried on a long correspondence under the name of "Manfred von Richthofen"! Eighty spammers tried, and eighty spammers died . . .

— JTM

From: **Alexis A. Gilliland** April 15, 2008  
4030 8<sup>th</sup> Street South, Arlington, VA  
22204-1552 USA

Thank you for *Alexiad* 7.2, which arrived well before the IRS deadline for submission of fanac, uh, that would be Form 1040 type fanac, which I had diligently completed a bit earlier, so that I could tell that I had a good year since I owed the IRS money instead of getting the usual refund for overpayment. Ah well, of all the functions I do not regret giving up (as I age with as much grace as I can muster,) letting an accountant prepare my tax returns instead of doing it myself is surely at the top of the list.

**Robley Rex** (aet. 106 as of April 15) does his own income tax.

In your review of *Elizabeth's Spymaster* you allude briefly to the murder of Kit Marlowe. My son Charles (who reads a lot more than I do these days) tells me that he was killed after Walsingham had died, probably as part of the struggle to succeed him, and possibly by friendly fire, in that he had been backing the winning side—from which the order to liquidate him issued. Marlowe was probably not "the only gay Cantab (Cambridge Alumni?)" in Walsingham's employ, though he was the only gay Cantab who is currently of any interest whatsoever. We note that the literary connection with British Intelligence is well established, starting at least with Chaucer, while in WW I, British Intelligence used Somerset Maugham, whose Ashenden stories were based on his experiences as a spy, and from WW II, Ian Fleming got the James Bond series.

We regret to note your loss of Red Wull, and remember that his namesake (in Ollivant's *Bob, Son of Battle*) was a contender in sheep herding competitions, but also unfortunately a sheep killer, which would make him a sort of Border Collie Nazi. Slim looks to be a worthy replacement, and we hope he graces your household for many years. Dolly and I had a series of Siamese toms, some of whom we mourned (the first Hatdama, Meowmoto Mewsashi) and some of whom we felt well rid of (the last Hatdama, Karff.) Currently Lee and I have Pest and Smoke, a couple of refugees from the animal shelter who keep each other company, and generally keep the house free from dragons, ghosts and evil spirits.

Refugees from the animal shelter are good. We still have two of ours. C'Mell is twelve but supposedly appleheads are long lived. Had Slim

not come along I would have eventually gone back to Animal Control.

— LTM

Ben Bernanke, the Head of the Federal Reserve Board, is a student of the Great Depression, which means that different mistakes will be made, or maybe only that different misfortunes will be endured. Being born in 1931 I have had an aversion to debt since I can remember. If the great American public discovers that debt can bite and is therefore not your friend, they may, to some extent, come to share my aversion. If so I might feel smug, or maybe vindicated, but any noticeable shift from deficit spending to personal saving will slow down the economy proportional to its noticeability and probably result in harder (if not Hard) times for the country. Steve, our long time neighbor and retired State Department type, is moving to a larger place (9.5 acres with beavers) out in Fairfax County. After he paid off the mortgage, he wanted to do some more building, to which his wife finally said no. He guesses his house may have lost 150k from its recently inflated peak, but figures with the advantages of buying, the losses of selling will pretty much be a wash. He thought the houses on offer in our neighborhood were overpriced to grossly overpriced, hence his move to the inner boondocks.

My cartoon website has turned out to be a substantially larger undertaking than we had imagined at the beginning. Lee is starting a couple of 4-week courses in May on Website Design and Dream Weaver, in order to get a handle on things, so as to set up the website they way she wants to and then run it as administrator. This isn't quite world conquest, but it will take longer and be more work than was looked for, even though we expect to be up and running eventually, albeit in a few months rather than a few weeks. As Willie says in the Mauldin cartoon: "We got you a target, but you gotta be patient." However, an unlooked for side benefit is that I am drawing a lot more cartoons these days than I have for quite awhile. Some of our problems have to do with organizing and indexing, and some of them, about which I am clueless, are technical. Ah well, we are all diligently beavering away at the project.

The weekend of April 24th is Ravencon, down in Richmond, which is at least as local as Philcon. Last year Lee ran their con suite, and this year she will be assisting Karen, the young lady who helped her last year, with an idea of passing the torch to the next generation. That should do for now.

Assuming the would-be congoers aren't instead attending the perpetual con on Second Life.

— JTM

From: **R-Laurraine Tutihasi** April 28, 2008  
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Thanks for your review of *The Foresight War*. I'm always looking for interesting alternate histories of WWII.

Sorry to hear of the passing of Red Wull. Sounds like he may have had the same problem as our Shadow, except that we discovered his problem earlier. Still it didn't, in the long run, make much difference other than emptying our pocket books. I spent thousands on surgery and chemotherapy for him. Eventually he ended up just like Red Wull. Our vets have been using multiyear rabies shots for our cats, mostly because they're indoor only cats.

### Our condolences.

Blu-Ray is technically superior to HD-DVD, so this time the better system won. I don't know how much difference there is. I haven't seen either, and we currently don't have equipment that can take advantage of them.

I don't think most trades people in any country know much about installing solar power infrastructure. In deciding how to proceed on the building of our house, we're lucky to have met a "green" consultant. He is steering us to the right people and giving us the information we need to make our decisions.

The sale of our California house has been concluded, and we've been busy starting the home-building process. We hired the "green" consultant, and we are almost ready to hire an architect. We've marked the spots on our land where we want our house and where Mike wants his observatory. The foundation for the observatory will be poured at the same time as that for the house. We are still busy gathering information about materials, appliances, and anything else we have to consider for the house. We have a couple of trips up to Phoenix planned for this purpose. We are going to be very busy.

There are a few amateur astronomers among the recipients, albeit they haven't been active of late. I hope they feel like commenting on this.

— JTM

From: **Jeffrey Allan Boman** May 1, 2008  
6900 Cote St-Luc Road #708, Montreal,  
Quebec, H4V 2Y9 CANADA  
[jeff.boman@gmail.com](mailto:jeff.boman@gmail.com)

Hi this is Jeff from St-Jean sur Richelieu . . .

(That one has a 'J' in the second name instead of the first. Distance alliteration?)

I didn't even come close to the end for Script Frenzy 2008: 52 pages out of 100. Only 5 people in different parts of Montreal competed this year, and a lack of face time hurt my chances . . . but 1) That's still more than last year and 2) For a script I wasn't really into this year, making it past the halfway point anyway is still fantastic!

My own zine is doing better this time: so far 4 issues done, and it'll be in a zine library in the States. Also, outreach has brought me a few new members . . . plus I have a few comic pros ready

to give me interviews, so my content is growing.. I've also now managed to secure several cover artists for the future. I've come to the realization that my readership is now larger than in my former APA, MANY years sooner. I'm always amazed at this growth, and at the improvements in my skill as a publisher. Had I realized this years ago I would have begun sooner!

May 14th this year was my 41st birthday. This one wasn't really a big deal for me. Understandably 42 will be. If you don't get the reference, here's a hint: May 25th is Towel Day.

By far the biggest news of the SF world in the past few months has been the death of Sir Arthur C. Clarke at the age of 91. Joe's memorial on the cover spoke of this. At onetime he — along with Robert A. Heinlein and Isaac Asimov — was a member of the Holy Trinity of science fiction. Now all three are gone, and we all likely feel a void.

Our models are gone and who is to replace them?

— JTM



Re: Random Jottings for February 2008 . . . Terry Pratchett burned bridges here at onept 1996 (he put down the French . . . in Québec); still, that doesn't make a diagnosis of Alzheimer right in the least. / Sir Edmund Hillary's ascent of Everest as the first will always be remembered — at least so long as there are people to remind youth of the history! / April 2008 . . . AD&D was the first roleplaying game I ever played. It started me down the path of gamer and game-writer that I'm on today. E. Gary Gygax will always own a hall in my memories. / Good-bye and good rest, Red Wull. We're losing too many of our companions lately . . . not surprising that I empathize.

