

ALEXIAD

(ΑΛΞΙΑΣ)

\$2.00

Slim is lying quietly not far from my foot. No wild cat will trouble him this night. For KloneKat, there is no such certainty. It was his misfortune to come along the day after we had committed our empty slot to Slim.

I saw a cat today who might have been KloneKat. His coat was much thicker than I remembered if he were indeed KloneKat. This cat was much shyer than KloneKat had been. If it was indeed KloneKat he was no longer the friendly little cat he had been but a streetwise veteran who knew better than to trust a human.

I did not try to coax him. I could perhaps have gotten him to come to me but it would have been cruelly pointless to do so.

Last Saturday there were many ads for animals in the newspaper. There were not many ads for free animals. That meant most were kitten or puppy mill products. In any case I wouldn't bother responding even to ads for free animals. I've had to turn away too many I was asked to take. And every time I've said no I've known I might have been condemning the refused animal to death. The alternative is to become one of the collectors who occasionally appear in the news.

— Lisa

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February 20, 2009 St. Photini

Great Lent begins March 2, 2009

Pascha (Orthodox Easter) is April 19, 2009

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Reviewer's Notes

Things get better, but we think they ought to be better in a different way. When I was young, great-grandfathers were someone you went to the cemetery and tried to figure out who that one had been. Now, half the older generation in my family are great-grandfathers. I still remember the search to find a computer account at U of L that had space enough to run the Star Trek program; then we'd have to run the paper tape through the machine. Now the biggest problem is finding time to play a game, because there's five hundred emails from the mailing lists to go through. There was the time we discovered that if you hit the hangup button on the phone the right way, you would get on the WATS line and be able to make long distance calls for free. Now, we have communicators. And then there were the wonderful days staying up to four in the morning, when Steve Spero could actually get his hands on a big reel of video tape, taping an episode of *Star Trek*.

I had never even considered being able to actually see a Kentucky Derby winner in the flesh; now there are two that can be seen for the bother of an hour's drive, a third that I had seen before he died, and a fourth being shown off by his proud owners. Which was interesting, since I went to the Horse Park not long after it opened . . . well, I went to the building, to kill time while waiting for an interview at a place across the road. Never knew I'd be back so often.

Which goes to show, I suppose, that technology does make a difference, but not the way we think it will. A generation ago, I suppose, I would have had surgery for my intestinal problem. I've still got it, however.

Ever have that feeling that you're in "Nobody Bothers Gus" (by Algis Budrys, *Astounding*, November 1955)? I sent an email to Bill Burns at efanazines.com about posting *Alexiad* there (I might even rework them into landscape format, so there'll be no paging up and down). No reply. And in spite of various efforts by various people (thanks to Susan Baugh and Tom Feller), I still don't seem to be on the ConCave mailing list.

At least we have Montréal to look forward to. And Québec. And seeing the *Cassin Young* in Boston, which we didn't know in 2004 we could have done. And getting to see again my aunt's daughters, and Dussie the WWII vet who celebrated her 22nd birthday last year, and the Harness Racing Museum . . .

— Joe

RANDOM JOTTINGS

by Joe



I gave Lisa a Christmas present, through the charity of Office Depot, which offered another one year no interest deal. She now has an Acer Aspire One AOA notebook computer that is about the size of a notebook; 9.8 inches wide, 6.7 inches deep, and 1.14 inches high, weighing a kilogram (2.2 lb). Yes. It has a 1.6 gigahertz processor and a 160 gigabyte hard drive. (By way of contrast, my first computer had a 25 kilohertz processor and a 30 megabyte drive, was a substantially larger desktop, and cost more than twice as much.)

She's very happy with it.

I read David Poyer's new Dan Lenson novel, *The Weapon* (St. Martin's Press; 2008; ISBN 978-0-312-37493-8; \$24.95). This one is not about direct threats to the US; it's about the murky underworld of weapons sales. The Russians have developed an ultra-high-velocity torpedo and Lenson is sent to get it. If it were only so easy as a shoot-em-up or as simple as a high-tech countermeasure! Lenson descends into this darkness and pursues the weapon doggedly, but with one failure after another, until he has to resort to direct action to inspect the thing. This is when matters get hairy; he and a special warfare team are trapped on an Iranian submarine in port and there's only one way out.

This is more of an analysis of the way the world works than of Lenson's psyche. However, it is proceeding along the path of showing him the indispensable yet dispensable man, always needed but never accepted.

The Shackleton Centenary parties reached the Pole; the Ice Team on January 18 and the 97 Mile Team on January 19. The Ice Team had marched all the way from Scott Base on Ross Island, among other things reaching Shackleton's 97-mile mark on the centennial of his achievement; the 97 Mile Team was flown in then and set off from there.

... After 100 years, five descendants of Shackleton's *Nimrod* expedition have stood at the Pole, and in so doing, completed "unfinished family business." God Save The Queen.

— Henry Worsley, Shackleton Centenary Expedition, January 19, 2009

<http://www.shackletoncentenary.org>

"Whatever regrets may be, we have done our best."

RECOMMENDATION:

<http://bestsciencefictionstories.com/>

Which does what it says, lists noteworthy short SF. For example, Bwana, they review "Kirinyaga", "The 43 Antarean Dynasties", "Seven Views of Olduvai Gorge", and other of your stories, quite favorably. The reviews admittedly can be quite simplistic, and always describing things as "cool" can pall — but then, this shows that these are younger people who find that the old stuff means something to them.

There was an annular eclipse of the Sun on January 26, visible along a track running through the South Atlantic and Indian Oceans, Cocos Island, Sumatra, Anak Krakatau, Java, Borneo, and Celebes, ending between Celebes and Mindanao. The longest duration of annularity was seven minutes, fifty-three and one-half seconds, at 34° 4' 27.84" S, 70° 14' 2.04" E., at sea. The eclipse was part of Saros 131, which began on August 1, 1125 and will end on September 2, 2469. The next eclipse in this saros will be an annular eclipse on February 6, 2027 with a path running through Chile, Argentina, Ivory Coast, Ghana, Togo, and Benin before ending in Nigeria, where it will be asked to help a bank clerk set up a lunar bank account to transfer \$127 MILLION dollars . . .

MONARCHIST NEWS

Terence David John Pratchett, O.B.E., has been knighted for service to literature. Arise, Sir PTerry, and be sure to get the Luggage out of the Palace before it trips someone.

The Russian princely family of Gagarin has a website:

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

I know what you're thinking, and no go:

Are you related to the famous Russian cosmonaut, Yuri Gagarin?

No. The Gagarin Princes owned many fiefdoms in Russia. Many serfs did not have surnames in Imperial Russia and it was common for them take [*sic*] the surname name of the local prince landowner. We believe that Yuri, the great Russian cosmonaut and first man in space, is a descendant of those serfs.

— Les Princes Gagarin, Frequently Asked Questions

OBITS

We regret to report the death of **Majel Barrett Roddenberry** on December 18, 2008 in Bel Air, California. Majel Lee Hudec was born February 23, 1932 in Columbus, Ohio. She appeared in a number of television shows (including "The Lieutenant", where Gene was a writer) before being cast as Number One in the

pilot of *Star Trek*, which led to her other role. She finally married Gene after the cancellation of the Original Series, but continued to be deeply involved in it even after his death, as character, producer, and promoter.

We regret to report the death of **Edd Cartier** on of all the days of the year, Christmas Day. Edward Daniel Cartier was born in North Bergen, New Jersey in 1914. After 1936, he became an illustrator for the Street and Smith magazines, initially *The Shadow* but soon more generally, particularly *Astounding*. His illustrations of Anderson's and Dickson's whimsical stories of the Hokas are a noteworthy example of this. In the mundane world, he was a World War II vet, having been wounded in the Ardennes.

We regret to report the death of **Patrick McGoohan** at home in Los Angeles on **January 13, 2009**. Born in Astoria, New York on March 19, 1928, Patrick Joseph McGoohan, the child of Irish immigrants, then returners, then new emigrants, began an acting career in England. After an unpleasant time as the equivalent of a contract player for the Rank Organization, McGoohan became a star in the different sort of spy series *Danger Man* (*Secret Agent* in the States). With more star quality he was given more authority, allowing him to produce *The Prisoner*, of which there is too much to be said.

We regret to report the death of **Ricardo Montalban** on **January 14, 2009**, at home in Los Angeles. Ricardo Gonzalo Pedro Montalban y Merino was born in Mexico City on 25 de noviembre 1920 and entered the acting profession in New York City in 1940, returning home thereafter to begin a film career.

He is best known to us, of course, as Khan Noonian Singh in *Star Trek*, though his recurring role as Mr. Rourke in *Fantasy Island* has also been of interest. Kirk has won out in the end, looks like.

IN MEMORIAM

Today is January 28, 2009, the anniversary of the *Challenger* explosion 23 years ago.

Michael J. Smith
Dick Scobee
Ronald McNair
Ellison Onizuka
Christa McAuliffe
Gregory Jarvis
Judith Resnik

They were the seven astronauts of *Challenger* who died trying to reach space. May their memory be eternal.

— Lisa

THE NIGHTMARE HAS TRIPLETS

Review by Joseph T Major of

AN EVIL GUEST

by Gene Wolfe

(Tor; 2008;

ISBN 978-0-7653-2133-6; \$25.95)

James Branch Cabell did not completely descend into the mire of Caleb Catlism. His trilogy "The Nightmare Has Triplets", the three novels *Smirt* (1934), *Smith* (1935), and *Smire* (1937), has absolutely nothing to do with dom Manuel or the rest of the bunch. However, it is a prolonged dream, and like so many dreams, and even more so dream-novels, consists of one disconnected incident after another with abrupt transitions.

Cassie Casey doesn't have triplets. She does, however, have a nightmare. When our story begins, she is heading for a daydream; she is appearing in a play, and a mysterious man comes to offer fame and fortune. (Think of the scene in *The Muppet Movie* (1979) where Lew Lord (Orson Welles) has his people draw up the standard rich and famous contract for the Muppets.)

What happens subsequently is a cascade of strange and exotic incidents, with Cassie being loved and admired, assisted and assaulted by mysterious men of power and puissance, married off twice, caught in adventure and escape, raised to the dominion of an exotic tropic paradise, and finally shipped off to the stars . . .

And that's that. For all that this is twenty-second century America, a country that has an embassy to the government of another planet, it seems all too much like contemporary America with a few extra gadgets. Or a few too few. Cassie doesn't even get the thoroughgoing blog-Twitter-Flickr-MySpaceization that even a local singer with one song that isn't completely bad will receive within an hour of her debut. I don't expect Wolfe to be au courant with the latest computer fad; indeed, no book can be, since these things change too fast for print. (At the same time, what that does indicate is the ephemerality of it all; it's impossible for anyone really to be cool anymore, and perhaps that means that the entire system will die.)

On a somewhat greater note, the point seems to have fallen out; there's no connection between any of the events that happen to Cassie, there is no there there. In response, she remains as bewildered as the reader at what is going on.

Nevertheless, the book is eminently readable; Wolfe could write a bad scene, I suppose, but if he ever has he used it to line cans of Pringles.

OMNILINGUAL

Review by Joseph T Major of

THE JANUARY DANCER

by Michael Flynn

(Tor; 2008;

ISBN 978-0-7653-1817-6; \$24.95)

Across a Billion Years (1969) is an anomaly. It comes in the midst of Silverberg's "lit'ry"

works, the sixties-fueled works of angst, drug-consumption, dissent, and oppression that have become so sixties. (This would in turn be followed by his picaresque-planet-opera era, kicked off by *Lord Valentine's Castle* (1980) but that's another story.) Unlike the other works of its period, it tells a straightforward story about growth and realization. A group of planetary archaeologists, excavating a ruin left by a race from a billion years in the past, find an artifact that still works. And you thought Piper's "Omnilingual" (*Astounding*, February 1957) was hard. The archaeological team, riven by conflicts both internal and common, investigates this find all the way to a shocking and surprising conclusion, with the narrator learning something about himself and those close to him in the process.

And this novel begins the same way, for some value of "archaeologists". Rather, looters, pothunters on an interstellar scale, trying to repair their ship (cf. *The Wreck of The River of Stars* (2003; reviewed in *Alexiad* V. 2 #6)). They need ore to get metal to repair their ship. However, the "ore body" turns out to be an ancient site, and they take what they can.

Then, the scene shifts to the commerce between the stars; the great interstellar paths of travel, known by the names of significant old Terran roads, the communities of those who travel those ways, and the struggles of those who form those communities.

At first, the plot line of a strange uprising on a minor planet, where peacekeeping ends up putting the rebels in power, seems discordant. Then, the various threads pull together, making for a (somewhat) resolution, in a universe too big to really resolve anything finally.

Flynn has created a universe, the Canonical Skiffy Universe where there were mysterious strange old races long ago whose artifacts were too odd to be safe, too interesting to be abandoned. Let's have more.

SPACE COWBOY

Review by Joseph T Major of

STARSHIP: REBEL

by Mike Resnick

(Pyr; 2008; ISBN 978-1-59102-695-2; \$25)

Sequel to *Starship: Mutiny*(reviewed in *Alexiad* V. 5 #1),*Starship: Pirate*(reviewed in *Alexiad* V. 6 #1), and*Starship: Mercenary*(reviewed in *Alexiad* V. 7 #2)

Wilson Cole is finding himself in a quite a predicament, and in fact I think he may be in a different sort of predicament than what he thinks he is in.

In our previous thrilling episodes, this former captain of the Republic's navy, hero and traitor, has been thrown on his own resources, finding himself given over to a more and more deeply organized career in order to merely survive. As a result, now he is forced to continue expanding, with greater and greater aims.

This is part of Resnick's *Birthright* universe. As anyone knows who has read the original

collection *Birthright: The Book of Man* (1982) there is a certain constraint to it all. One's rather reminded of the paradigm shifts between the end of each work of H. Beam Piper's TerroHuman Future History and the next one; between say the end of *The Cosmic Comptuer* and the beginning of *Space Viking*, and between the end of that novel and the beginning of "Ministry of Disturbance".

Blithely unaware of all this (about the only thing blithe in his personal life), Cole begins simply, recruiting more men to his free-lance security force. The cusp of fate comes when he is asked to deal with a guy with a similar idea, one of the colorful characters of Resnick's Inner Frontier, called (quite appropriately as it turns out) "The Octopus". You're in good hands with the Octopus, for substantial values of "you".

It's when Cole finds out how much the Republic is willing to do to get him that he decides to take the hands of the Octopus and confront the Navy. This confrontation has its own considerations, and makes its own goal, which leads them all on . . .

Resnick considers his "Inner Frontier" the equivalent of the Wild West, a place where outré personalities can develop and flourish. It does make the writer's task easier, to be able to focus on the actions of strong, noteworthy characters. Watching Wilson Cole have to deal with the day-to-day routine of a junior space officer, in the fashion of (say) John G. Hemry's Ensign Paul Sinclair (as reviewed in *Alexiad* V. 5 #5) would be interesting, I'm sure, but somewhat tedious.

Like Piper, he argues that history follows patterns; not quite so much repeating itself in the Spenglerian mode described by James Blish in his *Cities In Flight* series, but more that similar relationships produce similar results. When Blish had the Okies march on Earth, the result was constrained by his model (with however a joker in the pack); Resnick may have a different model in mind when Wilson's latest effort is . . . [To Be Continued]

JULIAN, CALLAN, & FRITZ

Review by Joseph T Major of

A DESERT CALLED PEACE

by Tom Kratman

(Baen Books; 2007, 2009;

ISBN 978-1-4165-5592-6; \$7.99)

There is a critique of this work that I think John W. Campbell would have made. Hidden within it, you see, is a tale of the disasters and struggles of interplanetary settlement; one, furthermore, not burdened with the clichés of the lost ship, the kindly captain destroying all their records so the settlers can learn by making their own mistakes, the forced or gradual intentional detechnologization, the aristocratic crew and descendants thoughtfully keeping the colonists backward for their own good, and so on. Indeed, Kratman's settlers of Terra Nova work within a mixture of advanced and ancient technologies; they struggle against a colonial administration that sets out to do good and ends up doing very well. JWC would sit back, shoot

a squirt from the asthma inhaler into his sinuses, light a cigarette, and begin dissecting. "You've got two interesting ideas in here, Kratman, and you're using one to hide the other . . ."

The hiding force, you see, is a very thinly covered story of a David Hackworth type organizing a response to the September 11 terrorist attacks. That the attacks hit the "Terra Nova Trade Organization" in "First Landing, Hudson, Federated States of Columbia" on the eleventh day of the seventh month should give the reader a hint.

Patrick Hennessey, veteran of the FSC Army, is one of the victims of this — not directly. His wife and children were in the TNT buildings. Having both cause and effect, he begins to recruit a military force. Not technically mercenary except as it's the nominal armed forces of one country serving the interests of another. Then, the new model army gets sent into the pacification of a country inhabited by Muslims of the usual truculent nature.

Mercenary dreams are very satisfying. To take the officers forced out for always being right when their incompetent and stupid superiors get embarrassed, to whip into shape turbulent yet unfocused young men, to thrust this superior army against the foe du jour, would seem to be the right thing to do. Yet in fact it never seems to work out this way.

The guys forced out more commonly are the discipline cases; for example, Costas Georgiou, ex-corporal, Parachute Regiment, restyled "Colonel Callan" and setting himself up as a real-life Miles Naismith, plunging into a war in Angola where he shot almost as many of his own men as of the enemy. He'd robbed a post office, and was aiming higher. Competent men who annoy superiors seem to fit into civilian life better.

One of the points made in Dr. Robert D. Hare's *Without Conscience: The Disturbing World of the Psychopaths Among Us* (1993) was that, contrary to progressive mythology, psychopaths made poor soldiers because they lacked many of the human skills of connectivity that soldiers needed. Not just cooperation with other soldiers in the actions of the army (George Patton's "an army is a team" speech contains a vigorous exposition of why supply truck drivers are just as important as the guys at the front) but realizing that the enemy can kill. Hare cites a case of one such man who stuck his head out of a halftrack, looking behind it, and never saw the enemy shooting at him.

And he didn't even think of Costas Georgiou. As for more stable types, the fine young upwardly-mobile man shown in the book is all very well and would make a good recruit, but the circumstances under which he joins are somewhat set.

