

# ALEXIAD

(ΑΛΕΞΙΑΣ)

\$2.00

In three weeks it will have been a full year since Wullie died and of late I have been remembering my sweet, gentle cat. His loss still hurts. He had the most beautiful personality of any animal I've ever shared my life with and the second whose death I had to authorize. It is strange to be suddenly remembering him like this. I think a large part of this is that we acquired Slim so soon after Wullie's death. Perhaps it is also guilt over filling his slot so fast, which is really irrational because I didn't go out looking for a replacement. Nor do I really think of Slim as a replacement for Wullie. Slim is a very different animal in both looks and personality. There is a spice to him that Wullie, sweet as he was, did not have. No, Slim has his own place. He has not filled Wullie's place in my heart. I very much doubt I will ever again own a cat as sweet and gentle as Wullie was.

— Lisa

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Pascha (Orthodox Easter) is **April 19, 2009**

The 135th Running of the Kentucky Derby is **May 2, 2009**.

The 134th Running of the Preakness Stakes is **May 16, 2009**.

The 140th Running of the Belmont Stakes is **June 6, 2009**.

The Sherlock Holmes/Arthur Conan Doyle Symposium will be **May 15-17, 2009** in Dayton, Ohio. The theme is "**The Merry Wives of Watson**" and the primary topic will be the long-suffering and much-neglected Dr. John H. Watson, late Army Medical Detachment, memorialist. Membership is \$45 if posted before April 20, \$50 of posted before May 8, and \$55 after that. Send to:

**Cathy Gill**  
**4661 Hamilton Avenue**  
**Cincinnati, OH 45223-1502 USA**

The **World Party** is at 9:00 p.m. local time on **June 21, 2009**.

Printed on April 6, 2009

Deadline is **June 6, 2009**

## Reviewer's Notes

When I got started going to Dr. Y, the former senior partner of my current doctor, Dr. H, the price of an office visit was, as I recall, about \$10. This was twenty-four years ago, understand. Now the price I pay is \$20. But the insurance pays \$\$\$.

Part of this is the general increase in prices. But a lot of it is management issues. Dr. H and his partners have to have management, so does Humana, and other things. For example, lab work is yet another outfit, even though they are all in the same office.

You remember Lisa injured her shoulder back at Christmas. The Magnetic Resonance Imaging scan cost \$\$\$\$ but they knocked off two-thirds. That's still \$\$\$\$. When I had a MRI, a few years ago, Humana paid the whole thing without question.

Speaking of management issues, Humana managed to get it wrong, so the company was demanding \$\$\$ from me. A few calls and I managed to get it adjusted, more or less.

Then there was the problem with my insulin, which ended up with me having to rush off to Dr. H's office to get samples to get me through the gap.

When I endure all this I try to remember that most of this wouldn't have been available back when I started going to Dr. Y in 1985, and the rest would have been proportionately as expensive.

Cathy Palmer-Lister is doing her best to find a good place to eat in Montréal. Y'all come now, heah?/Vous venez!

— Joe

## RANDOM JOTTINGS

by Joe



Now available on [efanzines.com](http://efanzines.com).

Thanks to Tom Feller, John Purcell, and particularly Bill Burns, and I guess those things I said have been invalidated by events. (Something like the Joker saying "I take back almost all the bad things I said about you!" upon being left a fortune in "Joker's Millions".)

Apologies to Gordon Brown, no not about the Region One DVDs: It is illegal in Kentucky to carry a concealed death star. Okay, how *do* we go about incarcerating the Black Cloud?

For a profoundly squamous, rugose, mephitic, and chthonic experience, read:

<http://lovecraftissing.com/>

Iä! Iä!

Among the amusing things I picked up at ConCave were *Ancient Athens on 5 Drachmas a Day* (2007) and *Ancient Rome on 5 Denarii a Day* (2008) both by Philip Matyszak (both \$18.95). They're amusingly written descriptions of the two great classical cities, with descriptions of the area, the people both great and small, the buildings, the events, and so on. Not to mention guides to the language, even though I suspect some of the Useful Phrases are cribbed. Though not all of them:

Indeed, I assure you that Homer's family name was Simpson.  
*ho dē Homēros ontōs ēn ho Simōnos.*

— *Ancient Athens on 5 Drachmas a Day*, Page 126

D'oh! I guess that would be:

Ω ΔΗ ΟΜΗΡΟΣ ΟΝΤΩΣ ΗΝ Ο ΣΙΜΩΝΟΣ

And of course it should be *Ancient Athens on 5 Drachmas a Day* and *Ancient Rome on 5 Denarii a Day*.

Is this becoming a Classic History zine? I also read James Mace's *Soldier of Rome: The Legionary: A Novel of the Twentieth Legion During the Campaigns of Germanicus Caesar* (2006; iUniverse; ISBN 978-0-595-41737-7; \$18.95) and *Soldier of Rome: The Sacrovir Revolt: A Novel of the Twentieth Legion during the Rebellion of Sacrovir and Florus* (2008; iUniverse; ISBN 978-0-595-48331-0; \$18.95), the story of Artorius the legionary of *legio XX Valeria Victrix* (Valeria Matuchek's namesake (*Operation Chaos* and *Operation Luna*) and Paulinus Maximus's command (*Eagle In the Snow*)) and his experiences in the Augustan army. Mace is an Iraq veteran himself, and if his barracks-talk and action seems to smack too much of today's army, one has to realize that so much of soldiering doesn't change. He has an understanding of the history and can tell an interesting story of what the foot soldier did as well as what his commanders did. Mace's depictions are unsparing in their portrayal of the harshnesses of war then.

As seems inevitable in a POD book, there are some lapses of editing. Computerized spell-checking can leave or even create homonyms, though I do admit that saying "the reigns of power" (*Soldier of Rome: The Legionary*) has a certain appropriateness. His Roman names are handled sensibly, but I mean, having a Gaul named "Farquhar"?

Artorius's grandchildren might be stationed in Asia, and go to the games to see Amazonia fight Achillia. Russell Whitfield has written *Gladiatorix* (2008; Myrmidon; ISBN 978-1-905802-09-8; £7.99) to tell a story about them (there is a memorial to two real gladiatrices called "Amazonia" and "Achillia"). Lysandra, a priestess of Athena from Sparta (apparently there actually was a temple to her there) is shipwrecked and, being an undocumented alien, sold into slavery, to gladiatorial trainers.

Whitfield's description of gladiatorial training is real and unsparing in its harshness. Lysandra/Achillia becomes skilled at arms under a harsh regimen, making friends and losing them to the final judgment, until she finds herself facing the killer of her lover . . .

Whitfield does get melodramatic; he has

every bout being to the death, though training gladiators or gladiatrices was a big investment and having such a high death rate would be a huge waste. Also, if you don't care much for the love of Sappho, this book may not be for you. (To be fair, the one time Lysandra thinks she's going to be a man's bedmate, he says that he didn't invite her to dinner for that.)

The **Third International Polar Year** has ended. It began in March of 2007 and ran through March of 2009. The IPY was run under the direction of the International Council for Science (ICSU) and encompassed scientific programs in both polar areas.

The First IPY was proposed by explorers Karl Weyprecht and Georg von Neumayer, running from 1882 to 1883, and included the Lady Franklin Bay Expedition led by Adolphus Greely. The Second IPY ran 1932-3 but did not include the Byrd Antarctic Expedition. The original Third IPY was absorbed into the International Geophysical Year (IGY) of 1957-8, which included the launching of the Sputnik and Explorer satellites and was the background for James Blish's *Frozen Year* (1957).

And speaking of cold things, the glacial era of, say 150,000 years ago is known as the Riss (Alpine) / Illinoian (U.S.) / Saale (European) / Wolstonian (U.K.) / Santa Maria (South America) Glaciation, which lasted from 200,000 to 130,000 years before present. Nice period for intentional de-technologizers to settle a whole new world, isn't it?

The overlawyered.com site links to a strange lawsuit filed by a girl who says she was run out of the Miss Porter's School in Connecticut by a clique calling themselves the Oprichniki.

Who says our children don't know history? Now if they had had the dog's-head and broom badge, and called their leader Ivana the Terrible, things would have been complete. Hoyda! Hoyda! Hoyda!

## OBITS

We regret to report the death of **Philip José Farmer** on **February 25, 2009** at home in Peoria. Born January 28, 1918, Farmer had his first story, *The Lovers*, in the August 1952 issue of *Startling Stories*. The novel heralded the theme of sexual exploration that was one of Farmer's mainstays. His next work, the contest entry *You Owe For the Flesh*, was caught in a financial problem, and was not published until several years later as the

Riverworld Series. Other interests of Farmer's included pulp adventure fiction, and he wrote several stories featuring his favorite heroes, Tarzan and Doc Savage, in various ways, finally getting to write an authorized Tarzan novel, *The Dark Heart of Time*, in 1999.

We regret to report the death of Canadian First Fan **Chester Cuthbert** on **March 20, 2009**, at the age of 96. Beginning his fannish life with reading A. Merritt's *The Ship of Ishtar* at the age of 12, Chester achieved a goal by selling two stories to *Wonder Stories* in 1934. He is best known for the Chester D. Cuthbert Collection, now at the University of Alberta, reported to have been at one time the largest single book collection in Canada.

## MONARCHIST NEWS

We are pleased to announce the engagement of **Her Royal Highness Crown Princess Victoria of Sweden** and **Mr. Daniel Westing**. Mr. Westing became a physical trainer after his military service and has a broad background in health and fitness services. He will be created **Duke of Västergötland** and made a Prince prior to the wedding, which is planned to be in the early summer of 2010.

Her Majesty the Queen of New Zealand (and some other countries) has been pleased to authorize the restoration of the rank of Knight/Dame to the upper two ranks of Grand Companion and Companion of her New Zealand Order of Merit, with the appropriate titles for the honorees. Tohu Hiranga.

**WICKS 'N' STICKS**

Review by Joseph T Major of  
*THE BREATH OF GOD*  
by Harry Turtledove

(Tor; 2008;  
ISBN 978-0-7653-1711-7; \$24.95)  
Sequel to *Beyond the Gap*  
(reviewed in *Alexiad* V. 6 #2)

Count Hamnet Thyssen just might consider himself the sort of guy whose life climaxes when a cloud appears behind him, and a giant hand issues from it, thumb against middle finger, ready to flick him across the back of the head. I mean, the clan he has taken up with has been utterly destroyed by the Rulers, the invading mammoth-riders. Having already survived one humiliating siege of adultery followed by divorce, he has now lost his new girlfriend, who left him for another man. He gets distrusted by the other clans, then when he reaches allegedly civilized territory he is thrown in a dungeon by his emperor. Oh, and having lost his former girlfriend to someone more of a colleague for her, the only person who seems to really care for him is a cannibal. (Which makes the possible additional conditions of that Monica-style connection somewhat hair-raising, if not other diminishing.)

There is a mix of various levels of story. On one level, we have the reaction of those who do not see and do not believe; the indifference of the imperial court to the potential threat of the Rulers. One almost expects Emperor Sigvart to dismiss the events as "a quarrel in a far-away country between people of whom we know nothing". And then, the man of peace finds himself presented with war.

On another level, there is the desperate adventure story, where Thyssen and his followers, fleeing the Rulers after the destruction of the clans, have no recourse but to cross the glacier. Fortunately they have meat and so don't have to send the big Irishman off alone on a 35 mile trip to get help for the little Englishman dying of scurvy. The other problems of crossing an ice cap of such height are not so amenable to solution, and then there's who they find on the mountain plateau that protrudes above the ice.

Not to mention the presentation of the shamaness Marcofeva's people, the cannibals mentioned above. (One hopes they get fats from other sources; eating an exclusive menu of very lean Person can cause problems from too much protein and no fat; see also *To Serve*

*Man: A Cookbook for People* by "Karl Würf" [George H. Scithers] (1976, 1979.) Having Evans, Lashly, and Crean — or maybe Shackleton, Worsley, and Crean (Tom Crean got around a lot) — drop in on the last few guys of the Greely Expedition is a bit disconcerting. Not quite as disconcerting as realizing that they are a trap themselves, as well as being in a trap; and yet they are still superior to the Rulers.

Desperation leads people to extraordinary measures. As when the emperor finally sees, and grants Count Thyssen an extraordinary commission, after having him dragged out of the dungeons. However, an extraordinary commission only means he's facing extraordinary opposition, and the Rulers really don't make any distinction between the tribal mammoth hunters and the people of the Empire.

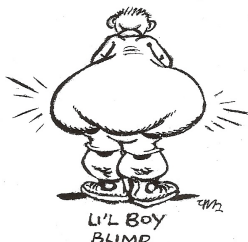
Count Thyssen has to face the Rulers again, and what happens next, terrible though it may be, is only a prelude to the great struggle that will occur when this is . . . [To Be Continued]

**CAPTAIN HOWDY**

Review by Joseph T Major of  
*PANDEMONIUM*  
by Daryl Gregory  
(Del Rey; 2008;

ISBN 978-0-345-50116-5; \$13.00)

NOTICE:  
The following drawings are  
based on sketches sneakily  
made at LoneStarCon Two,  
San Antonio, Texas, 1997.  
...So, recognize yourself?  
SCHIRM  
/ 2007



You have to admire a novel set in the ohs (that is, sometime around 2004) that has Philip K. Dick (1928-1982) as a character, and includes a cult built around *Slan*. Del Pierce, our h a p l e s s protagonist, might well wish for Pazuzu, also known as "Captain Howdy", to possess him. At least Captain

Howdy would vacate the premises given proper inducement. His own possession is not so easily terminated.

Sixty years ago, demonic possession became a very real thing. But the demons were not legendary things like Pazuzu or any of his other comrades in the legions of Hell; more archetypes, characters as much out of

pulp fiction or National Writers' Project collected folk takes as anything else. They are as fatal, though, as Captain Howdy was to Frs. Merrin and Karras, and with less effort.

Pierce was one of those possessed, and his possession led to his (or the demon's, anyway) shooting his mother's eye out with a slingshot. For all the time since then, he has become a captive of his possession, and indeed as the plot progresses, we see how much so.

The world is not much better. In interstitial flashbacks we see the effects of these possessions, most of them fatal. The main plot shows others; the proliferation of cults dedicated to explaining these events. And others, as demonstrated by the appearance of Valis the demon — possessing the body of Philip K. Dick. (Phil, you really needed to quit doing drugs, but that was a rather extreme method.)

What is surprising is how much normality there is amid the fray. At one point, Pierce flees to a run-down, small, off the beaten path motel in the backwoods of New York, and his trip is almost platitudinous in his transition of toll roads, gas stations, and the like. If nothing else, Gregory should be commended for his evocation of such remnants of the past. Similarly, his treatment of the pulps and comics of the thirties and forties is worth noting.

The clues to the business lie in such things, and in Pierce's realization of the connection between his own hand-drawn comics and the repetitious portrayals of a rural scene, created by one of the demons. As he crosses the continent, pursued by his own demons (so to speak) as much as anything, else, joined with a strange partner who herself has a troubling past of possession, for a confrontation with the source, he comes to a terrifying realization about himself. . . .

And yet, oddly enough, this is a Campbelleque work; the ordinary novel of the future that JWCjr desired. More an *Unknown Worlds* future than an *Astounding* future, but all the same an ordinary novel of its world, featuring an extraordinary character.

**ELLEANDER EVENING**

Review by Joseph T Major of  
*MY DIRTY LITTLE BOOK OF STOLEN TIME*

by Liz Jensen  
(Bloomsbury; 2006;  
ISBN 978-1-59691-188-8; \$23.95)

Jerry Yulsman's *Elleander Morning* (1984) recounts how one woman forestalled a war

following up on the World War, but then the Germans inexplicably decided they wanted to go get their arschens kicked by the world just like in the book. Time travel was involved. The book lacks historical coherence (the assassin goes to Vienna in 1913 to shoot Hitler, when he was in Munich) as well. And, no matter how often I tell Ed Meškys the facts, he thinks the author is (technically, was) a woman named "Yulesman" (and that the book is a good AH).

Well, Elleander Morning was a lady of the evening, and so is Charlotte Dagmar Marie of Østerbro (that being the orphanage where she grew up). Charlotte is furthermore financially encumbered in this year of grace 1897, having lost two of her more generous clients (one for twelve months barring a reduction for good behavior, and one for good) and still having to put up with Fru Schleswig, the former cook at the orphanage, who has somehow attached herself to Charlotte with loud protests of parental responsibility.

Other work is always a help, and through immense coincidence, Charlotte learns of Fru Krak of Number Nine Rosenvængtes Allé, København, a widow about to be remarried and in need of maid service to get her house in order for her new spouse. Charlotte and Fru Schleswig turn up ready for work.

If only it weren't for the strange stories about Professor Krak, the disappeared (or has he really?) man of the house, and the place of his construction in the cellar, the Oblivion Room, where people enter any time they like, but they never ever leave. While cleaning the house up of any small items that won't be missed but will bring in a few kronor at the pawn shop (a girl has to make a living), Charlotte investigates the cellar. There is something very strange down there.

However, when she, Fru Schleswig, and Fru Krak are all in the cellar at the same time, and the lady of the house reacts, Charlotte finds herself relocated in several dimensions. Namely, to twenty-first century London.

Charlotte adapts with considerable ease. There is an entire society of Professor Krak's voyagers there, living covertly and doing rather well, it seems. There is nothing like a Dane, I suppose, and with immense good luck, whilst trolling for clients (some things never change), she encounters Fergus McCrombie, an archaeologist with a cute little daughter and a willingness to believe.

And before long, Fergus wants to see the wonders of nineteenth-century Copenhagen. Only, once they get there, they find out that Fru Krak can be scared for a little while, but

not forever; and when they escape as best they can, their time machine is not even as reliable as Dr. Moses Nebogipfel's apparatus. Which leaves Charlotte and her friends of the Halfway Club of Danish time-travelers saddled with a remarkable problem. It seems neither Fergus nor Professor Krak went with them . . .

The writing style, my dear readers, may come across as a bit coy & epistolary-novelish. Charlotte does seem less hardened and cynical than most streetwalkers seem to become, and she was fortunate she did not encounter someone with an unfortunate ailment, in either time or work.

For someone who hadn't even read that novel by the English Mr. Wells, she seems remarkably accepting of the concept of time travel, and very practical withal in whatever circumstances she was in. Small wonder Fergus McCrombie thought her a fit caregiver for his daughter, and more along those lines, in spite of her other activity. You'll like meeting her, too.

### A CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF THE DA VINCI CODE

. . . 'Georg says this all reminds him of a book he once read about a murder in the Louvre,' said Fru Jakobsen. 'Everything was a conundrum, & as soon as the hero had cracked one set of riddle-me-rees, up popped another; it went on & on apparently but you couldn't put it down because it was all about Jesus having sexual congress & squiring progeniture.'

— *My Dirty Little Book of Stolen Time*, Page 246

### THE REVOLUTION OF NIHILISM

Review by Joseph T Major of  
**THE BOOKS OF THE WARS**  
by Mark S. Geston

(Baen; 2009;

ISBN 978-1-4165-9152-8; \$7.99)

Contains *Lords of the Starship* (1967),  
*Out of the Mouth of the Dragon* (1969),  
and *The Siege of Wonder* (1976)

China Miéville's works, particularly the New Croubzon series beginning with *Perdido Street Station* (2000; reviewed in *Alexiad* V. 1 #3), have seemed to have a certain blended ambience; to have the fittings and equipment of science fiction, but to be told in the style of fantasy. That the imagery is unremittingly ugly, the people predominantly wrathful, does

affect the reader.

Before Miéville there was Mark S. Geston. And yes, I did read *Lords of the Starship* when it came out from Ace and for a staggering price of 50¢. And there wasn't even another book tacked on back-to-back.

The Caroline Republic (presumably *res publica*, since it has a king) is just another New Croubzon; a decaying realm in a world living among the ruins of long-ago and long-destroyed greatness. Nothing is done because there's no point to anything.

As our story begins, Sir Henry Limpkin, a bureaucrat, is summoned by a mysterious figure known only as "General Toriman". In his campaigns, the general passed through a most strange place, known as "The Yards". The Yards had, it seems, the machinery and tools to build a spaceship, and as it happens he has a proposal for donig precisely that. And so there's no point in thinking small; the ship should be seven miles long, a third of a mile in diameter, a wingspan of three and a half miles, and a tail fin extending five-eighths of a mile above the hull.

The idea is to give the people of Coraline a goal, something for which they can be persuaded to build public works, industrialize, innovate, save, and so on. If their work is actually going to something, they will actually work for a change. And so the goal will be consumed by the effort, with all the work done on building the spaceship *Victory* in the end spurring people to rebuild their own world, instead of flying off to a new Home. (And besides the People will be put out by the incursion of so many Outsiders dropping in — oops, different Home.)

And so the wars of expansion begin. When the Yards and the route thereto are secured, so does the building.

Some time later, as work on the Ship progresses, a promising young engineer named Rome is approached by a mysterious figure known only as "General Tenn". The general has shocking news — some of the effort being put forth to build the Ship is being diverted.

What Rome should do it to organize the workers — known as "The People" (not those People, other People) to resist the autocracy of the higher-ranking engineering and construction staff, the Technos. In due time the People will have their turn, and they can devote all those resources to the building of the Ship.

And they do. Under the leadership of a mysterious figure known only as "Coral", the People stage an uprising. The Technos are destroyed with much carnage, all that effort at

development now becomes concentrated solely on finishing the Ship.

Then the Day comes. The Ship is finished. From some mysterious component within it, it sends forth great flocks of loudspeaker drones commanding all who hear to come to the Ship, that they may travel to the Home. And they do, by their thousands if not millions, frozen and stuffed into the compartments of the Ship.

As do enemies, who fear this, and attack it. A great combat ensues, with brutal and overwhelming fighting on all sides. In the middle of it, the Ship lights off its engines, backs out to sea and — begins to destroy itself.

In the middle of this, an even greater catastrophe ensues, as heretofore unimagined weapons smite the field of battle, turning all the combatants into that greasy gray ash that sticks to the boots. Destruction reigns.

Not long after, a sea raft that Miéville might appreciate approaches, and its passenger surveys the devastation. It is Toriman-Tenn-Coral himself, the leader and herald of an even greater army, come to assault the now ruined and defenseless lands.

Apparently some time later, for there are minor references to what may be events of the previous book (and may be just coincidences), Amon VanRoark, an inhabitant of a seaport that is never named, begins to wonder just might come *Out of the Mouth of the Dragon*. A ship limped into the harbor, returning ruined from a great battle at a place called the Meadows, and was slowly repaired. Then it set off again, leaving behind it a city that wasn't at all concerned about its port silting up because everyone was devoting all their effort to building a cathedral (for, apparently, no gods, there being no religious belief in this decaying world whatsoever).

VanRoark wants to go see the Meadows, so he goes to sea. The technology is the same erratic blend that existed in the other book, with supersonic jet planes flying over ratty sailing ships.

The voyage is long and tedious. VanRoark delves into the histories of his fellow venturers, finding them variously curiosity-driven or merely out for a new fight. Like everything else in the world, even the men are decaying.

Then, he leaves and finds more ventures, most interestingly on a "land train", a steam-powered vehicle of separate cars, run by you guessed it a decaying and strange crew. Since his leaving involved a fight in which he lost an arm and an eye, and one of the steam train people turned out to be a surgeon who replaced them with more capable mechanical parts, it

may have been just as well.

He leaves the train for a time, and after various wanderings, returns to his birthplace, home, only to find the city abandoned. He wanders the empty streets, noting the signs of destruction. The cathedral, rather damaged, is now an aircraft hangar — at least several jet fighters are parked in it.

Incurious, he leaves, soon running across the train, abandoned, the last man on board dead in a chair by it — an eerie scene, made more so by his continued conversation. The man was dead, his artificial voice box wasn't, and continued to emit random sounds.

And so, pointless in a pointless world, VanRoark wanders down to the sea pondering the fate of eternity.

As opposed to what a man called "Aden" endures in the Holy City of the wizards during *The Siege of Wonder*. Which is a collage of striking images and events, fighting and destruction.

I had thought that the pervasive, gripping nihilism seen in the destruction for the sake of destruction that runs through all three of these books was unrealistic. Then I remembered the story of the Russian peasant granted a wish, who wished that his neighbor's cow would die. Such attitudes exist, that is, and what Geston has done is to create a world where there is no other attitude; a world where a revolution of nihilism has triumphed, and cosmic indifference has become personal indifference.

