

# ALEXIAD

(ΑΛΕΞΙΑΣ)

\$2.00

I have yielded to temptation and gone to the library booksale even though I knew full well that as a book addict I should have stayed well away. But Sunday is the bargain day where a whole box of books can be had for ten dollars. How, then, could I possibly have missed such an event? Together, Joe and I came home with three boxes, two for me, one for him. My chief prize was a hardcover copy of Bova's *Brothers*, and *Iron Tears*, a book about the American Revolution by Stanley Weintraub. There were also several true war story books for my collection of such, which began with World War II but has expanded to Afghanistan and other wars between. There were no few children's books bought because I wanted to fill my box and they looked more interesting than most of the adult books. It is something of a setback to the book diet I have been on but I did limit myself to two boxes. The purchases do put me behind on making space for the expected acquisitions at Montréal. I am rationalizing the new purchases by reminding myself many more than two boxes have gone to the thrift store. I have even managed to clear out a little space for keeper books. Organization has never come easily to me so I take real pride in my little achievements, the organizing of socks, clothes to wear around the house and the little space for a few keepers. I hope that I can expand these small achievements through the house.

— Lisa

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**Anticipation**, the 67th World Science Fiction Convention/67e Congrès mondial de science-fiction, will be **August 6-10 août, 2009** at the Palais des congrès de Montréal. <http://www.anticipationsf.ca/>

The deadline for voting for the Hugo Awards is **July 3 juillet**. Vote early, vote often./Votez tôt, votez souvent.

The 84<sup>th</sup> Running of the Hambletonian (1st leg of the Trotting Triple Crown) is **August 8, 2009** at Meadowlands Racetrack in East Rutherford, New Jersey.

The 55<sup>th</sup> Running of the Yonkers Trot (2nd leg of the Trotting Triple Crown) is **August 29, 2009** at Yonkers Raceway in Yonkers, New York.

The 117<sup>th</sup> Running of the Kentucky Futurity (3rd leg of the Trotting Triple Crown) is **October 3, 2008** at the Red Mile in Lexington, Kentucky.

The **World Party** is at 9:00 p.m. local time on **June 21, 2009**. The Dormition of the Theokotos is on **August 15, 2009**.

Printed on June 9, 2009  
Deadline is **August 10, 2009**

## Reviewer's Notes

As I thought, Second Life is now passé. The big thing now is Twitter, and everyone tweets their entire life in 140-character blocks. Which is to say that your Best Fan Writer is now even more ephemeral than before (i.e., John Scalzi's comment on the Three Entries of the Average Blog). The ADD generation is empowered.

What was that Fred Pohl story about the drug so unaddictive that everyone took it all the time, since they could quit taking it in a moment? (Thus unaware or the concept of psychological addiction, but . . .) Now more than ever, people are so connected they don't know anything at all.

See you at Anticipation.

— Joe

## RANDOM JOTTINGS

by Joe

**This is NOT from 1984:**

... Michael Quill, the left-leaning head of the Transport Workers of New York, was delivering an angry speech denouncing the imperialist war, arguing that the American worker should have absolutely nothing to do with it. In the middle of his speech, he was handed a note informing him that the Nazis had invaded the Soviet Union. Without missing a beat, Quill totally changed direction, arguing that “we must all unite and fight for democracy.”

— Doris Kearns Goodwin, *No Ordinary Time* (1994), Page 256

The last survivor of the *Karluk* expedition, **Ruth Makpii “Mugpi” Ipalook**, died on **June 2, 2008** at the age of 97. Her misfortunes and adventures are recounted in Jennifer Niven’s book *The Ice Master: The Doomed 1913 Voyage of the Karluk* (2000; reviewed in *Alexiad* V. 2 #1).

The Peary-Henson Centennial Expedition reached the D.O.P. [Damned Old Pole, as the Commander put it] on **April 25, 2009**, after 53 days on the ice. For the record, Peary claimed to have reached the Pole on April 7 after 38 days. As an interesting side note, two of the members of the expedition, Stuart Smith and Maxime Chaya, have each climbed the Seven Summits and skied to the South Pole. The third member, Lonnie Dupre, has over 14,000 miles of Arctic travel on his record.

<http://www.humanedgetech.com/expedition/pe/>

And contrawise, **Sir Ran Fiennes** has finally reached the top of Mount Everest on **May 21**, after an interesting series of attempts including a heart attack at 28,000 feet (in 2005, not this time). This expedition was done for Marie Curie Cancer Care, a charity dedicated to home care for terminal cancer patients. (Sir Ran’s first wife Virginia, his mother, and one of his sisters all died of cancer within eighteen months of each other.)

Earlier this year, a plaque memorializing Frank Wild was placed in the church in

Grytviken, South Georgia, not far from the grave of Shackleton. As you know, John Robert Francis “Frank” Wild was one of the leading figures of the Heroic Age of Antarctic exploration, having been on five expeditions from 1901 to 1922, including accompanying Shackleton on his Farthest South and keeping the survivors of the *Endurance* alive on Elephant Island. What sort of man was he?

S. [Shackleton] privately forced upon me his one breakfast biscuit, and would have given me another tonight had I allowed him. I do not suppose that anyone else in the world can thoroughly realise how much generosity and sympathy was shown by this; I DO, and BY GOD I shall never forget. Thousands of pounds would not have bought that one biscuit.

— Frank Wild, January 31, 1909

(Wild had dysentery at the time and could not eat anything else.)

One small item was noted during this effort. Wild died in South Africa in 1939, after a long struggle with poverty, ill-health, and liquor. He was cremated.

**No one knows where the ashes are.**

<http://www.antarctic-circle.org/art.htm>

The July-August 2009 issue of *Analog* has two stories worthy of note. “Failure to Obey”, by **John G. Hemry**, continues the tales laid forth in the Paul Sinclair Novels (reviewed in *Alexiad* V. 5 #5). Lieutenant Jen Shen, Paul’s wife, now assigned to a Navy space station, finds it struck by a terrorist attack, which is defeated at a cost. Then, a petty officer is accused of having disobeyed orders during the fighting, and brought before a secret court-martial. The only person Jen can find to defend him is the very same prosecutor who had the case against her [back in *Rule of Evidence*] . . . and she has the fewest qualms.

The story ends with a tantalizing hint that not all has gone well for Paul, either . . . let’s hope that this story hasn’t ended.

Once past the serious stuff, one can find a “Probability Zero” by none other than the estimable Professor **Harry Turtledove**, on the topic of “Global Warming”, and the threat it makes to peoples’ way of life as the glaciers retreat and these dangerous things called *trees* flourish in their wake.

We regret to report the death of **Elizabeth Gladys Millvina Dean** of Ashurst, Hampshire, U.K. on **May 31, 2009**. Born **February 2, 1912** in London, with the exception of one trip to the States, Millvina lived in Britain all her life. The trip, however, happened to be on the RMS *Titanic*, and at the age of two months, Millvina was one of the youngest survivors, and also the last survivor of the sinking. Another link with history has gone.

The Legislature of the Commonwealth of Virginia has proclaimed **June 27, 2009** as “**Will F. Jenkins Day**”, in honor of the man who

described the Internet in his famous story “A Logic Named Joe” (*Astounding*, March 1946); he was better known to us as **Murray Leinster**. Thanks to **Robert Sabella** for printing the notice in *Visions of Paradise* #141.

## OBITS

We regret to report the death of **J. G. Ballard** on **April 19, 2009**. Born in the International Settlement of Shanghai, China on November 15, 1930, James Graham Ballard had a significant experience in his life before he was twelve. With all the other British subjects in the trade port, he was interned at the outbreak of the Greater East Asia War, an experience that formed the basis of his novel *Empire of the Sun* (1984). As with many of the Angry Young Men sort, he became more conservative as he grew older, albeit in his own, eccentric way.

Oh yes, he wrote SF too, being one of the leading lights of the New Wave. That’s something the media here wanted to forget — but in Blighty itself, *The Spectator* didn’t!

We regret to report the death of **A. Langley Searles** on **May 7, 2009**. Arthur Langley Searles was born **August 8, 1920**. In mundane life he was a professor of chemistry at the College of Mount Saint Vincent until his retirement. In the fancish world, he was best known for his fanzine *Fantasy Commentator*, published 1943-53 and 1978-2004, nominated for a Retro-Hugo for 1946.

We regret to report the death of **David Eddings** in Carson City, Nevada, on **June 3, 2009**. Born **July 7, 1931** in Spokane, Washington, Eddings came to fantasy writing comparatively late in life, with his first book being *Pawn of Prophecy* (1982), the first in his successful Belgariad series. He wrote several more series, as well as standalone novels both fantasy and mundane. In his later years, he acknowledged the contribution his wife Leigh made to his work. She died of a series of strokes in 2007, the year after the publication of their last work, *The Younger Gods* (2006).

## MONARCHIST NEWS

Among the passengers of Air France Flight 447 was **HIRH Prince Pedro Luiz de Orleans e Bragança**, third in succession to the headship of the Imperial Brazilian family. HIRH was a banker in Luxembourg, and had gone home to visit family.

The **Jong Il Che** of Choson has prepared a Rescript of Succession, naming his youngest son **Prince Jong Un** as *Chinwang*, or “Crown Prince”. His Imperial Majesty had given thought to the Imperial Demise, his own health being chancy, and wished to have a successor named prior to the centennial of birth of his own father, the **Il Sung Che**, styled “Great Leader”.

(North Korea is the only divine-right Communist monarchy, so it makes as much sense if not more to use the imperial styles and titles, doesn’t it?)

**HER HABILINE HUSBAND**

Review by Joseph T Major of

**SATURN'S CHILDREN:****A Space Opera**

by Charles Stross

(Ace; 2008;

ISBN 978-0-7394-9934-4; \$24.95)

**Best Novel Hugo Nominee**(Originally reviewed in *Alexiad* V. 7 #4)

Michael Bishop's Nebula-winning novelette "Her Habiline Husband" (1983) was a look into the problems of prejudice, species differences, anthropology, and cultural dissonances. It, and the later novel of which it formed the opening sequence, *Ancient of Days* (1985), suffered from an odd problem, at least to my observation. While the supporting characters were an interesting and richly-drawn cast of people, the central ones were blank dullards. As another reviewer noted, the female lead, who enters into a relationship of **Hot Sex™** with the "habiline husband" of the title, is inexplicably drawn to a mute, misshapen dwarf. The character developed in the additional sections, but the initial setup seemed more like something from Terry Southern's *Candy* (1958).

The two additional sections of the book were given similarly ponderous and alliterative titles, reminiscent of, say, the progression of Valentine Michael Smith's ascent in *Stranger in a Strange Land* (1961, 1990; NHOL G.127). Which brings us to this book, dedicated to Heinlein and Asimov.

The Heinlein dedication is more obvious, in that the book is essentially Stross's take on the setup of *Friday* (1982; NHOL G.197), the best novel of Heinlein's post-*Heinlein in Dimension* (by Alexei Panshin; 1968) work, but consider the competition. Indeed, the protagonist is named "Freya", and in Germanic languages "Friday" is derived from "Freyja". And the book begins on Venus, while in Romance languages the name for Friday is derived from *dies Veneris*, "Venus's day".

Though Freya is even less human than Friday, who was human, if unusually conceived. Some unspecified time before, humanity became extinct, leaving behind a direly polluted world, and no WALL-E to pick up after them. However, no problem, because before the Creators (or so she styles them) got tired and gave up, they created all Freya's people, who have taken over the business and are running it better than the original. As Freya observes, marvelling at the folly of the Creators, who thought they could span the hazards of space with mere mortal flesh. Hence the Good Dr. A. and his Laws.

After a somewhat hair-raising (very hair-raising, indeed) encounter on Venus that indicates to Freya that perhaps she is not universally loved, she has to look for work. Which turns out to be forthcoming. She gets taken on as a courier, assigned to bring a certain package to Mars. (Reading the intricate descriptions of the package [Page 59] and its container [Page 71] requires some mental effort to produce an amusing realization.)

Stross has built a remarkably complex society. From Freya's collection of the memory chips of her dead siblings to the hair-raisingly genteel recreation of aristocratic society, he has built a community of those who aren't human but think like humans.

However, having done that, he proceeds to see how many Heinlein tropes he can redo in a tour of the new Solar System. I mean, having Freya's nipples go "**Spung!**" [Page 142; also "*The Number of the Beast* — "1979, NHOL G.189, *passim*] This is one of those things that is too dumb to be serious and too lame to be satirical.

His principal model in this section of the book is more *The Rolling Stones* (1952; NHOL G.099), as Freya goes from planet to planet, tossing off changes of persona and odd vistas with a bland insouciance. Finally, after a shocking confrontation on the planet Eris (née Xena), she gets an opportunity to reach for the stars.

There is something not quite serious about this. For example, Freya is as passionately inclined as Maureen Johnson or any late Heinlein woman. Fine, but why does she have these passions anyway? She's a robot. In fact, some of the descriptions read like a bad translation of human intimacies. And why would robots be occupying planetary surfaces, place with corrosive gases and unsettled conditions, at all? Presumably there are reasons, but Stross should have put himself out to convey them, since Freya seems willing enough to "as you know" this narrative on many other matters.

It's an amusing story, with lots of wit, in-jokes, intrigue, striking settings, imaginative world-building, and many other virtues, but the thinking-out seems to be less sure.

(My luck: I got the SFBC edition, and the regular hardback edition has a nicer cover, more reminiscent of the Whelan cover art on the original paperback edition of *Friday*.)

**THE FAR SIDE OF LAST**

Review by Joseph T Major of

**ZOE'S TALE**

by John Scalzi

(Tor; 2008;

ISBN 978-0-7653-1698-1; \$24.95)

Sequel to *Old Man's War*(2005; reviewed in *Alexiad* V. 5 #3),**The Ghost Brigades**(2006; reviewed in *Alexiad* V. 5 #3), and**The Last Colony**(2007; reviewed in *Alexiad* V. 7 #3)**Best Novel Hugo Nominee**

As an obvious thing to say, if you liked *The Last Colony* you'll find this interesting. The title says it all; it's the perspective of John and Jane's adopted daughter Zoë.

Zoë played a significant part off stage saving *The Last Colony* and this describes how she did it. The first part is a story of growing up in the colonies, with the troubles of maturation followed by those of deprivation. A modern

girl, like, not able to use her iPod, you know, would be like soooo despondent . . . I suppose we ought to be glad that Zoë's experience has included actually learning.

Hard enough as that is, the situation turns worse when the real threat comes to pass. And not just for the colonists of Roanoke. Zoë is, it seems, the daughter of God. Like really. While her father had tried to betray all humanity, he had given an entire race consciousness, and they also for some reason developed the concept of gratitude. Even when the enemy offers to spare Roanoke in return for a hecatomb [look up the meaning of that word], and Zoë learns that the power of life and death is a burden, not a privilege.

The society of Zoë and her friends is like so ohs, but then almost any social prediction is as wrong and absurd as realities have been. Her grief over the death of her almost-boyfriend is touching and real; these things happen, but that doesn't make them happen to happen only to casually disposable mooks.

We're getting up to *Have Space Suit — Will Travel* now. Zoë doesn't quite have to say that "We'll build our own sun and come get you!" but she has the spirit. We'll just have to see how John and Jane react to her manufacturing explosives in a frame building within the colony limits . . .

**THE REPORT ON THE LIBRARY OF BABEL**

Review by Joseph T Major of

**ANATHEM**

by Neil Stephenson

(William Morrow; 2008;

ISBN 978-0-06-147409-5; \$29.95)

**Best Novel Hugo Nominee**

A long time ago, in a galaxy far far away, a meditative society built a monastery for the preservation of knowledge. It was vast, it was a superb warehouse for the storage of knowledge and wisdom. Its builders planned for the long term; one could tell as much by the great clock that dominated the compound, a clock which indicated not only the minutes and hours, but the days, years, decades, centuries, and yes, even millennia.

The only even grander project is the one Jorge Luis Borges wrote of, "*La Biblioteca de Babel*" ["The Library of Babel"] (1941, 1962), the universe which is a library, a collection of books containing every permutation of 25 characters (space, comma, period, and 22 letters of the alphabet).

Thus this. Which described in loving detail daily activities and incidents of this monastery, with histories, definitions of new terms, and other useful details. And even more details. Did I mention the intricate details?

Stephenson has gone to great and inclusive effort to create a setting. It's small wonder that his previous books were called the "Baroque Cycle", for he has such a degree of detail and of niches as would befit a Baroque style painting. There are all sorts of curious things in this work.

Will further perseverance actually uncover a **plot**?

## DANCES WITH WEREWOLVES

Review by Joseph T Major of

**REVAMPED**

by J. F. Lewis

(Pocket Books; 2009;

ISBN 978-1-4391-0228-2; \$15.00)

Sequel to *Staked*

(2008; reviewed in *Alexiad* V. 7 #5)

When we left our one protagonist, Eric the vampire, he was a ghost floating in the vicinity of his former strip club, which had just been blown up, him with it, not to mention his human former lover Marilyn. He was finally beginning to realize that perhaps his partner Roger was not entirely on the up and up. His newly-vampirized girlfriend Tabitha had left him for another vampire, and if it weren't for his new girlfriend, Tabitha's sister Rachel, he would be alone. Well, if he had a body to be alone with.

Meanwhile, Tabitha (the other protagonist) was plunging into the complexity of the vampire society. These vampires don't sparkle in sunlight, they burn. On the other hand, depending on how powerful they are, a stake in the heart might only impede them. A young woman surrounded by oaf boys who tosses off witty comments while impaling vampires, but can't afford a cell phone, wouldn't be much of a bother for Tabitha, because she is a different sort of rarity among vampires, one who can actually simulate humanity. Even though she is finding her new vampire associates interesting, she wants to be back with Eric. Ever since her sister Rachel died, she's been alone.

Are you beginning to see the picture?

In parallel chapters, Eric and Tabitha continue to explore their destiny, assuming they don't get utterly wiped out first. The demons are restless, understand. Not all of Eric's associates were bombed or bombing, and they do manage to bring him back to un-death — of course, they have to bring him back to life first, and then have him die again.

Once re-embodied, Eric begins a cavalcade of quests, based on finding out what exactly is going on and what to do about it. Hardly anyone is as they seem, and Eric has to bully and blunder along to find out what exactly is happening to himself. And with Rachel.

Tabitha has to reconnect with things. Her new undead self first; she doesn't quite understand what all she can do but no one else seems to either. Her new colleagues, who have their own places and positions, ones into which she doesn't quite seem to fit. With Eric, whom she still loves with all of her stilled heart. Except for who is this who looks like her late sister Rachel?

The sorting out takes some time and effort, and in the end there are still some questions, even after some successes. All's well that ends . . . if it really does.

## THE GREEN PARSEC

Review by Joseph T Major of

**THE LOST FLEET: RELENTLESS**

by "Jack Campbell" [John G. Henry]

(Ace; 2008; ISBN 978-0-441-01708-9; \$7.99)

Sequel to *The Lost Fleet: Dauntless* (2006;

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

*The Lost Fleet: Fearless* (2007; reviewed in

*Alexiad* V. 6 #1),

*The Lost Fleet: Courageous* (2007; reviewed

in *Alexiad* V. 7 #1), and

*The Lost Fleet: Valiant* (2008; reviewed in *Alexiad* V. 7 #5)

. . . the virtual conference room had its advantages, but it also had problems. Like this one. "There's only one way we can be absolutely certain that the aliens won't destroy the star once we get there. We will have to abandon ship, send the entire fleet into the star, and blend in on the world." The image of the captain of the *Apollo* wavered and then firmed up, showing a different person. "Commander Thrakes, sir. The captain is indisposed," she said.

— Not from *The Lost Fleet: Genesis*

When we left Captain Jack Geary, his troubles had multiplied. The Syndic fleet was still resisting — not surprising, he was still within Syndic space, albeit not as far in as the fleet had been! There were still opponents of his command out there — the social cohesion of the Navy had eroded during the century Geary had floated in cold sleep, lost between the stars in an escape pod, and the ethos of the fleet had

changed, battered under the strains of the long war. Worse yet, they had made a terrifying discovery, that there were aliens trying to influence the campaign, weaken humanity, both the Syndic and their own Alliance. And the gates that so aided interstellar travel had their terrible dangers.

Which made the stress on his personal life seem insignificant, except it became important. He was torn between two women, and not enough of a Heinlein character to resolve the difference. Add to that political needs, disciplinary requirements, and the stress of being cooped up for so long, and did I mention his concern at having to live up to the image of "Black Jack Geary", the superhero of the war?

Henry continues his emphasis on the real time factors of this kind of war. Decisions have to be made on estimates because that deployment you're seeing is several minutes old and the enemy may have done something else by now — light speed matters! Maintenance, repair, and resupply are significant, the fleet train with the repair ships has to be protected. And so on, much disappointing the sort of people looking for a battle ending with the Syndic fleet annihilated and the Alliance one nearly so, Geary standing on the bridge of the *Dauntless* in his pressure suit, one arm destroyed, one eye burnt out, but his cat . . . oh never mind.

The fleet is agonizingly close to home. So some sort of last-effort confrontation with the Syndic fleet is inevitable. However, surviving may not be much better. As Geary has noted, the social connectivity of the Fleet has eroded. How bad off is that of the civilian population, degraded by a century of war?

And worse yet, will they regard him as the Messiah? He may well envy Muad'dib, blinded and wandering the desert. As for saying no, well, "Only the true Messiah denies his divinity!" and you know what happened to that guy. Always look on the bright side of life.

The costs to both the fleet specifically and the Alliance as a whole may be too much to bear, and while the war may be winnable, the peace may be just as bad when this story of interstellar war is . . . [To Be Continued]

## IN AN OCTOPUS'S GARDEN — Part 3

Review by Joseph T Major of

**SEA LORD**

by Virginia Kantra

(Berkley Sensation; 2009;

ISBN 978-0-425-22636-0; \$7.99)

"The Children of the Sea"

The story of the three children of Atargatis the selkie and her human lover Bart Hunter the fisherman (and not the Keeper of the Eddystone Light?) comes to the final part of this stage with the story of the third child, Lucy. Her brothers Caleb (human, all too human) and Dylan (very selkie) and their respective wives Magred (selkie) and Rachel (human) have found themselves and their spouses, love and peril, and as Lucy sits in a pumpkin patch (mixed message there) she meets her fate, or vice versa, in the

I see that last week there was a triangle cartoon that shows Captain Kirk and Sarah Jane Smith remain an item while beyond the fourth wall.

So?

I wonder whether we could take a shot at ... you know ... being a real family. Beyond the fourth wall, of course.

Well, that depends. Do you still kill other characters?

Not beyond the fourth wall.

Beyond the fourth wall we can't be killed.



GAD ZIKOWSKI

person of Conn the selkie prince.

The theme throughout these works has been mutual understanding. To add to this, Lucy has to understand herself; why she was so afraid of the sea, to learn what she really is and why. For Conn, it's the simpler but deeper understanding of a life-partner as a whole.

The threat is never far away. If not quite as personalized as before, it is still dangerous — and combined with the sterility of the selkies, even perhaps terminal.

How can they reconcile all their problems? Finding out leads everyone to understand themselves and their abilities all the more.

