

ALEXIAD

(ΑΛΞΙΙΑΣ)

\$2.00

Another Worldcon is over. For us, it was a long exhausting trip and we were glad when we finally stumbled back into our house. After a telling of some of our adventures in Montreal I was asked if I would go back there if the Worldcon was held there again. My automatic answer was yes. The followup question was why. My answer was because it's Worldcon. It means being a fan among other fans from all over the world. For a few days you can actually see the people who are usually just names on emails or paperstuffs which arrive at the house. Nobody at a Worldcon lacks a sense of wonder. Worldcon is not just about the fabulous panels. It is about renewing our sense of fannish communities.

— Lisa

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The 84th Running of the Hambletonian (1st leg of the Trotting Triple Crown) was **August 8, 2009** at Meadowlands Racetrack in East Rutherford, New Jersey. Muscle Hill won by six lengths, setting a new record.

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

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

Printed on August 20, 2009

Deadline is **October 1, 2009**

Reviewer's Notes

I suppose it's time for the annual Hugo Voting Process Discontent Editorial. As usual, people from all over complained about how inadequate the voting process was. Strangely, there was no indication that the complainers had nominated. At which point the standard complaint that the voting fee is too high was brought forward, and proposals for a lower, or no voting fee were advanced. To which the spectre of Hugo-buying was invoked. In addition, there were the uninformed opinions, people who thought the awards were juried.

This goes round and round every year.

I wonder . . . is this part of the shift from participation to consuming? Someone whose con experience is going to see the blooper reel followed by a purchase of an autographed photo of Nonspeaking Klingon #6 is going to have a hard time imagining the idea of voting for an award. Or for that matter, actually writing for a publication. Yes, even the days of Mary Sue and slash may be seen as prodigies of pubbing!

I've found out how setting up a ladder can produce interesting results. That is, the cut and bruise I got when the ladder toppled and gave me a whack in the face. Home maintenance is a problem, and there is also the prospect of cutting the grass.

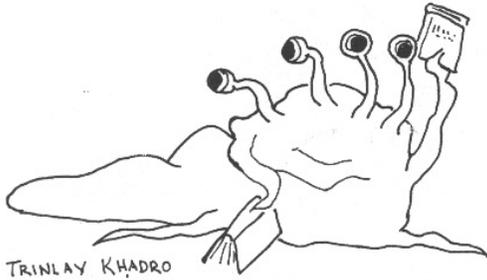
Meanwhile, I worry about being riffed out of my current position to become, say, a commuter counter, standing at the Salt River bridge rain or shine, sun or snow, with a clicker, counting all the cars that enter the county (6 am to 10 am shift) and leave (3 pm to 7 pm shift).

I can imagine some people would be pleased to hear of that.

— Joe

RANDOM JOTTINGS

by Joe



The Senior Surviving WorldCon Guest of Honor is **Richard Matheson**, GoH at SoLaCon, the 16th WorldCon at South Gate in '58.

Who comes next?

John Berry FanGoH, Detention 1959
Brian Aldiss ProGoH, LonCon II 1965
E. C. Tubb UKGoH, HeiCon 1970
Robert Silverberg USGoH, HeiCon
Herbert W. Francke GerGoH, HeiCon
Elliot K. Shorter FanGoH, HeiCon
Frederik Pohl ProGoH, LACon I, 1972
Juanita Coulson FanGoH, LACon I
Jay Kay Klein FanGoH, Discon II 1974
Ursula LeGuin GoH, Aussiecon I 1975
Mike Glickson FanGoH, Aussiecon I
Donald Tuck AussieGoH, Aussiecon I
Harlan Ellison® GoH, Iguanacon 1977

Fred Pohl is also the Senior Surviving SF Writer.

We regret to report the death of **Elizabeth Ann "Jackie" Maslin Ronne** on **June 14, 2009**, in Bethesda, Maryland, of complications of cancer, Alzheimer's Disease, and old age. Born **October 13, 1919** in Baltimore, she married fellow explorer Finn Ronne (né "Rønne") on March 18, 1941.

Jackie was best known as being one of the two First Overwintering Women, on the Ronne Antarctic Expedition of 1946-1948. The Ronne Ice Shelf (formerly known as Edith Ronne Land) in Antarctica is named for her. She herself made fifteen trips to the Antarctic, being the seventh woman to land at the pole, in 1971, and half of the first married couple to do so.

(Brenda Clough, author of "Might Be Some Time", the story of the rescue of L. E. G. Oates, was present at the memorial service.)

<http://www.ronneantarcticexplorers.com/index.htm>

We regret to report the death of **Dr. Jerri Lin Nielsen FitzGerald** on **June 25, 2009** at her home in Southwick, Massachusetts. Born March 1, 1952 in Youngstown, Ohio, Dr. Nielsen, as she was better known, was best known for her dramatic bout with cancer while being herself base physician at the Amundsen-Scott South Pole Station in the 1999-2000 season. She recounted her story in *Ice Bound: A Doctor's Incredible Battle for Survival at the South Pole* (with Maryanne Vollers, 2001). She

had remarried after her return from the Pole.

The cancer returned in 2005, spreading to her liver, bones, and eventually brain. She remained active until three months before her death.

Clarification on Matters Officially Heinlein: It seems that the first half of the Virginia Edition is out from the new publisher, and the first half of the Official Biography has been dispatched to the publisher, for publication sometime in 2010. In a discussion on the Heinlein Forum, Bill Patterson revealed that the planners for the V.E. had more enthusiasm than ability.

There was a news item about a birfer (one of those people who thinks that the President was actually born in Kenya and that his parents engaged in an expensive and complicated deceit for reasons that could not have been to any point at the time), an Army Reserve Major, who used his belief to argue that he couldn't be legally sent to Afghanistan by a non-President. He wasn't, apparently, but perhaps the Army realized that wackos don't do well in combat zones. What was really interesting was his name:

Stefan Frederick Cook

Not a descendant, since the doctor only had a daughter, who only had a daughter, but possibly related.

Ruth Downie's third novel about C. Petronius Ruso has been published in the States: *Persona Non Grata: A Novel of the Roman Empire* (2009; Bloomsbury USA; ISBN 978-1596916098; \$24.00), which takes Ruso and Tullia to Gaul to deal with family matters. Being in the Petronii seems to be as hazardous as being an old friend of Jessica Fletcher. While I seem to have missed John Maddox Roberts's latest *SPQR* novel, *Oracle of the Dead* (2008; Minotaur Books; ISBN 978-0-312-38093-9; \$24.95), where D. Caecilius Metellus tries to get as far away from his wife's uncle as possible, only to find that spree killing does not respect oracles.

While the Flashman Papers lie in limbo after the unfortunate demise of their editor, the esteemed George Macdonald Fraser, a more contemporary version portends. *Coward on the Beach* by James Delingpole (2007; Bloomsbury; ISBN 978-0-7475-82747; \$14.95) has the somewhat unfortunately-named Dick Coward, scion of an old family, plunged into the first tale of what portends to be about every disaster sustained during the Second World War. In this case, having barely survived an unrecounted (this volume, anyhow) adventure in Burma (and there are other references, some of which make him look like a veritable Lanny Budd), in order to be considered for the inheritance of his estate he has to prove himself a hero, which means he becomes a private in the Royal Marines, being sent against one of the more heavily defended parts of the Normandy Beaches. (His brother has the Military Cross with Bar, and the only way to outdo that is

usually fatal.) Bloodshed, death, bizarre romantic encounters, and much muddling through ensue, with the promise of much more to come . . .

OBITS

We regret to report the death of **Ken Moore** on **June 30, 2009**, at home in Nashville. Khen had been a leading figure in Nashville fandom ever since the seventies, having organized the first convention there, Kubla Khan, and having been president of the local club. He had been in declining health for the past two years.

The funeral was July 5, with a memorial service at which all and sundry were invited to recall their memories of Khen.

I didn't go to the first Kubla, but I started going afterwards. Khen was quite the character, particularly as he grew older, rangier, paler, and so on, going about in shorts and a short-sleeved shirt, delivering opinions and chat. He was energetic, friendly, convivial (ask anyone about his swill), and in the end all too self-destructive.

When I saw that gaunt, pale figure at ConCave this spring I was amazed. I hope he had a good time there. We'll miss him.

We regret to report the death of **Charles N. Brown** on **July 12, 2009** on the way home from ReaderCon. Charlie was best known for having founded and continued the fanzine-become-semiprozine *Locus*, the key information source for professionals in the field.

MONARCHIST NEWS

In the name of God, the Mighty, the Omnipotent. Blessed be His Majesty al-Malik 'Abd Allāh bin al-Husayn bin Talāl Banu Hashim, of the blood of the Prophet, upon whom be Peace. His Majesty has, in accordance with the constitution of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, proclaimed his eldest son **Prince Husayn bin al-'Abd Allāh** as Crown Prince of the Kingdom. May Peace and the Mercy of God be upon them.

DAVID EDWARD JONES

November 3, 1947 — August 8, 2009

by Lisa Major

My cousin was a good husband and father. He was also a talented architect and his funeral was held in a church he himself had designed. At family gatherings he was always pitching in until his health prevented him. He hung on until his daughter returned from summer camp. His presence will be much missed at our future family gatherings. David suffered the tragic loss of his son and came through with his personality unchanged. Afterwards he and his wife Betty adopted a Chinese orphan they gave the apt name Amie Joy. David held to his life until his daughter returned from summer camp and then died peacefully after a long illness. There are no real words for the loss his death is to our family.

A TRAGEDY OF CUSTOMS

Review by Joseph T Major of
*THE LEGEND OF SIGURD AND
GUDRÚN*

by J. R. R. Tolkien,
edited by Christopher Tolkien
(Houghton Mifflin Harcourt; 2009;
ISBN 978-0-547-27342-6; \$26.00)

Sometime in the early 1930s, at a point where his attempt to write a great poem of the tragic and beautiful romance of Beren and Lúthien had fallen by the wayside (as a good Catholic, he wouldn't use the "a" word), Oxford's professor of Anglo-Saxon took to his uncredited side-line. He was, you see, also lecturing on Ancient Norse. And so, he set out to write a lay, in Norse style but in English, about the life and death of Sigurd, and of Guðrún.

So many will say, "Ah, Wagner!" Not quite. This is an attempt to go back to Wagner's sources. There's no room for "When does the next swan leave?" and other such raillery here. Tolkien is presenting the grim Norse life of violence and betrayal, where no one, not even the Gods (or perhaps *particularly* the Gods) could be trusted. Robert E. Howard might have liked this.

And it's not a translation. This is original work, a poetic rendition, done in alliterative verse. This was where he got some practice for some of the verses in *The Lord of the Rings*. L. Sprague de Camp described writing a little Spenserian verse and wondered how the man had been able to compose six books, much less considered the two dozen he had in mind for *The Faerie Queene* (and when it came time to do his own approach to that, *The Castle of Iron* (with Fletcher Pratt; 1941, 1950) did it in prose). Tolkien did this, evidently without any problems beyond his usual always fiddling with just another bit to get it just so. (He really needed someone to steal his manuscripts and take them to the publisher.)

As for the content, what happens is that Sigurd quests for the most beautiful woman in the worlds, Brynhild. Rescuing her from her magical wards, he resolves to marry her once he has a proper kingdom to support her in the style which she deserves. However, the easiest way to do so involves the old trick of getting half the kingdom, namely the princess's hand in marriage. His marrying Guðrún does rather disappoint Brynhild, particularly when she gets tricked into marrying Atli the ruler of the Huns. Sigurd is killed in an ambush, Brynhild kills herself to be cremated at his side, Guðrún kills Atli in a fire and then drowns herself.

Obviously this is not "and they all lived happily ever after", much less "oh the embarrassment". This is the fictional reflection of the real world of the Norse, where nearly everybody did die violently and prematurely.

The Legend of Sigurd and Guðrún is not for everyone; some don't like Tolkien's verse, some don't care for alliterative verse in general, and some prefer an ending where someone is around to tell the tale. It provides a window into

Tolkien's mind, the way that *For Us, the Living: A Comedy of Customs* (2003; NHOL G.004) does for Robert A. Heinlein.

THE PHÈDRIAD

Review by Joseph T Major of
NAAMAH'S KISS
by Jacqueline Carey
(Grand Central Publishing; 2009;
ISBN 978-0446198035; \$29.99)
A *Kushiel* Novel

"Give her forty lashes with the whip!"

As the constables tore down the barbarian woman's clothes, Judge Dee noted the disgusting fishbelly-white appearance of her skin, the loathesomely abundant hair on her body, and most of all the tattoo on her back, which reached from her buttocks to the nape of her neck, and was as intricate as those etched into the flesh of the courtesans from the ugly little islands of Jih-pen, off the coast of Korea. As she knelt to accept the flogging, the woman spoke, and Master Lo, her master, translated.

"Most excellent magistrate, this unworthy person states that she is accustomed to receiving two or three times as many lashes, on a daily basis, in the exercises of her inferior religion."

— Not by Jacqueline Carey or Robert van Gulik

At least she got far enough out of her comfort zone to have all the characters of the previous works, Phèdre, Imriel, and their consorts, concubines, and customers, be legendary figures from long ago. And looking at it, sometimes I wonder if Carey, having bombed at copying Tolkien, is instead emulating David Eddings. That is to say, the plot of this and the presumed successor works is much the same, an innocent person becomes sexually empowered through a series of encounters, which in turn lead him or her to political intrigue and foreign adventure.

Moirin's family has fallen on bad times; something to do with bears and breaking up marriages (see also *Kushiel's Justice* (2007; reviewed in *Alexiad* V. 6 #4)) and she has to live in a cave. However, they can't pin a thing on her and she ends up getting to go to Terre d'Ange. Or perhaps having to go, after her first lover is so tragically killed.

There she ends up getting into the sort of entanglements that tend to end up with someone being killed. Or is it being simultaneously the lover of the Queen, the Dauphin [her stepson, fortunately], and the Queen's lover means having a very full and very complicated appointment book? Fortunately for Moirin's schedule, Master Lo, a visitor from the mysterious East has come to Terre d'Ange, and his bodyguard Bao turns out to be curious about the configuration of lo quan women.

Before Moirin can find herself being conveniently used as the one at fault in a romantic entanglement, someone comes to rescue her. Well, not her directly, but it seems

that the Emperor's heiress, Princess Snow Tiger, has some rather serious problems. Like, killing people with superhuman fury. Master Lo, absent in barbarian lands, may know how to cure her.

Moirin is quite glad to go with them. Not that all is well under heaven. In fact, the Emperor is thinking he has lost the Mandate of Heaven. Lord Jiang, the former father-in-law of Snow Tiger, was just a little put out that his son didn't quite survive the wedding night, and has risen up in rebellion against Emperor Zhu. (Now if Lord Jiang had had a banner with, not a white dragon on blue, but a white sun on blue, and his top counsellors were his brothers-in-law Lord Song and Lord Kong, not to mention his wife Lady Meiling . . .)

To avert the rebellion of Lord Jiang, Moirin has to take Snow Tiger to White Jade Mountain so she can be cured. Since this involved going through the territory Lord Jiang controls, the trip might be met by a few inconveniences. At least Carey is aware that traveling with the means she describes is a little more inconvenient than other forms of travel are.

And if Snow Tiger can be healed, Lord Jiang and his sinister subordinate Black Sleeve stopped, and the entire memory of the Divine Thunder erased from its users' minds [be fun when the next tribe of nomads overruns the place], Bao can set off to find his background and Moirin hers when this is . . . **[To Be Continued]**

SHARE OF GLORY

Review by Joseph T Major of
CONTACT WITH CHAOS
by Michael Z. Williamson
(Baen; 2009;
ISBN 978-1-4165-9154-2; \$24.00)

I've noted that science fiction writers, across the political spectrum, even those who denounce governmental activism, will write well of covert government agencies formed for the purpose of destabilizing planetary governments that are insufficiently progressive. Not surprisingly, there is a counteraction, where researchers investigating a newly-encountered planet strive mightily to prevent the newly met aliens from becoming aware of any technology more advanced than theirs, if having weird beings who come from another world isn't proof enough. And then you get things like *Xenocide* (1991) where after long and elaborate efforts to persuade the piggies that humans were Just Like Them, the investigators wondered why the xenanthropologist ended up being treated like a dead piggy.

The planet 107 Piscis 3 shouldn't have been of particular interest to the surveying ship that found it. The ship was from a mining group, looking for exploitable ores, and that particular planet had almost no surface ores to speak of; a low density crust.

On that low density crust, however, were intelligent beings.

Humanity seemed determined to export its own problems, or at least carry them along as they went. The official contact team that was

formed to meet the aliens of 107 Piscis 3 had to represent a profoundly diverse spectrum of beliefs. One might call this fantasy, as Williamson does not have the mission being blocked for years if not centuries by legal action. The principal conflict is between the statists of the Terran United Nations and the exploiters of Freehold. (The book is set in the universe of Williamson's previous work *Freehold* (2004), incidentally, but is not a direct sequel, surprisingly.) This is by far not the only one among the human First Contactors, and indeed the contrast between the two societies is as interesting as the detailed description of an a-metallic society.

Not that any of the sides is too foolish; only greedy, conceited, cocky, and so many of the other weaknesses that sapience falls heir to. The aliens struggle for understanding of, well, the aliens (so to speak).

Williamson has created a diverse, varied human interplanetary society (all too often it's "it was raining on Quatloo IV"), trying to understand an exotic, alternative nonhuman society. It's nice to see that he doesn't have Virtuous Capitalists having to prevent Greedy Statists from exploiting a unmarred society without a state.

THE OIKUMENE

Review by Joseph T Major of
THE EDGE OF THE WORLD
by Kevin J. Anderson
(Orbit; 2009;
ISBN 978-0-316-00418-3; \$14.99)
"Terra Incognita: Book One"

A confession is in order: I had been curious if Anderson, having written works "in the exciting universe" of so many other writers, had had originality expunged from his soul. Apparently not.

In this series, Anderson has created a complex world trembling on the verge of a great release of exploration, if only it can survive the forces of those whose faith is more formal than real. Yes, oddly enough, he has included genuine religious beliefs, religious entities that serve to hearten and sustain people, not vast cruel conspiracies of hypocrites that mock and exploit their naïve followers. And which all the same have people who believe too well, and too violently, slaying from divine right.

He tells a tale with many intertwining threads, of a careless act that creates a great destruction which engenders an even greater war, with even more destruction, world without end. Caught up in this too terrible force are the great and the small, we see royalty and commoners, merchants, beggars, scholars, and sailors, striving to survive, or being killed by the forces of nature or man.

Beyond the mere war — and there is a almost dire focus on the loss and the cruelty, as well as the necessities, of this — there is adventure and exploration. Whether it is a vast ship *almost* making it around the globe, or a simple hot-air balloon crossing a far desert, Anderson's characters pursue knowledge of the world for the sake of knowledge.

This seems almost too much of a gush, and there are blandnesses and inadequacies. This isn't a perfect novel, but maybe, just maybe, Anderson has picked up the right things from the works of others, and made something of his own that stands on its own. We'll find out when this complex saga is . . . **[To Be Continued]**



SLEEPING GIANT

Review by Joseph T Major of
1942: A NOVEL
by Robert Conroy
(Ballantine Books; 2009;
ISBN 978-0-345-50607-8; \$15.00)

In prewar days imaginative Japanese writers had drawn lurid pen-pictures of the invasion of Hawaii by the all-conquering legions of Nippon . . .

— Hector C. Bywater, *the Great Pacific War*, Page 149

The question has been often asked: "What If Japan invaded Oahu after the Pearl Harbor strike?" This certainly was a fear at the time, and the two-division garrison of Hawaii (the Hawaiian Division, a "square" division with four regiments, had been split into the 24th and 25th Infantry Divisions with the addition of the two regiments of the Hawaiian National Guard, two "triangular" divisions with three infantry regiments each) was sent to the beaches. Including many *nisei*, who were later pulled out and after various adventures became the 100th Battalion, the core unit of the famous 442nd Regimental Combat Team, and today's principal Hawaiian Army Reserve unit.