A novel about the misguided settlement of Nova Terra, written around the scenes here, could be very interesting. A contemporary thriller about Colonel Patrick Hennessey, hero of the Panama Invasion and burnout case, agonizingly widowed on 9-11, forming a new model army in Panama to take on Islamism, could be very interesting.

For all I know, Kratman did think of the latter. In 1919, Edgar Rice Burroughs wrote *Under the Red Flag*, a novel about a Soviet conquest of America, set years later, with the Americans living in the ruins. They rebelled, and at great cost overthrew the Soviets.

It didn't sell. So what he did was to change it to a conquest by people from the Moon, and write a prequel setting up that situation. (Dennis McKiernan is not original in that, either.) This is the origin of *The Moon Maid* and *The Moon Men* (1926). Did Kratman do something of the sort?

Well, like Burroughs, he did write a sequel, *Carnifex* (2007). Given that this is the Latin for "executioner", I have certain expectations about the book which will weigh against reading it.

There are many powerful and effective scenes in this book. The description of the deaths of Hennessey's wife and children; the career of Private Cruz, a Johnny Rico for this tale; the personal decline and recovery of Hennessey — Kratman has a command of human relationships that is effective and moving. Beyond that, he has a particular insight that is apparently lacking in most; he comprehends the sterility and nihilism of Islam.

There is a darkness of a different sort in all this. Behind this book, behind all of his works, stands the upbeat portrayal of the Waffen-SS in *Watch on the Rhine* (2005). To which he said that he had chosen the veterans of the 9th, 10th, and 12th Divisions because of their clean records. I'm sure the Canadians late of the North Nova Scotia Highlanders might have their own opinion of that latter unit. Then too, there were transfers in the course of building up a unit. Fritz Knöchlein of the *Totenkopfdivision*, last seen shooting Holy Boys, ended up in the 11. SS-Freiwilligenpanzergrenadierdivision Nordland, for example.



NOSEY VS. HICKORY

Review by Joseph T Major of
REDCOATS' REVENGE:
An Alternate History of the War of 1812
 by Colonel David Fitz-Enz, US Army (ret.)
 (Potomac Books; 2008;
 ISBN 978-1-57488-987-1; \$29.95)

In *Flying Colours* (1938), at one point during his daring escape from French captivity, Captain Horatio Hornblower notices with some acerbity a ship full of people he could talk to without revealing that his French is minimal. However, he's annoyed at them because the

bloody Jonathans are flouting the blockade and delivering Bonaparte the wherewithal he needs to sustain his war effort. If the chronicler hadn't been living there at the time, the Captain might have gone on to remark how the Jonathans were further empowering chaps to pose as Jonathans and so help prevent H.M. ships from keeping their manning up to barely acceptable levels. ("C. S. Forrester's" heir, Dudley Pope, raised this point in the useful guidebook *Life In Nelson's Navy* (1981).)

Back when they taught U.S. history in school, this was rendered as the Impressment Crisis, when wicked lobsterback sailors stormed aboard American ships and kidnapped good Americans to serve in the Royal Navy. Perspective is everything. Thus, for example, these works elided the hope of the War Hawks to liberate the enslaved people of the Canadas from the iron heel of the British Empire (they had forgotten that the last time the Patriots had tried that, the Canadians & Canadiens had been less than enthusiastic about the project).

Here and now, of course it's 1814, and Bonaparte has been given a right proper send-off, so Hornblower can make a visit and thank his succorers the de Gracays, though Lady Barbara probably did not appreciate how her spouse thanked Marie de Gracay. Meanwhile, the Jonathans are still raising a squabble, what what? Why not have Wellington nip off to the Canadas and teach the Brother Jonathans a thing or two as he'd served out the Frogs?

In our timeline, the Duke had had a few comments about how the Forces in America had failed on the essential underpinnings for such a programme. Colonel Fitz-Enz has him change his mind, and then asks "And then what?" In an era where AH is more likely to be on the theme of "What if the Pilgrims had to fight dinosaurs but Superman came back to help them?", this is not an unwelcome development.

Wellington might consider the phrase "Boot them, don't spatter them," one of those dreadful Prussian things, but he certainly practiced Onkel Heinz's policy in that regard. Unlike the mad plans that Lord George Germain had contrived in the last war, with to all appearances the aid of some aide from mysterious Japan, Nosey concentrates his army and moves south from the Canadas down into New York.

In response, President Madison brings up his reliable general from the south. By cracky, give him a little bacon and a little bit of beans, and Old Hickory will show them lobsterbacks a thing or two!

And so the two are met (by whom? Oh never mind) on the historic field wherein Burgoyne blew it. But this time there's more than a little unrest amid the Patriots . . .

As I pointed out, this is an attempt to provide a serious speculation about a point of departure and its consequences. Moreover, it is not done in isolation from the rest of the world (such as a reference to Uxbridge's less than stellar performance in Belgium against the renaissance Bonaparte; uh, I think Horatio Hornblower is in trouble, but not for long). Other events go more or less the same, but not exactly; as when Pakenham survives the stricken

field of New Orleans. (And then proceeds to raid along the American coast; while Sam Houston seems to be tied up, not available to divert *The Rivers of War* (by Eric Flint; 2005) against this foe.) Other domestic issues also affect the outcome. The spirit of the Hartford Convention seems to be burning a little more brightly here, for example. Those who want to read about what if Spartacus had a Piper Cub and the like likely won't be thrilled by this.

U23 — HAIE IN PAZIFIK

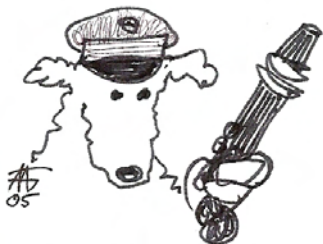
Review by Joseph T Major of
WITH HONOUR IN BATTLE

by J. T. McDaniel

(Riverdale Electronic Books; 2001, 2003;
ISBN 0-9712207-3-5; \$14.95)

SHEEP
WARS #3

"BLEAT TO
QUARTERS"



STARRING SYBYL SHEPARD
AS CAPTAIN LANOLIN

As I've mentioned in earlier reviews, the U.S. Navy tried to build its own Type XXI *Elektroboot*. The Type XXI was the German supersubmarine that could have swept the Atlantic free of Allied ships and won the war for the Third Reich, or so the enthusiastic fanboys say. This judgment is perhaps a bit exaggerated, for the *Elektroboote* were hastily built and inadequately worked up; yet from what the one or two that went to sea did, it seems likely that a Battle of the Atlantic against these would have been bloodier. All the same, that copy, the USS *Trigger* (SS-564), was even worse in performance than the *Elektroboote*.

The British made their own venture. After raising and testing a semi-experimental Walther-turbine engined *Uboot*, the Type XVIIIB U-

1407, as HMS/M *Meteorite*, they built two submarines using the Walther-turbine hydrogen peroxide engine, HMS/M *Explorer* and HMS/M *Excalibur*. Given that the jolly jack tars who manned her called the *Excalibur* the "*Excruciator*", one can guess that they would find Edward L. Beach's strictures on USS *Trigger* to be all too familiar, if not apropos.

This is what *Korvettenkapitän* Hans Kruger is trying to avert. Arriving in port from a successful patrol (i.e., he lived), Kruger is summoned to a meeting with authority. There, he is relieved of his command. You see, he is perhaps the only living and non-prisoner U-boat ace, and one is needed to command the new true submarine, U-2317 of the splendid new Walther-turbine engined Type XXVI class.

(McDaniel describes the Type XXVI boat briefly and correctly. The only error he makes is in the numbering; there was a U-2317 ordered, but she was an older model U-Boat and in any case was canceled. There were four Type XXVI boats actually started, numbered U-4501 through U-4504. Three Type XVIIIB boats were finished, and two of a larger design, the Type XVIII, were begun but canceled in favor of Type XXI boats, which were similar in size, weapons, and appearance.)

The U-2317 turns out to be a deadly weapon. To the enemy, too. The Perhydrol (hydrogen peroxide) system requires glass-lined fuel lines, with all the consequent problems of fragility under combat conditions. This isn't the stuff you put on a cut; it's nearly pure H₂O₂ and will dissolve flesh.

However, that concern can be sidetracked. Particularly when Kruger attacks a convoy and wipes out both the convoy and the escorts. A Third Happy Time is in the offing. So confident is Kruger, in fact, that he violates the *Laconia* Order and brings in a prisoner.

But the captivity of Captain David Ralston, R.N. is not for long. And then, rescued from the Huns by the Norwegian Underground, he proceeds to turn to hunting down this terrifying threat. (Would he really have Tribal-class destroyers? Those were fleet units; but then, the U-2317 is faster than your ordinary destroyer escort. And one is named *Apache* — just like the one in the WWII destroyer stories by "C. S. Forrester", available in *Gold from Crete* (1970).)

Captain Ralston and Kapitän Kruger continue to spar at sea, while on land, Kruger suffers the pains of the war as he finds and loses companionship and discovers the smallness of his country's aims. Ralston continues to be frustrated, but in the end, the greater progression of history leads to his victory, if not triumph. When the U-2317 sails in to Portsmouth Harbour to surrender, gramophone playing the *Deutschlandlied* . . .

This book is an interesting and different spin on the *Cruel Sea/Haie und kleine Fische* theme. (Or *Run Silent Run Deep* — or the German version, *U23 — Haie in Pazifik*.) If you like naval action, spiced with a touch of alternate history, this is a nifty peroxide-steampunk work for you.

Type XXVI U-Boats

<http://uboot.net/types/projects.htm>

A DAMNED FINE WAR

Review by Joseph T Major of

MOMENT OF DESTINY: ONE DAY IN ORAN:

An Alternative History of World War II

by Roger Branfill-Cook

(Trafford Publishing; 2008;

ISBN 978-1-4251-4179-0; \$27.95)

<http://www.trafford.com>

It has become rare to find an alternate history that isn't an expose of the author's pride at being the sole person who is an anti-Fascist. Well, maybe not, but at least the predominant strain in AH these days is about Fascist victories as told by the few devoted opponents.

Another all too common flaw is the absence of interconnectivity; an event changes events in one area of activity, but somehow that change does not affect other persons and places. The CSA wins but somehow Flashman is still token-scalped by a certain Sioux to cover his escape from the Greasy Grass, for example.

Branfill-Cook has chosen a different point of departure; the British assault on the French fleet at Oran on June 3, 1940. He begins with a "novelistic" description of how Admiral Sir James Somerville made a different decision; not to fire on the French ships, but continue conciliating them in the expectation that a French North Africa not alienated from the British would become alienated from the Nazis.

He is dismissed; yet before long his strategy works out. From there, the war progresses in a similar, yet different manner . . .

Some of his extrapolations are noteworthy. Thus, we have the Japanese actually modifying their grand strategy in the face of this different allied situation, leading to a radically different war in the Pacific.

Some are surprising, such as the employment of the Consolidated B-32 Terminator for a special weapon. Consolidated (now part of General Dynamics) did produce a bomber designated "B-32" as a follow-up to their B-24 Liberator, just as Boeing did the B-29 as a follow-up to the B-17, and Branfill-Cook provides a description of how it came to be called "Terminator" instead of "Dominator", as it was in our history. He has dug out an odd tidbit of aviation history and used it interestingly. Hasta la vista, babee.

Some are, sad to say, quite erroneous. The invasion of the Soviet Union could not possibly have begun on March 1, 1941 (Page 45). In his favor, Branfill-Cook does describe the results of the unanticipated Soviet technology and terrain.

An interesting point is that Branfill-Cook has told his story by giving separate viewpoints of the various participants in the various events of the war, and from both sides at that. It's well to remember that there are different viewpoints.

This book is not listed on the Uchronia site (www.uchronia.net). I'm surprised. It's a flawed, often badly so, yet interesting, often quite so, extrapolation.

FINISHED

Review by Joseph T Major of

WARLORD:***A Life of Winston Churchill at War, 1874-1945***

by Carlo d'Este

(HarperCollins; 2008;

ISBN 978-0-06-057573-1; \$39.95)

... I heard the two boys arguing and looked into the room. They were playing with a great army of lead soldiers, and the older one, a red-headed cherubic fellow, was declaring, "We shall never surrender, for our gunsh shall outshoot you."

The younger said, "But Winston, you never let me have any."

His brother looked at me and said, "Hunter Quatermain! You've been in war in Africa! Tell me, did an army of shavages ever beat an European army with gunsh?"

"Yes." I had left the camp of Isandlwana the day before the battle and never regretted the fact. Then I looked up and said, "Here's your father's other guest, General Flashman! Sir Harry, weren't you there at Isandlwana?"

The old satyr glared at me as if I'd cheated at cards. "So I was, and so was 'Tiger Jack' Moran ..."

— Not "edited" by Sir H. Rider Haggard, KBE or George Macdonald Fraser, OBE

Xenophon son of Gryllos would have understood the little boy who played soldiers:

These seem to me to have been the proceedings of one fond of war, who, when he might have lived in peace without disgrace or loss, chose war in preference; when he might have spent his time in idleness, voluntarily underwent toil for the sake of military adventure; and when he might have enjoyed riches in security, chose rather, by engaging in warfare, to diminish their amount. He was indeed led by inclination to spend his money in war, as he might have spent it in pursuits of gallantry, or any other pleasure; to such a degree was he fond of war. He appears also to have been qualified for military undertakings, as he liked perilous adventure, was ready to march day and night against the enemy, and was possessed of great presence of mind in circumstances of difficulty, as those who were with him on all such occasions were universally ready to acknowledge.

— Ἀνάβασις [*Anabasis*], Book II, Chapter 6, 6-7

This is the history of one man fond of war, for all that he was realistic enough to see how ugly it had become. Lord Randolph's worthless little boy had begun playing with toy soldiers. Lead and children could cohabit in those days,

and green multicultural peace studies weren't mandatory for junior persons. He did cheat, however, by not letting his brother Jack Strange Spencer Churchill have artillery. Maybe he could have solved that little difference of opinion he had with H. G. Wells (see *A Modern Utopia* (1905)) through some *Little Wars* (1913). He did, however, like H. Rider Haggard's works very much; could he have gamed the great battle between Ignosi's and Twala's armies in *King Solomon's Mines* (1885)?

But then, too stupid for a real career, he was relegated to the army, to the cavalry (where once there was a subaltern so stupid the other ones noticed it). From there, he proceeded to contradict all the predictions, from passing out at the top of his class at Sandhurst to writing several noteworthy books of front-line reporting while still being a serving officer.

The personal history of Churchill after that, from his Boer War captivity and escape to his service in the Cabinet in the first war and at its head in the second, is too well known and chronicled to need explaining. What is to be considered, though, is the author's take on it.

D'Este takes an almost uniformly negative position on all of Churchill's strategic plans during the later part of the war; nothing good to say about any of them. In the process, he elides the background of it all.



The "peripheral" strategy that Churchill favored was because of the manpower shortage. It would hardly have gone over well had he proposed expending American lives. Moreover there is the comparison with Cromwell. Churchill felt that Cromwell had focused too much on the current enemy, Spain, and not enough on the rising enemy, France. Thus his machinations to obtain an advantageous position vis-a-vis the Soviet Union.

And there was one consideration that bore upon Churchill:

'He suspects, but he does not know — not yet. Do you not see now wherefore your coming is to us as the footstep of Doom? For if you fail, then we are laid bare to the Enemy. Yet if you succeed, then our power is diminished, and Lothlórien will fade, and the tides of Time will sweep it away. We must depart into the West, or dwindle to a rustic folk of dell and cave, slowly to

forget and to be forgotten.'

Frodo bent his head. 'And what do you wish?' he said at last.

'That what should be shall be,' she answered. 'The love of the Elves for their land and their works is deeper than the depths of the Sea, and their regret is undying and cannot ever wholly be assuaged. Yet they will cast all away rather than submit to Sauron: for they know him now. For the fate of Lothlórien you are not answerable but only for the doing of your own task. Yet I could wish, were it of any avail, that the One Ring had never been wrought, or had remained for ever lost.'

— *The Lord of the Rings*

THE MASK OF SANITY

Review by Joseph T Major of Ann Rule's

MORTAL DANGER***And Other True Cases***

(Pocket Books; 2008;

ISBN 978-1-4165-4220-9; \$7.99)

"Ann Rule's Crime Files: Vol. 13"

<http://www.anrules.com>

Sir Terence David John Pratchett, O.B.E., put in the mouth of one of his characters a comment that may be indicative of his attitude towards capital punishment; certainly, it describes a very real consideration.

"Do you really think all this deters crime, Mr. Trooper?" he said.

"Well, in the generality of things I'd say it's hard to tell, given that it's hard to find evidence of crimes not committed," said the hangman, giving the trapdoor a final rattle. "But in the *specificity*, sir, I'd say it's very efficacious."

"Meaning what?" said Moist.

"Meaning I've never seen someone up here more'n once, sir. Shall we go?"

— Terry Pratchett, *Going Postal*, Page 10

One of the people Ann Rule writes about here should have been "up there" with Mr. Trooper, or something of the sort. In this, the latest installment of her True Crime Files, the best-known true crime writer of the day describes the problem of those who see the "mask of sanity" slip.

Dr. John Branden was a **Mortal Danger** to those around him in more ways than seemed. Some might find the "Dr." just a bit undeserved; it was from a "distance-learning" institution without a physical campus, and worse yet, he was a naturopath.

Then his personal life turned out to be really strange; he became abusive, and then a fugitive from justice after kidnapping and assaulting his common-law wife (his marital status was also strange). In spite of this, he managed to find yet another woman ... and then put himself beyond all prospect of prosecution.

As Cleckley and Hare point out, often the psychopath seems more personable than your ordinary person. He develops an image of normality, what Cleckley called the "mask of

sanity". In Branden's case, his fringe science gave him another field in which to practice imagery; an image which could not sustain itself.

Daniel Tavares was a good citizen; when his neighbors the Maucks were murdered, he willingly cooperated with the police, describing in detail what he'd seen. Considering he'd done fourteen years for manslaughter, this willingness seemed uncharacteristic. This made it more probable that the clues **Written in Blood** pointed to the ever-so-helpful witness.

And when his many lies tripped him up, it came to notice that he had stabbed to death his mother and perhaps his fiancée and maybe even several other people in Massachusetts. Incidentally, it dragged down Mitt Romney's presidential campaign.