Re: *Dragonwitch* (April) . . . I agree with Asimov in that there can never be too many autobiographies and biographies of the lives of great authors. There's just no way to include all of a life's journey in several hundred pages, even if it's lacking. / Re: Cthonian Cinema... I'd see the greatest problem with filming Cthulhu stories being the fact that few of the protagonists survive. Audiences have few to root by the end. / My sympathies on your two losses Lisa. / Re: Escaping Plato's Cave . . . considering how the States wouldn't get involved in WW2 at first,

stopping the Holocaust sooner (Joe Kennedy strong-armed Jewish Hollywood producers like the Warners and Mayer to keep them quiet . . . well, America not caring about the world I can believe — at least, if Republicans don't see oil that they want . . .

Re: Letters, we get letters . . .

**Martin Morse Wooster:** I couldn't go to Japan either . . . Montreal in 2009 is a go simply because I don't have to concern myself with housing costs at home . . . I used to be a SMOF, but I too can't understand faan snobishness.

**Darrell Schweitzer:** I'm curious how your unnamed fantasy author would have written the *Amber* series differently. Granted, the Merlin saga was too munchkinish for my tastes.

**John Purcell:** Steven Brust was a guest at Con\*Cept the year before I joined Con-Com. He proved unpopular; he ignored all hotel policies not to smoke in the panel rooms, and did in front of everyone. I learned of my allergies to nicotine years later, but I feel for athsmatic fen there.

**Roger and Pat Sims:** my best wishes to you too.

**Henry L. Welch:** Interesting Vista fact: I wouldn't touch that OS with a 10 foot pole, but I liked the look. I made it my Ubuntu Linux wallpaper.

**Alexander R. Slate:** My colonoscopy is scheduled 3 days before I leave for a comicbook convention in Toronto (scheduled by poor timing at the same time as the formerly-named Toronto Trek Polaris as Lloyd Penney informed me).

**Gina Teh:** I believe that you're the most distant fen here since I joined. Welcome! / I have over 1000 books, and I don't even come close to most people here, let alone Joe and Lisa! You aren't alone.

**Lloyd Penney:** I hope the doctors get to the root of Yvonne's food allergies. I know those headaches, since there are a lot of foods I can no longer have either, and have no real alternative. I hope she has better results.

**Milt Stevens:** I only know a few anime clubs in my area, so I can't call myself an expert. Only one of them has organized a convention here, though. I guess that's a factor of the youth and lack of organization interest in a few of them.

Now my stuff for the April issue. My intentions to mix my LOCs together didn't work.

I see kittens on TV and my heart breaks too, so I know a little of what Lisa's feeling. I'm thinking that my next cat will be an adult too. / Re: And as year follows you... so few are left, but the fact that they're all over 100 is still impressive.

May 25, 2008

The hottest day of the year in Montreal so far is on its way today. It feels it already: my bedroom and computer face the sunrise side of my building. Until I get my air conditioner installed, it will be a sauna.

Re: I am . . . Blasko... as a guy with a bookshelf full of D&D stuff and still plays the

game, I'd also resent ridicule! / I never heard of Cashback before. It sounds interesting to me though. / I've heard of ConCave! This report reminded me that I have to track down *Challenger* again. / Re: Super Thursday Night . . . I'm glad that you're OK. / Re: Red Wull . . . one of my mom's cats Cuddles wasn't eating in the end either, though she didn't have a growth causing it. I sympathize still for your loss. / Welcome to Slim! From the photo he looks like a beauty! I hope the family will get used to him quickly. / Yiddish is one of the nearly dead languages. Hopefully that will change thanks to language schools.

Re: Letters:

**Sheryl Birkhead:** My cats never got shots again in my home; indoor cats don't really need them, as they aren't exposed to the nastier germs. / Thank you for the thoughts for Boots. It's been half a year now, but the day doesn't go by that I don't think of him.

**John Hertz:** Vandal Savage is indeed an old time villain at DC Comics, but one who gets revamped over time (not surprising. He IS immortal, after all). In the latest he has innumerable descendants, and he harvests organs from them to continue to live.

**Lloyd Penney:** The ironic thing about Blu-Ray winning out is that its company (Sony) were the ones who lost out with Betamax before.

**Robert S. Kennedy:** Glad I'm not the only one to recognize Dushku from *True Lies*.

**Richard Densgrove:** I've heard from a driver about a large Jewish community in Iraq (I suspect that was before the current putz president) and took adult ed. courses with a lady from India who claimed to be part of one of the "lost" tribes.

**Taras Wolansky:** I think I've read the second book of Farmer's *World of Tiers* series, though none of the others.

I'm wrapping this one up earlier than the deadline. I have a meeting with a former producer and friend in June. I won't jinx it by talking about it, but I'm hoping for good news soon.

Read you all soon,

From: **George W. Price** May 4, 2008  
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April *Alexiad*:

Alexis Gilliland says that "To attribute the Great Depression to a single cause, such as too high wages, is an oversimplification . . ." I agree, and if I have given the impression that I think the Depression had only one cause, I must apologize. It was a hugely complicated event with many contributing causes. However, I don't believe I have said, or even implied, that high wages caused the Depression. That honor goes principally, but not exclusively, to the inflation of the 1920s.

What I will re-assert, and without apology, is that trying to maintain high wages in the face of a sharply declining money supply (deflation) was a horribly wrong prescription, and contributed mightily to prolonging the

Depression. Of course it was also prolonged by other mistaken policies, such as the Smoot-Hawley tariff and the consequent shrinkage of international trade.

In fact, I don't offhand think of any government policy of the 1930s that helped shorten the Depression, though some of the welfare measures may have mitigated the suffering. The Depression did not end, or even let up very much, until we got into World War II and there were serious changes in monetary policy. And no, unlike some other right-wingers, I do not believe that FDR purposely got us into the war just to end the Depression. He wanted war, that's for sure, but it was for the much better reason that Hitler needed to be taken down. That it pulled us out of the Depression was a happy side-effect.

I suspect that it was no coincidence that our worst-ever economic crunch followed the creation of the Federal Reserve system, which was intended precisely to prevent such episodes, but turned out to be a powerful engine of inflation. And it is still inflating. As I write, we are suffering a "falling dollar," with sharp increases in the prices of oil, food, other commodities, and gold. I attribute this to the Fed's policy of "easing" and "increasing liquidity," which are euphemisms for inflation.

I appear to have done Mr. Gilliland an injustice when I doubted that (as he said earlier), "in Tennessee female mill workers were earning less than 5 cents an hour while in Connecticut women were earning 2 to 3 cents an hour." I thought those were literally starvation wages that nobody could have lived on unless there were special circumstances, such as the company providing room and board in addition to the money wage. My error was in not realizing how cheap food was.

Gilliland suggested that I should Google "Wages 1932", which I have now done. I didn't find exactly what he cited, but there was one that was in the ball park. A University of Rhode Island website says that "According to the Department of Labor, in 1932 wages in PA sawmill [sic] were \$.05 per hour while women in TN mills earned \$2.39 for a 50 hour week." [[www.uri.edu/artsci/newecm/Classes/Art/INT1/Mac/1930s/1930sAA.html](http://www.uri.edu/artsci/newecm/Classes/Art/INT1/Mac/1930s/1930sAA.html)] (This appears to be part of a text for an economics course.)

My Google search also found a sampling of 1932-1934 wages and prices.

<http://www.paper-dragon.com/1939/priceguide.html>

The average annual salary for 37 assorted jobs was \$1,368, ranging from \$8,663 for a U.S. Congressman down to \$260 for a live-in-maid and \$216 for a hired farm hand. Note that the farm hand and the maid would be getting room and board, as I suggested. The lowest wages cited for jobs that wouldn't include room and board were \$423/yr for a steel worker and \$433/yr for a textile worker. That figures out to about 17 cents an hour for a 48-hour week. Which is a damned sight better than 2 to 5 cents.

How far would those wages have gone? The same site gives typical prices, such as 4 cents/lb for bread, 10 cents/lb for hamburger, 6 cents/lb



for rice, and 1 cent/lb for potatoes. So if a woman got 2 cents/hr for an 8-hour day, her day's wages could buy one pound each of bread, hamburger, and potatoes — enough to feed two adults for one day — with a whole penny left over to spend foolishly. So, not quite a starvation wage.