## THE BOGLAND OF DR. MOREAU — PART FOUR

Review by Joseph T Major of

**HORIZON:**

*The Sharing Knife, Volume Four*

by Lois McMaster Bujold

(Eos; 2009; ISBN 978-0-06-137536-1; \$25.95)

Sequel to *Beguilement*

(2006; reviewed in *Alexiad* V. 6 #1),

*Legacy* (2007; reviewed in *Alexiad* V.6 #4), & *Passage* (2009; reviewed in *Alexiad* V. 7 #4)

Fawn and Dag have to make a life together, both having been turned out of their existing lives. Both having new lives, and not just because they got married.

The *Sharing Knife* series contains several features not ordinarily found in fantasy. It contains, and indeed involves in the plot, the mundane need to make a living. The characters include farmers, herders, boatmen . . . the sort of people who make the adventurers, mages, nobles, warriors, etc. possible. It deals with a problem in the context of its world; there are no outsiders who will swoop down and fix the situation, Dag and Fawn and their friends have to deal with the consequences of their own problems and the problems of the world around them. Including what got us introduced to Fawn back then, pregnancy. (You will recall the sly comment in *The Tough Guide to Fantasyland* about how everybody gets a contraceptive.)

And yes, this is a fantasy, the mudmen, the malices, the sharing knives themselves are all very much non-mundane, and they too are part of the world. It isn't mundania, not by a long shot, and there is real adventure here. It just takes a while and involves difficulty.

Which in turn, is rewarded by a wrapup . . .

## IF THE LEADER KNEW

Review by Joseph T Major of

**THE THIRD REICH AT WAR**

by Richard J. Evans

(Penguin; 2009;

ISBN 978-1-59420-200-0; \$40.00)

Sequel to *The Coming of the Third Reich* (2004) and

*The Third Reich in Power* (2005)

*Wenn das der Führer wußte* (1966) by Otto Basil is a tale of a victorious Aryan people, and how their world triumph fell apart. Beneath the surface of the Weltreich is a hodge-podge of

competing authorities, individual leaders each grasping his own pocket of authority, seeking to expand it, competing with others. Then the human central principle of the government dies, and the unity vanishes.

What the chronicler of the moral and cultural collapse of Germany has done, surely not as first intention but all the same, is to show that if anything Basil was an optimist. More triumphant Nazi chroniclers, whether Phil Dick or Brad Linaweaver, are even less well founded. If the Nazi state had somehow developed nuclear weapons and destroyed London and the Allied armies, it still would have come apart, the material in this book demonstrates.

Evans has been criticized for focusing overmuch on the war against the Jews, and ignoring the war against the Allies (i.e., the invasion of Crete gets only two paragraphs). The recounting of the exclusion, concentration, and destruction of a people can get oppressive. It serves to remind the reader how a would-be Total State mobilizes.

The problem here is not so much that Evans ignores the military situation as that he does not consistently stick to topic; what about civil society in Nazi Germany? There should be more about the reactions to the contingencies of the war. Such material does predominate in the latter half of the book, showing the increasing disillusionment with the regime, and its nihilistic response to its defeats.

The structure of the government was rather a disappointment to writers of wartime propaganda and postwar fiction. Rather than a unified entity, the Nazi government was a hodge-podge of competing groups, party agencies overlaid on pre-Nazi bureaucracies, which latter operated without effective direction. The leaders of the Party all competed for power under the Leader, who never quite allowed anyone supremacy.

(Incidental note: Evans thoroughly translates *all* German terms, perhaps as a way of stripping away the mystique of esoteric Germanisms that pervades most writing on the topic.)

To take one example of the latter, the German government had two separate nuclear weapons projects. And so many of the Scientific and Technological wonders of the Nazi regime, the ones that excite the fanboys with the prospects of Winning The War, were unfeasible, underfunded, or wish-fulfillment. (It would help his point if he acknowledged that as empire-building, the subordinates kept large staffs of design engineers, who had to do something, so they drew up ever more imaginative plans without any regard for how they could be realized.) *My Tank Is Fight!* (2006; reviewed in *Alexiad* V. 6 #4), with its tales of imaginative German weapons is very much to the point in this context. The more successful (and not very at that) atom-bomb project was run by the Post Office. ("You have an embassy from the *Reichspost*: 'Our words are backed by NUCLEAR WEAPONS! We request an increase in first-class postage rates of 1 pfennig for the first 30 grams.'")

As the enemy closed in, the leadership

responded by escaping into flights of fancy. In the earlier volumes of this history, Evans describes the artistic endeavors of the time, and in this one he speaks of the movie *Kolberg* (1945), Goebbels's tribute to the striking siege of the Napoleonic wars. It required 20,000 troops for its battle scenes, faked history (it has Napoleon giving up, whereas in reality the city surrendered, though admittedly after the Treaty of Tilsit), and by the time it was finished there were hardly any cinemas left in Germany to show it. And you thought *Heaven's Gate* (1980) had problems.

However, Goebbels did have real cans of film for his (well, Veit Harlan's) efforts. The nightmarish scene in the Leader's Bunker has been recounted in many media (the scene from the movie *Der Untergang* (2004) where Hitler reacts to the inability of Steiner's army to relieve Berlin has served as a basis for many YouTube videos), describing how the Leader had absolutely abandoned his connections to reality, and when reality took over anyhow, how he gave up.

One point that Evans raises was that support for the government did indeed decline under the stress of war. While not everyone was an anti-Nazi from the start, much less at all, there was sufficient war-weariness that the uber-Werewolf of *The Man With the Iron Heart* (2008) would have had a very shallow and spotty sea for its fish to swim in, to mix metaphors. If you don't think this is relevant, there was a vibrant and well-publicized opinion in the U.S. during the war that Germany was seething with pro-Nazi resistance and would need to be demolished.

Evans has described how nothing comes from nothing; the slow abandonment of adherence to the concept of a society that was the product of Weimar led to this total nihilism.

## WITNESS

Review by Joseph T Major of

**SPIES:**

*The Rise and Fall of the KGB in America*

by John Earl Haynes, Harvey Klehr, and Alexander Vassiliev

(Yale University Press; 2009;

ISBN 978-0-300-12390-6; \$35.00)

By 1938, the Soviet espionage apparatus in Washington had penetrated the State Department, the Treasury Department, the Bureau of Standards and the Aberdeen Proving Ground in Maryland. In the State Department it had two active sources and two contacts that had not yet become active sources. In the Treasury Department, it had one active source and a contact who was used for a short time to watch and report on the active source. This contact later became a member of one of the underground apparatuses headed by Elizabeth Bentley. In the Bureau of Standards, the apparatus had one active source and one inactive contact. In the Aberdeen Proving Ground, it had one active source. . . All these men knew that the purpose of the apparatus they served

was espionage.

— Whittaker Chambers, *Witness* (1952), Pages 27-28

In 1914, Kansas newspaperman Ernest McNutt became a father. McNutt was to go on to be one of the founding members of the Communist Labor Party there, though his overt radicalism would decline in the years after. Nevertheless, he was identified as a covert communist, along with that son, Russell, and his other son, Waldo.

Russell pursued a private career as a civil engineer, working for the government and in private industry alike. He lived a long and presumably productive life, finally dying in North Carolina in February 2008.

One of those jobs was for the engineering contractor Kellex. And, as a committed Communist, Russell A. McNutt passed on information on the job they were doing, the gaseous diffusion plant at Oak Ridge, to his recruiter, Julius Rosenberg. He was the international man of mystery whose identity has been one of the great enigmas of espionage history ever since the VENONA decrypts were revealed, the unidentified secret agent in the heart of ENORMOUS (the Manhattan Project), Agent PERSIAN [PERS in the original].

The authors of *The Secret World of American Communism* (1996) and its many sequels have joined with the Russian reporter who was half of the shocking exposé *The Haunted Wood* (1998) to continue the intermittent and veiled revelations from the Soviet Archives that were To Be Preserved Forever, beyond top secret.

Susan Jacoby's *Alger Hiss and the Battle for History* (2009) contains an attempt to re-interpret the VENONA "Ales" telegram, by arguing that among other things Soviet intelligence officers exaggerated to their superiors. This is at least a change from the Wilder Foote story. Unfortunately for Jacoby, Vasiliev presents information from a number of internal State Security memoranda specifically identifying Hiss as one of theirs. (Thus mocking the official statements to the contrary. It's telling to note what people believe what official spokespersons.) Not surprisingly, when Jacoby was offered a chance to review the information here, she declined.

Another Matter of Interest that Vassiliev looked for was the penetration of ENORMOUS [ENORMOZ]. Thus his discovery of the provenance of Agent FOGEL/PERSIAN, the first source in the establishment, such as he was, is significant in and of itself. McNutt was only marginally involved in the construction of buildings at Oak Ridge, and did not go there, much to the disappointment of his boss, LIBERAL (Julius Rosenberg).

The authors recount the various tales of a number of agents, known, suspected, and mis-suspected. One particular item has to do with the mysterious VEKSEL — "Bill of Exchange". Which, it seemed, was an error for "VICTOR" — who, nevertheless, actually was Enrico Fermi, though the designation seems to have been more that he was a Person of Interest than

an actual spy, he was not like PERSIAN, CHARLES [CHARL'Z] (Klaus Fuchs), CALIBER [KALIBR] (David Greenglass), YOUTH [MLAD] (Teddy Hall), etc.

Speaking of persons of interest, another revelation here has to do with J. Robert Oppenheimer. Everyone will be disappointed with what the authors have found out; Oppenheimer was indeed a secret member of the Communist Party, but did not do any espionage. (Imagine *Atlas Shrugged* with the revelation that Robert Stadler *was* a Communist . . .)

The authors report an unexpected, if not outright bizarre, climate of opinion among the Soviets. They were stunned, disbelieving, they could not possibly imagine that the American authorities would actually sentence the Rosenbergs to death. They themselves held their own positions because former associates and superiors had been unmasked as agents of foreign espionage services and received the supreme measure of punishment, but that the bourgeois courts of the Main Adversary would do that? The New York station assembled a proposed program for saving them, one that was adopted in full by the official organs of the country.

One of the biggest calumnies put forth by these money-grubbing ex-spies was that daring independent journalists such as I. F. Stone were Soviet agents (see *The First Directorate: My 32 Years in Intelligence and Espionage Against the West* by Oleg Kalugin and Fen Montaigne (1994); revised as *Spymaster: My Thirty-two Years in Intelligence and Espionage Against the West* (2009) Pages 79-80). The authors have provided the beginning of the story that Kalugin gave the end of, describing the initial work and efforts of Agent PANCAKE [BLIN]. Stone had been openly pro-Soviet, but so were others. What the Soviet records show was that he did work for them in the thirties.

Unlike the next celebrity the authors mention, Papa. Now Ernest Hemingway had a rather checkered career with the chekists; he was a good friend of Commissar Nikolsky [Alexander Orlov] in Spain, and had a lot of Communist associates there. (See *The Breaking Point: Hemingway, Dos Passos, and the Murder of José Robles* by Stephen Koch (2005; reviewed in *Alexiad* V. 4 #3).) Papa was a spy groupie, and the Soviets tried to recruit him, even going so far as to assign him a code name, "ARGO". But this boat wouldn't float; the Soviets pursued Hemingway in vain.

Before he set up *The American Black Chamber*, Herbert Yardley worked in the State Department code room, where in 1917 he noted the inadequacy of their ciphers. His superior, the newly-appointed chief of the State Department's Bureau of Indexes and Archives, read Yardley's report, titled "Solution of America's Diplomatic Codes", and had him do something about it. Thirty-one years later, the same man was asked to confirm the Pumpkin Papers, showing that someone did indeed lift them from the State Department and give them to Whittaker Chambers.

Between these two events, David A. Salmon found a way to piece out his government pay; he

sold documents to the Soviet Union, more than doubling his income. Not directly, and he worked through Ludwig Lore [LEO]. (It may be possible he was thinking he was working for an independent source; the Soviets had no direct contact with him and when Lore was dropped as an agent for having padded his contacts, their contacts with Salmon [WILLY] also ended.)

Congressional committees can provide an opportunity for demagogues to make a name. Consider for example the solon who investigated foreign influence, claiming to have unearthed vast plots of espionage, sabotage, and violence. Who berated and denounced witnesses for being un-American. Who leaked lurid, unconfirmed testimony through the *Congressional Record*. If we properly attributed methodologies to their creators, we would call this sort of behavior "Dicksteinism", not "McCarthyism". Samuel Dickstein (D-NY (12th District)) did all these things, and more. He also augmented his income by taking bribes to get visas and residency permits (what they now call green cards). And then, in 1937, he went on the Soviet payroll. (That is, after the demise of the McCormack-Dickstein Committee, the predecessor of the House Committee on Un-American Activities.)

The Soviets seem to have found Dickstein as obnoxious, venal, and useless as just about everyone else. Often, code names were references to an agent's personal characteristics; thus, for example, Ted Hall was called YOUTH while his slightly-older courier Saville Sax was called OLDSTER [STAR]. Dickstein wanted \$2500 a month and gave little but old McCormack-Dickstein Committee files; and his code name was CROOK. In 1940 they quit wasting effort and money and let him go. In short, he was a John Walker, not a Kim Philby.

Nevertheless, it does seem ironic that the premier anti-Fascist in the country should have been a Soviet agent. Ted Morgan's contribution to Robert Cowley's alternate history collection *What Ifs? of American History* (2003), "Joe McCarthy's Secret Life" puts forth an even more extreme idea straight out of van Vogt. Morgan has Tailgunner Joe being a Soviet agent — and doing *exactly the same things* that he did in real life. Sounds like the protagonist's idea in Martyn Burke's *The Commissar's Report* (1984), of having the State Security support McCarthy (or at least a McCarthyite character called "the Senator") because he would eventually overreach himself, utterly discredit anti-Communism, and give the Soviets a free hand in the Main Adversary.

The proliferation of the new "alphabet agencies" under the New Deal made many opportunities for infiltration, because there were no established procedures. How much more so, then, for the new wartime agencies! And most of all, a key target, the Office of Strategic Services, which they called "HUT" [IZBA]. How delicious to get agents into the Main Adversary's intelligence service. And a number of them, recruited through the established intelligence groups, did so. None of them was unmasked or uncovered. But then, "Wild Bill" Donovan offered to cooperate fully with what

was then the NKVD (People's Commissariat of Internal Affairs), meeting with Pavel Fitin, and a man described to him as "Colonel Alexandr P. Osipov". This man was Gaik Ovakimyan, the spy who had overseen Soviet state security operations in the U.S. until arrested and expelled in 1941.

The decision in 1946 by Harry S. Truman to disband the OSS has been criticized. While reserving judgement on that matter as a whole, one more positive result was when building up the new organization, it was possible to perform adequate security screening.

This struggle was a part of the greater effort to acquire technology, the X-Y Line. It is arguable that technological theft was a more significant goal of the Soviet espionage effort than learning about the workings of bourgeois governments. Ion Mihai Pacepa described (*Red Horizons* (1988, 1990)) the Romanian effort to acquire technology, and the DS took its cue from its big brothers of Soviet State Security.

Among the leading groups in this effort was the ring of spies led by Agent LIBERAL — evidently nuclear espionage was just one of the many items on Julius Rosenberg's plate. Described here is the complex effort by which the Rosenberg Spy Ring tried to get, well, everything.

Not all the technologists were under Julius, either. The documentary *Theremin: An Electronic Odyssey* (1994) describes how Leon Theremin, the inventor of the eponymous musical instrument used for those special woo-woo sounds, was kidnapped to the Soviet Union. Except he wasn't. He went back to escape his creditors, but ended up in prison anyhow; a *sharashka*, the prison science lab described in Solzhenitsyn's *The First Circle*.

Speaking of all those money-grubbing ex-spies, another matter has to do with the support structure. If you take all the parts of the baby carriage home from the factory, put them together, and get a machine gun, it doesn't do any good if you can't tell your other employers. The State Security espionage support structure; couriers, leaders, that sort of thing, had been unmasked as traitors and liquidated during the Great Purge. As a result, the support for the spies came from FELLOWCOUNTRYMEN, the members of the Communist Party who were willing to work for international revolutionary brotherhood. This section shows how damaging the defections and testimony of Whittaker Chambers (KARL) and particularly Elizabeth Bentley (CLEVER GIRL) were to the system. (For the latter see also *Clever Girl: Elizabeth Bentley, the Spy Who Ushered In the McCarthy Era* by Lauren Kessler (2003).)

The State Security had to get who it could as an agent. Anyone who was important in another field was a prize. Thus the career of Martha Dodd, daughter of an American ambassador to Germany, a rather diverse lover, and Agent LIZA, was a boon to that last. They tried using her and her husband Alfred Stern in a variety of ways, none of which were very productive.

As opposed to Alfred's sometime business partner, Boris Morros (FROST [in Russian, "MOROZ"]) whose capability might have been

judged from reading H. Allen Smith's column in the *New York World-Telegram*:

"This El Jannings," said Mr. Morros, "at foist I could not finding. Ve sand out G-Mans. No good. Ve chacking opp through incomn texis, sushsel security codd, but ve cannot find. One day valks into my uffus a men, turns out to be El Jannings. He is a adventurous type, not like I'm, spritzel type. It is fanny to sit leesten to El Jannings tukk."

— H. Allen Smith, *Low Man on a Totem Pole* [SIC]

One wonders what Smith would have said if he had known that, while he was looking for "El Jannings", Boris Morros was a Soviet agent. Morros offered them high-level contacts, cover organizations, and propaganda opportunities. A Hollywood man to the hilt. And they didn't know that for the last ten years of his work, he was a double agent.



Towards the end of his life, Isaac Asimov said of an old friend:

... On May 26, 1990, I introduced Corliss Lamont, the grand old man of humanism, at a luncheon. He is eighty-eight and physically frail, but he stood on his feet for forty-five minutes and delivered an excellent impromptu speech. Clearly, he was in full mental vigor.

— I. Asimov, Pages 557-558

The authors have a divergent view of what he did with that full mental vigor: "... he justified and defended Stalin's Terror, the Nazi-Soviet Pact, the imposition of totalitarian regimes on Eastern Europe by the USSR, and the suppression of all dissent in the People's Republic of China and the People's Republic of Korea as necessary steps to bring about socialism." [Page 473] In 1940, the then NKGB planned to revive its own illegal station in the Main Adversary, using a new recruit code-named AUTHOR, who was the Chairman of the Society of Friends of the Soviet Union. At that time, that was Corliss Lamont, the "grand old man of humanism" to be. This seems to have come to nothing; or at least there is no indication that it went further.

Some of the efforts of this struggle betrayed a certain parochialism. We've already seen how the State Security put forth an immense effort at

monitoring the comic-opera monarchist exile organization (*The Lost Spy*, by Andrew Meier (2008; reviewed in *Alexiad* V. 7 #5)). The Trotskyists were a little more closely watched, but then, they were a threat to the ideological basis of the country, and the efforts went a little farther. (The Great Stalin ordered his loyal chekists to pick Trotsky's brain for help, and they did.)

The officers of the state security establishment, legal or not, within the U.S. were as hampered by the Great Purge as their colleagues at home. This meant that for espionage activities they had to rely on CPUSA members. As a result, the espionage effort was vulnerable to defection — note the above comments about the devastation caused to the effort by the defections and revelations of Chambers and Bentley. And many of the other spies were just as bad off; consider, for example, the polyamory of the Silvermasters and Ludwig Ullman, their subordinate.

One use of terminology may leave the informed reader confused, and the critic claiming errors. Throughout, the authors refer to the organs of state security as "KGB". A note gives the history of the shifting designations of the spy agencies, but it can be considered certain that critics will charge that the book is in error, since the KGB did not exist by that name in (say) 1937.

What were the opposing forces in this conflict like?

The KGB was not a ten-foot-tall superman; it was surely a strapping six-footer, but one that tripped over its own shoelaces from time to time and occasionally shot itself in the foot. And in the late 1930s, it turned into a paranoid schizophrenic who heard voices telling it to cut off its limbs, and it proceeded to do just that.

— *Spies*, Page 540

And in response:

It was no witch hunt that led American counterintelligence officials to investigate government employees and others with access to sensitive information for Communist ties after they became cognizant of the extent of Soviet espionage and the crucial role played in it by the CPUSA, but a rational response to the extent to which the Communist Party had become an appendage of Soviet intelligence. And, as the documents in Vassiliev's notebooks show, they only knew the half of it.

— *Spies*, Page 548

What to make of all this? Some have argued that Vassiliev's researches are lacking in credibility, since he does not provide the original documents. Others have asserted that these documents are genuine but misleading; that State Security officials regularly exaggerated, claiming contacts as sources,

chance meetings as contacts, and so on, in order to fill quotas.

It is necessary to confirm such information, but this holds true for all such historical research regardless. Confirmation has been possible, and these assertions fit into the growing picture of the extent of Soviet espionage.

Was there a “conspiracy so immense”? Not quite, certainly not in the form that the professional anti-Communists presented. Was there espionage, were the famous martyrs actually guilty? Yes.

Tibor scarcely heard him, and never even glanced at the tiny spool of tape lying in Nick’s palm. He could not guess, in this moment beyond all feeling, that the Furies had yet to close in upon his soul — and that soon the whole world would be listening to an accusing voice from beyond the grave, branding him more irrevocably than any man since Cain.

— Sir Arthur C. Clarke, “Hate” (*If*, November 1961)

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### DER ADLER IST GELANDET

Review by Joseph T Major of  
**KILLING HITLER**

(BBC Video; 2003; \$14.98)

<http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0360715/>

The crux of this production is expressed in a conversation between Special Operations Executive commander Colin Gubbins (Keith Allen) and Secret Intelligence Service chief Sir Stewart Graham Menzies (Kenneth Cranham — Pompey in HBO’s *Rome*), styled “C”. C carefully informs his colleague that the essential difference between their organisations is that SIS requires calm and secrecy, while SOE is intended to encourage unrest.

The story presented here comes across as something of a slap-happy thriller plot, a reversed version of *The Eagle Has Landed* (novel by Jack Higgins (1975), movie starring Sir Michael Caine (1976)). However, it also seems to have been actually considered. The British Public Records Office released a collection of the relevant documents in 1998; after they were declassified.

The plan was to infiltrate a sniper into Bavaria, to Berchtesgaden. Apparently Hitler felt safe there, safe enough to take a daily little morning walk without a horde of SS bodyguards surrounding himself. The area was rough enough that an infiltrator could possibly get through the (erratic) security, lay up in the hills, and pot him at the proper time.

One would think that the first response to the initial description would be “And how much was this informant paid?” It sounds like the Riga informants of twenty years previously, the “confidential sources” in the Baltic States selling the western intelligence services intimate stories of Lenine and Trotzky purging each other. The project itself comes across as one of those thriller-novel stories where infiltrating Germany is of somewhat less difficulty than going to the corner chemist’s, e.g. *Where Eagles*

*Dare* (1967).

A problem with the release of the original plans was that it followed rather closely upon the release of *Op. JB* by “Christopher Creighton” [John R. Davies] (1996), a lurid tale of massive infiltration into Berlin to exfiltrate Martin Bormann, who in return for asylum gave the British several thousand million pounds stolen from exterminated Jews. (Which last is a plot element of the renowned graphic novel alternate history *Ministry of Space* (2001, 2005); but that lost me in the first few pages where the author had Churchill referring to “that atom bomb project we’re not supposed to know about”, thus showing a remarkable ignorance of TUBE ALLOYS.)

However, this seems to have been actually considered. Governments consider all kinds of unusual things.

The presentation is interesting. There are two story lines (one can say) intertwined here. In one, a group of experts discuss the plans — real experts, bringing their knowledge and experience to the ideas laid out before them. In the other, a fictionalized story is told of the development and deployment of a sniper.