As with his previous books, Conroy shows the battle from the perspective of both the high command and the "little people". He has been criticized for presenting an overly brutal picture of the Japanese occupation of Oahu, but if anything he has them being particularly restrained. Not to mention whatever the Japanese version of "chutzpah" is, as when he has the occupation forces demanding that relief supplies be sent to the American population.

With various scenes recounting the decisions on high and some auxiliary items, the principal narrative deals with various leaders of the nascent resistance, an intelligence officer back on the mainland, and . . . a collaborationist.

The relationships of the various characters include a good bit of the vertical; Conroy describes their love affairs in a mildly graphic fashion. Men, and even women, about to go into battle, or just out of it, want to live until

they die. (And Conroy even has the results of this [Page 355].)

One does wonder, though, after the Battle of the Coral Sea (same as in Our Time Line [OTL]) why does the *Yorktown* head back to the West Coast when she could get patched up in Sydney [Page 239]?

As said, Conroy describes the horrors of the occupation in rather more detail than some would like. I suspect it would be even worse. The response is even more striking. The Japanese plan to annex the Hawaiian archipelago in a ceremony on August 1, 1942. The *kido butai* will be there, after which Yamamoto himself will lead it in a strike against the American mainland, which will presumably bring about the desired loss of will.

However, the Americans have some plans of their own. Not the least of which is the Doolittle Raid — flying boats rigged as bombers, to re-damage the oil tanks. (He'd rather be flying B-25s from carriers to China, bombing Japan along the way, but one does what one can with what one has.) And then there are the navy fighters flown in to the Big Island of Hawai'i itself, to strike at Oahu from a field operated by guerrillas. Not to mention the American fleet itself . . .

For all that the book is 350 pages long, it sometimes seems a bit pinched. And as I've said (at some length) the situation has problems. What comes next does follow, so to speak, at least until there are just too many lucky shots at the end. Conroy is able to juggle different and disparate plot elements consistently and have references to a world beyond the events, as it were.

WARNING

HISTORY GEEK SECTION

Conroy's principal Point Of Departure, the dispatch of the "third wave" against the fuel storage at Pearl Harbor, is problematic. The launching of a third wave from the Japanese carriers was rejected by *kaigun chūjō* Nagumo for many good reasons. For one, the strike would have to land on the carriers *at night*. For another, there was not enough fuel for either the planes or for the ships to carry out that attack and then go on to fulfill their other orders. (I suspect that Fuchida made up the story somewhat after the fact. History isn't so much written by the victors as it is by the survivors.)

To be fair, the on-line alternate history community has been suffering from a prolonged barrage from one very well-read but not very well-informed poster proposing a similar scenario, but one with even more effort put into it. (Not only a third strike, but a battleship bombardment, a blockship blocking the channel, even more aggressive minisub ops, paratroopers landing in the mountains, and a full-scale amphibious landing, all on December 7.) Like most monomaniacs, he wouldn't shut up.

A landing on Oahu would entail diverting army units and transport, the latter needed elsewhere, the former requiring high-level and acrimonious negotiations. It's not clear which the Japanese army thought the more important foe, the Allies or the Japanese navy. And any beach on Oahu would have problems. (In Harry Turtledove's series, he had the Japanese landing on the best surfing beach in Hawaii. The Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles could cry "Cowabunga!" as they came in to shore on a twenty-foot wave, but Special Naval Landing Force men would be saying "glug glug" as their landing craft capsized.)

A work worth reading in this context is *Hawaii Under the Rising Sun: Japan's Plans for Conquest After Pearl Harbor* by John J. Stephan (2002). It is a somewhat scattered work, with chapters dealing with such diverse peripheral matters as Japanese future-war books (pace Bywater) and the reaction of Japanese and Japanese-Americans in Hawaii, as well as both actual and fantasized plans for the invasion. The Army could spare three divisions, one of which was in the process of being formed, for an invasion of Oahu in July, after a presumed successful result of the Midway Operation. What strategic plans existed called for taking Palmyra Atoll as well as Midway, and using them as advance air bases. One planner wanted to land on the Big Island, Hawai'i proper, and make that into another base.

That's right, three (smaller) divisions landing over beaches more suited for surfing and attacking two divisions plus whatever Marines are to hand. Some people are optimistic. (And the *kido butai* had no at-sea refueling available, was needed elsewhere . . .)

When the time comes to strike back, Conroy states that "the American carriers had returned to the Pacific." [Page 261] He mentions the *Hornet* (CV-8) [Page 291] and the *Enterprise* (CV-5) [Page 331]. Then, in a desperate measure, King offers to send the *Saratoga* (CV-3), *Wasp* (CV-7), and *Ranger* (CV-5) [Page 240] to join Admiral Spruance, Halsey having the same problem with shingles that he did in our world. (Which makes it odd that they'd call the strike Operation WASP [Page 240]; Nimitz even refers to the same story that Eric Frank Russell cites in his novel *Wasp* (1958).)

But wait! There's more! There is also a reference to "other carriers" [Page 261]. And one of the parts of the plan involves the delivery of a dozen F4F Wildcats to the Big Island, launched from . . . a British carrier [Page 248]. There is also a reference to the Indian Ocean campaign being dropped in favor of the landings in Oahu. Which means that the British East Indies fleet might be available, with HMS *Indomitable* and HMS *Illustrious*, though whether they would be carrying the slow biplane Albacore and Swordfish torpedo bombers would be another matter.

Questionability of a landing:

<http://www.combinedfleet.com/pearlops.htm>

British carriers:

<http://www.fleetairarmarchive.net/Ships/>

ISAAC NEWTON, C.I.D.

Review by Joseph T Major of
*NEWTON AND THE COUNTERFEITER:
The Unknown Detective Career of the
World's Greatest Scientist*

by Thomas Levenson
(Houghton Mifflin Harcourt; 2009;
ISBN 978-0-15-101278-7; \$25.00)

Handwritten note on the first page

ACD:

The Americans have tampered with the title again.

JHW

"Now Watson, this is where the ideal reasoner of your romances lies buried. He was somewhat before our time, but his efforts are still an inspiration to me," Holmes said. I had never imagined Holmes being the sort of man to visit Westminster Abbey, but he had insisted upon doing so after having taken this peculiar case.

We stood before the tomb. Holmes took off his hat and translated the inscription. "Indeed, 'Mortals! Rejoice at such an ornament to the human race!' He prospered in not only my line of work, but even in the work we are proceeding to investigate."

"Alchemy?" I said, amazed.

— Not from "The Adventure of the Philosopher's Stone" [American title, "The Adventure of the Sorcerer's Stone"]

It seems utterly bizarre to imagine a senior government official engaged in personally conducting a criminal investigation and prosecution. The boundaries were looser in the old days, and some did. It seems even more improbable that the senior government official should be not only a significant figure in the academic world, but *the* greatest scientist of the time, and perhaps of all time. Add to that dabbling in alchemy, and the result is something too improbable for fiction.

Fiction has to make sense. Levenson has described a little-noted phase in the life and career of Sir Isaac Newton, F.R.S., Lucasian Professor of Mathematics at Cambridge, Member of Parliament for Cambridge University — and Warden, later Master, of the Royal Mint.

He begins with a short biography of Newton's life up to his appointment, focusing on his lesser-known activities. Yes, alchemy, and Levenson ties in his alchemical practices to his personal beliefs and activities.

There was a financial crisis in England in the 1690's; small change was disappearing. It seemed that the ratio of silver to gold was more advantageous on the Continent, so people were melting down silver coins, selling the bullion abroad for gold, at a profit, and using the gold to get more silver. Even the coins that were in circulation had the problem that the older ones were clipped.

The Mint installed new machinery, powerful

new coining equipment that would, among other things, mint coins with features that would betray their being clipped. But all the silver coinage in circulation (such as there was) would have to be called in and recoined.

A testimonial to Newton's universal genius emerges even here. He did a time-and-motion study and devised a means for increasing the production of coins. Even his alchemical researches proved relevant here, in that he had gained an understanding of chemistry.

Beyond that, he studied the problems of world cash flow, including the ultimate problem, which was that all the silver was going to China. All the while, Newton kept some connection with the world of natural philosophy, holding on to his professorship until he was promoted to Master of the Mint, which gave him a sufficient income to in fact get rich. (The Master got a fee for every pound of coinage. In Newton's first year on the job he got 3500£ this way, on top of his 500£ salary.) When he lost 20,000£ in the South Sea Bubble, it annoyed him, but did not bankrupt him. Levenson points out that here Newton did not do proper research, he failed to apply the same standards here that he did in the rest of his life.

All this money gave him leave and incentive to investigate counterfeiting. The existing English law on counterfeiting would be considered extreme by later standards; it was treason, and punished as such. Levenson cites a case of a woman who was convicted of coining and sentenced to be burned at the stake. (A search in the Old Bailey on-line records indicates that her sentence seems to have been remitted, but still . . .)

The "Counterfeiter" of the title was a smaller-bore figure, William Chaloner. Going through contemporary records (and I suspect there was a great deal to fill in), Levenson recreates life in the criminal society of Restoration England. Chaloner was a skilled craftsman and a careful planner, but faced the inevitable problem of unreliable underlings. Completely loyal henchmen seem only to exist in fiction.

The Warden (appropriate title) built a complex case against Chaloner, and after one misfire finally had him brought in and put on trial. Speaking of social differences, it is more than a little shocking by modern standards to realize that defendants then were not allowed to have counsel **at all**. The result seemed about as good, or bad, as the result produced by today's standards. Chaloner was convicted and sentenced to be hanged, drawn, and quartered.

How exactly did Newton become so successful in so many different fields of endeavor? The answer was uttered by Holmes in *A Study In Scarlet*: "They say that genius is an infinite capacity for taking pains."

EXERCITUS UNI

Review by Joseph T Major of

LEGIONARY:

The Roman Soldier's (Unofficial) Manual

by Philip Matyszak

(Thames & Hudson; 2009;

ISBN 978-0-500-25151-5; \$24.95)

conscribe te militem in legionibus. perevagare orbem terrarum. inveni terras externas. cognosce miros peregrinos. eviscera eos

Join the legions, see the world, travel to foreign parts, meet interesting and exotic people, and disembowel them.

— *Legionary*, Pagina VI

Lucius Vorenus and Titus Pullo may be found on Pagina XCI. Iunio and Gaius Philippus are not included here, though to be fair, nowhere in Chapter VI “People Who Will Want to Kill You” [Paginae XCIV-CXIV] can Xena be found.

Matyszak has written an informative, witty guide to life in the Roman army of the principate of Trajan. This is, after all, the guy who said, “*ho dē Homēros ontōs ēn ho Simōnos*.” [“Indeed, I assure you that Homer’s family name was Simpson.”] He describes recruitment, training, day-to-day life, work, combat, and the rewards of battle. The picture that emerges is one that resonates with later soldiering; some things never change, it seems.

Discussed are the potential enemies, some of which are actually on the other side, but others including centurions, tribunes, and the like. Other points raised include the equipment you never think about, like the *patera*, the soldier’s all-in-one ration equipment:

A good patera is important. You might need to use your sword in anger only once or twice in a campaign, but you will need your patera two or three times a day.

— *Legionary*, Pagina LXVII

In addition, Matyszak discusses the other arms of service, their equipment, employment, and pros and cons. An army is not just one kind of soldier, and there are sections on cavalry, auxilia, and the Praetorians. As said above, there is talk about the enemies; Parthians, Germans, Picts, and yes, even those turbulent people from that little province that’s more trouble than all the rest of the empire put together, the *novoconservatorii* or Judeans.

As the back notes indicate, “Matyszak has a doctorate in Roman history from St. John’s College, Oxford, and is the author of *Ancient Rome on 5 Denarii a Day*, *Ancient Athens on 5 Drachmas a Day* [both mentioned in *Alexiad* V. 8 #2] . . .” and many other interesting classical history books. He must also have some military connections. Where else would you learn that in a helmet, “Convex internal protrusions become concave indentations in the skull.” [Pagina LVIII]?

The book is copiously illustrated with good drawings of equipment and men, as well as photographs of recreators in full (and heavy!) gear. Matyszak has produced a work that is both useful and amusing. As shown by the insightful chapter heading quoted above. Or his final advice on the legionary’s tombstone:

With the sculpture, make the bas relief

as precise and accurate as you can, paying particular attention to items of armour and weaponry.

Future historians will be so grateful.

Finis

— *Legionary*, Pagina CXCIV

NEW LIES FOR OLD

Review by Joseph T Major of

TREACHERY:

Betrayals, Blunders, and Cover-Ups: Six Decades of Espionage Against America and Great Britain

by Chapman Pincher
(Random House; 2009;

ISBN 978-1-4000-6807-4; \$36.00)

I was somewhat surprised to learn that Pincher wasn’t able to pin the Pemberton-Billing trial (over a supposed German blackmail dossier), the Trust (the Soviet deception operation creating a spoof anti-Soviet movement), and the Venlo Incident (the capture of two British intelligence officers by a fake anti-Nazi movement) on the cunning mole Agent ELLI, also known as Sir Roger Hollis.

Harry Chapman Pincher, intelligence writer for the *Daily Express*, has had a long career of chronicling the dubious dark deeds of the intelligence services. Heretofore he was best known for being the co-author (and sole credited author) of *Their Trade Is Treachery* (1981), an earlier discussion of the explosive topic of Soviet penetration of the British Intelligence Services (the other writer was Peter Wright, who later found another co-writer and did *Spycatcher* (1987)).

Pincher’s thesis, inherited from Wright, is that Roger Hollis, sometime Director General of the Security Service (also known as MI-5) from 1956 to 1965, the counterespionage agency of the British government, was a Soviet agent. In the course of recounting the history of the less than energetic efforts of MI-5 in pursuing Soviet agents, Pincher puts forth some unusual theses.

For example, the defection of Burgess and Maclean was considered an example of spies escaping retaliation. Pincher says that in fact the defection of Maclean was allowed, because prosecuting him would have been an even greater embarrassment to the government. (Their having ignored for example his telling all and sundry, while in the depths of inebriation, that he was the English Hiss; *in vino veritas*.)

Not all of the book focuses on the failings of Hollis. Pincher discusses the strange case of Commander Lionel “Buster” Crabb, the diver who, contrary to Anthony Eden’s naïve orders, attempted to do an underwater inspection of a Soviet cruiser visiting Portsmouth. (Eden made some noises about their being guests; a ship from the Main Ally of the Main Adversary visiting Leningrad or Sevastapol would be thoroughly spied on.) It could be mentioned that Crabb was in poor condition; Pincher discusses the problems consequent upon his disappearance and the subsequent finding of an unidentifiable corpse that could have been his. [He gives no credence to the bizarre claim put forth by “Christopher Creighton” in *The*

Khrushchev Objective (1988) that he himself killed Crabb during an underwater fight.]

One point to be noted is that there is no mention of this matter in either the Mitrokhin (*The Sword and the Shield: The Mitrokhin Archives and the Secret History of the KGB*, by Christopher Andrew and Vasilii Mitrokhin (1999)) or the Vassiliev papers (*Spies: The Rise and Fall of the KGB in America* (2009; reviewed in *Alexiad* V. 8 #3). One would think that the recruitment of the chief of British counter-intelligence would be well remembered and exuberantly recounted throughout the organs of Soviet state security. Mitrokhin and Andrew say that ELLI was Leo Long (*The Sword and the Shield*, Pages 90-91), and neither book even mentions Hollis in the indices.

THE RIDE OF . . .

Review by Joseph T Major of
WIR WOLLTEN HITLER TÖTEN.
Ein letzter Zeuge des 20. Juli erinnert sich
(VALKYRIE:

The Story of the Plot to Kill Hitler, by Its Last Member)

by Philipp Freiherr von Boeselager with
Florence and Jérôme Fehrenbach,

Translated by Steven Rendell

(Knopf; 2009;

ISBN 978-0307270757; \$24.95)

After reading such incisive and informative wartime books as Louis Nizer’s *What to Do With Germany* (1944), Henry Morgenthau’s *Germany Is Our Problem* (1945), and Emil Ludwig’s *The Moral Conquest of Germany* (1945), one would conclude that a member of the Rhenish aristocracy would be a whole-hearted supporter of Hitler, a devoted Aryan who despised the Jews as the authors of the temporary defeat of the Teutonic Conspiracy for World Domination. Thus Baron Von Boeselager the Elder would have cooperated in the Final Solution to the Jewish Problem.

For some values of “cooperation”. To wit:

. . . There were three Jewish families in our little town of Heimerzheim. Our father, seeing the danger, advised them to flee the country. He even offered to pay their travel expenses. Two of the families followed his advice and emigrated to the United States. The father in the third family, whose name was Moses, elected not to go. He thought the Iron Cross he had been awarded for service in the trenches in 1914 would ensure his safety. He was sadly mistaken. A few years later, he was arrested along with the rest of his family. We never saw them again.

— *Valkyrie*, Page 21

The title, even the German title (“We wanted to kill Hitler”) is a little misleading. This is as much a story of a serving soldier as it is a story of conspiracy. Boeselager entered the army because, well, it was his responsibility. He didn’t find out the horrid stuff until a few years

on.

Indeed, the circumstances under which he found out were striking. He was aide-de-camp to a senior commander, when the SS officer responsible for the section of occupied Russia behind their part of the front sent in a report that mentioned that five Gypsies [Roma] had received "special treatment". The original is *Sonderbehandlung* and now we know how special that was, but when the commander asked the SS man what that was he said, "Those? We shot them! . . . All the Jews and Gypsies we pick up are liquidated — shot!" [Page 79]

The SS officer was Erich von dem Bach-Zelewski (he was of Kashubian ancestry, some Aryan), later to demolish Warsaw. The army commander was Field-Marshal Gunther von Kluge, not known as a particularly oppositional sort, although his headquarters was full of them. (Kluge was called "kluge Hans", a pun on his name and the performing horse Kluge Hans "Clever Hans".)

Boeselager was a cavalryman, and became commander of a cavalry regiment. This could be put down to the technical retrogression of the German Army in Russia as the war continued, as trucks and other mechanized equipment was concentrated in the *Panzerwaffe*, but under those circumstances sometimes cavalry had more mobility.

Boeselager's role in the conspiracy was very direct. He was supposed to shoot Hitler. Indeed, until he died he retained the pistol he was supposed to use. Things didn't work out. Indeed, there were three attempts on Hitler's life in a very short period, all of which failed to work out.

With such inspiration, Boeselager nevertheless fought on in an orderly manner. He demonstrated a noteworthy concern for the men under his command. The book describes the grueling and cruel experience of ordinary combat in sufficient detail to avoid the appellation of armywank.

And yet he survived. There is another book here in the tale of how the survivor rebuilt his life after the war, and the writers should be encouraged to tell it.

The translation often slips up on military matters. Thus the photograph on Page 174 with the caption "Georg presents the Iron Cross First Class to his brother." No, it's the *Ritterkreuz des Eisernen Kreuzes*, the Knight's Cross. Which he received on of all days July 20, 1944. Boeselager had both the Knight's Cross and the Legion of Honor.

As for Why . . . Nizer, Morgenthau, Ludwig, Rex Stout, and the others of their sort do not seem to have had much concern about these people. I wonder if they ever met Boeselager, Axel von dem Bussche, Rudolf von Gersdorff, Fabian von Schlabrendorff (a prominent German lawyer!), or any of the other remnant. The popular argument then was that this was rats leaving the sinking ship, if not the true masters discarding another front, and that they wanted Hitler's conquests without Hitler.

The discontent seems to have been very high-up. Boeselager reports on a discussion that

two of the leading personalities in the conspiracy, Gottfried von Bismarck (yes a descendant of the Iron Chancellor) and Wolf Graf Helldorf had with an ambassador, over the new potentialities of the coup, now that a reliable military force was to hand in the form of Boeselager's cavalry regiment [Page 110]. Since the ambassador was the notorious Franz von Papen, who seemed to have a foot in every camp, this may help explain why (for example) Papen was exonerated at the Nuremberg Trial.