Even when I first read it, I wondered why the characters (in the first book, that is), were so intent on self-destruction. For example, in the grand finale battle, the captain of the cruiser *Havengore*, reconstructed and made fully functional at immense effort and expense, runs her aground at full speed, followed by his two escort vessels. This is so much against naval protocol and self-preservation; it makes absolutely no sense whatsoever. Perhaps that was, in the end, Geston's point.

The first book presents an interesting example of this indifference, the curious and oblique character of Toriman-Tenn-Coral. A. E. van Vogt was criticized by Damon Knight for presenting in his works conflicts where the same person was secretly running both sides. Alexei Panshin defended that trope on the grounds that it showed the irrelevance of those conflicts. This setting has that character more conveniently, if not quite as plausibly (evidently everyone is so demoralized that they never check out Toriman-Tenn-Coral, or don't care when he doesn't check out)

masterminding destruction. One can argue that he is the protagonist.

Geston is writing in the theme of the grand devastation novel. While these sort of works go back a ways (*In the Days of the Comet* (1906), *The Poison Belt* (1913), *Sixty Days to Live* (1939), and so on), after the Second World War they tended to focus on nuclear destruction (*Alas, Babylon* (1959) by "Pat Frank" [Harry Hart Frank], *Fail-Safe* (1962) by Eugene Burdick and Harvey Wheeler, *Triumph* (1963) by Philip Wylie) in the U.S. The British field was dominated by J. G. Ballard's exotic tales of unimaginable devastation and general indifference to survival (*The Wind from Nowhere* (1961), *The Drowned World* (1962), *The Burning World* (1964), *The Crystal World* (1966)). Geston is between Ballard and Miéville in this, writing with great style and skill and brilliantly portraying a world of indifference. Nothing much matters anymore.

### THE BRONZE RAM OF RÓDOS

Review by Joseph T Major of  
*THE SUN'S BRIDE*  
by Gillan Bradshaw  
(Severn House; 2008;  
ISBN 978-0-7278-6641-7; \$28.95)

Isokrates poured a libation to the spirits of Menedemos and Sostratos, standing before the urns that contained their ashes. "The memorial is one of the last works of Chares of Lindhos, builder of the Colossus," he said by way of explanation, but he was a bit concerned that Gaby would launch into song, since it would be an offense to the Lady Dionysia . . .

— Not by Gillian Bradshaw

Isokrates the helmsman of the Rhodian trihemiola *Atalanta* is probably wanting to be doing some running. A mere anti-piracy swoop ends up getting him plugged directly into the turbulent mire of international politics, trapped between the Hellenistic Successor states of Macedon and Egypt and the Seleucid Empire. Not to mention rescuing the discarded mistress of King Antiochos Theos from pirates.

The third year of the 132nd Olympiad has just begun. Among the turbulent people of the border province between the Seleucids and the Ptolemies, it is the 3515th year since the creation of the world. In the far-western lands that Menedemos and Sostratos visited once, it is the consulship of M' Otacilius Crassus (for the second time) and P. Servilius Geminius

(for the second time), in the year DVIII since the Founding of the City. Far beyond the lands of the Parthians, Ch'in Shih-huang-ti (Qin Shi Huang Di) has just had the Mandate of Heaven descend upon his unworthy person. Off the coast of the Middle Kingdom, the lands of the Rising Sun bask in the 45th year of Kōrei. [Times yet to come will say 246 BC(E).]

ΡΟΔΟΣ, or Ródos, or Rhodes, will be familiar to the readers of L. Sprague de Camp's *The Bronze God of Rhodes* (1960) or the "Menedemos and Sostratos" novels by "H. N. Turteltaub". This particular work is set a little later, but the opening scene would be familiar to Chares, Menedemos, Sostratos, or Xena — the *Atalanta* is running down some pirates. Then, the pirate chief's hostage pulls out of his grasp and dives into the sea, after which the *Atalanta* proceeds to ram the ship and rescue the lady.

Dionysia, the lady in question, has just been sent away from the court of the Seleucid ruler Antiochos Theos [Antiochos Theos], where she had entertained the basileus in different ways. She had learned the kithara at her father's knee, and in a world where women were not quite empowered, but better than they had been, made herself a career. But now, it seems, Antiochos has put away his second wife, Berenice [Berenike] and returned to his first, Laodice [Laodike]. Since Berenice had been the seal on a peace treaty between Antiochos and Ptolemy [Ptolemaios Philadelphos], her father, it looks as if Hellenistic politics is in for some turmoil.

Not to mention that Isokrates has fallen for the lady, for all that he is in very constrained financial standards, estranged from his father, and along the way has picked up some powerful enemies. And did I mention that the pirate captain escaped, and turned up at the court of Queen Laodice when Isokrates reported in?

As the politics of the era get all too bloody, the characters find themselves going from one setting of immense peril to another. Their attraction to each other, however, is more restrained by external restraints. Assuming they live, which between the perils of being slipped hemlock or steel by a royal command, or merely being handed out as part of the swag of a bold pirate band, is hardly a certainty.

Bradshaw uses the social structures of Hellenistic society to make her point. This may not be how it was then, but as far as we know it was close enough. Having this, she proceeds to tell a story of heroic peril and romantic love, placing her lovers in the direst

of perils from foes both big and small. Having read this, you'll understand why Caesar did that to the pirates, even the female one . . .



### THE MAN WHO FOLDED THE WOODROW WILSON DIME

Review by Joseph T Major of  
*THE WALLS OF THE UNIVERSE*  
by Paul Melko  
(Tor; 2009;  
ISBN 978-0-7653-1997-5; \$25.95)

Verkan Vall looked at the toy, a simple mechanism of color-matching. "You say this was introduced to that time-line by a timeline-traveler?" he asked.

The research needed to prove the contamination had been tedious. The innovator had been tracked down after a long, stealthy investigation. Even genetic-particle analysis had not turned up any discrepancy, and it had taken research into a dozen extremely similar time-lines to determine which one had been his original one — all from the Europo-American Sector, for which they had an adequate selection of people and equipment. This was not the most recent example, but the last such risk had traded crude clothing fasteners and women's makeup between the two time-lines before the Paratime Police had caught him.

Vall picked up the device and began to move the facets. "Sir?" Parload Pato said. "Sir, will you authorize the removal?"

"When I get this . . ." he said, then broke into some unpleasant oaths he had picked up on a third-level time-line, upon seeing that one block had its colors in the wrong faces and he would have to undo his work . . .

— Not by H. Beam Piper or Jack Finney

If you've read *The History of Middle-earth*, this author's name seems a trifle unfortunate. (Hint: Morgoth's original name, "Melkor", had picked up a letter in the revisions.)

John Rayburn, of the middle of nowhere, Ohio, may be stalked by guys with sigma-ray needlers. This is because John Rayburn, formerly of the middle of nowhere, Ohio, abruptly showed up out of nowhere . . . a different timeline nowhere, and explained the situation. Then he handed the timeline travelling device to his duplicate, wished himself good luck, and took over his life.

John Prime (the first traveller) had this gadget that he was going to rename "Rayburn's Cube" and Rubik Ernō is just out of luck, running into the traditional loss of all his money and useful things.

John Prime then proceeds to fulfill an old wish, and marries the local time-line version of the girl he longed for in his home time-line. However, he finds the problems of too-young parenthood, on top of working full-time while going to school part-time, to be all too much.

John second is bounding from time-line to time-line, most of them unpleasant. At least he hasn't jumped into the Blight (of Laumer's *Imperium* (2005 (1961, 1965, 1968); reviewed in *Alexiad* V. 4 #3)). When he does settle down, he collects his feelings and sets out on a grand project of reverse engineering. You see, the time-line device has a little problem — it's one way only!

John Prime begins to run into legal problems. Rubik did indeed exist and patent his cube, just didn't develop it. However, this time-line doesn't have pinball machines. So he struggles through the legal problems of trying to patent and develop a new device. At which point some people with decidedly strange names begin making inquiries.

There are other time-line castaways here, men with strange names. Their original time-line was dominated by the Goths, see. (It ends up seeming like the AWB from *The Guns of the South* crossed with the Kromaggs from "Sliders".) Nevertheless they make very good wiseguys. "Nice little business you got here. Be a pity if anything were to happen to it."

Oh, and did I mention the murder? Not that we all haven't had bullies we wouldn't mind seeing getting snuffed, but John Prime's girlfriend turns out to be remarkably ruthless when it comes to being accessory to a murder.

John the original finally works out his own device, and just in, you will excuse the comment, time. This is a case where he really has to save himself . . .

Melko has kept control of his plot. Losing control of the plot is a far too easy error to make when dealing with multiple versions of the same person. Both versions of John run into real-world problems; even though I thought the bit about losing all his money was too clichéd, it was an exception.

And there are human problems too. Seeing how people do better or worse can be heartbreaking; it shows how a life can change for better or worse. Makes one think of the flash-asides in *Lola Rennit* (*Run Lola Run*; reviewed in *Alexiad* V. 2 #2) where the future lives of the people Lola ran past were so different.

In short, it's an ordinary novel about an extraordinary occurrence. John Prime doesn't have to try to pass Woodrow Wilson Dimes after folding himself into the time-line traveling device, he faces the problems someone who wasn't a time-line-traveler was as well.

### TO THE CORAL STRAND

Review by Joseph T Major of  
**DESTROYERMEN: MAELSTROM**  
by Taylor Anderson  
(RoC; 2009;  
ISBN 978-0-451-46253-4; \$24.95)  
Sequel to *Destroyermen: Into the Storm*  
(2008; reviewed in *Alexiad* V. 7 #5) and  
*Destroyermen: Crusade*  
(2008; reviewed in *Alexiad* V. 7 #6)

Lieutenant-Commander Matthew Patrick Ready, USNR, could probably put up with the antics of Torpedoman Gruber, Motor Machinist Mate Bell, Quartermaster Christopher, Gunner's Mate Edwards, Radioman Moss, and Seaman Haines, provided they could pull off the sort of success against the Grik that they usually did to save themselves from the wrath of Old Leadbottom. Lacking the services of Quintin McHale's gang of reprobates (did you know, by the way, that *McHale's Navy* began as a serious drama?), the USS *Walker* and its far-exiled crew may really be in for it.

They have recovered some of their comrades, and indeed found that there are more; but the enemy is also still out there, both domestic and imported. However, as the preview chapter printed at the end of *Destroyermen: Crusade* indicated, there was a reason that the Grik had English as a secret language and the Lemurians had Latin. And sure enough, when the *Walker* sails to the Philippines on a venture, they run into some of the local humans, along with the survivors of

the submarine *S-19* (which, in our world, was scuttled in 1938). Which was less bothersome than the other local humans, who popped up during a search for Someone Important and were just a bit miffed that these bloody colonialists should be lowering their standards so.

Meanwhile, the *Amagi* is proving herself more durable than your average cockroach, having suffered severe combat damage, and there are the little carnivorous fish that make underwater repairs a very interesting thing, but she's still going. (Anderson hints at how the *Amagi* managed to escape the Washington Naval Treaty limits by referring to 25.4 cm (oh all right 10") guns. The designed main battery of the *Amagi* class was 40.9 cm. (16.1").)

Oh yes, they still have Captain Kaufman, U.S.A (Air Corps). He's surprised, too.

Captain Ready and his men (and women) now have prospects of a future — provided they survive the imminent Grik assault, and the attack of the *Amagi*. There are always little problems.

So far, Anderson has escaped the "Party of Postponement" syndrome; the scenario where it turns out that even though last volume's enemy was handily defeated, there was a bigger and more powerful enemy out there that heretofore just hadn't wanted to get involved. Similarly, he has not succumbed to "Arcot, Wade, and Morey" syndrome, where technological advances burgeon at a speed unimagined in our experience with our resources, never mind the limited resources available to our stranded heroes. (Think the Professor in *Gilligan's Island*. By the way, his name was Roy Hinkley.)

Anderson's mining of naval trivia is not without interest for the old sailors. What are we going to run into next, HMS/M *X-1*, the Royal Navy's unsuccessful submarine cruiser?

Will this be continued? There's room for further adventures, and the Grik are still there and still hungry. And indeed, though there is no explicit declaration here, in other sources it has been definitely indicated that the plot lines begun here will be carried on when this sailors' saga is . . . [To Be Continued]

### DESTROYERMEN: ARMAGEDDON

Review by Joseph T Major of  
**A BLUE SEA OF BLOOD:**  
*Deciphering the Mysterious Fate of the USS*  
*Edsall*  
by Donald M. Kehn, Jr.  
(Zenith Press; 2008;  
ISBN 978-0-7603-3353-2; \$26.00)

It may be a planet of big ugly scaly things and not so animé cat people, but Taylor Anderson's *Destroyermen* saga begins in a very ugly setting, facing the sort of people who created animé cat people; the doomed campaigns of the remnants of the Asiatic Fleet. One of the real four-piper destroyers of that fleet, one like Anderson's fictively-preserved *Walker* and *Mahan*, was the USS *Edsall* (DD-219). The *Edsall* was not swept into a crosstime vortex, naturally; her fate was less appealing.

One wonders, naturally, if her commanding officer, Lieutenant Joshua J. Nix, USN (USNA '30) remembered that guy a year ahead of him who was on the fencing team, then got invalidated out with TB. Some of Heinlein's stories may have got out to the Far East by then. (Hm, Heinlein writing about a war between cat-people and lizard-people, resolved by humans — I bet Campbell would have bought that without even a second thought!)

One of the features of the book is that Kehn wanted to give the families of the crew closure; to tell them what really happened. And he describes the final days of the Asiatic Fleet. In one of the last commitments of men to the inferno, the *Edsall* was detached to speed to Java with a number of Air Corps pilots (an eerie parallel to *Destroyermen*). Then, as reports had it, she ran into the surface escort of *Kido Butai*, the Fast Carrier Striking Force.

It had been presumed that there were no survivors. But, Kehn found out, there were a handful of them. Who suffered even more extraordinary mistreatment and abuse before their deaths.

Which, more than the usual Japanese attitude towards those who did not fight to the death, seems also to have been caused by sheer embarrassment. The battleships *Hiei* and *Kirishima* and the cruisers *Tone* and *Chikuma* fired at the *Edsall* for approximately an hour and scored exactly one hit. In spite of the vast time since then and the substantial casualties then, Kehn was able to find survivors, including officers, of those ships who confirmed the narrative of the battle.

Other chapters of the book describe the greater world around the story. Kehn recounts the history of the *Edsall* including her presence at the fall of Symrna, the design failures of the four-pipers, the collapse of the Allied position in Southeast Asia, and indeed the end of colonialism there. The Dutch discovered that the people of the East Indies didn't love them after all.

The families of those lost on the *Edsall* now have a little bit of closure. Being cast

away in a world of flesh-eating lizards and cat people would be some kind of relief, but fiction remains, no matter how insightful and entertaining, only fiction, sad to say.

USS *Edsall* (DD-219)  
<http://www.history.navy.mil/danfs/e2/edsall-i.htm>

### THE LAUREL NOOSE

Review by Joseph T Major of  
**TOTHE END OF THE EARTH:**  
*Our Epic Journey to the North Pole and the*  
*Legend of Peary and Henson*  
by Tom Avery  
(St. Martin's Press; 2009;  
ISBN 978-0-312-55186-5; \$26.95)

The Beagle Project is an effort to encourage the Royal Geographical Society, heir to a century and a half of expeditionary history, to begin organizing expeditions again. Among its sponsors is Tom Avery, polar explorer — one of those entitled to a clasp to his Polar Medal, for having explored both ends of the Earth. In fact, having gone to the extremes of both ends of the world. This is the story of the Northern trip of 2005.

This time, Avery decided that he wanted to show that Peary had indeed gone to the North Pole, no matter what the first man who claimed to have gone to the North Pole and had it proven said. And indeed, it seems, Sir Walter William "Wally" Herbert was very skeptical.

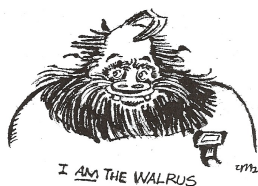
Gathering sponsorship seems to be not as hard as it used to be (i.e., Avery didn't have to emulate Scott and speak in Little-Storping-in-the-Swuff, getting £7.42 mostly in small change, plus that one-Euro coin that Nigel brought back from his trip to *foreign* parts), so that was the case. Personnel problems don't change, and it's not surprising that there was a broken engagement. What didn't happen in the Good Old Days was that the couple had been both in the team — and she went to the Pole.

The intent of this expedition was to demonstrate that Peary could have made it. Thus every dated entry in the narrative shows how far ahead or behind they are. While they had several advantages that Peary didn't (GPS location, for example, that gets rid of that troublesome need to calculate lateral drift), they had to deal with several problems that he didn't.

Nowadays the explorer has to struggle with a mound of permissions, restrictions, qualifications, and constraints. All the catastrophes and blockages that assailed James Blish's Western Polar Basin Expedition in

*Fallen Star* [*Frozen Year*] (1957) hardly needed intervention from albino Martians to come to pass. (For what it's worth, the strictures on albinism and skin cancer asserted in that book don't seem to be the case; the character is a photographer and given the visual problems associated with albinism (Elric wipes out so many people with Stormbringer because he can't see to tell associate from foe), Blish could have made a better case for his extraterrestrial origin on that basis.)

But, in the end, the expedition triumphed. They managed to reach the Pole without killing a single dog, in spite of the last supply drop nearly being aborted by a pilot who deemed it unnecessary. And then, making the obligatory mention of Global Warming thinning the ice pack to the point where the unique ecosystem will be fatally damaged unless We Do Something, they were picked up off the ice, having outdone Peary, and returned home triumphantly.



It's worth noting that Avery makes his case very precisely. For example, he cites Sir Wally as sceptically averring that his lightly-built

sledges will be battered to bits, citing his own disbelief — then, during the expedition, noting how the sledges were battered. And similarly, he not only sloughs over Sir Wally's comments but completely ignores the most thorough treatment of the matter, Robert M. Bryce's 1151-page doorstop of a book, *Cook and Peary: The Polar Controversy, Resolved* (1997). Not to mention ignoring one of the biggest problems — Peary's incredibly fast last dash to the pole, an assertion not even supported by the other witness. (See Matt Henson's *A Negro Explorer at the North Pole* (1912), preferably the edition edited by Robert Bryce.)

If you want to read the latest version of it was the best of times, it was the worst of times, and you should get a look at my toes, this is a good choice. In a world where every bit of risk (and every bit of fun) is ligitated away, there's few enough places left where there are no lawyers.

### MARK IST MARK

Review by Joseph T Major of  
**THE WAGES OF DESTRUCTION:  
The Making and Breaking of the Nazi**

### Economy

by Adam Tooze  
(Viking Adult; 2007;  
ISBN 978-0-670-03826-8; \$32.00 (hb);  
Penguin; 2008;  
ISBN 978-0-14-311320-1; \$20.00 (tp))

### If Hitler Had Invaded England

#### Introduction

THE TITLE tells you what this story is about. So often it has been said, if Hitler had made the attempt to invade Britain after the evacuation of Dunkirk, he would have won the war, that it is worth analyzing his chances. He must be given in this narrative every possible chance, but none of the impossible ones. Before war began he had made no plans, and certainly no preparations, for the invasion of Britain; if he had, history would have taken a different course from that moment. If he had begun to build a fleet of landing craft in 1938, for instance, the British attitude at Munich might well have been different, and certainly British rearmament would have been more rapid. And it must be remembered that with the German economy at full stretch for war production, such a fleet could only have been built at the cost of a diminished output of planes or guns or tanks or submarines.

— "C. S. Forester" [Cecil Louis Troughton Smith]

Fifty years on, the best and most plausible alternate history of the event bears the self-referential title of "If Hitler Had Invaded England" (*Saturday Evening Post*, April 16-30, 1960; available in *Gold from Crete* (1973)). Turning away from the *African Queen*, *The Pride and the Passion*, Captain Horatio Hornblower, and all that, C. S. Forester went into a new field of endeavor. Unlike his later colleagues who take up the forgeries of a man determined to blacken his country, "Forester" looked over the background, studied the resources available, and analyzed the correlation of forces.

Now, there is even less of an excuse. This book has won the Wolfson History Prize for excellence in the writing of history for the general public, so the would-be AH writer can't even claim that it's too technical for her.

Tooze gives a narrative of the troubled and uncertain economy of Nazi Germany. One of

the current claims of neo-Nazis is that "Hitler broke free of the chains of the International Jewish Finance System!" Leaving aside the Jew-hatred, this was what he attempted to do, and Tooze shows how the German economy could not achieve the autarky that National Socialist policy required and advocated.

The economy limped along through the thirties. Indeed, one factor that would prove to be very decisive later that Tooze demonstrates to abundance was how *undeveloped* Germany was; the bustling autobahns and the Mercedeses that filled them were the privilege of a few, while your average German lived on next to nothing. That is to say, mechanization was low, which was why the principal transport of the invincible Wehrmacht whinnied. (Which in turn explains many things, including the reason they didn't use poison gas.) The impoverished vista that greeted Ferric Jaggar when he returned to his native land of Helder was quite real in the original, though at least there were no mutants.

Tooze discusses the employment and unemployment problems that followed in the expansion of the Reich. Taking over first Austria, then the Sudetenland may have helped gain some foreign currency reserves; but it also meant more unemployed to find work for.

And then the war broke out. It was some kind of a solution, in that now it was possible to mobilize and direct the economy, but even there problems cropped up. Tooze provides a number of insights regarding the economic influence on strategy and politics. For example, there was the degree of arms production, which overreached the acceptable peacetime limits (hence "Forester's" comment about building landing craft meaning not building something else). Once the actual fighting began, this was improved in some ways but exacerbated in others.

One of the biggest reputations to suffer here is that of Albert Speer the Supreme Planner. There's already been a vast corrective to Speer's self-serving testimony (e.g. *Albert Speer: His Battle with Truth* (1995) by Gitta Sereny, O.B.E.) but this goes even further, and not just on such things as whether or not he was out of the room while Himmler was speaking about the extermination of the Jews (no doubt having drunk too much coffee and heading for the klo). Rather, Tooze shows how Speer's "great reorganization" only went so far in boosting arms production.

Other debunkings deal with the *Wunderwaffen* so beloved of fanboys, the jet planes, stealth submarines, and supertanks that would sweep away the Allies and win the war.

Tooze demonstrates the production problems of the ME-262 jet, the Type XXI U-Boat, and so on. For example, prefabricating submarine sections is one of those ideas that seem so good but can have a very bad slip between the drafting table and the boat in the water.

Getting back to an earlier topic, Tooze discusses the labor shortage in Germany. While debunking earlier conceptions regarding the mobilization of women for labor ("Kinder, Kirche, Küche" ended up being stretched to where kitchens were war plants), he discusses other labor sources, namely the importation of slave laborers from conquered territories. As more and more Germans were requisitioned for the armed forces, the number of workers had to be made up somehow. And then there was the problem of the deliberate destruction of skilled labor of the wrong ancestry . . .

It's worth noting that the quest for *Lebensraum* meant that the previous occupants had to be removed. Usually to a meter or two down, it turns out. That Reichsgau Götengau that so exercised Himmler's fantasies (see *The Master Plan: Himmler's Scholars and the Holocaust* (2006; reviewed in *Alexiad* V. 5 #5) by Heather Pringle for that story) would be pre-depopulated, as it were.

Tooze has presented a new perspective that increases the comprehensibility of that dark era of the world. It is all very well to present exciting tales of adventure, or insightful commentaries on the essential depravity of those of the wrong class, but those which ignore plausibility and coherence are less than they promise, whether it be science, history, or the dismal science. As the other side put it, "Facts are better than dreams."

### THE LOST WORLD

Review by Joseph T Major of  
**THE LOST CITY OF Z:**

*A Tale of Deadly Obsession in the Amazon*  
by David Grann

(Doubleday; 2005, 2009;  
ISBN 978-0-385-51353-1; \$27.50)

"Se aventura tiver um nome, deve ser o Indiana Jones!"