It appears that the planners did have two crucial breaks; 1) an SS man who had been a guard at the compound was captured, and did describe how the one thing the Führer did on a regular basis was to have his morning walk, and 2) a Luftwaffe officer who was taken prisoner had an anti-Nazi relative who owned a shooting estate nearby, so the snipers could be infiltrated.

The real and fictional presentations both discuss the problem of removing Hitler. Not on a moral basis, but a practical one. Would his demise create a new *Dolchstosslegende*, a belief that if only the Führer had lived, victory would have been achieved? Was his interference in combat operations so pervasive and negative that his removal would significantly improve German combat capabilities?

The explication and the dramatization continue in parallel, with the real-world experts discussing what is going on, while the characters prepare their efforts. I’ve mentioned Kenneth Cranham, and can go on to say that whatever their lapses in other fields, the BBC can draw upon a deep and broad reservoir of talent, in both acting and production. This is how it would have looked then. They even smoke.

The panel ends up voting for the hit. While their estimates may be a bit too high for the end of the war, still saving even five million lives, much less the ten million they estimate, would be an immensely precious thing. Never mind the *physical* devastation that would be spared.

The story has two endings. A repeating element has had the principal planner, SOE officer L/BX (Peter McDonald) awakening when his alarm clock goes off, getting out of bed, shaving, getting dressed, and then showing the day’s work, with a caption showing the date. In this last scene, the alarm clock rings, but he doesn’t get up. The Special Operations Executive has been disbanded.

But before that comes the Alternate History ending. The sniper and his escort have infiltrated the Berghof. Now, the sniper is in his

layup, overlooking the path. His target ambles down the way, unconcerned (or perhaps thinking more about the forthcoming offensive in the Ardennes, it being early December 1944). The sniper puts the crosshairs on the target . . .

A problem of, well, “executive action” is that sometimes planners generalize. In Iran, and in Guatemala, a marginally-based regime with a quasi-democratic claim to power was expelled by an uprising of locals, funded by the CIA. This became a belief that the CIA could alter governments at will; considered good when the Kennedys did it, not so good afterwards.

Would an assassination of Hitler make “executive action” a legitimate tool of conflict? Or worse yet, would it make that the accepted view of the intellectuals?

The consideration (voiced in the story by C) that “if we remove Hitler, a more competent man might take over” seems in retrospective to be overdrawn. Even if “competent man” (and who?) took power, there would be a period of chaos while the new arrangements came into being. Even more to the point, Hitler had so centralized the German government on himself that there would be no readily discernable new leader right away.

While the drama presents the hit as taking place in December 1944, the panel of experts concluded that a more likely date would have been July 14 or 15. Stauffenberg had brought his bombs to the briefings there that day, but didn’t use them because Himmler wasn’t there. Then the traveling circus left Bavaria for East Prussia . . .

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### TRIPLE CROWN NEWS

by Lisa

The Derby this year was a real shocker. It went to Mine that Bird, whose trainer had personally driven the colt to the Derby despite having to drive with a broken leg. It was the second biggest payoff in Derby history. First payoff. I had hoped to see General Quarters in the winner’s circle for the sake of his older trainer but Mine that Bird’s story was almost as good.

Preakness day came, along with news that Rachel Alexandra, hailed as a super filly after a huge win in the Oaks, had been sold and her new owners were going to run her in the Preakness. Bird’s jockey Calvin Borel was committed to ride her. Mike Smith would have the ride instead. Rachel Alexandra proved to be a big impressive filly but she did not give me the feeling she was really a superhorse. Smith tried to repeat Borel’s feat of cutting through the inside but everyone had learned better than to let Bird through the short inside path. Smith took back and headed Bird for the outside then turned him loose. He moved for Rachel Alexandra. The ground ran out on him before he could catch her and so Staying Alive remains the only gelding to win a Triple Crown.

The Belmont: When Mine That Bird hit the lead he looked like a winner. But three/fourths down the stretch Summer Bird, also by Birdstone, came to him and my heart sank for I



could see Summer Bird had his measure. Summer Bird powered clear and hit the wire first. There was an inquiry involving second-place Dunkirk and fourth-place Charitable Man but the stewards decided to let the results stand.

### THE GUERNSEY LITERARY AND POTATO PEEL PIE SOCIETY

by Mary Ann Schaffer and Annie Barrows  
(2008; Dial Press;  
ISBN 978-0-385-34100-4; \$14.00)  
Review by Lisa Major

We went to a Borders in Clarksville to use a big 40 percent coupon. At the counter the clerk pointed to a book entitled *The Guernsey Literary and Potato Peel Pie Society*. That day it was 40 percent off without a coupon. Guernsey is set in the Nazi occupation of the Channel Islands, which I had not known about.

It opens with an author looking for something interesting to write about. While she is considering what to do she receives a letter from a member of the Guernsey Literary and Potato Peel Pie Society, which began after an illegal roast pig dinner on an occupied island.

German officers catch some of the diners out after curfew. One of the diners, Elizabeth, invents a literary society. Luckily for the diners the Germans were under orders to encourage cultural activities. Those orders get the diners off with a small fine. However, the diners now have to read for real, as the German commander takes an interest in the Society.

This is an enchanting, very literary book which lived up to the praises sung by the Borders clerk. Sadly this is a one of a kind book. Its author died in February 2008. Her niece did the revising the publisher required.

It was especially poignant when I looked back through the book on June 6, the sixty-fifth anniversary of D-Day. I watched some of the events in memory of that day and through the day remembered the sacrifices made to liberate Europe. So many brave young men dead on the beaches of Normandy, so many more dead all over Europe and through the South Pacific.

### LOST ON VENUS, AND A PRINCESS OF MARS

A review by Grant C. McCormick of  
*THE SKY PEOPLE*  
(Tor; ISBN: 978-0-7653-5376-4; pb; 336  
pages; \$6.99) and

*IN THE COURTS OF THE CRIMSON  
KINGS*  
(Tor; ISBN: 978-0-7653-5377-1; pb; 368  
pages; \$7.99)

("The Lords of Creation" series)  
both by S. M. Stirling

Steve Stirling has a subtle sense of humor, and an imagination second to none. Once, many annual cycles ago, I had asked myself the question, what if the early space probes exploring our solar system had discovered that we lived in a Burroughsian universe? Specifically, I had wondered what would have happened had the Mariner 4 probe, while flying by Mars back when I was nine, seen the

silhouette of glorious Helium rather than a bunch of boring old craters? I never followed up on this, nor did anything else with it.

Stirling must have had a similar dream, and he did follow up on it. And he did a masterful job of it. In *The Lords of Creation*, he first explores the jungle-planet Venus in *The Sky People* with his hero, Marc Vitrac, an American Ranger from Louisiana of Cajun heritage. Set in 1988, Marc is one of the select few, literally one of the one-in-more-than-a-million people that the United States and its free-world allies (Britain, Canada, Japan, Australia, and New Zealand) have sent into space to the planets. The huge expense of shipping **anything** to Venus (or back to Earth) means that is an item isn't essential (read 'life-or-death'), it's either made on Venus, or done without. The Jamestown colony on Venus has far fewer than 200 people from Earth. The Eastbloc (the Soviet Empire and China) also has a similar-sized colony on Venus. Jamestown is a few miles from the only real city on Venus, a bronze-age metropolis of the native humans – who seem to be as human as any of the colonists from Earth. The Eastbloc enclave is many thousand of kilometers up-river.

Because of the space race – and because neither superpower wants to have to shove any major resources into any Earth-bound conflict that they can avoid – relations between East and West have been less overtly hostile than in our version of history. So the Middle East, Indo-China, and other spots that had threatened to become Hot have been Cooled by mutual consent and international peacekeepers. The fact that Mao died during the mid-1950s may have helped. Western Europe, under the leadership of France and de Gaulle, and freed from the threat of invasion from the east, has decided to pursue its own course, independent of both the Allies and the Eastbloc. And, until the Europeans decided to get their collective heads out of their burros, they didn't have any presence in space at all, and are still far behind.

Marc has various adventures on the jungle planet, until he is called upon to participate in a rescue attempt: to find the survivors, if any, of a crashed Eastbloc shuttle. In the course, they do indeed become lost on Venus, and uncover Unearthly Mysteries.

All in all, *The Sky People* is a fun read, and is well worth getting and reading.

The sequel, *In the Courts of the Crimson Kings*, is set on Mars in the year 2000. It follows the adventures of the archeologist Jeremy Wainman as he sets out to excavate a lost Martian City in the midst of the Deep Beyond. This city had been abandoned at the fall of the unified Martian Empire, whose decadent rump still resides at Mons Olympus.

The background of *In the Courts of the Crimson Kings* is the same as of the previous book, with a dozen years more accumulated knowledge. Jeremy and his companions make Mars-shattering discoveries, unearth yet more Unearthly Mysteries, and find a Martian Princess.

As a note, the word 'Wain' is older English for wagon or cart. So, one named Wainman (man of the cart) could also be called 'Carter.'

J. Carter of Mars . . .

Stirling must have had tons of fun writing these books, more fun than a man should be allowed to have. There are allusions galore to Burroughs and Brackett and Bradbury, of course, but also to *The Princess Bride*, to *Star Trek*, to *Indiana Jones*, to King Crimson, and doubtless many more that I have missed.

Like its prequel, *In the Courts of the Crimson Kings* is well worth the read. I would strongly recommend that you read the two books together, and in the correct sequence. They should be thought of as two halves of one longer work, neither fully complete without the other. This duology, along with his earlier *The Peshawar Lancers*, establish Stirling as the King of swash-buckling Alternate History.

Many of Stirling's works are set in worlds darker than our own (I am thinking of the *Draka* series in particular here), worlds where I can say, "A nice place to visit, but I wouldn't want to live there!" Not so of the world of *The Lords of Creation*. I would rather be there than here.

### SNICKERS NOUGABOT BAR

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

For the past few years, Mars has released limited editions of their product line in conjunction with various summer movie releases. Last year, it was *Indiana Jones And The Kingdom Of The Crystal Skull*. Two years ago, it was *Shrek The Third*. This year, the movie is *Transformers: Revenge Of The Fallen*, and one of the tie-in products is the Snickers Nougabot Bar.

The Nougabot Snickers is quite similar to the Shrek Snickers bar produced a couple of years ago. In the Shrek bar, the peanut butter nougat was tinted green — ostensibly the same verdant hue as that title character's epidermis. With the Nougabot bar, the nougat is tinted a bright yellow. (As I understand it, it's supposed to be the same color as one of the "fallen" mentioned in the title. I'm not a Transformers fan, however, so I'm just a little fuzzy on the details.) Other than the coloring of the nougat, the bar is the same as the original Snickers bar.

My first bite of a Nougabot Snickers was very careful. I wanted to take a good look at a cross section of the bar, particularly the nougat. And yes, the nougat is indeed a bright yellow; a sunshiny xanthic hue that Sinestro himself would be proud to display. (Yeah, I know, different fictional universe. It's the analogy that works best for me. Deal with it.) And I did not notice any difference in taste between the Nougabot bar and the original Snickers bar.

Just for verification, though, I gave one of the Nougabot bars to one of my co-workers, and I asked her opinion. I think she was a little put off by the color added to the nougat — I think she prefers that the nougat stay its normal color. But when I pressed her about the taste, her reply was, "Tastes like a Snickers to me."

At the moment, I have seen the Nougabot Snickers only as bags of Minis. But we should be seeing full-size Nougabot Snickers bars on the shelves soon. After all, the movie won't

even be in theaters for another couple of weeks. And since this is a movie tie-in, we should probably see it on the shelves at least through the first month or so of the movie's release. After that, it's going to disappear.

## THE JOY OF HIGH TECH

by Rodford Edmiston

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

### Distinctions

This started as a rant against bureaucrats who try to "compromise" in situations where anything over a specific, well-defined breakpoint means tragedy. For example, ichthyologists say "Take more than 1X tuna and the species will crash." Fishermen say "We must take at least 2X tuna or our industry will crash." So the bureaucrat says "We'll set the limit at 1.5X and everyone will be happy." Then is baffled when no-one is. (And wonders why he can't have tuna casserole any more.)

However, as I began writing I realized this was outside the scope of JOHT. Therefore, I changed it to a talk about clear — and not so clear — distinctions between astronomical bodies, which will probably be more entertaining to the readers.

There are certain breakpoints — certain clear distinctions — in the universe.

As an example, gas giant planets, brown dwarfs and stars all start out generally the same, as large bodies of hydrogen with traces of other elements. The difference between them depends on their starting mass.

A star is a body which burns hydrogen — or, later in its life, helium and other elements — in sustained fusion. A brown dwarf is a body which fuses deuterium for a while, but never plain hydrogen. There is a clear distinction, there; the mass required to provide enough squeeze and heat to fuse hydrogen is more than a brown dwarf has. While there is some leeway in how massive a body must be to have sustained hydrogen fusion — due to details of composition and environment — the bottom of this fuzzy boundary is significantly higher than the minimum mass required to fuse deuterium. Deuterium — double-heavy hydrogen — is

much easier to fuse than single hydrogen, but vastly scarcer. This isotope is soon consumed, and the brown dwarf is left without any power source aside from gravitational contraction. The breakpoint — the distinction between brown dwarves and stars — is the ability to fuse hydrogen.

A gas giant is distinct from a brown dwarf early in life due to being too small to fuse deuterium. Note that there will be some trace fusion activity in any body containing appropriate materials, due to sheer statistics, but these reactions are trivial. Note also that I specify starting conditions. A gas giant close enough to a star will experience changes in composition, due to radiation effects — including simple heating — from that star.

The difference between gas giant planets and rocky planets is that most of the mass of the former is light elements in a gaseous state, while the latter is mostly heavier elements in a solid state. Again, a clear distinction, though one clearer in our solar system than it may be in others.

Comets are (usually) solid bodies of light elements, ices and rocks, frozen together in a mass which is originally undifferentiated. As a comet approaches a star the most volatile elements begin to evaporate, with the less volatile ones following in order. If a comet does not fall into the star — or impact a planet — then on each pass it will lose more of the volatiles, until only rock and metal are left. This may actually be where many asteroids come from. It is definitely where several notable meteor showers come from.

Comets also tend to have highly elliptical orbits which are inclined — often steeply inclined — with respect to the plane of the ecliptic. That is, they don't orbit in the same plane as the planets and the asteroid belt. However, not all cometary orbits are outside the plane of the ecliptic, so this is not a determining factor in deciding whether something is a comet.

The distinction between a planet and a moon depends on what — if anything — the body orbits. Mercury orbits the Sun and is a planet. Our Moon — very similar in many ways, including size — orbits the Earth, and is a satellite.

The distinction between rocky planets and asteroids is largely a matter of size (though there

are differences in composition and form) and the first distinction mentioned in this column where the dividing line is largely arbitrary. Indeed, an early term for the larger asteroids was minor planets or dwarf planets. Ceres, the largest, is 950 kilometers across, which is a good chunk of real estate by many standards. Other star systems could have belts with far larger bodies sharing orbits with swarms of smaller ones. So where is the distinction between asteroid and planet?

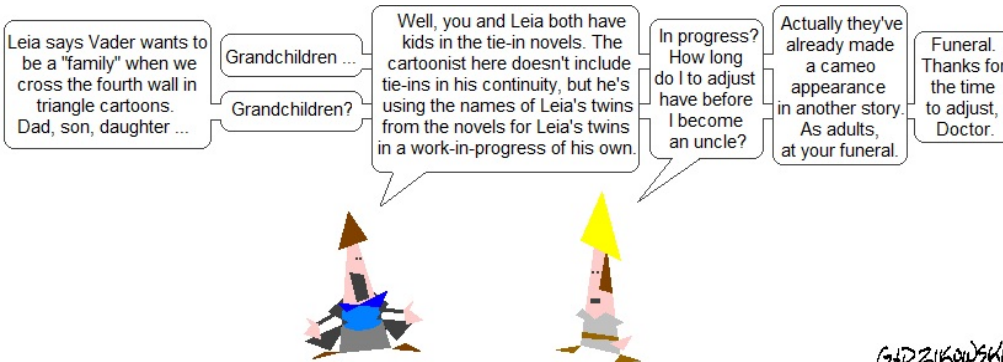
There is vague talk that a planet would be large enough to sweep its orbit clear of asteroids, but whether this would happen in a particular instance depends as much on several other factors as it does the mass of the body. One of these is the harmony of the spheres.

Gravitational resonances tend to shift orbiting bodies into mutually stable orbits, usually in the same plane. Which explains the Bode-Titus law most of us were taught in school, as well as why the majority of the solar system is so flat. In our solar system many smaller bodies are swept into a broad orbit between Mars and Jupiter. So even if Ceres were much larger it would probably still share its orbit with a plethora of smaller bodies. On the other hand, Ceres contains roughly a third of the mass in the asteroid belt. Just possibly, had things gone a bit differently, most of that material would have coalesced into a single body.

Another candidate for distinguishing between planets and asteroids is that planets are large enough to have undergone gravitational differentiation. That is, during formation, while they are still fluid from the heat of gravitational collapse, the denser materials settled to the core, leaving only traces in the much lighter crust. Several moons are large enough to have undergone this process, but we already have a distinction between planets and moons. Ceres is thought to possess a rocky main body covered in ice, a lesser form of differentiation. Whether Ceres has undergone the more extreme version of this process — which would have segregated most of its denser elements deep inside — is still being studied. The fact that — alone of the asteroids — Ceres is very close to spherical leads some to believe it has. If true, that characteristic is out the window for making the distinction between a planet and a major asteroid.

Note that during the conference on the status of Pluto a few years ago, there was considerable discussion about not only keeping it a planet, but also declaring Ceres — discovered more than a century earlier — a planet. However, that would have thrown the door wide to accepting many other known — and eventually far more currently unknown — bodies as planets.

As we move into the outer reaches of the solar system, past the gas giants, we are in a very different realm. Those bodies here which have not become comets and closely approached the Sun are remnants of the original material which formed the planets and their satellites. They are solid, cold objects, composed mostly of methane, frozen water and ammonia, with rocks mixed in. Many may have thin



atmospheres of hydrogen and other deep cryogenic substances. They are too small to retain more than a trace at any moment, but there is enough heat even here to slowly boil the materials out of their substance, continuously replenishing that trace. Like comets, they will eventually be mostly rock and metal, though that could take many billions of years.

The Kuiper (rhymes with viper) belt is like the asteroid belt, but much further out from the Sun. It extends from just beyond the orbit of Neptune — about thirty Astronomical Units — to about fifty-five AU. This “belt” is a torus of bodies, much larger and containing far more mass than the asteroid belt. The Kuiper belt was long thought to be the source of periodic comets with orbits of less than two hundred years. However, it now appears that the belt is dynamically stable, with bodies moving in all three dimensions within the torus but rarely leaving it.

The Scattered Disk overlaps the Kuiper belt, and contains similar bodies. However, they are far less orderly. The inner border is at 30–35 AU, and the orbits involved can extend well beyond 100 AU. Scattered Disk objects have orbital eccentricities ranging as high as 0.8, inclinations as high as 40° and perihelia greater than 30 astronomical units. A disturbance from inside or outside the solar system could send these objects dropping towards the Sun in a highly elliptical orbit.

The Oort Cloud is still hypothetical. If it exists, it is a vast cloud of primordial material extending as much as a light year from the Sun. It would be composed of an inner cloud, the Hills Cloud, a disk-shaped volume like a stretched-out Scattered Disk, and an outer, spherical cloud. There are no known direct observations of any bodies which are indisputably from either of these regions. However, long-period comets have to come from *somewhere*.

The distinction between bodies in the scattered disk and the Oort cloud is primarily one of temperature, which in turn depends on distance. Objects in the outer portion of the scattered disk are essentially indistinguishable from those in the inner portion of the Hills Cloud.

The conditions in the outer cloud make the Kuiper Belt seem balmy. Orbits are vast, orbital velocities a slow creep, the Sun’s grip so feeble that bodies are easily lost. Indeed, for our solar system, the Sun is simply the nearest star as far as these bodies are concerned. While there are many objects here, and much mass, the volume occupied is so great that the average distance between objects must be enormous even on an interplanetary scale.

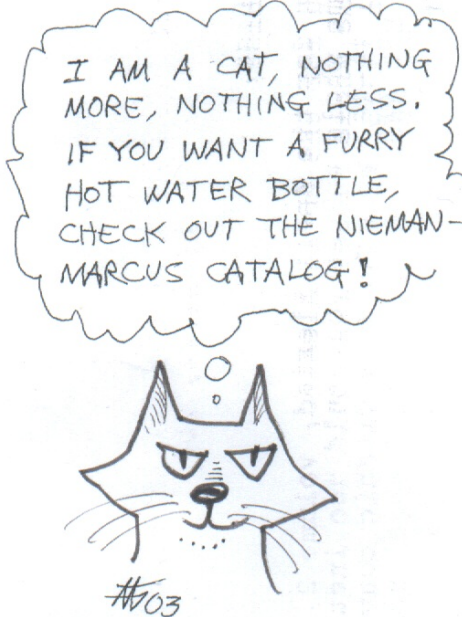
How big are these bodies? How many are there? Unknown. If they exist, they are almost certainly identical in makeup to virgin comets. Given developments in both terrestrial and space telescopes, we may find out in a few years. Most likely, the wait will be longer.

So here we end, off in an odd corner where we simply don’t have enough information to make distinctions.

Distinctions can be important, if only to help

us put things in order. Scientists are often criticized for being obsessed with labeling and pigeon-holing. However, this categorization process aids scientists in understanding things. Knowing what the breakpoints are, and why they exist, are vital to figuring out the larger rules.

Another criticism against scientists is that they are always changing things. Again, this reveals a misunderstanding about what science is and how it works. Scientists are *supposed* to examine their assumptions, and test the rules they develop. The exception tests the rule, in the laboratory or in nature. If the rule can’t pass the test presented by an exception, it needs to be changed or replaced.



**KITTY AND THE MIDNIGHT HOUR**  
(Kitty Norville, Book 1)

(Grand Central Publishing: 2005;  
ISBN 978-0446616416; \$6.99) and

**KITTY GOES TO WASHINGTON**  
(Kitty Norville, Book 2)

(Grand Central Publishing: 2006;  
ISBN 978-0446616423; \$6.99)

by Carrie Vaughn

Review by Carol Clarke

*Kitty and the Midnight Hour* is a humorous ride through world of werewolf Kitty Norville. Kitty starts out as one submissive wolf until her radio show is threatened; then Kitty finds the one thing she is willing to fight for. The book is a good read with a good pace. Kitty’s radio shows are very funny and make the book. Her trails as a werewolf parallel the struggle of what it’s like to be different and when you need to stand up and be counted. The problem with the midnight hour is it’s just the beginning and you

will want to read the other five books in the set. In short, *Kitty and the Midnight Hour* is a very good book.

After coming out on air as a werewolf *Kitty Goes to Washington* to testify in front of a senate committee. This brings Kitty out in the open and in front of some dangerous people. Through it all Kitty keeps her sense of humor and her natural talent for trouble. The real question Kitty ends up asking is how do you tell the good guys from the bad in the back drop of Washington DC. This is an exciting sequel to *Kitty and the Midnight Hour*. As always with Ms Vaughn’s work is after you finish this book you can’t wait to pick up the next installment.

**NEVILLE**

Tim’s and Elizabeth’s cat Neville died May 19. He had become listless, had injured himself, and was swelling up. The cause appears to have been multiple organ failure.