Before the 20. Juli Gersdorff and Busche had tried to blow up the Führer. Abroad, not only did Operation FOXLEY consider his death (see *Killing Hitler* (2003; reviewed in *Alexiad* V. 8 #3)) but Eddie Chapman, Agent ZIGZAG, volunteered to blow Hitler up, and he knew from explosives, having been the best cracksmen in London (see *Agent Zigzag* by Ben Macintyre (2007; reviewed in *Alexiad* V. 6 #5)). It's enough to make one a Manichean Gnostic, thinking that the world is indeed run by the Evil One.

As for the post hoc explanations of "wanting Nazi conquests without the Nazis," Boeselager delivers a powerful response. It's rather like the justification given by the BBC's panel of experts in *Killing Hitler*, or the reason J. G. Ballard was grateful to Harry Truman. Arch-conspirator Henning von Tresckow (whose suicide is painfully described on Pages 166-169) said:

"Gentlemen, every day we are assassinating nearly sixteen thousand additional victims. We have no choice."
— *Valkyrie*, Page 104

THE UNINCORPORATED MAN

by Danni Kollin and Eytan Kollin
(Tor; 2009;

ISBN 978-0-7653-1899-2; \$25.95)

Review by Lisa Major

Recently I checked a very interesting book out of the library. It was titled *The Unincorporated Man*, by brothers Dani and Eytan Kollin. The blurb on the back marketed it as being in Heinlein's style but it was actually a modern retelling of H.G. Wells' *The Sleeper Wakes*. It is not really in Heinlein's style. There was only one Heinlein. The Kollin brothers have their own fresh voices. Their sleeper is put at odds with the future culture, which is not the usual dystopia. The antagonist is very well presented.

We got a good Borders coupon along with Borders bucks, which I used for a hardback copy of this book. It came out this year, making it eligible for next year's Hugo. I would like to see it at least get nominated. Read it for yourselves and see if you agree with me.

COCONUT M&MS

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

I was just a little surprised when I saw this M&Ms variation at Dollar Tree yesterday. Cybele May of Candy Blog had written about

them recently, in an entry about upcoming releases. But if I'm remembering correctly, she said that the Coconut M&Ms wouldn't be out for another month or so. That was the thing that surprised me.

First, let's get the obvious bits out of the way. This is a variation on the milk chocolate M&Ms candy — what used to be called "Plain M&Ms." The inside is milk chocolate which has been infused with coconut flavor. No coconut, just the flavor. This coconut-flavored chocolate is covered in the M&Ms sugar shell makes it . . . well, I think you all know the slogan.

The shells for this limited edition have a different color scheme than the usual M&Ms. There are only three colors — brown, white, and green. Brown and white to represent the outside and inside of a coconut, and green because, well, the M&M spokescharacter Green is featured on the bags. (That's the conclusion that first comes to mind, anyway, and Occam's Razor would seem to apply.) While most of the shells have the usual "M" imprint, a few of the candies bear imprints of the "M" with an umbrella, a palm tree, or a sun. This seems to be in keeping with the tropical theme of this candy.

The coconut flavor is stronger than some of the other flavors Mars has used in previous M&Ms limited editions. This is good; in some of those other variations, the infused flavor was too subtle, almost to the point of it barely registering on my tastebuds. Not here. The coconut and chocolate flavors are on equal footing here. Neither overwhelms or dominates the other.

As I said, there is no actual coconut in these M&Ms. When I tried my first candy, I thought there might have been some coconut in the chocolate, but I quickly realized that any texture I was encountering was the crunching of the candy shell.

As I said, this is a limited edition, so the usual disclaimer applies. I have no idea how long these will stay on the shelves. The tropical theme of both the flavor and the packaging would make it ideal for an annual release every summer. Whether Mars thinks this is a good idea is another matter.

STRAWBERRIED PEANUT BUTTER M&MS

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

The Snickers Nougabot Bar isn't the only tie-in that Mars is producing in conjunction with *Transformers: Revenge Of The Fallen*. Mars is also bringing us the Strawberried Peanut Butter M&Ms.

I must confess that this particular edition leaves me just a little puzzled. As I mentioned in my review of the Nougabot Bar, it at least has a connection of some kind to the Transformers through the yellow color of the nougat. There doesn't seem to be any particular connection between this M&Ms variation and the Transformers universe. But as I have mentioned previously, I am not a Transformers fan, so there could easily be a connection, and I am not aware of it.

This edition is a variation on the Peanut Butter M&Ms. It starts with a core of peanut butter, which is covered with milk chocolate that has been infused with strawberry flavor. This is covered with the M&Ms sugar shell. And since I have probably gone through every possible joke on the M&Ms slogan by now, I think I will let you make up one of your own.

The shells have a slightly different color scheme for this edition. There are only three colors for the Strawberryed Peanut Butter M&Ms: Red, brown (both of which can be found in the regular M&Ms bags), and a red-splotched yellow. The last one gives the appearance of something yellow that has been splattered with red paint.

The strawberry flavor in the milk chocolate is pleasant, but almost too subtle for this edition. It might have been better if Mars had made an M&Ms edition that was just strawberry-flavored milk chocolate. When the peanut butter is added to the mix, the strawberry flavor is almost too subtle, becoming almost overwhelmed by the flavor of the peanut butter. It isn't a bad combination of flavors; it's just that the strawberry flavor need to be a little stronger to make it a better balance of flavors.

Unlike the Nougabot Snickers, the Strawberryed Peanut Butter M&Ms didn't come with any Transformers Bits & Bytes. I was a little surprised, because after last year, I was rather expecting some interesting bits of trivia on the packaging of both movie tie-ins.

And since this is a limited edition, the usual disclaimers should apply. This should be around for at least the first few weeks of release for *Transformers: Revenge Of The Fallen*. After that, I have no idea if Mars will ever plan a re-release. So enjoy them while you can.

THE JOY OF HIGH TECH

by Rodford Edmiston

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

Skylarking

The original, magazine serial version of *The Skylark of Space* has been in public domain for a while. You can download it from Project Gutenberg.

Reading the first version, you realize why Doc Smith wanted to re-write the story when the novel was printed. His style had grown by then, and the original version — which often reads like one of the original Tom Swift stories — had some uncomfortable features. However, for some reason he left out a number of important details in the re-write. Reading the original provides answers to several questions about technical details and some story elements.

One of the more interesting of these technical details is that one notch is consistently about half a g. This is true in both the smaller ship DuQuesne flies and in the *Skylark*. The *Skylark* has a double drive with each capable of providing thirty notches. That's thirty g total. Yet Seaton remains conscious at 16 g, and the whole crew survives seventy-two hours at

maximum throttle. In spite of "special chairs" and suits and breathing pure oxygen at plus pressure, that's not really possible... unless there's something else going on.

Let's take a look at what Seaton says about the effects he discovers:

"First: That it is a practically irresistible pull along the axis of the treated wire or bar. It is apparently focused at infinity, as near-by objects are not affected.

"Second: I have studied two of the border-line regions of current we discussed. I have found that in one the power is liberated as a similar attractive force but is focused upon the first object in line with the axis of the bar. As long as the current is applied it remains focused upon that object, no matter what comes between. In the second border-line condition the power is liberated as a terrific repulsion.

"Third: That the copper is completely transformed into available energy, there being no heat whatever liberated."

So, we have a pure thrust force, a pure attractive force, a pure repulsive force and a source of whatever form of energy we want, all by direct conversion of matter at very close (as noted in later stories, it's not perfect) to 100% efficiency. Any competent engineer could revolutionize the world with any of these. Even if the first three had to be externally powered any of them would still world-changing.

As a space drive, the copper bar would open up the solar system. Unfortunately, there just isn't enough energy in matter to push a ship very close to the speed of light. Even using Newtonian mechanics (which we could excuse Doc Smith for doing, since Einsteinian mechanics were less than twenty years old when he wrote this, only he doesn't seem to have done the math; or maybe just didn't like the results) you use about a third of the ship's mass getting to 0.9 C. That's far more mass than it takes in the books. Using relativistic equations, you need 130% of the ship's mass equivalent in energy to get that fast.

This is not an interstellar drive, at least not for humans for anything but the closest stars. Using some sort of staged process this could be used to send probes to other stars. However, for such short distances as inside the Solar System this technology works great.

At closest approach, Mars is a little over a day away at a constant one gravity of acceleration, turning over halfway. Naturally, you also have to take into account the velocity difference of the two planets, besides just covering the distance. The maximum difference between the orbital velocities of Earth and Mars is less than 8,000 m/s. At one g that's just a bit over thirteen minutes. Depending on the exact geometry of the situation, you would almost certainly add less time than that, simply by

adjusting your direction of acceleration and turnover point.

Likewise, at closest approach Jupiter is just about five days away at one g.

It's obvious — especially reading the original published version — that copper-powered craft accelerate far harder than humans should be able to withstand. Even with the "special" floors and seats, the occupants should be killed in minutes several times in the first story. In the second novel we learn that there is a way to apply the accelerative force uniformly to the entire contents of the ship. Many people have theorized this effect is inherent to the copper drive. That in the basic form Seaton developed, this effect only partially affected what was outside the bar. So it's possible to use higher accelerations without deleterious effect. That *really* opens things up.

The trip to Mars described above takes 19.6 hours at two g, contrasting with the 29.1 at one. The higher acceleration means a higher copper consumption, though. The way the math works out the increase in energy required is roughly proportional to the increase in acceleration (though for long trips high accelerations cause relativistic effects to become significant, increasing copper consumption). So this trip uses about twice as much copper.

Let's really bump things up, to forty g. The near Mars trip time drops to 4.6 hours. However, this high acceleration uses *forty times* as much copper as the one g trip. Keep in mind, though, the concentration of energy in matter. For a ten tonne spacecraft (hey, we're talking about Doc Smith, here; of course it'll be big) the one g Mars trip uses just one thirty-one grams of copper. The two g trip takes fifty-six. The forty g trip takes a bit less than one and a quarter kilograms of copper.

The second effect appears to work in a manner similar to quantum entanglement. This is a subatomic effect where two particles can be associated in a way which persists and is instantaneous no matter how far the particles are separated. This is impressive, especially when you realize Einstein didn't come up with the idea until 1935, and it wasn't definitively demonstrated until 1980. (Mention this long-verified faster-than-light effect to most physicists and they'll shuffle their feet and mutter things like "apparent but not real" and "can't send information." Actually, there's a lot in quantum mechanics which produces that effect.)

Using the attractive effect to move things at a distance has a vast array of uses. Couple that with the compass effect, and you have something which could be applied in myriad ways. Track items and individuals. Measure distances to astronomical objects. (There's no clue as to whether the act of locking on to something is an instantaneous quantum effect or is limited to the speed of light. Even if the latter, we could lock onto the nearer stars with a little patience.)

Where the attractive effect is obviously purely linear, the repulsive effect appears to be radial. I believe it is only described as being applied through the copper strips or plates on

the exterior of a spherical craft. The shields mentioned in later books for ships of other shapes are something different. This still allows for some interesting uses.

First, of course, is protection. However, there's also the frictionless aspect. Imagine evacuated transport tubes, filled with spherical vehicles with copper repellers on the outside. No friction, no air drag. No collisions, either.

Doc keeps describing the effect of the X-plosive bullets in ways which seem to indicate that it doesn't involve the emission of any radiation, including heat. (He mentions flame at least once, but that could be shock-induced combustion.) Perhaps they work by using the repulsive effect. Just drive a small sphere of treated copper to disruption and you get a sharp, hard shock, shoving outwards, like the wave of an explosion. Or maybe they do work from heat. I can't find enough clues to tell, either way.

Finally, we have energy generation. The fantastic thing here is not just the amount, but the concentration. With the conductors to handle it, you could have a multi-megawatt power plant in a steamer trunk.

Keep in mind that you can generate any energy with this. Electricity. Heat. UV. In *Skylark Three* they meet people who have had copper energy for a while, and who have hand weapons which utilize the direct liberation effect to create destructive beams. (This could actually meet my goal of having a flashlight with a perceptible recoil! :-)

The attractive effect actually seems to be the most flexible. There are plenty of extrapolations which might be possible with this effect. An atomic force microscope uses a very fine conductive needle to map the positions of individual atoms. It can even pick up atoms and move them around. A few years back one was used to spell IBM in letters only a few atoms high.

Imagine if you could do that with needles of activated copper. Now, imagine three arrays of thousands of such needles, in a half cube, picking up and placing individual atoms. Building things.

There might even be a way to record the "set" of an attractor, rather than keeping the power on all the time. Among other functions, you could use this to find and pull whatever material you wanted. Just tune your attractor to gold, and fly a close grid pattern over international waters.

Better yet, tune it to X, to make sure you keep your monopoly. I mean, you don't really want this stuff in unsupervised hands, right?

The Skylark of Space

<http://www.gutenberg.org/etext/20869>

ROSCOE ARBUCKLE

by Steven H Silver

<http://www.imdb.com/name/nm0000779/>

This is the third of a series of six articles on silent film comedians. Other articles will be appearing in other fanzines, including *Chunga*, *Askance*, *The Drink Tank*, *The Reluctant Famulus*, and *Challenger*. Eventually, all six

will be combined, along with "DVD Extras" in the 2009 issue of *Argentus*.

Roscoe Conkling Arbuckle was born in Kansas on March 24, 1887, the youngest of nine children, and named after Republican political boss Roscoe Conkling, a strange choice considering that his father, William Goodrich Arbuckle, was a staunch Democrat. Apparently, William was convinced that Roscoe was illegitimate and hated him, naming him after a man he also hated to confirm that feeling. Throughout his youth, William beat Roscoe.

The family moved to Santa Ana, California when Roscoe was a year old. His mother died when he was 12 and his father abandoned him shortly after. Arbuckle survived by taking odd jobs in restaurants and hotels in San Jose, eventually being discovered when he was singing in a restaurant kitchen. The Vaudevillian who found him persuaded him to perform at a local amateur night, where he was heard by David Grauman, who recruited him to perform in Vaudeville as a singer and dancer for his brother Sid Grauman, who would go on to build Grauman's Chinese Theatre and Grauman's Egyptian Theatre in Hollywood. When opera singer Enrico Caruso heard Arbuckle sing, he told the comedian to "give up this nonsense you do for a living, with training you could become the second greatest singer in the world."

By 1904, he was touring the American West as part of the Pantages Theatre circuit, including a stint in San Francisco which coincided with the Earthquake of 1906. He toured in Vaudeville for several years before making his first film, *Ben's Kid*, for the Selig Polyscope Company in 1909. While continuing to tour, often in the company of actress Minta Durfee, Arbuckle made several films for Selig until 1913, when he left the company, which had gotten its start in Chicago in 1896 and later became the first permanent film studio in Los Angeles.

At Keystone, Mack Sennett not only hired Arbuckle to replace outgoing comedic star Fred Mace, with whom Arbuckle appeared in his first film at Selig, but he also hired Durfee and Arbuckle's nephew, Al St. John. At the time, Keystone was making madcap comedies that didn't focus too heavily on plot, instead taking the general running-around and pratfalls from Vaudeville and recreating them on the much larger stage that film allowed, adding props, including cars, planes, and crowds.

Sennett was adding numerous comedians to his company, including Mabel Normand, who made numerous films with Arbuckle, including the popular "Fatty and Mabel" series, and Charles Chaplin, who made seven films with Arbuckle in 1914. During that time, Chaplin borrowed a pair of Arbuckle's oversized pants and adopted them in the creation of a character of his own, the Little Tramp.

Most of the great silent film comedians had their own trademarks, whether it was Ben Turpin's crossed eyes, Chaplin's can and moustache, or Buster Keaton's pork pie hat. In Arbuckle's case, he wisely played off his youthful looks and adopted a pair of pants that

was too short for him. The look exaggerated his youthful looks by giving the appearance of a boy who had just gone through a growth spurt.

Arbuckle also tried to keep his weight above three hundred pounds throughout his career. Despite this, he was quite agile and had a grace about him while performing pratfalls and other physical stunts. When paired with other, smaller, actors, like Buster Keaton, Arbuckle used his size and strength to good effect to effortlessly throw his partners around. On the other hand, he never played being fat for a laugh. Chairs wouldn't break under him and he wouldn't find himself in unnaturally tight spaces.

At Keystone, Arbuckle began to work as a director as well as an actor. The first comedian to also direct, Arbuckle created the path that other comedians, such as Chaplin, Buster Keaton, and Harold Lloyd, would eventually follow. As a director, however, Arbuckle still found himself limited by Sennett's influence, and eventually moved his productions off the main Keystone lot to shoot in New Jersey.

Normand left Keystone after discovering that Sennett was having an affair, and by late 1916, Keystone looked like it was in trouble. Arbuckle decided it was time to leave Keystone for the newly formed Comique, which Arbuckle insisted was pronounced Comeekay.

In late 1916, Joseph Schenck approached Arbuckle and offered him \$1,000 a day salary, 25% of the profits, and creative control of his films. Arbuckle figuratively jumped at the chance, although he was grounded literally by a carbuncle that almost caused the doctors to amputate a leg, and an addiction to morphine. By 1917, however, he was ready to start work again.

Comique's first film was *The Butcher Boy*, which starred Arbuckle, St. John, and Josephine Stevens as the love interest. As filming was beginning, Lou Anger brought a young Vaudevillian he had bumped into on the street into the studio. Buster Keaton agreed to appear in the day's shooting, but, wasn't particularly interested in leaving Vaudeville for film. Nevertheless, after taking home one of Arbuckle's cameras, disassembling it and reassembling it, Keaton returned the next day taking a \$40 weekly salary from Arbuckle, which meant giving up the \$250 he was making weekly on Broadway, and proceeded to make numerous films with Arbuckle's group before branching off on its own.

Between 1917 and 1920, Arbuckle and Keaton released sixteen films, at least a dozen of which are extant and available. For many of the films, they aren't partners in the way later comedic duos are. Frequently, rather than interacting together or responding to each other, the two men perform their own gags, almost as if in competition with each other to see who can do the most outrageous stunts or falls. In addition to pratfalls, one area of comedy in which both Arbuckle and Keaton excelled was the use of props. Perhaps more so than the other actors I'll be discussing in this series, Arbuckle had a way of turning everyday gadgets into pieces of comic art.

Arbuckle was also much more likely than Keaton, Lloyd, Chaplin, or Turpin to show up in films in drag, possibly because of the concept that a large man dressed as a woman was more humorous than a smaller man dressed in drag. Not only did Arbuckle appear in his shorts like this, but in many of his films, such as *Miss Fatty's Seaside Lovers* (1915) or *Rebecca's Wedding Day* (1914), saw him spend the entire film in drag playing a female, rather than a male character who dresses in disguise.

Arbuckle didn't last with Comique for very long. By December 1919, Paramount was making overtures to him, with Adolph Zukor offering a million dollars a year and feature length films. Arbuckle took the offer, despite the fact that it meant ceding creative control. After one period when Zukor had Arbuckle working on three films simultaneously, Arbuckle turned down an invitation to celebrate Labor Day with Keaton and instead decided to take a vacation to San Francisco.

On September 5, 1921, Fred Fischbach, who was sharing the suite with Arbuckle, hosted a party in his room, suite 1220 of the St. Francis Hotel in San Francisco. Despite Prohibition being in full swing, the party included alcohol, which would eventually net Arbuckle and Fischbach a \$500 fine. That, however, would be the least of Arbuckle's legal problems resulting from the infamous party.

At one point, Arbuckle went into his adjoining room to change clothes and saw a young actress, named Virginia Rappé, with whom he had been on a few dates, passed out on the floor of the bathroom. He helped her to the bed and got her a glass of water. After changing clothes in the bathroom, he found her lying on the floor again. He went into the suite and brought others back to help Rappé, at which point she started to scream that she was in pain. With the help of the hotel management, Arbuckle carried Rappé to a room down the hall, where a friend of hers, who had been drinking heavily at the party, Maude Delmont, joined her. Once a doctor arrived, Arbuckle left the hotel.

On September 9, Rappé died of peritonitis. Delmont claimed that Rappé died from injuries she sustained when Arbuckle raped Rappé, although Delmont changed her story often and on at least one instance claimed that Arbuckle had sexually assaulted Rappé with a Coke bottle. On September 11, 1921, Arbuckle was arrested and charged with murder.