That Google search also turned up a *History of Carpenters Local #308* for 1930-1939 which states that in January 1932 “over 80% of the Brotherhood members were out of work. . . . Carpenters’ wages fell below their 1920 level after 308 accepted a 17-1/2 cents per hour wage reduction to 87-1/2 cents.” However, through union solidarity and the advent of the National Labor Relations Act, which “outlawed many unfair labor practices,” by 1937 “carpenters’ wages increased to \$1.10 per hour from a low of 70 cents in 1934.”

<http://www.carpenterslocal308.com/history/1930s.htm>

This little history shows no awareness at all of the possibility that preventing the wage from falling as far as it would have without union and government intervention just might have had something to do with that 80% unemployment rate. Note that the very lowest wage for union carpenters, 70 cents/hr, was 35 times the 2 cents/hr Mr. Gilliland cited for those women in Connecticut. Quite a spread!



Also, the fact that some wages really were near starvation level does not refute the charge that the Depression was prolonged by keeping other wages too high. No one claims that all wages were too high; only that some were, and political success in keeping them high guaranteed severe unemployment in those lines of work, as with the carpenters. In fact, keeping wages in some lines too high would help force some other wages even lower because so much of the limited amount of money was being absorbed by the overpaid workers. Which helps explain why the carpenters could command a wage 35 or more times that of the lowest unskilled workers, a much wider spread than would prevail in normal times with a free labor market.

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It's a bit hard to tackle Richard Dengrove's comments because he uses terminology that is strange to me, referring to “an aggrandizing wage sector” and a “decreasing wage sector.” This has a vaguely Keynesian sound, which I confess prejudices me against it. (Apropos, Henry Hazlitt's *The Failure of the New Economics* [1959] is a very clear and complete demolition of Lord Keynes' *The General Theory of Employment, Interest, and Money*. Hazlitt takes Keynes apart chapter by chapter, almost line by line. Read the two books in parallel — first a short stretch of Keynes, then Hazlitt's analysis of it, and then another bite of Keynes.)

I will limit myself to one sentence by Dengrove that seems to epitomize his error: “An aggrandizing wage sector causes inflation not deflation.” Well, no, it doesn't. Assuming that he means rising wages cause inflation, he's wrong. The causation is the other way around. It is inflation — in its original meaning of an undue increase in the money supply — that leads to higher wages and prices. The monetary authorities first inflate the quantity of money in circulation, and then wages and prices inexorably rise to sop up the added money.

As Milton Friedman (and Hazlitt before him) have amply shown, inflation — in its modern sense of wages and prices spiraling upward — is entirely a monetary phenomenon. If a union forces its wages up, while the money supply remains constant, the result is more money for some members, and unemployment for others, but no change in the overall levels of wages and prices. Likewise, if a company raises prices while the money supply remains constant, the result is shrinking sales for that company, but no change in the overall levels of wages and prices. Inflating the money supply allows payment of numerically higher wages and prices all around, which feels good at first. But the real value of those wages and prices — in terms of how much the money will buy — stays more or less constant. Inflation also inevitably causes serious economic distortions which make it a disastrously bad policy in nearly every case.

And remember, Hazlitt's *Time Will Run Back* (1951, 1966), a novelized essay doing as much for Soviet totalitarianism, is available for download on the website of the Mises Foundation.

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Jim Stumm and Taras Wolansky mention the disputed causes of the fall of the Roman Empire. For an entertaining fictional treatment, I recommend Poul and Karen Anderson's “King of Ys” series. The Andersons saw the slow-motion collapse of Rome as due to stifling bureaucracy and inappropriate social policies and customs, and not at all to climate change or crop failure. I'll go with that. Note especially the creeping destruction of the “equestrian” middle class.

The same view, then, taken by Wallace Bream in *Eagle In the*

Snow (see review).

—JTM

From: **Dainis Bisenieks** May 2, 2008  
921 S. St. Bernard Street, Philadelphia,  
PA 19143-3310 USA

Like Milt Stevens, I was there, but knew of no delay in U.S. reception of *The Lord of the Rings*. Mere months passed between UK and US publication, for the final volume, Oct. 20, 1955 to Jan. 5, 1956. I was ready and waiting, and it was not long before I saw all three books together on the library shelf. Of reviewers in prozines, I am certain only of Tony Boucher in *F&SF*; I don't recall what fans had to say. I did not actually see fans in the plural until the 1957 Midwestcon; then or the following year somebody displayed the UK editions with the eye-and-ring cover design. Apart from that and the cachet of having such, they cost less; by 1959 I had my own (plus *The Hobbit*, about which little needs to be said). By then I am sure knowledge was general. The earliest Tolkienzines that I know of, *I Palantir* and *Entmoot*, came a bit later. MZB's essay, “Men, Halflings, and Hero-worship”, was in Poul Anderson's zine *The Alif* (or was it *The Zed?*). For how many fans here did the most persuasive knowledge come from British fans? Hard to say. My late wife, with no fannish contacts, got the US editions fairly early. In *TT* and *RK* I see “Printed in Great Britain” with no indications; *FR* had been lost and was replaced by a later U.S. printing.

But meanwhile, back then I had realized that between those who are deeply affected by Tolkien and those who cannot there is bound to be a deep gulf of incomprehension. I had to find rapport on this basis; it was absolutely necessary — though, sadly, it has proved not to be sufficient or decisive. It's like being of the same religion. So it was that I parted with successive sets of Tolkien, being left at the last with fourth printings (1969) of the UK edition. Once indeed the young woman I had just met stole my line; I responded with the countersign, “Elen sila . . .” My first great love responded feelingly to the book, less so to me, and married someone else. After some years I got a letter which pointedly asked nothing and offered nothing, but in any event told how the marriage had proved inharmonious. I determined then to keep nourishing her imagination — as nobody else was doing — and did so for many years. To a later lost love I could say upon parting, “Whatever you do, don't marry anyone who doesn't understand about hobbits.” But to continue, after Betsy's death I learned that the inharmonious marriage had, after some forty years, ended in divorce. We're in the same tale still.

I entirely believe what Rebecca West wrote in *Black Lamb and Grey Falcon*, that we want our lives to have story-shape, with form and meaning. We wouldn't want to say, “And then I never saw or heard from her again.” It's enough said, really, that for me she fills the blank in “I must tell \_\_\_\_\_ about this.” I do so in a couple of phone calls each week, and hear

of her little doings. Four hundred miles separate us, for now. I will give no further reports until something absolutely decisive is actually done. I tell this much lest people suspect emptiness and inanition.

Behold! We are not bound for ever to the circles of the world, and beyond them is more than memory.

A splendid recent book find was *The Cockney*, by Julian Franklyn (London, 1953), which I read at a college library many years ago. It is a book founded in affection and thorough knowledge; in considerable degree it sets out to correct errors and stereotypes. I can't begin to tell of what I found in it.

That was \$3 at a sale of donated books; I thought it worth while to spend all of \$9 for a thick, square paperback, the DK Ultimate Visual Dictionary. A "naming of parts" thing. About half of it is taken up with natural history, presented so sketchily that you could get little from it if you didn't know already. The other half is human artifacts and activities. Among omissions I noted civil engineering, agriculture, and couture of whatever altitude. So if you want to see in context what a coultur or a ruche is, you'll have to go somewhere else. Was ever a book so full of couture as *Gaudy Night*? All that remains a mystery to me.

How about the Zimiamvia Trilogy? And that has meals in equal detail.

A 25¢ library discard and a nice clean copy: *A Ramble Through My War: Anzio and Other Joys* by Charles F. Marshall (Louisiana State U.P., 1988). With a thorough knowledge of German, the author was an Intelligence officer, working his way up to generals and field marshals at war's end. "What a waste!" is a recurring theme.

But at the present day, what accommodation is there with men who gleefully jump up and down brandishing their weapons? Least of all for men of like inclinations but opposite politics . . .