Like his kidnapped partner Shadow, Neville was a friendly fellow. He was gray with white underneath, a neutered tom, with a liking for jumping up into spare laps.

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

Report by Joseph T Major

We regret to report the death of **Netherwood “Ned” Hughes on April 4, 2009** at Woodburn’s Home for the Elderly, Clayton-Moors, Hyndburn, Lancashire. Born **June 12, 1900**, in Great Harwood, Lancashire, Hughes was a lorry driver during the war until called up in May of 1918. He was assigned to the 51st (Graduated) Battalion, Manchester Regiment, a training unit stationed in Herringfleet, Suffolk.

Hughes married twice but was childless. He is survived by a niece, sister-in-law, and several descendants of his nieces and nephews.

We regret to report the death of **Robley Henry Rex on April 28, 2009** at the Louisville Veterans’ Administration Medical Center. Born **January 2, 1903** in Hopkinsville, Kentucky, Robley enlisted in the Army in May of 1919, serving in the Army of Occupation in Germany.

He was married to Gracie Bivins for seventy years but was childless. He is survived by his nephew and many step-relatives, including us.

There was a notice in the *Courier-Journal* about a “World War One” veteran from Hopkinsville living in Louisville, volunteering at the Veterans Administration hospital here, still thriving. I called my cousin Brooks to ask if he knew about the man, and Brooks said, “Robley?” Robley’s mother was the sister of Brooks’s grandmother.

So I wrote the old man a letter. He responded, and one fine day we went down to see him. He lived alone, but he was hardly alone; he had connections upon connections, and my family (his mother’s second husband

was a relative of mine) was only one of them. He was an *active* member of the American Legion and the Veterans of Foreign Wars. He was a chaplain, an ordained minister. And did I mention he did peoples' income tax?

He was always polite, friendly, engaging. Even when his health declined and he had to move into a nursing home, he continued to be active, to receive correspondence, visitors, to be honored and recognized.

I miss him.

### Robley Rex

January 2, 1903 — April 28, 2009

by Lisa

Tonight when I got home from work and running errands I turned on the radio in order to hear Derby coverage. I hadn't listened long when the dj made the announcement of Robley's death. My heart cracked and bled. This is an incredible loss to our community. He was a living legend but he didn't let it affect him. Until his health prevented him he volunteered at the VA every day.

I remembered the first time I saw him. Joe wanted to meet this legendary stepcousin. Hey, cool, yes, by all means let's meet this living piece of history but let's not stay long enough to tire out a frail old man. Well, when the door opened what stood revealed was most definitely not a frail old man. It was the Energizer Bunny. Mr. Robley's prime philosophy was that of Harvey's Elwood P. Dowd: "You can never have too many friends." He was in time to fill the empty slot Miss Ophelia's passing left in my life.

It was a privilege to know him and not just because he was a living legend.

He was a man, taken all in all. We shall not look on his like again.

Someday no one will march there at all.

We regret to report the death of Field-Marshal **Waldemar Levy Cardoso** of the Brazilian Army on **May 13, 2009**. Born **December 4, 1900**, Cardoso attended the Brazilian Military Academy, graduating at the top of his class in 1918 (thus making him a WWI-era vet). He served in the Brazilian Expeditionary Force in Italy as commander of a battalion of artillery.

On retiring in 1966, he was promoted to *Marechal* (Field-Marshal). At the time of his death he was the oldest Brazilian WWII veteran and the last Field-Marshal of the Brazilian Army.

We regret to report the death of **John Campbell "Jack" Ross** on **June 3, 2009** at Golden Oaks Nursing Home in Bendigo, Victoria, Australia. Born **March 11, 1899**, in Newtown, Victoria, Jack joined the Australian Imperial Force in February of 1918, but never served outside the country. In the Second World War, he was a corporal in the Volunteer Defence Force, Australia's version of the Home Guard. At the time of his death, he was the oldest person in Australia.

And so now every April, I sit on my porch,  
And I watch the parades pass before me.  
And I see my old comrades, how proudly they march,  
Reviving past dreams of old glories.  
And the old men march slowly, old bones stiff and sore,  
They're tired old heroes from a forgotten war  
And the young people ask, what are they marching for?  
And I ask myself the same question.

But the band plays Waltzing Matilda,  
and the old men still answer the call.  
But as year follows year, more old men disappear.  
Someday no one will march there at all.

Waltzing Matilda, Waltzing Matilda,  
who'll come a-waltzing Matilda with me?  
And their ghosts may be heard as they march by that billabong,  
Who'll come a-waltzing Matilda with me?

— Eric Bogle, "And the Band Played 'Waltzing Matilda'"

Thanks to **Evelyn Leeper, Guy H. Lillian III**, and **John Purcell** for noticing.

Remaining are:

#### Australia

Claude Stanley Choules (108) Royal Navy

#### Poland

Józef Kowalski\* (109) 22 Pulk Ułanów

#### United Kingdom

Henry William Allingham (113) Royal Naval Air Service/Royal Air Force

Henry John "Harry" Patch (110) Duke of Cornwall's Light Infantry

#### United States

John Henry Foster "Jack" Babcock (108) 146th Battalion, Canadian Expeditionary Force

Frank Woodruff Buckles (108) United States Army

\* "WWI-era" veteran, enlisted between the Armistice and the Treaty of Versailles

National totals: U.K. 3; Canada, U.S. 1 each; Poland, 1 WWI-era. British Empire 4.

### WATSON'S UP, DOC?

Trip Report by Joseph & Lisa Major on **The Twenty-Eighth Sherlock**

**Holmes/Arthur Conan Doyle Symposium**  
"The Merry Wives of Watson and All Things Watsonical"

Dayton, Ohio, May 15-17, 2009

As you know, last year, the Symposium, originally called "Year of the Yard", became "Year of the Blizzard" when Cathy Gill, its organizer, couldn't make it. Cathy lives in Cincinnati, forty miles or so from the site, which gives you an indication as to how bad the storm

was. And of course we couldn't either.

Friday I bought supplies and gassed up, as well as dropping off my family newsletter to be copied and picking it up. So prepared, we got to bed at an early hour.

**Saturday, May 16, 2009**  
**Louisville — Dayton**

We got out early enough to have a sit-down breakfast, then went to Elizabeth's and Tim's getting there at almost precisely the moment he came out to look. From there, we had a clear run to Dayton, as the light rain of the morning (not to mention the driving thunderstorms of pre-dawn) died away, and in fact we arrived at the hotel at eleven. For a moment we had concerns about the site, but parking next to a car with a licence-plate frame that said, "Elementary, My Dear Watson" rather removed any doubt.

(I did think it odd, however, that in another function room at the hotel, one could do business with "Robert Scott Furs". The Owner wouldn't have anything to do with such *native* claptrap; their *scientific* methods would do much better and never mind that *The Coldest March* didn't bother that Norskie cad Amundsen (in his Inuit furs) one bit.)

After going over the various items available, we were summoned to our seats, and Cathy Gill called the Symposium to order. She lamentably recounted the snow of last year, and her frightening discovery that the Symposium had originally been held in January, but moved to March for better weather. She thanked the people who had sent their condolences over the death of her son. And then, we began.

**Dr. & Mrs. Watson at Home, by Loren Estelman**

Presented by Meredith Granger and Cathy Gill

This was a comic beginning, with Mary Watson and her spouse James — er, John having to work out the difficulties of a marriage with an even more obtrusive than usual outside interest on the husband's part. And it seemed the wife had one as well . . .

**Dr. Watson, Medical Pioneer**

Robert Cairo

This was another take on Cairo's theory that Watson was an early neurosurgeon who also in those pre-specialization days also dabbled in psychology. Cairo does have a great many items from the Canon to support this thesis.

**John H. Watson and Arthur Conan Doyle: A Literary Marriage Gone Strange**

Brad Keefauver

Or why was it that every time a great change took place in Holmes's life, Dr. Doyle also had a life-shaking change? Keefauver started out admitting it was "Holmesian", but did deliver his paper with enthusiasm.

**Dominion by "Pat Moss", BSI**

Presented by Marcy Mahle

I'm sorry, but this just didn't impress me.

**The Probabilistic Verdicity of Dr. Watson**

Joel Senter

Pointing out that everything that Watson writes is true by definition, even some of the hard stuff like the extremely dubious herpetology in "The Speckled Band".

**A Brief History of the "Boobus Britannicus Filmicus": Watson on Film**

Pat Ward

Referred to in the program as "Pat Warf". Cathy Gill apologized a dozen times, saying the program had been proofread at one in the morning.

Pat Warf or Ward described the problem with Nigel Bruce, who played up the portrayal of Watson-as-dullard all the better to highlight Holmes's brilliant reasonings. This portrayal influenced too many of the successive Watsons. Ward pointed out that the better productions (e.g., the Granada versions with Jeremy Brett) had strong, well-played Watsons to counterpoint their Holmeses.

**Watson In His Own Write**

Gord Shriver

This did have bows to Robert Cairo's work. Watson described himself modestly because he wasn't the point of the story, the point was the fellow he admired so.

**Just Who Was "The Man"?**

A peculiar little pastiche with Irene Adler (she seems to crop up a lot) explaining why Watson is "The Man" to her being "The Woman". Not that Carole Nelson Douglas will care.

**Poetry Contest**

Tom McElfresh, Judge

The competition had haiku, quatrains, and limericks. I suppose I ought to hand copies of the first (not for publication) over to John Hertz. They were all very clever.

**Laddie or Lady? A Light-hearted Look at Watson's Gender**

Cathy Gill

This was a second-order Sherlockianism, as it were, as Gill discussed the publication and reception of Rex Stout's "Watson Was a Woman". An interesting realization of this was that the original BSI was in fact a part of the New York literary scene of the forties.

**The Painful Predicament of Sherlock Holmes**

William Cochran, BSI

This was not the notorious play by William Gillette where a chatty client doesn't let Holmes get a word in. Note that all the BSI members listed their affiliation. The organization is hardly marginalized.

We pulled out to go register at the Super 8 and get our luggage (and my medicines!) into the rooms. This had a probabalistic paradox here, because Tim wanted to circulate in the Convivial Hour, and post time for the Preakness was 6:15. Thus the driver of the only car had to go back and forth.

We watched the race and came back with the news. The Convivial Hour was interesting, but less so than usual. Many familiar faces were missing from the Symposium crowd. Greg Sullivan, for example, was no longer there to give his splendid interpretations of the Canon and associated works; he was too busy bringing up his daughter. (I still recall the old joke that if it had been a boy, he should have been named "Tobias" so he would be, of course, "Tobias, Greg's son".) There were only fifty-one people registered. There's room for improvement.

After that we departed for the nearby Perkins Café. The one in Louisville had burned down, you see. (Too much scheming by World Steel?) Tim filled up quickly and observed that it seemed odd not to have the muffins that were their speciality.

**Readers' Theater:****"The Peculiar Persecution of John Vincent Hardin"**

An Original Script by Daniel M. Andriacco

Based on an original story — pastiche, anyhow. I don't know why it didn't get published. It had a great many Holmesian points; the "Sherlockism" of determining Mr. Hardin's background from his minor points of dress and person, the shocking revelation, and most of all, Holmes admitting that he had not done as well in the case as he theoretically could have. And it seems that the minor characters were named after Andriacco's friends in his local scion society. None of the actors knew what a "Tuckerism" was, either, but I tried to fill that lack.

And so to bed.

**Sunday, May 17, 2009****Dayton — Cincinnati — Louisville**

We woke up fairly early the next morning, checked out, and were off to the "Brain Buster" quiz. Best wishes to Robert Cairo for having made a challenging and topical work; even the winner only got 76 out of 80.

And then, with regrets, but hope for the years to come, we were off. The drive to Cincinnati was not long, and we were going to a place just off the interstate.

**Cincinnati Museum Center at Union Terminal**

The railroads had built a large, splendid building for their use. In fact, it dated to the thirties, when money was tight. And it outlived its original usage; but the city found something else to do there.

The building is still very much in Art Deco style, albeit with less deco prices. I got a bit of a shock when the ticket taker gave us all the Senior Citizen price.

There are three museums in the building, as well as an IMAX theater; at that time, they were showing a film on dinosaurs. We did not have time or energy to see that or the Duke Energy Children's Museum.

Our first choice was the **Cincinnati History Museum**, recounting the growth of the city from

prehistory to the nineteenth century. The exhibits touched on such matters as the Mound-Builders, urban archaeology (or the things people will throw down the outhouse hole), territorial militia, and the political struggle between the city and the rest of the Ohio Territory. One entire floor was dedicated to Cincinnati in World War 2, describing the effects of rationing, mobilization, conscription, and the like. One of the exhibits did not need any explanation; it was the memorial to those who died in the war.

On the other side of the building was the **Museum of Natural History and Science**. This began with fossils and then displayed the Ice-Age flora and fauna of the area. Much of the exhibit space was keyed towards the younger generation, and there were a number of children there. With these and the Art Museum, Cincinnati has a substantial commitment to culture and intellectual expansion.

By the time we staggered out of the depths of the Museum of Natural History and Science, we had had it sufficiently proven to ourselves that we were old fen, and tired. So it was that we drove the rest of the way home. We dropped off Tim and Elizabeth and had dinner ourselves at the nearby Chili's, before returning to the familiar welcome of Grant and the cats.

And so to bed.

Next year, the topic will be "**Investigating the AmeriCanon**" and will concern itself with Holmes's American connexions. The place will be the Holiday Inn Dayton Mall in Dayton, the dates **May 14-16, 2010**, and for information inquire:

**Cathy Gill**  
4661 Hamilton Avenue  
Cincinnati, OH 45223-1502 USA  
[chirpsworth@fuse.net](mailto:chirpsworth@fuse.net)

See you there.

**FANZINES**

Among the items on efanazines.com is *Horrorshow*, a 1990's fanzine done by Steve Green and his friend the late Alan Keeley under the pseudonyms of "Eddie Trenchcoat and Mister Damage". It has all the snarkiness and juvenile exuberance of the early days, its topic being videos. I have a couple of questions about the "things you never knew" about directors ("Dario Argento . . . was actually born in South Wales in 1943 . . ."). It was even mimeo'd, how can you get more faanish than that? And their advice was quite to the point:

Want to see your name in print?  
Then go and publish a fanzine of your  
own, you lazy sod!

— *Horrorshow* #2, Page 5  
<http://efanazines.com/Horrorshow/index.htm>

*Argentus* Special Edition #2  
Steven H Silver  
[s.hsilver@comcast.net](mailto:s.hsilver@comcast.net)

<http://www.efanzines.com>  
<http://www.sfsite.com/~silverag/argenteus.html>

**Askance #14**

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**Banana Wings #38, May 2009**

Claire Brialey and Mark Plummer, 59  
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**Beyond Bree April 2009, May 2009**

Nancy Martsch, Post Office Box 55372,  
 Sherman Oaks, CA 91413-5372 USA  
[beyondbree@yahoo.com](mailto:beyondbree@yahoo.com)  
 Not available for The Usual; \$15/year, \$20  
 in envelope or overseas.

**Claims Department #9**

Christopher J. Garcia  
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<http://www.efanzines.com>  
**Best Fan Writer Hugo Nominee**

**The Drink Tank #209, #210, #211, #212, #213, #215**

Christopher J. Garcia  
[garcia@computerhistory.org](mailto:garcia@computerhistory.org)  
<http://www.efanzines.com>  
**Best Fanzine Hugo Nominee**  
**Best Fan Writer Hugo Nominee**

Yes, that list *is* missing issue 214.  
 There is a reason.

**eI #44 June 2009**

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**Feline Mewsings #36 May 2009**

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**FOSFAX #215**

Timothy Lane, Post Office Box 37281,  
 Louisville, KY 40233-7281 USA

**The Knarley Knews # 133 April 2009**

Henry & Letha Welch, 18345 Skyline  
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<http://tkk.welchcastle.com/>

**Lofgeornost #95 May 2009**

Fred Lerner, 81 Worcester Avenue, White

River Junction, VT 05001-8011 USA  
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**Luna! WN 2 February 2009, WN 3 March 2009**

C. D. Carson, Luna Project, Post Office Box  
 1035, Fort Worth, TX 76101-1035 USA  
[ed\\_luna@lunarcc.org](mailto:ed_luna@lunarcc.org)  
<http://www.lunarcc.org>

**MT Void V.27 #40 April 3, 2009 — V. 27 #49  
 June 5, 2009**

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<http://www.geocities.com/evelynleeper>

**Opuntia #67.1D April 2009, 67.1E Victoria  
 Day 2009**

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

**The Reluctant Famulus #69 Spring 2009**

Thomas D. Sadler, 305 Gill Branch Road,  
 Owenton, KY 40359-8611 USA  
[tomfamulus@hughes.net](mailto:tomfamulus@hughes.net)  
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**Royal Swiss Navy Gazette #17**

Garth Spencer, Post Office Box  
 74122, Hillcrest Park, Vancouver, BC V5V  
 3P0 CANADA  
[garthspencer@shaw.ca](mailto:garthspencer@shaw.ca)  
<http://www.efanzines.com>

**Science Fiction/San Francisco #84 April 15,  
 2009, #85 May 6, 2009, #86 May 20, 2009**

Christopher J. Garcia and Jean Martin  
[SFinSF@gmail.com](mailto:SFinSF@gmail.com)  
<http://www.efanzines.com>  
**Best Fan Writer Hugo Nominee**

**Southern Fandom Confederation Update V. 1**

#4 April 2009, V. 1 #5 May 2009  
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[warrenmbuff@gmail.com](mailto:warrenmbuff@gmail.com)  
<http://www.efanzines.com>

**This Here. . . #11, #12**

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**Vanamonde #778-787**

John Hertz, 236 S. Coronado Street, No.  
 409, Los Angeles, CA 90057-1456 USA  
**Best Fan Writer Hugo Nominee**

**Visions of Paradise #140, #141**

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<http://www.efanzines.com>

**WCSFAzine #19**

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**The Zine Dump #22**

Guy H. Lillian III, 8700 Millicent Way  
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[GHLIII@yahoo.com](mailto:GHLIII@yahoo.com)  
<http://www.challzine.net>

**NEBULA AWARD WINNERS**

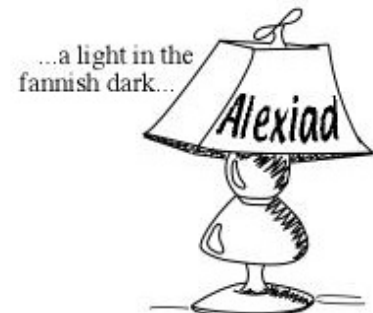
- Novel:** *Powers* by Ursula K. Le Guin  
 (Harcourt, Sep07)
- Novella:** "The Spacetime Pool" by  
 Catherine Asaro (*Analog*,  
 Mar08)
- Novellette:** "Pride and Prometheus" by John  
 Kessel (*F&SF*, Jan08)
- Short Story:** "Trophy Wives" by Nina Kiriki  
 Hoffman (*Fellowship Fantastic*,  
 ed. Greenberg and Hughes,  
 DAW, Jan08)
- Script:** *WALL-E*. Screenplay by Andrew  
 Stanton, Jim Reardon, Original  
 story by Andrew Stanton, Pete  
 Docter (Walt Disney June 2008)

**SIDeways AWARD NOMINEES**

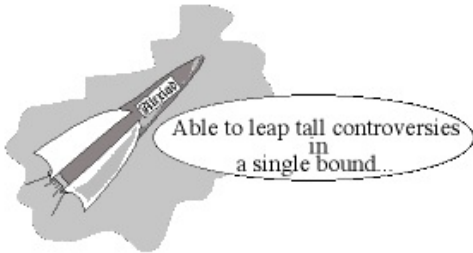
- Short Form:**
- "A Brief Guide to Other Histories," by Paul  
 J. McAuley (*Postscripts* #15)
- "G-Men," by Kristine Kathryn Rusch  
 (*Sideways in Crime*, edited by Lou  
 Anders, Solaris)
- "Night Bird Soaring," by T.L. Morganfield  
 (*Greatest Uncommon Denominator*,  
 Autumn/08)
- "The People's Machine," by Tobias Buckell  
 (*Sideways in Crime*, edited by Lou  
 Anders, Solaris)
- "Poison Victory," by Albert E. Cowdrey  
 (*F&SF*, 07/08)
- "Sacrifice," by Mary Rosenblum (*Sideways  
 in Crime*, edited by Lou Anders, Solaris)

**Long Form:**

- The Affinity Bridge*, by George Mann  
 (Snowbooks/Tor, 2009)
- The Dragon's Nine Sons*, by Chris  
 Roberson (Solaris)
- Half a Crown*, by Jo Walton (Tor)
- Nation*, by Terry Pratchett  
 (HarperCollins/Doubleday UK)
- Swiftly*, by Adam Roberts (Gollancz)



## Letters, we get letters



From: **Cathy Palmer-Lister** April 9, 2009  
 Ste. Julie, Quebec, Canada  
[cathyp1@sympatico.ca](mailto:cathyp1@sympatico.ca)  
<http://www.conceptsf.ca>

Thanks for *Alexiad*. I'm still rather new at this fan-ed business, so reading all the different zines is a journey of discovery. I edit a clubzine, and while it is by no means limited to MonSFFA's activities, *WARP* is entirely SFF driven. At one time I had assumed all zines were essentially SFF zines, and was astonished to find articles ranging from the state of the economy to unusual toilets. Hmm, come to think of it, there is a connection there between the two . . .

I've been casing restaurants for the fan-ed dinner. It's complicated. There are so many variables: noon, or supper? walk or Metro? steak or Chinese? Inside, or on la terrasse? So far, I'm hearing steak, noonish, in walking distance. BTW, generally speaking, on Sundays and Mondays Montreal restaurants are staffed by the lesser kitchen deities. I'm not sure there is one in walking distance of the Convention Centre, but an interesting option are restaurants that serve their own brews. One I was looking at was described to me by a friend as having great beer, so-so food. Anyway, the search continues, so do contact me if you want some input into the final decision. For a large group, at noon especially, reservations will have to be made.

Cats and horses? An odd combination, isn't it usually dogs and horses? I'm always amazed at how cats find their way into SF lovers' hearts. Maybe it's because they don't drive you nuts when you're trying to read. I like cats, and still dearly miss my Matou who could open windows and was working on learning the mechanisms of the can opener and fridge door. However, it's dogs that run our lives now. Currently we have three: a border collie, a border collie/shepherd, and a border collie/beagle. All are from the SPCA. I can identify with your writers who said they couldn't go into a shelter for fear of wanting to bring them all home. The ones we left behind, are they happy, are they loved? The Montérégie shelter has a no-kill policy, and is located in a rural area with lots of space to run and even a stream to swim in, two lovely big rooms with sun decks for the cats, but nothing beats a warm home with a loving family.

About cataracts — a strange coincidence, or maybe just a sign of our aging group — but one

of our MonSFFA members wrote a short article about his operation, comparing it to the "cures" of the Middle Ages for *WARP* 71.

Our reviews of books and movies in *WARP* tend to be much shorter than those of *Alexiad*. Our members, largely media fans, are paranoid about spoilers, and for the most part I agree with them. I don't even read the jacket blurbs on books by authors I know and love. Half the fun is just learning about what makes their particular universe tick, so I prefer to read and discover the problems with oceans and canals for myself. OTOH, I do enjoy discussing books in depth with others who have read them, too. The same goes for movies, of course, but I don't seem to go out much anymore. They don't make the movies I want to see: brave new worlds to explore, strange technologies, interaction with fascinating aliens who are not out to conquer the world, steal our women, or siphon off the oceans. I'm tired of sequels and prequels, or shows like *Battlestar Galactica* which is in my view a shameless plagiarism. Why are the studios so afraid of making something new?