As soon as Arbuckle's arrest was announced, theatres began banning Arbuckle's work, much as they would do a year later for Arbuckle's frequent co-star, Mabel Normand. Mayor J. Hampton Moore banned the showing of Arbuckle's films in Philadelphia on September 11 on the grounds that they would offend public morals due to the charges pending against Arbuckle. Similar actions were taken in Los Angeles, Chicago, New York, Washington, and other cities.

There was immediate public outcry, with the Heart papers, especially, playing up the most lurid accusations against Arbuckle. However, the legal evidence was otherwise. Judge Sylvain

Lazarus ordered that the charges be decreased from murder to manslaughter. While public opinion was against Arbuckle, his wife, Minta Durfee, from whom he had separated in 1917, came out to support him. Other actors and producers who supported him were asked by his attorneys to stay away, fearing a wave of Anti-Hollywood sentiment in San Francisco.

The trial began on November 14, prosecuted by Matthew Brady. Early in the trial, the fact that Brady had threatened one of his witnesses in order to get her testimony damaged his case. Furthermore, Delmont, who raised the initial outcry, did not appear on the stand for either prosecution or defense. On November 28, Arbuckle took the stand and told his story, which was more consistent than Delmont's. Brady was unable to poke holes in Arbuckle's testimony. Furthermore, medical testimony from both sides agreed that Rappé's punctured bladder was not caused by an external agent. On December 4, after 22 ballots, the jury was declared hung, 10-2 in favor of Arbuckle's acquittal.

Brady decided to bring the case back for a second trial. Arbuckle's defense team decided not to allow Arbuckle to take the stand, in theory to show their contempt for the prosecution. They also refused the chance to make closing arguments. Once again, Arbuckle found himself with a hung jury, although this time, taking his refusal to testify as a sign of guilt, they voted 10-2 to convict.

Brady once again brought the case to trial, Arbuckle took the stand, the prosecution's star witness, Zey Prevon, who had been threatened into testifying before the first trial, fled the country before she could be brought to the stand, and on April 22, 1922 Arbuckle was acquitted. The jury released a statement in support of their belief in his innocence:

Acquittal is not enough for Roscoe Arbuckle. We feel that a great injustice has been done him. We feel also that it was only our plain duty to give him this exoneration, under the evidence, for there was not the slightest proof adduced to connect him in any way with the commission of a crime.

He was manly throughout the case, and told a straightforward story on the witness stand, which we all believed.

The happening at the hotel was an unfortunate affair for which Arbuckle, so the evidence shows, was in no way responsible.

We wish him success and hope that the American people will take the judgement [*sic*] of fourteen men and women who have sat listening for thirty-one days to the evidence, that Roscoe Arbuckle is entirely innocent and free of all blame.

However, four days before the jury made their statement, Will Hays, in consultation with Nicholas Schenck, Adolph Zukor, and Jessy Lasky, announced that they would no longer be showing any Arbuckle films. The blacklisting,

the first in Hollywood's history, would officially be lifted in December 1922, but Arbuckle wouldn't work openly in films for a decade. Will Hays, who had previously served as the chairman of the Republican National Committee (1918-21), and served in Warren G. Harding's cabinet as Postmaster General from 1921-1922, had only recently become the President of the Motion Picture Producers and Distributors of America in an effort to introduce clean, decent values to films. In 1930, he ushered through the Production Code (usually called the Hays Code) which introduced strong censorship into films.

Unable to get work in Hollywood, and beset with heavy debt, Arbuckle's friends, led by Buster Keaton, helped him pay off his legal bills. Arbuckle also went on a trip to the Orient, paid for by friends and upon his return, James Cruze gave him a cameo in a satire, playing himself in *Hollywood*. Keaton tried to get Arbuckle to direct *Sherlock, Jr.*, but the stress proved too great for Arbuckle, who backed out. Nevertheless, Keaton apparently used Arbuckle in several of his films, although uncredited and frequently with his familiar features obscured.

Beginning in 1925, Arbuckle was allowed to direct films, although in a nod to the public outrage against him even three years after his acquittal, he had to use a pseudonym, adopting the name William Goodrich, after his abusive father. Arbuckle and Durfee also got an amicable divorce, which allowed Arbuckle to marry Doris Deane. His marriage to Deane, however was hampered by Arbuckle's alcoholism and broke up in 1928.

One of Arbuckle's major attackers during the trials of 1922 was William Randolph Hearst, whose Hearst Newspapers worked to keep the scandal alive and in the public eye. Hearst once bragged to Buster Keaton that he had made more money of the Arbuckle Scandal than he had off the sinking of the *Lusitania*. However, Hearst apparently didn't have a personal animosity towards Arbuckle. In 1925, Arbuckle and Deane vacationed at Hearst's home, San Simeon, where according to Arbuckle, Hearst told him, "I never knew anything more about your case, Roscoe, than I read in the newspapers." Arbuckle's most successful film during his blacklisted years was *The Red Mill* (1927), which starred Heart's mistress Marion Davies, and Arbuckle was apparently asked to direct by Hearst, himself.

In 1928, still directing under the Goodrich name, Arbuckle opened Roscoe Arbuckle's Plantation Club, a nightclub which featured many of the comedians Arbuckle had known for years, including Keaton and Chaplin. However, the club was not able to survive the Great Depression and closed shortly after the stock market crashed.

When he had been blacklisted for a decade, *Motion Picture* magazine ran an advertisement entitled "Doesn't Fatty Arbuckle Deserve a Break?" signed by dozens of film stars. The result was that Arbuckle was offered a six film contract by Jack Warner in 1932. Arbuckle married a third time, to Addie McPhail as his career was about to relaunch. None of these films, Arbuckle's only talkies, although he

directed some talkies under the Goodrich name, have been released to DVD/video.

By June 28, 1933, Arbuckle had finished the first of the last of his films for Warner. They had done well enough that Warner Brothers signed him to a long term contract. The next day, after a night of celebrating the contract and his first wedding anniversary with Addie McPhail, she found Arbuckle had died in his sleep.

Of the six comedians I'm discussing, Turpin, Normand, Arbuckle, Lloyd, Keaton, and Chaplin, Roscoe Arbuckle is the only one who worked with all five of the others during the course of his career, ranging from his two films with Turpin to the forty he made with Normand. With regard to Chaplin, Arbuckle commented that he wished he could have made more, and longer, films with him.

Between 1909 and 1933, Arbuckle appeared in 163 films, with 153 before his blackballing in 1922. Unfortunately, spending ten years out of the public favor and dying at the very beginning of his comeback meant that Arbuckle didn't have the fan base or the resources to maintain his films. Both Chaplin and Lloyd managed to gain the rights and preserve their legacy. Although Arbuckle's friend Keaton did not, collector Raymond Rohauer did preserve the Keaton canon, including the shorts Keaton made with Arbuckle, although Rohauer gave Keaton top billing, turning Arbuckle into a supporting actor. For this reason, many of Arbuckle's films have been lost or severely damaged in ways that the other actors' have not been.

Virginia Rappé

<http://www.imdb.com/name/nm0710915/>

IRISH HORROR

Review by Rodney Leighton of
NOCTURNES

by John Connolly (2004)

John Connolly was born in Dublin in 1968. He has contributed to newspapers; written short stories to be read on radio and written some novels. The novels tend to be longish; with a certain characteristic: bad, evil people. Many of the novels feature on Charlie Parker, a former New York cop turned private eye and vigilante. There are about six novels featuring Parker; of those I have read he changes from a good guy who is tortured by the brutal murder of his wife and daughter to a cold blooded murderer, no different than the beasts he chases. The novels proclaim themselves to be thrillers; well, the blurbs in the front do. Each one has a horror element and that element grows with each novel.

Every Dead Thing, published in 1999, is a thriller the element of dead folks staying around; Charlie sees his murdered wife and child from time to time. *The Black Angel*, the last true Charlie Parker novel I have seen, is pure horror and not that good; I kept the other books I have gotten to possibly read again but donated that one to a secondhand store.

Some of the blurbs in the books compare Connolly to Stephen King; there is some validity to this. Parker lives in Maine and a number of the novels are based there; I have

seen some similarities to Robert Parker's *Spenser* in Charlie Parker and the earlier novels. In *The Reapers* he emulates a latter day Dean Koontz and puts his characters into life threatening situations and then meanders off into the past or arcane trivia for pages and pages. That one only has Parker part of the time; mostly his friends, a couple of gay guys, one a black former hitman for hire, still a cold blooded murderer and his partner, a ragamuffin former burglar. Lots of folks die. Some of them deserved to.

Zellers sells novels for \$4.99 plus tax. I don't usually buy many from there; that is a cheap enough price but still higher than free. However, on my latest excursion to that store, I spied *Nocturnes* by John Connolly.

It contains 18 stories; 2 novellas, whatever that means, and 16 short stories. Being that one of the long stories is a Charlie Parker novella, I read that first. It comes about the middle of the Parker saga as I know it; he is still a good guy and doesn't kill a single person in this story, which was a credible mix of thriller and horror, quite good story of child abduction and possession and an evil being living in mirrors.

The other long story, entitled "The Cancer Cowboy Rides", is a truly sick tale, pure King like. A creature infects a man with a being which gives him the ability and the need to infect people with super cancer; two or three days from infection and you die horribly. Rather a gross story but it did have a good ending.

These two stories start and finish the anthology per se; there are about three shorts following which were originally available only on the website which are all ghost stories with horrible aspects and all set in England or perhaps Ireland. "The Inn at Shillingford" is a pure old style English Horror story except perhaps a bit more yucky. "The Bridal Bed" doesn't really have a locale; it was sad and ridiculous and love carried to an extreme.

The thirteen short stories in the main part of the book are good, if you like ghosts and evil beings. The vampire tale was funny; most of the evil creature tales were typical of their kind but good to read and the ghosts ranged from sad to funny. Most of these are set in the United Kingdom.

Website can be figured out even by a Luddite like me:

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

**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 **Henry William Allingham** on **July 18, 2009**. Born in Clapton, a district of London, on **June 6, 1896**, Allingham became an auto body engineer, working for various companies including Ford Motor. He joined the Royal Naval Air Service in 1915, remaining with it until it was merged into the Royal Air Force in 1918; he was

discharged in 1919. He married Dorothy Cator [1895-1970] in 1918; they had two daughters (who emigrated to the States), six grandchildren, 12 great-grandchildren, 14 great-great-grandchildren, and one great-great-great-grandchild.

Since 2001 he had been one of the foremost public faces of the WWI veteran, having participated in many activities including the ninetieth anniversary wreath-laying ceremony at the Centopath in London on Remembrance Day 2008. At the time of his death he was the oldest living man in the world and the oldest British man ever. He was the last survivor of the Battle of Jutland, the last survivor of the Battle of Ypres, the last surviving member of the Royal Naval Air Service, and the last surviving founding member of the Royal Air Force. He received a funeral with full military honors, at St. Nicholas's Church in Brighton, on **July 30, 2009**. Among those present were his great-grandsons Brent Gray and Michael Gray, petty officers in the U.S. Navy.

Thanks to **Evelyn Leeper, Martin Morse Wooster, John Purcell, Guy H. Lillian III, and Robert S. Kennedy**,

We regret to report the death of **Henry John "Harry" Patch** on **July 25, 2009**. Born in Combe Down, Somerset on **June 17, 1898**, he was an apprentice plumber (with his father) when he was conscripted into the Duke of Cornwall's Light Infantry (now part of The Light Infantry) as a Lewis gunner.

After the War he returned to plumbing. He married Ada Billington in 1918; they had two sons (who predeceased him) before she died in 1976. His second wife, died in 1984 and his third in 2007. Along with Henry Allingham (above) he participated in the Remembrance Day 2008 ceremony. His autobiography *The Last Fighting Tommy* was published in 2007, making him the world's oldest author.

At the time of his death he was the oldest man in Europe. He was the last surviving man who had been at the Front, the last surviving wounded soldier, the last surviving British soldier of the War, and the last survivor of the Battle of Passchendaele.

Thanks to **John Purcell, Grant McCormick, Martin Morse Wooster, and Robert S. Kennedy**.

FOR THE FALLEN

With proud thanksgiving, a mother for
her children,
England mourns for her dead across the
sea.
Flesh of her flesh they were, spirit of her
spirit,
Fallen in the cause of the free.

Solemn the drums thrill; Death august
and royal
Sings sorrow up into immortal spheres,
There is music in the midst of desolation
And a glory that shines upon our tears.

They went with songs to the battle, they

were young,
Straight of limb, true of eye, steady and
aglow.

They were staunch to the end against
odds uncounted;
They fell with their faces to the foe.

They shall grow not old, as we that are
left grow old:
Age shall not weary them, nor the years
contemn.
At the going down of the sun and in the
morning
We will remember them.

They mingle not with their laughing
comrades again;
They sit no more at familiar tables of
home;
They have no lot in our labour of the
day-time;
They sleep beyond England's foam.

But where our desires are and our hopes
profound,
Felt as a well-spring that is hidden from
sight,
To the innermost heart of their own land
they are known
As the stars are known to the Night;

As the stars that shall be bright when we
are dust,
Moving in marches upon the heavenly
plain;
As the stars that are starry in the time of
our darkness,
To the end, to the end, they remain.

— R. Lawrence Binyon

And the band played "Waltzing Matilda" . . .
we regret to report the death of **Edward
"Ted" Kenna, VC, on July 8, 2009**. Born **July
6, 1919**, Kenna enlisted in the Second
Australian Imperial Force, and was assigned to the
2/4th Battalion of the 6th Australian
Division.

On May 15, 1945, at Wewak in New
Guinea, his unit was assigned to capture a well-
defended Japanese position. Private Kenna
stood up and while under heavy Japanese fire
delivered cover fire, firing a Bren light machine
gun from the hip, then silencing the Japanese
defenders with rifle fire. He was wounded in a
later battle and spent more than a year in
hospital, but recovered, marrying his nurse. He
is survived by her and three of their four
children. He was the last surviving Australian
VC from the Second World War.

There are now nine surviving holders of the
Victoria Cross. Two are Australian: Keith
Payne, VC, a Vietnam vet, and Mark
Donaldson, VC, the first recipient of the
Victoria Cross for Australia, for actions in
Afghanistan.

Remaining are:

Australia

Claude Stanley Choules (108) Royal Navy

Poland

Józef Kowalski* (109) 22 Pulk Ułanów

United States

John Henry Foster "Jack" Babcock (109)
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: Canada, U.K., U.S. 1 each;
Poland 1 WWI-era. British Empire 2.

IS MAKING ME WAIT — Part 1

Anticipation, the 67th World Science Fiction
Convention

Trip report by Joe and Lisa



I had begun saving my pocket change again
after NorEasCon. For some reason, I didn't feel
the need to tap that resource going to Denver.
This time was different. After some excavation
(it had been surrounded by books in the long
time since then), I unearthed the jar the change
goes in. Then there was a lot of counting
involved. The change-counter I had bought was
missing, the plastic coin tubes broken, I think.
I'd found a coin-collectors' tube at the flea
market, and it did hold a proper (\$10) roll of
quarters. Buying paper tubes was another
bother and I ended up going to Office Depot
(where this fine publication is printed) to get
quarter tubes, lots of them. Then I had to heave
a great mass of metal into Branch Banking &
Trust to get bills, and another down to ValuMart
to get rid of the pennies. The total came to
\$593.31 — which did not include what I spent
on tubes and the 8% or so cut the coin counter
takes.

Next involved getting Canadian currency.
The bank offers a service, which is available
over the Internet. The assistant I talked to said
I could use my bank card for such purchases. I
don't think it's particularly feasible to give a
motel employee my bank card as a tip. Well,
desirable anyway. I got Can\$400. It came by
FedEx and Grant kindly received the package.

After last time (2003 again) I figured I
needed to be prepared. Amazingly, I could find
the book I'd bought: *Gettysburg: A Battlefield
Guide* by Mark Grimsley and Brooks D.
Simpson (University of Nebraska Press; 1999).

It gives a driving tour, explains which way to
look and what happened where you look, and so
on. It does not include information on the site
where "Melvin" Bean was wounded, where
Lieutenant Haggerwells was killed by his own
troops, the advance of Longstreet's troops
taking the road to Winchester before the Battle
of Union Mills, the address of the house where
Harry Flashman bedded his latest conquest
during a crucial moment in the battle, the place
where General Stuart recovered after driving the
tank through the bath house during his Ride of
1963, and so on. Inadequacies everywhere.

When we went to Borders the Friday before
I bought two books on the Battle of Gettysburg,
to go with the guide. Background stuff,
understand.

Then there came laundry. Lots and lots of
laundry. That took up most of a Sunday,
followed by intermittent additions as Lisa got
her clothes selected.

On Thursday I went to the doctor to get my
B-12 shot. That night I didn't sleep, for two or
three different reasons. On Friday we had a big
dinner with Grant and Carolyn Clowes, Tim
Lane and Elizabeth Garrott, and Jack & Susan
Young at Lee's Korean. We had a good time
reminiscing about old times and new, talking
about things from Classical History to next
week.

Saturday, August 1, 2009

**Louisville, KY — Madisonville, KY —
Hopkinsville, KY**

Grant had to get out early that day, too. We
swung by the main library to drop off the last of
Lisa's books (Had We But Known . . .), went
down to Elizabethtown and had breakfast at the
Golden Corral there, and made our way to
Madisonville for lunch at a Cracker Barrel with
my brother Tem and his wife, Julie.

My niece, Sarah, was not well and staying
with her father, so we went to Tem's and Julie's
to talk and also to wish her well. On the way we
had a hair-raising experience when a black and
white collie jumped out between two cars and
we nearly hit it. Then, behind us, the dog dared
fate again.

Tem & Julie had to go do something, so we
left and drove down to Hopkinsville, where we
checked into the motel. Once we had our things
in, we went out and saw several relatives,
including Lisa's aunt Daphne and her husband,
my cousin Howard, and cousin Jim, who had
kept the raincoat we had left at his house last
time we were there. We also did a little
shopping at Fred's, the local branch of a low-
cost chain. I checked in with Grant and all was
well at home.

And so to bed.

Miles driven: 222.5

Sunday, August 2, 2009

**Hopkinsville — Cadiz, KY — Louisville
Thomas-Bridges Family Reunion**

In the morning we indulged in the hotel
breakfast. I also began reading one of the books
on Gettysburg I had bought. We checked out
(our room was on the first floor, which made

moving easy) and drove off to Cadiz. We drove through town, all the better to have fresh memories with which to compare it to Goshen, New York. The fabled Hamtown, the first place I ever ate ham biscuits, has reopened.

The reunion is at a wonderful facility on Lake Barkley (named after Alben Barkley, President of the U.S. in *To Sail Beyond the Sunset* and other offices in other timelines) and we got there early enough to see the table decorations before dinner was set up. Other Thomas-Bridges family members arrived, including Brenda Lile, whom we'd seen at the Garrott Reunion in July, with her husband David, who is a Garrott. Then, Edison Thomas arrived, 97 years old, and looking better than he had last year. The reunion was cheery enough, and I got to commiserate with Lisa's cousin Charles Bridges, the editor of the Thomas-Bridges family newsletter, who had had a really spectacular encounter with the Post Office. After the reunion, we went down to the Jolly Dairy Bar and Grill at the Lake Barkley Marina, where we saw cousin Ellen, Jim's daughter (see above about Jim). Ellen and her husband Scott are the biggest cattlemen in Trigg County, if that says anything, or even much.

Driving back to Louisville was uneventful for me, but Lisa's tooth was bothering her. I went out and got dinner at Bunz, washed the few clothes that had been used, packed the car, and caught up on mail after everything else was done.

And so to bed.

Miles driven: 239.8

Monday, August 3, 2009 Louisville — West Bloomfield, MI

Monday morning was bothersome. We had been planning to leave as early as possible, but a diversion was essential. We got to the dentists' when they opened and they managed to fit in Lisa at 8:30. In fact, they saw her before then, and said that she could get through without any emergency work. With that dubious reassurance, we set off for the north.

The Bob Evans restaurant we ate lunch at was a very congenial place. Now we used to eat at a Bob Evans in Louisville on Friday nights, but the place has been torn down now. If it had the features the Bob Evans in Tipp City had, I suspect Grant would regret it more. The Bob Evans in Tipp City had Wifi, you see. I sent some email and worked on my Facebook page.