As illustration of this personality defect, Rule includes here two very brief cases of what happens when a frustrated husband acts on the principle of **If I Can't Have You . . .**, of two very different and yet so similar women who took normal precautions when their husbands became unnaturally possessive, yet found that some people are abnormal.

And even **Thirty Years Later** crime investigation can lead the investigators into a wilderness of mirrors, where nothing quite seems as it is, and guilt or innocence blur. This chapter discusses two cases, the murder of a store clerk (who had her own secrets) and of a student (who had such prospects). The store clerk's killer was found and convicted — but was he really guilty, or did he only happen to resemble the man in the pictures? And the student's killer is still unknown. Thus the examples of the frustration and pain that come in real crime investigations.

The final chapter describes how you are **Not Safe At Home**. Traia Carr, divorced but not out of it, thought she was. Then she vanished, setting off a search that ended tragically with the discovery of her multiply violated corpse in the woods. Then, it turned out that the neighbor's boy had been passing her checks. When he spoke, quite openly, it seemed he had decided that he wanted to rape, rob, and kill her, with about the same qualms he would have had about deciding to go to the mall.



The criticism has been made that Rule focuses on "women in peril". The perils here, though, apply without discrimination, and the horrors that lie behind the mask of sanity really

do not care what sex their targets are.

VISIT TO LANE'S END



January 12 we saw Curlin at Lane's End. He is an elegant chestnut, regal. Joe took my picture with him.

For me though the big thing was getting to see Bernardini's sire A.P. Indy. Indy proved to be surprisingly gentle. He came at his groom's call and seemed to enjoy being petted by a stranger, even though my first impression of him was of size and power. He is very like Bernardini, except that he has a blaze down his face where Bernardini's face is solid-colored.

— Lisa

That Sunday, Lane's End Farm had an open house, probably for people with mares, but we went anyhow. The horse business seems to be doing well; the buildings were new and well appointed, as had been the case at Darnley last year. The farm is between Versailles and Midway, to confuse historians.

One of the stallions, albeit not one of the higher-priced ones, rejoiced in the name of "Aragorn". He seemed rather disturbed when we went into the barn, we hoped not because of the proximity of orcs.

Afterwards, we adjourned to Frankfort, where we browsed the splendid resources of the Poor Richard's Book Store on Broadway, and then home again. We had hoped to see my cousin Cayce Jones, but his parents were out.

— Joe

COMPUTER NEWS

by Lisa

Joe gave me a little Acer laptop for Christmas. It turned out to be invaluable due to events. The Acer weighs less than two pounds compared to the big laptop's eight pounds, which is a huge difference when you have a badly sprained shoulder. Grant says it has a bigger hard drive than the big laptop.

STORMY WEATHER

On January 25 a big winter storm warning was issued for our area. I went out and bought about eighty dollars worth of foodstuffs and bottled water. The storm was scheduled to hit

late Monday night. Tuesday I got up to some snow and ice, but not too bad for driving.

When I came home Tuesday afternoon I was very glad to get the car parked in something resembling a straight line. I got out of the car and scrambled into the house through the gauntlet of freezing rain. Through the day conditions steadily worsened. By Thursday morning the trees were covered in shining blankets of ice which doubled many of them over. All over Louisville the snap, crackle, and gunshot-like pop of overburdened branches became a commonplace sound.

All across the state some 607,000 people, seven thousand more than Ike put back in frontier days, lost their power. Joe, Grant and I were among the lucky few who continued to live with modern conveniences. Ours flickered several times but always came back in a very few seconds. We suffered only the inconvenience of losing cable. The worst part of this for me came when I tried to call family members in harder-hit areas and was unable to reach them due to technical difficulties.

Thursday Joe had to go out to get his prescriptions. It took us and five very kind neighbors to get the car out onto the street. Afterwards I helped one of them shovel off her boyfriend's car. I had a surprisingly good time doing it.

I finally heard from my father through Grant, who was home when he called. We got out Friday night for dinner at Golden Corral. We ended up having to take a very long, circuitous detour to Tim's. I spent most of the drive looking at the trees covered in the shining blankets of ice that had turned them all into living icicles. It was fantastically beautiful even though I knew the trees were struggling for their lives. The small ones will be okay, I think. But the big ones are in sore distress. When we got there we discovered a big tree in his yard had given way under the ice and had fallen on his house.

This Monday the temperature has eased somewhat and we are having a fairly normal day at the library. The electric workers are probably using the warmth to try to catch up.

— Lisa

I broke out the boots that I'd bought a couple of years ago and tramped through the mush of damp snow and freezing rain to work on Tuesday morning. Hardly anyone else was there. They had power at work, but they'd had power during the hurricane interruptus of September, so there was that. It wasn't until about noon that I learned that the mayor had decreed a two-hour excused absence.

Over the week, people managed to extricate their cars or learn the bus schedule. As Lisa said, I finally got dug out Thursday afternoon. And only after getting home with the medicine did I think to ask Grant if he wanted me to pick anything up, so I went out again and got myself something as well. The main roads were clear by then.

That was when I got down to making calls, when telephone service to Hopkinsville was available again. My brother and niece and their

families are refugees; their hometown of Madisonville was completely out. There was power in Hopkinsville itself, but not in Christian County or Trigg County. Lisa's Aunt Delta was having her (grown) children over so they could bathe and cook. Later on, her sister, Aunt Mildred, came over from Mayfield.

There have been deaths from carbon monoxide poisoning here in Louisville; people running generators inside the house. So no one we know has been killed, but it's been a most stressful and/or interesting time here in the sunny South.

— Joe

THE JOY OF HIGH TECH

by Rodford Edmiston

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

Time on Our Minds

Which came first, the day planner or the calendar? Silly question. An awareness of time led to planning events for the future, which led to a need for more accurate measurement of time, which led to more detailed planning, which led to . . . Well, you get the idea.

There is a long history of people gradually creating ways of more accurately and precisely measuring time to meet a perceived need. Once purely mechanical means of doing so — using devices independent of natural cycles — were available the need for long-term consistency also became more and more important. (Those of you who have not read Dava Sobel's book *Longitude* on how John Harrison solved the longitude problem — or seen the miniseries based on it — should definitely do so soonest.)

Alexander Pope stated that men's judgements were like their watches, in that "none go just alike, yet each believes his own." Note that he wrote this just before the period when the first truly accurate mechanical timepieces were developed. Good synchronization of accurate clocks and watches was still over a century away. The need for keeping clocks on the same time over wide areas was felt for centuries before doing so was actually feasible (at first through telegraph lines). Even the synchronization between one's home clock and the time one carried in one's pocket could be troublesome, and drove invention. There are many examples of "father-son" arrangements, where placing a watch in a "dock" (to use the modern term) on a matching clock would set it to the time of the clock, and usually rewind it in the process. Of course, that only put those two together, and neighbors' clocks — or even those in the same home — could be wildly different. Setting the clock to a master standard was still problematic. Small timepieces were notoriously inaccurate until well into the Eighteenth Century, and could only be trusted to carry accurate time for short intervals. This was due in part to the difficulty of making a precision piece of equipment so small, but also to the conditions a pocket watch was exposed to.

Portable clocks intended to provide

reference to a standard were transported in special cases, to reduce environmental effects such as motion, temperature and humidity changes. This helped, but even with such measures and great care in the transport, carrying accurate time from place to place was problematic. Which meant that people who wanted to set their clocks to an exact time did so with astronomical observations. This, of course, introduced the variations in skill of the observer. Long after Greenwich was accepted as the zero meridian, clocks elsewhere might give different times than that observatory.

I am privileged to have three issues of *The Mentor*, an early Twentieth Century publication of The Mentor Association. These mail-order pamphlets had single-issue articles on technical, scientific, cultural and historical topics. One of these issues is on then-modern high-tech timekeeping. By the time this January 1, 1917 issue was printed time signals over wire had long been the standard. Among other things discussed was radiotelegraphy time signals, which was fairly new.

These issues have loose cards in the front, with a photo or art print on one side and an accompanying description on the other, plus a bound-in pamphlet on the general topic. This issue has cards for some clocks at the US Naval Observatory, as well as other timepieces. The difference between Observatory clocks intended for different functions is interesting. The actual astronomical clock is in a sealed case, presumably with humidity, pressure and temperature controls. It rests on a solid pedestal, vibrationally isolated from the rest of the building with a separate foundation.

Something which struck me about these images and articles is that except for the use of electricity, the clocks shown and described would have posed little mystery for John Harrison. The mechanisms were still driven by springs — though wound by electric motors — and they still used swinging pendulums to meter out intervals of time. They also acted through gears to rotate hands showing the time on clock faces. Even the device which sent the telegraphic time synchronization signal was clock-like, with a cam mechanically actuating an electrical contact. The majority of other telegraph signals were held in abeyance while the time signal was transmitted.



For sending signals to other clocks there was a pair of identical long-case clocks (one being a backup). During this period, time signals were only sent twice a day — by wire and radio — at Noon and 10 PM EST. (Mare Island had a similar station which sent the signals at the

equivalent hours of Mountain Time.) In many cities, a time ball automatically dropped on receiving the Noon signal. This tradition harkened back to observatories dropping a ball to likewise mark the hour. This was especially useful in harbors, allowing ships' navigators to set their chronometers before leaving port.

The telegraph and radio signals sent by the Naval Observatory were rarely more than two tenths of a second off as received. The average error during this period was only five hundredths of a second. This was plenty good enough for just about any use conceivable.

The most accurate clock in the world at that time was probably in an observatory in Berlin. It bragged an error of only fifteen thousandths of a second in a day. To attain this accuracy with mechanical clocks required — besides the measures mentioned above — starting from the ground up. Or, rather, with a solid foundation, often a granite or concrete block, reaching far below ground, perhaps to bedrock. The entire room for such a clock must be custom designed and built, with the support for the clock actually separate from it. That way, vibrations from people moving and working in the room would not be conducted to the clock. These rooms were often underground, not only because of the nearly constant temperature — very important in those days before air conditioning — but to help isolate it from other environmental disturbances. The electric winding motor might run as often as every minute, to maintain a constant driving force.

Well before this publication saw print, clocks were accurate enough to raise questions. Among them was: What time, specifically, should be measured?

Natural events by which time had been traditionally measured were not divided up into nice, even intervals. For example, there is not a whole number of days in a year. Neither is there an even number of days in a lunar month, nor lunar months in a year.

Astronomers use what is known as sidereal — or star — time. Because of the Earth's movement in its orbit around the Sun the time between when a particular star rises and sets on subsequent nights takes a little less than twenty-four hours. By using sidereal time astronomers greatly simplify observation schedules. So to use astronomical observations to set clocks requires a conversion factor to keep correct time for terrestrial usage.

Many watches were fairly accurate during this period, at least enough for everyday use. With clock towers in every city and many towns, usually set by the Naval Observatory time signal, watches could be checked frequently during the day. Most good quality watches didn't need to be checked this often, if kept in good condition and wound correctly. There were few professions which actually required the dependability of good quality watches, but there were a few. Among those were the railroads.

It's no coincidence that a traditional retirement reward for a railroad worker was a watch. Before radios were small enough and cheap enough to put on trains they *had* to run

closely to schedule. Otherwise the fast freight might find out the hard way that the slow freight ahead of them hadn't reached the siding yet.

Railroads were the primary driving force behind the US adopting strict time zones. The standardization was necessary for the same reason that accurate timepieces on trains and in stations were. (As I was writing this, a PBS program on filmmakers who left Hitler's Germany and the countries it conquered showed the segment from *High Noon* where the station clock strikes Noon. :-) Local Noon depends on your longitude, but the time zone Noon is set by telegraph and therefore is the same throughout the zone.

These days we require far more accuracy, precision and dependability in our timekeeping than even the best mechanical systems can provide. This requirement is met by using oscillators far more rapid than those of any pendulum or balance wheel. A quality quartz wristwatch is a far better timekeeper than any clock from a century ago, because the tiny crystal inside drives a timing circuit at a frequency of around 32 kHz. Larger — and more expensive — quartz chronometers may have timing frequencies in the multiple megahertz. We humans don't personally need time this finely divided and exquisitely rationed for ourselves, of course. The nerve impulses in our bodies travel at a relative snail's pace, not even reaching the speed of sound. However, many of our endeavors do need this close measure of time. Trains, planes and spacecraft — Especially spacecraft! — need literally split-second timing.

Fortunately, the technology has advanced sufficiently that handling of this is normally transparent. Our computers automatically synchronize through the Internet. Our clocks and even watches detect the shortwave signal from the Naval Observatory. Our technology of time is so advanced that satellites with clocks on board automatically compensate for the slight slowing their high velocity causes. An effect only recently predicted by Albert Einstein at the time this pamphlet was published.

We may not have mastered the use of time, but we humans are today pretty good at measuring it.

STRANGE VISITORS FROM CLEVELAND

Review by Johnny Carruthers of
BOYS OF STEEL:

The Creators of Superman

by Marc Tyler Nobleman

Illustrated by Ross MacDonald
(Alfred A. Knopf; 2008; \$16.99)

<http://purpleranger.livejournal.com/8200.html>

Everyone knows Superman's origin story.

It has been told and retold many times in the 70 years since *Action Comics* #1 first hit the newsstands. Writers have added things to the story, and other writers have taken out things, but the story has remained essentially the same: As the planet Krypton is being destroyed in a planetary cataclysm, a scientist sends his infant son to Earth in a rocketship, where he develops

amazing powers in Earth's environment; powers that he uses for the good of his adopted planet as Superman, the Man of Steel.

As I said, most of you, if not all of you, know that story. But how many of you know Superman's other origin story? The story of how two kids from Cleveland created what they described would be "the greatest superhero of all time." (And as it turns out, they were right.)

Marc Tyler Nobleman tells that story in *Boys of Steel*. He is writing it for a young audience (probably first grade level), so he is telling the story of Jerry Siegel, Joe Shuster, and their creation in a very simple manner. But he is telling it in a way that should also hold the interest of parents (or other adults) who might be reading it to kids who are still learning to read.

Ross MacDonald's illustrations are an homage to Shuster. They capture the style of the art of Superman's early years perfectly, almost as if MacDonald had Shuster's spirit guiding his hand as he was drawing them. (I think my favorite illustration in the book is one of the last ones, where the cover of *Action Comics* #1 was lovingly recreated.)

The main story takes Siegel and Shuster from high school to their first success with Superman. A text-only afterword tells of what happened to them later, from the shameful treatment they received at the hands of DC Comics to how DC eventually provided them with pensions.



I know that various parts of the story have been told in other places, and it's quite likely that the entire story has been told more completely in one place. But *Boys of Steel* tells it in a way that might capture the attention of my six-year-old niece, or even my nine-year-old nephew — and just maybe give them a little more insight into how the man in the big red S made it to the page.

HOW I WRITE:

The Secret Lives of Authors

edited by Dan Crowe with Philip Oltermann
(Rizzoli, 2007, 186 pp., \$35.00,

ISBN 9780847829422)

Reviewed by Jim Sullivan

Here's a vividly beautiful art book incorporating the so-called 'secret lives' of writers. The secrets, however, are, sadly, small beer indeed. Some writers tell how they are moved to write by their desk, or chair, or flashlight. The essays of these obscure writers, save for a few prominent writers, like the ubiquitous Joyce Carol Oates, who is motivated by a painting she has; Jane Smiley, who loves her hot water, which inspires her composing; and Jay McInerney, who is moved in his craft by an ancient stone hammer, are rather humdrum.

The book itself is oversized and, for the most part, gorgeous to look at. Inside the covers, art work dominates the writing. That's painfully true with the small print used in some places to accommodate the art work. Moreover, some writing is difficult to read because of the artistic colored page background.

The editors write:

How I Write was born out of curiosity. Like John Self, we wanted to tear down the invisible wall between us readers and them writers and see what's really going on behind the page. What keeps writers going? If not money, what is their fix? What gets them high? What gets them low? Where do they get their ideas from? And what *do* they do all day?

If a reader gets all that much out of this beautiful, essentially, art book, this reviewer would like to know about it. The book ends with a biography of all the writers.

Dan Crowe, one of the editors, lives in England. Philip Olsterman resides in London where he is employed as a journalist.

Recommended as an art book.

NO SIGNS OF INTELLIGENT LIFE

Review by Taral Wayne of

M. Night Shyamalan's *Signs*

<http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0286106/>

Just saw *Signs*, the third of the "Philadelphia" trilogy that started with *The Sixth Sense*, and *Unbroken*. I've heard it suggested that it's not as good as the first, but better than the second. I'm afraid it was the weakest of the three for me. Not that the performances weren't very good, and the camera work interesting. It's refreshing, too, seeing Mel Gibson doing something different from vilifying the British Empire. But the story is a claustrophobic one, concerning the reactions of a rather tight little family in corn-country, Pennsylvania, during the invasion of earth by flying saucers. Virtually no-one else figures in the film. The family winces, moans, cries, startles, shouts, wheezes, chokes, and barricades itself finally in the basement during the height of invasion — and that's about all you see.

But barring only *Plan Nine From Outer Space*, the alien invasion is the stupidest every filmed. The aliens have giant invisible spaceships, but leave the lights on at night so

they can be seen. They can cross interstellar space, but apparently haven't invented the crowbar yet, since they have insurmountable difficulties breaking down a wooden door. They have no weapons apart from a wimpy spray from a spine in their wrist which is inadequate to poison even one unconscious asthmatic child. To navigate they cut crop circles all over Earth. While they seem to communicate with radio signals, for some reason it never occurred to them to use the same radio signals as a navigational aid.

They have one vulnerability (aside from having no credible weapons). Water burns them like acid. This was discovered in the middle-east; oddly, by people in shorter supply of that commodity than most. Unfortunately, no one knew the word for water in Arabic, so the news about this convenient *deus ex machina* spread slowly around the world. Leaving aside the issue of whether a humanoid life-form could be that allergic to something as universal as water, it's far more surprising that no one aboard ship thought of taking a spectrograph of Earth before landing. Had it been a human invasion of an alien planet, how likely would we have picked as prime target a world saturated with sulphuric acid? At the very least, we would have worn space-suits. Not the aliens in *Signs*, who don't seem to have even invented a tool belt for the tools they also don't seem to have invented.