Indy removed his hat, and wiped the sweat from his forehead. Then he put his hat back on, not wanting sunstroke. "Kid, see the darker soil there? That's a posthole. And there's another one, over there, and beyond that in the next trench." He looked into the woods, where the great moat could be seen. "John Roxton's report was right. There was a great civilization here once."

“But where’s the gold?” Mutt said. He breathed hard and swatted away a dozen different kinds of insects.

Indy smiled. “In New York,” he said, confident. “Lectures, films, books . . .” Then he moved quickly, the whip snapped out, taking off the head of a snake that had been about to bite Mutt. “It had to be snakes,” he said.

Back in the sixties, I had a disintegrating cheaply-hardbound book about lost treasures. Some of them were merely petty, such as the pottery cat that had several valuable rubies hidden in it by someone who seemed to have read “The Six Napoleons”. (When Holmes insisted on buying all rights to the bust, he wasn’t trying to lay claim to the Black Pearl of the Borgias; he was making sure he could legitimately claim the entire reward.) Some were, er, well, historically off; I don’t know what Lisa would think of the story of Anne Bonney and the pirate crew of half-dressed wenches.

One story, though, told about Percy Fawcett and the Amazon. This British explorer had traveled into the depths of the Mato Grosso in search of an ancient lost civilization repeatedly. In 1925 he had set off again, only this time he had never come back. The book had described their journey, their final contact with others, and then they had vanished in the wilderness.

I don’t think David Grann read that book. He did read others, though, and the story of Percy Hamilton Fawcett is quite intriguing.

He was a gunner to begin with. He survived boarding school and Woolwich (the training academy for Royal Artillery officer candidates) and his first posting was in Ceylon. Where he went searching for lost treasure, at an abandoned Sinhalese city inland (instead of the Great Basses Reef, but diving technology was not quite so developed then).

Then the Mato Grosso bug bit him. Beginning in 1906, Fawcett launched six expeditions into the uncharted wild of northern Bolivia and western Brazil. This was not the most hospitable of country, to put it mildly. The hostile fauna ranged from midges to giant snakes (it had to be snakes), not to mention the candiru, a small fish that makes the piranha seem friendly. It likes to swim up narrow orifices and I think I’ll leave the rest to your pained imagination. Then too, the human inhabitants are to be considered. Not only do they live there, but they do hold a grudge about previous attempts to “civilize” them.

Fawcett was a man very much in harmony

with the philosophy put forth by Sir Chris Bonington, but a generation earlier (see Clint Willis’s *The Boys of Everest* (2006; reviewed in *Alexiad* V. 6 #2) for this). Rather than the huge, logistically burdened, massively buttressed expeditions that overwhelmed their goals, Fawcett preferred to have only a handful of men, or even less if necessary. This did entail a somewhat ruthless attitude towards falling out. One of the worst cases was that of James Murray, veteran of the British Antarctic Expedition of 1908-9. Murray probably wished he was back with Shackleton, certainly after the maggots . . . er, well, utterly disgusted, he left the country, and signed up with the *Karluk* expedition, where after the ship became beset, he bugged out, and died somewhere on the ice (see *The Ice Master* (2000; reviewed in *Alexiad* V. 2. #1) by Jennifer Niven for this).

But, it seems, Fawcett had his own quirks. One, of course, was not revealing his sources, out of concern over their being exploited by a competitor. In an era where an unguarded site can be totally trashed by pot hunters by tomorrow morning, thanks to the Internet, this attitude becomes more comprehensible.

Oh yes, competition. Fawcett had a number of competitors, of whom he didn’t think much. Yes, even the man for whom the Rio Roosevelt is named.

Not to mention interruptions. When the Great War began, Gunner Fawcett went back to the army, sure it would all be over by Christmas. When it was all over, he was Lieutenant-Colonel Fawcett, D.S.O., Royal Artillery, desperately trying to get a second pip under the crown. It was the status of the thing, I suppose. And then there was the time he almost had that man in the fur coat with the French helmet arrested as a Hun spy . . .

Then the last expedition, in 1925. England was worn out by the War (and then too, having a record of threatening Mr Churchill, who was now the Chancellor of the Exchequer, might not have been the most advantageous thing to do) and so Colonel Fawcett went to the States. It didn’t help that one of his competitors was from there, and independently wealthy to boot. But he managed to raise money, and with his older son and a friend, set out to find the Lost City of Z. He was admittedly suffering from a paradigm shift, as that period was when such expeditions were supposed to be carried out by degreed professionals, not amiable amateurs. Nevertheless, they crossed from Bolivia into Brazil, went into the depths of the Mato Grosso forest . . . and vanished.

That was only the beginning of the story.

For twenty years, ever more expeditions set out to find Fawcett. Other investigators used other means; rumors, spiritualists, sightings . . . but no clear indication of their fate.

Grann interleaves the chapters on Fawcett with chapters on his own quest. He not only went to the Mato Grosso, he spoke with Fawcett’s daughter. Fawcett had given a false location for Dead Horse Camp, the place from where he had set out on his final quest, and Grann managed to determine what the actual coordinates of the place were. In Brazil, he managed to see the original of the ancient document that first described the lost city of Z. (That book I’d read had mentioned it. They sent ahead a runner with a letter. The expedition then vanished. Lot of that going around.) Strangely enough, none of Grann’s gear was stolen from him, forcing him to go out exploring with only a crust in his wallet and a song in his heart, but then reality does that sort of thing.

Grann interleaves the story of Fawcett’s life with scenes of his own preparation and activities in the Mato Grosso, as well as the other researches. He seems to want to show that he could get a feel for the scene, and having done so does intensify his descriptions. Having these chapters mixed in with the biographical information on Fawcett does break up the flow of the narrative.

I’m grateful to Martin Morse Wooster for having sent me a copy of Grann’s original article, from *The New Yorker*, and for having alerted me to the release of this book.

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### SETTING THE EAST ABLAZE

Review by Joseph T Major of  
***THE BLOODY WHITE BARON:  
The Extraordinary Story of the Russian  
Nobleman Who Became the Last Khan of  
Mongolia***

by James Palmer  
(Basic Books; 2008, 2009;  
ISBN 978-0-465-01448-4; \$26.95)

From a great distance away, a slow thudding sound began to intrude itself. Yarblek’s eyes narrowed with hate. “It looks like Silk left just in time,” he growled.

The thudding became louder and turned into a hollow, booming sound. Dimly, behind the booming, they could hear a kind of groaning chant of hundreds of voices in a deep, minor key.

“What’s that?” Durnik asked.

“Taur Urgas,” Yarblek answered

and spat. “That’s the war song of the king of the Murgos. . . Taur Urgas is always at war. . . Even when there isn’t anybody to be at war with. He sleeps in his armor, even in his own palace. It makes him smelly, but all Murgos stink anyway, so it really doesn’t make any difference . . .”

The chanting and the measured drumbeats grew louder. Shrill fifes picked up a discordant, almost jiggling accompaniment, and then there was a sudden blaring of deep-throated horns.

A steady stream of grim-faced Murgo soldiers marched eight abreast into the makeshift fair to the cadenced beat of great drums. In their midst, astride a black horse and under a flapping black banner, rode Taur Urgas. He was a tall man with heavy, sloping shoulders and an angular, merciless face. The thick links of his mail shirt had been dipped in molten red gold, making it almost appear as if he were covered in blood. A thick metal belt encircled his waist, and the scabbard of the sword he wore on his left hip was jewel-encrusted. A pointed steel helmet sat low over his black eyebrows, and the bloodied crown of Cthol Murgos was riveted to it. A kind of chain-mail hood covered the back and sides of the king’s neck and spread out over his shoulders.

— David Eddings, *Magician’s Gambit*

The story of Baron Nikolai Roman Maximilian Fyodorovich von Ungern-Sternberg is in itself only a tale of human cruelty. In its ramifications, it stretches across half a world, affecting even today, touching peoples across the steppe. Most of them fatally, but cruelty was the issue here.

In the vaster canvas of the Bolshevik Revolution, the Mad Baron was only an afterthought, a feudal aberration made even more feudal by the range and diversity of his beliefs and influences. He was born in Austria no less, to a noble Baltic German family. Palmer makes the interesting point that, due to the difference between the Julian and the Gregorian Calendars, Ungern-Sternberg was born in two different years: December 29, 1885 (o.s.) = January 10, 1886 (n.s.). And somehow, throughout the rest of his life, he always seemed to be between cultures.

His parents divorced, his mother went back to Estonia and remarried, and he grew up to be the terror of the educational system; a



discipline problem, dismissed from school. Then came the Russo-Japanese war, and Ungern-Sternberg's aggressive nature found a place; he was enlisted into the army and served briefly at the front.

Then, he signed up as a regular, first going to a military academy, then gaining a commission (first soldier, then officer, where have we heard that before). While learning the essentials of military administration (which he seems to have shed quickly enough when the opportunity came) he also encountered occultism.

Palmer discusses how, even in eras of overt and thoroughgoing rationalism, outside religious beliefs creep in to replace the discredited native ones. As in the New Age of the eighties, so in Russia a century ago the young and spiritually impoverished studied Buddhism, graduated to Theosophy, and then tacked on their own additions.

Ungern-Sternberg was assigned to the Transbaikal Cossacks, right across the border from Mongolia, home of a lamastic Buddhism. Palmer argues that Buddhism is so broad that just about any belief can be fitted into it; he compares it to the Church of England (but maybe not, since Ann Holmes Redding, the former Episcopal priest who says she is simultaneously a Muslim, has been kicked out for failure to apostatize). In Mongolia and Tibet (and the Mongolian Buddhists derive from Tibet) the beliefs are pretty gory.

A few years later, German explorers seeking the Ancient Aryan Roots of Tibet would observe how un-monastic the monasteries of Tibet were; many of the lamas were armed, the use of prostitutes was so prevalent that gonorrhoea was endemic, and so on. (See *Himmler's Crusade* by Christopher Hale (2003; reviewed in *Alexiad* V. 4 #4) for more on this.) Their northern brothers were even more like this. Tibetan and Mongolian monasteries portrayed the wars of the gods and the torments of the damned in grisly and explicit detail, along with how they relieved their emotions afterwards. These matters have been cleaned up for foreign consumption, but not when Ungern-Sternberg came by.

All too soon, the Great War came. Whatever his other lapses, Ungern-Sternberg was lucky. He served in Samsonov's army, and if you know the history, you will be properly amazed when you hear that Ungern-Sternberg escaped unharmed. (The destruction of Samsonov's army by the dynamic duo of Hindenburg and Ludendorff is properly renowned as an example of great skill on one side facing utter incompetence on the other.)

He continued to serve on the German front for the next three years, building a reputation for reckless assaults. One of which earned him a brief spell in the guardhouse, followed by a transfer to the Persian front. Then there came the two revolutions, and all his life came apart.

Other officers noticed that Ungern-Sternberg was an anti-Semite. That should indicate how far out he was, in a milieu where *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion* was known to be the way things really were. And here the neocons, sorry for the anachronism, the Zyd had overthrown the Little Father.

Going east as one of a handful of men, he did his part in winning Siberia for the Bolsheviks. Since he was a White officer, that may give you an idea of the success of his efforts. Ungern-Sternberg organized a military force (to use the terms very loosely) that was kept together by terror, and dominated its enemies by even more terror.

Having eroded support in his political home, Ungern-Sternberg withdrew to his spiritual home, where he made common cause with the Bogd Lama, the then-current incarnation of the Jebtsundamba Khutuktu, the ruler of Mongolia under the Chinese dominion. Which was itself coming apart. The Bogd Lama had a wife, and apparently a harem.

Terror can only go so far before it runs out of victims and has to find a new field of action. Ungern-Sternberg had killed all the Jews he could find in Mongolia, driven the Chinese out of the country, and had to find something to do. So he attacked Russia.

As a result, his army was destroyed, rather like how Pancho Villa's *División del Norte* disintegrated when it attacked Obregón's better-organized forces at Agua Prieta. The Red Army "liberated" Mongolia and Ungern-Sternberg became a fugitive. One of the more striking images of that time in his life is the portrayal of him become Mongolian shaman, bare-chested, wearing amulets, riding aimlessly across the steppes, seeking . . .

And before long the Bolsheviks got him. He was brought to book for his crimes and received the supreme measure of punishment, passing into oblivion and history. In fiction, the ruthless, brutal ruler progresses from success to success until the lone scorned hero makes a lucky shot; or now, more so, the ruthless, brutal ruling class dominate the world by dint of their superior nature. Reality is less accommodating of such dreams.

The sources for the "Mad Baron" are slender and contradictory. Palmer discusses how the best-known contemporary work about him is full of errors and misstatements.

Yet . . . one of his informants told Palmer that his family regarded Ungern-Sternberg as a god, in the Buddhist way. His actions moved Mongolia into the Soviet adit, and Palmer points out that either way, Communist rule meant the destruction of lives and ways of living.

. . . One Mongolian may be worth eight Chinese, but there are five hundred Chinese for every Mongolian. They only have to look at Inner Mongolia, where ethnic Mongols, once the majority, now make up less than 5 per cent of the population, to see their likely fate if swallowed by the new Chinese imperium; reduced to a colourful sideshow in dancing displays staged to demonstrate the wonderful diversity of China while their children study Mandarin in school.

— *The Bloody White Baron*, Page 120

## BEING CONVEXED

Trip Report by Joseph and Lisa Major on  
**ConCave 30**  
 February 22-24, 2009

This was the hardest thing to find out about. The Internet ate two requests by me to get on the mailing list — which I should have been anyhow, having signed up last year. And the flyer I picked up at WorldCon vanished.

But finally, we learned when the con was, and resolved to go there. I was just a bit worried when I woke up at three in the morning, and wasn't sure if I ever got back to sleep again. We washed up and got on the road around eight. Grant had shown some interest in going, but his foot was still bothering him and he knew he would be on it all day if he went, so he didn't. In spite of tanking up and stocking up, we got down to the vicinity of **Tim's** and **Elizabeth's** just a little early, so I scoped out what time the Chili's on Bardstown & Hikes Lane closed, before going on to 2265 Bradford.

We had found out that the hotel breakfast was prolonged precisely for the convenience of the congoers (thanks to the enthusiastic endorsement of **Mike Baugh**) but couldn't quite be sure it would be extended to day-trippers, so ate breakfast in Elizabethtown. It was a cloudy day, so I didn't need the sunglasses I'd taken. (I did need something I'd forgotten to take, but that's another story.)

We arrived at the hotel at half-past nine, and I dropped everyone else off under the portico while I went looking for a parking

space — and found one in the lot! The hotel is more than full, understand, and there were people parked along the drive.

When I got in, I found them talking to **Tom Feller** while **Anita** sat and watched. After a moment, I decided that hot tea was 1) within the limits of things that could be given away and 2) probably a good idea for staying awake. So I got some, doing a whip around and noting (with hellos), **Mike & Susan Baugh** and **Steve & Sue Francis**.

After a while, a ghost appeared. This figure was pale white, clad in white, with white hair and a fixed, nigh rigid gaze. Since I (and apparently many others) had expected that **Khen Moore** was on his deathbed, his presence there was unexpected. Somewhat later, **Dan Caldwell** came by, and we said hello, but he was busy with the party.

Not long thereafter, **Corliss Robe** appeared and began taking registrations. I was Member #302, which indicates that they are keeping up numbers.

The dealers room opened about then, and we went in there to see **Larry Smith** about what he had, which was a fair bit. **Steve Francis** was there, and so were **Bob Roehm** and **Joel Zakem**. I got from **Steve** a copy of *The Tyrant*, by **Eric Flint** and **David Drake**. It reads more like an outline for a longer novel, I'm afraid.

Then **Tim**, **Elizabeth**, **Tom**, **Lisa**, and I were sitting around a table and **Warren Buff** came up to us, held out his hand to **Tim**, and said, "Hello, Joe." Friday night must have been exhausting.

Later that afternoon **Rod Smith** started showing his WorldCon pictures. He had so many prints he was giving them away, and once we logged on the hotel wireless internet, we started doing more. I actually posted pictures of me with **Rod** and with **Tom Feller** on Facebook while we were at the con.

We settled up with **Larry Smith** and among us we had (after discount) \$300 worth of books. **Lisa** and I had a little more than **Tim** and **Elizabeth**, but I had the only full-price hardback.

The LibertyCon party started about five and we all went there. And ended up in a corner talking to **Susan Baugh** about various things, but it was very enjoyable.

After that we figured we had to leave. While saying our goodbyes, I went into the con suite's service room, found **Annette Carrico**, and talked for a little while. It's been twenty-five, thirty years since those days at WKUSFS, and now she's retired.

But then we had to hit the road. It was

raining, cold rain at that, and the wipers were acting up so the only uncleared patch on the windshield was right in front of my face. The rain stopped about the time we crossed the metro line.

After dropping Tim and Elizabeth off we went to that Chili's and had dinner. It was about nine-thirty, and I'd checked that morning (remember?) and the place closed at eleven. Fortunately, the car has a clock on the dashboard. I'd left my cell phone at home, on the charger (I had thoughtfully and foresightedly charged it up the night before) and had some concern about the time.

We got home then, told Grant a little, I had my shots, and got to sleep about one after catching up on various things.

This is Gary's last year as con chair. Good luck to them and to the new bosses.

— JTM

The last weekend in February was Concave so Joe, Tim, Elizabeth and I bundled into the car and headed off for Horse Cave. Concave is a relaxicon so there was no programming. Khen Moore made an appearance. No convention is complete without a huckster room which we visited several times. I found a Winston Churchill paperback and a volume of Sandburg's *Lincoln* at a fifty-cent table. Two dollars bought me a copy of Bob Shaw's *Fire Pattern*. I also replaced my copy of Heyer's *Royal Escape* and also bought a novel about William the Conqueror by her. We spent time with Tom and Anita Feller. One dealer had old convention shirts at half price and I bought a Denvention shirt.

— LTM

## WEATHER NOTES

by Lisa

The cleanup for the ice storm continues. Downed trees and piles of branches can be seen

everywhere. No area seems unaffected by the ice storm. Wherever we have driven we have seen uncountable numbers of downed trees, their torn branches testifying to the dreadful wounds they suffered during the ice storm. The marks of the storm will be with us many years to come, I think.

We have had a return to winter. I have been grateful for the eight-dollar light coat I bought from Nearly New, the upscale thrift store in the basement of the mall where I work. It is surprisingly warm, given its light weight. Its label states it was made by Weatherproof under

the brand label WP. Because of cosmetic stains Nearly New priced it at eight dollars. I looked at the company's website but could not find the coat. It was probably a discontinued version. A pity, that. It's quite comfortable and warm, yet not at all heavy.

## THE ADVANCE OF INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

by Lisa Major

When Grant made mention of there being eight functioning computers in the house, I thought he was exaggerating slightly. But then I began counting. I have a desktop and two laptops. Joe has a desktop and a laptop. Grant has two desktops and at least one laptop. That's eight. Plus there are the two senior citizens which are never turned on these days. One of those I am trying to clear piles away from so that Grant can see if it is still functioning. If it isn't it has to go to the great office in the sky. That also goes for the one in the closet. If they're going to take up space they have to at least store backups.

## CAT NEWS

by Lisa

March marking a full year of Slim's presence in our house, it was time for his annual shots. On Saturday night I got a carrier out and took it upstairs to the bedroom in hopes that the cats would adjust to it. Very shortly afterwards Slim went into the carrier. He returned to it the next morning and stayed there until it was time to secure him in it. He yowled a bit but was far less unpleasant than either Delenn or C'Mell are. The trick won't probably work on him again but perhaps in a year he will have forgotten. I may get the carrier out a week earlier and establish it as a familiar part of the environment.

I went out with Joe this morning in search of a paper to replace one stolen from the library. At the door a large black and white cat was begging to be let in. "No, no, no, no," I growled at it. "We are not your people. Take a good sniff and you'll see I speak the truth. Go home." One glance made it clear this animal was far from starving. It hesitated when we came out and then disappeared under a car. I hope it does indeed have a home to go to and was not freshly dumped. Some days I just want to haul every animal I see running loose to the clinic and have them fixed.

When I came home Friday afternoon I was relieved to see the animal had apparently gone

home but was dismayed to see the animal appear after we were in the car. It watched us drive away with this incredible guilt-producing look on its face. Please don't leave me. It is a very striking animal with beautiful black and white piebald markings. Its condition is good enough that it might be someone's pet. I think I will call it Pied Piper. Cat websites say piebalds are common but this is the first one I remember seeing.

Saturday night the cat came up to us, jumped on the car and climbed up to the roof, where it eyed the inside. I shooed it away and tried to determine gender but failed in the dark. If the animal is still around Monday morning I'm going to take it to Animal Control for a chip scan. Surely this beautiful, sweet cat has an owner.

It has been several days since I have seen the Piebald. I debated going to Animal Control but decided I did not have the strength to look at all the numerous strays and walk away from those on death row. Had the Piebald been one of our five I would have gone. But the Piebald was not my cat. I did make inquiries of other cat lovers and learned they believed the Piebald had a home somewhere in the neighborhood. Part of me still wonders, though, if the cat failed to show up again because it was dead.

At this moment all the kittes are within sight and all resting peacefully. I suppose they need the rest after the past two days. They have spilled a bag of food everywhere, shredded toilet paper and indulged in numerous spitting bouts. Gemellus has gotten outside and chased the brown and white cat easily twice his size under a car. He has bounced everywhere in the house. In general they have behaved in ways that make me wonder why I don't have nice quiet pets like rattlesnakes.

## ALYSHEBA

March 3, 1984 — March 27, 2009

by Lisa Major

Yesterday, March 27, the news broke that Thoroughbred legend Alysheba had fallen in his stall. He had earlier been diagnosed with a degenerative disease. When he was unable to stand, the Horse Park Veterinarians conferred with the Saudi king's veterinarians and the decision was made to euthanize the big bay. I froze and stared at the announcement, for the horse had seemed in excellent health in October, when we saw him prance off the van. I remembered that first Saturday in May twenty-two years ago, the day I saw Alysheba

perform an incredible feat of agility and strength.

## LIL E. TEE

1989 — March 17, 2009

by Lisa Major

1992 Derby winner Lil E. Tee died of colic March 17. His Derby was supposed to be a coronation for the latest incarnation of Secretariat, Arazi. Arazi tired badly at the end. Lil E. Tee gave noted jockey Pat Day his only roses.

## THE BOUNDLESS DEEP

by Kate Brallier

(Tor; 2008; ISBN 978-0-7653-5809-7; \$6.99)

Review by Lisa Major

On a Friday night expedition to Borders I chanced to see a book titled *The Boundless Deep*. It sounded interesting so I took it off the shelf. The cover was intriguing and I opened the book. I was hooked with the first paragraph. It begins with the narrator in a recurring dream in which she returns to a past life.

It starts with the dream; it always starts with the dream. The ship is rocking, the waves slapping iron-fisted against the hull. A cold wind is screaming out of the south, blasted up from the Antarctic, chapping the cheeks and watering the eyes. There is nothing but ocean on all sides, as dark and forbidding as the backs of the leviathans when they finally surface in swirls of water and spouts of steam. Overhead, the sails creak ominously, taut under the strain of the fierce wind. A momentary lull slackens the canvas, then it snaps into place with the sullen crack of a slavemaster's whip.

— *The Boundless Deep*, Page 15

Narrator Liza's roommate Jane convinces her to go on a summer visit to Nantucket and research her dreams in a whaling town. They will be staying with Jane's Aunt Kitty. She meets Kitty's godson Lucian and visits the whaling museum where she meets Adam, the young curator. *Boundless Deep* alternates between Liza's present-day life and the people whose lives haunt her dreams. After a certain point Liza's life becomes far less interesting than those of the dream ghosts but they are sufficiently interesting, along with the

Nantucket history, to make this one of the most fun reads I've had in quite a while.

There are some warnings. If you hated Gothics, don't like explicit sex or loathe the paranormal this book is not for you. The characters are not constantly looking for dark corners in which to screw but the sex is explicitly there. Readers should also be aware Brallier presents a potentially addicting view of Nantucket's history. Her book got me also to sit down and read *Moby-Dick*. I'd read it in high school, of course, but it didn't impress me the way it did when I read it again yesterday.

### THE LENSMAN IS WORTHY OF HIS DUE

by Grant C. McCormick

There has been some question lately as to the desirability to have another try for a Best All-Time Series Hugo award<sup>1</sup>. There were five nominees for this award the first time it was done, back in 1966. The winner was The *Foundation* Trilogy, by Isaac Asimov.