We have civilization when some at least — a saving remnant — can meaningfully throw away advantage: at an extreme, leaving the ranks of persecutors even when that means joining the ranks of victims. For a Moslem to do this would be to lay down the sword of Islam. I do not say that none have done so! But Islam is still largely a triumphalist religion. What apart the potent bribe of Paradise has in this, I do not know; I have only tidings, suspicions, God does not bribe!

There appears to be a streak of Manicheanism in Islam (and not only in Islam): the belief that the world and the flesh are under the dominion of the Adversary; that his temptations are intrinsically stronger than the Word of God, which therefore must be protected by police methods. It is assumed, for instance, that any time a woman is alone with a man, they will be Up To Something. Concupiscence is dealt with by making all women equally ugly. Some of us, on the other

hand, believe that a man can learn to be a gentleman, meaning one who treats every woman like a lady. (There has been another sort of "gentleman", who sharply differentiates himself from non-gentlemen. The other kind cannot be challenged to a duel, having by definition no honor. An event of May 22, 1856, offers a case in point.)

Footnote: That was when Congressman Preston Brooks (D-SC) caned Senator Charles Sumner (D-MA) on the floor of the Senate.

Just how such an education might proceed — and, correspondingly, for young women — is an interesting question; but assuredly it begins in the family, in which the worth of one's spouse can be affirmed. Can a Moslem then be a gentleman, having never had any knowledge of a woman who owns herself, who commands herself? Where does a Moslem think that his own worth resides?

Knowing about the belief that burqa-less women are "uncovered meat", who can be raped since it was their fault, shows how far this process has to go.

Back to such trifles as books. I've been reading up on Napoleon from Moscow to abdication, having for this purpose Caulaincourt and Ségur, who were there; and *Imperial Sunset* by R. F. Delderfield, a pretty good storyteller but careless writer. "Fermented" for "fomented" is not easily forgotten. Names are misspelled, and in general he often fails to make his symbols tally. This lapidary, or is that gnostic, phrase comes from Robert Graves.

A general complaint about books covering this era in history is that names are never reduced to a system but (excepting capital cities) spelled as found in the sources. Transliterations from Russian are French-style, with some concessions to German. Kutusof or Kutuzov? Orcha or Orsha?

Proofreading continues. Another Clark Ashton Smith collection. Klarkash-Ton didn't rightly orchestrate his prose; didn't know when to give his battery its 350 bars rest. More fantastical romances in the Juno Books series. Some of the writers go in for Naming of Parts, everything except the cervix. Which actually was named in a slushpile gem — the collection of extracts made by George Scithers' crew at *Asimov's* and *Amazing* has passed into my keeping. But my favorite remains the punchline, "I sentence you to be scraped." My discovery, as it happens.

In TV news not long ago was a bit about Fundamentalists' children being sent to natural history museums, where they affirmed: "How do we know the Earth is 5000 years old? The Bible tells us so." It's probably too late for flat earthing (the Boer leaders Joshua Slocum met on his voyage were flat-earthers) but can any be inveigled into affirming that the Sun goes around the Earth? After all, Joshua made the Sun stand still.

Even if you brought in Sir Robin Knox-Johnston [Sir William Robert Pat "Robin" Knox-Johnston, C.B.E.], winner of the Times Round the World contest, and Sir Ran Fiennes [Sir Ranulph Twistleton-Wykeham-Fiennes, Bt. O.B.E.], first to go pole to pole and home again, they still wouldn't believe it.

—JTM

From: **Richard Dengrove** May 11, 2008  
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Enjoyed April's *Alexiad*, as I have all of them.

Will anachronisms that stick out like sore thumbs cause me to stop reading a novel. Would Harold II fighting the Duke of Wellington, or a crossword puzzle in Jack the Ripper's time? They won't necessarily stop me from reading for entertainment. The novel might even be more entertaining because of all the anachronisms. They would probably stop me from reading for history, though.

In World War II, should we have required of Germany unconditional surrender? Sefton Delmer says we shouldn't have. I disagree. Didn't we have to keep up our alliance with Russia?

I was considering giving this reason too: we couldn't have trusted Hitler. He was notorious for doubledealing. Of course, whether he could wriggle out would depend on what the conditions of surrender were. A conditional surrender might still mean that the Germans would have to hand Hitler over.

There is a certain romance in the view that says Germany could have conquered Britain, and the world, even though the logistics were not right. It presumes that Will will conquer all. Hitler believed that. Which was why he was defeated.

Specifically, I gather his view was that his troops, who were so spiritually motivated, could easily defeat the materialistic Americans and the more numerous Russian *untersmenschen*.

Of course, the German weapons were no match for advanced American weapons, on the one hand. On the other, the Germans lost a million men and were crippled while the Russians lost ten million men and were stronger than ever.

I tend to go Jon Ronson, in his book, one step farther. Psychic warfare, as all para-psychology, tries to prove the spiritual with the material. It is doomed to failure. The material can only be observed inside of us and the spiritual can only be observed outside of us.

I realize that people have deluded themselves that they can prove the spiritual with the material through sophistry. They presume if we can't explain something material materially, the cause has to be spiritual. That ignores material causes as yet unknown.

Similarly, many presume if we can't prove the spiritual spiritually, there must be a material cause: e.g., lack of money, a debilitating

childhood. Therefore, spiritual malaise and doubt ignores spiritual possibilities as yet unknown.

In "No Country for Old Fen," you talk about a hostess at LibertyCon who had a beautiful Egyptian motif tattoo across her shoulders. I bet I met the same woman at OutsideCon/DeepSouthCon in September. She was just there as a guest.

Sheryl Birkhead complains that she has had a problem getting her tax information out of her zip drive.

I had a similar problem when I got my Windows XP computer. The CD drive would not read my CD-RWs I had backed up everything on. What I ended up doing is bringing them to a computer shop, and they succeeded in getting them all on a CD-R the drive could read.

Also, there are companies that do data recovery, but, I hear, they are expensive.

Tsk, tsk, Joe. So one person speaks for all the Arabs? Who speaks for us? . . . Nonetheless, you are probably in the right ballpark. What many Arabs have against the West is they perceive that Westernization threatens their religion and morality. And, yes, for them, their morality with regard to the sexes seems especially vulnerable.

Of course, the threat from the West has been combined with grievances against the elites who rule Arab countries.

Apropos, I have observed something curious about relations between the sexes among the Arabs. Arab women I have seen don't look as cowed as women who were crushed would. In fact, older, more conservative women, with the hijab and the loose flowing robes, look particularly formidable. They don't look like they are going to let anyone get away with anything.

**I'm sure the sisters Amina Said and Sarah Said, late of Irving, Texas, would have some interesting commentary . . . if they hadn't been killed by their father for the offense of having boyfriends.**

On the other hand, many Arab men I have observed act as if they are passive or walking on egg shells. I am sure many are afraid that, since 9-1-1, Westerners will be hostile. However, this contrasts with the attitude of the women, whom, one would expect, similarly live under the shadow of 9-1-1 .

For this reason, I think Lloyd is right. We are missing something when we think we understand the Arabs.

Jim Stumm disagrees with my views on how Rome fell. I disagree with his. My understanding is that the barbarians were in fact affected by crop failure. The population of Europe went through a massive decline.

Also, not only does their migration not contradict the idea of crop failure; it could compliment it. They could be traveling to a more fertile or booty filled area. Migration has often been the case in famines.

It helped that the Romans could no longer

bribe or coopt the barbarians. With this prospect and with a fully fitted Roman army, they had invaded or disrupted the empire. Now there was less reason for them not to. Even the army could not be trusted. I hear Odacer, the first 'barbarian' emperor had been a Roman general.

Another point I disagree with Jim about is that crop failure meant everyone starved. I think Jim has fallen into the all or nothing trap. Obviously, I didn't mean crop failure where nothing grew and nobody survived. I meant crop failure so the Roman Empire could no longer be supported. Some crops were produced and some land remained productive.

Slip of the pen. I wrote:

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.

I should have written Demand is lower than supply.