In fact, their actions are rarely logical, arguably not the behavior of anything but unthinking brutes. Why rattle doorknobs and bang on roofs of lonely farmhouses in rural Pennsylvania at all? Particularly unintelligible was the injured alien left behind. He not only tracks down Mel Gibson, the man who cut off two of his claws, he then breaks into the place for no better reason, it seems, than to hiss over Mel's asthmatic son and act menacingly. Further straining believability, the room was full of the daughter's drinking glasses, each half full of water and just waiting to scald some incautious alien intruder.

The upshot of all this? Mel Gibson regains his faith, puts on his starched collar again, and once again believes everything is part of The Big Plan.

The audience never doubted it a moment there was some intelligence behind all this . . . did we?

Save a few bucks, rent the video.

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

Report by Joseph T Major

We note the death of **Eric Charles Twelves Wilson, VC**, Lieutenant-Colonel (Ret.) East Surrey Regiment, on **December 23, 2008**. Colonel Wilson was awarded the Victoria Cross posthumously (or so they thought) for sustained valor defending a position during the Eritrean Campaign of August 11-15, 1940. After his liberation from Italian captivity, he served with the Long Range Desert Group and the King's African Rifles. After retirement he maintained

a long relationship with the Somali people.

At the time of his death he was the senior and oldest surviving VC. There are now ten living recipients, including the newly invested **Mark Gregor Strang Donaldson, VC**, of the Australian SAS Regiment, awarded the VC for Australia for bravery in Afghanistan, for among other things rescuing a wounded Afghan auxiliary under fire. The investiture was **January 16, 2009**.

I'm a soldier, I'm trained to fight . . . it's instinct and it's natural. I just saw him there, I went over and got him, that was it.

— Mark Donaldson, VC

We regret to report the death of **Aarne Armas "Arska" Arvonen** on **January 1, 2009** at his home in Järvenpää, Finland. Born **August 4, 1897** in Helsinki, Arvonen fought in the Red Guards during the Finnish Civil War. He was the last surviving Finn born in the nineteenth century and the all-time oldest male Finn recorded.



We regret to report the death of **William Frederick "Bill" Stone**, Chief Stoker Petty Officer (ret.), R.N., on **January 10, 2008**. Born **September 23, 1900** in Devonshire, Stone joined the Navy (like his uncles and brothers) in September 1918. He served for twenty-seven years in a vast variety of ships ranging from the minesweeper HMS *Salamander* to the battle-cruiser HMS *Hood*, being demobilized in 1945 at the end of the war.

He was a member of the Royal British Legion, the Dunkirk Veterans, the *Hood* Association, and many other veterans' groups, as well as being a Freemason. In his memoir he described being honored at a number of reviews, most lately at the Remembrance Day 90th Anniversary memorial service at the Centopath in London.

Remaining are:

Australia

Claude Stanley Choules (107) Royal Navy
John Campbell Ross (109) Australian Imperial Force

Brazil

Waldemar Levy Cardoso* (108), 2º Grupo de Artilharia de Campanha Leve — Regimento Deodoro

Poland

Józef Kowalski* (108) 22 Pułk Ułanów

United Kingdom

Henry William Allingham (112) Royal Naval Air Service/Royal Air Force
Netherwood "Ned" Hughes (108), Manchester Regiment
Henry John "Harry" Patch (110) Duke of Cornwall's Light Infantry

United States

John Henry Foster Babcock (108) 146th Battalion, Canadian Expeditionary Force
Frank Woodruff Buckles (108) 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. 4; U.S. 1+1; Australia, Canada 1 each; Brazil, Poland, 1 WWI-era each. British Empire 6.

HEALTH MATTERS

by Joe

It all began Christmas Eve. We were at Lisa's sister's, and Lisa was showing off her new and her newest acquisitions (the Sony camera and Acer laptop). Taking pictures of, among other things, Lisa's darling grandniece involved getting the right angle. So Lisa knelt on a large hassock, which turned out to be not too stable. She put out one hand to catch herself, and hurt her shoulder.

Then we went off and had Christmas in Hopkinsville, followed by a post-Christmas dinner in Madisonville with my brothers and niece. Not my older brother's wife, who was not well, which was why we ate out and only went there afterwards. Which was where he got the bad news.

His son was in the hospital in Evansville with a collapsed lung. We had to go that direction anyhow, so dropped in and saw him. He was chipper (he's been promoted to a managership at a bigger Loew's, over twice as many departments) but in pain, and somewhat surprised. His mother came by while we were there, and his father came after we left.

When we got home, though, Grant was not well. He hadn't been able to keep anything down since Christmas. He was coughing constantly. Oh yes, and one of his surviving toes was infected.

It took until Tuesday to get him to the hospital. Paperwork, reluctance, and whatnot all combined to delay matters. He would be in hospital over New Year's, and on January 1 his company changed insurance.

But they got an IV with antibiotics into him pretty quickly, and when I had to leave him in the intake room he seemed to be improving. He responded quickly to treatment, and while he kept the toe, he did have to have some bone removed from his foot.

(The elevator in Jewish Hospital, where Grant went, was made by ThyssenKrupp. One presumes they were the lowest bidder.)

Lisa meanwhile went to her doctor's, who gave her a prescription for pain medicine,

advised her to get a sling (which she did), and set up an appointment for a MRI (Magnetic Resonance Imaging) scan to see if there were rotator cuff damage or just a sprain. I've been there before.

Grant had several visitors besides us. Carolyn Clowes was there the first time we came, Dale & Tammi the second, and Tim & Elizabeth came by on their way to their New Year's party.

Elizabeth, by the way, has been going about with a walker and cane, at various times, thanks to a knee injury. It doesn't keep her from work, which indicates either her devotion or their policies.

That weekend, I called my brother and learned that my nephew was out of the hospital. Somebody was doing well. However, I then discovered that Lisa's uncle, my cousin Howard, was in the Intensive Care Unit down in Hopkinsville's Jennie Stuart Hospital.

On Monday after New Year's, Lisa went and had the MRI. She was pretty uncomfortable all week, and her shoulder ached too. She was fretting to know, and afraid to know.

On Tuesday, Grant was discharged. They had tried to get him into a nursing home to make sure his foot healed up, but the insurance company said otherwise. So he's back on the couch. And on medical leave, but that's another story.

Lisa finally heard from the doctor on Friday. She had no injury that the MRI could detect, so it was probably just a sprain. The next day I called Howard's brother Brooks, who told me that Howard was back home again. (Brooks is a retired Christian Church minister; he preached at my grandfather's funeral, which is interesting because my grandfather was a Southern Baptist.) Howard had had very high blood pressure and apparently a small stroke.

A couple of weeks later, Grant went back to the wound clinic to get his wound looked at. And then they wanted him to come back before the end of the week. Lisa offered to drive him both times, though the first time he said it was too cold for her to go out.

All this makes this damned chronic floater in my right eye that's been troubling me since Christmas seem trivial.

FANZINES

Argentus # 8

Steven H Silver
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<http://www.efanzines.com>
<http://www.sfsite.com/~silverag/argentus.html>

Askance #12

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Beyond Bree December 2008, January 2009
 Nancy Martsch, Post Office Box 55372,
 Sherman Oaks, CA 91413-5372 USA
beyondbree@yahoo.com
 Not available for The Usual; \$15/year, \$20

in envelope or overseas.

The Drink Tank #190, #191, #192, #193, #194,
 #195, #196, #197, #198, #199, #200

Christopher J. Garcia
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eI #41

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File 770: 154 November 2008

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Hell I'm Sixty!

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MT Void V.27 #23 December 5, 2008 — V. 27
 #31 January 30, 2009

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Opuntia

Dale Speirs, Box 6830, Calgary, Alberta
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Royal Swiss Navy Gazette #16

Garth Spencer, Box 74122, Vancouver,
 British Columbia V5V 3P0 CANADA
<http://www.efanzines.com>

Science Fiction/San Francisco #77 December

3, 2008, #78 December 17, 2008, #79
 January 14, 2009, #80 January 28, 2009
 Christopher J. Garcia and Jean Martin
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Steam Engine Time #9

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This Here #9

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Visions of Paradise # 136

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WCSFAzine #17

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HUGO RECOMMENDATIONS



Ah...
 it's Hugo nominating
 time in fandom!!

Or, broken record time. First off, we recommend the diverse **Dale Speirs** for Best Fan Writer, and the effervescent **Challenger** for Best Fanzine.

More consideration in the BFW is due none other than **Earl Kemp** for his recounting of a very diverse and unusual life. In the fanzine category, John Purcell's *Askance* is likewise worth noting, as is *Steam Engine Time* by Bruce Gillespie and Jan Stinson.

(The prolific and energized **Chris Garcia** of *The Drink Tank*, *Science Fiction San Francisco*, and probably a dozen other titles by now, hardly needs any mention to gain nominations.)

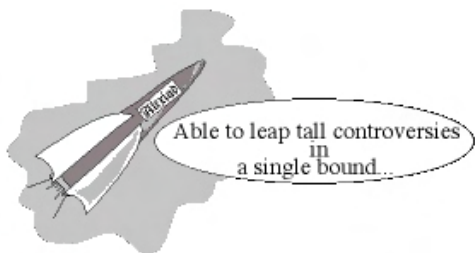
And remember, the deadline/date limite is **February 28 de février**.

Has anyone seen copies of the Virginia Edition of Heinlein's works? It had a very problematic arrival. The sales were predicated on everyone being able to pay \$2000 down beforehand. And apparently no books would be sold separately, in spite of the fact that the series contained two volumes of his letters, and letters without the redaction that appears in *Grumbles from the Grave* at that.

Then the publisher, Meisha Merlin, went out of business. A new publisher has taken it over, I hear, but the books, already behind the announced schedule, are falling even farther behind.

And speaking of behind schedule, there's Bill Patterson's biography of RAH . . .

Letters, we get letters



From: **Christopher J. Garcia** Dec. 11, 2008
1401 N. Shoreline Boulevard, Mountain View, CA 94043-1311
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My work computer when I first started at the Computer History Museum had a 1 gig drive. It was constantly getting filled and we'd dump to the network. I started with it on March 1st, 1999, and was on to the computer I use to this day by December 1st. I certainly agree that Cyberpunk has not fared well, I was never much of a fan of it to begin with, but I remember that satire you had in *Challenger*. It was good stuff.

I think both *Analog* and *Asimov's* would be very much helped by not sucking so hard. *Analog* has become pert near unreadable, and *Asimov's*, which had a good year in 2006 and an OK year in 2007, is awful this year. *F&SF* is the only one of the Big Three worth reading on a regular basis, had a superior 2007 (which earned Gordo a Hugo) and 2008 has been nearly as good. I wouldn't be surprised to see one of the Big Three fold, or at least downgrade the number of issues a year, during the current economic downturn (which I'm betting will last 5 to 7 years).

You got it. *F&SF* has just gone bimonthly. Dell could merge *Analog* and *Asimov's*: "John W. Campbell's Science Fiction Magazine"!

— JTM

I thought Bhutan had dissolved their monarchy? I had a friend via eMail who was from Bhutan. Nice girl. We talked crime novels and complained about the Sci-Fi that was coming out in the early 90s. I miss her. I should send her a mail again.

And yes, I'm using Sci-Fi from now on instead of SF in honor of one of my heroes: Forry Ackerman. Johnny's article was a lovely touch about him. I owe him a lot for what I've with my life largely due to a visit to the Ackermansion when I was a kid.

You know, I've always liked H. Beam Piper, but I know nothing about him. I've gotta get a copy soon so I can see if it's worth a nom for Best Related Book Hugo. It sounds like an interesting read, that's for sure.

You're right, that piece that opens the *After the Downfall* sure sounds like Farmer.

Big Brown with a tore foot? That's another

foot injury from an impressive horse. There really needs to be more close scrutiny towards the breeding of race horses. I've only started my look at who'll I'll be betting on for the Derby (there's a horse in Cali that's looking like a near-certain lock for the start that I'm thinking will be my bet).

Ghost Dots are pretty tasty. Evelyn got a bunch of them when she went Trick-or-Treating this year.

More WWI vets are gone, and there are only a few left. I doubt there'll be any left by 2010. It's a shame, but those guys have luckily been interviewed and their stories recorded. There was a documentary we watched, I have no idea what it was called anymore but it came out in the early 1990s and was required for one of my classes at Emerson, that dealt with combat-related stress and compared the reports from after the Civil War about 'nostalgia' and then looked at the way various periods dealt with varying forms of post-traumatic stress from combat. They interviewed a couple of WWI survivors who had suffered from Shell-Shock so badly that they were institutionalized for years after the war. The interview were from the late 1980s and the stories they told about how they felt and what they went through were incredibly similar to the reports they were getting from vets who came back from The Persian Gulf a few years later. I wish I could remember what it was called, but I think it was a PBS-type doc.

Good issue, as always!

From: **Martin Morse Wooster** Dec. 8, 2008
Post Office Box 8093, Silver Spring, MD 20907-8093 USA
mmwooster@yahoo.com

Many thanks for *Alexiad* 41. I'm sorry I wasn't at your "Faneds Feast" in Denver but at that time I was on the Ski Train heading for Winter Park, Colorado, where I ended up drinking at 10,000 feet. My problem with Worldcons is that I say to myself, "I'm in Denver! What should I see and do?" and then I spend most of my time seeing and doing things. You caught me on the way back from a Rockies doubleheader. (I brought my Nationals cap and kept yelling, "Sweep! Sweep!" after the Nats did their duty.) On the way back from Winter park I ended up with a bunch of inebriates who couldn't understand why I didn't want to spend the evening drinking with them, because I had to see the Hugo Awards.

I enjoyed Joe's discussion of various panels. Being a horrible person, I didn't see any panels in Denver. (I made up for this by seeing six panels at Bouchercon.) But what was the "infamous panel" at Xanadu on fanzines? Why was it infamous?

I had three panelists and four attendees, and one was Lisa. It was against the guest of honor speeches. Also, as I said, Tim Bolgeo was in a shouting match with Guy Lillian over why the only way to go was all email, and I barely got a word in edgewise.

Robert Kennedy: While I did do research for John Fund for *Stealing Elections*, it was less than what I have done for Rich Miniter. I've read large parts of this book and can highly recommend it as very good and balanced reporting. I did my part to fight election fraud by serving as an election judge where our precinct had all sorts of flakes. The #2 flake was a woman who thought that because she had voted in the District of Columbia in 2004 she was entitled to vote in Maryland in 2008. She had apparently never heard of state electoral rolls. She was, however, topped by one gentleman who loudly asked why he couldn't cast a write in vote for vice president! He apparently thought he got two votes! He blamed Diebold and Company for denying him his vice-presidential vote.

Sue Burke's comments about Spanish democracy were very enlightening. We may understandably grouch about all the problems of our democracy but as she shows parliamentary democracies are far less responsive to the people than our two-party system is. And was the Golden Brick Award an actual brick? At the American Homebrewers Association convention they award the Golden Urinal (or Pissoir d'Or for Francophones) for the club that brings the most kegs. The prize is in fact an urinal and you can attach a beer tap to it.

I'm glad Joe and Lisa survived Hurricane Ike. We had Tropical Storm Isabel in 2003, which left my home without power for five days. Fortunately power stayed on at the Laundromat and supermarket down the street. My busy street was so quiet that it felt like living in the country! Still, I don't want to live through any more tropical storms.

Which is why Lisa is buying everyone in the family small battery-operated radios for Christmas, and I am longingly looking over generators.

December 28, 2008

Many thanks for *Alexiad*. I've thought more about the Faneds Feast, and revelation struck me like a thunderbolt: *where were the members of Core Fandom?* Surely these faanish fanzine titans would not ignore the premier fanzine event of Denvention. But then I realized that Messrs. Hooper, Byers, and Katz, being some of the most titanic geniuses of our time, might have felt uncomfortable mingling with the hoi polloi. I mean there were over 3,000 people at Denvention who *didn't know* who sawed Courtney's boat or who lived with Ted White in 1958. How *plebeian!* Moreover, I'm sure these Core Fans might well have worried about tripping and falling at Denver's altitude, since they must walk down the street with their noses in the air to avoid making eye contact with second-raters.

They have Corflu. Though Mike Glycer told me about how the others there received Arnie Katz's theory of Core Fandom.

— JTM

Rodney Leighton: I love *Ansible*, and it makes my day when I manage to sneak an item into Thog's Masterclass. But Dave Langford has won too many fanwriter Hugoes. Giving it to John Scalzi is not a solution (particularly if Tor decides to plaster "Hugo Winner" on all his books). By contrast, Mike Glycer has won a moderate number of Hugos, and publishes an entertaining zine. Having *File 770* win the Fanzine Hugo doesn't bother me one bit.

I'm sorry that the circulation of the prozines is falling. I only read *F&SF*, but what I like about it is the deal that editor Gordon Van Gelder has with his readers — if you like some of the stories I publish, you might like other kinds of stories. I've uncovered all sorts of writers and types of stories I would never have read because of *F&SF*, such as Kelly Link. If there weren't any prozines, I'd probably absorb most of my sf from books — and have no one to tell me what new writers I ought to try.

As for computer storage, I remember spending \$300 in 1990 upgrading my computer hard drive from 20 to 30 megabytes. I also remember in *Johnny Mnemonic*, which appeared in the mid-1990s, Keanu Reeves had a problem because he had to transport 350 ME of data in his gigantic brain but his storage capability was only 150 megabytes. But who would have thought in 1995 that today we would be watching DVDs on our computers, or be downloading movies and saving them on our computers?

I read John F. Carr's biography of Beam Piper, and I don't see any similarities between Piper and Lovecraft. Piper was a pro, but a slow writer. Lovecraft was primarily a fan, who spent far too much time in correspondence and not enough time producing saleable prose. Piper might have made it as a writer if he had credit cards, didn't spend so much money on his gun collection, or had figured out how to supplement his writing income.