One of the original candidates for the original Best All-Time Science Fiction Series was the *Lensman* series by Edward Elmer "Doc" Smith, Ph.D. A question was raised recently<sup>2</sup>, asking if the *Lensman* series would be worthy of inclusion in a new attempt, and even if it were actually suitable for the first round.

My answer is decidedly: Yes!

E. E. Smith's *Lensman* series is considered by many people, including myself, to be the quintessential space opera series, but it was not he first such. It was preceded by (most of) Smith's own *Skylark* series, as well as others by John W. Campbell (his Arcot, Wade, and Morey series, and others), Neil R. Jones (the Professor Jameson series), and others.

The main complaints against E. E. Smith's *Lensman* series fall under the category of writing style. Smith had a style (or, rather, series of styles, since his working style evolved during his writing career) that was all his own, and easy to parody<sup>3</sup>. Smith himself was aware of this – in the climax volume of the *Lensman* series, *Children of the Lens*, Kimball Kinnison goes undercover as the science-fiction author Sybly Whyte. And, as Whyte, Kinnison actually writes a novel (a paragraph fragment of which is quoted in *Children of the Lens* in a hyperbolic amplification of Smith's own florid and verbose style):

Qadgop the Mercotan slithered flatly around the after-bulge of the tranship. One claw dug into the meters-thick

armor of pure neutronium, then another. Its terrible xmex-like snout locked on. Its zymolose polydactile tongue crunched out, crashed down, rasped across. *Slurp! Slurp!* At each abrasive stroke the groove in the tranship's plating deepened and Qadgop leered more fiercely. Fools! Did they think that the airlessness of absolute space, the heatlessness of absolute zero, the yieldlessness of absolute neutronium, could stop QADGOP THE MERCOTAN? And the stowaway, that human wench Cynthia, cowering in helpless terror just beyond this thin and fragile wall . . .

Florid and verbose his style might be, but E. E. Smith knew his language, and he used it to say exactly what he wanted to say, and not some mere approximation thereto. And what Smith has to say in the *Lensman* series is more, much more, than only space battles and overblown writing.

For a series conceived in the 1930s, and written in the 1930s through the early 1950s, he presents some deep thoughts. In *Gray Lensman*, while discussing the upcoming Conference of Science, he expounds upon the virtues of economic freedom and minimal government in what could be taken as a statement of proto-Libertarianism. In *Second Stage Lensman*, while working with the Lyranian matriarchs, through Kinnison he explains that equality of the sexes is a fundamental requirement of a free Civilization.

Because Smith's optimistic and liberating writings tend to buck today's nihilistic, pessimistic, and self-destructive world-view, his popularity with the "intelligentsia" in SF and in society as a whole has declined in recent years. And I think this says much more about our present society than it does about any shortcomings in E. E. Smith and the *Lensman* series.

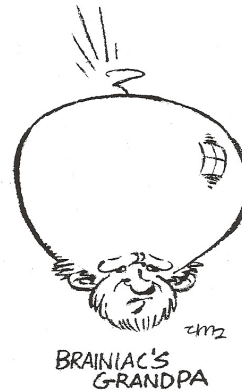
- 1 Carruthers, Johnny, "Time to Reconsider?" in *Alexiad* Vol. 6 #6, Dec. 2007, Pages 12-14.
- 2 Schweitzer, Darrell, Letter, in *Alexiad* Vol. 7 #1, Feb. 2008, Pages 14-16.
- 3 Garrett, Randall, "Backstage Lensman," *Analogue*, June, 1978.

### NETWORK NETWORK?

IT in a stefnal household,  
by Grant C. McCormick

I remember way back when the SF novel *The Mote In God's Eye*, by Larry Niven and Jerry Pournelle, was published in 1974. One rather far-out 'prediction' that this book has is of portable computing devices capable of connecting with massive databases. To quote from Jerry Pournelle's "Computing At Chaos Manor" article of March 11, 2009:

The new 3G iPhone moves us a long way toward the pocket computer Niven and I described in 1973 in *The Mote in God's Eye*. Of course that book was set a long way into the future, and the pocket computer in the book was something out of my imagination; I certainly didn't expect to have anything like that in my lifetime. In those days computers were large monsters that lurked in air-conditioned rooms and were tended by a priesthood. Science fiction stories of the time envisioned huge computers; Isaac Asimov had one the size of a planet. The notion that ordinary people might not only have, but depend on, personal computers was considered plain silly, and the notion of pocket computers even more so. Yet here they are.



Here at the Major Muddle, none of us (yet) have an iPhone of any type, though Joseph's cell

phone is pretty capable, and all of us except some of the cats have some form of cellular telephone of some ability or another. And Lisa, particularly, has her Acer Aspire netbook computer – small enough to fit in the palm of her hand, let alone my larger mitt, and quite powerful. With one gigabyte of RAM<sup>2</sup>, a 160GB fixed disk, and a 1.6GHz 32-bit single-core Intel Atom processor, it's not going to be anyone's first choice for gaming nor data processing. But for casual use, word

processing, browsing, and other everyday applications, it is perfect. And it is small enough to be truly portable. And while it does not have any CD- or DVD-ROM drive (Joseph did get Lisa a USB-powered external DVD burner to go with it), its ability to connect over either wired Ethernet or WiFi (802.11g, to be specific) more than makes up for this lack 99% of the time. And the regular retail price for this unit just dropped by 10%, to \$300 plus state extortion tax.

All in all, we here at the Major Muddle (three adults and five cats) have eight working computers: desktops, towers, laptops, and the one netbook (though both Joseph and I are thinking of getting one each for ourselves). And one of the most important components of our IT environment here is our network. It is based around a secured Linksys 802.11n gigabit router, and allows us all to connect to the Lexmark wireless all-in-one printer/scanner; the 300GB network stand-alone fixed disk (which I have mapped on all of our computers as the 'W:' drive); and as well as to the other computers.

Every now and then the Internet connection dies, or the W: drive becomes inaccessible, and if I haven't discovered this on my own, I'll hear a cry of "The Internet isn't working!" or "Grant, the W: drive is down!" Then we have to reboot the network. So far, this has restored the network to full functionality.

On our network, we have our CD music collections ripped to MP3 files, and we have all of the Baen Books CDs that have been published so far with selected book titles downloaded, as well. We also use the W: drive as a file transfer area and backup file and data storage for our different computers.

Even as recently as ten years ago, let alone as far back as 1974, I never would have dreamed that a smoothly-running computer network, with all of its components, was a necessity for a smoothly-running household.

1. Jerry Pournelle. "Computing at Chaos Manor: March 11, 2009," from *The User's Column, March, 2009, Column 344* of *Chaos Manor Reviews*.

2. Which is enough Random-Access Memory if you are running Windows-XP SP3, which comes pre-installed on the Acer Aspire netbook.

### A HELL OF A JOURNEY

A Review by Grant C. McCormick of  
Larry Niven's and Jerry Pournelle's  
*ESCAPE FROM HELL*

(Tor, February, 2009; Hardcover, \$24.95 (\$27.95 Canada); 332 pages; ISBN 978-0-7653-1632-5)

When last seen, at the end of *Inferno*, the late Allen Carpenter was watching Benito Mussolini climb up from the grotto beneath Satan up to – wherever. Maybe the Earth's surface, maybe Heaven, definitely Elsewhere: not Hell.

Now, about thirty-three years (Earth time) and six months (Hell time) later, Carpenter is back in the flesh in Hell, and finds himself back in the Vestibule (although not again in his jar), after having an encounter with a Suicide Bomber in the Nadir of Hell. In this cosmogony, Suicide Bombers do not go to Paradise with seventy-two (nor any other quantity) of Houris – instead, they go to the Hell which they so richly deserve (and there are hints that their ultimate fates may be worse than those of even such villains as Hitler and Stalin).

The first half of the book is told as an extended flashback as Carpenter talks with the main other character, Sylvia Plath. She is not the only 'real' character that Carpenter meets in Hell – the Dramatis Personae at the beginning reads as a *Who's-Who of Hell*. As a warning, not everyone listed is actually in Hell, and not everyone in Hell is Damned to be there.

Carpenter has taken as his task the verification that anyone in Hell can (in theory, at least) be rescued from their situation to be allowed to try to escape. This includes the Suicides (such as Sylvia) who are incarnated as trees, the Traitors (frozen in the ice near Satan), and all the rest of those in Hell. Once they have repented; once they have suffered proportionate to their sins, their evil, and their deeds; is there a way for any sinner to escape from Hell? He feels that he finds an answer.

The authors have included both a Preface (at the beginning), and Notes (at the end). They feel that *Inferno* and *Escape from Hell* are concordant with the Roman Catholic Church's doctrine. However, they warn: "This is, of course, a fantasy novel, not a treatise on theology and salvation." [Page 329]

Carpenter and the reader encounter some of the same inmates and staff they were encountered previously. Most are new to this work, though. All in all, given the premise of this book and its prequel, I did not find anyone of whose situation I knew in Hell who did not deserve to be where they were placed. One somewhat notorious person has some documentation in the Notes as to why this

person was placed where found.

This is an enjoyable book. As a totally-lapsed Catholic, I find the logic of this work compelling, while still not believing in the slightest in the premises. If there were a traditional Hell, this is the way it would be.

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### THE JOY OF HIGH TECH

by Rodford Edmiston

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

#### Absolute Nonsense

As an engineer, I have occasionally been witness to someone being presented with an engineering estimate which has a range value, and seeing that rejected. "Can't you give me a firm number?"

The problem is that no, you often can't. Instead, an engineer will specify something as "sixty-two to sixty-eight" or "sixty-five plus or minus three." Because just saying "sixty-five" isn't justified. But some people believe that if you can't give an exact number, you don't know what you're doing.

People like absolutes. The problem is, there may not be any.

Newton's laws of motion were a large part of the "clockwork universe" view which prevailed even among the well-educated for centuries. As we learned more about the universe, though, it began to look less and less like a clock. For most things, Newton was still quite accurate; Einstein didn't replace Newton, he simply explained a few odd corners where Newton's laws became inaccurate. Even Einstein has subsequently been refined. But you still get people who don't understand that — as a standout example — the speed of light is not a firm number.

We all know that the speed of light is the fastest velocity possible. Only, which speed? You see, the speed of light varies with the medium through which it passes. As a general rule, the more matter, the slower it goes. Which is why the speed of light is usually given for passage through a vacuum. Since a vacuum is the least matter we know of light is fastest there.

How slow can light go? Recent experiments have reduced it to the speed of a slow walk.

Einstein himself expected this. He was co-originator of the idea of the Bose-Einstein Condensate. This is a peculiar state of matter, first proposed in 1924 by Albert Einstein and Satyendra Nath Bose, an Indian physicist.

According to their theory, atoms crowded close enough in ultra-low temperatures would lock together to form what another physicist has called "a single glob of solid matter." One property of such a cloud of matter is that it can slow light to a great extreme.

Black holes are singularities, point sources of gravity with no dimension. Or maybe not. There is no doubt black holes exist. By plotting the speed of stars orbiting them — and this includes the one at the core of our own galaxy — the mass of a gravity source can be determined. Through other measures we can get firm estimates of the maximum size these dense bodies can be. Some fiddling is required to account for the accretion disk, but even with the known range of error (see first paragraph) there are many bodies where we know enough matter is crowded into a small enough space that the escape velocity is above the speed of light.

That, friends, is a black hole. But is it a singularity? The theory is that so much mass in one place will literally drop out of fourspace, producing a point of infinite density. Whether this actually happens is something we can't yet see because, well, we *can't* see inside a black hole. However, even if singularities exist, they may be larger than mathematical points. Some analyses say that the actual singularity could have a finite diameter.

Now, there are philosophical and mathematical absolutes. Absolute magnitude is a good example. Getting the apparent magnitude of a star is easy. A trained human eye can do that. But this doesn't take distance into account. Neither does it include emissions outside the range of human vision. Absolute magnitude assumes detecting all the electromagnetic energy from a particular star striking a standard area at a standard distance.

There's a joke in mathematics — especially programming — that constants aren't and variables don't. Physical constants are generally assumed to be, well, constant. As with the speed of light, however, this isn't always true. There are circumstances where time slows and distance stretches. These are unlikely to be encountered by humans — at least humans who survive to see the phenomena — so generally we shouldn't worry about them.

Absolute zero is a condition where all molecular motion has stopped. However, there is both evidence and theory that this can never happen. That as long as there is matter there will be molecular motion. Some have even hypothesized that matter will "evaporate" to release the energy to continue the motion.

Once it's all gone, well, since temperature is a measure of the motion of particles, if there aren't any particles there isn't a temperature. So, no absolute zero. (There is no "extreme cold of space." Space is a vacuum. A vacuum has no temperature. Though, as mentioned in the next paragraph, there may not be a true vacuum.)

Likewise, there are those who think that there can never be an absolute vacuum. That once the density of matter drops below a certain value — perhaps one hydrogen atom every few cubic meters — particles will spontaneously precipitate from the quantum foam. (Could the Medieval Catholic Church have been right, just using the wrong terms?)

Water is incompressible. Except that it isn't. This is an example of the ever-popular "if it's very difficult it must be impossible" school of thought. Water is far denser than air and far more difficult to compress, but it can be compressed. You can bet that a cubic centimeter of water taken from the surface of the ocean to the bottom of the Mariana Trench will subsequently occupy less than a cubic centimeter.

Yet another speed of light exception is quantum entanglement. This is what Einstein referred to as "spooky action at a distance." Particles separated in a certain way will remain somehow connected, each reacting instantaneously to what happens to the other, no matter how much distance lies between them.

All of this is beside the problem of practical accuracy and precision. An engineer has a good idea of what is achievable and acceptable in his field. For certain tasks, stating an acceptable range is the practical solution to the problem of pursuing an ideal unattainable in the real world.

Knowing what you need (and can get away with) is important to engineering. During the construction of the Hale Telescope at Mount Palomar the first person in charge of designing and building the mounting was a naval engineer. He thought in terms of battleship turrets. These were in the right mass range, but the precision of aim required was more than an order of magnitude finer than he was used to. He eventually had to be fired, and someone willing to accept the astronomers' word as to the precision needed hired.

So, please, learn to value vagueness. It can be absolutely essential.

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### THOUGHTS ON A DARK KNIGHT

Review of *The Dark Knight*  
by Taral Wayne (no relation)

<http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0468569/>

I was late seeing the second of the revisionist Batman films directed by Christopher Nolan, and starring Christian Bale.

To be honest, I had doubts about re-launching the franchise after the Shoemaker travesties had destroyed the work of Tim Burton. Even when I had seen *Batman Begins* I was ambivalent. On a minor level, I was annoyed by the actor Christian Bale, whose high cheekbones, narrow face, and slicked back hair is at odds with the customary "Captain Easy" looks of Batman. From Bob Kane to Warner Bros. he had always a square chin, and dark hair loose on his forehead. Bales looked suggestively Latino to me. Maybe that's the future looking back; an American average that is slowly but ineluctably evolving in a Hispanic direction. But I'm a traditionalist. I don't want to think about a "Bruce Juan" under the cowl someday.

In a larger sense, the entire first half of *Batman Begins* was a second rate Kung Fu movie, employing every martial arts cliché in the book. It doesn't bother me that Batman would be a master of Karate, Judo, Aikido and other such skills. But really, anyone can take lessons and I don't know why Bruce Wayne's would be more interesting in particular than anyone else's. Skip ahead to the stuff that matters — the brooding decision to strike terror in the hearts of superstitious criminals by adopting the appearance of a creature of the night. Get to the cavern headquarters under sprawling Wayne manner, to the utility belt and bat signal and all the mythic matter that is original to the character. Why borrow? And why from something as campy as Hong Kong made "B" movies, whose formulas haven't changed significantly since they amused audiences of late night TV in the 1970's?

But all right. The new franchise got off to a somewhat shaky start. I think most people agreed on that. What of the sequel?

Clearly, the movie-going public and the critics loved *The Dark Knight*. It was dark. It was violent. It was cynical. It was just like the reality CNN Headline News has led us all to believe in. People who probably wouldn't have given a second look to Neil Adams, or even Frank Miller, ate *The Dark Knight* up. I wonder if in fact that's what I didn't feel was right about the film. It was made for people with no interest in mythos.

On the most obvious level, other than what was said before in *Batman Begins*. The Joker, on the other hand, is given a riveting interpretation by trendy dead actor Heath

Ledger. (Trendy dead actors are the best kind — they leave you an immemorial performance, and are never diminished later by a *Hook* or *How the Grinch Stole Christmas*.) While the Caped Crusader goes through the numbers, The Joker is developed with volcanic force, from new kid on the block to criminal mastermind.

But is he *The Joker*? Not really, not for all that he has greasepaint on his face, and a twisted take on the meaning of life. Every incarnation of the real Joker I know of is basically a clown. His murderous acts all have a sort of circus flavour, with deadly carnival rides, or poisonous pies in the face. The real Joker has a sense of humour. A corny one, it's true, that turns pain and horror into a bad joke. Ledger's Joker simply finds pleasure in evil, and does nothing to make a joke of it. His Joker is wry, rather than a practical joker.

What makes the Ledger character horrifying is that he is so quick to extreme violence. Where an ordinary thug is thinking of throwing a punch, this Joker has already arranged for his victim to be incinerated or impaled. In such a realistic setting, he comes across as a drug-deranged punk, and the question arises why some cop doesn't just empty a pistol at him. Even if you miss once, surely he must succumb to a hail of gunfire? This is "reality" we're talking about in *The Dark Knight*, isn't it? Maybe not.

This Joker is also five steps ahead of everyone — not just the cops and the city government, but Batman too. He not only plants bombs in his henchmen to create diversions, and choreographs his bank robberies so that his mob is rubbed out one by one, but he spends months smuggling high explosives into a hospital so he can blow it up at the right moment, when Harvey Dent has become Two Face. He is a psychotic *super-genius*. Now where have I seen that before? I know . . . *Silence of the Lambs!* This isn't "reality" after all. This Joker is merely Hannibal Lecter, not an actual coke-crazed maniac.

Do these reflections make *The Dark Knight* a bad movie? No, not at all. I only question whether it is a Batman movie, and I don't think it is. Not only is it not a movie about Batman, it's a movie that doesn't need a Batman.

There is a test, based on the legendary Phantom Edit. If you haven't seen it, I would imagine the Phantom Edit can still be downloaded from three dozen websites on the internet. The gist of it is that a fan of *Star Wars* (Mike J. Nichols) hated the presence of Jar Jar Binks in *The Phantom Menace*, and

edited the film to remove Jar Jar wherever humanly possible. The remaining footage segued together seamlessly, producing a superior version of the film according to hard core fans. That was the point, of course. To show up the bad judgment of George Lucas for including an annoying Roger Rabbit knock-off as unnecessary comedy relief.

I propose we apply the Phantom Edit test to *The Dark Knight*. I don't mean that Harvey Dent, or Commissioner Gordon, or some other secondary character should be removed from the movie. Instead, I want to *replace* a character. A principal character in fact. Let us imagine that Batman himself has been replaced. Allow Bruce Wayne to remain in the background, but as a completely separate person who has nothing whatever to do with crime-fighting, and is not preoccupied with avenging the murder of his parents. In every scene where Batman appears though, erase him utterly.

He's not even much of a loss. This isn't a Batman I much admire, it's one who growls to sound menacing, rages incoherently at criminals, and beats the shit out of the Joker while in police custody. The Batman I admire is one who looked into the abyss, and turned away, who keeps the darkness in him under control. Christian Bale's Batman looked into the abyss and leaned too far forward. He fell in, and the only way to be sure he's the good guy is to check the program. So, away with this Batman.

Then digitally dub in Bruce Willis. Let Bruce Willis perform all the Bat stunts and battle the bad guys, and ultimately overcome the Joker just before the end credits.

Honestly . . . would it make any difference? No. It wouldn't. Not really.

That's why, after giving *The Dark Knight* a lot of thought, I decided I didn't like it all that much. It wasn't a Batman movie at all, but Die Hard 5 or 6. The *Dark Knight* is a contemporary, urban thriller different from other such films only in the odd little detail that Steven Seagal, Nicholas Cage, or Jean-Claude Van Damme is wearing a cape.

Holy red herring, Batman!

### **EDISON'S CONQUEST OF MARS: a Sequel to The War of the Worlds**

by Garrett P. Serviss.

Compilation and Introduction by Robert Godwin.

Burlington, Ontario, Canada: Apogee Books, 2005 [1898]

Review by Richard Dengrove

Serviss claimed he wrote this book to calm the public after H.G. Wells' *War of the Worlds*. I am sure that Wells' novel was in a lot of people's minds at the time. It had been published in the States in the November-December 1897 issue of *Cosmopolitan* magazine. Also, I could see why newspapers looked to Serviss to calm the public. He was a journalist, then free lance, renown for explaining science to the masses. They expected a halfway decent product of him. Taking away from this somewhat, Serviss must have written the serial with all due speed, because it ran in the New York *Morning Journal* January 12 — February 10, 1898 and the Boston *Post*, February 6 — March 13.

How is it as a sequel to *War of the Worlds*? Wells complained about how the American press was plagiarizing his novel; and he was right. People often talk about the newspaper serial that set Wells' scenes in Boston. On the other hand, this serial doesn't plagiarize at all; in fact, it has very little to do with Wells' novel.

For instance, while Wells' Martians were octopoid-like beings, Serviss' looked like humans, except that, because of the Martian gravity, they were fifteen feet tall. He does throw a bone to Wells', though. The Martians have perfected the art of phrenology so their troops can learn faster. Often, they do not even have to learn; they know just by virtue of having their brains enlarged. That gets Serviss a little way toward Wells' Martians, who were mostly brain. Of course, Serviss' attitude toward his Martians is different too. Wells considered his Martians to be no better or worse than any other conqueror. Serviss believed that this enlarged brain meant that their emotions are undeveloped. Many decades later, the advocates of flying saucer abductees mentioned that as the problem with the large headed Alien Greys, who abduct humans.

In addition, I have a hard time seeing how Serviss' Martians could die off from our microbes, like they did in Wells. Mars has as much water, and presumably vegetation, as Earth; it is not the cold and dry planet that Wells describes. It would be microbe filled. Even if the Martians had been vulnerable to Earth's microbes, would they be by now? They had traveled to Earth in the past, built the pyramids, and kidnapped some Aryans as slaves. Presumably, in the process, the Martians would have developed some immunity to Earth microbes.

The fact that Mars has oceans interferes with the plot in another way. Thomas Edison

defeats the Martians by going to a central dam that controls the canals, and flooding all of Mars. Why you would need to channel all water on a water-filled world is unclear. There were other reasons as well why the idea of oceans contradicted the idea of canals. In fact, Schiaparelli, the godfather of the canals; Percival Lowell, the advocate of the canals; and others noted them.

The novel differs from Wells' in less important ways too. Wells has his Martians be shot to Earth like shells from a cannon. At the time, many believed cannons would get us into outerspace before rockets. Earlier (1865) Jules Verne had the Baltimore Gun Club circle the Moon with a projectile shot from an enormous cannon. On the other hand, we really never learn how Serviss' Martians propel their ships. We do know Thomas Edison develops an anti-gravity drive and that enables his spaceships to get from Earth to Mars.

In short, Serviss doesn't feel he has to stick closely to Wells, or make much sense.

In another way, Serviss is answering Wells more effectively than if he had stuck closely to the plot. He fights Wells' whole idea of Martians and Mars. He returned to prior Mars novels, where the Martians resembled us humans very closely. In Pope's *Journey to Mars* (1894), the Martians are so human-like, that, in parts, the plot resembled a Victorian melodrama. In *War of the Worlds*, Wells discussed the rationale for this: most writers presumed humans were the height of reason and so, on other planets, humanoids had developed. However, Wells discussed it only to debunk it. Instead, Wells designs Martians that, he believes, are more rational, and rationally built. As I said, he made them mostly brain.

As I said too, Serviss returns to Martians that are humanoid, and to the idea that we are the height of reason. Also, he takes a swipe at the idea that large brains would do us any good in the long run. I am sure people cheered that our own brains were the best in the universe. For instance, the Martian military wouldn't have invaded us had their heads been the proper size. Right? Furthermore, their large heads are no match for good old American know-how, like Thomas Edison's. In addition to the anti-gravity drive and disintegrator ray, he invents that staple of pulp science fiction, the oxygen pill. Also, he succeeds in defeating the Martians. For an American audience, which didn't flinch at racism or jingoism, this was manna to their ears.