From: **Lloyd Penney** May 12, 2008  
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It took some tinkering, downloading and transferring via thumb drive, and the realization that for some reason, the .pdf you sent me originally didn't completely arrive in my inbox, but with sending the articles to my emergency e-mail, I now have a complete set of the two .pdfs of *Alexiad* WN 38. Let's hope you have fewer problems in getting my loc to open.

Our local convention, Ad Astra, took place at the end of March, but the good times were muted a little for us by the passing of Sir Arthur C. Clarke. Yvonne quickly put together a book of condolences, and it's been signed by fans and space advocates in Toronto, Niagara Falls, Las Vegas and soon in Washington before being sent to Sir Arthur's brother Fred. We hope this will be of some comfort to the Clarke family.

My condolences on the loss of Wullie. We learn more and more about love and grief when we let cats and dogs and other pets into our lives. I hope Slim is settling into the household comfortably.

**He flops out over the floor at perfect ease as if he owns the place and has occasionally joined us on the bed. His horribly scarred leg has healed up amazingly well.**

I enjoy a lot of things in fandom, which sometimes makes it difficult to have comprehensive knowledge of the field. I cover myself by saying that fandom is a continuous learning experience. There is always something new to learn, new nooks and crannies to discover. With that in mind, I attended a Tolkien convention in Toronto some years ago, and found the intensity and commitment of the

Tolkien fans. They admire the universe Prof. Tolkien created to the point where they feel they could easily live in it. There was many costumes, many enthusiastic people, and because most of them had registered under their online pseudo nym, they found each other under their own names, and with sheer joy in finally putting names to faces and being able to hold and hug the people they've known for a decade or more online. I can understand the single-fandom people because they want to truly know one part of SF/F, and Middle-Earth is as good as any other part; for them, it's the best part.

My loc . . . found out that Chris Garcia is running the fanzine lounge in Denver, so we plan to share ideas to make both the Denver and Montréal lounges as good as we can.

I thought I might have more than a page to give to you, but looks like not this time around. We'll give it a better try next issue, and see what we get. Take care, and see you next time out.

**Providing it remains possible to get something past the intricate structure of defenses needed to prevent one's account from being taken over and used to mail out invitations to buy blue pills that will enable one to make a stand all night, barely legal XXX chicks for that item previously mentioned, real fake watches, appeals from an African leader's widow to help get his fortune out of the country . . .**

— JTM

From: **Jim Stumm** May 10, 2008  
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Alexis A. Gilliland: I have never read that high wages CAUSED the Great Depression but rather that they prolonged it. The 6 or 8 previous panics and crashes in US history had all been mercifully short, over in a year or two. The Depression of the 1930s, with its massive Government intervention, dragged out to 10 years. So the relevant figures for Union membership would be for the 1930s, not the 1920s.

The causes of the Depression, I have read, included mismanagement of the money supply in the 1920s by the Federal Reserve, along with foolish legislation like the Smoot-Hawley tariff. You mention that FDR was experimenting and wonder what sort of planning this is diametrically opposed to. Not to government planning. But rather, FDR's experimenting, repeatedly and unpredictably changing the rules of the game, was deadly to private planning by businesses and investors. No one dares to invest when they have no idea what the Government is going to do next, perhaps some new experiment that would turn their soundest investments into financial disasters. If you want businesses to invest, thereby increasing production and employment, government has to provide an economic environment that is stable and predictable. Constant change does more to discourage private investment than repressive

regulation.

As for WW2 ending the Depression, it certainly ended the unemployment problem. Drafting millions of working men and shipping them overseas, was bound to put an end to the oversupply of labor.

George W. Price: What Congress does in regard to the District of Columbia is not a perfect test case. In fact, it's completely irrelevant. In regard to DC and military bases and Federal territories, Congress is empowered to act as a State or municipal legislature. This is authorized by Art I Sect 8 which gives Congress the power "to exercise exclusive legislation in all cases whatsoever, over such District . . ." (describes what became DC). Further down, that Section authorizes Congress "to exercise like authority over all places purchased . . . for the erection of forts, magazines, arsenals, dockyards, and other needful buildings." Territories are covered in Art IV Sect 3: "The Congress shall have power to dispose of and make all needful rules and regulations respecting the territory or other property belonging to the United States . . ."

These clauses establish what might be called a Federal Zone consisting of DC, military bases and Federal buildings, and Federal territories, a zone in which no state government has authority, and where the Federal Government exercises the same broad powers as states. When Congress is acting instead as a national legislature, as it always is over areas not part of this zone, it has only the limited powers granted to it by the Constitution.

Education is an example of the difference. In the Federal Zone the Federal Government may legally establish schools. (Whether that would be good public policy is a different question.) But outside the Federal Zone, the Federal Government has no authority at all concerning schools, and all Federal education laws (Federal Zone excepted) are unconstitutional. "The powers not delegated to the United States . . . are reserved to the States . . ." (Tenth Amendment)

I'm sure the Founders expected libel, slander, and obscenity to be against the law. But they expected such domestic crimes to be violations of state laws, just as robbery and murder were. The Federal Government was set up to concern itself mainly with interstate and international affairs.

I read somewhere (can't find it just now) that the very first Federal law that said anything about obscenity was a clause in an import bill passed in the 1840s.

R-Laurraine Tutihasi: For the TV schedule, I buy the Sunday edition of the local daily *Buffalo News* that has a TV section that lists TV shows for the following week. I need that because with my work schedule I tape many shows on my 2 VCRs that I can't watch live. Also tape when 2 shows I want to watch are on at the same time. I don't save them. I'm just time-shifting. I use the tapes over and over until they wear out.

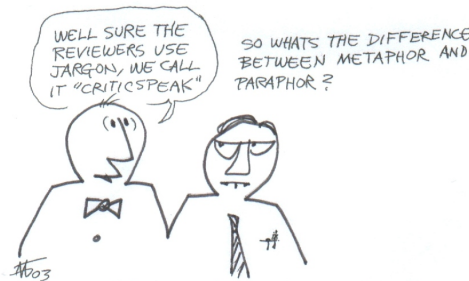
All that will change with the switch to digital broadcasting in Feb 09. I don't get cable or satellite because I don't want to pay the monthly

bill. I get a dozen or more channels of reasonable quality over the air. I don't know if I will still be able to tape shows with my VCRs after the switch to digital, probably not. I have read that Canada is not switching to digital broadcasting until 2011. I get 3 or 4 Canadian channels. So I may watch and tape them for awhile after us goes all digital.

**You don't think the digital-to-analog converter boxes will work with your VCR?**

— JTM

From: **Milt Stevens** May 16, 2008  
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In *Alexiad* V7#2, Joseph laments the lack of plot in many current SF novels. Most writers need a plot in their novels. Of course, a really good writer can get along without one. People usually don't care if they aren't going anywhere as long as they are having fun not going there. It is much more difficult to write a novel without a plot. Before a writer embarks on such a project, they should seriously ask themselves whether they are really good or just egomaniacal.

The plot isn't usually the thing I remember after reading an SF novel. In a novel I like, I usually remember the background detail and general situation. I react somewhat differently to non-SF novels, and probably remember the characters and the situation. With many SF novels, I forget the plot after I finish the book.

Later in the issue, Joseph notes that cyberpunk stories are usually behind the times by the time they are published. Yes, I recall a novel where Ashton-Tate was a big, powerful name in future computing. By the time I read that particular story, Ashton-Tate and dBase had already disappeared from the marketplace. However, I've never found the out of date aspect of cyberpunk to be particularly unusual. What I thought was strange was representing punks as techy super-geeks. Punks are red neck thugs. They are nihilistic and violent. I have no idea why some SF writers seem to admire such people.

**They're, like, so totally cool.**

"When Languages Die, the Extinction of the World's Languages and the Erosion of Human Knowledge." Have you ever noticed that books

with titles like this aren't likely to become runaway bestsellers. I suspect readers get bored by the middle of the title and don't buy the books. I doubt the author noted that while some languages die others are born. Dialects of minor languages have drifted so far apart that they are no longer mutually understandable. It is only habit that makes us still consider them part of the same language. The writer probably considers it intuitively obvious that all languages contain knowledge of some sort. I would question that assumption. Referring the software systems as languages is probably apt. More functional languages replace less functional languages. That's progress.