From: **Cuyler "Ned" Brooks** Dec. 14, 2008
4817 Dean Lane, Lilburn, GA 30047-4720 USA
nedbrooks@sprynet.com

Much thanks for the zine. Excellent review of the biography of H. Beam Piper. I never thought of him as a figure that would inspire a \$45 biography! I met him once at a Philcon in the 1960s. He would certainly have made a good actor — even drunk no one would ever have guessed that he was a high-school dropout working as a railroad watchman. He had the elegant clothes and manner of a gentleman from an *Esquire* ad of the time. I met him at a party at the home of Harriett Kolchak — she may have known who he really was, as her husband also worked for the railroad. As the party broke up, Phil Harrell and I were delegated to drive Mr. Piper back to his downtown hotel. He could still walk — just barely. Harriett's parties were always very well lubricated. We got him into the back of my '61 Corvair. At one point during the trip he seemed to be afraid that we were lost

— and with me driving it was certainly possible — but we got him back to the hotel. The only one of his books I remember now is the "Little Fuzzy" one — and that gets tangled in my aging brain pan with the Poul Anderson / Gordon Dickson *Earthman's Burden*, which has Fuzzy-like creatures called Hokas excellently drawn by Edd Cartier.

Does Carr mention anything about Piper's artwork? He apparently did sketches at parties — at least I have one such, and a vague recollection of seeing him do it. It's in colored ballpoint and signed. I think Piper gave it to Phill Harrell and it was passed on to me later. I framed it and it's hanging in the living room.

Interesting side-note about Piper. I don't recall Carr mentioning Piper's doing any drawing. It would be interesting to see the sketch.

— JTM



From: **Brad W. Foster** December 18, 2008
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bwfoster@juno.com
<http://www.jabberwockygraphix.com>

Got in the year-end *Alexiad*, more leads on great reading that, if I'm lucky, I'll manage to get to a portion of myself someday. Between the six *Alexiads*, and Ned's annual *It Goes on the Shelf*, list of books I'd love to find just gets longer and longer.

I connected more personally to your comment about finding the ad from 1990 for a \$5,000 1GB hard drive, compared to the \$10 monster-GB flash drives of today. I only just bought my first flash drive last week, and was *amazed* to see the huge storage capacity and tiny price on these things. Gosh darn, but these kids are gettin' cleverer every day!

1 GB flash drives are now found in large jars at the checkout counter, like penny candy.

— JTM

I've never been a huge candy-freak like Carruthers and others. (Oh, poetry!) I'm usually happy with the occasional Three Musketeers bar, and don't look for anything else. So I normally enjoy reading his reviews for the excitement of his discovery, but beyond that, not much reaction. Until this issue, and "Ghost

Dots". Specifically his description of them as a "pale shade of green". Suddenly it was all clear to me: these are the regular dots that come in bright colors the rest of the year, but are the ones that have fallen out of the machines during the manufacturing process, and rolled under various bits of hard-to-reach equipment. Once a year the company gives the plant a good cleaning, and all these orphan dots, now faded away to the same dull, pale shade of green, (and with faded flavor, as Johnny notes) are gathered up, dusted off, and packaged as special Halloween candies. There, now prove that I'm wrong!

Re: Sheryl Birkhead on taking medication to prevent glaucoma. I'm in the same position. When we switched insurance coverage years ago they refused to cover just about anything that had the word "eye" in it, since I was having my pressure monitored, and taking eye drops to control it. No amount of information from the doctors or other folks would convince them of the difference between "stopping the pressure from getting to the point where I *would* get glaucoma, and actually have the condition itself." When I had unexplained dizzy spells a couple of years ago, I first went to the eye doc to see if that was the problem. Then to a brain doc, then an ear specialist. But since I started with the eye doc, and even though the condition had nothing to do with my eyes, they continued to refuse to cover any of the medical related to it after that. Thankfully, we're no longer with those idiots.

Re Rodney Leighton on objections to *File 770* winning a Best Fanzine Hugo for, as he puts it, "... the 7th or so time ...", got me curious enough to go look it up, as I never got the feeling Mike was taking over the category. Turns out *F770* has won 6 times over a period of 25 years, which certainly doesn't look like he is dominating the category. (Heck, it wasn't even on the final ballot 4 times in that period.) So I think that answers the question: no one is upset, as there is nothing for them to get upset about. (And even if *File 770* had won the award every time for 30 years, then I would assume it's because the majority of people who voted felt it deserved it.) Glad to help!

From: **Lloyd Penney** December 18, 2008
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I have received *Alexiad* WN 42, and many thanks for it. As always, let see if I can be my usual opinionated self, and offer up a letter of comment.

I'd be interested in what kind of weather you've been experiencing. As you might expect, we do have some snow on the ground, and more is expected this weekend. At our latitude, it's to be expected. but, I've also heard about a dusting of snow in New Orleans, and there is a layer of snow similar to ours in Las Vegas right now. More evidence of climate change; there are times I think I should expect forecasts of locusts and frogs.

Some news I did hear for people who enjoy horse racing . . . in this new era of bailouts, the Fort Erie Raceway, one of the few places in our area to see harness racing, may shut down unless it get a sizable cash outlay. I don't know more of the details, but many racetracks have shut down over the past few years, and Fort Erie would be the biggest of the bunch, should it close.

Ooo, a whole gigabyte! I remember fans here in the 80s, competing with each other to get the best and more modern computer equipment, and finally bragging about getting the pinnacle of storage of the time, a 40Mb hard drive. I don't think they could have imagined a terabyte or more in their CPUs, and now a terabyte or more is available in modern computers for sale.

What can I say about Forrest J Ackerman that hasn't already been said here and elsewhere? When we went to LAconIV in Anaheim a couple of years ago now, we had an ulterior motive . . . to see Forry Ackerman and Ray Bradbury one last time. I couldn't get an autograph from Ray, simply because the crowds tired Ray fairly easily, but I did present Forry with one of his anthologies, and he signed it, and I firmly shook his hand, and thanked him. I mourn his passing, but I am glad I got to see him one last time. We met him at Worldcon in Baltimore in 1983, and in Montreal in the mid-90s.

I am still having some trouble with my eyes, as well. I am seeing well enough to still work at SGS as a packaging proofreader, but my right eye worsens, and with my last eye exam, my optometrist confirmed that I have a cataract forming there. My next ophthalmologist's appointment is on January 14, where I expect I will be scheduled to have the cataract removed, probably in February. You can tell we're getting old, we're talking more about our medical problems and less about fandom and science fiction.

My loc . . . Facebook has now allowed me to find a handful of cousins I had lost touch with. I now know how to reach my cousins Robin, Sandra, John and Janice, scattered all over southern Ontario. However, my attitude towards sites like Facebook and LiveJournal still stands. I want those sites, should I use them at all, to be useful to me and be flexible enough to suit my needs. I will not change to suit those sites. I look forward to being dragged willingly to the fanned's dinner in Montreal.

I have now marked 31 years in fandom, and I remember my first years with fondness because they were all positive; my first real friends, my first best friend, my first girlfriend. There were no older snarky types to puncture my balloon, and I think that cemented me in fandom. I moved to Toronto and encountered fandom here, and it was less friendly, to be sure, but I was older, and they couldn't be rid of me now. With those memories in mind, I have tried to be a friendly guide to new people who come to our local conventions and pubnights, in remembrance of those friendly people who brought me in. It's the least I can do.

My thanks to Rich Dengrove on his good wishes. I often say to people that if I had \$10 for

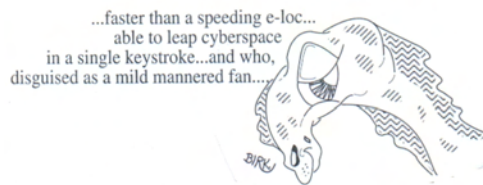
every resume I've sent out, I wouldn't have to send out resumes. I am heartily tired of job hunting, and do not want to make it my second career. George Price should know that there are three intersections in Toronto where we could do the Barnes dance across the street.

I'm not going to mention the story of EDS in Frankfort again. Rather, I'll tell about going out on a job interview and coming home to be told by Mother that someone had called about a job interview, and kindly didn't bother to give a number since they'd call back when I got in. Or when the Census Bureau decided I was too able to be a forms collector, but since I had to go to school, I couldn't be as available as needed to be a group leader, and they didn't bother telling me of either until too late. Or . . .

I hope AL duPisani will relay my good wishes to the SFSA, and I still appreciate the club sending me paper copies of their clubzine *Probe*. Such a luxury is getting more and more expensive to the average club and its members; if they can no longer send me copies, I'd certainly understand.

Tomorrow is Yvonne's birthday, and Joe, you share a birthday with my mother, so both our households know all about celebrating more than just Christmas this time of year. You probably got combination Christmas/birthday presents, as did Yvonne. I make sure that does not happen at home. We wish you all the best of the rest of the year, and hope that 2009 will be a better year for all of us. Doesn't look like it from a global financial standpoint, but any bucking of the trend is not only a good thing, but may be the only way we get ourselves out of this hole. Take care, and see you next issue.

From: **Earl Kemp** December 18, 2008
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Alexiad Dec. arrived in today's mail pickup. Thanks as always.

So it's already that time again, Happy birthday, Joe! Well, almost anyway.

Eddie Westlake, as we knew him in the porno business, was always a bit irregular and almost always funny. Heads above most of his contemporaries, arrogantly doing his own thing and ignoring all instructions for content . . . a good seller in spite of his output. Some of his

books are very good reading indeed.

I found him more amusing when I was in seventh grade. Make of that what you will.

And now he's passed on. Thanks to Earl for the original notice.

— JTM

Loved *Down on the Bayou*. Liked *Why, Robot?* Nice to know that Ellison can do good now and then.

A few months ago I reread Piper's *Little Fuzzy* and liked it all over again. A nasty way to go but a popular one, except for the cleanup involved . . . that you pointed out. Shades of Tom Disch and Earnie Hemingway.

I think I'll wait and let nature do the deed for me.

From: **John Purcell** December 20, 2008
3744 Marielene Circle, College Station, TX 77845-3926 USA
j_purcell54@yahoo.com

Well, well. The December, 2008 issue is Volume 7, Number 6, which translates to 42 issues, and also means you've been doing this as a bi-monthly zine for a full seven years now. Congratulations! That's a nice achievement. Which reminds me: I have never asked you how you decided on *Alexiad* as the name of your zine. What's the story behind that?

Alexiad is the title of a Byzantine history written by Princess Anna Komnena. There's a good fictional telling of her story in a book called *Anna of Byzantium*.

— LTM

Here's hoping and praying you maintain your office and position. Planning for potential layoffs is not my idea of a good Christmas present. That is what I call poor timing. Good luck to you, sir.

Like you and so many others, I was very saddened by the news of Forrest J Ackerman's death. Unlike Johnny Carruthers, who wrote a nice obituary about 4E, I never met the man. Even so, he touched the lives of all fans, no question about that. He will be missed. R.I.P., Forry.

Lots of interesting reviews this time around, Joe, especially the "Submarine!" one you wrote. I never knew that the movie *Run Silent, Run Deep* was based on a book — silly me — let alone the first novel in a trilogy. That was news to me! They all sound like interesting books to read, too. This was a good review because it is inspiring me to head down to the Half-Price Bookstore to see if I can find these books. I know they're easily found on the Internet, but one of my guilty pleasures is lazily browsing through used bookstores. Any excuse to do so is a good excuse in my book *har-har*.

Say, one quibble that has bugged me about your zine and which is easily fixed is the size of the illoes you use. Some are fine when ensmallled, but the Gilliland cartoons are very

hard to read when they are so tiny. If you could, please enlarge these. They don't have to be HUGE and take up big chunks of page space, but two-column wide illos would be good and would break up the text blocks, too. Just a suggestion. It's your zine, after all, and what you do with it is your decision. I just thought I'd share this thought with you. I mean, there could be a very good and logical reason why you've done them this way for so long. Technical limitations leap to mind as a valid cause. Oh, well. As the French are wont to say, *vivre dangereusement*.

How cool that must have been for Lisa (and you, I assume) to see Alysheba in the flesh. I had no idea he was still alive; 24 years is not too old for a horse, I know, and in that picture — wish it was bigger; sorry! — he looks really alert and lovely as ever. Very cool indeed to see a legendary horse. I am envious.

The Horse Park now has an embarrassment of riches, what with Funny Cide joining the throng at the Hall of Champions.

Yes, it was very cool getting to see Alysheba.

— LTM

The book review by Jim Sullivan about *Big Man on Campus* by Stephen Joel Trachtenberg was interesting to read, and raised my hackles a bit with this:

[L]ike any reasonable university executive, [Trachtenberg] rails against the self-aggrandizing bunch of academically trained, but totally ungovernable, {sic} bucking broncos, the Faculty Senate. They consider themselves the equal of the president, and, therefore, wish to make university decisions, but they aren't willing to be accountable for their actions. However, the university president ends up taking the heat for their and his own errors.

Speaking as a first year member of the Faculty Senate at Blinn College, my experience so far is that our Faculty Senate does not exhibit the behavior that Sullivan (via Trachtenberg) writes about. I am sure that Trachtenberg based his opinions on personal experience, and maybe the Faculty Senate at George Washington University acted this way, but it is true that the president of any higher educational institution needs to accept the brunt of the blows leveled at a school. It's unfortunately part of the job description when you're the top dog at any college or university. Even so, sweeping generalizations like "self-aggrandizing bunch of academically trained, but totally ungovernable, bucking broncos" are statements to be avoided. Blinn College's Faculty Senate has a very good working relationship with the executive branch of our school. In fact, we see our role as a go-between the classroom and the administration, which is as it should be. We do make policy and academic recommendations, of course, but do

not assume the position of making "university decisions." That is up to the high mucky-mucks of Blinn.

Even so, I found myself agreeing with quite a few of the points Jim Sullivan makes in the review. *Big Man on Campus* definitely sounds like an interesting read for anyone interested in assuming administrative leadership at an institution of higher learning (not me, though), and for that I thank Jim. Here's another book to track down at the Half-Price Bookstore, even if it was just published. The turn-around there is pretty fast, I have noticed.

Loccol tidbits: Rodney Leighton's loc reminds me that I have a copy of *Askance* to mail him. I do, indeed, print copies, usually for contributors, and I admit to being sorely amiss in that duty for far too long; having a busy schedule of work and doctoral studies will do that to a faned. I think what I will do is stick to an "as requested" basis: tell me you'd like a copy mailed off, and I'll print one. I simply cannot afford to make and mail X-number of copies every other month! The cold, hard facts of economics makes this painfully true. But I really do want to do much better at this.

That's the problem; a certain number of people do not have internet access, prefer physical material, or have other reasons for declining net-only distribution. And is it doing all that well anyhow? Where are all the new e-faneds? The new e-lochackers?

—JTM

Thank you, Joe, for included the mailing addresses of Sue Burke and Al du Pisani so I can send them copies of my zine. It would be fun to hear from them.

Thus I thank you for another interesting *Alexiad*, Joseph and Lisa. As always, read and enjoyed.

From: **Alexander R. Slate** Dec. 23, 2008
2014 Columbia Pike #14, Arlington VA
22204-4613 USA
arslate@verizon.net

Thanks for the ish. Somehow, I thought I had sent you a loc for the last two issues, but have not seen them mentioned (even in the WAHF section), so I don't know what's happened. It's possible that I never sent them — my memory seems to be playing a few tricks on me now and then.

I don't think we've ever had a LoC that wasn't at printed at least in part. Well, maybe the guy from prison . . .

Still drifting in and out of fandom. I haven't been going to many of the WSFA meetings or the get togethers at Lee & Alexis Gillilands' place. I was going fairly regularly for a while. But I did get to Capclave from the husband of a friend. Got to see a couple of people I haven't seen in a couple of years which was nice — but

frankly I wasn't extremely excited by the programming.

Sheryl, your potassium is too high? Somehow, I must have missed some of the prelude to this story? I haven't run across anyone with that problem before, though I am familiar with what too low a potassium level can do. I tend to get muscle cramps when mine is down, and if it gets very low there is a danger of heart attacks (happened to my mother).

My personal health is not bad, my weight is up from the low 150s it was this past spring, but not too badly. My daily blood sugar is a little higher than I like it, but again, not very high. It all comes down to the fact that I haven't been getting the amount of exercise that I would like. Longer working days have had their cost.

Alexis, please have Lee add me to the Meet-Me list (Alexander.slate@pentagon.af.mil or arslate@verizon.net). This was supposed to have been done but wasn't and is the main reason I have missed the get togethers. I tend to lose track of the days and need that reminder. The switch away from the second Friday really threw me.

Well, I have about another 6-7 months to go in DC. Then hopefully it is off to Dayton. They are working my next assignment now.

Would you want to go to the Sherlock Holmes/Arthur Conan Doyle Symposium in Dayton? I'll be this May.

— JTM

That will about do it for now. Thanks and a happy holiday season for all and my wishes for a good new year . . .

From: **Sheryl Birkhead** November 8, 2008
(well, started then . . .) — almost Christmas now
22509 Jonnie Court, Gaithersburg, MD
20882-3422 USA
catsmeouch@yahoo.com

I just got the magazine put out by the *Best Friends* shelter and they ran an article on a prosthesis for a mare they have. At the same time one of my non-juried veterinary magazines ran a piece on interosseous implants as they are currently being used in veterinary surgery. It will be interesting to see where this leads — especially since the problems are different for small animals even if the joints are similar.

Ah yes, how soon we are out of the loop!

I went to the local *Borders Books* and noticed the sign about the *Twilight* chorale. I thought this referred to something taking place at dusk until I was told it was about the book series. I'm still not sure how chorale has much to do with the series, but I am also ignorant about the series, so who knows?

I get a batch of free magazines for my "waiting room". Since I never requested these, I just look and toss. Lately, *Mid-Atlantic Horse* has been added in with one of the farming magazines. On the nearly last page was a short piece about a young lady who had a scholarship to work with a dressage trainer. Oh, the interesting point is that she rides a mule. I am

hoping they check in on the progress before my free copies run out. Should be interesting.

Johnny (Carruthers) — the Mentalist looks like a polished upscale *Psych*. I thank *Netflix* for access to *Psych*. For the *Turkish Delight* bar — simple check would be to read the ingredients and see what fruit(s) are listed.

Yes, the economy is . . . um . . . not rosy — but I never thought I would like seeing Christmas advertising up and running before Thanksgiving, but I do. It took a bit of getting used to hearing Christmas carols as I looked at Halloween candy. I would also suspect this gives retailers a bit longer to dive into the black if that is going to happen. We'll see .

I first noticed this happening when we stopped in Wal-Mart in Lafayette, Indiana on the way to ChiCon back in 2000 and they had Halloween decorations up. In August.