As for the oceans and the canals of Mars, they both delighted the people of the time. The

oceans meant that Mars supported life, and there was proof considered scientific at the time that Mars did indeed have oceans. That would set the stage for what the public wanted, intelligent life on Mars. The canals, on the other hand, proved that intelligent life existed on Mars: the idea that truly excited the public. Many people not thinking too logically were perfectly happy to accept a Mars with both oceans and canals.

If all this didn't raise people's spirits, Serviss provided other things that did. For instance, the fact that the Moon had once been inhabited and there are ruins to prove it. That all the heavenly bodies have had intelligent life I am sure made people even happier than that only Mars had it. Over the centuries, intelligent life has been considered a good. Another thing that might have raised people's spirits was a solid gold asteroid. While it might not raise people's spirits like intelligent life on all worlds, it was a wonder to ponder.

Before I end my article, I feel compelled to broach a completely different topic than Serviss vs. Wells. Did *Edison's Conquest of Mars* contain many firsts? That is what Robert Godwin, who introduces and comments on this edition, claims. He is wrong on the anti-gravity drive. I know because Gustavus Pope had spaceships with an anti-gravity drive four years before in his *Journey to Mars*. Anyway, it was not some idea completely foreign to the Victorians: scientists then believed that gravity was an electromagnetic force, like magnetism, with positive and negative charges. They believed it until Einstein and his theory of relativity.

However, oxygen pills, alien abductions and aliens building pyramids might have been firsts. A lot of the other firsts that impress Godwin do not impress me: for instance, the shape of Edison's spaceships and spacesuits.

Whatever was first, this serial was heady stuff for the public. One person, in particular, we know was inspired by Serviss' serial was Robert Hutchings Goddard, (1882-1945), the rocket pioneer. Not only as a teenager but as an adult. He somehow preserved each installment in the *Boston Post* and re-read them as an adult in 1929.

#### **BUTTERFINGER BUZZ:**

A Study in Group Tasting  
By Christopher J Garcia  
**Best Fan Writer Hugo Nominee**

On February 17<sup>th</sup>, at 11:35, I brought in a batch of the new Butterfinger Buzz chocolate bars to the Computer History Museum

lunchroom. I handed one to each of the Unofficial Lunch Bunch that enjoy our lunches together early every afternoon. We stretch from our mid-20s through early 40s, mostly White or Hispanic, half of us are married, and half of the other half is engaged to be married. Everyone but myself self-identify as Democrat, with me the lone Libertarian in the bunch. Most of us buy our lunch every day, but two of us, Radio and Karen, bring their own every day.

Demographics are so important to these things. We're not exactly the most representative group, but we're the best I could get without having to pay them.

As soon as I saw the Butterfinger Buzz, I knew I wanted to put together the taste test. I mean, the concept is enough to make me gag. A candy bar with as much caffeine as the leading Energy Drink! It's bizarre! It's wrong! It's required eating! I bought the 8 we needed and passed them out.

"Alright everybody, here's the bar." I said, making sure each one got their own bar and a small glass of water. "now, take a sip of the water to clear the palette and then eat 1 of the pieces and then another sip and then the second part."

This turned out to be not as strong a suggestion as I had hoped. Karen, the elder stateswoman of our crowd, pushed it away.

"Eating that is a bad idea." She said, though I noticed that she drank the glass of water.

Alex, our foreign friend from Germany, also took himself out of the running. That left six of us.

We all took the sip of water, which allowed me to give a toast — "To Absent Friends," I said.

We all ate our first piece. There was little different from the original Butterfinger. The dry peanut butter sensation that the regular Butterfinger provides is its key. It doesn't feel right unless the flaky peanut butter clumps up in your teeth. It was a little more clumpy than a regular Butterfinger, though the taste was almost exactly the same. The chocolate was exactly the same, not superior, but good and slightly chalky. The flakiness wasn't on the same level, but it still clumped up in my molars, so that's fine.

We all looked at each other and agreed that there was no difference.

"I don't see the difference." Radio said.  
"I usually don't like Butterfingers." Alana said.

"I do." Sara added, taking her sip and then starting in on the second piece."

We all ate the rest of the bars and sat around talking.

Now, our conversations roll through a lot of territory, and there's always a loud roar of laughter. There are people who don't like eating in the Lounge because we're a bit rough on each other, but there are other people who think that the stage show is a part of a good lunch. As time went by, we noticed things were getting kinda weird. Around Noon, I noticed that my legs were bouncing. Even more than usual. It was bizarre. I was thinking that the whole caffeine thing was just a come-on, but I looked over at Sara, and she was drumming her fingers on the table. Radio's eyes were huge. Alex and Lux were laughing much harder than usual.

OMG! This stuff is like ChocoSpeed! I was actually sweating! We have a stethoscope in the Lounge and I checked, and at least my heart rate wasn't much higher than normal, but still, that caffeine was a powerhouse!

We all went back to our desks around 12:45. Now, roughly an hour and a half later, all those who partook in the experiment have come by my cube.

"That was a bad idea." Radio said.  
"I'm never listening to you again!" said Sara.

Lux just popped his head and, caught my attention and shook his head.

And thus, I can not recommend Butterfinger Buzz to anyone suffering from a heart condition, but it may well help you get through a long cross-country drive.

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#### **THE FAERY'S KISS**

##### **— A Romantic Comedy**

(Fairy tales can even happen to Grownups!)  
by Bill Breuer

The Bullitt County Theatre Company presents the World Premiere of the Romantic Comedy Fairy tale for Adults (children age 10 and up can enjoy it too!)

There is a new owner of a rural, coastal cottage. Everyone says the place is haunted — but instead he finds the place is inhabited by an attractive adult woman who is naturally mischievous and has a delightful personality . . . but she is not the girl of his dreams! She claims to be a Faery and she doesn't want him there! She keeps his head in a spin as he endeavors to fit in with the townspeople of a new country while she is also trying to protect a secret that others are trying to steal.

A modern stageplay in the old folktale tradition, the story has all the traditional ingredients: love, magic, elements of the

bittersweet, mystery, humour and good triumphing over evil — all the things that have made Irish storytelling famous for a millennium. This show will make its Canadian debut this summer.

This play ran March 5-15, too late for this issue, but we are pleased to note it.

— JTM

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

Report by Joseph T Major

**Liberté Égalité Fraternité**

In the Name of the Republic, **Henry William Allingham** and **Henry John Patch** have been awarded the insignia of Officers of the Legion of Honor, having previously been awarded the insignia of Members, for their services to France in the Great War.

Remaining are:

**Australia**

Claude Stanley Choules (108) Royal Navy  
John Campbell “Jack” Ross (110)  
Australian Imperial Force

**Brazil**

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

**Poland**

Józef Kowalski\* (109) 22 Pulk 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 “Jack” Babcock (108)  
146<sup>th</sup> 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.

**FANZINES**

Did I mention that *Alexiad* is now available  
at:

<http://www.efanzines.com/Alexiad/index.htm>

*Askance* #13 March 2009

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*Beyond Bree* February 2009, March 2009

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in envelope or overseas.

*Challenger* #29 Winter 2008-2009

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*Debris* #3

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*The Drink Tank* #201, #202, #203, #204, #205,  
#206, #207, #208

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*JOMP, Jr.* #27 February 2009

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*The Knarley Knews* #132

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*Loftgeornost* #94 February 2009

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*MT Void* V.27 #32 February 6, 2009 — V. 27  
#39 March 27, 2009

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*Opuntia* #67.1A Edgar Allan Poe’s Birthday  
2009, #67.1B February 2009, #67.1C St.  
Urho’s Day  
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*Pablo Lennis* #257 April 2009

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*Plokta* V. 14 #1 January 2009

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**Best Fan Artist Hugo Nominee**

*QuasiQuote* #8 March 2009

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*The Reluctant Famulus* #68 Winter 2009

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*Science Fiction/San Francisco* #81 February  
11, 2009, #82 March 11, 2009, #83 April 1,  
2009

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**Best Fan Writer Hugo Nominee**

*Steam Engine Time* #10, March 2009

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*This Here* #10

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*Vanamonde* #773-777

John Hertz, 236 S. Coronado Street, No.  
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**Best Fan Writer Hugo Nominee**

*Visions of Paradise* #137, #138, #139

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*WCSFazine* #18

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**HUGO NOMINEES**

**Best Novel**

*Anthem* by Neal Stephenson  
*The Graveyard Book* by Neil Gaiman  
*Little Brother* by Cory Doctorow  
*Saturn’s Children* by Charles Stross  
*Zoe’s Tale* by John Scalzi

**Best Novella**

“The Erdmann Nexus” by Nancy Kress  
(*Asimov’s* Oct/Nov 2008)  
“The Political Prisoner” by Charles  
Coleman Finlay (*F&SF* Aug 2008)  
“The Tear” by Ian McDonald (*Galactic  
Empires*)  
“True Names” by Benjamin Rosenbaum &

Cory Doctorow  
 “Truth” by Robert Reed (*Asimov's*  
 Oct/Nov 2008)

#### Best Novelette

“Alastair Baffle’s Emporium of Wonders”  
 by Mike Resnick (*Asimov's* Jan 2008)  
 “The Gambler” by Paolo Bacigalupi (*Fast*  
*Forward* 2)  
 “Pride and Prometheus” by John Kessel  
 (*F&SF* Jan 2008)  
 “The Ray-Gun: A Love Story” by James  
 Alan Gardner (*Asimov's* Feb 2008)  
 “Shoggoths in Bloom” by Elizabeth Bear  
 (*Asimov's* Mar 2008)

#### Best Short Story

“26 Monkeys, Also the Abyss” by Kij  
 Johnson (*Asimov's* Jul 2008)  
 “Article of Faith” by Mike Resnick (*Baen's*  
*Universe* Oct 2008)  
 “Evil Robot Monkey” by Mary Robinette  
 Kowal (*The Solaris Book of New*  
*Science Fiction, Volume Two*)  
 “Exhalation” by Ted Chiang (*Eclipse Two*)  
 “From Babel’s Fall’n Glory We Fled” by  
 Michael Swanwick (*Asimov's* Feb  
 2008)

#### Best Related Book

*Rhetorics of Fantasy* by Farah Mendlesohn  
*Spectrum 15: The Best in Contemporary*  
*Fantastic Art* by Cathy & Arnie Fenner,  
 eds.  
*The Vorkosigan Companion: The Universe*  
*of Lois McMaster Bujold* by Lillian  
 Stewart Carl & John Helfers, eds.  
*What It Is We Do When We Read Science*  
*Fiction* by Paul Kincaid  
*Your Hate Mail Will be Graded: A Decade*  
*of Whatever, 1998-2008* by John Scalzi

#### Best Graphic Story

*The Dresden Files: Welcome to the Jungle*  
 Written by Jim Butcher, art by Ardan  
 Syaf  
*Girl Genius, Volume 8: Agatha Heterodyne*  
*and the Chapel of Bones* Written by  
 Kaja & Phil Foglio, art by Phil Foglio,  
 colors by Cheyenne Wright  
*Fables: War and Pieces* Written by Bill  
 Willingham, pencilled by Mark  
 Buckingham, art by Steve Leialoha and  
 Andrew Pepoy, color by Lee  
 Loughridge, letters by Todd Klein  
*Schlock Mercenary: The Body Politic* Story  
 and art by Howard Tayler  
*Serenity: Better Days* Written by Joss  
 Whedon & Brett Matthews, art by Will

Conrad, color by Michelle Madsen,  
 cover by Jo Chen  
*Y: The Last Man, Volume 10: Whys and*  
*Wherefores* Written/created by Brian K.  
 Vaughan, pencilled/created by Pia  
 Guerra, inked by Jose Marzan, Jr.

#### Best Dramatic Presentation, Long Form

*The Dark Knight*  
*Hellboy II: The Golden Army*  
*Iron Man*  
*METAtropolis*  
*WALL-E*

#### Best Dramatic Presentation, Short Form

“The Constant” (*Lost*)  
*Doctor Horrible’s Sing-Along Blog*  
 “Revelations” (*Battlestar Galactica*)  
 “Silence in the Library/Forest of the Dead”  
 (*Doctor Who*)  
 “Turn Left” (*Doctor Who*)

#### Best Editor, Short Form

Ellen Datlow  
 Stanley Schmidt  
 Jonathan Strahan  
 Gordon Van Gelder  
 Sheila Williams

#### Best Editor, Long Form

Lou Anders  
 Ginjer Buchanan  
 David G. Hartwell  
 Beth Meacham  
 Patrick Nielsen Hayden

#### Best Professional Artist

Daniel Dos Santos  
 Bob Eggleton  
 Donato Giancola  
 John Picacio  
 Shaun Tan

#### Best Semiprozine

*Clarkesworld Magazine* edited by Neil  
 Clarke, Nick Mamatas & Sean Wallace  
*Interzone* edited by Andy Cox  
*Locus* edited by Charles N. Brown, Kirsten  
 Gong-Wong, & Liza Groen Trombi  
*The New York Review of Science Fiction*  
 edited by Kathryn Cramer, Kris  
 Dikeman, David G. Hartwell, & Kevin  
 J. Maroney  
*Weird Tales* edited by Ann VanderMeer &  
 Stephen H. Segal

#### Best Fanzine

*Argentus* edited by Steven H Silver  
*Banana Wings* edited by Claire Brialey and

Mark Plummer  
*Challenger* edited by Guy H. Lillian III  
*The Drink Tank* edited by Chris Garcia  
*Electric Velocipede* edited by John Klima  
*File 770* edited by Mike Glyer

#### Best Fan Writer

Chris Garcia  
 John Hertz  
 Dave Langford  
 Cheryl Morgan  
 Steven H Silver

#### Best Fan Artist

Alan F. Beck  
 Brad W. Foster  
 Sue Mason  
 Taral Wayne  
 Frank Wu

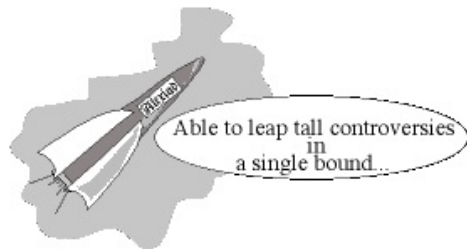
#### The John W. Campbell Award for Best New Writer

Aliette de Bodard\*  
 David Anthony Durham\*  
 Felix Gilman  
 Tony Pi\*  
 Gord Sellar\*

\* Second year of eligibility.



## Letters, we get letters



From: **Cuyler "Ned" Brooks** Feb. 9, 2009  
4817 Dean Lane, Lilburn, GA 30047-4720 USA  
[nedbrooks@sprynet.com](mailto:nedbrooks@sprynet.com)

Thanks for the zine. I wonder if the H Beam Piper sketch will scan in the frame. . . I don't want to take it apart. I could photograph it. Bah — the HP scanner I bought the end of last October has died! Just out of warranty I suppose. I have reinstalled the one I bought in 2002 — HP used to make good stuff. The old one had started making streaks on hi-res scans.

I see that of Cabell's "nightmare triplets", I have only the first, *Smirt*. And have yet to read it. Judging from the last Gene Wolfe I tried, I wouldn't get anywhere with *The Evil Guest* — if it turns up at the thrift store I will buy it!

The picture is not all that much, though it does set a scene very well. It would have done for illustrating a story.

Thanks to Ned for the copy.

— JTM

From: **Jason K. Burnett** February 10, 2009  
4903 Camden Avenue North,  
Minneapolis, MN 55430-3544 USA  
[BritHistorian@gmail.com](mailto:BritHistorian@gmail.com)

I was determined this time that I was going to manage to get a LOC in to you before the next issue arrived. So here it is — not necessarily in time for you to do anything with, but there nonetheless.

I hope you're both doing well. Things have been pretty hectic up here. Since the last time I wrote to you I've applied to, interviewed for, and been passed over by a teaching fellowship program. Had I gotten in, I'd have started teaching math in an inner city junior

high or high school this fall. Instead, I'm stuck with my medical transcription and looking for new options.

I'm just dying to know, Joe: How do you read so many books? Are you just naturally fast, or did you take a speed-reading course? I used to think that I was a fast reader until I saw how many books you can plow through.

I suppose it's natural. I cannot remember a time when I could not read.

I enjoyed Johnny Carruthers' article about Harlan Ellison's *I, Robot* screenplay. Ellison seems to have some sort of gift for writing marvelous screenplays that never get turned into movies. I remember reading his screenplay for "Nackles" when it was published in *Twilight Zone Magazine* and thinking that it was a shame it never got produced.

I think it's the downside of his having become his image. He stresses being difficult to work with, and surprise surprise, people don't work with him. So his talent languishes in oblivion.

And that's all I've got time for now — I've got to take the younger son to a new doctor tomorrow, which is always fun.

March 3, 2009

The day after I send off my last LOC, a new *Alexiad* arrived. In order to try to get things in soon rather than Real Soon Now, this time I'm LOCing as I read.

Lisa's anecdote about KloneKat on page 1 touched me deeply. If not for the fact that our landlady has a "no pets" policy (we were able to convince her to let us keep a therapy dog for Angel, but recognize that this is well outside her usual way of doing things), we would be in danger of becoming animal collectors, or at least of having more animals than we do now. There was a story in the newspaper up here in the last couple of weeks of a couple who had collected 120 cats in their small house. According to the news accounts, the cats were in fairly good shape for having been in a hoarding situation, but the SPCA ruled that they were unadoptable (by whatever standards they use) and had them euthanized.

Lisa's pleasure with her Acer netbook helped sway my decision when I was shopping for a laptop recently. I had been looking at the

Asus netbooks, but after reading about Lisa's new computer I gave Acer a look and ended up buying that instead. So far I'm exceedingly pleased with it. Now I'm just waiting for our wireless router to come in so I can actually get online from anywhere in the house.

The *Challenger* explosion is my generation's Kennedy assassination, just as the 9/11 attacks are my son's. I was in 7th grade when the *Challenger* exploded. I was in the band room and had just put away my trumpet, about to go eat lunch before going to chorus, when the principal came on the intercom and told us about it. I was devastated, because at the time I wanted nothing more than to be an astronaut. The chorus teacher managed to get a TV into her classroom so that we could watch the news coverage.

I was at work at the Naval Ordnance Station and one of the other programmers (who was also from Hopkinstown, how about that?) was listening to the radio and then he said that there'd been an explosion on the shuttle.

—JTM

Re the Virginia edition of Heinlein: Given the current state of the publishing industry, I'll be surprised if those ever see the light of day. Especially given that asinine sales policy. They probably could have sold them on a subscription basis, but I don't know anyone who's sufficiently flush and Heinlein-crazy to fork out 2 grand up front for the series. Another project that's been derailed by the Meisha Merlin's woes is the reissue of the *Sime/Gen* novels.

re Chris Garcia's assessment of the "big 3" SF digests: It's kind of odd (not to mention annoying) that the one of the big 3 that's pretty universally regarded as the best right now is the one going down to a bimonthly schedule and is also the only one not available on the Amazon Kindle.

Speaking of the Kindle, I've drunk the Koolaid and bought one of these. It's actually pretty nice — it's far more portable than a laptop, the battery lasts pretty much forever, and the website/kindle interface is pretty much seamless. It's a lot of money to have shelled out at one, but so far I'm finding it to be worth it. Of course, the Trekkie part of me wonders how conscious the designers were that the final product ended up looking like the PADDs from Deep Space Nine.

Well, I've got to run now. Take care,

From: **Brad W. Foster** February 11, 2009  
P.O. Box 165246, Irving, TX 75016-5246 USA  
[bwfoster@juno.com](mailto:bwfoster@juno.com)  
<http://www.jabberwockygraphix.com>  
**Best Fan Artist Hugo Nominee**

Wow, hadn't realized until saw it spelled out by John Purcell this issue that you had been maintaining such a rigorous, regular publishing schedule for such a long time. Of course, now I'm worried that, since it's been pointed out in print, something will happen to break the run. The downside of having worked hard all my life not to be superstitious is, when I finally need a bad-luck-breaking movement, I've got nothing to fall back on! Best I can do is say: Oh, Flying Spaghetti Monster, let your noodly appendages surround *Alexiad* with your ramen peace!

Right before we mailed that issue off, we mailed out another publication: The Major Bulletin Volume 15 Number 1, January 2009. My family newsletter, mailed out every other month without fail since 1985. I ended that issue, "Fifteen years, can you believe it?"

— JTM

From: **John Purcell** February 15, 2009  
3744 Marielene Circle, College Station,  
TX 77845-3926 USA  
[j\\_purcell54@yahoo.com](mailto:j_purcell54@yahoo.com)

Ah-ha! So that's where the name comes from (re: your response in my loc). It figures that it would come from some historical background.

I am very surprised that you haven't heard from Bill Burns, Joe, about efanzines.com hosting *Alexiad*. That would be great for expanding your audience. Unless Bill is very busy with work or at a con (or overseas at a con or on a work-related trip) he is very good at getting back to folks. Ask him again; you must have caught him during one of his frequent naps at the computer.

Once again some mighty fine book reviews in your zine, most of them on the military history side of things, which is a topic that interests me. I have a copy of Churchill's *History of World War II*; a massive, two-volume effort that I read a long, long time ago and enjoyed. Fascinating reading that gave insight into Sir Winston's point of view of the whole shebang. If I tried making any real

commentary on it beyond that I would very likely mis-remember things, so I think I shall leave it at that. Still, it would be a book worthy of revisiting some year.

I read it in seventh grade.

Rodford Edmiston's article is definitely a timely piece. If he keeps up this kind of quality writing his name might be one to watch for in future award categories. At least his writings are a major cog in your zine's content, and I found nothing at all in Rod's article to get all wound up about. Thank you for springing this article on us, your ever watchful readership.

Thank you, kind sir, for the nod in the fanzine Hugo direction. From what little I have heard in the fannish grapevines, my zippy little fanzine might break into the short list. If it does, wunnerful. I am definitely flattered that folks like *Askance*, but I don't want to worry about awards or any of that kind of malarkey. I am having fun with the zine, and that's all that really matters. But I definitely agree with you about *Challenger* and *Steam Engine Time* as potential best fanzine, and Earl Kemp or Curt Phillips for best fan writer. That Garcia kid is threatening another Handicapping the Hugos issue of *Drink Tank* Real Soon Now, so expect the sky to fall upon us. I have other more pressing concerns to take care of.

Loccol tidbits: Thank you, Sheryl Birkhead, for the belated happy anniversary wishes. Valerie and I thank you. (\*) Getting bills and fanzines in the mail happens to me all the time, so Rodney Leighton, you are not alone in that department. (\*) Hey, Jim Stumm: do you think the Comstock Law would apply nowadays to the Victoria's Secrets, Adam & Eve, Just My Size, and other mail-order lingerie catalogs that drop into mailboxes? Heck, they don't have to be lingerie catalogs, either; my older daughter gets fashion mailers that have rather skimpy outfits modeled within their pages. Not that I look at these, you understand . . .

What about the Abercrombie & Fitch catalog? That used to have middle-aged guys in waders, now it goes on the same rack as the Frederick's of Hollywood catalog.

— JTM

Thank you for the zine, Joe, and have a good one. If you make it to Anticipation, have a great time.

February 21, 2009



thanks you as well.

The other thing is regarding Taras Wolansky's comment to me about Mikhail Gorbachev. Taras claimed that he "was an inept leader, in that his goal was to reform the Soviet Union, not to end it." True that Gorb'y's goal was indeed to reform the USSR so it could compete in the global market, but the problem was that their economy was in such a shambles it couldn't handle the challenge of a free market system. A command economy, which long dominated the Soviet Union, simply could change overnight, which truthfully was a major underestimation on Gorbachev's part. He was way too optimistic about his country's ability to adapt; the sudden change resulted in the disintegration of the USSR, the repercussions of which are still affecting the Russia and many of its former republics. They may, in fact, never recover. If they do, it will take generations for that to happen.

Didn't mean to go on like that, but this is my closing statement: Gorbachev was not an "inept" leader, but definitely mismanaged things by underestimating what his country could handle. Does that make him inept? Maybe in a strict literal sense, although his heart and intentions were definitely pointing in the right direction.