**Because something new might not do as well as the live-action version of Rocket Robin Hood, with its guaranteed audience of grown-ups who remembered it as it was when they were kids.**

Brad W. Foster wrote:

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 . . . when the principal came on the intercom and told us about it.

Geez, Brad, you're making me feel old. I was in grade 6 or 7 when the principal came running down the hall shouting, "The President's been shot!" We didn't have intercoms. However, this is not what I first think of when I muse on the defining moments of my formative years. Rather, I remember the little Vietnamese girl running down the road, and pictures of the Tiger Cages. What amazes me is that I saw the Wall built and saw it fall, saw dogs set upon civil rights protesters and saw a Black president elected. What a time to be alive! Moon walks, computers, Internet, oh, my!

Hmm, computers — reminds me: paper or pdf? Our club struggled with this, we do love paper! but economics made the choice for us. We are only sending print copies to those who request them. It's awkward since the zine is a benefit of club membership, putting it on line might open doors to potential abuse from freeloaders. We are trying out a system of passwords. However, we are still very much interested in trades, so we will be sending the password to those who ask to be on our trade list. Paper is still available for our trading partners, too.

Take care, and hope to see you all at Anticipation.

Yawl come now, heah?

— Joe-boy

From: **Rod E. Smith** April 11, 2009  
 730 Cline Street, Frankfort, KY 40601-1034 USA  
[stickmaker@usa.net](mailto:stickmaker@usa.net)

In re. the comments by John Purcell on my JOHT column about time pieces: You're ticking me off. :-^)

From: **Darrell Schweitzer** April 14, 2009  
 6644 Rutland Street, Philadelphia, PA 19149-2128 USA  
[darrells@comcast.net](mailto:darrells@comcast.net)

If I may be entirely pedantic and correct a numismatic error in my past letter, which only I would spot, let me point out that not all of Hui Zong's coins are in the much-admired Slender Gold Script. Some of them are. The emperor invented this script. His enormous Chong Ning coins, which are the size of Eisenhower dollars, are the most impressive coins of the Middle Ages. The only thing I can think of that comes close is the Christ follis of Basil II the Bulgar Slayer, which came out about a century earlier. Slender Gold script actually doesn't seem to have been used in subsequent reigns, but it is apparently still admired in China, where calligraphy is taken much more seriously as a fine art than it is in the West. Hui Zong's other coins are in Regular, Li, Seal, Grass, and Running scripts, like anybody else's. My literacy in Chinese is, let us say, minimal. I know about a dozen characters, some of them archaic. I have difficulty telling Running Script and Grass script apart. They're the two squiggly ones, designed for fast writing.

Hui Tsung and Hui Zong, I point out, are the same person. There are two systems of Romanization of Chinese, called Wade-Giles, which dates from the 19th century, and Pinyin, which was invented by the Chinese themselves in the 1950s. It is a bit simpler. Wade-Giles: Mao Tse-tung. Pinyin: Mao Zedong. They still use Wade-Giles in Taiwan, eschewing the invention of the Communists rather the way Protestant countries were reluctant to use the Gregorian Calendar for a long time. Most sources I encounter use Pinyin. I don't know how the Chinese actually pronounce the words.

On the subject of the fall of empires, there is a new Chinese epic film out called *Red Cliff*, directed by John Woo, which, despite the usual license & a few mistakes, dramatizes the end of the Han Dynasty, as taken from *The Romance of the Three Kingdoms*, a story as well known in Asia as that of King Arthur is known in the West. What is of interest here is that the Han empire, unlike its contemporary, the Roman Empire, did not decay after a series of military defeats and the infiltration of barbarians into the army. The late Han seems to have been quite militarily formidable. But the central government had withered away, with corruption, control by eunuch bureaucrats, purges to exterminate the eunuchs, a series of juvenile or ineffectual emperors, etc. At the end a warlord

a.k.a. Imperial Chancellor named Cao Cao had control of the last emperor. He had an impressive military record, and when he set forth with a huge army to secure the rest of the country, it seemed certain he would win. But two other warlords, one in the southeast and the other in the southwest, resisted heroically against overwhelming odds. Ancient sources probably exaggerate the numbers, but it seems that hundreds of thousands of soldiers were involved. At the battle of Red Cliffs (AD 208), Cao Cao was defeated, but not destroyed. The country then broke up into the Three Kingdoms and moved into a period of instability that lasted until the late 6th century. The last Han emperor, Xian, quietly abdicated in favor of Cao Cao's son in 220. He lived in comfortable retirement for some years after that.

Here we have an example where the empire did not wither away. It was not militarily feeble, or brought down by barbarian invasions. The real figures at Red Cliff may be 200,000 for Cao Cao, 70,000 for the other two leaders, combined. Armies like that would have been sheer fantasy in the late Roman Empire. What seems to have happened is that the central government could not hold together, lost itself in intrigues, and the various regional generals turned into warlords and took over. But none of them could seize the whole country, so they started fighting one another. There doesn't seem to have been any decline in Chinese civilization, at least not right away. That came later, as the Three Kingdoms gradually broke up and barbarian invasions began.

So Tsao Tsao would be the equivalent of Orestes? With Hsien the Han version of Julius Nepos, and Tsao Pi a more effectual Romulus Augustulus.

— JTM



Actually, if you think about it, a lot of empires are still quite massive at the moment of their dissolution. The Czarist Empire, for instance, or, for that matter, the Soviet. Byzantium, which shrank down to a tiny speck first is the exception. Jim Stumm to the contrary, there is more to it than the defensibility of Constantinople vs. Rome. Initially, it may simply have been that the Eastern Empire was simply too large for any barbarian to absorb. Too many cities, too large a population. The West was more thinly populated. Suppose a Hun

horde had sacked Constantinople? Then what? Would there have been enough Huns to work their way all the way around the Mediterranean, taking Antioch, Jerusalem, then Egypt? And again, then what? It was simply beyond the capacity of a bunch of horse-barbarians to control that much territory, particularly when it's weak on pasture lands.

Rome was not indefensible. The Aurelian walls, which still stand at least in part, are impressive. I've seen them. Imperial Rome was never actually taken by storm. In 410, after a siege, someone opened a gate. This may have been a pro-Gothic traitor, or some do-gooder trying to relieve the suffering of the people. In 455, there was no defending army and no resistance as the Vandals walked in. In 472, when Gundobad sacked Rome, his army was the "Roman" army and presumably was already inside. During the wars of Justinian Rome changed hands several times, usually by trickery. If sufficiently garrisoned, Rome could be defended. Its chief vulnerability was that it had to be supplied from the sea, via the Tiber. If the enemy could take Ostia and close the Tiber mouth, he could starve the city out.

To George Price and others I will point out that the big difference between the American Revolution and those of France or Russia is that the American Revolution was not a social revolution at all. It was not a revolt of the lower classes against the upper classes. In fact, the only people who lost their property were the Tories. Otherwise, the social structure remained exactly as it was, and the wealthy retained their estates. It was more a war of secession than a proper revolution. The Confederates were trying to replay it in the Civil War, for the same reason, to preserve their way of life unchanged.

By the way, there are several errors in your Philip José Farmer obit. His first published story was "O'Brien and Obrenov," in *Adventure* in 1946. His next work after "The Lovers" was "Sail On, Sail On!" in *Startling Stories* for December 1952. Then came "Mother" in April 1953 and his second novel, *Moth and Rust* (later reprinted as *A Woman a Day and The Day of the Timestop* in the June 1953 issue. *I Owe for the Flesh* would have been his third novel.

I can't agree with Grant McCormick. Giving the Lensman series a Best All Time Series award now would just be an embarrassment, which would make SF look ridiculous. Doc Smith was important, but he represents a point the field has long moved past. The main objections are indeed his writing style and his total inability to depict human beings in a manner congruent with adult reality. We tend to fall into a lazy acceptance of bad writing as "old-fashioned" writing and then try to explain its awfulness as mere changes in fashion. No, bad writing is bad writing in any decade. It so happens that most of Doc Smith's work was published during the Great Retarded Period, in which the standards of science fiction were not merely sub-literary but sub-pulp. (Otherwise Smith would never have been publishable at all.) But we should remember that there actually were science fiction writers in that period who could write. Read William Sloane's *To Walk the*

*Night*, which came out in 1937, the same year as *Galactic Patrol*. It's a shock to find an SF novel from the '30s that is literate and written and on an adult level, but there it is. Here was an SF novel actually good enough to be published as a real book, by a real publisher. In the pulps, there were a few literate writers in the '30s. Lawrence Manning could actually write. Jack Williamson was getting steadily better. When you realize that *Children of the Lens* came out in 1947, the year of Sturgeon's "Thunder and Roses" and a year after Kuttner/Moore's "Vintage Season" you can appreciate how far the field had moved beyond Smith, even then. Giving an All Time Best award to Doc Smith would be like naming Fenimore Cooper the greatest American novelist. Better to just leave that one lie.

From: **Bill Breuer** April 15, 2009  
[billbreuer@juno.com](mailto:billbreuer@juno.com)

Thanks, Joe for putting it in. The next will be an new and scientifically updated — but period version of *Frankenstein — the Stageplay* — scheduled for the beginning of October 2009!

From: **Alexis A. Gilliland** April 10, 2009  
 4030 8th Street South, Arlington, VA  
 22204-1552 USA  
<http://www.alexisgilliland.com>

Thank you for *Alexiad* 8.2, which arrived on the first night of Passover. Why is this night (or day, as the case may be) different from all other nights? Because every 28 years Passover used to coincide with the vernal equinox, so it is time for the Birkat HaChama, a celebration of the sun. Alas, that the year should have been 11 minutes off, so that over time the equinox stayed put while Passover wandered away from its calendrical moorings. On an unrelated note, I read and enjoyed Terry Pratchett's *Nation* which combines elements of the Krakatoa explosion, Mu, Disc World, and much else for a fast and entertaining story.

In the last few weeks the economy has rebounded by more than 20 percent but the pessimists note that in the depth of the depression there were three rallies of 20 percent or more. Have we reached the bottom? Maybe, maybe not, but either way there will likely be a long spell of subdued economic activity before us. For what it may be worth, almost all of the trillions of dollars that vanished with a bang and a flash were owned by the very rich, so that the spread of income between rich and poor is starting to narrow as the market does something the government would (or could) not.

George Price very properly notes that the American Revolution was more in the nature of a secession, wherein the 13 colonies threw off control of the distant and Imperial London. Also, he notes that on the whole those colonies were conservative, though the Articles of Confederation suggests there was a strong Libertarian streak as well. By way of contrast, the revolutions in France and Russia were radical, aimed at overthrowing despotic regimes that had fiercely resisted any attempts at reform,



and the new regimes drifted towards the despotic state model they were familiar with. Certainly America's founding fathers — Washington, Jefferson and Adams, were far different from Danton, Marat, and Robespierre, or Lenin, Stalin and Trotsky.

Taras Wolansky disputes my notion that the sfnal idea of going into space will recapitulate the American frontier is no longer viable. Concentrating on "space" he points out that the technology for living in space is improving, so that a self-sustaining Martian colony appears increasingly possible. Maybe, maybe not, but he should have concentrated on the "American frontier" aspect, instead. I have been watching the PBS home video "Ken Burns Presents The West" which shows how the West was won, and by whom, and it is essentially the account of a great and technologically advanced power rolling over disunited smaller powers, including the Lakota/Sioux (who were doing the same thing to the Mandans, Crows, Blackfeet and others) and the small number of Spanish settlers in Texas and California. Once the new territories were secured, settlers poured in (using state of the art wagon trains) to seek the good life. The best that can be said is that we Americans acted like humans have always acted when they had an advantage, wiping out the less advantaged competition and stealing their wealth. All of which I found repetitive and depressing, so much so that I stopped watching after three of the four DVDs. If we do go into space, step one will be to create Wolansky's self-sustaining habitats, necessarily with robots or remotely directed machines. Step two will be to send the colonists to inhabit them. Step three will be tweaking the system until it starts to thrive, and Step Four will be more tweaking to get the system to self-replicate. None of this will remotely resemble how the west was won, but if it ever happens it will be its own story, and probably too tedious for any sort of popular entertainment, though maybe a Ken Burns-type special would be possible.

A case may also be made that sf was a literature of unpopular ideas hiding out in popular entertainment, just as Aesop's fables told truths his Roman masters would have suppressed had they been stated in plain language. As our society changes (far faster than in Roman times) so do the ideas that need Aesopian disguise, meaning that sf has to change as well. A book called *13 Is The New 18*, by Beth Harpaz, is entertaining, and notes that today's youth have been informed about sex and drugs by the internet. To the extent that being informed is to be empowered, this means that kids are making their usual mistakes at a younger age. This may be a reversion to the evolutionary norm existing before the recent invention of privacy, but is still a change from what we had. Thus, the poor sf authors must find new ideas to embrace as they scramble to find where the current popular entertainment is hanging out.

The first book I read by Roland Huntford wasn't Scott and Amundsen [The Last Place on

Earth] (1979) but The New Totalitarians (1975). This was a discussion of the self-editing of Swedish society into a Newspeak one, where concepts of individualism were absent. And other things; one being the rising rate of gonorrhoea among twelve-year olds.

— JTM

What else? Jeffrey Boman wonders about our using an .org domain. This was a temporary expedient, and has been replaced by a .com domain, which is now up and running. For what it's worth, no profits have been made, nor are likely to be made. That should do for now.



From: **Brad W. Foster** April 15, 2009  
P.O. Box 165246, Irving, TX 75016-5246 USA  
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<http://www.jabberwockygraphix.com>  
**Best Fan Artist Hugo Nominee**

This issue of *Alexiad* arrived on an amazing day: there were two other printzines in the mailbox at the same time. Talk about your flashbacks!

I kind of know how you feel about missing Wullie. When we had to have our sweet Vlad put to sleep last year, it came as such a sudden surprise that I still find myself thinking about him a year later. With other cats in the past, there has been slow ailment or other time period to lead up to the end, but for Vlad, he was just here one day, and a day later he was gone. But, when I do think of him, I also smile, so the hurt is a sweet one.

Your review of *Pandemonium* makes it all sound so **wonderfully** odd that it is definitely going on my list of books to find.

It is so wonderfully odd because it has so much normality amid its strangeness.

— JTM

Re: "Network Network?", just a minor quibble from an admitted non-techno: The final comment regarding how "a smoothly running computer network . . . was a necessity for a smoothly running household." I'd like to submit that "necessity" could be replaced with the phrase "huge help", since strange as it may

seem, people still can get by these days without any sort of home computer at all if they wish. (I don't want to do that, but I know many who are quite happy being computer-free.)

Much of my work, my recreation, and my interests involve either computers, networking, the Internet, or all of the above. The same is true, to a greater or lesser extent, for both Joseph and Lisa, and perhaps some of the cats. We listen to the MP3s on the network drive, or to streaming audio from the Internet. We read webcomics, follow blogs, and get our news from websites. The W: drive serves as a convenient backup and data sharing area.

Sure, we could live our lives without all this. Just as we could live without computers, without television, without electricity, without running water, but that's not the way we chose to live.

---Grant

And hey, loved all the little pieces from Schirm throughout this ish!

From: **Joy V. Smith** April 18, 2009  
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I learn about a lot of fun and interesting books in *Alexiad*. The *Ancient Athens...* and *Ancient Rome ...* books sound like fun. ("Homer's family name was Simpson.") Btw, are time travel and alternate history books proliferating or are you collecting them?!

Thanks for the tidbits, including *McHale's Navy* (no, I wasn't aware that it started out as a drama. Was it adapted from a book?) and *Elric's albinism*. I think you were kidding about his not being able to tell friend from foe? I always blamed it on Stormbringer. *To the End of the Earth* sounds interesting but badly flawed.

I have a history degree. AH is my SF, you might say. The saga of Quintin McHale and his merry crew was original to TV. And it was Stormbringer who had the habit of eating friends' souls, but Moorcock could have blamed vision. Scene: *Elric meets Thomas Covenant*. Stormbringer comes down, drinks his soul . . .

Then begins to retch and gag, uncontrollably.

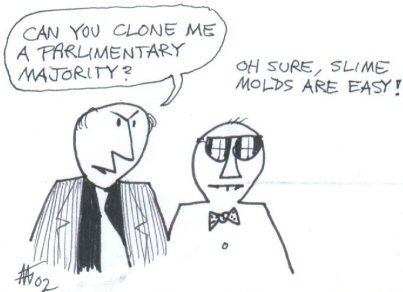
— JTM

*The Wages of Destruction: The Making and Breaking of the Nazi Economy* sounds like a book necessary to getting a handle on history. And, of course, you've included other history books.

I see you enjoyed ConCave and are still cleaning up after the ice storm. Oh, yes, downed trees and empty spaces are long term reminders. I also enjoyed the piece on the Best All-Time Series Hugo award. I'd like to see a list of the best series possible nominees, including today's. (I'd include the Liaden universe series.) And I agree with Taral Wayne about *Batman Begins*; it should have started later. I enjoyed his gathering and testing of equipment and the man who helped him, also Alfred's comments on the process. Great Scott, I never heard of Butterfinger Buzz! (We did it because we could.)

I see that there's more history and reviews in the letters column. I couldn't make it all the way through *The Colour of Magic*, btw. I'm glad they're making movies of Pratchett's books though. I am looking forward to *Making Money*, the movie. Oh, I also enjoyed your closing piece, *America Held Hostage*. That could make a funny movie. Or a scary one.

From: **AL du Pisani** April 22, 2009  
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In *Alexiad* you asked if we have election irregularities. The answer is of course yes. I do know know if they are the same as the ones you get in the USA, or just similar, or uniquely South African.

They usually come in: gifts before the election, irregularities and lies before and during the election, and funding shenanigans.

Gifts before the election: The Budget before the election always have some sweeteners in for the governing parties expected voters. Currently, in South Africa, it mostly means the poor and unemployed. And the most common way is to up social welfare pensions and grants. So much so that approximately 8 million tax payers are subsidizing 13 million others. (My figures may be off a bit, I am working from memory here, but the bottom line is that about 25% of South Africans get money from the government, and less than that are paying for it.)

Then there are the food parcels given out at election rallies. At least one incident was

reported in this election cycle where food parcels from a private charity were distributed at an ANC election rally, with the impression given that the parcels were from the ANC.

Irregularities and lies: I know of at least one instance where people living in subsidized and low income housing were told that if they did not display an ANC sticker on their front doors, and vote for the ANC in the election, they would lose their housing.

In the current election, we have had at least one incident where an election official was caught stuffing ballot boxes. We have had ballot papers being found lying in the street, before the election — The IEC (who run the elections) says there is no reason to suspect that anything irregular has happened.

We have had complaints that polling stations have run out of ballot papers. There I am inclined to suspect incompetence rather than malice, but am open to the idea of malice, especially since the people making the complaint claim that it mostly happened in their party's strongholds.

Funding irregularities: The split in the ANC to form COPE (Congress of the people — I can tell you more about that, if you are interested) cost the ANC at least R200 Million, according to reports. This was both to fight the election against them, and to entice defectors back with job offers etc. And according to some reports, most of the money was a gift from one Moammar Gadhaffi, dictator of Libya. Might have even come from the People's Republic of China, as we had an incident not too long ago where the Dalai Lama was refused a visa, because he "might cause violence". There the greasy fingermarks of China were all over the show, even though the ANC government denied it.

No political party has been the least interested to go public with their sources of funding, as smaller parties suspect (probably rightly) that the ANC will put pressure on any commercial organisation that supports anybody other than them with more money. This has not prevented some instances where a person sitting on the board of directors of a company, is part in approving a donation of money to a political party, just to turn up on that party's list of candidates.

Now, my impressions of the current election: I have been sick and tired of the election a month ago, even before the main television news bulletins started to use half of their time to cover the elections. I was not the only one. But a lot of people were still uncertain who they were going to vote for. While knowing quite well who they were voting against.

One of the strange things about the way South African elections were run, was that expatriates were denied the vote, while jailed felons were allowed to vote. A very small amount of South Africans finding themselves overseas were allowed to vote, mostly people working for the government, such as embassy personnel, and sports teams on an official tour. About one month ago this was successfully challenged in court, and expatriates were allowed to cast their votes. Leading to London,

with about 7500 voters, most of which voted, being the largest voting district in the election. The largest local voting district has about 3500 voters.

It took me three hours and twenty minutes to vote. Three hours and 10 minutes queuing to get to the polling station, and ten minutes to be processed and to vote. The polling stations opened at 07h00, and people who were there at that time waited about three hours to get in and vote. I arrived at 09h00, and when I left, the queue looked to be as long as it had been when I arrived.

I have heard similar stories from the people I saw today, with times of two to three hours seemingly the norm in Johannesburg. Except some people who voted in the late afternoon, and took about fifteen minutes.

It seems to me if the polling stations were incapable of processing the voters fast enough. Since there was only one person checking id's with an electronic scanner, and all voters had to go past him for verification. There were also only two people marking off people on the paper copy of the voters roll. Thereafter the marking of a thumbnail with the purple spot, getting ballot papers, voting and placing the ballots in the right boxes, did not take a lot of time. The people I spoke to had similar experiences, with only one person reporting that the final process of voting taking a long time.

The weather here was overcast, with a nip in the air from approaching winter. This meant that the queuing experience was not unpleasant due to much rain or sun, and I could read about half a book in the time I was queuing. I did not see a lot of people arriving, looking at the queue and leaving, although it did happen. There might have been people arriving, seeing how full the roads were parked, and leaving, but I did not see that. I am voting in a anti-ANC stronghold, which may colour my impressions.

But feel: People do not stand for so long in queues because they are happy with the job the government are doing. I think they are going to get a lot less votes than everybody have been expecting. I really hope so.

But we will see what the official results are, something during the next week or so.

If your election process was handled the way ours is, Koos van der Merwe and Vernon Koekemoer should have turned up on the rolls several times.

— JTM

From: **Milt Stevens** April 22, 2009  
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In *Alexiad* V8#2, Lisa and Grant talk about household computers. I hadn't particularly thought about how many computers I have. The number is three, two desktops and a laptop. I use one of the desktops for just about everything (95% of my computer use is word processing). The other desktop is what used to be my main computer. I have it set up on a work table and

keep it in case I need any old files or need to access a floppy. Neither of those needs have arisen in the last year. The laptop was an experiment that didn't work. Laptop screens are too small for the current state of my eyesight. The laptop is useful for transporting large amounts of data. I've used it to show pictures to people at LASFS.

The price of computers has become so reasonable that lots of people could afford to have a computer in every room of the house. I don't really know why you would need a computer in the bathroom, but I'm sure there are some hardcore computer users who experience such a need. I used to watch the TV show C-Net Central. They showed all sorts of really strange computer gadgets. For instance, they once showed a computerized rearview mirror for your car. I don't really have any use for such a gadget, but it's sort of interesting that it exists.

Grant McCormick brings up the idea of doing the Hugo for best all-time series again. I generally oppose Hugo proliferation, so I would be against this idea. I didn't like the idea when it was done the first time. Having an award that is on a different timescale than the other awards in the same series just seems wrong to me. However, now that you have given a Hugo for best all-time series, you can't very well do it again. That's one of the weaknesses of awards for "all-time" anything.