(Yeah, it's been long enough that I now have two issues sitting here — well, it should keep postage down! I've lost track of where I am — so to speak — so I'll just jump to the nextish.)

Just watched, courtesy of *Netflix*, *IronMan* — and enjoyed it — totally watching it and not just watching as I worked!

I guess, that as things unfold, we may learn more about what was still in the scaled down Ackermansion. I think quite a few people are wondering what will happen to the *Metropolis* automaton — it was such a part of the photos we all saw of *Forry*. While I was not in the ingroup, I did meet *Forry* several times and always found him to be a gracious conversationalist. One more gone ahead.

The visual field test is one they give me at least annually — to be sure that the upper normal pressure is normal for me and not causing damage. The technician gets me settled in, starts things moving then the disappears. Inevitably I get done and have to just sit there. She always apologizes . . . saying she is not used to anyone finishing the test so quickly . . . which is a way of saying that most people taking it have trouble seeing things at all. They are also doing the NFL measurement — and I had to read the blurb they handed me to find out about. While I am not particularly a football fan, even I know what the NFL is — but this one stands for nerve fiber layer — thickness measurement. So far, no problems, just big bills!

Um — sorry, but, in general, I simply do not like *Russell Stover* chocolates (please note that this is not the same as saying I actually dislike the chocolates). I just feel they are vaguely generically sweet and taste too similar to each other.

Oh yes, the thudding of the driver's side window — turns out it is something called a stop. My bet is that when they made the recall-repair before that the thudding was not from the covered problem. So, for now — it thuds when I actually have the door open and the window electronically going down. Since this is not done very often, I opted not to pay the estimated \$250 for the repair.

Belated happy anniversary to both the *Purcells* and you,

Rod — I also have the radio that adds in cellphone recharging — along with crank, solar, battery, and DC as options for power. The next problem was to get a cell phone that was compatible. Since I only use the phone as an emergency aid, it was not all that difficult — and I only spend \$10 every three months — worth it to me.

Yes, we should all have 72 hours of supplies around for emergencies. In this (the DC metropolitan area) I tend to think that most emergencies that area truly serious are going to be of the nuclear variety, but I *do* have a corner in the basement devoted to emergency preparedness — and just hope I never have to find out if I actually forgot anything!

Hope that *Lloyd* is now a permanent employee — *Alexiad* readers want to know!

Lloyd — *Psych* plays it much more comedic ally than does *Mentalist*. Both are similar in approach — i.e. observation leads to solving crimes — but come at it from different angles. I enjoy both, but would have to lean more toward *Mentalist* since it is closer to what *might* be real than *Psych*. I think *Mentalist* lead-Simon Baker was just named the sexiest blond (male) alive — and it is always fun to listen to him in character and then out — *Tasmanian* (well, to me simply *Australian*) accent.

Is *Turkish Delight* a cultural sweet (uh — you know what I mean)? I believe that is the enticement to get *Edmund* (think I have the right child) to move into the “dark” in the *Narnia* books. I have no real idea what it is.

Ah, must add *Marley and Me* to the *Netflix* list. Quickly finished off the *Dewey the Library Cat* book and look forward to *Meryl Streep* as the librarian in the large screen rendition.

I recently had to head into relatively close areas with which I was unfamiliar. I needed my portable scale “checked out”. The sales manager at the place simply told me I ought to invest in a GPS — without looking it up, the brand name was something like *Gamian*. He said to get the *nofrills* version and that there was no monthly fee . . . and that I would quickly find it to be a necessity . . . just as the cell phone. I didn't have the heart to tell him there are still those of us who don't consider the cell phone a necessity. Until I get all the piling up bills paid off and the postponed dental stuff done, no matter how attractive this toy might be, I put this into the interesting but not affordable pile. Oh yeah — one of these days I'll tell you about the \$63 piece of electrical tape that we are both hoping will solve the problem (or keep it at bay for a while).

Probably “Garmin” — the model of our GPS unit. Though we also have Microsoft Streets & Trips 2009 © TM SM Bill Gates is GOD! which has a GPS receiver. Mostly for the laptop, but it is amusing to plug it into the desktop and see the details about home.

— JTM

Sorry it has been so long between locs — I'm coughing a little less each day and almost back to the pre-incidents pain level — such fun.

Know that this is written (well . . .) before the holidays — hope your holiday season is a pleasant one and that the new year is as ghodd as it seems it just *might* be!!

From: **Rodney Leighton** December 17, 2008
11 Branch Road, R. R. #3,
Tatmagouche, Nova Scotia B0K 1V0
CANADA

Yesterday brought the latest *Alexiad* and the VISA statement. Amazing how often that occurs.

A rather amusing incident: the Saturday after I typed the last note, I turned on the tv, CBC, “Hockey Night In Canada”. Host was talking about some kind of mess and said: “I recall all the kerfuffle about . . .” Gosh, don't see or hear the word for ages and then twice in a week.

Thanks for the info on the zines. Given that it has been 2 or 3 years since I have seen an issue of *Plokta* I guess it is safe to assume that I have been dismissed from their mailing list. The main reason I asked Guy to drop me off his mailing list was that I was pissed off at things he was writing about me but the biggest thing about *Challenger* was that he was saying that he had mailed me 4 or 5 issues in a row, none of which had ever arrived and I figured, well, either he's mistaken or someone is stealing them and he might as well send those copies to someone who might get them and enjoy them and perhaps even write a loc.

I did send some stuff to one person; no response to date, probably none forthcoming. Given my predilections for snarling at folks, writing what I think, getting into spats and not writing at all, I don't blame anyone for not sending me fanzines.

Weather has been totally weird here. Record setting highs; snowstorms. Blizzard forecast for here today. High of minus 9 for Saturday. Monday, high was plus 15.

That is, from 14 degrees Fahrenheit to 59. Christmas week,, on Monday the temperature was 6 degrees (-14) and on Saturday it was 71 (22).

— JTM

From: **Alexis A. Gilliland** Dec. 29, 2008
4030 8th Street South, Arlington, VA
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<http://www.alexisgilliland.org>

Thank you for *Alexiad* 7.6, which arrived on or about Joe's birthday, 12/24. My son, Charles, is in a similar plight, being born on 12/27, so after unwrapping assorted presents, we took him to dinner, and the next day went out to Best Buy where I bought him a dryer to replace his old dryer which died in the autumn. A small step up from socks, perhaps, but it was something he needed. He did look over the current issue, and his comment was that you appear to have mistranslated the title, since the final character

is a sigma-producing “Alexias,” rather than a delta, which is what you appeared to have in mind. All knowledge is indeed contained in fanzines, but fans are often distracted or inattentive.

Martin Arbagi, who was a professor with some relevant knowledge, said it should end with a sigma. Thus: “Alexias”.

The economy had a bad year, the worst since 1931, as an impressive \$7.3 trillion vanished from the Wilshire 5000, with the market as a whole going down 36 percent. The short version of what I think happened is that back in 1986 some very smart people figured out how to pass on risk from their company to the economy as a whole, and they got rich doing it. This inspired some less creative (but still pretty smart) people to do the same thing, and they also made lots and lots of money. Monkey see, monkey do, and eventually the chimps (or do I mean chumps?) of Wall Street loaded the economy with so much risk that it collapsed. Notice that the problem is not debt but risk, and because that risk had been packaged for redistribution to the economy at large, no one could sort out who owed what or even how much. Which resulted in a widespread loss of trust with enough money being tied up in suddenly illiquid instruments to bring about the credit death of the economic universe.

Jim Stumm reminds me that new and improved space drives might yet shorten the journey time of interplanetary space ships. This is reasonable if not yet factual, but Freeman Dyson’s Orion, the atom bomb powered space ship, might make an excellent prototype. However, even if such a ship were to leave from high earth orbit, so that its fallout would be blown away by the Solar winds, there would still be the political problem of storing thousands or tens of thousands of little atom bombs in orbit for refueling. (Larry Niven has suggested that other technologies might also be problematical, in that they could be tweaked to use as weapons.) More to the point, passengers make up an extremely massive load to move around since they require a portable biosphere, not to mention shielding, and all the other comforts of home. From which it logically follows that humans must travel — probably one way and certainly as fast as possible, from Earth to a preexisting Earthlike environment. Which may be a terraformed Mars, but (given the constraints of geological time) is far more likely to be a space habitat of some sort. Every twenty years or so someone notes that science fiction is no longer “possible,” by which they mean that the story paradigm which they considered to define science fiction is no longer scientifically plausible. Faster than light travel is going the way of Martian Princesses, while the idea that going into space will recapitulate the American frontier has been consigned to the dustbin of history. Why? Because we have discovered that every planet, moon, and asteroid within reach is totally useless without a whole lot of expensive modification. The bold and entrepreneurial crew of adventurers going out to conquer the New

World becomes ridiculous when the major story element is the government somehow building that New World for them to go to.

John Clute and Alexei Panshin, for example. And that’s just in the field.

— JTM

Joe Major’s Historical Note imagines a Russian outcome imposed on the American Revolution. Which is kind of fun, but raises the question of why our Revolution was different than that of France or Russia. Perhaps the answer can be found in history, since George III was trying to recover the concessions made to English citizens when William of Orange, later William III, overthrew his father-in-law, James II. Thus, for Americans the ideal was free citizenry, resulting in the unworkable Articles of Confederation, which in 1791 gave way to a central government with carefully limited powers. For the French and also the Russians, the old regime had been despotic and corrupt, and that, with a little tweaking, is what they aspired to achieve.

From: **Milt Stevens** January 6, 2009
6325 Keystone Street, Simi Valley, CA
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miltstevens@earthlink.net

In Alexiad V7#6, Joseph comments on some of his recent offices. Over the course of my working career, I worked in all sorts of strange places. Probably the oddest office I ever had was a converted holding cell in LAPD Robbery-Homicide Division. They did remove the door before they gave it to me. We somehow managed to put two desks, a phone, a computer, a secretary, and myself into that space. It was sort of intimate.

The worst place I ever had to work was a one week assignment for a special project in the Emergency Command Center six floors below the Los Angeles Civic Center. That place got on my nerves to the max. There were only two elevators that went back to the surface. The command center had been built to withstand a nuclear attack. Personally, I never understood the advantage of being buried six floors underground after a nuclear attack. While the place was supposedly nuclear safe, they hadn’t worried about conventional security. There was no guard on the elevators at the lobby level. You could put a satchel charge in the elevator, push the down button, and blow the command center out of creation.

For the last dozen years of my career, I worked in a suite of offices on the eighth floor of the first highrise west of the CNN Building on Sunset Blvd. in Hollywood. On a clear day, you could see the Pacific Ocean, and on any day, you could see the hookers working on Sunset. There were also the demonstrations in front of the CNN Building. From eight floors up, one demonstration looks exactly like all the others. Come to think of it, they look pretty much the same from the street level too.

I also remember back when the size of a

computer hard drive was something to think about. I haven’t concerned myself with that in years. At some point, I bought a computer with more memory capacity than I would ever need in a lifetime. I’ve never thought about the issue again. The situation is pretty much the same in regard to computer speed. I suppose I could use more speed, but I don’t actually need any more speed. Do you suppose the computer revolution is really over?

This is where Gates’s Law comes in. The Toshiba laptop could probably run MS-DOS 3.31 programs (WordStar 7.0 or Family Tree Maker Version 2) with blazing speed. But WordPerfect X4 and FTM for Windows 2009 are far above them in capabilities. Everything comes at a price.

—JTM

For a nitpick, the costumes Forry Ackerman and Morajo wore at the first worldcon were from “Things To Come” rather than “When Worlds Collide.” “When Worlds Collide” wasn’t made until the early fifties.

The Brad Foster cartoon on page 16 (Mr. Cornhead says “It’s not just sliced cabbage, it’s the slaw.”) is worthy of one oook and probably two.

From: **Jim Stumm** December 28, 2008
Post Office Box 29, Buffalo NY 14223-0029 USA

George W. Price: People remember when the bans on importing books like *Fanny Hill* were lifted in the 1960s, and they assume that such bans had been in place since time immemorial before that. But that’s not true.

The first federal law against importing obscene material was an obscure clause in the US Tariff Act of 1842. Before that, such importation wasn’t illegal. When *Fanny Hill* was published in 1749, British authorities took no notice of it. Erotic books were freely sold in London until suppression began with the Lord Campbell Act of 1857. So before the 1840s, an American could buy *Fanny Hill* and other sexy books in London and bring them into USA without violating any laws. However, if an American bookseller had imported a trunk of such books and put them on sale in those years, he would probably have been prosecuted by local authorities. But it would not have been a federal offense.

You ask, when did federal law begin prohibiting sending obscenity through the mail? That’s the Comstockery I mentioned. Anthony Comstock was an anti-vice crusader (fanatic) working with the YMCA in NYC. In 1873 he persuaded the federal government to pass what became known as the Comstock Law, making it illegal to send obscene material thru the mail. Then he got himself appointed as a postal inspector and he instigated

1000s of prosecutions to enforce his law, until his death in 1915. His idea of what was obscene was rather broad, including certain

works of art, birth control devices, and some anatomy textbooks. There was no law against sending sexy material thru the mail before 1873. Before Comstock, in the US censorship was entirely a state and local matter, e.g. banned in Boston.

And now you know why the second edition of *Jurgen* has a satire on censorship; the scene with the Tumble-Bug who cries, "Now by St. Anthony!" when referring to some of the symbolic scenes in the book.

— JTM

The Founders assumed there would be laws against libel and slander in places other than Congress, which mainly meant places under jurisdiction of the several states, because there already were such state laws even before the Constitution was written. In the federal zone, where the federal government was empowered "to exercise exclusive legislation in all cases whatsoever," local ordinances against libel and slander might be enacted by the federal government acting as the municipal government of DC and other places in the federal zone. At such times it would not be acting as a national legislature, so such ordinances have no effect outside the federal zone.

Slaughterhouse Cases: I hold that the 4 justices who were in the minority had it right. Moreover, modern legal theorists mostly agree that the Slaughterhouse majority were wrong. The 5-justice majority said that the 14th Amendment was meant to protect only national rights, consisting of such trivialities as the right of access to seaports. They held that such rights as freedom of speech, press, assembly, religion, etc. were state rights that the 14th was not meant to guarantee. It's clear that this is not what the 39th Congress intended when they passed the 14th.

You say that the difference between national and state citizenship has now practically disappeared. True. That was a result of the 14th Amendment. Justice Field in his dissent in that case said: "A citizen of a state is now only a citizen of the United States residing in that state. The fundamental rights, privileges, and immunities which belong to him as a free man and a free citizen, now belong to him as a citizen of the United States, and are not dependent upon his citizenship of any state . . ."

But I agree entirely with what you say about the way the 14th Amendment was ratified.

Joseph Major: I suppose the Javanese Book of Kings is the written record of an eruption in 416 AD that you are referring to. But in Europe there is no physical evidence, nor any written record of any unusual weather around that year as there is for alarming phenomena in Europe around the year 535. So whatever may have happened in 416 in Indonesia seems not to have affected Europe or the Roman Empire.

Sheryl Birkhead: Digital TV: In the end, I bought a new TV rather than a converter box, a 19inch, which is big enough for me. So now I'm thinking about buying a DVR to record

programs. I have been searching the internet to see what's available and to read reviews by users. I'd like to get a machine that records onto a hard drive so I don't have to bother with DVDs since I don't intend to keep programs anyway, just timeshift.

Watching in digital on my new TV, I see a wonderfully sharp picture and more channels. I too see some pixilation and picture freezing for a second, but it usually doesn't happen often enough to be a problem. The analog image on my old TV is usually worse. My antenna is an outdoor antenna in the attic, not rabbit ears.

From: **George W. Price** January 13, 2009
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December *Alexiad*:

First, a minor nit to pick: Jim Sullivan's review of Trachtenberg's *Big Man on Campus* says "He's gotten flack about . . ." That should be "flak." A "flack" is a publicity agent. "Flak" means incoming gunfire; it's the World War II German acronym for "*flugschiiff abwehr kanonen*," meaning antiaircraft fire (literally, "flying-ship defense cannon"). Of course, it's possible for a flack to get flak.

Jim Stumm justifies the "incorporation" doctrine by telling me that the "life, liberty, or property" clause of the 14th Amendment is "a new restriction placed on what states may do. It is, in fact, the same language we find in the 5th Amendment where it applies only to the Federal Government. So here we have an explicit instance of incorporation."

No, we don't. The 5th Amendment, like all of the Bill of Rights *except* the First Amendment, already applied to the states as well as the Federal Government. The First says "Congress shall make no law" on certain subjects, so it restricts only Congress, not the states. The other amendments do *not* specify Congress, and therefore apply equally to the states. (I had this forcefully pointed out to me in the pages of *FOSEX* several years ago.)

So I am still waiting for some evidence that the authors of the 14th actually intended it to "incorporate" the First Amendment to make it binding on the states. (The rest of the Bill of Rights was already binding on the states.)

We might also note that not many whites at that time (1868) thought that racial segregation was evil *per se*. I have read that the same Congress that passed the 14th also set up a segregated school system in Washington. This argues that the authors of the 14th did not regard segregation as discrimination *against* blacks, but as a reasonable accommodation to the presumed differences between blacks and whites. Neither did they believe that legal equality had to mean social equality — many northern states allowed blacks to vote and hold office, but forbade interracial marriage.

I was troubled by the "Brown vs. Board of Education" decision in 1954 because it was largely based on the bad psychological effects which segregation had on blacks, which was

obviously true but not the sort of thing that legal decisions should rest upon. The Supreme Court should instead have taken note that in practice "separate but equal" had proven to be a tool of oppression. The Court should then have scornfully rejected "separate but equal" on the simple grounds that it was a lie, had always been a lie, everybody knew it was a lie, and it really meant "separate in order to avoid being equal."

I have long wondered: what if the Federal Government had not striven to directly overturn segregation, but instead had moved to enforce Section 2 of the 14th Amendment? Section 2 requires that if a state disenfranchises part of its adult male population, its representation in the House shall be reduced proportionately. I've never seen a discussion of that clause, nor heard that it was even considered as a way of forcing the South to let blacks vote. And once they could vote, you can bet that invidious segregation would not last long.