We got some nice pictures of the Islamic Center of Toledo, a strange Arabian Nights building transported by the jann to the green fields of Ohio. It's visible from I-75. But I think that getting there set the stage for another problem, of which more tomorrow.

We hadn't seen my cousin Kathy and her husband Paul ever since, well, TorCon. In spite of being separated from my branch of the Major family by 200 years, her branch is remarkably like ours. Except for Cousin George, who is a Kiowa. Thanks to the wonders of modern technology we managed to get to their house without becoming lost. It is in a hard to find subdivision outside of Detroit.

Kathy and Paul were so hospitable it's impossible to believe. In return, we offered to find out about Paul's ancestors. His family came from Belarus, and you can imagine the tsouris involved in finding out about there. But seeing his parents' dates displayed made him a believer, and that was with our working with a Mac. He also showed us his guitars.

And so to bed.

Miles driven: 396.9

Books read: *A Home for Our Heritage* by Geoffrey C. Upward

Tuesday, August 4, 2009 West Bloomfield — Dearborn, MI — Kitchener, ON

Kathy went out to walk the dog that morning. When she came back in, she observed that the rear passenger side tire was flat. I had to unload the car to get at the spare and the jack, and jacking the car up left me wheezing. Fortunately there was a tire repair store not too far away. They wanted to sell me at least two and preferably four new tires. Let me be the judge of that.

So we left around ten and got on the road for the . . .

Henry Ford Museum

My cousin Charles Cook used to haunt flea markets, garage sales, and Uncle Don's salvage store in the old firehouse in Hopkinsville. He filled his house down in Locust Grove with all sorts of eccentric, unusual, and obscure things. Henry Ford was like that except he was a billionaire (by modern cash values, but still . . .).

When Ford said "History is bunk", he did not mean it the way Mustapha Mond interpreted it, that all the past needed to be wiped away. His complaint was that history as taught was a compilation of extraordinary events as done by the ruling class, completely ignoring how ordinary people lived. This view has become more popular, since then, though I don't think it was because of that.

The Henry Ford Museum is a museum of technology and of ordinary lives. I wonder why Asimov didn't ever go there. Thus there are exhibits showing typical working-class residences, or the sort of tools and items that ordinary people used.

Or would have used. We toured the Dymaxion House, Buckminster Fuller's ingenious plan for the use of airplane-construction capacity for housing for returning soldiers. It was very Fullersh; for example, the shower is most comfortably usable for someone about Fuller's height (he was rather short), and needs to be stepped up into. And imagining how a subdivision of them would look after a tornado hit . . .

The Arctic exploration plane *Josephine Ford* is on exhibit, a reconstruction of the takeoff site, together with a discussion of the controversy, one mildly pro-Byrd. (Bernt Balchen, who would work with Byrd later, had some doubts. He is buried two or three graves over from Byrd in Arlington National Cemetery, which would make Resurrection Day interesting.) The South Pole plane *Floyd*

Bennett is also on exhibit. As part of a display on passenger flight.

Having already had our disaster, we left and drove north. We were braced for a prolonged siege at Douane Canada Customs about why we were coming to their wonderful country, eh? The border control officer asked four questions, didn't even need to look at our passports, and we zoomed off into Canada.

The hotel in Kitchener was not all that bad. I thought I was lost and as usual was on the right road to there. We ate a bit late, which meant that we got to Chapters about ten minutes before it closed, but I did get a copy of *Hitler's War*. Since Chapters is likely to get British books before they get into American stores, I had hoped to find a copy of *Coward at the Bridge*, but there wasn't enough time to look under "D" in fiction.

And so to bed.

Miles driven: 243.4

Books read: *Gettysburg* by Stephen W. Sears

Wednesday, August 5, 2009 Kitchener — Montréal, QC

Up early enough, breakfast at the Tim Horton's across the street, and we were off. The trip was nice, with views of remarkably home-like country. In more ways than one, for we drove through a serious rainstorm at one point. Meanwhile, a far more serious one had hit Louisville, causing flooding. The main library was flooded out, as was Churchill Downs.

(The last estimate I heard was fifty thousand books, a huge cultural loss. Lisa)

Then we entered Québec. Most of the people one has contact with do speak English, so perhaps the worst effects of identity politics have receded. However, so do the police.

The last length of the trip was a profound traffic jam, in which I found myself unable to reach the turnoff, had to work my way through a maze of twisty little side streets, all of them alike, and ended up turning left at an intersection where, apparently, turns were forbidden. So welcome to Montréal, and here's your traffic ticket.

The hotel was interesting. They put us in a handicapped-access room. I had doubts about getting a wheelchair into it. And then they brought up the refrigerator. At least they had a refrigerator. With that and all our gear it was pretty cramped.

So we went to register. Registration was very fast and efficient. On the way we ran into **Mark & Evelyn Leeper**. They wanted to eat in Chinatown, I couldn't, so they went their way and we ours. We ended up eating at the Steak frites, a restaurant between the Palais de Congres and the party hotel, the Delta.

And so to bed.

Miles driven: 401.1

Books read: *Hitler's War* by Harry Turtledove

. . . To Be Continued

YOU'RE SO VAIN

by Joe

On July 22, 2009, a total eclipse of the sun took place. The path of totality ran from India through Nepal, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Myanmar, China, the Ryukyu Islands, the Marshall Islands, and Kiribati, ending in the Central Pacific. The maximum totality was six minutes and 39 seconds, seen in the ocean south of the Bonin Islands. This is the longest totality of an eclipse this century, with a longer not coming until the eclipse of June 13, 2132.

The eclipse was part of Saros 136, which began on June 14, 1360 and will end on July 30, 2622. The next eclipse in that saros will be on August 2, 2027 and will be a total eclipse. It will be visible in Spain, Algeria, Tunisia, Libya, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and Yemen. The maximum totality will be six minutes and 23 seconds.

The next solar eclipse will be on January 15, 2010 and will be an annular eclipse, visible in India, Sumatra, and Borneo. It is part of Saros 141, which began on May 19, 1613 and will end on June 13, 2857. The next total eclipse will be on July 11, 2010, visible in Chile and Argentina; the maximum totality will be five minutes and 20 seconds. This eclipse is part of Saros 146, which began on September 19, 1541 and will end on December 29, 2893.

<http://www.hermit.org/Eclipse>

<http://www.eclipse.org.uk/>

FANZINES*Askance* #15

John Purcell, 3744 Marielene Circle,
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<http://www.efanzines.com>

Beyond Bree June 2009, July 2009, August 2009

Nancy Martsch, Post Office Box 55372,
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beyondbree@yahoo.com
Not available for The Usual; \$15/year, \$20 overseas.

Challenger #30 Summer 2009

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The Drink Tank #214, #216, #217, #218, #219, #220

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eI #45 August 2009

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File 770:156

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Fish Out of Water #339, #340, #341

Marty Helgesen, 11 Lawrence Avenue,
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Journal of Mind Pollution #34

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The Knarley Knews #134

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Hell I'm Still Here!!

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CANADA

Luna! #4 April 2009

C. D. Carson, Luna Project, Post Office Box
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<http://www.lunarcc.org>

MT Void V. 27 #50 June 12, 2009 — V. 28 #6 August 7, 2009

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mleeper@optonline.net
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Opuntia #67.1F June 2009, #67.5 July 2009

Dale Speirs, Box 6830, Calgary, Alberta
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Pablo Lennis #261 August 2009

John Thiel, 30 N, 19th Street, Lafayette, IN
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The Reluctant Famulus #70 Summer 2009

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Royal Swiss Navy Gazette #18 June 2009

Garth Spencer, Post Office Box 7422,
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Science Fiction/San Francisco #87 June 10,
2009, #88 June 24, 2009, #89 July 8, 2009,
#90 July 22, 2009. #91 August 4, 2009
Christopher J. Garcia and Jean Martin
SFinSF@gmail.com
<http://www.efanzines.com>
Best Fan Writer Hugo Nominee

Southern Fandom Confederation Update V. 1
#6 June 2009, V. 1 #7 July 2009
Warren Buff, 22144 B Ravenglass Place,
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Visions of Paradise #142

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FUTURE WORLDCON NOTES

We note that there is now a Nippon 2017
WorldCon bid organizing. If you want to see
their placeholder website, for what it's worth:

<http://nippon2017.org/>

For the record, other existing bids:

2012

Chicago
<http://www.chicagoin2012.org/>

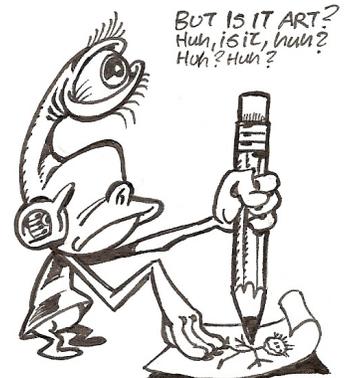
2013

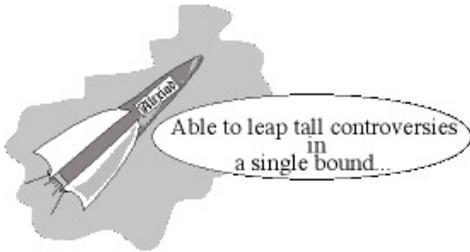
Texas
<http://www.texasin2013.org/>

Zagreb

2014

United Kingdom



Letters, we get letters


From: **Rod E. Smith** June 16, 2009
730 Cline Street, Frankfort, KY 40601-1034 USA
stickmaker@usa.net

R-Laurraine Tutihasi comments about engineers wanting to know when something would be available through interlibrary loan. I note that there are many people with engineering degrees who aren't really engineers. :-) Seriously, though, you gave them a typical span with the understanding that the time required could be a little less or much more. That's an estimate and a known error factor for similar events. Which is what most engineers want.

John Purcell most likely means that I am a technophile, rather than a technophobe.

I note that the makeup for Heath Ledger's Joker reminds me of that for the Crow.

Taras Wolansky asks me about current status of research on quantum tunneling. I haven't read anything about this in several months, so can't really say.

I will not be attending WorldCon this year. Being two years retired, I'm finally making a determined effort to pay down my main credit card. Hopefully, next year.

Next year in Raleigh!

— JTM

From: **Alexis A. Gilliland** June 21, 2009
4030 8th Street South, Arlington, VA 22204-1552 USA
<http://www.alexisgilliland.org>

Thank you for *Alexiad* 8.3, which arrived as near to the summer solstice as makes no never mind. You note the passing of Millvina Dean, last survivor of the *Titanic*, and unlike the case in most such notices, it happens that Lee and I had met the lady when we went to *Titanic* conventions in Southampton, England, back in 2003 and 2005. In 2003 we introduced ourselves, and chatted for a bit at her table, where I drew her a cartoon from the stockpile, "That splinter of ice in your heart would sink the *Titanic*" which may be seen on page 12 of the *Titanic* section of my website. In 2005 she was pleased to see us again, and we attended the ceremony in which a new Southampton bus was named after her. Later, when she had to go into

a nursing home, I sent her copies of some cartoons to cheer her up, and she had them framed and hung on the wall. I got an invitation to her funeral; she didn't remember my name, but asked that "that nice American cartoonist" be invited. The funeral was on a Thursday when we had committed to go to a convention in Nashville that weekend, so of course we couldn't go, but it would have been a great impromptu gathering of *Titanic* fans. When word got out that she had to sell some of her collection of *Titanic* memorabilia to pay for the cost of the nursing home, a collection was taken up on her behalf, to which Leonardo DiCaprio and Kate Winslet, the stars of the movie "Titanic" graciously contributed \$50,000.

The Nashville convention mentioned, Hypericon 5 aka Deepsouthcon 47, was a semi-relaxicon held in a Days Inn, and focused mainly on Horror and Gaming, with a few odd panels on science. Lee and I were persuaded to play in a Hearts tournament against Heart sharks, and we attended the NASA panel, where we learned about assorted NASA trivia from one of the contractors, and also the talk on Dark Matter, suggesting that Dark Matter must exist, without having a clue as to what it might be. The late J.B.S. Haldane was right when he said: "The universe is not only stranger than we imagine, it is stranger than we can imagine.") So I didn't get on the program, though I did do some cartoons for the one shot fanzine. Lee, on the other hand, connected with some of her Deep South fan group, and with Warren Buff, the chairman of the Raleigh Nascfic, who would like her to run the con suite. Since we are going to Tempe, AZ for Westercon aka Fiestacon over the July 4th weekend, we agreed to throw a Nascfic party to show the flag in a manner of speaking.

Joe reviews *Spies* by Vassiliev et al, at some length, on the reality of the Soviet espionage effort back in the day when the Soviet Union was a contender. To examine the shadow thrown by this reality, he might consider doing a little reading on HUAC, the House Unamerican Affairs Committee. The efforts of the "professional anti-Communists" were supported by a lot of amateurs, call them fellow travelers if you will, who did a lot of collateral damage. It wasn't just Joe McCarthy who gave anti-Communism a bad name. The joke about "picking Trotsky's brain" is funny but might mislead the novice reader.

John Earl Haynes's website has a page which lists all the people accused by McCarthy, and whether or not they really were spies or Soviet agents, as far as is known. Most of them weren't (only nine, maybe ten, out of 159), and the ones he got right had already been fingered by others.
<http://www.johnearlhaynes.org/page62.html>

Lloyd Penney wonders where the caffeine in decaffeinated coffee goes. Mostly into soft drinks like Coke and Pepsi; decaf was originally a way to use the residual beans. George Price

wonders what specific regulations were repealed to cause the current fiscal crisis, the enumeration of which would make an eyegazing list of seriously boring names. However, one of them was surely the 1999 repeal of the Glass-Steagall Act, banning banks from merging with brokerages, and another would have been repealing the onerous and ultra-conservative regulation that limited investment banks to a leverage of 15 to 1. Thus, when Lehman Brothers went suddenly bankrupt they were leveraged at 30 to 1, but since no upper limit had been specified they were perfectly legal if not perfectly safe. The attempt to regulate credit swaps as if they were insurance (which is what they were being used for) was also blocked, as was any attempt to regulate (or even make transparent) the securitization of debt. The general case was that since it had been 80 years since the last major crisis, nobody believed that the good times weren't going to roll forever because none of the players had ever experienced bad times. Thus, we have the madness of the crowd informing the regulations and deregulations that the government issued, and now, for a little while, there will be more emphasis placed on safety until the fear goes away.

Price quotes the *Wall Street Journal* to the effect that greed is a constant, which is untrue. The ratio of greed to fear is critical, and when fear is in the ascendant (as now), people are less willing to take chances to make money. The modest recovery produced by massive government spending has inspired a certain amount of apprehension about all that good government debt piling up, namely that it might make interest rates rise and choke off the recovery.

Jim Stumm contemplates the meaning of "States Rights" which in practice was the right of the state to favor whites over blacks, rather than following a national prescription that hadn't always been observed in practice, and States Rights is a legacy of the deal cut in 1877 to end Reconstruction by having Florida cast its electoral votes for Rutherford B. Hayes, after which the South was readmitted to the Union at the expense of America's black citizens who mostly lived in the South. Secession had failed, yes, but the South managed to maintain the essence of its peculiar institution for more than half a century, with Strom Thurmond's run in 1948 being the high water mark for States Rights. There was some erosion under Eisenhower, who tactlessly enforced *Brown vs. Board of Education* in 1954 and after Lyndon Johnson signed the 1964 Civil Rights Act, Civil Rights essentially castrated States Rights, as blacks became de jure citizens, while the South grudgingly rejoined the United States and joined the party of Lincoln.

What else? The website is currently at 246 pages, about 1,000 cartoons, including all of my recent ones, so if you'd like some of my cartoons you can use your files, or go to my website for "new" stuff.

From: **Joy V. Smith** June 25, 2009
8925 Selph Road, Lakeland, FL 33810-

0341 USA
 Pagadan@aol.com
<http://pagadan.blogspot.com/>

A great deal of what I know about polar expeditions, spying, WWII, etc., I learned from book reviews in *Alexiad*, so I enjoyed learning more in *The Third Reich at War, Spies* [KGB], and the video, *Killing Hitler*, reviews. And I enjoyed your British Antarctica Territory stamps. Great illos!

All the best with your organization, Lisa. (I cull ruthlessly now and then.) I read *The Guernsey Literary and Potato Peel Society* a few months ago and enjoyed it. I hadn't been aware that the occupation of Guernsey lasted so long! (I have a review of it in my media blog.)

Thanks to Rodford Edmiston for his high tech column; that may have been my first exposure to a brown dwarf so that I wasn't taken aback at its use in *Impact*, the two-part movie about the brown dwarf hitting the moon . . . (It concludes this Sunday.) The Kitty Norville books sound like fun; I'll keep my eyes open for them.

I enjoyed the report of your trip to the Sherlock Holmes/Doyle Symposium. And thanks for the fanzines and award nominees and winners lists.

LOCs: Thanks to Darrell Schweitzer for his background on the different spellings of Chinese names. That explains a lot! (I'd given up on keeping track of them.) Okaay, someone, why is Bombay now spelled Mumbai? And thanks to everyone for the historical tidbits. (*Alexiad* needs an index.)

"Mumbai" is closer to the original pronunciation. As for indices, I have an index of the book and movie reviews.

— JTM

From: **Jason K. Burnett** June 28, 2009
 4903 Camden Avenue North,
 Minneapolis, MN 55430-3544 USA
BritHistorian@gmail.com

Things have been pretty hectic up at this end of the world recently. Thanks to a miscommunication from my older son's case manager at the school district we ended up almost moving to the other end of the city (to the tune of finding a place and moving about 1/3 of our belongings) and then — when it turned out that the new place was pretty much unsuitable and there was actually no need to move in order to keep him in his current school — moving back into our previous house. If I sent you a COA, please disregard it: We're still at 4903 Camden Ave N, Minneapolis MN 55430.

By the time all the uproar from the move had settled down, it was time for our annual trip Down South to visit the families (my family on the Mississippi coast and Angel's family in New Orleans). Given the current state of the economy, we decided to drive down rather than flying. Even though this still meant renting a car (I don't think our car has another

cross-country trip left in her), we'd have had to rent a car anyway, and a couple of extra days' car rent was still much less than 4 plane tickets would have been. The families were all doing well, and our visit was surprisingly (and pleasantly) drama-free this year. But even though it was a nice trip, I'm still glad to be home.

Taras Wolansky's response to my comment about the Virginia Edition of Heinlein's works has gotten me to thinking more about the various ways in which an author's legacy can be managed or mis-managed. I think the Tolkien estate has done an excellent job with keeping his works in print in a variety of bindings and price points. This seems to be very much the exception rather than the rule. I've never read any of Vance's work, because I've never found it in inexpensive, easily available editions. At the other extreme, I'm currently reading H.P. Lovecraft on my Kindle, where I purchased his entire collected works for the grand sum of \$3.20. I think that authors' estate often go too far in their efforts to "protect" the author's legacy, often to the point of correcting it from being read.

I have to hand a Tor combined edition of the three Alastor novels, for \$14.95. The Demon Princes novels, The Dying Earth books, and the Planet of Adventure series are also available from them for comparable prices.

— JTM

The servers at work have come back up again, so I'd better get back to work. I hope this letter finds you well.



From: **Darrell Schweitzer** June 30, 2009
 6644 Rutland Street, Philadelphia, PA
 19149-2128 USA
darrells@comcast.net

Actually, I think the end of the Han Dynasty did not so much resemble the sputtering end of the Western Roman Empire as it resembled what happened in the middle of the 3rd century, when the Roman Empire broke into three quite viable and militarily potent pieces. The west,

Britain, Gaul, and Spain, came under the rule of M. Cassianus Latinius Postumus in 259. About the same time, the East broke away under Palmyra, under the auspices of Odenathus (who was more or less legitimate) and then under the famous Queen Zenobia and her son Vabalathus, who started out as regents for the central government but went for full independence. For a time the empire of the middle, which rested on the power of the Danube army, was too preoccupied with barbarian invasions and usurpations to do much about this. Gallienus (sole emperor, 260-68) once tried to settle matters by challenging Postumus to a duel, but the latter replied haughtily that he was "not a gladiator." Later, Aurelian (270-75) mopped up both breakaway empires and restored unity. But if Aurelian had failed, then the Roman Empire would have gone on broken into three pieces, all of them with functional central governments and strong armies capable of repelling barbarian attacks. In fact the reason that Postumus did so well was that he was better able to hold off the barbarians than the legitimate emperor (Gallienus). He also had his own senate in Gaul, issued his own coinage (which is considerably more impressive than that of Gallienus), and is reputed to have been a wise and capable ruler. He was later killed by his own troops when he had just defeated the latest usurper and refused to let his soldiers loot Mainz, which was, after all, a Roman city which he was supposed to be protecting.