Back when this award was given, I preferred Poul Anderson's Polesotechnic League stories to either the Foundation series or the Lensman series. These days, I would only recommend the Lensman series to someone who had a serious interest in the history of science fiction. It pretty much introduces the galactic epic to science fiction. On the downside, the writing isn't very good, the science is archaic, and some of the social views grate. In particular, Smith's attitude on genocide isn't likely to appeal to a post WWII reader.

Back to *Edison's Conquest of Mars*. My impression is that it was a rush job to steal *War of the Worlds* before someone else did. It seems like Serviss may not have been allowed to read the original. If he had read it, changing the Martians would have been a really questionable decision. I suspect Serviss was influenced by mythology when he made the Martians humanoid giants. In mythology, superior beings are usually bigger than we are. The same sort of thing crops up in the novels of S. Fowler Wright in the 1920s. Tolkien makes his hobbits small to get the same idea across.

Serviss used as his basis the pirated US version, *Fighters from Mars*, which moved the invasion to New England. (And not Grover's Mill, New Jersey?)

— JTM

From: **Lloyd Penney** April 30, 2009  
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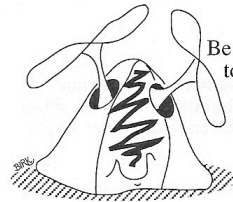
Many thanks for *Alexiad* WN 44. The temperatures here are finally warm, the trees are greening, and I am spending as much time outside as possible . . . when I'm not inside writing letters, that is . . .

We have our own fond feline remembrances. . . our favorite cat is Momcat, and she no longer lives in Windsor, but is now with other friends near Ottawa. We love that little cat, too, but we couldn't take her when she was offered to us. Now that others have taken her home, we fear we may never see her again, and we'll have to live with those memories.

I find that eFanzines.com will keep your back issues available for downloading a lot longer, and for no cost. I don't know how many terabytes of fanzines Bill Burns has on his website, but his willingness to do that had added a lot more life to the fanzine field. It would be in sad shape right now if most of us weren't willing to move to e-zines to keep the communications going.

I fear that you are right; which is why we have gone with the flow.

I've said in other zines that I never got to meet Chester Cuthbert, and few other fans did, but his collection was a major work, and his family has donated it to the University of Alberta. So many other similar collections make their way to the landfill, courtesy of families who never even tried to understand the obsessions of their loved ones.



Be the first one on your block to have dual props!

The Schirm illustrations raise a smile . . . I am a fine one to talk, and I cut no svelte figure, but some physiques I've seen at Worldcons lead me to simply ask, "How?" The genetic pool is wide and deep, and probably contains some weird chemicals, too. I also imagine the word WIDE and LOAD on the back pockets of some pairs of jeans.

I have read some of China Miéville's work set in New Crobuzon, and he describes the decaying city very well. With that success, too many writers now employ the decaying city as their setting. For experienced readers, this becomes too repetitive, but for newer readers, this may become near-future SF, what with the infrastructure of many cities around the world crumbling because of little investment in rebuilding and maintenance.

Mention of J.G. Ballard reminds me that he's passed away, joining a long line of oh-so-familiar names. Every so often I go onto Laurie Mann's Dead People Server ([www.dpsinfo.com](http://www.dpsinfo.com)), and see who's well known in entertainment and SF circles, and quite dead.

I still hear complaints about too much

fictional science in our science fiction, and I usually disagree with those complaints, but I rarely hear complaints about alternate timelines. The science there is theoretical and a little specious, but still, anything can happen. I enjoy alternate timeline stories, too, and still wonder at the reaction of those who demand 100% science.

A nostalgia for a time that never existed, but we wish it did . . . Indiana Jones, a time of adventure in unknown realms, treasure and risk together, lost cities and peoples, horrible enemies kept at bay, but still a simpler, gentler and more genteel time. I think we wish and yearn for a time like that, a time when social networking was done at the private club downtown. That yearning may have been one of the big reasons another Indiana Jones movie came out (Harrison Ford's alimony being the other), and that may also be one of the reasons steampunk has become as big as it has.

That was the period when it was possible to go somewhere exotic and come back again in the same year, but they didn't have a McDonalds and a Starbucks there.

Khen Moore is someone I haven't seen at Worldcon in some time, and if he is as ill as reported, I might not see him again. I wish him improved health, and I hope to see that barefoot boy in Worldcon's halls again.

I like Grant McCormick's idea of reviving the All-Time Series Hugo, but I doubt that today's reader would remember the Lensman series, or Asimov's Foundation Series, for that matter. *Lord of the Rings* might get consideration, or for more modern readers, Kim Stanley Robinson's Mars series. We'd never agree on this one, there's been so many great series since that Hugo in 1966. Let's start it up anyway, and we can always watch from the stands and we snack on popcorn . . .

A caffeinated candy bar? I'd expect Starbucks to sell those, to be honest. Have they never thought to hypercaffeinate coffee? They'd make a fortune! When something is decaffeinated, that stuff has to go somewhere. I'm sure the Jolt Company buys some . . .

The *Challenger* explosion? I was working in the catalogue department at Sears Canada, and the boss' secretary off-handedly told me that the shuttle had blown up. 9/11? I was working at Central Reproductions, and had wondered where most of the staff had gone . . . was there a meeting I wasn't told about? I was one of the few people in that company that didn't have e-mail, and I found everyone gathered around four or five television sets. Looked like a disaster movie, but it was all too real.

My loc . . . after my replacement optometrist failing to come to an agreement with my ophthalmologist, I decided that if you guys can't come to an agreement, I will go and get my glasses anyway, and I did. I have a slab lens in the right side, which is a bit of a pain, but it is allowing me much better vision than before. 2Gb thumb drives are the norm now . . . anything smaller is considered obsolete, if not

archaic. And, SGS let me go at the end of February, lack of work, and I am continuing to hunt for some more daytime work. I still work at the Globe and Mail in the evenings.

To Jeff . . . yup, I'll be at the Auroras, and I suspect I'll be at the Hugos. We usually go to see who gets the silver rockets, and to see who shows up in their fineries. I usually don't recognize them until they say something. Hall costume awards for everyone.

Well, I think I'm done . . . the storm clouds are gathering outside, and I have to go out in it to go to work. C'est la vie. This Saturday is the Kentucky Derby . . . enjoy, and have a great weekend. Thanks for another *Alexiad*, and see you next time.

*We were furloughed for the Friday before; but I don't suppose I can complain. I still have a job.*

— JTM

From: **Sandra Childress** May 4, 2009  
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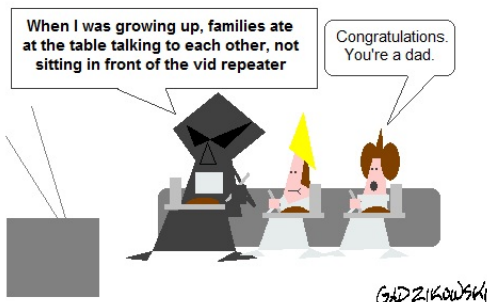
Just wanted you to know that there's a summary article about SMOF Racing (that's a touch out of date) in *The Drink Tank* #210 by Chris Garcia. Includes our first and only win photo.

From: **Eric Mayer** May 7, 2009  
[maywrite2@epix.net](mailto:maywrite2@epix.net)

Thanks for making the new *Alexiad* available online. You really pack a lot of interesting material in.

Sorry, Lisa, to hear about Wullie. As I type this our cat, Sabrina, is sitting on my lap as she always does on cool days. She is 20. She dates back to a whole different era in my life — different marriage, different home, different work. She has accompanied me through many changes and a few states as well. I know that it won't be too long before I have a sad anniversary to look back on just as you do. I try not to think about it. It is amazing, isn't it, what an impression an animal can make on our lives.

*I had my cat Sulla for seventeen years, and I cried so hard the day he died.*



And now, Joe, I can commiserate with you over the criminal enterprise known as insurance. A few years ago I had an MRI which finally determined what the heck was wrong with my leg (bad back, dmaged nerve). But last year the protection racket which demands payments every month informed me they no longer covered MRIs. So today, if my doctor thought I should have another MRI I would have to regretfully decline. Of course the solution in a free economy is to take our business elsewhere except, isn't it funny, how the insurers all seem to immediately go with the latest trend?

Interesting to see how many historicals set in the classical era you review. Since Mary and I have been writing our Byzantine mysteries I've shied away from reading similar books because I don't want to risk subconsciously plagiarizing. I think historicals are much like science fiction. They are set in times and places different from our own. Growing up, I gorged on science fiction but ancient Rome fascinated me as much as Mars. There just seemed to be more sf available to read at the local library.

*I have to fix one translation but would you like to see my article on Wallace Breem's Eagle In the Snow? Or if you're in the mood for some weirdness, my fan fiction with Caesar, Vorenus & Pullo, Caecilius Metellus — and Xena?*

There's some discussion in the loccol of why the Western Empire fell and why the Eastern Empire survived. My understanding is that the Empire had clearly changed its focus to the east long before 476 AD. The so-called fall of Rome didn't mean all that much. Justinian temporarily reconquered most of Italy during the mid-sixth century but I've seen studies that suggest that Italy was an economic backwater by then and not worth the cost of reconquest.

People will always speculate about what would have happened if Hitler had invaded England. From what I've read such an invasion would have been less likely to succeed than many seem to suppose. Of course, some of my opinion is based on an old war game from *Strategy and Tactics* about Operation Sea Lion and thus probably not overly reliable. The game did however, illustrate, rightly or wrongly, the very difficult logistics involved in invading across the English Channel and how dependent the attack would be on the very unpredictable weather. Perhaps the same could be said of the Normandy Invasion which worked. I get the impression also that Hitler's plans were pretty much doomed from the outset given the relatively small size of the German economy. Germany could really only have beaten the allies if the allies chose at some point to not fight.

*I remember that game. The designers said they had to entirely omit the Royal Navy. Even one destroyer could have wiped out the entire barge fleet, just by steaming past them at 30 knots.*

— JTM

I was pretty croggled to read about your home computer network. Mary and I each have a computer and we're still on dial-up and trade the line back and forth. But I did take a big leap into the future this past week. My old mouse stopped working and so now, rather than the old roller-ball type I have a laser mouse. With a cord. So I'm still how many years behind?

Terrific article by Rodford Edmiston. I don't possess enough knowledge of any of the topics to offer a useful comment except that I really enjoyed it. I kind of like the idea that maybe, not only don't we know everything, maybe we can't, ever, figure everything out exactly. I prefer a universe where there will always be surprises.

Richard Dengrove's review of the Serviss book reminds me that I keep meaning to read some of this early science fiction. Long ago, when I mostly read sf, I read H.G.Wells and Jules Verne but that was about it. I wasn't aware of all the other Victorian era writers who wrote in the vein. I have recently revisited a couple of the Verne books and found them very entertaining.

And thanks to Chris Garcia for alerting me to the Butterfinger Buzz. Wow. Caffeinated candy! I love it. Or suspect I would. If I can find one around here. Sounds like it would go great with a few cups of coffee and no doubt tastes better than energy drinks.

By the way, thanks to the mention of it in the last loccol I have been enjoying Sue Burke's online translation of *Amadis of Gaul*. I was pretty sure I had heard about it from something Lin Carter had written, checked to see if it had ever appeared in the Ballantine Fantasy series and was rather surprised to see it had not. Well, I didn't recall it appearing, but I remembered Carter praising it highly so it seemed odd he hadn't published it.

Jim Stumm mentions going three weeks between food buying trips, and, as you point out, in Buffalo one might be concerned about being snowed in for a long time. As it happens my wife Mary and I, living in the mountains of Northeastern Pennsylvania, have this problem in spades (or at least lots of spadefuls of snow and ice) Our house is located at the end of a private precipitous private right-of-way which is never plowed and which, worse yet, is on the side of a mountain and hence turns from creek to glacier when winter temperatures set in. We soon found it was so aggravating and time consuming to try to get out very often that we were better off stocking up at the beginning of the winter and just staying in. Our record was 70 days between grocery trips. Last year we lucked out, the longest stretch being 40 days.

Now I'd probably better stop yapping. Thanks for a most interesting read.

From: **Richard Dengrove** May 10, 2009  
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Enjoyed *Alexiad* April 2009. Of course, there are going to be comments.

About the book on Rear Admiral Robert Peary, I have heard that the biggest problem with his claim to be first on the North Pole is not that he didn't make it, but that Dr. Frederick Cook made it before him. I am uncertain about the evidence, but I know Cook has a lot of defenders. The author of an article in a recent Smithsonian, for instance. He claimed that Peary made sure that evidence that Cook reached the pole got lost. Also, Peary had helpers: the wealthy people who financed him didn't want to see Cook get the bronze either. In fact, they paid for calumnies against him.

It's a pretty savage controversy.

In *Scientists and Scoundrels: A Book of Hoaxes* (1965), Robert Silverberg wondered if Cook hadn't gone more subtly mad on the Gerlache expedition, where a lot of people did go openly bonkers. Up until then, he had been a man of probity. After that, he stole the Yahgan dictionary, faked the climb of Mount McKinley, and then the Pole. Given that his companions Aapilaq and Itukisuk reported that Cook had acted the way that Ed Barrill (the McKinley climb guy) said he had acted, I think we've got a pretty clear M.O.

Speaking of savages, Baron Roman Nicolai Maximilian von Ungern-Sternberg was pretty crazy. I read in Webb's *The Occult Establishment*, as dictator of Mongolia after World War I, he used to organize attacks both on Bolshevik troops, whom he always despised, and White troops, whom he had previously been associated with. Also, he rode into battle on his horse buck naked and head bent.

Ultimately, he was so brutal to his own men they turned him over to the Bolsheviks. While awaiting death, he tried to eat one of his medals rather than let the Bolsheviks get it.

About his anti-Semitism, I read contradictory things in Webb. No doubt one part of him was virulently anti-Semitic. In fact, he made a proclamation to the effect that Mongolians should avoid all Jews. On the other hand, someone claimed that he had Jewish spies. Given how crazy von Ungern-Sternberg was, I am not certain that, to him, that would have been a contradiction.

Palmer doesn't mention this Webb; and he does note that there is enough misinformation about v. Ungern-Sternberg out there. He also doesn't mention spies, and from the descriptions of the Baron's savagery, it hardly seems likely he would have any at all, much less members of the group he despised so. Also, Webb's book dates from 1976 and far more research has been done since then.

— JTM

Century, how about Lloyd Penney's adventures now: he had a cataract adventure, where his ophthalmologist and optometrist differed on whether he had a cataract. I had a somewhat different adventure. Because of signs of pressure, my ophthalmologist has been testing me for cataracts, and so far the results have come back negative. However, I am having more trouble focusing my sight, and I wonder if that's related.

Now we go thousands of years into the past, not just the early part of the century. I agree with Darrell Schweitzer about people's prejudices and the Fall of the Roman Empire. People's prejudices stick out like a sore thumb when they propose causes for the Fall of the Roman Empire. I don't know whether he agrees with me that, in our everyday lives, our prejudices form our views too; just that they don't stick out as much.

I have Aristotle to back me up, though. He says, to convince someone, you have to use beliefs they have already. Of course, we don't want to admit that we are susceptible to a tactic like that.

Jim Stumm had a comment on the Fall of the Roman Empire too. He finally specified the factors which, he believes, caused the Fall: namely, social anarchy, the resources it took and invasion from the Steppes.

The problem is that the Eastern Empire survived social anarchy while the Western Empire fell. That is why I am dubious that it is a factor. The nomads from the Steppes are another thing entirely. I think they typically attacked Europe and ignored the Middle East. If so, they could genuinely be a factor in the Fall of the Western Empire.

Another thing: wouldn't weather in turn be the cause of the nomads attacking? That is the only reason I can think of why the nomads attacked once every five hundred years, which, Jim had heard, they did.

Of course, it would be the weather in the Steppes rather than in Europe proper. As to what would cause the weather in the Steppes to change, I don't pretend to know. I do know the idea that the ultimate cause lies beyond our grasp is frustrating; but, on the other hand, given our limited knowledge, we would likely have to stop positing causes and effects somewhere anyway.

Now we go back to the present again. George Price disagrees that the Constitution should ever be changed by reinterpretation. If that happens, he argues, the law is not consistent. He has a point.

Of course, wouldn't people find it radically inconsistent if, after fifty years, all the laws that had been reinterpreted were interpreted back? Certainly they would find themselves in a completely different ball game. I hear Justice Souter voted so often with the Liberal wing of the Supreme Court to avoid just such inconsistencies.

Back from grand issues to everyday life again. It's as I figured about Sheryl Birkhead: in the next test, her potassium would come normal.

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Thanks once more for the zine. Actually responding relatively early for me.



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

As far as the Hugo and Nebula listings for best novel, up to a month ago I hadn't read any of them. I have now finished *Little Brother* and *Anthem* and am a little more than halfway through *Saturn's Children*. I've got *Zoe's Tale* and *Brasyl* sitting on the coffee table to take up when I finish *Saturn's Children*. So far, *Little Brother* has my vote; though *Anthem* was pretty good — thought the ending was a bit too easy to see coming. *Saturn's Children* has some good points, but the storytelling is a bit jumpy. Interesting homage to Heinlein and somewhat to Asimov, though. Have read enough of the short fiction to form an opinion. Have seen all of the long form dramatic presentations except *METAtropolis* — my vote goes to *WALL-E*. For fanzine — *Challenger*.

Jim Stumm: I would think that the amount of emergency supplies would depend upon where you are and what type of emergency you are planning for. For winter storms you would need more supplies in the north than in the south — the likelihood of everything being shut down for a longer period of time is certainly much greater in Buffalo than in San Antonio. Or if you live up in the mountains as opposed to the eastern seaboard near a large city.

To Joe in response to George W. Price: If the English Parliament had delegated the taxation to the colonial assemblies the revolution might or might not have happened. It would depend upon whether the colonies believed the amount was a fair share of the taxation as opposed to getting the colonies to pay for everything. Yet it certainly would have taken a lot of the steam out of "No taxation without representation."

George W. Price: I don't think that national citizenship and state citizenship are separate entities. If you are a United States Citizen, you are a citizen of whatever state you reside in (unless you purposely hold your citizenship to be from another state — such as many members of the armed forces do — within the strictures of the law). However, citizens rights do vary from state to state even today (though a lot less today than they did through the beginning of the

post-bellum period) — for instance the right to vote does vary somewhat from state to state (as in residency requirements or the ability to vote in absentia or in early voting). But your point about the rights simply having to be the same for blacks and whites is ceded.

Well, that will do it for right now. Looks like I'm going to be in DC a little longer than expected — I will probably not be leaving for Ohio in June. Hopefully later this summer.

We missed you at SH/ACD.  
Maybe next year. It's in May now.

— JTM

From: **Martin Morse Wooster** May 11, 2009  
Post Office Box 8093, Silver Spring,  
MD 20907-8093 USA  
[mmwooster@yahoo.com](mailto:mmwooster@yahoo.com)

Many thanks for *Alexiad*. I'm sorry I didn't respond to the last issue. My current "day job" is editing a book on telecommunications for Thomas Hazlett, and I'm trying to get all the billable hours in before I knock off work at 7 and then get ready to keep with our TV Friends. It's a different kind of work than when I'm doing my own writing, and can get started writing a LoC before I turn out my 1,000 words. When Hazlett's project ends I will have more time and more energy, but right now I need to get those billable hours in. You may report me to the Fanzine Control Board.

I don't understand the reference to New Zealand. Are you saying that New Zealand is now allowing its citizens to accept knighthoods? While I think Australia doesn't allow Australians to get K's (or does it vary by state?) I'm sure you're following the exciting saga of the man American journalists call R. Allen Stanford and British journalists call Sir Allen Stanford in first reference and Sir Allen in second reference? He is apparently entitled to his K because he became a citizen of Antigua. I'm sure the Queen would love to take his honors away and then spank him with the royal paddle.

What happened was that an honour established by and for New Zealanders had originally had its higher ranks bestowing knighthood. Then this was discontinued and now it has been reinstated.

—JTM

Jerry Pournelle's comment that he somehow predicted the iPhone in *The Mote in God's Eye* is about as risible as comments I have heard David Brin make about all the predictions he got right in *Earth*, a novel that predicts in 2040 that South Africa is still racist and the Soviet Union is intact except for one breakaway Siberian province. Lots of people were predicting some sort of "pocket computer" back in the 1970s. Isn't the tricorder in "Star Trek" really a pocket computer? I don't think Pournelle or anyone else predicted that a telephone would have so many features, including the "iFart" whoopee cushion . . .

I don't know enough about comics to know whether *The Dark Knight* differs from more canonical Batman movies, but I thought it was a very good piece of commercial filmmaking. It seemed completely satisfying to me, and I didn't mind the violence (which was toned down for a PG-13 rating). Ledger deserved his Oscar. Christopher Nolan is one of the few big screen movie makers (Guillermo del Toro is another) where I'd be interested in everything the man directs.

George Price: I think *U.S. News* has an electronic weekly edition and a monthly print edition. It seemed to me to be *slightly* more conservative than *Time* or *Newsweek*, but aren't newweeklies obsolete with the Net? I read *The Week*, which is funny and entertaining, but the eggheads prefer *The Economist* — which is a very good choice.



From: **Henry Welch** May 15, 2009  
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Thanks for the latest *Alexiad*.

I agree with Taral that *The Dark Knight* was not about Batman. Heath Ledger in his haunting role as The Joker was the true focus of the movie.

I realize that this bit of advice is now too late for Sheryl Birkhead and others, but Turbo Tax can now be run from your web browser without having to worry about your local updates. My only issue with this version is that the raw data is kept by Turbo Tax and not on your local harddrive.

That could cause problems.  
Which is where you come in now.

— JTM

From: **R-Laurraine Tutihasi** May 17, 2009  
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I enjoyed Grant McCormick's "Network Network?" article if only because it gave me a comparison for the way we do things. I asked Mike to write up the way our network will be set

up in our new home. The diagram is attached.

The local network in our new home will make use of the Cat-6 Ethernet cables that we had installed in the walls to provide connectivity at many locations throughout the house. The room cable runs all terminate in a closet in Mike's workroom. We chose wired connectivity and Cat-6 wiring to support our Gigabit (and some day even faster) network devices. Our in-house network also has wireless (Wi-Fi) access (protected and encrypted).

The network design is very similar to what we've done for the past several years. Here is a brief outline; follow along with the diagram. The DSL internet connection will connect to our firewall/router. This protects our local network and provides the first level of network routing for our local network. The firewall/router then connects to some devices. Our colour laser printer is connected here. Also connected to the firewall/router is an Apple Time Capsule that provides additional routing, Wi-Fi, and automated backup of our computers to its 1-TB internal disk. Lastly, a network switch is also connected to provide more routing. The Time Capsule has our local file and music server and our two primary Macintosh laptops connected. The Time Capsule also provides Wi-Fi for our secondary (and primary when needed) Macintosh laptops and our iPhone. Guests can also use our Wi-Fi network (although there is a wired Ethernet connection in the guest bedroom). The switch provides the added connectivity to all the wired rooms (as seen in the diagram). At some point in the future, the existing 8-port switch (10/100) will be replaced with a larger switch providing Gigabit Ethernet (10/100/1000). At that point, the existing firewall/router (10/100) will be replaced with the Time Capsule (10/100/1000) as the firewall/router. Alternatively, we may get a different firewall/router with sufficient ports to handle all the rooms, but those are more expensive than just a basic switch.