From: **Sue Burke** May 18, 2008  
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I'll be in Wisconsin from May 22 to June 2, my first visit to the US since 2005. I'm curious to see how things really are these days. The Spanish media usually only covers news from Manhattan, the White House, and Hollywood. Most cultural information comes from movies and television shows. For foreigners trying to understand the US, this creates an irreducible reservoir of misunderstanding and misinformation; in addition, too many US movies and series make Americans seem like idiots, which creates a lasting impression overseas.

The protracted presidential primary has managed to teach them some geography, at least. Indiana, West Virginia, and Guam finally got headlines. John Hertz commented about Vandals. He may already know that they were in southern Spain from 409 to 429 A.D., two decades that contemporary local historians described as chaos. They were finally pushed across the Strait of Gibraltar by the Visigoths, but they left behind a toponym, (V)andalucia.

Robert S. Kennedy speculated that eliminating primary elections would mean expert choices of candidates, less political crap, and peace and quiet. My devastating rebuttal requires only two words: Silvio Berlusconi.

Finally, I'd like to clarify my comments in my last letter about stupid, undisciplined, unprofessional, and venal soldiers in the Napoleonic wars. I meant the Spanish, Portuguese, and French. Not the British — Wellington saw to that.

Colonel et chef-de-brigade Étienne Gérard of the Hussars of Confians (3eme Hussards) would agree with that; see "How the Brigadier Saved an Army". El Cuchillo, the guerilla leader in the story, was probably the son of a Jacobite named MacHeath, but his strictures on the rhymes in Spanish could have been uttered by Borges.

— JTM



From: **Sheryl Birkhead** May 16, 2008  
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Of course my non-system breaks down when I forget to do the minimal upkeep on zines sitting here. I refer to the February ish sitting here . . . quietly waiting just in front of the April issue. Now, I am pretty certain I wrote about the Feb ish, but I did not make any notations on it — so I have to gamble that my memory is more reliable than the non-note! There, did that make any sense at all? On the off chance that I am correct, I am going to file Feb and move on to April!

You are absolutely right about most people and kitten versus cat. Aside from the cuteness factor (which I admit is a big one!) most people get a rude awakening about damage and socialization issues . . . along with needing to (quickly) learn how to baby proof their home. The biggest bone of contention is the personality of the kitten frequently goes through a lot of changes until the mature personality is formed. Some kittens luck out and their people fall in love with them so much that they cannot bring themselves to return their Satan's spawn to the shelter despite home destruction and hospital visits (yes, a true cat bite is a medical emergency — if you have to ponder whether or not you have ever actually been **bitten** — not nipped — by a cat then the answer is no). On the other hand, adult cats that are adopted come completely formed and many just seem so grateful (anthropomorphizing?) to have a home and love.

I have purposely not mentioned the Kentucky Derby — my only comment right now is that I thought that after Barbaro most (all? apparently not) large tracks were heading toward artificial surfaces. I believe that a few of this year's contenders had actually never even run on a real dirt track before. A breakdown injury is a breakdown injury — the mere fact that I do not understand why it did not happen in that final tear down the backstretch instead of during the pull up after the wire does not change this fact. Hopefully I'll get this mailed before the Preakness, this Saturday!

Our four footed friends move on and leave an emptiness . . . and others come and fill the voids in their own unique ways. Thank you for sharing the image of Red Wull. I actually do not have any pictures of my companions who have moved on over the past ten years. I used to keep pictures and then realized I was still feeling great sadness when looking at them even years after they had moved on — so I no longer take pics. The image of Winston (a super dog!) Or Putt (a super cat), or a whole host of others still gets the tears flowing. But, I thank you.

I'd suggest that you think about microchipping Slim, if not the whole tribe. Although most people never intend to let their cats out, it still happens. Taking a Siamese cat home, when you've found it on the street, would be much more likely than not — at least a chipped cat has a reasonable shot at coming

home if the "rescuers" are really just that and the cat is scanned.

Johnny — yes, remember the little red cinnamon hearts, just a tad hot — and always a sure indication that Valentine's Day was coming. I sent a small bag of them to a college freshman this year — her first away from home.

I am not a particular fan of nougat. I also hasten to admit that there is not much in the candy line that I would not eat . . . just that I do not recall seeing the Brach nougat. I have seen (but not tried) one or two new M&M flavors. I have made the unfortunate (but perhaps not irrevocable) decision to avoid high fructose corn syrup. I need to go find out what other variations are actually the same ingredient. I was surprised to find corn syrup (note — lack of the wording high fructose — hence I need to do a bit of research) on the M&M ingredient list. I happened to select a store that has three rows of organic/natural foods, including bulk candy/treats. I spent a bit of time looking at the ingredients of anything that had chocolate in it (although none of even the generic M&Ms were in those aisles) — no corn syrup/high fructose corn syrup. I then moved over to the regular bulk candy/treat bins. Well, you can guess what I found there. I need to look at the ingredients a bit more closely and then decide how much of a fanatic I wish to be.

"Corn syrup" means Karo® down here. The underdog guy in W. Watts Biggers's *The Man Inside* (1968) got called "Caro" because he put Karo syrup on everything. K kosher for Passover Coca-Cola is made with real sugar, not corn syrup, because corn is kitniyot. Our recipient Bill Breuer has a corn allergy, which makes his eating habits interesting.

— JTM

Agh — time has, once again, gotten away from me and I want to get this in the mail tomorrow, so I had better stop now and try to ensure this happens, yeah, with the new 1¢ added in as of May 12!

From: **John Purcell** May 22, 2008  
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Well, Joseph, it looks like I might be back in the loc-writing business again. School is done for the year, and even though I'm teaching summer classes, the schedule leaves me room to do more writing. I mean, good gravy, this last term was very busy, and even slowed down my work on *Askance* #8, which now is on the construction block. Give me a few days and I can get that baby done and shipped off to Bill Burns.

That picture of Red Wull caught my interest immediately. My condolences on the loss. We have some pets that are getting up there in years, and I know it is going to be painful to lose any of them. With luck and TLC, this may not

happen for quite a while. In the meantime, I am sorry to read of Red Wull's passing.

I am likewise trying out a new novel: *The Poe Shadow* by Matthew Pearl. I began reading it over the past weekend, and it's progressing nicely. This is one of those historical murder mysteries, mixing fact and fiction, and it is done very well. You might get a review out of this once I finish reading it.

This kind of makes me want to check out *The Foresight War*, which you reviewed on pages 8-9. As much as I enjoy reading good ol' science fiction, these alternative history novels are a lot of fun to read, too. Amazing how this works, especially since one could argue that science fiction itself is a form of alternative history, be it set in the past, present, or near/far future. Exploring the ramifications of something or other making a difference in the time-stream continuum is a classic skiffy theme, and novels like these are enjoyable. I had no idea — being so far out of the popular literature loop thanks to being buried in my world of academia — there are so many of these books being published nowadays. More fun reading for me to do, that's for sure.

For a listing of the variety available nowadays, look at the Uchronia website:

<http://www.uchronia.com/>

It's even being invaded by the mundanes (*The Plot Against America*, reviewed in Alexiad V. 3 #6; am I the only reviewer who noted all the historical impossibilities?). I can't count Michael Chabon (*The Yiddish Policemen's Union*, reviewed tish) since he is a comics fan.

— JTM

Your ConCave 28 report was enjoyed, too. Some day I will get the chance to meet Guy and Rosy Lillian; I hear tell they are most delightful company. Here's another con I would like to wander off to some year. Oh, the places I could go if I had the bucks. \*sigh\*

Say, do you think Big Brown will win the Triple Crown this year? A most impressive win in the Preakness last weekend. How long has it been since there's been a Triple Crown winner in horse racing? 30 years, I think. If I remember correctly, it was Affirmed in '78. I may have to check this out. Time to open another window here . . . be right back. . .

Yup. It was Affirmed in 1978. Dang, I actually remembered something correctly regarding horse racing. Shows where my interests lie, doesn't it?