Say, Joe, glad to see you got *Alexiad* up on efanazines.com. Looks good in landscape format.

From: **Jerry Kaufman** February 16, 2009  
Post Office Box 25075, Seattle, WA  
98165-5075 USA  
[JAKaufman@aol.com](mailto:JAKaufman@aol.com)

Don't save any chairs at the Faned Dinner in Montreal for us. Suzle and I checked the hotel prices when the information was released

There are just a couple other things I noted in the loccol that I felt the need to respond to.

First off, thank you Sheryl Birkhead, for the anniversary wishes. Valerie, who is a vet tech and runs her own pet-sitting business with our older daughter,

recently, and decided that we were not going, after all. It would have been fun, of course, but we'll put that money to use paying off the car, or perhaps the loan we took out to do some house improvements.

Instead, we'll be elitist snobs, stay at home and attend Corflu here next month. No, wait, we're on the committee — we have to attend. I'm expecting it to be as much fun as a Worldcon, in that we'll have several Australians, several Canadians, and a handful of British fans in attendance. Programming will include a look back at Seattle fan publishing when the scene included Patrick and Teresa Nielsen Hayden, the rigors of fan art, memories of Forry Ackerman, and a presentation by the Eaton Collection of science fiction and fanzines.

Jim Sullivan got me interested in *The Secret Lives of Authors*. I wondered how many contributors I would know. I finally found a contents listing at the Rizzoli web site, and found 19 names I recognized. However, most of those I knew only by reputation — I've actually read stuff by five or six of them, Oates, Smiley and McInerney included. At least one of the others, Jonathan Lethem, has written some sf/fantasy — *Gun*, with *Occasional Music* being one of his novels. Of course, just because I know their names doesn't mean their writing methods are more interesting.

I agree with Taral's assessment of the story logic in *Signs*. Too bad, since Shyamalan started as such a promising director. Taral's last line, "Save a few bucks, rent the video," seems to be suggesting that we not race off to the multiplex to spend \$10. No worries there, mate; *Signs* came out in 2002. Renting or buying the video or watching a tv showing are the only ways to see it now. (If you're one of those folks who likes to own your own copy, you've probably got it already.)

By the time your readers see this letter, it'll be too late to nominate things for the Hugo, or to vote in the FAAN Awards. But I'll second your suggestion of *Steam Engine Time*. Other zines I favor include Pete Weston's in depth meditation on British fandom, *Prolapse* (the newest issue has just arrived with a new title, *Relapse*); Mark Plummer and Claire Brialey's *Banana Wings*, still frequent, still covering a variety of subjects, and still available only on paper; and hometown fave *Chunga*.

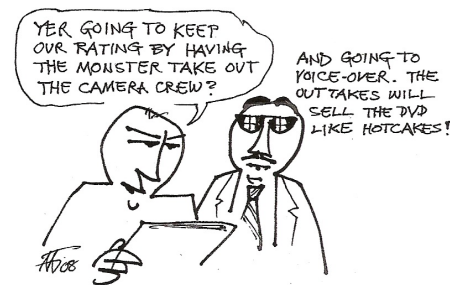
For Robert Kennedy, I'd like to recommend three movies with Daryl Hannah. They're all enjoyable in their different ways, and in none of them does Hannah deliver what I'd call a great performance. But she's very pleasant to look at. In *Splash* she plays a

mermaid discovered by Tom Hanks. Naturally, much humor follows from this fish out of water situation and Hanks falls in love. Then there's the Steve Martin modernization of *Cyrano de Bergerac* in which Steve plays *Cyrano*, and Hannah plays the title character *Roxanne*. I found it a stretch to believe that Daryl played an astronomer in this. But the classic story combined with Martin's more restrained later sense of humor won me over. Finally, there's the movie many people think is the best sf movie ever, *Bladerunner*. Hannah plays one of the replicants.

The scene in *Splash* where Madison runs a bath, flops down in the water with a relaxed look on her face, and then her tail flips up over the end of the tub is superb.

But which version of *Blade Runner* — the original "film noir" version or the later director's cut? Along with some clarifications, the director's cut takes out the narration, but since the movie is following that model otherwise, there seems to be a net loss by that change.

— JTM



From: **Alexis A. Gilliland** February 13, 2009  
4030 8<sup>th</sup> Street South, Arlington, VA  
22204-1552 USA  
<http://www.alexisgilliland.org>

Thank you for *Alexiad* 8.1, even if the Greek characters seemingly spell out Alexias, which is a mere transposition of Alexis A. Deferring to authority we take your word for it that Professor Arbagi knew what he is talking about when you consulted him on the issue. I mentioned getting Charles an electric dryer for Christmas. Sigh. An electric dryer requires electricity and his house, built in 1943, had the

original fuse box in place, somewhat modified over time, and more than a little degraded. When replacing a couple of fuses didn't help, Charles, a methodical sort, called in an electrician. Who eyeballed the old fuse box, felt it, and declared it was a fire waiting to happen, so I wound up helping Charles get a contemporary circuit breaker installed for about three times what the dryer cost, but his house now meets the Arlington electric code. Maybe it will be covered by his insurance since it was a major upgrade rather than mere wimpy maintenance. Providing a happy ending when his dryer was delivered everything worked just fine. Our own circuit breaker was installed in 1968-41 years, that's not too many, and probably needs to be replaced, perhaps with my tax refund, if I get one this year. Health matters: I went in for my annual checkup, and my vital signs remain good. Then I went in for my regular dental appointment. The young lady cleaning my teeth said I looked good, and I couldn't remember the last time a young lady said that to me. Lee; however, has been showing some early signs of arthritis, which seem to be responding to treatment. So far, so good, the way to a long life is to have a chronic condition and coddle it.

George Price wonders why the Federal Government moved to overturn segregation the way it did instead of using the obvious constitutional remedy of applying Section 2 of the 14th Amendment. The general answer is that the Federal Government didn't do it, the NAACP did, and given their limited resources they had to go with what worked. There were lots of cases on voting rights, invariably lost on appeal and which the Supreme Court invariably declined to review. Since the conservative/southern bloc in Congress was able to block any remedial legislation, the NAACP needed to go through the Supreme Court. More specifically, *Brown vs. Board of Education* was one of a series of cases touching on education, but it was the one that went all the way, and since it was a political hot potato, the Supreme Court spent a lot of time with it, holding it over to the next session if memory serves, before deciding for *Brown* by a unanimous 9-0 vote. The peculiarities of the decision on which Price remarks were likely the price for getting the nine justices to vote unanimously.

Taking a hit from the bong of Alternate History Price also wonders what would have happened if Nixon's plumbers had eluded capture at the Watergate where they were not looking for anything but trying to bug the

phones to get early warning (Nixon had a guilty conscience) of Democratic plans. Well, G. Gordon Liddy & Co. did elude capture when they broke into the office of Daniel "Pentagon Papers" Ellsberg's psychiatrist. However, Liddy was out of control and most probably would have continued until the plumbers were caught in the act somewhere else. We also note that after Hoover died Mark Felt was the natural choice to head the FBI, but Nixon went outside the FBI to name the compliant L. Patrick Grey. Even without the Watergate, Felt would have still been Nixon's enemy, and with the resources of the FBI at his disposal was well placed to avenge his injury against a president who imagined himself above the law. The idea that the reelected Nixon (remember his secret plan to get us out of Nam?) might have invaded North Vietnam is a fantasy; he and Kissinger had already sold out the South Vietnamese. The reason the US would have never invaded North Vietnam was the fear of Chinese intervention, which had happened when Truman tried to unify Korea twenty odd years before. The best a Watergate-free Nixon might have done was to honor his promise to support South Vietnam with materiel. The North would still have won, but it might have taken longer.

**Christopher Andrew, the intelligence historian, has noted (For the President's Eyes Only (1995)) that Nixon's considering Liddy a proper covert operative showed how poor an understanding of intelligence-collecting Nixon had. Which makes Liddy's being Director of Central Intelligence in Watchmen . . . interesting.**

In an aside, Joe wonders what might have happened if Strom Thurmond's States Right split in 1948 had become permanent. In 2002, when Trent Lott, honoring Thurmond on his 100th birthday, said that if Thurmond had been elected president, "we wouldn't have had all these problems" he was forced to step down as Senate Majority leader for openly embracing segregation. The SR split, of course, was permanent and when Lyndon Johnson pushed for and got the Civil Rights Act of 1964 he knowingly ceded the South to the Republicans for at least a generation. Nixon's Southern Strategy embraced the South, and in time the South took over the Republican Party, producing a slow realignment along Civil War lines, as the Northern States, which had elected moderate and progressive Republicans reacted

against the hot new look of the GOP to elect \*ugh\* Democrats.

While the Community Reinvestment Act (CRA) was passed in 1977, after Clinton's modification in 1995 the CRA does appear to have been one of the things that started the housing bubble. However, deregulation, lobbying, and the Gramm-Leach-Bliley Act enabled that bubble to grow, grow, and grow some more. Even the great Greenspan himself didn't see it was a bubble. All of which suggests that the economist's model of an economically rational man is mistaken. Homo economicus, having evolved before the stock market, is imperfectly adapted to that institution which defines the culture of capitalism. Put another way, the \$7.3 trillion loss in the stock market caused by the bursting credit bubble is the value of all the houses east of the Mississippi River, rather more than what the CRA could take credit for. Thus, the government's attempt to bail us out may be necessary, but it is by no means certain to succeed, and while speed may be urgently needed there is also a need for accuracy.

What else? Martin Morse Wooster wonders about Arnie Katz's theory of "Core Fandom" a tiny subset of skiffy fandom, which is increasingly dwarfed by media fandom, comics fandom, and Ghu knows what else. I don't know what Glycer had to say on the subject, but proclaiming the centrality of the small pond in which you happen to be a big fish strikes me, if I may mix a metaphor, as the cock crowing on his own dunghill. The attempt by the FOLLE committee to define the 1953 Hugos given to Forry Ackerman and Willy Ley as "special awards" rather than full-fledged Hugos appears to have been somewhat in error. Bob Madle, a member of the 1953 Worldcon committee, confirms that all categories of Hugos were voted on. Will the error be corrected? Stay tuned.

**And now Arnie Katz is winding up Vegas Fan Weekly, for what that's worth.**

— JTM

From: **Joy V. Smith** February 20, 2009  
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<http://pagadan.blogspot.com/>

Ah, Terry Pratchett has been knighted. I hadn't heard. He deserves it. (I have a shelf of his books.) Thanks for the news.

I was really glad though to hear that you

didn't lose electricity; I knew Louisville was hard hit, and I wondered how you and Lisa fared during and after the big ice storm, but didn't want to clutter your e-mailbox. Stocking up was smart. (We're used to keeping bottled water and food on hand during hurricane season.)

I liked your line at the end of *The January Dancer* review — "mysterious strange old races . . . whose artifacts were too odd to be safe, too interesting to be abandoned." Reminds me of the Old Tech artifacts in the Liaden universe stories which are often dangerous . . .

I enjoyed Taral Wayne's review of *Signs*, which I have no interest in ever seeing. (I dislike dumb aliens almost as much as dumb heroes and heroines.) Also enjoyed your illos, including the cartoons about the legendary Bling Kong, the *Enterprise* crossing into anime space, and the one on the last page about Spock running out of minutes.

Re: LOCs: I was impressed by Sue Burke's translation project! I think it's great that she's helping to preserve *Amadis of Gaul*.

**I could never figure out why Lin Carter, who had so much good to say about the book in A Look Behind The Lord of the Rings (1969), and was editor of the Ballantine Adult Fantasy series, didn't publish a translation.**

— JTM

From: **Lloyd Penney** February 23, 2009  
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Thank you for sending me the .pdfs for *Alexiad* 43. Good to see that you now have a page on eFanzines.com. If you still intend to sent .pdfs direct, please keep me in your list . . . I prefer the portrait rather than landscape orientation. Anyway, on to the zine . . .

**I have been providing both to efanazines.com so the reader can choose to read onscreen or printout.**

Your story of KloneKat reminds me of how many stray animals are out there, cold and hungry, especially cold in this season and this latitude. I hate to think about all the unwanted cats and dogs that are euthanized every year because there's no one to take them home. In

this economic downturn, as it's called, so many people are heartlessly abandoning their pets, either on the street or in the wilderness where they become prey to wilder animals. If Yvonne and I were to visit the Toronto Human Society, we'd want to take them all home. We don't have a pet because with our crazy schedule, it wouldn't be fair to a cat or dog to bring them in and then leave them alone.

KloneKat was last seen a week ago so he made it through the ice storm.

— LTM

I think you will enjoy Montreal. The Palais de Congres is literally at the intersection of downtown Montreal, le Vieux Quartier and Chinatown. The convention is looking good in its final preps, and we are getting things ready for our respective departments.

**We got a room in the Travelodge, one block from the Palais de Congres. Lisa wants to go see the Plains of Abraham and the USS Cassin Young after the con.**

So many familiar names in the deaths file . . . if I want to really get depressed, I look at the obit file in most issues of *Ansible*. The familiar names and faces of the people who make up my science fiction today are slowly but surely going away.

I am a little surprised we didn't find out sooner, but find out we did just yesterday. Those who are supporters of aviation and space museums might like to know that the Toronto Aerospace Museum has announced large expansion plans, plus a name change to the Canadian Air & Space Museum. It's been a little crowded, especially with the expansion of the displays to include a reproduction of an Avro Arrow, there is need of fresh funding and more space. It might be the time for us to renew our own support, and see where the museum intends to go.

Let's all share eye stories . . . after a regular ophthalmologist's appointment, he said that while the cataract in my right eye seems to be getting just a little worse, it doesn't seem to be obstructing my vision, and I am still able to do my job. I went to my optometrist for a scheduled appointment there, and her temporary replacement (she's on maternity leave) took a look at my eyes, and felt that I should have the cataract looked at immediately. I called the ophthalmologist back

to arrange a new appointment, and he refused to do so until he could look at my records from my optometrist, and the observations of the replacement optometrist. I hope these doctors can form an opinion soon; I'd like to do one or the other, but can do neither until they take a few minutes out of their busy days to consult with each other.

The Xanadu fanzine panel . . . we all know far too many people whose apparent mission in life is to be enraged with others, and all the people I know in that category are fans. Fortunately, they are greatly outnumbered by the great people I know, but I wish we could all be warned against these people so they could be avoided and ignored.

**I don't think he was enraged, merely so utterly certain he was doing the One True & Right Thing.**

— JTM

I hope some members of Core Fandom will be in Montreal for Worldcon . . . it should be a good time. I would hope that all fanzine fans, no matter which group they identify with, if any, would attend, but Worldcons are for some, not all.

One Gb thumbdrives . . . they were uncommon at one point, and now so common that computer stores are offering to have you give up your bag of thumbdrives and load everything onto a portable flash drive that can hold the contents of all those thumbdrives and more. I have a 4Gb drive, plus a couple of 512Mb drives, and perhaps plans for more.

Greetings to Sheryl . . . I have been at SGS Toronto for six months now, but they have still to sign me to a contract, or even an extension of the original contract. Not sure that the problem is, but I come to do the work, and they pay me. Works for me so far.

Laurraine, hope you and Mike do come to Montreal. However, I do know of some people who have decided to skip Montreal because the 2010 Worldcon is in Australia. That's a shame, any Worldcon could use the money, but I had hoped that Montreal would be exotic and bohemian enough to attract lots of people.

Done for the moment . . . in a few weeks, it'll be our local convention, Ad Astra 2009. So many plans, so many things to get ready for, so little time. Should be a great time once we actually get there. Eeriecon 11 in Niagara Falls, NY about three weeks after that, and that's when we know the convention season has started. Take care, and see you next issue, and eventually in Montreal.

From: **Darrell Schweitzer** February 26, 2009  
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Thanks for the various *Alexiads*.

Taral is correct of course in his rather belated analysis of M. Night Shy-a-Melon's *Signs*, that this really should have been called *Plan Ten from Outer Space*, as it makes no more sense than the previous nine. The film is nicely mounted, you have to admit, and is genuinely suspenseful until it gets very, very silly. The first time we see one of the aliens, in that video from South America, is a great shot. However, this is indeed the worst conceived alien invasion on record. I do think I know why the aliens are here, despite everything. It is the same reason that all humanophagous aliens come and can be summed up in one word: sushi.

These aliens are apparently here for the purpose of eating humans. Now, since humans are mostly water, and water is toxic to the aliens, humans must be the equivalent of fugu, those poisonous blowfish that the Japanese eat. If you slice fugu just so, it gives a thrilling buzz, as the poison remains below lethal levels. Do it wrong and you die. Humans are to these aliens the equivalent of fugu, a delicious and dangerous delicacy. More generally, it makes no sense whatever in terms of either physics or economics to travel interstellar distances to get a little extra protein by eating humans. (And if they did need Earth protein, cows would be more efficient and more docile.) So the only logic behind even such a classic story as "To Serve Man" can only be that human meat tastes really wonderful, and humans are the equivalent of sushi, which likewise is a delicacy pursued for its taste, being not worth the bother in either nutritional or economic terms.

As for the brilliance of the invasion plan itself, whereby the aliens insert themselves into the equivalent of an acid bath — all that water vapor in our atmosphere — my first reaction was, "What will they do when it rains?" I doubt they brought umbrellas. My second was that this gives a while new meaning to the old saying, "Well, piss on it then," meaning that if you can't deal with the problem (i.e. putting a fire out) by proper means, you use what is available. Of course any child could defeat these aliens with one of those pump-action "soaker" water pistols.

Yes, these are pretty incompetent alien gourmets. Or could it be that Shyamalan is a pretty incompetent screenwriter? It's

increasingly looking like *The Sixth Sense* was a fluke, and for all he has some cinematic talent, he not only lacks storytelling talent but doesn't understand the need for it.

**When I mentioned to Mike Resnick that we had seen Funny Cide at the Horse Park, he said that the horse was a mediocre one that had three good weeks. Sounds like you're saying that Shyamalan was like that.**

Richard Dengrove raises an interesting point that people pick a Fall of the Roman Empire theory to suit their own prejudices, usually at the expense of adherence to the facts. If "decadence" is defined as "sexual excess and extravagance," then we have to conclude that the last really decadent emperor was Elagabalus (212-16), after whose reign the complete empire somehow staggered on for another 260 years. If we define "decadence" as "timid leadership and a neglect of duty," then we can say that Christianity CAUSED the decadence, and that nobody was more decadent than some of the pious twits of the 5th century, such as Honorius, Arcadius, and Theodosius II. Otherwise we have to acknowledge that the Empire was rising to power throughout its most decadent periods, and the antics of Caligula and Nero did nothing to stop this. They were followed by such competent rulers as Vespasian, Trajan, Hadrian, and Antoninus Pius, under whom the Empire produced what Edward Gibbon rather provincially called mankind's happiest hour.

The "lead poisoning" theory does not work, because such paragons of virtue as Antoninus Pius and Marcus Aurelius drank out of the same lead pipes as the wicked emperors. The problem with the volcano/bad-weather/crop failure theory is that it does not explain why the Persian Empire did not fail at the same time (or why the East survived) or even why the Ostrogoths were able to set up a prosperous and orderly kingdom in the former province of Italy.

If Christianity caused the Fall, then we have to ask why it also caused the survival of Byzantium. Furthermore, most of the barbarians were Christians of one sort or another. They fared variously. The Franks under Clovis used Christianity to their advantage, cannily converting, not to the Arianism which was prevalent among Germanic barbarians, but to Catholicism, which got them the support of the Pope and the "Roman" population of Gaul, and gave them a

perfect excuse to smite the Visigoths.



This leads us back to theories of military failure, too many civil wars, and economic ruin caused by too many wars and the rich people managing to evade taxes. We can also look at the entire Empire in terms of Chinese historiography, noting that the

complete Empire, from Augustus to Romulus Augustulus, lasted about as long as a successful Chinese dynasty. The typical Chinese dynasty would be founded by a strong and vigorous leader (Augustus), who, after some difficulties (usually a usurpation or two in the first couple generations) would be succeeded by several more strong leaders (Vespasian, Trajan) etc. Then the dynasty would settle down and become corrupt. Powerful people would put short-term gain ahead of national interest. As a result of political intrigues, the civilian government, often run by eunuchs (in the Roman Empire, freedmen, and later eunuchs), would cut funds for the military, get prominent generals executed on trumped up charges, and otherwise turn the resources of the government inward, toward the court, while ignoring the provinces. This would lead to near collapse, but then a new wave of strong rulers would effect some reforms and the dynasty would get a second wind (Diocletian, Constantine, Theodosius I), which would enable it to stagger on for a century or more but ultimately it would collapse and the last emperors would be effectual, decadent puppets of their ministers, just like Honorius or Romulus Augustulus. Ultimately the dynasty's supply of virtue is exhausted, and the Mandate of Heaven goes elsewhere.

So if you look at the Roman Empire in terms of, say, the Ming Dynasty, this starts to make sense. You can also see it in terms of the Song, in which barbarians conquered the northern part of the country and captured the last, decadent emperors. But one of the emperor's sons got away and founded the Southern Song in the lower half of the country, a regime which showed considerable vigor before finally succumbing to the Mongols a century and a half later. Think of this as the equivalent of the survival of Byzantium. The

empire becomes decadent. It is run by imbeciles. Duty and defense are neglected. But only half of it falls, and the other half proves the basis of a defensible, smaller state.

Of course these models only go so far. The Song empire was extremely prosperous at the point of the ghastly embarrassment of 1127, when the Emperor Hui Zong, having barely escaped a seige by the barbarian Jin a year before, was actually stupid enough to send the armies back to the provinces and even disband some of them, assuming that the Jin, having taken a huge bribe, would be satisfied and not come back. . . . Of course when they DID come back about 18 months later, there was nothing to stop them. Hui Zong abdicated in favor of his son, which accomplished nothing, except caused the issue of some very rare coins. Hui Zong's coinage, by the way, is massive and beautiful and very common. It's the best produced on Earth during the entire medieval period. The inscriptions, still admired today, are in "Slender Gold Script," the emperor's own hand. Hui Zong seems to have been a noted calligrapher, painter, poet, philosopher, a virtual polymath with a talent for everything except government. He was therefore a typical "decadent" emperor, despite no particular lapse in morals, and the virtue of Northern Song ran out.

St. Augustine did make an argument to the effect that the virtue of the Roman Empire was finite. That is, God, working through history, caused the Roman Empire to prevail so that it would be a medium for the spread of Christianity. Once this purpose was accomplished, it could be allowed to fail. The Church, being the City of God, was for all time. The empire, being the City of Man, was of limited duration. If you substitute "Divine grace" for "virtue" and "the will of God" for "the Mandate of Heaven," you get a similar model.

I reviewed Arther Ferrill's *The Fall of the Roman Empire: A Military Explanation* (1986) a few years ago. His thesis was that the collapse of the Western Empire was due to specific military defeats, beginning with Hadrianople, and to the Germanization of the army, enlisting entire tribal warbands under their own leaders, instead of Romanizing the Germans, enlisting them as individuals in regular army units. Rather as if Hui-Tsung had hired entire

Jurchen bands to replace the demobilized army.

— JTM

From: **Milt Stevens** March 6, 2009  
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In *Alexiad* V8#1, Joseph mentions great-grandfathers as people you might visit in a cemetery. That started me thinking about visiting deceased relatives in graveyards. I've seen such things represented in films, but I don't think any of my own family have ever done such a thing. Whatever else we may believe or not believe, we apparently don't believe that spirits hang around in graveyards. I certainly wouldn't do it if I was a spirit.

My family has been around the Los Angeles area for several generations. I attended the funerals of both my parents and both of my grandmothers, but I couldn't tell you where the graves were located without checking records. My maternal grandfather died of the influenza after WWI and was buried decades before I was even born. My paternal grandfather died when I was in my teens, but I never met him. Fathers and sons usually experience some friction. It may be instinctive behavior. I didn't even meet my father until I was three years old, and I think that put a certain distance between us. (My father had been off at WWII before I met him.) However, my father and I got along really great when compared to my father and his father. When my grandfather died my father wasn't even invited to the funeral. My father only heard about the death as second hand information about a year after the event. On being told about it, he shrugged and never commented at all.