We're in the process of checking out the Ethernet connections and making sure they are all connected properly. We've found several that were not and hope they will be fixed soon.

The best reason was that we actually saved money; when we had dial-up we had to have two telephone lines. The reduction paid for the DSL modem by the second month, never mind the time saved on downloads, and the price for the DSL service was less than that for the two dial-ups.

I found it interesting to read Rodford Edmiston write that people should "learn to value vagueness". When I was a corporate interlibrary loan librarian, I had three kinds of clientele — engineers, scientists, and business folk. The business people always wanted things yesterday, so everything was late where they were concerned. The scientists didn't really care how long anything took to get as long as they eventually got it. The engineers always wanted to know how long it would take and

wouldn't take "it depends" or "it could take a week or several months depending" for an answer. They finally went away satisfied when I told them that the "average turnaround was two weeks". It seems they wanted precision and didn't care about accuracy.

I'd like to thank Taral Wayne for a great review of *The Dark Knight*. The previews made it seem way too dark for my tastes, so I haven't seen it, waiting until it appears on TV.

My apologies to all who thought they were going to meet me in Montreal. It just isn't in the cards.

I've seen a lot of informative ads lately about the upcoming digital switch for TV, and I hope the same ads have run everywhere. One thing I hadn't known was that you have to have a UHF antenna to receive the digital channels. I'm not sure how that setup would work with the old TVs. I guess you would hook it up to the VHF leads.

I've had problems with muscle cramps practically all my life. I take potassium supplements daily. My frequent craving for salty things may also stem from this; my blood pressure is usually on the low side, so I don't worry about getting too much salt. I used to eat a banana every day until I just got sick of them. Kiwi fruit are good, too, for potassium; but they are much more work to eat. Pistachio nuts are also a good source, but I kind of got tired of eating them, too. I remember one time many years ago when I was driving home with my mother. I got a cramp in my side and had to pull over and have her drive the rest of the way. With the potassium supplements, I haven't eliminated cramping altogether; but I don't get them as often.

The fun time was when I had gas so bad I had to burp nonstop, and then I started having cramps on both the front and back of my legs. Finally, about four in the morning, I drove down to the CVS pharmacy and got some Mylanta. Then I could get a little sleep.

— JTM

Thanks for another interesting issue.

From: **John Purcell** May 24, 2009  
3744 Marielene Circle, College Station,  
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[j\\_purcell54@yahoo.com](mailto:j_purcell54@yahoo.com)

As near as I can figure, this is your 44th issue, Joe. That's a pretty good run so far. Here is to continued good health for your zine. And now for the commentary.

I hadn't realized it until Lisa led off with the remembrance of Wullie that it's been one year since you folks lost that cat. It is very hard to replace a dearly loved pet; we have yet to replace Waldo (who died in October last year) and probably never will. Of course, we have so many pets in the first place that thinning the herd here is probably a good idea. Even so, we hate losing one, and Waldo was a great cat. So I can certainly understand how Lisa feels. Enjoy

Slim and the others.

Joe, your trials with the health insurance certainly strike a receptive chord in me. For many years I worked in the insurance industry: personal lines (auto, home, rec. vehicle) then health (Blue Cross Blue Shield system), and eventually grew very tired of it. Over the years health care coverages have dwindled mostly because of doctor dictated care. We still owe \$\$ on Josie's knee surgeries — used to be \$\$\$, but have paid off some of it — and are very glad that insurance did cover as much as it did. Personally, I believe much of health care coverages are artificially inflated, much like the real estate market here in College Station, to thwart people from taking advantage of the system. This to me sounds very oxymoronic in principle: denying care for people who need care simply because they can't afford the care. No, the system needs some serious overhauling, and I do hope that the Obama Administration can make some headway on solving the problem. Good luck to them.

No Triple Crown winner again this year, although the Kentucky Derby winner, Mine That Bird, came close to winning the Preakness. With the Belmont coming up Real Soon Now, I have no idea which horse is favored to win. Must go the Internet to seek and find what is needed to know. Such a handy tool to have nowadays . . . Okay, I'm back. It looks like Charitable Man is favored at present. We shall have to see what happens on June 6th. Hey! That's the deadline for your next issue. How serendipitous can you get? I bet you folks planned that out, didn't you?

I really enjoyed Rodford Edmiston's "Joy of High Tech" article again. I won't go into any in-depth analysis, but let's just say I found it very interesting and well written. The bottom line — the value of vagueness — works very well in pretty much all fiction writing, besides scientific theory. Sometimes it's best to let the imagination fill in the blanks. Very interesting article. Thank you, Rodford; glad to have a technophobe on board the HMS *Alexiad*.

Say, I enjoyed *The Dark Knight*. Like Taral Wayne, I didn't care much for Christian Bale's Batman, but Heath Ledger's Joker was one of the darkest turns on that character I've seen. Jack Nicholson still was the best, IMHO, but that was literally for a different audience. Hard to believe that was 20 years ago! Not only that, the first Batman movie is still my favorite of the bunch. All those wonderful toys!

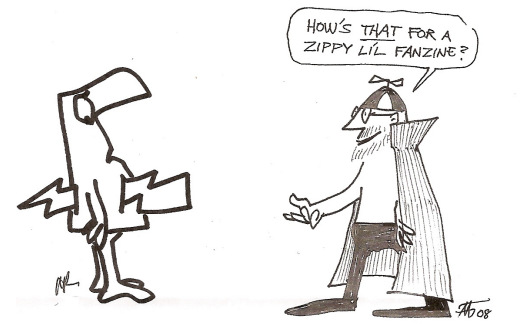
A grateful "thanks for the warning" goes to Chris Garcia for the word on the Butterfinger Buzz candy bar. That one sounds dangerous. It may have been a very small sample, but the results of the test say a fair amount. Too bad Chris didn't run a true blind test: since there were six test subjects, Chris should have had 3 Butterfinger Buzz bars and 3 regular Butterfinger bars, all unwrapped then rewrapped in plain foil and given to subjects at random. Naturally, the test administrator would know which were which to compare results and draw conclusions. Even so, Chris' report serves as a warning to consumers. Let's hear it for empirical science!

Which brings me to the lettercolumn,

always the highlight of each issue. In your final response to Alexis Gilliland's loc, Joe, you noted that Arnie Katz has ended *VFW* (its final name, as opposed to *Vegas Fandom Weekly*, which is how it started out). To the best of my knowledge — and I do hope Arnie writes to you, too — he stopped the zine because he felt *VFW* had run its full and natural course, and this was the right time to end the zine. Arnie does have a new zine in the works, called *Quibble*, which I look forward to. He's a fine fan editor, and for quite a few years *VFW* was one of the better zines running. Thankfully he is not going gently into that good night. He might rage against the dying of the light, for that matter.

I haven't heard from him yet.

—JTM.



And I have to wrap this up with a comment on Darrell Schweitzer's loc. Very interesting historical information, especially the part where Darrell elaborates on the fate of Emperor Hui Zong and his dealings with the Song Dynasty. Things certainly didn't turn out very well for Hui Zong, did they? Too bad his life was a sad refrain on only a northern Song. He would have fared much better if he had been born under a Southern Song. "Just a Song before I go, a lesson to be learned . . ."

I could go on, but I value my life.

Thanks for the zine, Joe and Lisa, and enjoy Anticipation. Say hi to folks for me, especially Lloyd and Yvonne. Let's give that Hugo for Taral Wayne, while we're at it.

From: **Robert S. Kennedy** May 25, 2009  
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Thank you for Vol. 8, No. 2

On March 28 Dean Koontz sent me a personal letter in which he referred to a letter that I had sent him and apologized for the delay in responding. I couldn't remember my letter so checked my records and found that it had been sent on January 24. Dean Koontz is a very busy person and I didn't expect a response to my letter. But, I have written him a few times since 1995 telling him how much I've enjoyed something he has written and making comments. Even though I never expect a response, if my memory is correct he has always responded.

This time he even included a paperback copy of his updated *The Eyes of Darkness* (2008) an earlier edition (1996) to which I had referred in my letter. Dean Koontz is not only a great writer, he is a great person.

On Wednesday, April 29 I went to the DMV in Thousand Oaks to renew my driver's license. I had an appointment for 11:00 a.m. and arrived early at 10:30 am. There was virtually no one there. My eyes were checked, my picture taken, and the written test taken. I was all through before my appointment time. Incredible. Oh, and thanks to my cataract surgery 5+ years ago, once again my license does not say that I have to wear glasses.

I took time off the day after Memorial Day to get some things done. There was the dentist's appointment and then I had to get replacement registration certificates for the two cars. Both of these went amazingly well.

On Friday, May 1, around 6:00 pm there was a short terrific wind. It was followed by an earthquake that shook my house. That was then followed by a short rain. Very weird. The earthquake was apparently centered in the Santa Monica Mountains that are just between here and the Pacific Ocean. The "mountains" are not very high, but are still considered mountains. The earthquake was a magnitude 4.4. It was apparently so little thought of that it only appeared on page 6 of the Los Angeles Daily News the next day.

Wednesday morning on May 6<sup>th</sup> I was awakened by helicopters going around and around. Ear plugs were inserted and I went back to sleep. After getting up later it was noticed that the message light on my answering machine was on. There were two messages, both from the Ventura County Sheriff's Department using, I believe for the first time, the reverse emergency call system. There was a 300 pound bear loose in an apartment complex East of here and they recommended not going outside. Given that the area is over a mile from here I didn't see any problem. The second message was that the bear had been captured and was being transported away from the community. No big deal where I live. But, it must have been rather exciting for the people in the apartment complex.

One of my favorite TV shows was *Life on Mars*. Sadly, it came to an end on April 1. I had an idea of what I hoped they would do with the last episode. Actually, they promised that the ending would not be that he was in a coma and they kept that promise. For a moment toward the end it looked like the ending would be something like what I hoped. No such luck — It was a space ship to Mars. The ending would have been marginally acceptable to me if not for a few problems. First was with the lack of a time lag in communication with Earth. Second was with the political commentary. I guess being Hollywood that they just couldn't help themselves. Also, the female lead (now revealed as a Colonel) keeps smiling and

looking at him as if she was aware of, and maybe had been in, his "dream" story. Then, what was with the un-space suited foot stepping onto Mars? Did that mean it really wasn't over or was it just indicating a new home? Obviously, I was very unhappy to see the end of this program.

*Dollhouse* starring Eliza Dushku kept getting better with each episode. Something I hadn't noticed previously is that she is listed as a Producer. There are, however, various other kinds of producers listed, lots of them. Anyway, I guess this means that Eliza is more than just an actress in the program. A second season appeared to be questionable. But, thankfully it has been renewed.

Another TV program that I like is *Chuck*. Its second season was also questionable. But, it too has been renewed.

Then there is *Bones* that is one of my two favorite TV programs and it has been renewed. *Fringe* has become even more interesting now that they have an alternate Earth.

Apparently *King of the Hill* has been cancelled. A great loss.

*Time Spike* by Eric Flint and Marilyn Kosmatka (2008) was an enjoyable read. It includes another take on the "Grantville Incident" (1632, etc.)—Possible Aliens with a direct attack on Earth or the side effect of an Alien war. Also, are they directly in the past or was a new time-line created? I would like to see *Time Spike* develop into a series.

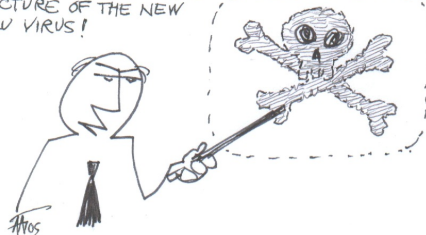
I just finished reading *Captain Nemo: The Fantastic History of a Dark Genius* by K. J. Anderson (2002) and highly recommend it.

Also read was *Laugh Lines* by Ben Bova (2008). It's two novels and four short stories previously published. Living as I do in Southern California where it is impossible to not be on or near a fault line, my favorite was the short story *A Slight Miscalculation*. The novel *Cyberbooks* was quite enjoyable except for the Epilogue which was depressing. If you read it you will understand why.

I saw the new *Star Trek* movie and can't recommend it.

Totally off the subject of SF is the Bernie Madoff PONZI. The May 11, 2009, issue of *Fortune* magazine has an outstanding 22 page article about Bernie and his PONZI. Highly recommended to anyone interested in the subject.

AND THIS SLIDE SHOWS AN ELECTRON MICROSCOPE PICTURE OF THE NEW FLU VIRUS!



For those of us who depend on Social Security for a good portion of our retirement income 2010 and 2011 do not look good. It has

been reported that there will not be any increases in those years. Also, no doubt Medicare will see significant increases in the premium resulting in a major decrease in net income from Social Security.

**Joe**—Thank you for the information on the *Destroyermen* series and that there will be more after the third book. I've ordered *Maelstrom* from Interlibrary loan. Also, I've just purchased *The Lost Fleet: Relentless* by Jack Campbell (John G. Henry).

Note both the review of the book and the appearance in *Analog* of a story about Jen Shen (Paul Sinclair's wife).

**Lisa**—I would set the cat carriers out open a day or two before using them. The cats seemed to like getting in them and sleeping. No problems when it came time to actually use them. Toilet paper shredded by cats? That happened to me until I had the paper come out from the bottom instead of the top. At least for me that solved the problem.

**Rodford Edmiston**: Another very interesting "The Joy of High Tech".

**Taral Wayne**: Personally, I enjoyed *The Dark Knight* and will probably vote it #2 on the Hugo Ballot.

**Jerry Kaufman**: More proof of my mind failing. I've seen *Splash* (1984) and *Blade Runner* (1982), just forgot about Daryl Hannah. You also recommend the Steve Martin modernization of *Cyrano de Bergerac*. The actual title of the movie is *Roxanne* (1987). I think that I've seen it too. I'll try to rent all three movies. She was also in *Kill Bill* that I haven't seen. Thank you for your comments.

**Taras Wolansky**: I first started subscribing to *U.S. News & World Report* when David Lawrence was the Owner/Publisher. Its move to the Left under the current Owner/Publisher was obvious. Nevertheless, it remained a good news magazine for a long time. In the past few years it just deteriorated and no longer held much interest for me. If the *Economist* comes up with another good offer I will probably subscribe to it again. (Its regular subscription price is just too high.)

I used to get USN&WR, but it just got too expensive for what I was getting, and most of what was good wasn't useful to me (i.e. their ratings of universities, hospitals, etc.)

So, Steve Stiles declined the best Fan Artist nomination so as to give Taral a better chance of winning. That's a very nice thing to do. Now if some other nominees in other categories would do the same . . .

"America held Hostage"—Excellent! I had only one problem. Both the Senate and the House have to vote on the confirmation of a replacement Vice President (Amendment XXV, Section 2).

From: **Jim Stumm**

May 18, 2009



Post Office Box 29, Buffalo NY 14223-0029 USA

George W. Price: I don't know if any of the authors of the 14th Amendment expressed any opinion about the *Slaughterhouse* Cases decision. They were mainly concerned with protecting the rights of ex-slaves, although the language of the 14th is general. Since *Slaughterhouse* involved only white men, as far as I know, and there was no racial issue, perhaps the authors of the 14th took no interest in it. But they should have noticed that the distinction the Court made between broad State rights vs. narrow national rights might be detrimental to black people at some future time, which is what did happen in the Jim Crow era.

It occurs to me that the term "States Rights," which I have always thought meant rights of States, might rather, following the *Slaughterhouse* decision, mean rights of persons that are protected by State governments rather than by the Federal Government.

The incorporation of the 1st Amendment into the 14th began with *Gitlow vs. NY* (decided 1925). Gitlow was a socialist who was prosecuted by NY for writing an inflammatory pamphlet. His ACLU lawyer, Walter Pollak, argued that liberty of expression should be protected against abridgement by State governments by the 14th Amendment. The entire Court apparently found this novel theory agreeable, but the majority upheld the conviction of Gitlow anyway. Justices Oliver Wendell Holmes and Louis Brandeis wrote in their dissent that Gitlow should have been set free because words alone, without any violent action, should not be punished. This minority opinion became the prevailing view of the Court in later years.

The first case in which the Supreme Court actually declared a State law unconstitutional on 1st Amendment free speech grounds was *Stromberg vs. California* (1931). Stromberg was convicted of violating California's Red Flag Law because he displayed a red flag at a socialist summer camp. The Supreme Court sensibly struck down this silly law.

The earliest Supreme Court case dealing with obscenity that I have been able to find is *Roth vs. US* (1957). There were many more such cases in the following years.

JTM: You say that you can't remember a time when you couldn't read. I've said the same thing about myself. But now I wonder whether anyone remembers that. Or a time when they couldn't count. I suppose someone might remember learning to read if it was a difficult process. But if reading came easy to them, there's probably no reason to have any particular memory of it. I suppose I learned to read in first grade. This is just speculation, not a memory. Once I had the general idea and knew what sounds the letters represented, I took off on my own and I was always far more advanced than most of my classmates in reading.

That late? I learned to read when I was two and a half.

JTM: About being snowed in for long periods in Buffalo, no, actually I've never been snowed in at all. Sure, we get a lot of snow, but we also have a world class fleet of snow removal equipment, and everybody knows how to cope with snow. There are occasional days when it's too blizzardy and I stay in until it blows over. But I could get around if I wanted to, by bus, subway, or on foot if I couldn't drive. But there is seldom a day when I can't drive because the city does a good job of plowing and salting the streets. Our city government is crony-ridden and incompetent in many ways, but I can't complain about the efficiency of their snow plowing. Our attitude here is: This is Buffalo; it snows; deal with it.

Everybody knows about snow in Buffalo, but it's less widely known that our summer weather is glorious. Also, Buffalo suffers from no other natural disasters, no earthquakes, hurricanes, tornadoes, forest fires, etc., just the occasional blizzard that usually causes little or no property damage or loss of life.



John Purcell: I don't know if the Comstock Law is still on the books. A lot of racy stuff passes through the postal system these days. Back in Comstock's day, he apparently had a free hand in saying what was obscene according to his own opinion. There were people who objected to his views concerning certain items like birth control information and art. But Anthony may have been expressing the views of the majority at that time. Since then, the Supreme Court has wrestled with defining what is obscene and has considerably narrowed the definition.

Cuyler Brooks: The 3 events that are seared into my memory are the JFK assassination, the *Challenger* disaster, and the events of 9/11. But I have no particular memory of the 1st Apollo moon landing, or the *Columbia* disaster. I have images in my mind of the last 2, but that's from seeing that footage repeated over and over in the years since. As for JFK, I was walking home from a college class when a neighbor kid ran by and without stopping, yelled out to me that the President had been shot and killed. My first

reaction was that I flat out didn't believe him. I thought something had happened, but this kid must have gotten the details all confused. But when I got home and turned on the TV I discovered that it was true.

That was on Friday, and for the rest of the weekend, we watched the events unfolding on TV. It was surreal. Culminating with Sunday morning, as I watched the TV coverage of the accused assassin Oswald being moved from one place to another, out of the sidelines jumps this stout man in a suit who shoots Oswald dead. I felt like the world had turned inside out. I never expected to see an actual murder take place live on TV while I watched.

We were driving home from Hopkinsville, on Interstate 64, about to take the US-127 exit, and my father had the car radio on for the news.

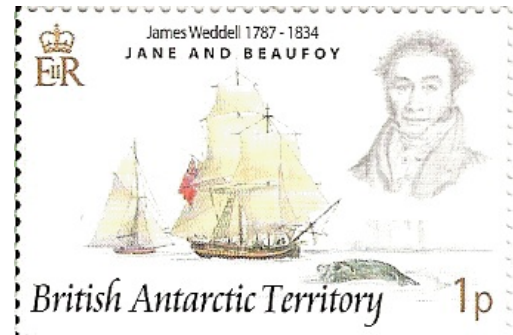
— JTM

From: **Dainis Bisenieks** May 25, 2009  
921 S. St. Bernard Street, Philadelphia, PA 19143-3310 USA

I had long been skeptical of "he said, laughing" in fiction. But when friends from Israel (not seen for a quarter century) came visiting and I was speaking with the utmost cheer, there I was doing it.

On the other hand, turning on one's heel (which George Scithers absolutely does not believe in) is easy to the point of being a reflex. You twist your upper body sharply and let the momentum of that carry you around as you lightly lift one foot and pivot on the heel of the other.

Can you bathe twice in the same river? Is Rome of the Republic the same as Rome of the Principate, and is that still the same after it became traditional and obligator to kowtow to those sacred personages, the Emperors? And the "fall" of a polity may come long after a catastrophe that can never be made good. In the historical note to his novel *The Little Emperors* (1953), Alfred Dugan noted that "in 405 the Empire was in a flourishing condition, victorious over all its enemies . . . the Western Empire was destroyed in the seven years covered by this novel . . ." His central character, after a series of humiliating compromises with the power-hungry, ends his life as the pet scribe and historian of a barbarian "king".



Then came Maximus, bearing the imperial decree cutting off Britannia, who said to the man who called himself governor of Londinium: "You may choose as many emperors as you please. Honorius has freed you at last. You must look to yourselves now — if you can." (Eagle In the Snow, Epilogue)

The closing chapters of another Duggan novel, *The Lady for Ransom*, are set against the background of the Battle of Manzikert (1071); and for Gillian Bradshaw's *The Beacon at Alexandria*, it's the Battle of Adrianople (378). The protagonist of Duggan's *Winter Quarters*, a Gaul in the service of Rome, is taken prisoner at Carrhae and ends up serving different masters on a distant frontier. The epilogue of *Three's Company* shows the funeral of "one of the old, superseded politicians" — the discredited triumvir Lepidus, who had been allowed to live, and chose not to fall on his sword:

"Remember this funeral, Clodilla. You are seeing the last of a bit of old Rome. Do you realize that when that corpse was a young man, he had to persuade the citizens to choose him for office, against the competition of his equals? . . . He must be the last of the true magistrates, the rulers elected by free men. When he was elected praetor there was no government to tell the citizens how they must vote."

Not that I don't appreciate costume romances, but Duggan's novels cannot be so described. Gillian Bradshaw's latest is more nearly a costume romance than some of her other novels. Ruth Downie's novels, the two that have appeared so far, almost escape that label. It's a question, there, not only of differences in personal outlook, but cultural also: the Roman and the Briton. And the question of how to get on with the increasingly significant other. To be continued . . .

*Persona Non Grata*, the third Ruso novel, will be released in the U.S. on pridie idus Iulius, that is July 14.

Spurred by an essay/review in Hugh Kenner's *Historical Fictions*, I read Gilbert Sorrentino's 1979 "novel" *Mulligan Stew*, a metafictional jape. In one episode, a bunch of fugitive fictional characters exchange reminiscences of the awful, awful things their erstwhile employers have caused them to do or witness. "I knew a poor wench who was always forced to remove her stockings without first removing her shoes." Here is a genuine problem for the writer and the reader. When would omission obtrude — and when would explicitness obtrude? The absence, from quest fantasy, of socks is well known. But, for that matter, are undergarments ever mentioned by,

let us say, Tolkien? A couple of times the characters explicitly go to bed, but without any explicit shifting of garments, and both at Rivendell and Lorien they can enjoy untroubled sleep in perfect comfort. This includes boot-wearers, and I have no doubt that Aragorn has socks, with hithlain-reinforced heels and toes, lovingly knitted for him by you-know-who.