Oh well, I suppose that a Supreme Court decision that one-third or so of Southern congressmen must be kicked out of office would have run into even more resistance than school desegregation. I envision soldiers with fixed bayonets on the steps of the Capitol barring entrance to the displaced Southern congressmen . . . a delightful thought!

Not as long as the Southern congressmen were of the same party. Politically, the national party might deplore their attitudes, but they wanted the votes. Now if the States' Rights Democratic split of 1948 had become permanent . . .

Richard Dengrove mentions the John Birch Society and its idiotic accusations that President Eisenhower "was a puppet of his brother, Milton, and Milton was a Communist." In the early 1960s I worked with a fellow who was even farther right than I was, and he plied me with Birch Society literature. What came through to me was that the Birchers had far too much faith in human rationality. They assumed that whatever happened must have been planned that way, so if our leaders did something that resulted in a Communist gain, that was evidence that they were Communist agents. They made no allowance for just plain screwups that the Communists were able to take advantage of. The Birch Society's fulminations illustrate the dangers of ignoring the rule that you should never attribute to conspiracy what is better explained by stupidity.

Mr. Dengrove also asks me, concerning the current financial crises, "did the government start the speculation by printing up money, or did the speculators pressure the government into doing that so they could speculate?" I would have to say, neither. Speculation hasn't been all that important in creating the problems. For that matter, speculators rarely *cause* problems; what they do is bet on the outcome of a problem.

The present mess may be traced back to the

mistaken assumption that “redlining” — the refusal of banks to lend in certain areas, especially black ghettos — was primarily due to racism. So Congress passed the Community Reinvestment Act (CRA) to damned well force those mean racist bankers to lend to the deserving poor. As I recall, the CRA pressures bankers by refusing to let them have Federal deposit insurance unless they give a certain percentage of mortgages to those with less than prime credit.

It is now obvious that the bankers had a perfectly good reason for restricting lending in those areas: most of those people, however deserving in a moral sense, were too poor to payoff the mortgages. And the CRA did nothing to make them any better able to pay.

The Federal Reserve encouraged subprime loans by pumping out money to make interest rates lower (that is, inflation). And Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac bought up the subprime mortgages as fast as the lenders could produce them, in the belief that they were encouraging the American Dream of home ownership. (Rep. Barney Frank took pride in fighting off all attempts to rein in Fannie and Freddie. And now he’s a leader in the effort to cure the problems that he thus helped cause. Irony compounded.)

Of course there was ample greed, but as the *Wall Street Journal* has observed, greed is a constant. What was different was that the government encouraged and attracted greedy and shady lenders by standing ready to guarantee all those subprime mortgages, without checking to see if they could be repaid. So of course the greedheads came crawling out of the woodwork to satisfy the government’s demand for risky mortgages. What else would you expect?

Now, of course, we are told that the crisis is a “market failure” and tighter regulation is needed. Bullshit! The government caused this mess. It was the regulators themselves who encouraged the risky loans instead of challenging them.

One might even see a general principle at work here. Regulators cannot be trusted to burst bubbles — or even to recognize that we are in a bubble — because the regulators are just as caught up in the bubble psychology as everyone else. If anything, the regulators will make the bubble worse, by using the power of the state to enforce the madness of the moment on everybody, including those who resist the bubble. (“What! You don’t want to make mortgage loans to poor people? You must hate the poor! We’ll have to shut you down!”)

Oh, and nobody is even considering repealing or amending the CRA.

And — did you notice? — the bailout that started as an attempt to unwind the “toxic” mortgages has steadily and speedily turned into a gigantic porkfest for everybody and his brother. Hang on, it’s going to be a bumpy ride!

I see where Mark “Deep Throat” Felt just died. I wonder what would have happened if the Watergate burglary had gone undetected? The “plumbers” were supposedly looking for evidence that the Democratic Party was linked

to the communists in Vietnam. Presumably they would have found nothing, and then gone away with no one the wiser. With no Watergate crisis to cripple Nixon, he might have been strong enough to change the outcome of the war. Suppose he had decided to save South Vietnam by striking at the source of the trouble, and invading the north? We might have wound up with a unified Vietnam with its capital in Saigon. And two million Cambodians would not have been murdered. Or (though I seriously doubt it) the Chinese and/or the Soviets might have come in and given us a much wider war. In either case, the world would have been very different.

Mark Whittington’s *Children of Apollo* (2001; reviewed in *Alexiad* V. 3 #1) is suggestive.

— JTM

From: **Robert S. Kennedy** January 18, 2009
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Thank you for Vol. 7, No. 6. The completion of seven years. Incredible! And where has the time gone?

I rented and watched *Final Days of Planet Earth* (2006) starring Daryl Hannah and some other people. It’s almost three hours long, and I do mean long. The only reason I watched it to the end is my compulsion to always finish watching a movie or reading a book even if it isn’t good. I know that Daryl Hannah has been around. But, this is the first time I can remember seeing her in a movie. She is not a good actress (or at least isn’t in this movie). Actually, the other actors and actresses are not much good either. In my scoring system of 1-5, I gave the movie a 0.1 just because there were a couple of good scenes. If you have thought of watching this movie, don’t bother.

Slow Train to Arcturus by Eric Flint and Dave Freer (2008) was obtained from Interlibrary Loan. A good read. It did have one thing that I have mentioned previously and that brings my reading to a grinding halt. On page 107 they have a character on a communicator using the expression “over and out” which is incorrect usage. “Over” means it is the other person’s time to talk. “Out” means goodbye, hang-up, no more talking. When I see this it drives me nuts. But, then they had a couple of comments that were great. Referring to politicians: “They’re a kind of parasite. An animal that looks superficially like us, but has no brain and lives only to breed and devour our food.” (p. 127). “The trouble with a nanny state is that in the long run you’re only going to have people who need a nanny. When you’re pushing the frontiers you need attitude. Space is not for wimps. People who like danger-sports are not fools, nor, despite the risks we take, do we die often. That’s because we learn PDQ what a nanny deprives humans of. Personal assessment. Learn it, learn it fast, or deck it.” (p. 265).

For those of you who have enjoyed watching shows starring Eliza Dushku, *The Dollhouse* is scheduled to premier on Friday, February 13,

2009, on FOX. Hopefully, this show will be good and last longer than *Tru Calling* (that enjoyed and was sorry to see cancelled).

An item that may be of some small interest. I have subscribed to *U.S. News & World Report* for almost as long as I can remember. Over the years it has been an outstanding magazine. That is no longer the case. Now I can often go through it in a few minutes. And its special issues like on hospitals, schools, etc. are of no interest to me. In May I made the mistake of renewing my subscription. So, in November I wrote them requesting that they cancel my subscription and refund the remaining amount of my subscription. At the end of December they did so.

I had the same problem. At least they didn’t harass me for a resubscription the way *The Atlantic* did. (They lost me when they called me every night one week wanting a reup, except the night they called twice.)

The Thanksgiving weekend was spent as usual at the LAX Marriott for Loscon 35. I drive down Thanksgiving afternoon hoping that the traffic will not be too bad. This year there was more than ever contrary to predictions. Often Thanksgiving evening I meet Milt Stevens and we have dinner together. This time he did not come down until Friday. When I went to make a reservation for Friday dinner there was Milt who was next in line. So, we had a nice dinner together. Loscon was quite enjoyable as usual and I signed up for 2009.

New Year’s Eve I was in bed before midnight, but still awake. In past years there has always been a lot of noise at midnight. This time—silence. Could it be the economy?

Stargate Atlantis saw its last TV broadcast on January 9 and it will certainly be missed by me. Apparently *Sanctuary* will continue. But, I may stop watching it. Anyway, without the lead-in from *Stargate Atlantis* it seems to me questionable as to how it will do. My main reason for watching *Sanctuary* was/is Amanda Tapping. But, as Milt Stevens said to me at Loscon 35 as to the reason he quit watching: “It’s the monster of the week.”

I was finally able to obtain *Destroyermen: Into the Storm* because my city library purchased a copy. Obviously the concept is not new. Nevertheless I thoroughly enjoyed the book and have ordered the next in the series, *Crusade*, from Interlibrary Loan.

For over a week we have had extremely high winds causing damage and high temperatures, like 80° to 90°. On January 12 there was fluctuating electricity in my area which screwed up my various equipment. Finally the electricity really went off for about two hours. Very frustrating. I then had to reprogram some six devices and reset a couple of clocks. I know that there are areas of the country who would like to have our temperatures. But, this is the middle of January and it’s supposed to be reasonably cold. It was only a few years ago that we were told to expect a new ice age. Here

it is the middle of January and I'm running my air conditioning. Something is wrong. Other areas of the country are freezing or flooding. I may have to rethink my opinion of The Holy Church of the Global Warming. Oh, wait, that church was last seen morphing into The Holy Church of the Climate Change. There must be a theological problem involved. And once again what about the rest of the country. Also, what's happening on other planets like Mars? Very confusing. I'll have to read *Climate of Extremes: Global Warming Science They Don't Want You to Know* (2009) to see if I can make some sense of it all.

A restaurant over on Bardstown Road had a fire one morning and all the power in this area went out. We learned this by waking up in darkness to the beep-beep-beep of the UPS. Then we got worried because, you see, it was **one degree below zero** that morning. About an hour later the power came back on and I went to work. (And then there came the big ice storm.)

I had my computer in the shop because of some problems. After getting it back I hooked everything up and pushed the ON button. Nothing. I checked everything several times including crawling under the table. My chest started to hurt and I thought that I might be getting a heart attack. Everything was connected, but still nothing. I looked one more time at the back of the computer and finally realized that the ON/OFF switch was in the OFF position. It probably happened while I was moving it in and out of my car. Something as simple as that caused me a great deal of physical exertion and I'm getting too old for that.

Johnny Carruthers: *The Mentalist* on November 18, 2008, had a woman who claimed to really be able to channel the dead. (Hillary might be interested.) One of the police officers was a believer. Our hero "The Mentalist" was supposedly going to prove that she was a fraud. However, that didn't happen and we were left at the end that maybe "The Mentalist" might actually believe in her. I have to say that it really pissed me off. If they don't in a reasonable time have an episode having him proving her to be a fraud I may quit watching the program which would be tragic. (Maybe they should bring on Randi the Magician.) So far she has not reappeared.

Joe: Thank you very much for the 3+ pages on Capt. Edward L. Beach, Jr. Also, the mention of his *Scapegoats: A Defense of Kimmel and Short at Pearl Harbor* (1995) that was mentioned in my loc too. In a message left on my answering machine you said that there would be a surprise in this issue of *Alexiad* and this is obviously it.

I enjoyed Turtledove's *After the Downfall* (your review p. 7).

Jim Sullivan: I've ordered *Big Man on Campus* from Interlibrary Loan (Your review p. 13).

Lloyd Penney: I don't understand your problem concerning 9/11. We know the reasons for the attack. They hate us, not just the USA, but the West. Joe Major answered the why several issues ago in a response to you. They hate us because we are not Muslims. In the next issue I added that they also hate us because our culture is a success and theirs is a failure. What would you have us do, get together with them and sing Cumbuya? Here's a quote from an article by Fareed Zakaria in the December 8, 2008, issue of *Newsweek* that is basically about Mumbai, but can also be applied to 9/11 and other terrorist attacks — "The crucial point is to remember the common enemy. When discussing causes and cures, never forget who is to blame first and foremost: the terrorists, the evil men who chose to deliberately kill innocent men, women and children, to burn young families to death. They are the ones who did it." Then there is this from one of the characters in Orson Scott Card's *Ender in Exile* (2008)—"There really is evil in the world, and wickedness . . ." (p. 366).

Lloyd G. Daub: Come on Lloyd, send something that Joe can publish.

Yes, Lloyd. And Lucinda. And Oino. We want to hear from you!
— JTM

Historical Note (p. 26): Excellent!

From: **Richard Dengrove** January 20, 2009
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Once again I write to comment on *Alexiad*. This time the December issue.

About dead tree fiction vs. the net, I am not certain the net is the big roadblock to nurturing and feedback for fiction writers. I think the big roadblocks are that the short story and amateur fiction, two great American traditions, are dead. Or decimated. People cringe at the thought of reading either. More and more you write a novel or you write nonfiction.

About the glaucoma test, Joe, I'm a lot worse. You're not the only one with that problem. I blink so bad when I am tested for glaucoma, I need to have my eyes dilated with drops. And, afterward, wear dark glasses if I'm in the Sun.

Sheryl Birkhead told us how she tested dangerously low for potassium. When she was tested next, however, her potassium was normal. She wonders whether it is because she changed her diet or because the test was faulty. While it may have been because she changed her diet, she shouldn't write off that the test was faulty. In my years of being health tested, I have often had dire results, which were reversed next test. That is why, before taking advice based on one test, I often await confirmation.

I better get back to why I was originally making this argument. While Jim Stumm may be hot to trot to disprove that a very long spell of weather, cold or dry, caused the Fall of the Roman Empire, I originally was not so hot to

trot to prove it.

I only argued that it was better than any of the other theories. That you never hear about it is no great flaw. The theories of the Fall you hear about have known defects: that moral decline was the cause or the rise of Christianity was.

People generally agree that the decadence reached its height around the time of Christ: Nero's reign was the one most noted for 'decadence.' However, the Empire continued for several hundred years after that. As for Christianity, it was not an invariant harbinger of Fall. The Eastern Empire adopted Christianity and lasted until 1453 A.D.

People have advocated these theories because they are attractive to them. The first, the decadence theory, supports the conservative over the ages. It says that once we give up the old ways, we go to hell in a handbasket. The second, the Christianity theory, supports the skeptic: religion never did anyone any good.

There is another theory, a more recent one, that is also attractive, the volcano theory. Jim claims that he has never heard of weather being a factor in the Fall of Rome. In this form, he has. The idea behind the volcano eruption theory is that an eruption caused the Empire's weather to get colder, crops to fail, and the Empire to fall.

Of course, the problem is all prospective eruptions occurred too late. The 535 A.D. did. A 416 A.D. eruption would have too. However, the volcano theory is attractive: it is more appropriate to many that the world should change with a bang rather than a whimper.

Finally we get to Jim Stumm's theory, which he gave last issue. He has claimed it is based on a lot of reading. Unfortunately, all he has to say for it is several factors caused the Fall of Rome. He doesn't even tell us which factors.

If this isn't actually saying nothing, it is saying very little. I realize that many academics have been thought wise for saying this little. However, to me, it's a cop out.

That he took this position benefitted me, though. It was a clarion call to clarify my position. So far I have been talking as if there could be only one factor in Rome's Fall. That has the advantage of simplifying the issue. On the other hand, it has the disadvantage of oversimplifying it.

Jim is right that there could be several factors. Therefore, I must change weather from a cause to a factor, and admit there could be others. Let us face it, if they didn't have their obvious defects, moral decline and Christianity could, without contradiction, stand side by side my weather theory.

In this form, is my theory backed up by overwhelming evidence? Hell no! I really don't have the key evidence that the Empire was suffering from dryness or cold during its Fall.

What do I have? The weather theory's inspiration: a passage from Will Durant's multivolume history of Europe. He claimed that crop failure was both the latest and oldest theory of the Fall.

Of course, the crop failure could have come from erosion.

Next, there is a bit of evidence from a

special on the History Channel. Because of famine, a barbarian tribe had migrated to Illyria. The Romans promised it the dole if it laid down its arms. It did. However, the Romans welshed on the deal, and the tribe re-armed and invaded other Roman lands.

The treachery of the Roman government towards the Tervingi, the group in question, and the catastrophic response, are recounted in Alessandro Barbero's 9 Agosto 378: Il Giorno dei Barbari [The Day of the Barbarians] (2005, 2007; reviewed in *Alexiad* V. 6 #5).

Of course, was this true of other barbarian tribes?

In addition, there are facts that agree with my weather theory, that cold or dry ruined the Western Empire's harvest. Jim agrees that the Empire was becoming depopulated. From poor harvest from poor weather? Also, Jim agrees that barbarians were pressing in on the Empire. Driven by famine? Furthermore, I think Jim agrees the Eastern Empire did not want anything to do with the Western Empire. Was it because the Western Empire was an economic drag?

Of course, while these facts agree with my theory, they could agree with other theories.

Nonetheless, despite all my theory's faults: and it has plenty of them: it has a decided virtue. This unwanted theory is, as I originally argued, the strongest one so far. At least, it says something and no one has actually disproved it yet.

George Price claims that the courts have interpreted the 14th Amendment way beyond its intent; and the 14th Amendment was not legally passed anyway. I am going to deal solely with whether the courts have reinterpreted the Constitution. Which, of course, they have.

Although it would be more consistent if judges followed the intent of a law's original framers, our legal system isn't based on consistency. No, I gather it is based on precedents. If a judge can make a precedent and make it stick, it becomes the new interpretation. This is as opposed, I gather, to Germany, where law is supposedly based on rational, presumably consistent, principles.

I am sure George will disagree that precedent is how judges should proceed. There is some advantages to it, however. I heard that, in the *Federalist Papers*, someone asked what would happen if parts of the Constitution became outmoded. The answer was that judges would set precedents.

On the hand, I freely admit there are probably some marked disadvantages to law by precedent too.

That's about it.

From: **Henry Welch** January 21, 2009
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Thanks for the latest two issues of *Alexiad*. I'm way behind in my fannish activity, but issues 130 and 131 of *TKK* are finally ready to be posted following printer death in our household.

I used to have wonderful career fair props. The centerpieces were two harddrives that were the same size, but were from about 8 years apart. The older drive had drive heads that weighed over 10 lbs alone and the newer drive was a standard PC half-height. Despite the differences, you could see that the technology was basically the same. And now I can put over 100 times the capacity in my pocket as a USB drive.

I'm surprised that you could even stomach an episode of *Hannah Montana*. I get ill just at the sound of the theme song.

There was plenty of background noise and I had something to read.

— JTM

I agree with Stephen Trautenberg about going to a good school that emphasizes teaching. The most over-hyped metric is faculty to student ratio. All that means is that there may be lots of research faculty that never see the inside of a classroom. A better metric is average class size.

Text messaging while driving is now expressly prohibited in California.

In the small world department I did a recent search for "Carry on Jeeves" and got a hit for *The Knarley News* on a web site devoted to Krohn's Disease. Apparently at least one issue is considered a reference on the disease. That is likely your fault.