Part of the memory that just got jogged says that my father may have had two half sisters as part of my grandfather's second family. My father never met them and probably didn't even know their names. Obviously, they didn't want to meet him either. The information about the possible half sisters was mentioned once when I was a child, and I hadn't thought about it since then. Maybe I have all sorts of quasi relatives. Mildly interesting, but so what? If my father didn't care, I probably shouldn't either.

When Grant's father died, someone unprecedented showed up for the funeral; Grant's half-brother. He hasn't heard from

him since then, either.

— JTM

I'd go along with Joseph's suggestions of Dale Speirs as best fan writer and *Challenger* as best fanzine. Dale Speirs has been doing good work for years, but he really doesn't receive much notice. He publishes a fanzine that isn't like any other fanzine, and his fan writing is also unique. Originality is a quality we are supposed to admire, but that might not be so. When confronted with something really different we may just decide it isn't good to eat and leave it.

From: **Jim Stumm** February 27, 2009  
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Alexis A. Gilliland: The Orion spaceship, powered by tossing atom bombs behind it, seems like an inelegant solution whose chief merit is that it could be slapped together quickly since we already know how to build the atom bombs. The better candidates for a spaceship drive are nuclear-thermal and nuclear-electric. N-thermal uses a reactor to heat something, probably hydrogen, which spews out of a nozzle at high speed to provide thrust. Thrust is proportional to temperature. This is fairly simple, but the limitation is the melting point of the materials used. N-electric is better since it uses electric or magnetic fields to accelerate the ionized working fluid without such high temperatures. Thrust is proportional to the available power. The issue becomes what kind of fission reactor should be used. Half a dozen basic designs have been proposed with various pluses and minuses. Fusion would be better than fission but is beyond our reach at present.

Spacecraft can also be powered by analogous solar-thermal or solarelectric systems. In fact, solar-electric propulsion has been used to send a device to the Moon, but it was so low-powered that it took many months to get there. Solar-electric, although politically acceptable, is pitifully feeble compared to nuclear. And solar propulsion is not much good beyond the orbit of Mars, while nuclear can go anywhere. Outer space, beyond Earth's ecosphere, is already awash with radiation, so there's no problem of contaminating it with nuclear power, any more than spilling a little water in the ocean would be a concern. But I wouldn't use nuclear power to launch from Earth, or fire up a reactor until it's well beyond Earth.

It's true that humans and their life support

system would be a massive load, but that doesn't mean interplanetary travel will never happen. We humans have undertaken large projects before, e.g transcontinental railroads. We probably can build small habitats capable of supporting humans, though growing food in space remains untried, but terraforming a planet is so far beyond our present abilities as to be not worth talking about.

George W. Price: You're right, the way it's worded, the 5th Amendment does already apply to the states, even without the 14th Amendment. But I don't recall ever reading that there was any consideration given, in 1791, to passing a Bill of Rights that would also limit state government powers. So the 14th at least reaffirms the rights contained in the federal Bill of Rights as limitations on states. Beyond that, we should look at the genesis of the 14th. After the Civil War, Congress passed the Civil Rights Act of 1866. President Andrew Johnson vetoed it. Congress overrode his veto. But out of concern that the Supreme Court might find the Act unconstitutional, Congress passed the 14th Amendment to legitimize it.

So if we want to know what rights Congress meant by the privileges and immunities clause of the 14th, we should look at the Civil Rights Act of 1866. It says, in pertinent part: (Citizens of the US) "of any race and color . . . shall have the same right . . . to make and enforce contracts, to sue, be parties, and give evidence, to inherit, purchase, lease, sell, hold, and convey real and personal property, as is enjoyed by white citizens . . ." These are about all of the positive rights mentioned. The other clauses deal mostly with technical details concerning enforcement.

Richard Dengrove: About what caused the Fall of the Roman Empire: what can I say in a short letter about such a big subject? Here's what I think: The Empire grew too large to be governed from one center with the technology available at that time. Yet Rome had to grow because its economy depended on conquering and looting new provinces. It had to grow or die, and when it ran out of new, rich lands it could conquer, it began to die.

The Romans never developed an adequate method of choosing a new ruler, leading to civil wars, resulting in killing off huge numbers of fighting men as legion fought legion. Also the Empire was repeatedly swept with deadly epidemics that carried off a large number of people. This depopulation reduced harvests (an effect not a cause) for lack of agricultural workers, and left the Empire vulnerable to barbarian invasion, and required

that barbarians increasingly be recruited to fill out legions, until at the end, there were no Romans left in the "Roman" army.

Rising defense costs led to higher taxation, inflation, requisition of supplies for the army without payment, and increasing tyranny which decreased popular support ~or the government. Crop failures from erosion also occurred, as well as deforestation near cities, and silting up of harbors, but these were locally devastating problems, not Empire-wide. Most likely barbarians came into the Empire (often with official permission) because they were attracted by the relative prosperity of the Empire and the opportunity to settle on depopulated land, and because they were driven from behind by a population explosion among nomads on the south Russian steppes.

There's a theory that for 1000s of years there was a boom and bust cycle of population among the nomads on the grasslands stretching from Hungary to Mongolia. Peak to peak of this cycle was about 500 years, at which time nomads would expand out in all directions from their heartland, conquering and driving other tribes ahead of them. That's what was happening at the time of the barbarian invasions of Rome with Huns from the steppes driving Goths ahead of them, while other steppe nomads were invading China and attacking Persia at the same time.

I don't have a good understanding of why the Eastern Empire was able to survive while the West fell, except this one detail: Constantinople was built in an unassailable defensive location that could not be conquered until the invention of cannon. By contrast, Rome had no natural defenses. So barbarians frequently bypassed Constantinople to attack softer targets in the West. And that sketch, inadequate as it is, is all that I can say here.

Sheryl Birkhead: 72 hours of emergency supplies seems an absurdly low number. Some Mormons recommend that every family should have one year's supply of food on hand. That's rather extreme. But most people who put aside supplies for an emergency think in terms of weeks or months rather than 3 days. I could go for some weeks with the food I normally keep on hand. In fact, I often go 3 weeks between food buying trips. (I live alone so I'm only buying for one.) I could stretch it out longer if I had to, but after some weeks I'd be down to a boring diet of mostly oatmeal and rice. It would keep me alive though.

I would say, offhand, that in Buffalo you'd be concerned about being snowed in for long periods.

— JTM

From: **Rodney Leighton** February 24, 2009  
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CANADA

Thanks for the latest issue.

Thanks to the guys who explained the *File 770* Hugo matter to me.

Some guy came to the house, spent 4 minutes inside and 3 outside, took a few photos and a week later came a letter from the insurance company: you must do this and that followed by, in order to for us to continue to provide coverage you must complete these recommendations by. I am tempted to tell them their terminology sucks. Estimate yesterday was around 3000 bucks. I would ignore it. But I have a mortgage. Which requires that I carry insurance . . . guess what will happen if the insurance company cancels the insurance. I was planning on trying to do what I think I will do anyway, this summer, when I will hopefully be working and making a few dollars.

Sounds like what happened when the man from the financial company came about the home equity loan and smelled the cats.

Oh well. I figured up recently that I spent about \$80 on cigars in a three week period. Perhaps having to change my heating system will prompt me to try to save some money by not buying cigars.

I had this notion awhile ago that I would do some sort of on-going report entitled Chocolate Bars Eaten Between Issues of *Alexiad*. Write up some sort of report of each bar I ate between this issue and next and send it in. Don't worry, I abandoned that idea as being as foolish as the idea I had awhile ago of trying to establish a reviewzine again.

Hey, I got a bag of books. Paperbacks. Two of the Jack Reacher novels by Lee Child. And 4 by some guy named John Connolly. Started *The White Road* and realized about 80 pages in that this is the second in a series and started the first one entitled *Every Dead Thing*. About halfway through that one; it's quite good. Roughly 3000 pages of reading in that bag. Half a day for you; weeks for me, likely.

Rather intriguing that this big bag of books was mailed in the United Kingdom 3 days later than you mailed *Alexiad* and they arrived on the same day!

I picked up a huge book of Fantasy tales

edited by Robert Silverberg. I liked most of what I read and was even thinking I might try to do a review of it. But then I got distracted by other things of more interest; books about or by wrestlers, mysteries, THN, hockey games.

I will finish it some day. Write something in the zine thing. Might do a review to send to you. Don't hold your breath!

John Purcell did send me a copy of *Askance* #12. First fanzine of 2009. It was pretty good. I think I wrote him some sort of letter. Garth sent me a copy of *RSNG* #16. I don't know if I wrote him anything or not. Double shot of *TKK* arrived Feb. 2. *Alexiad* Feb. 16. Bunch of *Vanamondes*.

VISA statement came the day after *Alexiad* this time!

We just had winter storm #11. Supposedly over although it is still snowing. The mail carrier, who used to travel through blizzards and snow up past the bumper on her car when she drove a small car now drives a SUV and doesn't come around if there is any snow or ice to deal with. According to the news, we got about a dozen centimeters here, which is likely close. Forty-two cm. in Fredericton, N.B.! Rain on the South Shore. Nothing at all in Cape Breton.

Got some money to do some silviculture. Snow is about 2 feet deep. Boss said he would buy me a shovel. I said the hell with that, buy me some snowshoes.

Well, I should have some breakfast and go move some snow around; make some soup; see if anything appears in the mailbox.

From: **George W. Price** March 15, 2009  
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February *Alexiad*:

Alexis Gilliland raises "the question of why our Revolution was different than that of France or Russia." He suggests that "George III was trying to recover the concessions made to English citizens" almost a century earlier, so that "for Americans the ideal was free citizenry . . ." while 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."

True, but perhaps more important was that the American Revolution was conservative, while the French and Russian revolutions were radical.

That is, Americans were fighting to keep the system they already had, against the king's attempts to change it. (We need not get into the

question of whether all the “rights of Englishmen” that the colonists claimed had really been traditional in England, or whether they were something new that had grown up in the colonies far away from London’s control.)

In contrast, the French and Russian revolutions were frankly intended to destroy the old systems right down to the ground, and rebuild society in drastically new directions. But, as Gilliland observes, they used the templates they were familiar with, and succeeded only in building new despotisms. It took the French two or three more generations to achieve a democratic society, and the Russians still haven’t escaped from despotism.

This also illustrates one terrible danger of radical changes: you get more unintended consequences than you can cope with. Better to make incremental changes and tweak them as experience shows to be necessary. The American revolutionaries first tried the Articles of Confederation, and then modified that to get the Constitution. And through all that, their ways of life did not change much from colonial times, in contrast to the radical upheavals suffered by the French and the Russians. And that was the object: Americans wanted only to be left alone to live in their accustomed ways; they were not inspired by some phantasmal dream of a glorious new order.

In one sense it wasn’t even a “revolution”, since the existing colonial assemblies became state assemblies. If Parliament had delegated the taxation to them — “My dear fellows, you need to raise 2,000,000£ to pay for fighting the Froggies; get it however you choose.” — would there have been so much contention?

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Jim Stumm cites enough history that I hadn’t known for me to accept that the federal government did not ban obscenity and pornography until the 1870s and the era of Comstock. However, that is not the same as saying that the Founders interpreted the right of free speech or free press to mean the federal government could place no restrictions at all on what was said or printed, only that their idea of what was tolerable was broader than I had previously believed. I would still like to see a citation in which any Founder said right out that the feds couldn’t censor anything for any reason.

As to the Slaughterhouse Cases, Mr. Stumm holds “that the 4 justices who were in the minority had it right.” The majority ruled that the 14th Amendment applied only to the rights and privileges of national citizenship, and that this was very distinct from state citizenship, whereas the minority saw the 14th as extending (“incorporating”) federal rights and essentially wiping out the distinction between national and state citizenship. The latter sounds more reasonable, as it would have made little sense for the 14th to be restricted to, as Mr. Stumm puts it, protecting only “such trivialities as the right of access to seaports.”

I believe that what the authors of the 14th intended was that blacks should have exactly the same rights as whites in all matters, though these rights could vary from state to state. Again, that’s not the same as saying that states could not censor, etc.; only that any such laws had to apply equally to whites and blacks. (I also note that the Slaughterhouse Cases did not deal with the rights of blacks compared to those of whites, but were about certain business regulations having little or nothing to do with race or slavery, and the issue was whether the 14th could be so extended.)

I originally said that the “incorporation” doctrine was not promulgated by the Supreme Court until the authors of the 14th were safely dead and could not scream that they had been misinterpreted. That obviously did not apply to the Slaughterhouse Cases, which were decided only a few years after the 14th was adopted. Almost all the authors of the 14th were still alive and must have been aware of the controversy. Did any of them rise up to denounce or praise the majority decision?

For that matter, how close did the incorporation decisions of our times — eliminating the rights of states to censor, etc. — come to the matters covered in the Slaughterhouse Cases? So are those cases really relevant?

By the way, when the Supreme Court in our times knocked out the right of states to censor, they still felt it necessary to allow censorship in cases where there was “no redeeming social value.” That is, they still didn’t see the rights of free speech and press as absolute; they just greatly restricted the circumstances in which those rights could be constrained. Of course, it has turned out that damned near everything has “redeeming social value,” so maybe that was just a figleaf to obscure the fact that they were really killing censorship entirely but didn’t want to say so right out.

\*\*\*\*\*

I notice two very odd typos in my letter as printed. In the first paragraph, War got changed to Var, and meaning became meaning. Considering that I send in my LOCs by e-mail, so they shouldn’t need to be re-typed, I am curious as to how this could happen. Maybe you print them out and then scan them, and these are OCR glitches?

I cut-and-pasted it, so it can’t be that.

\*\*\*\*\*

Robert Kennedy notes the deterioration of *U.S. News & World Report*; he canceled his subscription. Yes indeed. I’ve been reading *U.S. News* since the 1950s — what first attracted me was a condensation of Max Eastman’s *Reflections on the Failure of Socialism*; they retitled it something like “The Flop of the Century.” Last summer they went from weekly to biweekly, and last month they went to monthly. Is this a strategy of desperation? A monthly newsmagazine is almost a contradiction in terms, so I expect that they will either change their coverage radically, or fold entirely. I will keep the subscription for a while and see what happens.

\*\*\*\*\*

Richard Dengrove is less opposed than I am to the courts reinterpreting the Constitution, saying, “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.”

He thinks I will disagree with that — and he’s right, I do. Setting new precedents is how the common law evolves to fit new circumstances. But I strongly deny that it is a proper way to change the Constitution. First, it’s not necessary; the Constitution has a workable way of changing: we amend it. Second, consistency is the whole point of a having a written constitution. It should be unchanging (except by formal amendment), so that you always know exactly what is constitutional and what is not. Changing the Constitution by reinterpretation is intolerable precisely because this evades having to reach a political consensus on how it should be amended.

Thus the Dukakis campaigner’s comment about the Pledge of Allegiance issue to the effect that it didn’t matter, since there was a court ruling supporting Dukakis.

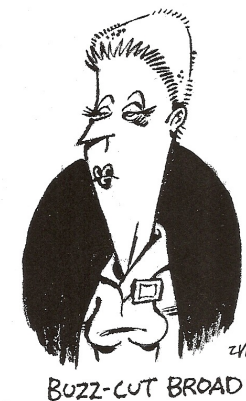
— JTM

From: **Robert S. Kennedy** March 19, 2009  
1779 Ciprian Avenue, Camarillo, CA  
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[robertk@cipcug.org](mailto:robertk@cipcug.org)

Thank you for Vol. 8, No. 1

Proof that my mind is going—When I read in *LOCUS* that the third and final book in the *Destroyermen* series (*Maelstrom*) would be coming out in February it was thought that I had better read the second book. For some reason I couldn’t remember the title. Knowing that Joe had reviewed it I e-mailed him and he furnished *Crusade*. So, I ordered it from Interlibrary Loan. The order form was printed out and when I went to file it discovered that I had already ordered the book. Furthermore, in my loc in Vol. 8, No. 1 I even commented about having ordered the book. If this doesn’t prove that my mind is slipping, I don’t know what does.

Then you will be pleased to note that *Destroyermen: Maelstrom* is NOT going to be the last book in the series.



Given the weather in Kentucky as well as a large area of the country I feel rather ridiculous complaining about the screwy weather we have had here. However, let me comment on something that appeared in the February newsletter from my company retiree club in Jacksonville, Florida. They had

a low turnout for their January meeting because of “an unfortunately cold day in North Florida”—48° or 49°. I had to laugh. We get colder than that here in Sunny Southern California and the temperature was 47° when

I left to go to our February retiree club meeting in Los Angeles. Anyway, since our previous weather we have had nice cool weather and lots of rain. We keep being told that we are still in drought conditions and we have to cut back on our water usage. But, that isn't really true. Our rain cycle is rather normal. The problem is not rain, it's too many people.

One of the fires we had in 2006 was started by an arsonist. Five federal firefighters died when they were overrun by the fire. A jury has found the arsonist guilty on five counts of first-degree murder, 20 counts of arson, and 17 counts of using an incendiary device. I have previously expressed my opinion that if people die in an arson fire that the arsonist should receive the death penalty. The jury has recommended the death penalty. To this I say great.

I've ordered *Starship: Rebel* (p. 3) and *Redcoats Revenge* (p. 4) from the library and purchased *A Desert Called Peace* (p. 3). I've already read *The January Dancer* (p. 3).

*The Men Who Stare At Goats* by Jon Ronson (reviewed by Joe) was finally obtained from the San Luis Obispo (California) library on Interlibrary Loan. Weird, but interesting. I had just one problem. Ronson indicates that the Branch Davidians were selling weapons illegally (p. 185). From my reading I do not believe that was the case. They were working through a licensed gun dealer. Other than that, the book is recommended. For anyone who is interested in the extermination of the Branch Davidians the following books are recommended: *The Ashes of Waco: An Investigation* by Dick J. Reavis (1995) and *No More Wacos* by David B. Kopel & Paul H. Blackman (1997). Also, the documentary *WACO: The Rules of Engagement* (1997). It should be available through Amazon.com It's magnificent. It received "Two Thumbs Up" from Siskel & Ebert and was the winner of International Documentary Association Feature Award – 1997). It was also nominated for a Best Documentary Oscar. Sadly, it didn't win. But the fact that it was even nominated was a surprise to me.

I just finished reading *Manxome Foe* by John Ringo and Travis S. Taylor (2008). A good read as usual for these authors. But, my favorite part was the Epilogue.

**Martin Morse Wooster:** In the Revised and Updated *Stealing Elections: How Voter Fraud threatens Our Democracy* (2008), John Fund has excellent coverage of the 2004 Washington state Governor's election. Now it looks like he will have to produce another updated edition devoting a chapter to covering

the Minnesota Senate election.

**Rodford Edmiston:** Excellent article "Time on Our Minds"—I've sent a copy to a couple of friends.

**Joe Major:** Sorry to hear about all the health problems. I have had a floater in my right eye for a number of years. When a new one showed up recently I went to my ophthalmologist to make sure everything was ok. It was. But, he told me that I have a number of floaters in the eye. He also said that sometimes the brain will ignore them. That's what has happened and I no longer see the floaters. Thanks for the Hugo recommendations.

**Guy Lillian was the only one I nominated who got on the ballot.**  
— JTM

**Lloyd Penney:** Cataract surgery is great. I had both eyes done several years ago. The improvement in my eyesight was remarkable. Also, my driver's license no longer says that I have to wear glasses.

**George W. Price:** Excellent comments concerning our ongoing financial crises.

From: **Richard Dengrove** March 20, 2009  
2651 Arlington Drive, #302,  
Alexandria, VA 22306-3626 USA  
[RichD22426@aol.com](mailto:RichD22426@aol.com)

Enjoyed *Alexiad* February 2009. Of course, there are going to be comments.

I'm going to disagree with Taral Wayne's review of M. Night Shyamalan's *Signs*. I don't think by much, though.

The problem, in my estimation, wasn't that the aliens invaders didn't make sense. A lot of science fictional movies make no sense at all.

No, the problem was that Shyamalan's aliens were totally simpleminded and simplistic. For one thing, most of us, I bet, know that the Alien Greys' problem is not reasoning too little, as in the movie, but reasoning too much.

Having said that, I didn't think everything was wrong with the picture. Shyamalan's human characters weren't too bad.

I can understand John Purcell not wanting to print out and send copies to everyone on his distribution list. It can get very costly if you have a distribution list of several hundred.

Of course, each of us has our own solution. Mine is not to let my distribution list go much above forty.

George Price admits that there are enemies to the Right of him as well as enemies to Left

of him. He points to the Birch Society. As far as I am concerned, there are enemies to the Right of me, enemies to the Left of me, and enemies Next to me. That people inhabit the same place on the ideological spectrum does not mean they do anything in the way of thinking.

George goes on about the current economic crash. He seems to have two theories about how it happened, which strike me at heart as contradictory. One is the Community Reinvestment Act and Barney Frank caused our mortgage problems. They did it by forcing lenders to provide mortgages to minorities. It's a perfect theory for him. The whole problem was government regulation and a Liberal bugbear. There is an added benefit: good ol' boys are let off the hook completely. What's to dislike about that theory?

For one thing, I haven't seen the slightest evidence for it. As far as I can tell, it wasn't only minorities that took out subprime loans with variable rates. Lenders couldn't wait to make them. And Buyers at all levels couldn't wait to take them out. Also, investors couldn't wait to invest in them.

Not when they believed housing prices would rise exponentially for the foreseeable future. It was a proposition they couldn't lose; they could only win.

A second theory George Price puts forth is that the evil bureaucrats failed to regulate the banking and the mortgage industry, and it caused the crash. I realize that, for him and many others, bureaucrat is synonymous with over-regulation.

However, what he said was the bureaucrats, in this case, deregulated. They went against their natural tendency and created the Libertarian promised land — at least in real estate and financial speculation.

Had the deregulation succeeded, I can't believe he wouldn't have held it up to me as proof positive he had been right all along, and I had been wrong. Now that the deregulation has failed, it's the product of evil bureaucrats and the same thing as over-regulation.

Taras Wolansky recalls that Will Smith's *I, Robot* contained a lot of Jack Williamson's ideas. I was told that, in *I, Robot*, Will Smith did what he has done in other movies. He is a science fiction fan and insists that elements of famous science fiction stories appear. Supposedly, he insisted the movie include Asimov's Three Laws of Robotics, and maybe the title of Asimov's novel as its title.

My informant could very well be wrong, and I don't mind if someone who really knows corrects me.

From: **Sheryl Birkhead** March 25, 2009  
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[catsmeouch@yahoo.com](mailto:catsmeouch@yahoo.com)

**IF** memory serves me well, I already sent you the bit about the *Johne's* vaccine. It has been so long since I actually treated large animals in the field that I have to rely on what I read to keep up with what is happening. *Johne's* is a horrible disease and I can only hope the vaccine is effective. It will be interesting to watch and see if there are any comments in the veterinary publications with further information about *Crohn's* disease mentioned in conjunction with *Johne's*.

**One hears of great advances in treatment, but these never seem to prove out, or at least I never see them.**

Locally *WARL (Washington Animal Rescue League)* purposefully does **not** advertise itself as no-kill. I visited there when they first opened their doors (a while ago now) and was told that no animal deemed adoptable was ever "put down", but if the public perceived that any given animal was in danger of being destroyed they tended to commit to adoption. Unfortunately, there are not many shelters that have this luxury. Our county shelter has had an 85% euthanasia rate for cats for at least the last 15 years. Dogs have a better chance, but still not all that great. Sigh.

Ah, since prices put any new (*Mac*) computer — desktop or laptop — out of serious consideration, I still need to figure out how to combine the new *Mac* with the software I use (which is incompatible) so that any desktop and any laptop I would end up with could actually communicate with each other. Right now that looks to be an impossibility. Ah, but that give me a lot of time to cogitate over the problems.

Alas, all the names in the obits are familiar to me.

I will ignore the economy — we'll all see . . .

I haven't had a chance to look at the *Hugo* nominations (presuming they are "legally" out there for public consumption) — I simply got sidetracked over one of the fanartist nominees and didn't have a chance to look further. At least in that category fen I would *traditionally* call **fanartists** seem to be slowly being replaced.