It is true that nothing is said about the domestic economy of Elves — only in *The Hobbit* do we get a glimpse of toiling Elves. But of course they have to be their own hewers of wood, drawers of water, and launderers of drawers. Like any institution, Rivendell has to have a Physical Plant tucked away somewhere. I am reminded of an episode somewhere in the work of Jack Vance, where the wanderer comes to a community where he finds a bunch of people enjoying various amenities, and joins them. Then the time rolls around when they must take their turn at being servitors . . . at which point our friend absconds.

I was very pleased to find at a book sale *Popski's Private Army* by Vladimir Peniakoff, Military Book Club following a Bantam paperback. A pleasant feature of this edition is the line drawings depicting (for the most part) weaponry where mentioned in the text — and, in one place, oryx. The book is insightful and humane. The narrator, operating with small groups behind enemy lines, was in his element as at no other time in his life; like Lessingham or Barganax ("I must have action.") but with teamwork, an ethos of not letting down the boys. Which makes a world of difference. The cover, incidentally, depicts a jeep going hell-for-leather under shellfire, exactly what they were at pains to avoid.

I don't think that if Popski had been told that someone near & dear to him had been killed, that he would have grabbed the messenger by the throat, bellowed, "A lie! And here's your death for it!", and produced a weapon. I have the Bantam paperback, also the original British edition, titled merely *Private Army*, which has several bits cut from the Yank version. Popski died of a brain tumor, a cerebral hemorrhage, or suicide (I've seen all three asserted) not long after the book came out.



Before David Irving went around the bend,

he wrote such books as *The Rise and Fall of the Luftwaffe*, which is a life of Erhard Milch, whose concern was that enough planes, and the right planes, should be manufactured. Just as there are books on the Battle of Britain that make no mention at all of Beaverbrook, the Minister of Aircraft Production without whom, etc., so larger histories of the war give no inkling of his role. To be sure, his success was, relatively, a failure; and in the last year of the war, when aircraft production really got rolling (whatever credit may be given to Speer), there were desperate shortages of trained pilots and of fuel. In 1941 Milch had the good sense to hasten production of winter gear for his Luftwaffe, which was then robbed by the unprovided-for Wehrmacht. We get a view inside the Nazi war machine, with hatreds and jealousies, people pulling in different directions, and just plain obstruction. Galbraith remarked on the sheer mediocrity of the top German leaders as seen after the war. Whatever may be said for the fighting qualities of the German soldier, the Germans under Hitler were not fated to be the side that made the fewest blunders.

One matter that Deborah Lipstadt chose to ignore for some reason was that of Captain Jack Broome, who sued Irving for libel over *The Destruction of Convoy PQ-17* and won. On the other hand, I've never heard that Kurt Vonnegut ever admitted that his source for the events in *Dresden*, Irving's *The Destruction of Dresden*, had been proven false.

I've caught up somewhat on the work of Douglas Hofstadter, reading *Le Ton beau de Marot* and *I Am a Strange Loop*. In the first, I am glad to see that he has discovered some of my favorite jeux d'esprit, among them Poul Anderson's "Uncleftish Beholding". Has he yet discovered the works of Jasper Fforde? You'd think they would be right down his alley. It is of interest that *The Eyre Affair* has been translated into Polish. (Of other translations I have no knowledge.) My friend Marek didn't think that the transmogrified version of the name Millon De Floss was at all effective. I can think of bits in this and other books that would give a translator severe difficulties.



Reading about the latest *Messenger* flyby in *Science*, I learn that the adjective for Mercury is

Hermean. Hermes was, of course, the, ahem, messenger of the Greek Gods, equated with Mercury in the interpretatio Romana.

Also the name of the messenger of D. Caecilius Metellus in John Maddox Roberts's books, with cause.

— JTM

From: **John Hertz** May 28, 2009  
 236 S. Coronado Street No. 409, Los Angeles, CA 90057-1456 USA  
**Best Fan Writer Hugo Nominee**

Churchill's memoir *The Second World War* I've probably read four times, a superb work of literature deserving of the Nobel Prize it won, a hystory composed mostly of what he wrote in dispatches and minutes. I say this as one who does not concur in his politics — but I don't need a book to be agreed with.

Not only for fans of Poul Anderson, there is nothing like a Dane!

The Moffatts say they introduced MacDonald to Dean Grennell; JDM may have consulted DG about pistol practice (and other gun facts in *Scarlet Muse*).

Thanks for the *The City and the Stars* reference in *The Reluctant Famulus* #69.

Perhaps "Rabbi" is not a surname because us Jews were still using patronyms in the days when "Deacon" and "Priest" emerged.

From: **Sue Burke** June 3, 2009  
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Joy V. Smith: Thanks. I'm having great fun with *Amadis of Gaul*. I'd like to remind Alexiad readers that it has a Creative Commons 3.0 license, so sharing, re-posting, performance, display, and derivative works are permitted and encouraged.

Amadis slash, ooh, isn't it lovely.

I'm especially pleased to present a guest commentary by Spanish science fiction and fantasy writer José Miguel Pallarés on June 4. He tells how, as a boy, he found a dusty copy from 1837 in his family home in a medieval mountain town, and how it changed his life.

Taras Wolansky: You ask why *Amadis* wasn't revived when a lot of other chivalric tales were, and if *Don Quixote* had anything to do with it.

Excellent question. The Romanticism of the 18th century looked back to pre-Renaissance sources for "authentic" emotional inspirations in contrast to Neoclassic rationalism. But Romanticism also stressed nationalism, so its followers looked for local heroes: revivals of Arthur and his knights in Britain, of Parzival and Tristan in Germany, of Roland in France, and of El Cid and Don Quixote in Spain. (When

chivalric novels went out of style, *Quixote* suffered, too.) But *Amadis* was from Gaul, an imaginary kingdom, and his deeds spanned Europe. He was everyone's hero — and no one's. In Spain in the 1800s, *Amadis* made a weak comeback, but only as a tangent to *Quixote*. Censorship, rather than *Quixote*, killed *Amadis* in the 1600s. (It depicts out-of-wedlock sex favorably.)

"Local heros": that was where Ossian came in. And then there was the Kalevala in the 1800s.

— JTM

Joseph T Major: You ask why *Amadis* wasn't republished in 1969 by Lin Carter. Simply because no good translation was available. In fact, at that time, it was tough to get a good copy of the book in Spanish in Spain.

Also, JTM, thanks for the review of Mark S. Geston books. A friend recently lent me his copy of *Out of the Mouth of the Dragon* and begged me to read it. It's been moved up to the top of the pile.

Christopher J. Garcia: Butterfinger Buzz? ¡Dios mío! We're behind the times here, and that may be just as well.

Finally, a true story: I belong to an international organization of American expatriates, and we recently held an election. Each country had to send its ballots to the central office — but Americans living abroad tend to adopt the personalities of their host countries. The ballots from Germany arrived exactly on time, neatly boxed with color-coordinated indexes. The vote from Spain arrived three days late. The ballots from Italy were an organizational disaster, and in France, no one could figure out whose job it was to send them in.



From: **George W. Price** June 4, 2009  
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April Alexiad:

Taral Wayne's review of *The Dark Knight* casually mentions the "bad judgment of George Lucas for including an annoying Roger Rabbit knock-off" in *The Phantom Menace*. This reminded me of an odd boo-boo in the original *Who Framed Roger Rabbit* movie. Early in the film, characters are talking in a bar, and through

the window you see a streetcar go by. Then another streetcar goes by the other way. But it isn't really another car, it's the same clip of the first car played backward. You can tell because the trolley pole is slanted the same way both times, though moving in opposite directions. The movie makers obviously did not know that the pole has to slant backward to the direction of travel. When a streetcar of that era got to the end of the line it did not use a loop to turn around. The two ends of the car were symmetrical, so they just pulled down the pole at one end and put up the pole at the other end. What had been the back end became the front end for the return trip. The movie made it look like a streetcar backing up (which they rarely did precisely because that tended to make the pickup at the end of the trolley pole jump off the wire). Perhaps the movie makers were accustomed to modern "light rail" cars using pantograph pickups that stick straight up regardless of the direction of travel, and it never occurred to them that the old cars worked differently.

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My thanks to Alexis Gilliland for explaining 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" (which would have deprived the Jim Crow states of representation in the House in proportion to the disenfranchised black population). As Gilliland says — and which I must have known, though I didn't think of it when I wrote — the NAACP used the routes available, and that "obvious constitutional remedy" could never have gotten through Congress, dominated as it was then by segregationists.

Still, I wonder how it would have gone over if the Court had foregone the psychological analysis and simply recognized what everyone already knew: that "separate but equal" was a lie, had always been a lie, and had always meant "separate in order to avoid being equal."

\*\*\*\*\*

Darrell Schweitzer and Jim Stumm offer widely different ideas on what caused the Fall of the Roman Empire. I do not feel qualified to say who is right; in fact, I suspect that the events were so complicated that no one is qualified to judge, and no one ever will be.



We can talk learnedly about the broad sweep of events, and centuries later try to discern trends that were invisible to the participants. But so much of history is contingent that it seems likely that if any of an infinite number of simple events had been done just slightly differently, history would have been set on a very different and unguessable path. "For want of a nail . . ." A sergeant is hung over, so he doesn't push his men quite as hard as he should have, so they arrive at the crucial battle too late to save the day. An Asian barbarian chief decides to dally with his new concubine a few days longer instead of starting his army on the way to invade Europe, and then the weather changes and it's too late to set out this year. Trivial reasons can have huge consequences. Asimov and Hari Seldon notwithstanding, there are no laws of psychohistory, and there is no historical inevitability. Or we could say that history doesn't get set on any path; there are no paths; that's just a metaphor by which we try to impose order on our understanding of an inherently disorderly process.

The Lord of the Rings into three volumes, and yet the creation of the concept of "trilogy" as a fantasy standard is one of the more significant concepts of the field and era.

— JTM

\*\*\*\*\*

Rodney Leighton mentions that a "big bag of books was mailed in the United Kingdom 3 days later than you mailed *Alexiad* and they arrived on the same day!" It was only a year or so ago that I learned that there is no longer any surface mail to countries overseas. It used to take two or three months to send books to Australia by slow freighter, and air mail was prohibitively expensive. Now there is only one class of foreign mail; everything goes by air, just like domestic mail. Sometimes the postal service actually does improve.

\*\*\*\*\*

Robert S. Kennedy comments on "the screwy weather we have had" in California. In my long life, I have concluded that in most places the weather is always screwy. That is, it is only in memory that weather evens out neatly to "cold in winter and hot in summer"; in experience at the time there are always wide and wild variations around the norm. In the 1930s my father used to complain about how strange the weather had become compared to when he was a boy in the 1890s; he blamed it on the cannonading in Europe during the Great War some twenty years before. In the 1960s, people blamed the weird weather on the A-bomb tests of the 1950s. Now it gets blamed on global warming, and in a century it will no doubt be blamed on something else.

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Richard Dengrove thinks that I have two contradictory theories of what has caused our financial crisis. First, that the Community Reinvestment Act inspired lenders to write mortgages that couldn't be paid off, and second, "that the evil bureaucrats failed to regulate the banking and the mortgage industry." The first part is right; the second part I don't recognize as being based on anything that I said.

The CRA was imposed as a way to encourage lending to minorities who would otherwise get left out. But, as Mr. Dengrove points out, "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."

All perfectly true. And why were they all so eager? It wasn't that they all suddenly got greedy. As the *Wall Street Journal* never tires of pointing out, greed is a constant. So why did we get such an explosion of greed at this particular time? Answer, because they knew that the federal government — in the form of Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac — would take any losses

that might eventuate. And the Federal Reserve would inflate the money supply to grant absurdly easy credit. That's what lured the greedheads out of the woodwork. And they were right; the government (i.e., the taxpayer) is taking the losses.

The metaphor that occurs to me is the fence, the man who buys stolen goods. Suppose a fence comes to town and lets it be known that he will buy anything, no matter how hot, and pay a good price, no questions asked. Is it the least bit surprising that the rate of burglary explodes? In the same way — except that it was all legal — Uncle Sam stood ready to buy up the toxic paper without limit, so the toxic paper proliferated outrageously.

I really don't know why Mr. Dengrove thinks I blame this on deregulation. It was quite the opposite: it was the regulations, particularly the CRA, that produced the mess.

Many commentators have blamed the crisis on deregulation. I wish they would tell me just what these regulations were that we supposedly got rid of, and then walk me step by step through the explanation of just how keeping them would have prevented the boom and collapse.

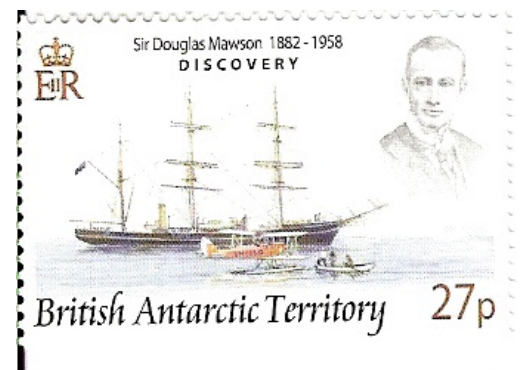
From: **Taras Wolansky** June 6, 2009  
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*Alexiad*, April 2009:

*Review of Niven & Pournelle's Escape from Hell: "Now, about thirty-three years (Earth time) and six months (Hell time) later, Carpenter is back in the flesh in Hell . . . [to verify] that anyone in Hell can . . . be rescued from their situation . . ."* You don't mention how Carpenter gets to Hell — some kind of crucifixion, by any chance?

It was malfeasance. In the first book, Carpenter had been taking part in a drinking contest at a convention, and fell out of a window.

---Grant



Comments to Jerry Kaufman: "Which version of *Blade Runner* [is best] — the



Not from James Blish's "A Case of Conscience".

Or like the scene in *The King Must Die* where Theseus is annoyed at being called a pimp by a sailor from the ship he was going to take from Troizen to Athens, and decides to go by land, thus going through Eleusis . . .

"Yet I see, when I look back, that he let flow the blood of as many men as if he had been some great War Leader; the blood of chiefs and princes, and the blood of a king. It may be if all were known, palaces and kingdoms have fallen by such men. But they go to their unmarked graves, and never know it."

For example, I've never found the name of the George Allen & Unwin editor who decided to break

original 'film noir' version or the later director's cut? . . . Since the movie is following that [noir] model otherwise, there seems to be a net loss by that change." Good point. In its great, original version *Blade Runner* is a kind of skewed *film noir*, because the detective/narrator never finds out what was really going on, that is, what the four replicants were doing on Earth in the first place. But the major harm the director's cut does, something which perplexes or disgusts everybody else who worked on the film, it seems, is removing the film's central conflict by making replicant-hunter Rick Deckard a replicant himself. You should read what Rutger Hauer, who played the leader of the replicants, says about it in his memoir.

*Review of The Bloody White Baron by James Palmer:* The old Russian word for "neocoon" is usually rendered "zhid" or possibly "zhyd", not "zyd". In Russian it's considered offensive ("Yevrei" is the polite word); while in Ukraine it can be OK — depending on your tone of voice!

*Rodford Edmiston:* "Since a vacuum is the least matter we know of light is fastest there." What's the current story on using quantum tunneling to send particles FTL?

*Tara Wayne:* In *The Dark Knight*, Christian "Bale looked suggestively Latino to me." He was born in Wales of South African parents; doesn't seem to be any Latino connection. On the subject of "ethnic-looking" superheroes, the quarter-Japanese and three-quarters everything else Dean Cain (born Dean Tanaka) played Superman on TV in the early Nineties.

You're right, though, that Western standards of beauty are shifting: why all these actresses are having collagen injected into their lips.

"Why some cop doesn't just empty a pistol at" Heath Ledger's Joker. For that matter, why doesn't somebody just tell him to shut up! In the film, everybody stands around listening to the Joker's pearls of wisdom.

I have always found the Joker a boring villain, regardless of who plays him. He lacks the tragic and human dimension of the three villains in Tim Burton's *Batman Returns*, for example. And, as you point out, Ledger's Joker is even more one-dimensional than the character is in the comic books.

*Richard Dengrove:* Why do you think "the idea of oceans contradicted the idea of canals" in Garrett P. Serviss's 1898 *Edison's Conquest of Mars*?

*Alexis Gilliland:* Given the power J. Edgar Hoover had held over American Presidents for so many years, it's not surprising Nixon would pick an FBI director who would recognize that, under the Constitution, he works for the Chief Executive.

*Darrell Schweitzer:* "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." Darrell, your excellent scheme of looking at the Roman Empire "in terms of Chinese historiography"

may also have application to more recent history!

*AL du Pisani:* Sounds like there are still problems with getting SF books in South Africa. But note that there's a lot of stuff available online these days, for free; for example, <http://www.baen.com/library/>

*Jason K. Burnett:* "I don't know anyone who's sufficiently flush and Heinlein-crazy to fork out 2 grand up front for the [Virginia edition]." Obviously some people are, like the space tourist who donated a copy of *The Moon is a Harsh Mistress* as accession #1 to the International Space Station library.

However, it is another sign that Heinlein's legacy is being mismanaged. If you look at the retrospective "best of" series starting with 1939, *Isaac Asimov Presents The Great SF Stories*, you'll see Asimov wrote introductions to several classic Heinlein stories. But the estate never let them have any Heinlein stories; for anyone who uses the series to learn the classics of the field, Heinlein's stories don't exist.

The same thing happened with the "Integral Edition" of Jack Vance's work. When Robert Silverberg wrote about it in his *Asimov's* column, I thought of writing him that it's a mausoleum for Vance's work, not an outreach tool. I would have been willing to pay the \$1500, but the limited edition of only 500 copies had already sold out, bought by the usual Vance collectors.

GOD AND I PLOTTED  
OUR FOREIGN POLICY,  
BUT IF GOD HAD TOLD  
ME WHAT HE HAD IN  
MIND FOR THE COUNTRY,  
I WOULD HAVE DONE SOME-  
THING ELSE!



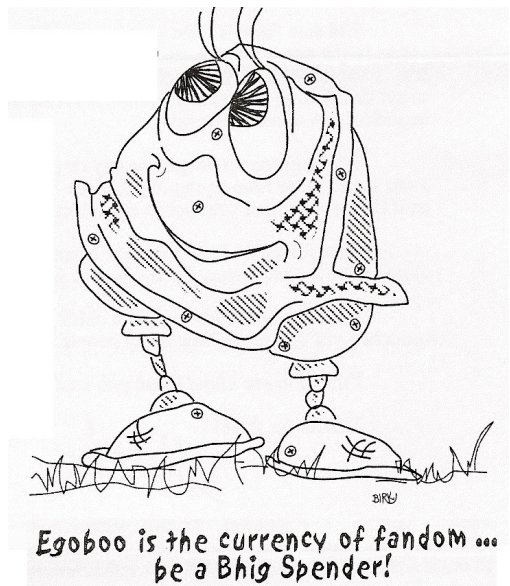
Whatever the cost (I've seen \$2500, for the initial Meisha Merlin set), the Virginia Edition

seems to be badly mismanaged in general. It's also far behind schedule, just like Bill Patterson's official Heinlein biography.

— JTM

**WAHF:**

Lloyd Daub, with various items of interest.  
Mike Brown and Pat McCray, saying hello.  
C. D. Carson, of *Luna*, asking for an exchange (Yes We Can!). Send them your zines.  
Marc Schirmeister, who appreciated the use of his illos and sent more.



The Anticipation programming department is keeping us waiting, or has been less than proactive in our quest to have a fanzines panel, preferably on Saturday August 8 aout, samedi. Everyone, check the message board and leave a message for Guy Lillian or me or preferably both of us.

Hugo recommendations: I couldn't really get through *Anathem* and couldn't stomach *Little Brother*. No novel recommendations this year, in other words.

Meanwhile, I write fiction, even though I doubt it'll be published by a real publisher, since I don't have the triumphant Nazis, nuclear devastation, etc. that are mandatory. If anyone wants a file, let me know.

## SO LONG AND THANKS FOR ALL THE MATRIX

“... to create a unit of immense computing power,” Morpheus said. “The Matrix is a giant operating system, meant to harness the computing power of the minds of all humanity in the pursuit of some strange question.”

“What question?” Neo said. Outside the tatty hotel room, lightning thundered and rain cataracted down from the sky — which, or so this man said, was all an illusion.

“We have no idea. Come . . .”

Neo lay in the bed, feeling the agony of reality come to him. Morpheus, the beautiful young woman who was Trinity, cynical Cypher, devoted Tank, they were the reality, and the world he had seen was the dream. The dream that was the operating system for the greatest computer ever conceived.

What would be the question that would require billions and billions of human minds to process? He struggled to sit upright, failing as his unused muscles proved unequal to the task, and flopped back, breathing heavily.

The door opened with a metallic grind. “Neo,” Morpheus said as he entered.

“Hel . . . hello.”

“I’ve been meaning to ask you about this one matter. When we pulled you into the *Nebuchadnezzar*, you said something.”

Neo lifted one arm with glacial slowness and rubbed the bridge of his nose with forefinger and thumb. While gathering his thoughts, he said, trying to buy time, “You said, ‘Welcome to the real world.’”

“And you said ‘Forty-two’. Do you remember?”

He struggled, “It’s like I was asked that and I needed to answer in the form of a question. . .” he said, his voice trailing off in weakness.

“Your life was in jeopardy the moment you took the red pill. We had to find you before the Agents did. That was why we were so urgent about pulling you out. And if we lost the question . . .”

. . . Agent Smith began to divide and multiply. There were more of him, nine across and three, four, five — Neo had a satori, a sudden realization of the meaning of life, the Matrix, and everything, and he said, without even thinking, “What do you get when you multiply six by nine!?”

A giant Sound pervaded everything. For a moment, the Smiths, the rain, the motion all froze, stopped — and then it was all gone.

Neo stood alone in a universe of blue. Whether it was sky or roof, he could not tell. He turned slowly, looking for something, anything in this pervasive blue. He heard the slap of feet and looked in the direction that the sound came from.

It was from an old man, with long white hair and a scraggly beard, in a white robe. He was doddering along, looking at the only other thing in the all-pervasive blueness, Neo himself. There was nothing to do but wait.

When the old man was close enough to be heard he said in a tottery old voice, “You’d be this Neo, I take it.”

“Yes.”

“Well, finish the question.”

“I don’t understand. Who are you, anyway?”

The old man seemed to heave a sad, resigned sigh as he said, “My name is Slartibartfast, and I was the designer of this world. One of the designers. The world as it was, that is. Won a prize for it, you know . . .”

Neo flinched as a small white mouse ran over his foot.

— Not by Douglas Adams or the Wachowski Brothers

Over on [alternatethehistory.com](http://alternatethehistory.com) they just had to ask about Cthulhu versus 1984 . . .

He gazed up at the enormous Face. Forty æons it had taken him to learn what kind of eldrich spawn was hidden beneath those writhing tentacles. O abhorrent, blasphemous misunderstanding! O cthonic exile from the squamous, rugose integument! Two rivulets of deliquescent brains trickled from his ears down the sides of his neck. But it was all mephitic, everything was all mephitic, the struggle was finished, the stars were right. He had won the cosmic victory over himself. *Iä! Iä! Ph’nglui mglw’nafh Cthulhu R’lyeh wgah’nagl’fhtagn!*

— Not from *Anno MCMLXXXIV*, by H. P. Lovecraft

Co-Editors: Lisa & Joseph Major  
Co-Publishers: Joseph & Lisa Major  
Writers, Staff: Major, Joseph, Major, Lisa, & McCormick, Grant

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