Anyway, if Aurelian had not reunited the Empire, it would have gone on in three pieces, each piece meeting its own fate, which is what happened in China during the Three Kingdoms period. When is very clear from the film *Red Cliffs* and from *The Romance of the Three Kingdoms* is that Cao Cao and his two rivals had large and formidable armies at their command. By contrast, in the late Roman period in the West, the army was a pathetic joke. There were hardly any Romans in it. The Roman people were either a useless mob in Rome, peasants bound to the soil in an early version of medieval serfdom (i.e. those bankrupted by taxes sold out to rich landlords and became sharecroppers, in exchange for protection and immunity from the military draft), or else very rich senators who lived in fortified estates, had their own armies of retainers, but paid no taxes and contributed nothing to national defense. What few Romans or semi-Romans could be rounded up for the army were usually the least fit peasants, whom the landlords thought they could spare. It was common for landlords to bribe officials either not to draft their valuable workforce, but to fill the quotas with the elderly, cripples, etc. Draft-dodgers who cut off their own thumbs to avoid service were either burned alive or drafted anyway. The result was a truly sorry army. It is alleged that Attila the Hun gave a speech to his troops before the Battle of Mauriacus (Chalons) telling them that their real enemy was the Visigoths. Beat them and it would all be over. The Romans cowered behind their shields on a hilltop and were not to be taken seriously. Now the Roman government was still functioning in the areas it controlled. The emperor, Valentinian

III, was pretty incompetent, but not an utter, drooling imbecile like some of the figures you find at the end of Chinese dynasties. He had just enough backbone to do the wrong thing. He personally stabbed the general Aetius, having been convinced by courtiers that Aetius was after the throne. (This was not a spur of the moment thing, since Aetius had long been the enemy of Valentinian's mother, Galla Placidia. But she was smart enough to realize that she needed him, and struck a compromise with him.) Valentinian actually aspired to take over and rule, rather than be a docile puppet. But it was too late for that. The Roman army was a mere remnant. The real military power in the empire was held by barbarian mercenaries, who had to be paid and whose loyalty was at best questionable. This is not at all like the endgame of the Han Dynasty at all.

**Thus the comment in Ferrill's
The Fall of the Roman Empire: The
Military Explanation (1986).**

I've always managed the end of the Western Empire to be observed by a couple of peasants, rather like the famous shit-covered ones in *Monty Python and the Holy Grail*. One looks up from his labor and says, "Oh, the Visigoths are burning the manor house." His companion shrugs and says, "I hope they get the tax records." They go on with their work, completely uninterested.

Eric Mayer is correct, by the way, that by the late 5th or early 6th century Rome was a backwater. Its population was much reduced. It was no longer a city of nearly a million fed by grain fleets from Africa (which was in the hands of the Vandals) or Egypt (which sent its grain to Constantinople). The city had not been the real capital for centuries, since the emperors from Diocletian's time onward had operated out of Trier or Arles or Milan in order to be closer to the frontiers. Honorius removed the court to Ravenna in 402, because that city was surrounded by swamps and could be supplied from the sea. So Rome just sat there as a large and useless relic, although no one understood it to be such for a while yet. But it didn't produce anything. I don't imagine it made very much off the tourist trade. Eric is also correct that Italy was not worth the cost of Justinian's reconquest. It might have been worth the cost of a quick pushover, such as Belisarius delivered to the Vandals, but the war in Italy dragged on for twenty years and utterly devastated the country. Most of the major cities changed hands several times. There were massacres, famines, and plagues. At one point Rome was so reduced that the entire population sought refuge in a single church, and pathetically, the Ostrogoths started slaughtering them before someone restored order. There may have been at this point no more than a couple hundred Romans left. A little while later the Gothic king Totila rendered the city wholly without inhabitants for 30 days and threatened to raze it. Certainly to the Empire as a whole, and particularly to Italy, the reconquest was not worth it. Justinian would have been wiser to have just found a friendly

candidate for the Ostrogothic throne and left Italy as a tributary kingdom. The result of his reconquest may have looked good on a map, but a couple years after his death, most of it was lost when the Lombards walked into empty countryside and could not be expelled.

**Thus the lesson from Lest
Darkness Fall. One suspects
Justinian and that fabled hero of
alternate-history Belisarius would
have been better employed razing
the Arab town of Makoraba to the
ground, destroying the pagan
moon-temple in its midst with fire
and vinegar (shattering every rock,
particularly the black ones), and
executing all the inhabitants.**

In these years the center of Byzantine power was not in Rome, but in Ravenna. I was just there, by the way, a week ago. (June 23rd.) I did not go, like William Butler Yeats, sailing to Byzantium. It was more a matter of driving to Byzantium on the Italian Autostrada (the national highway), from where I was staying in Tuscany, near a town called Colle di Val d' Elsa, which is about an hour south of Florence. But I was not about to get that close and miss out on Holy Byzantium. I was told it was about 300 km and would take about 3 hours, but Italian distances turn out to be like Italian time. It took about five hours, but I did it and it was, I think, a fairly ambitious feat of navigation for a first-time driver in a foreign country when one has only the most minimal grasp of the language. (I did make a careful study of Italian road signs.) Much Autostrada driving is similar to the experience of a pinball — too fast, surrounded by trucks, no shoulders, weaving around curves, racing over bridges and through tunnels. You appreciate what an impressive engineering feat this highway actually is, considering the terrain, and that, prior to its building, such a trip would have taken days. (Now, I am told they're going to widen it from 2 lanes to 3 in each direction, which means redoing every last tunnel and bridge.)

I missed an exit north of Bologna and wound up in Modena, where the guy at the toll booth told me to turn around. After that, there were signs for Ravenna. The approach to the city does not look as it did in antiquity. It looks more like northern New Jersey, industrial, with electrical towers and oil refineries going on for miles. I had enough sense not to get off the highway in what was clearly marked the industrial district, but kept on going for another 30 km or so. Eventually the highway ran out and I started seeing signs for the Tomb of Theodoric. (There are special road signs for historical and religious edifices.) I figured that this tomb must be near the other ancient buildings, as it was probably within the city in the 6th century, or just outside the walls. Suddenly, there it was. I had found the free parking lot by the edge of town, across from the station. My wife Mattie and I toured the tomb, which is massive, but plain. There are faint traces of decorations on the walls, what must

have been paintings rather than mosaics. There remains a vast porphyry sarcophagus like an enormous bathtub, a big piece chipped away, the lid gone. The king himself has long since vanished.

It took a while after that, maybe 45 minutes to get orientated, and we only got into the center of the city ("Centro") when a kindly native walked us in through the maze of tiny pedestrian streets, which are confusing even by Italian standards. Having set forth at 10 AM on what was supposed to be a rather short drive, we actually made it, someone the worse for wear, to the church San Vitale by 4 PM. What can I say? It looked easy on a map. People in our tour group were actually considering driving to Venice. I even proposed doing so, which would have been insane.



But Ravenna was within reach for the sufficiently determined, and for those with the right education and precisely the correct sort of romantic sensibility, its Byzantine churches are sublime. The huge Renaissance cathedrals (such as St. Peter's in the Vatican) are overwhelming, not to mention large enough to fly a zeppelin inside, but San Vitale is a much more subtle. You ignore the inside of the dome, which was disfigured with Renaissance kitsch about 1500. The mass of mosaics around and above the altar are what you came to see. You can look at them one by one, but they blend together, as they were intended to, into a kind of haze of color, which has a decidedly unworldly effect. Everything centers on a seated, beardless Christ (whom Mattie thought looked like a Beetle), but to the left and right are, as you have seen in so many books (but not really seen at all) Justinian and his retinue and Theodora and her retinue. The images were brighter than I expected. They're about life-sized, and maybe Justinian does look a little bit like Rowan Atkinson, but the figures seem to float in space. The bodies are about two heads too tall for a realistic portrait, and the feet don't connect to anything. I think the idea is that these figures are supposed to be part of an eternal world, beyond the physical and everyday. Surrounding Justinian you see the very important Bishop Maximianus and other clergy, whose faces are distinct enough that they are probably real individuals, and also there is a figure believed to be Belisarius, another who may be Germanus (Justinian's cousin, whom he intended to make emperor of the west) and Germanus's son Justin (the future emperor Justin II). There is also a

figure believed to be Julian the Silversmith, a very rich local who financed the building of this and other churches in Ravenna. (Anticipating the custom commonplace a thousand years later of painting the donor into pictures with Jesus and the saints.) There are lots of other details. The pillars are wonderfully carved porphyry capitals with leaf designs and a repeated motif of two lambs facing a cross. This image (with a palm tree instead of a cross) is of pre-Christian, Persian origin. (Porphyry is a purple stone which is difficult to work. The art was lost in the Middle Ages, so this would have been an example of superior, lost Roman technology)

I still managed to miss details. I have no distinct memory of seeing the bearded Christ up on the ceiling, though I do remember the strip of portraits of saints leading up to him. The building has been called the last of Antiquity or the first of the Middle Ages. It mixes Early Christian and distinctly Medieval designs. These are of course the finest early Byzantine mosaics in the world. There is nothing like them in Greece or in Istanbul, because the Iconoclasts got them all. They differ from later Byzantine art in that there is still a trace of Roman classicism, so that the portraits are of individuals, not just types. The portrait of Justinian may be from life. Theodora was already dead. Her portrait is full of subtle symbols of immortality. This is the one place where a hint of that vanished age still lingers. San Vitale was built at precisely the time when the rest of Italy was being utterly destroyed in the Byzantine-Gothic war. It's also as if the supreme effort of the Empire was directed toward making a statement like this.

Outside is the alleged masoleum of Galla Placidia. I only got a superficial look at that, because it is small and human body heat is bad for the mosaics, so you're only allowed in for five minutes. It may or may not have anything to do with Placidia, but it is from her time, and she is allegedly buried there. I managed to walk right by the supposed sarcophagi of Constantius III (her husband) and of Valentinian III without noticing. Well, now I know what to look for if I ever come back. (Likewise, when I was in Rome for a day and a half on this trip, I could walk up to the Column of Marcus Aurelius and pick out the Rain Miracle immediately, because I knew what I was looking for.) The Mausoleum of Placidia contains the famous image of St. Dennis standing by the grill on which he was roasted. (He's the martyr with the sense of humor, who said, "I'm done on this side. You can turn me over.") This building is a hundred years older than San Vitale, dating from about 450. I mostly remember the brilliant blue, sparkling vaulted ceiling over the entrance, which gives the impression of a starry night sky. There is a plain cross inside the dome surrounded by the same blue. There are little figures of the four Evangelists. (Lion, ox, eagle, man.) This was actually made while the Western Empire was still a going concern. The art style is similar to that of Justinian's day, but not quite the same. The figures do not have that floating effect. They more resemble older, Roman mosaics.

After that, we were running out of time. Mattie wasn't up to much more racing on foot, so I made a last-ditch attempt in the car to make it to San Appollinaire in Classe before the last admissions (6:30). This was allegedly 2 miles outside of town. It felt more like five. At one point we'd circled around back into Ravenna, but, with 15 minutes to go I made one last effort and found it. We had to run up the walkway to get in before 6:30, at which point we had half an hour inside, which was enough for a relaxed visit. We even had a chance to sit down. This church was built about the same time as San Vitale, when Classe was the port of Ravenna. (Nowdays it is 2 miles from the sea.) Julian the Silversmith seems to have bankrolled it. But the mosaics are from a century later. To the left of the altar, where Justinian is shown in San Vitale, we encounter Constantine IV Pogonatus and his brothers Heraclius and Tiberius. All three of them have halos, as imperial personages do, but Constantine is the only one with a purple robe. He is seen giving a grant of independence to the bishop of Ravenna. The church is much larger than San Vitale, in classic Roman basilica style, not cross-shaped like a medieval church.

After they threw us out, we headed home. I got back to Colle di Valle d'Elsa (which means Hill in the Valley of the river Elsa) in about 4 hours, through the driving was worse, because it was night, with more trucks. Apparently the A1 Autostrada is the main traffic artery for the whole country. When I started seeing signs for Roma and Napoli I took an exit that promised Firenze and Siena, and got us back safely. This may be my only glance in to the ghostly world of Holy Byzantium, but if not, I know what to look for next time. According to the guidebook, I saw about half of it, which is pretty good for an expedition like that. The major loss was San Apollinaire Nuovo, which is the third major Byzantine cathedral, with splendid mosaics. This was built by King Theodoric, but redone after the Byzantine reconquest. There's a portrait of Justinian there that doesn't look at all like the one in San Vitale. The figure looks older and fatter. Now Justinian did live to almost eighty, but the best guess is that this is a portrait of Theodoric, altered after the fact. The church was only later dedicated to Saint Apollinaire because, as imperial power declined, even the defense of Classe became uncertain, and so the bones of the saint had to be moved to prevent their being stolen by Slavic pirates from the Balkans. This is a very typically Byzantine attitude, with a concern for otherworldly things even under such circumstances.

Of course I wore my Byzantine Stooges t-shirt to Ravenna. Of course, too, only the Orthodox eyepoke (two-fingered, recognizing the spiritual and physical natures of Christ equally) would be acceptable in the city of Justinian.

The entirely sensible way to get to Ravenna is by train from Venice. It reportedly takes about an hour. But I wasn't in Venice, and so had to make do. The food in the Autostrada rest stops is quite good by the way, much better than you'd find at the American equivalent. This

being Italy, they sell wine there too. What this does for driving safety, I don't know.

Win some, lose some. Thanks
for an interesting travelogue.

— JTM

From: **Christopher J. Garcia** July 3, 2009
1401 N. Shoreline Boulevard, Mountain
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garcia@computerhistory.org

Alexiad comes around and I often feel bad about seldom LoCing. There's usually so much there for me to say stuff about, yet I seldom find myself with the time to address it. And so, here's a short-ish LoC on issue 45.

Well, Second Life and Twitter are totally different worlds, pun completely intended. Second Life is not getting the press it once did, but Twitter is so convenient. Of course, something will knock Twitter out of the spotlight in a fit of All About Eve-ian retribution. I like Twitter a lot. I tend to think in small chunks and as one can tell reading an issue of *Claims Department*, I often try and falsely string those chunks together and make a mess of it. Mitch Kapor noted that when he started in computers you had 80 characters on a punch card and now you have 140 on a Tweet, which ends up being a 1.4% annual increase.

DYING IS EASY,
COMEDY IS HARD!

AND WHEN I SAID:
"BUT SERIOUSLY, FOLKS,"
THERE WAS THIS MAD
DASH FOR THE EXITS!



I find it very interesting that we've lost the last survivor of the *Titanic* (1912) and yet there are at least three survivors of the Zapatistas (1910) and two well-known Villaistas (both

from Pancho Villa's Battle of Chihuahua). All of them are 110+ or so. Just goes to show that rich white folks don't have the staying power of my people!

As you know, the oldest soldier ever was a Puerto Rican. In other fields, do you know about Juan Pujol García?

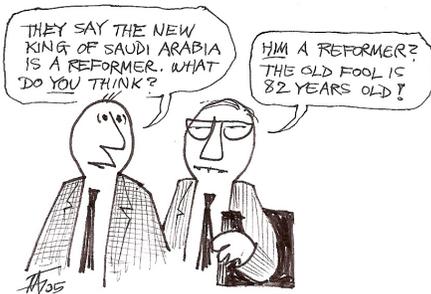
— JTM

As far as the Best Novel Nominations, I liked *Saturn's Children*, and it's really grown on me since I sped through it at Nomination announcement time. I still have not been able to finish *Zoe's Tale*. *Anthem*, which is way too long for me to read, was a very good Audio Book (I nominated it for Best Dramatic Presentation EXTREMELY Long Form) and I enjoyed *Little Brother*. Still, I can't stand *The Graveyard Book*. I dunno what it is but my brain tends to reject a lot of Gaiman's work, though it very much loves movies and such made from his words. Odd.

I broke even on the Triple Crown this year. I had Mine That Bird on a Topper for the Derby (I could not resist the odds there!) and that covered the fact that I got nothing on any of the other races. Still, I'm up for my over-all horse gambling.

I met Carrie Vaughn at the NASFiC in 2005 and I asked her to pitch her then up-coming novel *Kitty and the Midnight Hour* to me. "Talk Radio and Sex Werewolves" was her answer. Well-put. I love the series and I usually hate open-ended series. She's really good at hooking you. I thought that the first, third and fourth books were my faves, though none of them are actively bad.

See, brief, and now I must run away.



From: **Richard A. Dengrove** July 5, 2009
2651 Arlington Drive, #302, Alexandria,
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RichD22426@aol.com

I, of course, liked the June issue *Alexiad*; and I, of course, have comments about it.

First, I have a question. In your review of the video *Killing Hitler*, you mention the Guatemalan regime with a quasi-Democratic claim to power which the CIA overthrew. Wasn't that the Arbenz regime? And wasn't it overthrown in 1954?

Another question. Alexis Gilliland mentions

Aesop's Fables, which, he claims, held a slave's view hiding as entertainment. I have heard several different tales about the real Aesop; and the one we are reading apparently was never a slave.

While Aesop was mentioned in Ancient times, one person has claimed the works attributed him were really written by a 15th Century monk. Another that they were really written later in Ancient times by a Syrian gentlemen named Brabius. About the latter, little appears to be known except that he lived later.

That is the last question I have. From now on, except for a bit of hearsay and a later question, it is all assertions. Like one I have for Milt Stevens. I don't know whether changing the Martians from octopoids to giant humanoids was unwise on Serviss' part in his *Edison's Conquest of Mars*. A humanoid giant was the stereotype of a being from outerspace at the time. In the "Airship Sightings," which happened around that time, that is how sighters depicted the extraterrestrials they saw. In the 1940s, when the flying saucer sightings began, UFO aliens were typically depicted as two feet tall.

Uh . . . write a sequel to a book and change the original story? Come to think of it, that happens all the time these days. Garrett P. Serviss, meet John F. Carr.

In my comments to your comments, Joe, I am not going to assert Cook didn't steal the dictionary, fake the climb or reach the pole. Not like his supporters. Instead, I am going to assert I know where they are coming from. Even Peary's supporters admit that he could be pretty arrogant. I suspect his bankrollers were too.

Now for the promised second assertion. Once again it is not the obvious: I am not going to claim that von Ungern-Sternberg had Jewish spies. Instead, I am going to assert I wouldn't put it past him. While he was wildly anti-Semitic, he was completely erratic.

I have an assertion for Martin Morse Wooster too. I am not going to claim the golden prediction for Hugo Gernsback, i.e., that he predicted the personal computer. However, I am going to assert he predicted the cell phone. My father wrote for one of his magazines, *Sexology*; and, for it, received Gernsback's personally written, sub-digest sized magazine *Forecast*.

There, one year in the '60s, he forecasted something very similar to cell phones, wrist telephones. I admit one part of his forecast hasn't happened yet: the wrist telephone's servers would be geostationary satellites, each about 22,000 miles up.

Also, I admit Dick Tracy pre-dated him.

One thing I am not going to assert; just say I heard it. It is hearsay. Joe, in your comment to Dainis Biseneks, you mention an emperor telling Britannia it could have its own emperor. I hear Britain did have its own emperors for a time. Also, I hear Ambrosius Aurelianus, a hero in the fight against the Saxons, was the illegitimate son of one of the emperors of

Britain. On the other hand, that last belief could have been a misunderstanding of the writer Gildas.