As an aside of interest to no one — I spent



all day (literally) working on my taxes. It took almost 8 hours to download the 6 updates the application disc said were needed. I won't go into details, but as soon as I started actually working . . . I was told I needed (you guessed it) the same 6 updates. I called *TurboTax* and they told me to try downloading onto a thumb drive at the library. We'll see — those computers are all PCs — so I can pray it will work. If it doesn't work I'll need to wait 2 weeks to have the company mail me the updates can we say *April 15th*? Whee?

Sounds like you have a dial-up connection. Grant says that AT&T can (if you ask really really hard) provide DSL for \$9.99 a month.

Just had a crown replaced (and a second crown fell off during the work!) to the tune of \$1495!!! Because the crown was only four years old I tried to get the dentist to prorata the cost like a tire, but it was a non-starter. I did manage to get them to split the bill into three payments to soften the blow.

I looked at both *Facebook* and *MySpace* (at least I think I have the names right), but since both required that you sign up to even go in and look around I passed on them both.

Rich (Dengrove) — no, my potassium level was high. That makes sense since I am a vegetarian and the saying I located (while looking for low potassium foods) was that if it has roots, it has potassium. The main cause in people is end-stage kidney failure and I was pretty sure that was not the case. What I was left with as the most likely causes were — too tight tourniquet, took long in taking a sample, and a new phlebotomist. Since this was my first time at this lab I did not know any of the staff — so any or all of the above seemed to apply more than the kidney problem. At the recheck I was prepared to ask for a specific phlebotomist if I got the same tech — I did not. Things came back fine and it could have been a mix of avoiding more of the prepared foods (vegetarian prepared foods seem even more loaded with Na and K) and a different phlebotomist.

Once again I can only hope that *Lloyd Daub* will eventually pub his ish. I can always hope.

I had an electrician come by and give an estimate to replace all the coaxial cable from the roof antenna and add two more rooms into the line. Since this house was built in 1975 I am guessing that is the date all the cable was put in. Uh . . . he was showing me where he would split the line to add two more rooms in

and the cable pulled apart. Okay, expensive but less than 2 years of basic cable. Then one of the TV's already connected to the roof antenna stopped getting several channels that the others still get. I am crossing my fingers that it is just from the degradation of the cable. Next decision — the antenna seems fine, but it **has** been up there more than 35 years. If I am going to replace it I ought to bite the bullet and do the whole thing at once. There are no more TV repair places to go to and ask such questions! The last thing I am toying with is — the roof antenna gets a series of channels pretty nicely . . . rabbit ears get another set of channels nicely — why can't I simply splice (my term) the two together with some sort of a "y" so both signals go to the converter?? Seems to make sense to me at least. So far I am told that a splitter (I was just going to put two IN and one OUT instead of the other way around) won't do it; a diplexer won't do it; and it appears that a joiner just might — but no one has one — so if I want to try this I will have to buy it online and if it won't do the job . . . Of course it appears that the joiner is more expensive than either the splitter or the diplexer. Ah — as I sit here I hit the analog pass through and watch clear crisp signals . . . when I switch back to digital I lose 2/3 of the channels and get tired pretty quickly of the frozen pixelated images. Sooner or later I will either solve the problem or quit trying!

I hope to work on a few fillos for you before I mail this so it may be a while . . .

As always — thanks for this!

From: **Dainis Bisenieks** March 23, 2009  
921 S. St. Bernard Street, Philadelphia,  
PA 19143-3310 USA

My informant said, as I recalled, 8 p.m., and that's when I turned in to watch *The Colour of Magic*; but instead of a title and credits, I saw a series of shots of a horseman riding through woods country. This went on for several minutes and puzzled me mightily — until we came to the talkative sword. When I subsequently refreshed my memory of the two books, this came halfway through the first. As with *Hogfather*, I wondered what a person totally unfamiliar with the book would make of the film. I wouldn't have known; it did not help that I couldn't make out half the dialogue, which had strong competition from the music. Of the commercials that interrupted the show, I could understand every word, with the most perfect clarity! Movie sound tracks have annoyed me in this way for donkey's years. Are they any better in a theater? Maybe — but

the last film I saw in a theater was *Chicken Run*, back in 2000.

For that matter, in real life people mumble and slur their words, and I can't understand what they say. Now when I was in Lithuania in 2000, Gediminas Beresnevičius told me he had the same trouble understanding American natives — but my speech was perfectly clear. Hah! And I wasn't even speaking very slowly.

I have now proved to myself that I can not see the crescent Venus as different from a point, even when I eliminated the halo around it.

Repeat visits to get freebie library discards at Northeast Regional Library paid off, but now I will wait three or four months for fresh stock to appear. *Life and Leisure in Ancient Rome* by J. P. V. D. Balsdon is most interesting. While its announced focus is on what Romans (those who left some record) did and thought, it does seem like an omission to tell us all about baths but nothing about aqueducts or drains.

Not everything is a keeper. It was interesting to read *Kreuzerkrieg* by Edwin P. Hoyt, about the East Asia Squadron in 1914, its initial victory and eventual defeat. It goes without saying, really, that the author and his editor failed to get the bits of German 100% correct. This is a library rebound copy . . . there were doubtless maps on the endpapers.

Dainis very kindly offered this to me, if I wanted it. Yes and thanks.

I'm not proofreading Juno Books since the change in ownership, but now that Sean Wallace is polishing his own cannon as owner of Prime Books, I may see more books in that line than I did formerly.

Balsdon tells us that exercise for Romans included riding, but "(No mention is made of horse jumping.)" Without ever having been on a horse, I would guess that for this, saddles and stirrups are absolutely essential.

I gave away three decades (with gaps) of *National Geographic*s, freeing nine feet of shelf space. The rest (in a dark corner) should not remain for long. But I will continue to take in *Smithsonian* magazines, as I find cheap or free copies. Post-hardcover *American Heritage* mags can't be found casually; those that I have were part of a bulk purchase (cheap).

I found in rain-washed soil a dime of 1899, with some wear but "Liberty" still faintly readable. My fifth of this type found in Philadelphia; two are in better condition.

About as many "Mercury" times, which I've mixed with the little hoard inherited from Betsy. There's hope yet for the Seated Liberty type; to *buy* a type specimen wouldn't really be collecting, would it now? Finding coins by eye is naturally self-limiting.

Flak is *Flug(zeug)abwehrkanone*. Whereas ack-ack, anti-aircraft, is AA in the British military alphabet.

Which would have been "Able-Able" in U.S. military alphabet, "Anton-Anton" in the German, and "Alfa-Alfa" in the NATO one. Sergeant Rock of comics fame is now in Echo Company.

— JTM

From: **Jeffrey Allan Boman** March 30, 2009  
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CANADA  
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Hi Joe. This is Jeff from Jakarta . . .

I've been reading the Progress Reports for the Worldcon here in Montreal this August, and I've been looking forward to seeing all the folks whose names I recognize as members! There are many who I know already thanks to Con\*Cept and NaNoWriMo, and a few of you fellow ziners as well. I'm looking forward to meeting Joe, as well as Taral Wayne and R-Lauraine Tutihasi. Hope I haven't left any of you out... I just hope the fanned dinner isn't on the first day though; I'm a fanned now, but the first night is traditionally a dinner for my fellow Compuserve IMPs (impatient to be published).

We'll have to learn more about the programming. It probably won't be on the first day (that's for making contacts) and won't be Hugo Awards day. Lauraine and Mike won't be able to make it.



I performed my faan duties, both nominating and voting for both the Hugos and the Auroras (our Canadian equivalent). I

nominated Lloyd for a Hugo, but he made the ballot for the Aurora instead (and got my vote). I was surprised to wake-up to an e-mailed query if I accepted a short-list nomination in its Fan Activity category myself (for my zine *The Original Universe*) — then was even more pleasantly surprised when I made the final ballot!

I voted for the Awards, but not for myself . . . IF I win, I wouldn't want to be a part of it. I say if, because although I'm a local guy, my zine is less than 2 years old so far; it won't be that well known yet. Granted, that makes the nomination so soon even more thrilling . . . of course I'd like to win (I've e-mailed friends across Canada to vote for me, and even bought Web space and a domain name to promote it), but even if I don't I'll forever be able to advertise it as nominated.

The Web URL (hope I have it online by the time you read this):

<http://theoriginaluniverse.info>

Unfortunately the nomination came at a time when I had troubles printing a readable version of my latest issue. I've solved the problems and it will be mailed out long before you read these words — but I lost two full months when another issue could have been out. I'm separating some content into a special issue to come out shortly, hoping to begin to get back on track.

Re: Reveiw'er's Notes . . . one of my first Flash drives is 1 GB, my Portable Apps one 4. I wish the 1 Gig one had been \$10 when I got it.

Re: And Here's To You, Mr. Ackerman . . . he was a GoH here for Con\*Cept 1997. I bought a photo with him (it's a treasured keepsake). When he was here he said he wanted to be our first Fan Centarian, following George Burns. Sadly, he was close but not enough.

Letters:

**Sheryl Birkhead:** In her case it was cable Internet and not DSL, but my mom didn't have a choice of anything but dial-up in the Laurentians until last year. Even though she has a Bell Express Vue satellite, Bell still doesn't offer DSL her way. / My potassium levels are low every 3-4 months, to the point that I wake up due to my leg muscles cramping up.

**Robert Lichtman:** Recently thanks to Facebook I've now reconnected with work-friends from over 20 years ago, as well as a neighbor from my childhood.

**John Thiel:** In Montreal we have

earthquakes that rarely even register a 1. All that they've done so far is to make me stir slightly in bed. Our Mount Royal is an extinct volcano that's been that way for over 500 years.

**Nancy Martsch:** In 1997 we had the horrid Ice Storm here. I only lost power for a day, but some folks on our South Shore had none for over 2 weeks! The city had to refund on a lot of spoiled food.

**Rod E. Smith:** I'm on the 7th floor of a building with stairs only in fire exits. If the power went out in a major way the elevators wouldn't work and many of us would be up a creek. An emergency kit would be a very good idea.

**Lloyd Penney:** I have a Fan site for my zine on Facebook as another way to spread the word about it. / One event I'll attend for sure this WorldCon — I suspect you will too — is the Aurora Awards. After all, we're both nominated there. :)

**Jerry Kaufman:** I hope you get to Anticipation town . . . another ziner to meet!

**Alexis A. Gilliland:** An .org domain? Aren't those intended for non-profits? / I've been following Phil Foglio ever since his Phil and Dixie strips in *Dragon* magazine. I've been reading Girl Genius online myself. / 40 years is an impressive achievement.

**Henry Welch:** Microsoft has been trying to squelch XP for a few years now for a move to Vista instead, but too many users refuse that change.

The weather in Montreal in August tends to be very hot and humid Joe, I have to warn you in advance. Bring very light clothing!

You mean like when we went to Florida and there was a cold snap?

March 30, 2009

Re: Reviewers notes . . . my nephew and nieces now have Great Aunts and Uncles, but no Great Grandparents. My dad is already 70; I don't expect my parents to be Great ones. / I may ask to archive my zine on *efanzines* too, but not until I have at least 3 years worth. / Patrick McGoohan and Ricardo Montalban lost so close together was a very difficult loss.

Interesting comment about Joe Shuster: he's originally from Toronto, Canada. He was the cousin of the late Frank Shuster of the comedy duo Wayne and Shuster.

Re: No Signs of Intelligent Life . . . I always rent films, so that was no problem. I enjoyed *Signs*, but I didn't put any actual thought into it. Now that Taral mentions it, it was pretty dumb.

Re: Hugo Nominations... I'm up against Dale for the Aurora; I'll have to read the ballot for the Hugo again to see if he's there. I know Chris Garcia is.

**Christopher J. Garcia:** I have the early days of ASIMOV, when Isaac was still alive. It has never been as good since then.

**Martin Morse Wooster:** To date I've submitted stories to F&SF only. I don't write hard SF, more science fantasy, and that magazine seems a better fit.

**Lloyd Penney:** I've not counted my years in SF fandom. I know I have over 27 years in comicbooks, and I've been reading SF since I was 4 (38 years ago now) . . . but I think I really started in fandom with Con\*Cept 1992, and my first stint on the concom in '93.

**Alexis A. Gilliland:** The folks who claim SF is no longer possible are forgetting that humanity hasn't even gone to Mars yet (just probes).

They've been claiming that SF is no longer possible since 1945.

— JTM

**Taras Wolansky:** You're brave to have even watched *I Robot*. I've avoided it even on TV for the way it treated Asimov's book.

Read you all soon.

From: **Taras Wolansky** March 31, 2009  
100 Montgomery Street., #24-H, Jersey City, NJ 07302-3787 USA  
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*Alexiad*, February 2009:

*Review of Tom Kratman's A Desert Called Peace: "In 1919, Edgar Rice Burroughs wrote Under the Red Flag, a novel about a Soviet conquest of America . . . It didn't sell" until he reworked it into The Moon Maid.*

Why was the book rejected? Does anybody know? If it were offered to New York publishers in the Thirties or Forties, I would understand why an anti-Soviet SF novel would have a hard time, but 1919? Does the manuscript still exist, and was it ever published?

Irwin Porges's Edgar Rice Burroughs: The Man Who Created Tarzan (1975) apparently has a summary, and the book was about Julian James, born in the 31st Commune of the Chicago Soviet, under the rule of President Lantski Petrov, dealing with Otto

Bergst, the local Red Guard Commander. The book got turned down by everybody from The Saturday Evening Post to All-Story.

**"Dell should merge Analog and Asimov's."** I always thought *Analog* would have been better off competing with *Asimov's*. Having a larger circulation, it would have been able to offer writers a higher rate, to compensate for being the less-prestigious market.

**"Lisa is buying everyone in the family small battery-operated radios for Christmas".** For disasters, I would have thought the kind you crank would be even better.

*Alexis Gilliland:* As always, your cartoons are a delight. ("Bleat to Quarters", indeed! Also your husband-hunting Catwoman.)

Uh, you do know that Batman told Catwoman who he was? And they have indeed been having it on every now and then?

**"Faster than light travel is going the way of Martian Princesses . . ."** The impression I get is just the opposite: FTL travel is more soundly based on relativity and quantum physics than it ever was before, though still very speculative. I do think it tends to minimize the grandeur of space: a galaxy you can fly across in a week is, well, not very big.

**"The idea that going into space will recapitulate the American frontier has been consigned to the dustbin of history. . . Because . . . every planet, moon, and asteroid within reach is totally useless without a whole lot of expensive modification."** Only if your standard of usefulness is walking outside unprotected. The technology of living in space and hostile planetary environments is constantly improving. A self-sustaining Martian colony is looking easier every day, for example.

**"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."** It might be more accurate to say that is what they thoroughly rejected, throwing out the baby with the bathwater. But still more accurately, the French and Russian revolutionaries really were revolutionaries, with quasi-religious ideologies of human perfectionism they were determined to impose on imperfect humans, whatever the cost. While the American

“revolutionaries” were really secessionists: already existing, popular governments separating themselves from governors and laws imposed on them by London politicians they never voted for. I think it was Edmund Burke who waggishly described them as English gentlemen rebelling against a German King.

**Burroughs, too; see Tarzan and the “Foreign Legion” (1947).**

— JTM

*Jim Stumm:* I have a Philips DVR which can record 66 hours at SP. I love the convenience, but it’s a cranky machine and I would probably look for another brand for my next one.

*George W. Price:* The 1954 *Brown* decision was “based on the bad psychological effects which segregation had on blacks”. According to a long essay in *The New Republic*, some years back, it was based on research that showed Black kids in segregated schools had lower self-esteem. The scientist who had done the research knew that was false — black kids in *integrated* schools had lower self-esteem (think about it) — but he opposed segregation so he kept his mouth shut.

*Robert S. Kennedy:* *U.S. News & World Report* is going Internet-only, aside from occasional special issues. When David Lawrence published it, it was the only news weekly that didn’t lean to the left; but then he died and his heirs sold it to liberals. A couple of conservative columnists were the only vestige of the way it was.

*Sue Burke:* I dipped into your entertaining translation of *Amadis of Gaul*. Why do you suppose it wasn’t revived when a lot of other chivalric tales were? The influence of *Don Quixote*?

*Lloyd Penney:* “**I have tried to be a friendly guide to new people**” at cons. Good for you! Not a common practice, alas.

From: **AL du Pisani** April 1, 2009  
945 Grand Prix Street,  
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I am OK, just looking forward to the public holidays in April. This year, every single full week in April has a public holiday in it, and I am looking forward to the time to rest.

I am still happy at work, but some things are getting my goat. I do not know if it is because I am getting older, but these days it is a lot easier to get my goat than ever before.

I have stopped caring about things like the election, as no political party have any appeal to me. I am currently just voting to keep one bunch of bastards out of office. And we still have three weeks to go before polling day. The good thing is that it will be a public holiday, and I can also spend some time with friends.

I’m still stuck with not a lot of what I want to read available, so have had to make do with reading more supernatural romances. And I am slowly cooling off to even more authors who is currently highly regarded in SF circles. Or at least they tend to be nominated for and win prizes.

I hope that you are well, and wish you good luck in your endeavours.

**Thank you for your kind words. As I've said, it's seeming more and more that your politics are becoming like ours. Are there any vote-buying scandals?**

— JTM

From: **John Hertz** March 30, 2009  
236 S. Coronado Street No. 409, Los  
Angeles, CA 90057-1456 USA

Indeed a clock is a time machine. Also a social device. Life is partly objective and partly subjective; annoying as keeping a schedule may be, it helps others. I keep telling myself this.

It can be quite heartbreaking if, upon crying out in pain, one is attacked with “How dare you make such a horrid noise?” Think of this when bashing Arnie Katz, for “Core Fandom”.

**If he looks over his circle of friends and feels their pain, I'm not one to decry it. Their thinking they are all the fandom that matters can lead me to a different judgment. But then, I've found that if there's a clique out there, I'm not in it.**

— JTM

*Am I really in the  
Alexiad lettercol...?*



From: **Eric Mayer**  
[maywrite2@epix.net](mailto:maywrite2@epix.net)

April 5, 2009

Thanks for putting *Alexiad* online. Since I have been such a stickler about limiting myself to efanac I thought it only fair that I send a Loc when someone who prefers paper is good enough to cater to such as myself. Mind you, I am still loccing a bit and I suspect if I hadn’t limited my activity I would be long gone, again.

I’m not sure how faanish I am really. As you are probably aware I do not circle very close to the life-giving sun of Core Fandom. In fact, I have receded to such a distance I am not even under the influence of science fiction of any sort so I am not sure exactly what force is keeping me a part of the faanish system, or whether I am part of it. I guess I like hearing people natter about themselves and their interests and although blogs and such are great often they move a little too fast for my taste.

I didn’t get my first computer until almost 1990. It was an Apple. No hard drive. It could hold almost exactly 5,000 words in its memory. Enough for a short story. It seemed amazing at the time. (It also figured out and saved the statistics for the Strat-O-Matic Baseball game that you could play on it. A miracle!)

I don’t envy you that ice storm. I went through one of those back in the early nineties when I was living in upstate New York. The backyard was filled with downed trees. The town where I lived had a peculiar arrangement in that half was served by an above ground electrical system while the other half had the wires underground. Weirdly enough, the part of town in which I was, with the above ground wires, kept its electricity while the other part of town lost it. The streets couldn’t be navigated to drive on but I went out for a run (yeah, that was a while ago, when I was middle-aged and stupid). I got to enjoy the spectacle of a world encased in glittering ice, even if I did have to detour some downed power lines. Sadly, the character of many streets was changed because all the large trees along them came down. A street deprived of its big shade trees looks remarkably different.

Your accounts of all those health problems are harrowing. Such a shame that health problems are inevitably accompanied by insurance problems these days. Rather than “get well soon cards” we should send out “get coverage soon” cards. I have been extremely fortunate in regards to health and will count it good fortune if I manage to just drop dead

before I develop any serious illnesses/conditions. Well, I won’t be around to count anything, but you probably see what I mean. I hope things work out for everyone.

Rodford Edmiston’s piece on time keeping was fascinating. I have read that the Romans used to consider the hours of darkness to be half the day and those of daylight the other half so the length of 12 nighttime and 12 daytime hours differed according to the season. Makes sense, I guess. An hour of night in the cold of the winter seems longer than an hour on a summer night! Of course sun dials and water clocks weren’t very accurate so appointments tended to be scheduled for the appropriate hour rather than to the minute as we do. Which was probably a better way to live. I rarely wear a watch. Right now I don’t often need to be anywhere at a specific time. There’s an old spring driven alarm clock ticking away on the shelf behind me even as I type and it does well enough for my needs. I could probably get by with one of those old Roman water clocks. Although in this climate those might freeze.

This is a bit brief and belated. (The deadline I see was April 1 unless you were joking) I have just dug myself out from under a mountain of legal writing and am trying to catch up on correspondence before the next mountain comes crashing down. (And it better because I need the work!) Look forward to the next issue.

No, it's not a joke. See?

— JTM

#### WAHF:

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

**C. D. Carson**, about the Luna Project.

**Jim Sullivan**, who sent two book reviews that are in the house . . . somewhere.

**Knarley Welch**, with the address correction and wishes for healing.

Congratulations to our Hugo Nominee recipients, Mike Resnick, Steve Silver, Claire Briailey & Mark Plummer, Guy H. Lillian III, Chris Garcia, Mike Glycer, John Hertz, Brad Foster, Sue Mason, and Taral.

In other news, Steve Stiles has announced that he declined the Best Fan Artist nomination in order to give Taral a better shot at winning.

## AMERICA HELD HOSTAGE

WASHINGTON — The American presidential standoff has ground into its second week with no clear end in sight. Supporters of the competing candidates have continued to make claims and threats, but with no clear legal controlling authority, any resolution remains difficult. A nation still reeling from the incredible airplane accident that annihilated the President, Congress, and Supreme Court and destroyed the historic Capitol Building remains divided and dismayed.

Former National Security Advisor John Patrick “Jack” Ryan remains in the Executive Mansion, basing his claim on his confirmation by the United States Senate moments before the airplane crash that killed the Senators and President Durling. In spite of the less than secure basis for his position, Ryan has received foreign ambassadors, issued executive orders, and called upon the state governors to appoint new Senators and arrange for special elections for Representatives, while putting forward a list of cabinet members. The conservative tone of his proposed Cabinet appointments has been widely criticized.

His apparent predecessor, scandal-plagued Vice-President Edward “Ed” Kealty, remains in the vice-presidential mansion, basing his claim on his not having formally submitted his resignation from the office. Like Ryan, Kealty has called for interim Senate appointments and new House elections. While he has not put forth any Cabinet appointments, a number of moderate political figures and notables from private life have been suggested as potential nominees.

The “third force” candidate, Senator (D-NH) Josiah Edward “Josh” Bartlet, continues to advance the claim that the “emergency session” of three surviving senators (who had boycotted the confirmation of Ryan as a protest against his alleged links to right-wing death squads in the intelligence services) which elected him as President pro tempore of the Senate, and therefore successor to the Presidency, was legitimate. Bartlet has already assembled a team of acting cabinet officials, and put together a staff under the leadership of AIDS activist Leo McGarry.

Observers see this confrontation shaping up as a regional clash, with Bartlet enjoying the support of Atlantic Coast liberals, Kealty the support of Hollywood progressives, and Ryan being backed by Catholic and evangelical reactionaries from “flyover country”.

Supporters of the three claimants continue to clash in the streets. Army commanders have refused to intervene in what they regard as a civilian matter. “The armed forces will support the constitution and the legitimate president,” a Pentagon spokesman said. “The U.S. Army, Navy, Air Force, and Marines are not a third-world political militia.”

A proposal to resolve the deadlock by considering the claims of all three candidates as invalid and accepting the succession of the sole surviving Cabinet member, Secretary of Energy Dr. Helen Kokintz, has been stymied by her continuing inability to release her birth certificate, continuing to fuel the rumors that she was actually born abroad. The Roma-American community, of which she is a prominent member, has denounced these rumors as “gajje prejudice and bigotry”.

The airwaves are scenes of disagreement, while even more radical views are gaining increasing strength on the Internet. A number of prominent Internet personalities have endorsed the proposal by Colorado activist E. W. Bear for a declaration by the states that the Constitution’s government has failed, and that a new Continental Congress be summoned under the terms of the Articles of Confederation.

— Not by Tom Clancy, Aaron Sorkin, Leonard Wibberley, or L. Neil Smith

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

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

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