Well, that's about all I can rattle off for now. Here's to a wonderful summer, Joe and Lisa, and I hope that someday we can get together and enjoy a mint julep while rocking on your front porch in the gloaming of the day.

Yeesh, where in the heck did THAT come from?

From: **Robert S. Kennedy** May 18, 2008  
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Thank you for Vol. 7, No. 2.

For any fans of *Stargate SG-1* who have not as yet watched *Stargate: The Ark of Truth*, I highly recommend the movie. It brings closure to *Stargate SG-1* just as *Farscape: The Peacekeeper Wars* did for *Farscape*. I rented it from Hollywood Video. A special added attraction is a feature with some of the main characters at *Comic-Con*. I've never been to *Comic-Con* and this special attraction was very enjoyable. Two of the actors from *Farscape* who moved to *Stargate SG-1* were at *Comic-Con* (Ben Browder and Claudia Black.) It appears that *Stargate: The Ark of Truth* will be eligible for a HUGO next year. Perhaps it will have better luck than *Farscape* which never even got nominated for a HUGO, either Short or Long Form (to the great shame of SF Fandom).

I rented and watched *Sweeney Todd: The Demon Barber of Fleet Street*. The actor playing the part of Judge Turpin reminded me of someone and I finally placed him. It's Alan Rickman who played Alexander Dane in *Galaxy Quest*.

I may have lost my head. I sent in my registration for The North American Discworld Convention to be held in Tempe, Arizona September 4-7, 2009. My hotel reservation has also been made. I asked if they had a lot of reservations already and the lady said yes and that they were almost filled up. Who would have thought when it is over a year away? There are a couple of reasons for my registering. I went to two of *Farscape* Conventions in Burbank and they were enjoyable so it was thought a Discworld Convention might also be enjoyable. Lee Whiteside is the chair and I have been impressed by him at SF Conventions.

Interesting review by Joe of *The Men Who Stare at Goats* by Jon Ronson (2004). I've ordered it from Interlibrary Loan. It be may recalled that Ronson is also the author of *Them: Adventures with Extremists* (2002). I had a short review of that book in *FOSFAX #207* (November 2002).

**George W. Price:** You wonder how WW II "would have gone if so many of our battleships had not been knocked out?" I think that your answer is correct. The battleship admirals would have been in command instead of the carrier admirals and the result would have been disastrous. Hopefully you are correct that the carriers would eventually have come to the fore. But, as you say, the war would have been longer and even bloodier.

So the British Carrier Admirals would have been in the forefront; Somerville crippling the Bismarck and Cunningham scuppering the Italian fleet.

— JTM

Yes, Pope John Paul II and President Ronald Reagan should probably be given equal credit

for the collapse of the Soviet Union.

Excellent catch in *1824: The Arkansas War* by Eric Flint having U.S. Senators elected by popular vote instead of the correct by state legislatures. I didn't spot that myself.

**Marty Helgesen:** Life with out the Internet might be unthinkable, but as I've told my urologist (after some 25 kidney stones) life without ice cream would not be worth living. ☺ (That was after he told me to stop eating ice cream and cheese. He now likes to tell his other patients about my comment.)

Yes, you are correct that most of the priests are not pedophiles, they are homosexuals. In 2005 I was at a family dinner with long time friends (who happen to be Roman Catholic) the day after a huge party celebrating their 50<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary. Their family was also present. One of their son's referred to the priests as pedophiles. I said that no they are not, they are predatory homosexuals. (That's as opposed to predatory heterosexuals.) The conversation then changed and the subject was not discussed further. You have given me a new word—"ephebophiles"—the word fits perfectly. A Google search on "ephebophile" brings up a multitude of sites.

**Joseph T Major:** Yes, by all means, a dinner in Denver. I've already sent you an e-mail on the subject.

From: **John Hertz** May 22, 2008  
236 S. Coronado Street No. 409, Los Angeles, CA 90057-1456 USA

The way to learn about fandom and fanzines, as with many things, is to look and think. Observe. Compare. Weigh. "If it isn't on the Web it doesn't exist," is about as reliable as "If it isn't in my village". A more useful thought is, "What's missing from this picture?"

"If it isn't on the Web it doesn't exist," shows that the speaker is hip and cool and cyberpunk, so far beyond you that you, like, just don't get it? Being like so totally connected that they don't actually, like, need to know anything? (Like the case I read of the would-be State Department intern who bragged that she didn't need to know when WWII was, because she could always Google it.)

— JTM

From: **AL du Pisani** June 7, 2008  
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Greetings in salutations from South Africa.

The weather is still fine, but we have had rain (almost unheard of in winter), and although a couple of cold fronts have come past, most days are still full of sunshine, and not too cold. Looks as if the much anticipated cold winter will start later.

Today with the 91-degree temps

I could almost envy you that rain.

Politically we are still a mess, so much so that I cannot keep up with all the scandals at state level, much less provincial or local government. And in every sport were the country is successful, there is (attempted) government interference. And the power situations is still dire, with at least four people having been killed as a direct result of the electricity crises. But at least we do not have daily rationing. (They had to stop than, once two substations blew up, resulting in up to eight days loss of power to suburbs.) So, no I am not going to speak about that — too depressing.

SFSA recently had as guest speaker Prof David Coplan, with a talk entitled "Angels Without Wings: Making New Religions in the Foothills of the Drakensberg". Which was about a valley on the border between South Africa and Lesotho, where a bunch of people are experiencing some powerful religious feelings. He mentioned some interesting things, such as that when a SA indigenous religious practitioner wants to go into a trance, he (or she) does it the hard way: Stay awake until you hallucinate, dance through the night, etc. Never by using hallucinogens.

Now the area in which he has been active is known as the "Conquered Territories", and is called that because the Boer republic of the Orange Free State took all the farmland that belonged to Lesotho in a series of wars, in the 1800s (1840 to 1890, if I remember correctly). For which Lesotho has appealed to the UN for restitution, without any luck. The interesting thing about this was that Prof Copland said that this border area is reminiscent of the US-Mexican border area, with the Basotho taking the role of the Mexicans, the Boer Commandos taking the role of the Texas Rangers, and the various bad guys taking the role of the Indians. That he is tempted to write a Western set in that place in that era, and call it a Southern.

It was about two days later that I remembered some books from my youth, that almost fit this template, a Western set in South Africa: *Temmers van die Woestyn* (Tamers of the desert), which take place in the Northern Cape, roughly in the area of Upington today. In South Africa, the lower Orange River area was the last part of the country to be settled, since it is semi-desert. Along the river banks there was much opportunity for bad people to hide, and it was one of the last untamed parts of South Africa, with Scotty Smith operating as a livestock thief and swindler into the first decade of the twentieth century.

In any way, back to the pulps of my youth. These books were first published much earlier, in normal paperback. I do not know when exactly they were published, but any time from about 1925 to 1955 fits the time line. And in the late 1970s, early 1980s they were re-published, this time as pulps, looking surprisingly enough much like a copy of *Analog*, except thinner, and only having a single short novel in it. All were written in Afrikaans, and there were a number of novels in each series. *Temmers van die Woestyn*,

mentioned above, was the Western, with a male/female pair of lawmen brining law to the untamed wilderness. I cannot remember if they started out married, or marry in the course of the series.

Then there was *Rooi Jan* (Red John), the equivalent of Tarzan among the Voortrekkers. He was brought up outside of civilisation, and wandered around in a loincloth, carrying a knife. His girlfriend dressed as a man, rode like a man, and carried a rifle. There was also *Swart Luiperd* (Black Leopard), a guy who also was the mysterious stranger walking around wearing a leopard head as mask. He started out single, but eventually married. A much later book in the series takes place in exotic South America, where he, his wife and son are assisting in an expedition.

**"A guy named John who was brought up outside of civilization, and wandered around in a loincloth, carrying a knife," describes Tarzan — John Clayton, Lord Greystoke. Kreegah!**

*Swerwerspeurder* (Wanderer detective) was a more conventional PI series set in (then) contemporary South Africa, with the unmarried hero doing his thing. And *Die Sahara Avontuurreeks* (The Sahara Adventure series), which is about a group of people in the French Foreign Legion, presumably in Algeria, since they are always fighting Arabs. The main character is a South African, but his two buddies are a German and an Englishman, with their French Lieutenant.