No, it's not hearsay. Look up Constantine III.

— JTM

For George Price, I have not just one assertion but two. He is desperate to prove that the Federal bureaucrats caused the current recession/depression. For this, he has come up with several explanations. My first assertion is that, unfortunately for him, they lack proof.

The last included. I know of no evidence that financiers bankrupted the nation because they figured the Federal government would bail them out anyway. As far as I can tell, they were confident that their machinations would lead to permanent prosperity; and Federal regulation and subsidies would be a thing of the past.

My second assertion has to do with George's belief that I misinterpreted him. He denies that he ever said that the recession/depression occurred because the Federal bureaucrats didn't regulate enough. He did say that the Federal bureaucrats couldn't because, during a speculative frenzy, nobody realizes we're in one. I don't think it is a bad interpretation that they could have stopped it if they had kept their heads while others were losing theirs.

On the other hand, I find this George's most convincing argument. That is not to say that, during the recent frenzy, a lot of people didn't complain that the subprime loans and the securitizing of mortgages were not a good idea. The practices that caused the recession/depression.

It is another thing entirely whether these dissenters could have won in the political playing fields against the speculators, who were fantastically well-heeled. Even in an Administration which wasn't as hate to trot to de-regulate as the Bush people.

Lastly, I have a question to answer, as opposed to an assertion to make, for Taras Wolansky. He asks me why I thought that Mars having Oceans contradicted that idea of canals. First off, some canals were in the same place as astronomers had believed there were oceans. Second, why would you need an elaborate, planet wide system of canals when the water is plentiful? That, oceans imply. Which is why Lowell made his Mars of the canals a dry planet.

That's it for responses.

From: **John Purcell** July 7, 2009
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j_purcell54@yahoo.com

Sometimes I get so caught up in the whirl-wind of our household — with three kids and innumerable animals underfoot — that I realize my locking has dropped like a rock plummeting off a cliff face. So, it's time to catch up somewhat. Your latest *Alexiad* is the first zine to be tackled. Hopefully some locs will get me energized enough to finish *Askance* 15 this week. With luck, that is should be done.

Lisa's opening salvo about the library booksale reminds me of when I've done that in the past. The last time Valerie and I partook of such a sale was when we were still living in Marshalltown, Iowa, and for \$1 a bag, you could take home as many books as you possibly could manage. If I recall correctly, we bought something like 9 bags of books, and each bag contained a dozen books in hardcover and paperback. I can't recall any major finds, but I do think we snagged lots of history and adventure books. Other than that, nothing of note leaps to mind. Still, library booksales are a blast, and I wouldn't mind going to another one some day.

The Friends of the Library provide boxes. This was, I have been told, after someone brought his own box. It happened to be a refrigerator box. I wonder if what he saved on books made up for the cost of the hernia surgery.

The book reports in this issue have given me a whole batch of titles to procure for my reading shelves — note the plural. What little of John Scalzi's novels I have read — *Old Man's War* is it so far — I enjoyed a great deal, so I shall have to check more of his books out of the local library. The same can be said for Charles Stross: I have heard many good things about his work, but haven't really read enough to formulate a dominant opinion. That also goes for Neil Stephenson and gawd knows how many other writers lurk beyond the walls of my modest abode. Oh, well. There are much worse things to do in your spare time than read a good book.

Okay. Now you've done it. I am going to have to read S.M. Stirling's books (as reviewed by Grant McCormick on page 9) because they sound like a lot of fun. Not only that, but not too long ago I read Burroughs' *Carson of Venus* and loved it. From what numerous other fans have told me, if I enjoyed Burroughs, I will really like Stirling. Sure sounds like that's true, judging by Grant's review.

Some year I really must get to one of those Doyle/Holmes Symposiums. Your joint report of the 28th edition sounds like it was very interesting and enjoyable. Holmes is one of my guilty reading pleasures, but I am not a serious devotee of the canon. Still, I would probably enjoy attending, just like being at an SF convention. Another item to add to my Eventually To Do List.

We'll be glad to see you. Remember, next year the topic is "Investigating the AmeriCanon". If you can find any Sherlock Holmes in Texas stories, you'll be even more welcome. I expect there'll be everything from "A Double-Barreled Detective Story" to Larry Millet's Minnesota tales, not to mention "The Angels of Darkness".

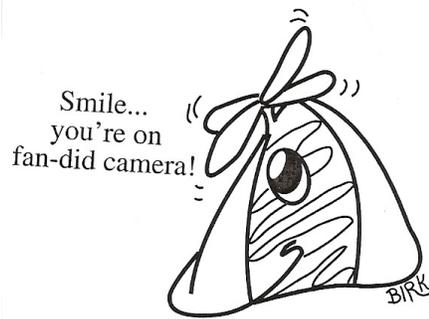
— JTM

A quick glance through the fanzine listing

makes me wish all the fan nominees a hearty bon chance to them. By the time the next *Alexiad* hits the newstands we should know the winners. I shall refrain from predictions; my prognostications rarely come true anyway, so I am content to await the results.

Nothing much else to note in the letters, but as always, they're a blast to read. Many thanks for the zine, and I look forward to your next issue with bated breath — and an alliterative cliché.

From: **Sheryl Birkhead** June 26-July 3, 2009
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catsmeouch@yahoo.com



Well, the *Triple Crown* is history again. It was interesting to note that the *Kentucky Derby* winner ended up with 1st, 2nd, and 3rd places among the three races. I was just glad that there were no horrific accidents.

My health insurance helps on two visits a quarter. This past quarter I needed three. I bet on which would be cheaper and I lost! They help on the first two visits — so I went to the dermatologist and the cardiologist. The third, uncovered, visit was just to the OP to discuss bloodwork (which I already understood — she wanted me to come in and be sure I understood . . .). Turns out that the dermatologist was \$65 — but this was a co-pay \$15. The OP was \$128 — which ended up as \$65 — so I guessed incorrectly. So far my medical bills (which includes insurance) is running about 150% of my income — anyone notice anything interesting about this number? We shall see.

Let me see . . . I have three functioning computers in the house . . . the old *Apple LC* (lovingly called the *pizza box*), this old laptop, and the desktop G-4. So there are three, but only two are actually used . . . I am not even remotely tempted to get rid of the *pizza box* but I did make two trips to the recycling center to unload batches of various things electronic that no longer work. Ironically, just about everything I called electronic, they called scrap metal, despite being mostly plastic. At least I did not have to bring anything home again to continue taking up space.

Grant is currently rehabilitating a computer I bought back in 1994.

Just a repeat note — annual shots are not. The (to me the **only**) *Pure Vax* feline rabies vaccine is an annual, but that is it. Once there have been "baby shots" — or a series of two in the adult — and a booster in one year — the *AAFP* recommendation is either an annual titer or tri-annual vaccination. Note this is not pertinent if the cat goes outside. End of commercial announcement.

Hmm — I don't mess with caffeine-never have . . . so I am not even tempted in the slightest to try the *Butterfinger* bar on speed. Thanks for the review — that is enough to satisfy any curiosity I might have.

Congrats to all the *Hugo* nominations.

Apropos of nothing — heard on a recent TV show (no, I do not remember which one) that if a child is not snagged at age 8 to read — the love of reading will not be there.

For the *Challenger* explosion, I was sitting the parking lot of the veterinary school in Blacksburg, just getting ready to go in for class and turned the radio on . . . and froze . . .

John P — lately I have had reason to (pointlessly) suggest to several clients how are heading out on vacations, that they need a pet sitting service that offers medical care. No one has been able to locate one. The problem would be the expense. For cats, boarding should not be a reasonable options — they just don't do well. That reminds me that I need to see if my dial up will do its thing tonight later on and see if I can research feline CML (chronic myeloid leukemia) for a friend. I am not that well versed in oncology and have no idea of any useful treatment. Unfortunately this particular friend/client has about a dozen cats and is slowly getting around to the routine work — so far, one with glaucoma, one with diabetes and renal disease, one with nasal lymphoma and now this one with CML. There is also a foster cat with a skin problem, but that is not her financial concern. I wish I could afford to subscribe to *VZN*, but that is not even a remote possibility.

Back to the current program . . .

Before I forget — I noted on a page that I filed that the fillos had been sent . . . in April I think. I believe they were emailed — forgot to check and see if they arrived at the destination. If they did not, let me know and I'll both re-send them electronically and by regular mail, presuming that at least one of them will make the trip.

AT&T does not offer any Internet services in this area — I checked.

Well, any expenditures other than necessities are now on hold — car needs \$800 in work (top of the list is brakes and I do not mess with those — get them replaced) and this year's property tax bill just arrived — went up \$800!!! They persist in saying my simple rancher in worth \$507,000. Yeah . . . right. That over the stove microwave will have to be a wall ornament (see *tRF*) for the foreseeable future. Gotta love this economy . . . just not very much!

Jeffrey Allan Boman — I believe this is an acupressure treatment — but it works (for me at least!). My mother had *Charlie-horses*, so leg cramps may be either dietary or hereditary — but when one starts — pinch forefinger on the

outside of the philtrum — that groove from nose to mouth — and the thumb inside the lip — **pinch**. For me at least, it works — but one quick stop doesn't last long and you have to repeat or keep pinching beyond the stop of the cramp.

I think I could find more comment hooks, but the stack of zines is still growing — must keep on moving!

From: **Milt Stevens** July 9, 2009
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miltstevens@earthlink.net

In *Alexiad* V8#3. Joseph tells us Second Life is passé. Oh! I'm almost sorry to hear it. I knew more about Second Life than about most teenage (?) fads. I once wandered into a panel at an SF con where they were discussing Second Life. I listened for awhile, and the whole thing started to sound familiar. Back when I was a young fan we had something similar, and we called it COVENTRY. A fan named Paul Stanbury invented an imaginary world called Coventry and appointed himself emperor. This was a little odd. Then he invited his friends to move into his imaginary world. This was definitely odd. His friends accepted the invitation and invented their own imaginary characters in the imaginary world. Soon everybody was writing stories and drawing pictures about what was going on in Coventry. It was peculiar but far from the strangest thing fans had ever done. Then the Guardian appeared. The Guardian was a persona of an unknown person who started menacing the characters in Coventry. This wasn't so much fun. One morning, one of the participants walked out of his front door and found the symbol of the Guardian painted on his driveway. Things had stopped being fun altogether. Even onto this very day, Bjo will go into high orbit at the very mention of Coventry. The fellow who was the Guardian is still unwelcome in L.A. fandom.

A little darker addition to the description of Coventry in Harry Warner's *A Wealth of Fable*.

Twitter is not passé. I guess I'm sort of glad to know that. Maybe some con will have a panel discussing Twitter, and I will find out more about it.

I don't recall the Frederik Pohl story about the totally non-addictive drug. However, the comment reminded me of the Dread Drug Plergb. Plergb had only one effect. It made you forget that you had taken it. This made it very difficult to determine how many plergb addicts there might be. There was a long discussion of Plergb in *Apa L* but nobody remembers what was said. We have also seen mentions of a Plergb Commission, but nobody knows what it does.

When J. G. Ballard died I found out I had been mispronouncing his name. At LASFS, Karen Anderson said he pronounced his name Ba-Lard. I had always pronounced it Bal-Lerd. Either way, he is the writer I most think of when

the New Wave is mentioned. I don't know whether that is a good thing or not. I never liked his novels and don't know why I read as many of them as I did. His novels made a lot more sense after seeing the movie "Empire of the Sun." I didn't like them any better, but at least I could understand why they were written.

The original novel is full of imagery he repeated in his stories for *Moorcock's New Worlds*. Great mind-pictures there, but plot? Character? Coherence? And he could and did do those both earlier and later.

— JTM



From: **Rodney Leighton** June 22, 2009
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Tatmagouche, Nova Scotia B0K 1V0
CANADA

Thanks for *Alexiad*.

I am in another of those flux situations. I don't read much any longer and the very thought of sitting in front of this old machine is sometimes too sickening to overcome. I have pretty well lost interest in the zine thing and think I will finish that up next month; got most of a blank page to go. I don't want to lose the few fanzines I do get. But thinking of comments is hard these days, especially if I do my best not to piss off anyone. I have been toying with the idea of writing something to submit to publishers. I even tried this morning. Pretty crappy result in my view. Use it if you wish; toss it if you want, I won't mind.

We all go through low spells.
I've several projects I mean to get
back to when I can find the time
and energy.

— JTM

Of course, this is all old news. I can recall when I would have written a three-page review of that book. That single page was enough for me. My reviewing ability seems to have vanished; not to mention my desire to do so.

Anyway: my mother ate a banana a day on doctor's orders for years and years and she got

so sick of the things that trying to eat one would make her physically ill and then she had to take potassium pills. I used to eat one a day and then switched to one any day I was at work but didn't bother when at home and I was tired of them and didn't buy any over winter. Felt lousy for months and one day it dawned on me that I felt better when I was eating quite a few bananas and went and bought some and, well, I do feel better now that I am back eating 5 or 6 a week. Of course, that coincided with going to work and walking 15 miles a day.

In an intriguing bit of irony the latest *Alexiad* and the latest bag of books from the U.K. arrived close together. Would have been cool if they had arrived the same day. Books arrived June 16; *Alexiad* June 18. Bit of a difference in transport times this time; I see you mailed *Alexiad* June 10 which means it took 6 mail days, Canadian mail days, 7 if you count Saturday, 8 days total. The books were mailed on April 21 and arrived June 16. Almost 2 months. 41 Canadian mail days. No, 40, I forgot Victoria Day, holiday. There was a package of 2 books he sent me which took 27 days. I believe George Price is correct, everything goes by air. Just not given priority somewhere, sometimes.

Even with my greatly decreased interest in reading I am still delighted to see books and be given books and even buy some. Went to visit my sister and donated some books to a store close to her and picked up 4 or 5; she had 3 or 4 that she thought I might like and 2 that I had gotten her to buy for me from Amazon and I ordered one while I was there which arrived the next week. Wrestling books: I am partway through both of them. Went to visit an aunt who gave me 2 books; I had read the Sandford novel but will read it again someday. And Chuck sent 6 novels in this latest batch. I have enough books close to my chair in the living room to keep even you busy for a couple of days except you likely wouldn't want to read any of them and yet I still look at books on charity tables and at tables in Zellers and I even sent in the latest Harlequin free book thing which will end up with 5 or so thriller type novels with too much boring sex arriving via Canada Post and which will be read someday, probably.

From: **Jim Stumm** July 5, 2009
Post Office Box 29, Buffalo NY 14223-
0029 USA

R-Lauraine Tutihasi: I hooked up my new digital TV to the outdoor antenna in my attic, the same one I've been using for about 30 years. When I ran the scan after the digital change-over, I found that this pulled in 15 channels, from channel 4 to 49, both digital and analog. As well as local digital signals from Buffalo, I pick up analog stations from Hamilton and Toronto. Since I still don't have a DVR, I'm now taping Canadian channels on my VCR.

I also have a UHF loop mounted over my front door. When all broadcasts were analog, I found that the UHF loop worked better for some channels on some days. I've only briefly tried the UHF loop with the digital channels. I didn't

see any improvement. One of these days I need to give it a proper test and try the UHF loop on all 15 channels to see which antenna is better for each channel. But in the past I've found that the best antenna arrangement for each channel often differs from day to day, depending, I suppose, on the weather. Digital reception also differs from day to day. Certain channels that are okay some days, on other days have so much freezing and pixilating as to be unwatchable, with the antenna unchanged.

John Purcell: I notice that you think it's a darn shame to deny medical care to people who need care simply because they can't afford it. That seems similar to the conviction that it's a darn shame not to allow some people to own mansions simply because they can't afford to pay for them. The government took care of that by seeing to it that such people could get mortgages anyway even though they couldn't even pay the interest, much less the principle. We are now aware of what a fiasco that turned into.

I'm sure that health care costs are artificially inflated, mostly by government interference into the health care market in ways that limit competition and choice. Eg, there are all those state government mandates that force health insurance companies to include in all their policies, coverage of 100s of services that politicians want everyone to have. This prevents us from buying cheaper policies that would exclude services that we would never use. Of course, health care is also more expensive now than it was years ago because so many expensive treatments and drugs are available now that we didn't have years ago.

And then there are the lawyers. I wonder what medical malpractice costs would look like if lawyers who handled these cases were not allowed to charge more than \$20/hour.

Generally I hold that people have a right to buy whatever they can pay for, but not what they can't afford, no matter how much they might want it. If someone wants to give them some benefit that lies beyond their means as free charity, there's nothing wrong with that. But it seems that too many people believe in the fantasy that government is an omnipotent diety that can provide us with everything we want at no cost. As a society, despite our present financial difficulties, we still haven't learned that we can't all have what we can't afford.

Milt Stevens: I don't know what a computerized rear view mirror is supposed to do, but I would like to have a video camera pointing back from the rear of my car, with a display on the dashboard, so I could see behind me with no blind spots. I'd also like to be able to switch to cameras aimed at my wheels so I can see how close they are to the curb when I'm trying to parallel park.

Darrell Schweitzer: And yet, barbarians did sack Rome, but they never got into Constantinople. Among other, Huns attacked Constantinople in 442; Bulgars attacked it in 555; and Avars attacked it in 626, but none of them could make a dent in the towering ramparts of the city. Huns turned to Europe instead and sacked Cologne, Trier, Metz, and

many other cities. They would have done the same to Antioch and other rich cities of the East, but there was no way they could get to them. Byzantines blocked the straits west of the Black Sea. East of the Black Sea, steppe nomads could come down through the Caucasus Mountains passes if they were undefended. But any organized military force could easily block those passes. East of the Caspian Sea, Persians blocked the way.

And the horsemen of the steppes never crossed any arm of the sea, so they didn't sail across the Black Sea, or attack by sea from Greece or Italy. Except for Anglo-Saxons and Vandals, both Germans, none of the barbarians ever attacked by sea, not even Goths. So the Near East cities were saved from barbarian invasion by favorable geography augmented by Byzantine defenses. By contrast, Europe lay entirely open to barbarians who had no problem crossing rivers. In that geography lies the answer to how the Eastern Roman Empire survived when the West didn't.



You say the Eastern Empire was too large for any barbarians to absorb. That's irrelevant. The issue is not what they could absorb, but what they could attack and loot. You could say the same thing about the West. No barbarians could absorb the Balkans, Italy, Iberia, Gaul, and North Africa all at once and none of them tried to. You say the East had too many cities and too large a population. How is that a problem? It just means more cities to sack, one at a time, if they could get to them.

You ask whether there would have been enough Huns to work their way around all the cities of the East. Huns didn't leave a garrison behind in each city they sacked. They did suffer battle losses that, in the event, stopped them at the gates of Rome. They could have similarly worked their way through many cities of the East, but they attacked none of them because they were stopped by the walls of Constantinople, and geography denied them any other route.

You ask what would they do after sacking many eastern cities, since horse-barbarians couldn't control so much territory. What they might have done is return to the steppes with their loot, which is what such raiding barbarians had often done. Or they could have set out to rule some smaller territory, a piece of the Empire rather than the whole of it. That's what they did in the West. After raiding in the West, with their numbers greatly reduced after the death of Attila, the surviving Huns returned to the steppes. Other barbarians carved out small pieces of the Western Empire, Franks in Gaul,

Visigoths in Iberia, Vandals in Africa. None of them did in the West what you say they could not have done in the East.

Richard Dengrove: I didn't mention social anarchy, and I don't know what you mean. Civil wars to choose a new emperor does not mean anarchy. Away from the battlefields, orderly civil society continued.

On the steppes, the theory I recall didn't mention weather. It said that there was a rise and collapse of human population in a natural cycle with about 500 years peak to peak. Raids by steppe nomads became especially intense at these population peaks.

And then, to make the argument from Asimov (instead of from Heinlein), technologies were developed that made the settled people more powerful than the steppe nomads. Which was why Ungern-Sternberg was the new Attila, but still didn't succeed.

—JTM

From: **Lloyd Penney** July 18, 2009
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Thank you for another *Alexiad*, number 45. It is but three weeks or so away from the Montreal Worldcon, and there is still plenty to do to get ready. Here comes a quick loc; it may be your only warning.