From: **R-Lauraine Tutihasi** Jan. 21, 2009
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Thanks for another great issue.

I have a slight correction on Johnny Carruthers's article about Forry Ackerman. While it's true that Forry published the translations of the Perry Rhodan books, Wendayne did the actual translating. She was originally from Germany, as I recall.

Lisa complained of not sleeping because of the heat. Sounds like you don't have AC.

Here in Arizona, no one would think of building without AC or at least a swamp cooler. I hate those things, because they use water to cool. This raises the humidity, which I hate. My arthralgia acts up under those circumstances, not to mention my sinuses.

The building of our house is coming along very well. The frame and basic structure are all complete. All the wiring, plumbing, and lines for the central vacuum have been installed. The roof is ready to have the shingles put on. The foam insulation is in the process of being blown in and should be finished in a couple of days. The pair of retaining walls on the high side of the property is also almost finished and looks very nice. Keystone blocks were used, and a stairway in the middle of the lower wall is finished in smooth sandstone. The colouring is reddish, which matches the soil colour pretty

well. I don't mean to suggest that there's any clay in the soil, though. The soil seems to be very rich and fairly deep. The drywall should go in soon.

I'm currently rethinking our plans to attend the Montreal worldcon. I should know by the time I LoC your next zine.

We hope you can make it. Cathy Palmer-Lister has already found a good restaurant; it's near a used book store!

— JTM

From: **Sue Burke** January 28, 2009
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According to research published by the Biblioteca Nacional de España, *Amadis of Gaul* has been translated into English in Great Britain by Anthony Munday in 1589; John Shirley in 1702, abridged; and Robert Southey in 1803, abridged. In the United States, it was translated in its entirety by Edwin Place and Herbert Behm in 1974, but I think their work is so overly literal that at times it is incomprehensible.

So I am translating it myself, and posting it, a chapter a time, at:

<http://amadisofgaul.blogspot.com>

This work dates back to early 14th-century tales of chivalry in Iberia, but the earliest surviving version was by Garci Rodríguez de Montalvo, published in 1508, of which one copy remains (at the British Library). It's the version I am translating. It was reprinted and translated repeatedly throughout the 16th century across Europe, became a continent-wide best-seller, and created the enormously popular Renaissance genre of chivalric novels.

Although Miguel de Cervantes satirized these novels in 1605 with *Don Quijote de la Mancha*, they remained popular until they were stamped out by the Inquisition and civil authorities because they were too entertaining, mere fantasy, and (supposedly) corrupting young women.

I hope my translation of *Amadis* will entertain you and, these days, I think it could only uplift young women to read of noble deeds and faithful love, even if they are mere fantasy. I am dismayed that such an important book fell (or was pushed) into near oblivion.

That's the sort of corruption we want to see.

— JTM

In meteorological matters, it was interesting to read about Hurricane Ike. In Houston, my brother, his wife, and their two small children spent hours in a closet as it passed overhead, but their house suffered only minor damage. Electricity came back on in a week.

Here in Madrid, we got surprised by

snowstorm on January 9 with 3 inches of snow, which was more than the city knew how to handle. Amazingly, there were no automobile accidents during the hours of the heaviest snowfall. People were too scared to drive.

Then on January 23-24 we endured what Spanish meteorologists called a "*cyclogénesis explosiva muy fuerte*," or a "very powerful explosive cyclone generation": a sudden mini-hurricane with 200km/125mph winds and 21.5m/70-foot waves at the coasts. It caused power and phone outages, closed roads, downed trees, damaged buildings and boats, and canceled flights and trains; spread forest fires; and killed 12 people before moving on to France and Germany. Damage in Madrid was limited to mountain peaks and passes. Meanwhile, the production of electricity from windmills tripled.

From: **Dainis Bisenieks** January 26, 2009
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Kerfuffle as an everyday word met my eye in chapter 41 of *Silver Pigs* as I was re-reading it; and by an equally neat coincidence, foofaraw is on p. 349 of Vance's *Araminta Station*, lately also re-read. Also in *Night Lamp*.

I've finished the two by Ruth Downie and will patiently await continuations of the saga. It is more reminiscent of the work of Lindsey Davis than of Gillian Bradshaw, whose climactic (careful with that word!) events have much more intensity. Two point-of-view characters appear, not in strict alternation of chapters. The saga promises to continue, with developing trust between the two and new scenes as well as corpore delicti.

I have actually heard the word "grand" for \$1K spoken, by a financial advisor. To my mind, it is a genre word, belonging to thrillers (film and print) of an era when we had 3¢ postage and 5¢ newspapers. I could not use it with a straight face; only in quotation marks. We are in the era of "a billion here, a billion there." To be sure, we can now buy all sorts of neat and almost instantly obsolescent things, with manuals that weigh more than the device itself.

The idea is too obvious not to have been thought of, but anything that can display a page's worth of text ought to display, in default mode, the basic index to the manual, with the first instructions on how to consult it.

But even so, as for obvious things being overlooked: how many books will tell you that on the Moon you could leap upward six times as high as on Earth? (Inside a pressurized dome, that would be.) Not so! There is a bonus, which for leaps is of about the same magnitude. For calculation, you are required to know the distance over which muscular force is exerted: represent it by D. Imagine now an enfeebled person who, straightening his knees, can just lift his Earthly weight, but his feet don't leave the ground. Let's put him on the Moon, where his weight is a sixth of what it was, and the other five sixths of his muscular force accelerate his mass in a leap rising to 5D. That is, if would if

the muscular force remained the same at greater speed and therefore shorter time. Not strictly so. But then again, you could start your leap from a deeper crouch. If on Earth, you could leap to a height of D, the equivalent force on the moon would carry you up to 6D+5D. The generalization is obvious.

Caption for a cartoon existing only in my imagination: "If you grow up, son you can fire off some of these."

Another: "Please show me your *best* sackcloth and ashes."

Forry: I knew him, Horatio. Of scarcely another could it be said in such a kindly way that he remained childlike all his life.



Sketched from life at the 70th anniversary meeting of the LASFS, October 28, 2004

While Philadelphia does get a proper blizzard every decade or so, and a hurricane is not out of the question, we're generally on the edge of things. A transition between rain and snow is utterly typical for Philadelphia. There's been nothing worse so far than a heavy and persistent rain which caused severe seepage in my basement. The basement in the other half of this duplex has a slightly higher floor and makes its contribution. A plumbing break occurred there the other day, and I had to bail out another lake. But on all such occasions I've kept it from drowning out the basement furnace and water heater. I am not, anyway, on low-lying ground where flooding is at all possible.

From: **AL du Pisani** November 30, 2008
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Thank that you keep sending Alexiad to me. I always make time to read it, and although I do not comment much, I read almost everything.

A (female) friend of mine recently called the whole genre of books you have referred to as "sexy vampires" as "women's crap". Even as she lent me some books that she said are better than average, in that genre. Most of them the lead character could not make up her mind whether she is in a romance or action novel, often trying to mix genres, with mixed results.

That is one reason I have been reading less

— I have not been able to find enough stuff that I like. But I have also been reading a bit more non-fiction, although some of it has at times felt too unreal to be true.

When I read non-fiction, I read a lot slower, trying to understand what is going on, mulling through the implications of what is said, and trying to tie it together with other things, sometimes in completely unrelated fields, which seem to share a maybe coincidental similarity.

It therefore took me the best part of a month to read Gillomee's biography of the Afrikaner, trying to relate what he said to other fragments of information I have. And making me think: South Africa had two major rushes — A diamond rush in the Kimberley area, and a gold rush in the Witwatersrand. (Strangely enough, the gold strike at Baberton and environs, in between these rushes does not get as much attention. Even though Baberton had a stock exchange, which the Johannesburg Stock Exchange bought out and terminated later.)

Kimberley and the diamond rush made millionaires of a bunch of people, among them Cecil Rhodes and Barney Barnato. Yet this wealth did not stick as much as it could have. Baberton's history is in many ways that of a typical gold rush town: Boom as gold is discovered, prosperity of sorts while the gold lasts, and then a bust as the gold runs out, and most of the people leave. Both Kimberley and Johannesburg were spared this fate, as the diamonds and gold lasted a very long time. Long enough in the case of Johannesburg to become less important, as other industries and businesses grew and took over.

Kimberley was administered by the Cape government, and to some extent by proxy from Britain. The Cape's power struggle in those days was between the Eastern Cape and the Western Cape, with the Western Cape having a more Afrikaner character, and the most wealth, with an economy based on farming. While Kimberley became a city, and prospers to this day, there was no great effort made to use that as a springboard for industrialization. In fact, while Kimberley was the second most important city in the Cape, the British forces in the Anglo-Boer war (1899-1902) thought that Kimberley was militarily so useless, that it should have been abandoned and evacuated, rather than defended when besieged.

I'm sure that would have pleased everybody. Cecil Rhodes was besieged in Kimberley. One of the people in history I would least like to be is Robert George Kekewich, Lieutenant-Colonel (The Loyal North Lancashire Regiment), commander (at least that was what his orders said) at Kimberley.

— JTM

Interestingly enough, out of the legal shenanigans which made sure that Kimberley is a part of the Cape, and not of the Orange Free State, (which had a prior claim on the ground,) the Free State got a settlement that turned them into a nice prosperous farming country. All of

this as due to good government by people that were not noticed much by the previous set of history books, and are noticed even less by today's history books.

The Transvaal was a different kettle of fish, with bad government almost from the start. Although the history books managed to hide the extent of the problems, enough of the leaders achieved name recognition. Albeit quite often without quite getting to explaining what their achievements were. Out of this mess comes Paul Kruger, who managed to sink an attempt at annexation of the Transvaal by Britain. A very conservative figure in many ways, he none the less recognised that there was no future and prosperity for the people of the Transvaal if they did not industrialize. And his government had already started to put an industrialisation policy into place, when gold was discovered. The 5% (five percent) tax on mining profits ended up gathering enough money that this industrialisation attempt was successful. Not without corruption and bad governance, and decisions which today seem stupid, but which had been taken for valid reasons, even though some of those reasons did not make economic sense, then or now.

Kruger's supporters included the "Takhare", which can be translated as "branch hairs", because the male Takhaar supposedly never washed his hair, nor brushed or combed it. They were the rural farmers, and by the time of the Anglo-Boer war were the older conservatives. The younger progressives, who campaigned on getting rid of corruption, good government and faster progress, strangely enough furnished the bulk of the Boer war generals. As the Takhaar generals did not achieve much, and their capture or death by enemy hands actually provided a boost in effectiveness of the Boer forces.

Once of the main reasons why the Cape government, and the British government, wanted to annex the Transvaal, was because the policy of industrialisation caused the economic centre of Southern Africa to move from the Western Cape, around Cape Town, to the Transvaal, Johannesburg in particular.

In local history classes we learnt of the industrialisation of Japan, usually called the Westernization of Japan. We may hear about the other places in Asia that tried and failed, sometimes by being run over by the adjacent colonial area. We have never learnt about the industrialisation of the Transvaal, other than that it happened.

The problem with not knowing or understanding the past, is that it may teach you the wrong lessons for the future. And we are in for a rough ride, as I keep on hearing lies propagated as Truth. The lessons we are learning are often based on lies and a deliberate misunderstanding of the past. We will live to rue it.

As may you. From what I am hearing about American politics, I am expecting that life is going to get worse for you. Since the lessons being learnt from the past are so often what enhances decisions already taken, or plans already made, rather than something that goes against it. I hope you get through this OK. Not

just because I expect bad decisions there to spill over and cause bad decisions here, but because I can hope that there would be a least one place where the candle of hope continues to burn.

I wish you good luck, prosperity, and much interesting books.

From: **Taras Wolansky** February 1, 2009
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Alexiad, Dec. 2008:

Review of John F. Carr's H. Beam Piper: A Biography: It would seem, from what Joe writes, that Carr was unable to discover why Avon sabotaged the sequel to *Little Fuzzy*.

Never attribute to malice what can be explained by stupidity, or even some editor deciding to flex her muscles.

— JTM

Johnny Carruthers: The Will Smith *I, Robot* had a lot of Jack Williamson's "With Folded Hands" in it, as I recall.

Jim Sullivan: Your review of Stephen Joel Trachtenberg's *Big Man on Campus* at least makes it sound like the author never addresses affirmative action, or racial and gender "correctness". Trachtenberg "takes umbrage" at the high-tech lynching of the Duke lacrosse team, but does he understand why it happened?

He talks about university athletics. What does he say about the gender quotas that have forced some universities to shut down various men's sports? Note that the demand is not merely for a 50% quota of women, but to match the gender ratio at each university. Today, a growing majority of undergraduates is female.

John Purcell: Gorbachev was an inept leader, in that his goal was to reform the Soviet Union, not to end it. The Soviets' understanding of American politics was too meager to permit them to understand they need not respond to Reagan's challenge, but merely to wait until he left office and Soviet-American relations went back to "normal".

Jim Stumm: "Separate but equal" treatment of blacks and whites was the law of the land according to the Supreme Court during the six decades prior to the *Brown* decision. The *Brown* court could simply have said, the question is moot because we now know "separate but equal" is impossible. Instead they based their decision on bogus social science research.

Dainis Bisenieks: If a dead guy can narrate *Sunset Boulevard*, then a novel can be based on journals lost in a shipwreck! Seriously, you just need an author's note saying parts of the journals had to be reconstructed.

Nancy Martsch: Thank you. I'm glad you liked my Heinlein Centennial report.

From: **John Hertz** January 28, 2009
236 S. Coronado Street No. 409, Los Angeles, CA 90057-1456 USA

Run Silent, Run Deep is a good novel and has a soft spot in my heart. From it I learned about Condensed Books. I read them when I was eight, and I remember telling my mother I thought the CB *Silent* was good and what was the fuss? "And please don't say I'll understand when I get older," I said. "Don't you see that's just pulling rank? It may be true but I can't do anything with it. Won't you say something I can understand now? Have a heart." SO she said "Okay, try reading the original." I went off to the library. I didn't know James Bond then, but now that I do I can say it was like Chapter 2 of *Diamonds Are Forever*. Or, "Don't tell 'em, show 'em."

That also was my first lesson to read for writing. We could use more of that.

We don't read Shakespeare to study Hamlet or Richard III. They aren't there anyhow. Shakespeare's art is, and that's worth reading. Or, since those are plays, watching. Performing. The reason to follow the footnotes in Sayers's translation of Dante's *Divine Comedy* is not to see how accurately Dante treated Francesca da Rimini — or how deservedly punished her, Heaven help us — but to get the joy of his art.

I just had a letter from a man who noted *The Languages of Pao* was one of the "Wonders of 1958" that Denvention III had me pick and lead talks on. He said he likes it because it shows how people are shaped by their language. Alas. What it shows is how well Vance can write.

That is to say, "Sapir-Whorf". Or Gulliver's saying that the Houyhnhnms are always truthful because they have no word for "lie". Obviously he had never saddled a horse (or watched it swell its gut so the saddle would be loose and come off).

— JTM

WAHF:

Lloyd Daub, with various items of interest.

John Dalmas, with his annual newsletter.



SAME BAT-TIME, SAME BAT-MATRIX

It was a lousy damp night, on the verge of rain. Jim Gordon wanted nothing better than to be home, which was why he was here, overseeing this bust. Only a computer hacker, he knew, but even the most trivial of crimes could turn out to have a deadly or even a sublimely grotesque depth. He had seen this sort of thing all too often in his career. As he stepped out of his car he saw others arriving:

"Lieutenant, you were given specific orders."

Those new federal Agents; bossy, domineering, all-powerful. And never going after his own problems. The lieutenant was arguing with the Agent, himself in touch with some central power through his earpiece, who cut the conversation short by saying, "No, Lieutenant, your men are already dead."

Then, responding to some signal, the three Agents bolted into the tawdry, frowsy hotel. Gordon watched them go, then said, wearily, "Send in backup. If we move fast enough perhaps we can get a piece of this arrest."

"Damn tiny one . . . sir."

Then things got really interesting.

A few last drops of rain fell on the roof. Gordon looked up towards the clouds, towards the searchlight blazing on their underside, and worried. Two units of policemen killed. Was there another one of . . . *that* sort here?

Then he felt a familiar presence on the roof. He turned and saw the grim, familiar figure. He meant to frighten criminals, and perhaps that was what reassured Gordon.

"It's worse than you think." The voice was low, yet it carried.

"I've lost good men," Gordon said, the loss causing pain to run through him.

"I do have a witness. If you will put aside certain . . . matters for now?"

Gordon nodded, reluctantly. Immunity was always a touchy matter; there had been a case recently of a chain of immunity-grants running from a shoplifter all the way up to a billion-dollar scammer, each getting immunity for turning in someone bigger. Then, the case against the scammer had collapsed under the barrage of his high-powered lawyers. This was murder.

"Very well," he said.

Then he heard the purr.

"How public spirited of you," she said.

If the man Gordon had summoned had a dark side, this woman was darkness enough, always taunting, always getting away, one way or another . . . for all that, or so it was said on the street, she had taken on the mob now. He looked at her and said, "If you have evidence in this case, you should go to the police with it."

"And here I am."

Gordon's eyes flicked to the caped form beside the searchlight. There were rumors . . . "Go ahead."

"I was up on the rooftop —"

"What were you doing there!" he burst out.

"Casing the joint?"

"Walking my cat." She purred again, laughing. "There was a scuffle on the roof of the building across the street, and then this woman jumped all the way across the street to near where I was. I thought only the big guy in Metropolis could do that!"

"Liked her dress sense. She ran past, jumping down, and I followed. If there's a new guy — or gal — in town, I like to know. She got down to the street, and dashed for a telephone booth."

"Next thing I know, there's a semi heading for it, engine roaring flat out. I can see her face in the booth, pale, lit up, and then there's a green flash, right before the truck smashes the booth flat."

Gordon sat back, sighing. The report about the crash at Wells and Lake was clear enough. The driver had been killed; but there was no trace of human remains in the demolished telephone booth.

He heard a sound behind him. "Barbara?" he said, turning.

"More hackers?" his daughter said as she came in. "Makes you wish for the old days."

If either of them had seen the reflection of the screen on his eyeglasses, they would have seen, not the report pulled up, but blackness, broken by lines of cascading green letters, numbers, kana . . .

— Not by the Wachowski Brothers or DC

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