So much for nostalgia.

I have recently been struggling with my reading, reading much less fiction than before, and doing most of my reading online, reading blogs and articles on the Internet. So much so that I currently have about ten books in my to-read pile, with very little enthusiasm about going to read them someday.

And then I read a book that I devoured in three days. All 1200 pages. *Reaper's Gale*, by Steven Erikson. Have any of you read anything by Erikson? I have heard that he is much more popular outside of the US than inside it, with at least one publisher having told him to his face that his books are too complex for Americans to read. (That was before Tor decided to publish him, in the US.)

Winding down: When reading the list of Hugo nominees, I was struck by how much better I find the visual categories than the written ones. Of the Best Dramatic Presentation, Long form nominees I had seen three, and think that two would make good winners. Of the Best Novel nominees, I have read one, (which I found awful), plan to read two, but do not know if any is worthy of winning. And in the shorter form, the writing nominees do not excite me at all. (Incidentally, am I wrong in thinking that the authors for Best Novel all have impeccable leftist credentials?)

R-Laurraine Tutihasi: We have a saying about complaining while carrying a white bread under you arm, meaning that you are privileged,

yet still complaining and unhappy. South Africa is a beautiful place, having managed to preserve and keep some of our wildlife heritage. But I am one of the privileged few in South Africa, having very little idea of what is going on in place as little as ten kilometers away from my house, if not almost next door. Partly that is because I am just not interested, having had too many people try and lay a guilt trip on me to "care". And partly it is because I am immersed in my work, working to make South Africa a better place, on my own modest scale. Of the latest violence against (illegal and otherwise) immigrants, my only contact with that has been my contributions to my church to go and help. It has not affected me, nor is it likely to affect me. Yet there are people that have been murdered, or lost their businesses and possessions.

Taras Wolansky: I have thought of moving somewhere else. My problem is that it has not yet become bad enough for me to move, and I am still hoping of making a difference. If I ever give up hope, I shall probably leave. I just do not know where to. Of all the places in the world, the USA is probably the place that I would move to, should I have to. Yet too much of how I see myself is entangled in Africa. I am single, so I do not worry about my own children's future and prospects. I am too young to be too affected by affirmative action at management level, and too old to be affected by it at job entry level. In fact, the economy has recently turned, making this a seller's market for job seekers with the right qualifications, which I currently have. I am holding on.

Joseph Major: Van der Merwe jokes are still around, and probably will be for a long time. But much of the environment and culture from which he came is gone, that to some extent the real van der Merwe jokes are pure nostalgia. In the mean time, I have seen "Vernon Koekemoer" in two television ads. One in which he is just a character in the background, and one in which he is the main character, with a Chuck Norris look alike appearing as well.

It has been good to hear from you all. God bless and keep you.

**We hope to see you in Chicago or Texas.**

— JTM

#### WAHF:

**Lloyd Daub**, with various items of interest.

**Pat McCray**, sending his thanks.

**Anthony G. Williams**, with thanks.

"Good morning, ladies and gentlemen. I am your reporter, Johnson Wraxx, and I am here at the Mumblesford Village chemists, and I am speaking with . . ."

"O'Toole. Cedric O'Toole."

"Thank you, Mr O'Toole. May I —"

"Please, call me Cee!"

"Err, thank you, Cee. May I confirm that you have just purchased a package of Beano, please?"

"Spot on, man! That's Beano, spot on!"

"And may I enquire why you have purchased this Beano, please?"

"Good Lord, man! Why does anybody get Beano?"

"You mean . . ."

"Spot on! I'm talking the tuba section of the London Philharmonic all night long, otherwise."

"My word, Cee!"

"And with Beano, not even one solitary piccolo!"

"Most impressive, Cee. Most impressive."

"Spot on!"

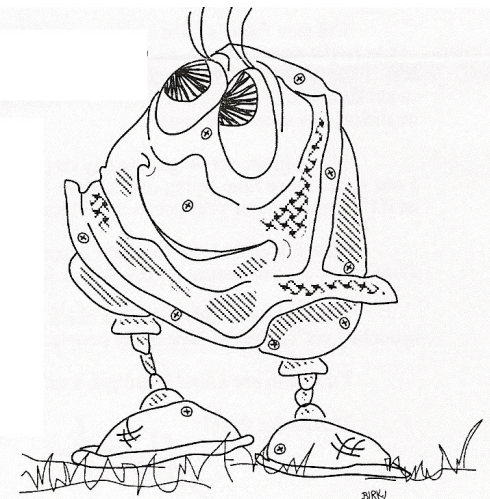
"Are you married, Cee?"

"No, sir. Been single since my fiancée left me under a cloud."

"Hmmm . . . In that case, Cee, why do you bother?"

"Public duty, sir. Just doing my part to reduce Cee O'Toole emissions."

"Thank you, Cee."



**Egoboo is the currency of fandom ... be a Bhig Spender!**

## KENOBI'S PEOPLE

It was a cold, rainy night in the town of Glienicke, on the planet Havel. Kenobi felt the cold in his bones. He had been on Tatooine too long, his vigor had failed him in the warmth.

He stamped his feet, adjusted his cowl to keep the drip off his face, and then said to Be-Ton Chay, "What's next for them?"

"The Commercial Sector," the other Jedi, one of those who had gone to ground after the dire events on Coruscant, said. "They say there, 'The Emperor is very far away.'"

"Not with the power of the Dark Side. Is that them?"

One of the Emperor's strange counsellor's subordinates could be seen there at the end of the street. "They were instructed to come over one at a time. That's the droid."

As the droid approached Kenobi could make out his set, rigid features. He was built to a more human resemblance than droids usually were; but his odd eyes and pallid skin set him apart. Still, there were humans like that amid all the planets of the . . . Kenobi still found it hard to say "empire".

The droid was glancing around the streets with a certain bewilderment. When his eyes lit on the two Jedi standing there, he said, "I have not seen this sort of climate in some time. They don't let us out much."

Be-Ton Chay pointed, and the droid went on. They waited and then the **tlhIngan** approached, grim and ferocious. He looked curiously deprived, his primitive edged weapons having been taken from him. He saw them and said, "The Emperor hides his face, he has no honor. **quv Huth HoHbogh tlhIngan 'ach qabDaj 'angbe'bogh.**"

"There will be honor in time," Kenobi said, and Be-Ton Chay pointed. The **tlhIngan** stalked off, his honor still offended.

"I said one at a time!" Be-Ton Chay groaned, and they looked up to see the counsellor's counsellor and the counsellor's assistant walking down the rainy street together, the man and the woman lost in each other's eyes.

They passed, noticing nothing but themselves. "The Force is strong in that woman," Kenobi said.

For a moment, they waited for yet another, but the endlessly capable young man had gone to work on the rumored superweapon the Emperor spoke of in veiled terms, the ship capable of destroying an entire planet. He was reveling in the chance to display his skills, they heard.

A figure appeared in the dim light and approached. For a moment Kenobi wished for the Clone Troopers to appear, to level their blasters and cut Picard down where he stood. All the betrayals, all the massacres, all the killings, all the ruination, on the shoulders of this utterly alien who was so totally human.

Picard continued walking, slowly, unmolested. He drew closer, Kenobi saw his face, aged and weary and travelled, the bare scalp beaded with drops of rain. They faced each other; they were perhaps an arm's length apart. They exchanged a glance, and perhaps each in that glimpse did see in the other something of himself.

Then Picard was gone, taken off to the dubious security of the Commercial Sector, where everything was for sale. He seemed to have acquired already the submissive manner of a prisoner. It must have been the company he had been keeping.

"Kenobi, you won!" said Be-Ton Chay as they walked towards the land speeder.

"Did I? Yes. Yes, well I suppose I did."

— Not by David Cornwell, George Lucas, or Gene Roddenberry

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