I have voted for TAFF and DUFF, and I would have voted for CUFF if the voting period wasn't at the same time as our computer being in the shop. I have purchased my Aurora Awards banquet tickets, and we will be presenting a Hugo. I expect that life will get crazy at this coming Worldcon, but such is life. The crazier a Worldcon is, the more fun I have at it, and the more memorable it is. See you at the fanzine lounge in Montréal.

With this being the season for racing, I hope you were able to get to see or at least hear about this year's Queen's Plate. This year's edition was the 150th, and it got less press here than I thought it would. Still, it was a big deal in the local sports press, but I do not remember who won.

Any faned whose fanzine has an obituary column must wonder if there's something in the water. After the current batch of passings comes Charlie Brown, Khen Moore and yesterday, Canadian author Phyllis Gotlieb. So many of us must be feeling a little targeted.

The Alexis Gilliland cartoon on page 11 reminds me of a story I found on the BBC News website, that as we may have suspected all along, cats have found a purr and other behaviours that drives us to give them what they want. So, those of us with cats, or who love cats, are very well-trained. Dogs have owners, cats have staff.

Hello, Cathy Palmer-Lister in the loco! I'm seeing you more and more here. I hope you're enjoying all this letter writing . . . I sure am.

Looks like you've found that in many fanzines, once we've established the common interest of SF, we can then go on to talk about anything else under the sun.

My loc . . . I saw the story on the BBC News website about how cats use a particular purr and behaviour to influence humans and make them give the cats what they want. I could just hear readers say, "As I always suspected . . ." I suppose that as long as we get a little attention, a furry coat to pet, and some companionship, we wouldn't mind being manipulated thus.

My fears about Khen Moore have come to our worst expectations. Worldcon will be less without him running barefoot. My Worldcon this year will consist of running the fanzine lounge, attending the Aurora Awards banquet as a nominee, and the Hugos ceremonies as a presenter. Our week is already planned, and could be quite exciting.

My adventures in ophthalmology may come to a head in 2010 with another appointment, and very possibly, an operation to remove the offending cataract. I'll probably need a new lens for my glasses, too. The cataract is a direct result of the retinal reattachment surgery in December of 2006. I wouldn't mind not having to wear glasses, but surgery is bad enough; I am not confident about laser surgery.

Time to fold . . . it's been a beautiful Saturday, been for a couple of walks, and it's getting late enough that I'm having a little trouble focusing on the screen. Take care, and see you shortly in Montreal.

While you were writing this, we were coming home from a beautiful Saturday in Lexington, seeing the Horse Park, which was having Breyerfest.

—JTM

From: **Robert S. Kennedy** July 28, 2009
1779 Ciprian Avenue, Camarillo, CA
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robertk@cipcug.org

Thank you for Vol. 8, No. 3.

Last year the Camarillo Arts Council Movies in the Park showed *Galaxy Quest* which was greatly enjoyed. This year the SF movie they selected to show was the newest *Journey to the Center of the Earth* (2008). Why they picked that piece of crap I don't understand. Obviously I didn't go to see it having already wasted my money on it as a rental.

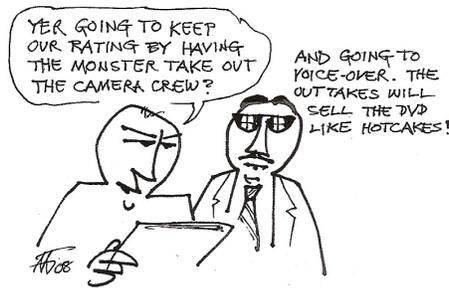
I purchased *Galaxy Quest – Deluxe Edition* because of the added Special features. One problem I have with it is that they keep mentioning Sci-Fi, an expression that makes me cringe. A disappointment is that no mention is made of the HUGO that proved how much fans liked the movie and perhaps recognized themselves. Obviously, I like the movie and watch it every year or so.

For those who are not enamored of government I highly recommend *Visions of Liberty* edited by Mark Tier and Martin H. Greenberg (2004). The copy I obtained on Interlibrary Loan was a paperback from the

Long Beach (California) Public Library. Another book that might be of interest is *A STATE OF DISOBEDIENCE* BY Tom Kratman (2003) that I obtained from the Palm Springs Public Library on Interlibrary Loan.

Another wonderful Leary novel by David Drake—*In the Stormy Red Sky* (2009). I did feel that there were some gaps in the novel. But, that just could have been me. What had happened was obvious. Perhaps there was some cutting to keep the book to 378 pages. All that I can add is more Leary!

I watch almost no live TV and no news unless there is something like a disaster. The shows I want to see are taped and watched at my convenience. One show that was being watched was *Merlin*. It was somewhat interesting. But, I was not impressed by the lead actress and didn't think that she fit the part. Anyway, two tapes were backed up as it had not been watched for two weeks. I put the first tape in the VCR and started to watch it. Then I said to myself that I didn't really care, took the tape out, and decided not to watch any more episodes.



Also, I've been watching *Ascent of Money* on PBS. It's interesting. But, I don't understand how a program on money and banking could ignore the Knights Templar who were probably the first international bankers.

Joe: Yes, "Failure to Obey" by John G. Hemry in the July-August 2009 issue of *Analog* was quite good and like you I hope for more stories. "Probability Zero" by Harry Turtledove was great. Damn those trees for getting in the way when glaciers recede. ☺

George W. Price: Yes, I remember noticing the streetcar boo-boo in *Who Framed Roger Rabbit*. But, I had forgotten about it until you mentioned it. I have the two DVD set, love the movie, and have watched it several times. Especially enjoyed is the scene where the wall opens up to Toontown and all the cartoon characters are seen.

From: **Jeffrey Allan Boman** July 11, 2009
6900 Cote St-Luc Road #708, Montreal,
Quebec, H4V 2Y9 CANADA
jeff.boman@gmail.com
2009 Aurora Award Nominee

This is Jeff from Jakarta. . .

I'm starting this LOC on Google Documents, typing on my Eee PC netbook. Lugosi IV (my desktop PC) has given up the ghost. Hopefully a friend is building me Lugosi

V tomorrow, and hopefully we'll be able to recover what data I didn't back up yet. I'll STILL use Google Docs after that so that I can work on this letter anywhere with net access. It'll take some time to re-install all my preferred apps anyway, and I don't really like Open Office Writer, so this is my best choice for now.

Re-reading my Aurora Nom headline (Lloyd corrected me about calling it a 'FAAN award'. That's I believe a Corflu one) is a bit of a potential paradox: by the time this sees print I'll know whether or not I've won it, as will Joe, Guy, Chris, and any other zine folks there who come to Anticipation!

As you know, he did.

As soon as I have an active PC again I'll get my zines out to members, and also get Lloyd a few copies for the Anticipation fanzine lounge. The past few months have been very busy for me on the zine front: I got new members, set up a bunch of zine trades, and thanks to Guy Lillian's *The Zine Dump* found my first comicbook zine to trade with! I may well join up to Challenger soon, and I'm getting more content to add to my Wetpasint zine wiki now. Life is (mostly) good.

2 days later: most of my PC is now new. The previous motherboard was trashed along with the power supply. We also needed a new case; the connectors in the old one weren't long enough. Only my DVD burner and HDs are the originals, and after Anticipation I'll get a new HD; the new board really uses SATA, and I can only use my IDE one temporarily. It will take time to reconnect things, so for now I'm still using my Eee PC. As of July 13, I've been back on my desktop machine.

July 15, 2009

Now begins my LOC starting with Vol. 8, No. 2! Thanks for sending it to me.

I've had many MRIs myself. I always sleep in it. . . I've been told that's a special talent. / I was hoping to meet Philip Jose Farmer. That can't happen now. That also happened with Douglas Adams before Torcon 2003, and Julie Schwartz. :(/ Re: Cat News. . . a few years ago at my aunt's old home in Burlington, VT (she now lives in a large 2-floor townhouse there) a cat came over to be fed. After we learned his name was Salem, and he lived with a family on the other side of the block. He was just greedy. Your case sounds very different. I hope that cat has a home. I'm still dazed that as I read in the next issue that Wullie has been gone for a year. It's almost 2 years now since I lost Boots. It doesn't hurt now like it did, but I still miss the fuzzy grouch. I still have some of his fur too.

The Lensmen series has a lot of echoes in Green Lantern. I suspect that the series was an influence; Guy Lillian III likely knows more — I'll ask him at Anticipation. / It's a corny series now, but I also think it deserves a bigger status in the field. / Re: Network Network? . . . I've also thought of a wifi network for my netbook, but my apartment is very small. / Re: The Joys of High Tech. . . I'm friends with a few

engineers, and one (RIP) was a Nobel Prize laureate. I'd know better than to ask one for a fixed estimate! / Einstein's laws (rules?) I don't know as well as you do, I see. / Re: Thoughts on a Dark Knight... I own a copy now (I buy anything related to comicbooks in film – except for *The Rise of the Silver Surfer*. I avoid disappointing crap). Anyway, Bruce Wayne is supposed to be a master of all the martial arts. He's supposed to be the best natural athlete in the world. You're correct about this film being focussed on the Joker for the most part. Two-Face (Harvey Dent) is just a quick footnote; he's been a major villain in the comicbook from the beginning. / The Serviss book sounds as if it has one huge strike against it: it doesn't sound fun.

You can see for yourself, it's on the Net:

<http://manybooks.net/titles/servissq2167021670-8.html>

Re: Letters

Cuyler "Ned" Brooks: Lugosi IV (my computer) also died, but far out of warranty (at least 7 years). Sounds far worse for you. My sympathies.

Jason K. Burnett: I'm also part of the *Challenger* generation. I was just in my first year of college. / A Kindle is too expensive right now.

John Purcell: I also didn't think of awards when I began *The Original Universe*. Having a zine less than 2 years old nominated for an award was more a surprise than anything. / Gorbachev was really known more for the blotch on his head than his politics — oh, and the end of the USSR too...

Jerry Kaufman: A shame to have 2 less folks to meet here at Anticipation. Mind you no hotel fees in my hometown help. Corflu IS the home of the FAAN awards, is it not? Regardless, it's on my "someday maybe" list. / I really enjoyed Splash and Roxanne. Daryl had such a minor part in *Blade Runner* though that the film would never hurt from her absence.

July 20, 2009

Alexis A. Gilliland: I hope the treatment for Lee indeed helped. / I think it was already mentioned here: *Watchmen* has a huge alternate reality twist — not only did Richard Nixon remain president, he also got another term into the 1980s.

Lloyd Penney: See you and Joe (among others) at Anticipation! / Concerning Joe's comment, I'm guessing he'll also go to Québec City; the Plains of Abraham are there, / I'll hope to have some zines for your fanzine lounge too.

We didn't, but more on that later.

— JTM

Darrell Schweitzer: Shyamalan is a running joke on *Robot Chicken*. . . whenever they have a story surprise he appears to just grin and say, "What a twist!"

Jim Strumm: Because people fear nuclear energy and the shielding the astronauts would need, I don't think that will be used in our lifetimes.

Richard Dengrove: Regardless of Will Smith being an SF fan I still refuse to see *I, Robot* — specifically because I find that it perverts Asimov's story intent.

Taras Wolansky: I always felt that *Analog* was too hard science for my taste, but it should still be saved. . . after all it is the magazine with the highest pedigree, and it has been the birthplace of many novels over the years. . .

Eric Mayer: Welcome! / My first computer didn't have a hard drive either, but it was an Atari 400, with a "whopping" 4 K of RAM. / In Montreal ever since 1997/98 "ice storm" are words that strike terror in many hearts; our city looked like a warzone. I think it was the same one as you had.

July 31, 2009

I'm running to the wire here, so I'll only reply to LOCs for #3.

Cathy Palmer-Lister: Your name was mentioned in the past few issues concerning the FanEd Feast at Anticipation, so I anticipated (a pun!) you coming here eventually. Still, welcome to LOC-ing! / Many of the folks here know history (especially of Rome), where I don't. I always defer to their knowledge. / I'm one of those who prefer paper too.

Alexis A. Gilliland: My uncle in Vermont was raised in a religious home and celebrates the holidays. That's the only time I know them. / I think your reasoning on the .org site works.

Brad W. Foster: Boots has been gone for almost 2 years now, and even though he was usually far from what you'd call sweet, I still think of him, so you and Joe aren't alone.

Lloyd Penney: You should see some of the folks I saw at GenCon in '92. They could have put many SF fans to shame. / I was home during 9-11, and saw the horrific tragedies happen on the Today Show. The events are burned into my brain.

R-Lauraine Tutihasi: My EeePC has a Wifi driver, but in a small apartment I don't feel it necessary. / *The Dark Knight* was indeed a dark film. Now that I've seen it, I don't find it as good as the general crowd felt either.

Robert S. Kennedy: I gave up on *Fringe* after the gross effects of the first episode. / King of the Hill played too much off negative stereotypes; I gave it almost a season.

On the matter of *The Dark Knight* (I'm a Monty Python fan; I can't NOT say 'dark night') I am one of the residents knowledgeable about comicbooks (as FanEd of a comicbook zine I'd better be!). That was the name of a 4-issue series by Frank Miller where an older Bruce Wayne un-retires in a future dystopia. The series is cited as the reason for the "grim and gritty" trend in comics in the 90s. Many would say it was to blame. It was a dark book itself, and sold very well too.

Time to send this to Joe. I'll see some of you at Worldcon, and read the others soon.

From: **AL du Pisani** August 2, 2009
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Of course I haven't written- take a ghod look at me!



It has been too long since I wrote my last letter. Life intervened.

Since the last time, I have been on a short holiday, going camping in the mountains, and resting. I needed that, since then I have been on the go often and long. So much so that I have difficulty remembering what I did in my personal life.

I did go to a concert with my sister, to watch her son perform. He is now studying music, and was playing the double-bass with a youth orchestra. A pleasant evening.

The elections did not turn out as well as I had hoped. And what I saw as examples of incompetence was seen by others as the opposite. Ironically, one commentator mentioned that checking his details on election day was much better than his experience when he applied to renew his driver's licence. My experience has been the opposite.

It is currently strike season — when the unions, especially the public sector unions negotiate their salary increases for the year ahead. And this year they have been very uncooperative, more so than normal. Some public sector unions has rejected as insulting increase offers of 11%. This in an economy which is shedding jobs left, right and centre, and where a lot of people are thankful if they are offered any increase at all.

Unfortunately, our government ministers have not been examples of frugal discipline, with most of the new ones buying new luxury vehicles on the government dime. At least five of them had spent between a million and two and a half million rand each on new cars, usually two cars each.

A couple of months back there was an incident, when the new car of a government functionary was stolen before sundown of the day it was bought. The two things of interest were the cost of the vehicle (about a million rand), and the fact that it was not insured. And the reason it was not insured was because no insurance company was offering insurance to high government officials at anything but very expensive rates, due to their bad track record in looking after vehicles, accidents, and thefts.

Among the places where there have been strikes has been the SABC. There it came to light that management has been living high on

the hog, and could not account where the money went. With a lot of outside suppliers very unhappy at not being paid. They are looking of a loss of about 2 thousand million rand. And the unions want to be paid more. It would not surprise you that the national co-ordinator for collective bargaining at one of the unions is one Vulture Ntukuli.

I have been trying to get back to reading more for pleasure, these days. Every now and then I hit a good book, or a couple of good books. And then I can climb back into the zone, where I lived for so long. But it is getting difficult. I am finding less books that interest me that are currently being published. Most of the ones I have been reading are books published during the past ten to fifteen years, with very little under five years old.

I feel like I am living through a drought. One that I hope would break soon. Unfortunately, most of the books that *Alexiad* have been reviewing recently have not been falling into the category "I must read this!!!!", or even the ones with less exclamation marks.

More recent books have been less to my taste, I am finding.

— JTM

From a very cold Johannesburg, I wish that you stay warm, and have lots of good books to read.

From: **Sue Burke** August 2, 2009
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<http://amadisofgaul.blogspot.com>

Apollo 11's historic moonwalk anniversary got a lot of attention in Spain. The radio message saying, "Houston, Tranquility Base here. The Eagle has landed," traveled from the Moon to a big parabolic antenna in a field near Fresnedillas de la Oliva, a town of 600 in the foothills of the Guadarrama Mountains near Madrid.

NASA had three manned spaceflight antenna installations in the world: Fresnedillas de la Oliva, Spain; Goldstone, California; and Honeysuckle Creek, Australia. Fresnedillas received the transmissions during the landing, but six and a half hours later, "That's one small step for a man, one giant leap for mankind" was picked up by the Australian antenna (as depicted in a cute movie, *The Dish*) and shared with the world. Television sets were still somewhat rare in Spain, and although it was 3:56 a.m. local time, people crowded into homes or bars or their village's communal TV in the parish social room to marvel.

Jesús Hermida, Spanish TV's first American correspondent (there was only one Spanish television network), earned fame for his detail-filled, enthusiastic narration. He had studied and copied Walter Cronkite's methods: slow delivery filled with words selected with the care of a prose poet, backed up by tireless

investigation.

These days, NASA has a new antenna in nearby Robledo de Chavela. It turned the one in Fresnedillas over to the Spanish government, and it's now the communications center for Spain's equivalent of the CIA. Still, Fresnedillas held a party for the 40th anniversary of the moonwalk. Dozens of the 103 Spaniards who had worked at the antenna came, along with several of the Americans. They were reminded that the center's land had fallen mostly within a neighboring town called Navalagamella, but that was too hard for Americans to pronounce, so in spite of the efforts of the Navalagamella mayor, it was named the Fresnedillas station.

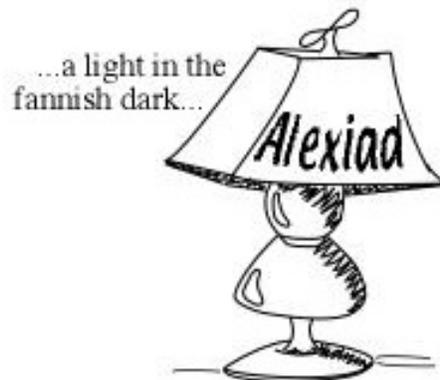
Spain has more links with Apollo 11. General Emilio Herrera, who had worked on Spain's military program for dirigibles and balloons, devised a suit to wear in very high altitudes. NASA used his design and offered him a contract to do further spacesuit investigation 1958, but he insisted that a Spanish flag wave alongside the American one on the Moon, and NASA wouldn't agree. He died in 1967, but Neil Armstrong gave a Moon rock to Spain in gratitude for his suit design.

There doesn't seem to be any confirmation of this in any local source, but see:

<http://www.astronautix.com/craftfam/spasuits.htm>

— JTM

That rock had been in the office of the director of Madrid's Aeronautical Museum, but it disappeared in 2004. Another, a piece of basalt, had been in the possession of the head of the Central Council for Scientific Investigation and displayed in a glass case in the council president's office, but it can no longer be found. It may have been the rock presented by the United States government to Generalísimo Francisco Franco, but if not, that one is missing, too.



Spain's first NASA astronaut, Pedro Duque, spent nine days in the Discovery shuttle in 1998 and ten days in the Soyuz TMA and the International Space Station in 2003 to complete the 22 experiments in the European Space Agency's Cervantes Mission (with a very cool mission logo of Don Quixote in space). Currently, he's CEO of Deimos Imaging, which

on July 29 launched its first Earth Observation satellite. It will monitor crops, pastures, forests, and water reserves in Europe, with special attention to La Mancha.

And that's the way it is.

From: **George W. Price** August 2, 2009
P.O. Box A3228, Chicago, IL
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June *Alexiad*:

Darrell Schweitzer thinks that "Giving the Lensman series a Best All Time Series award now would just be an embarrassment." I agree, but only with strong caveats.

Doc Smith's writing in the Lensman series (and the Skylark series before it) was slanted to adolescent boys, and it shows, particularly in its treatment of sex. I still cringe at the scene in *Galactic Patrol* (Chap. 20) where Clarrissa pretends to defy Blakeslee; she uses language better suited to an eight-year-old than to a strong adult woman. To be sure, the requirements of pulp fiction for boys in 1937 made an adult treatment impossible. But Doc went too far in juveniling it. He certainly *could* write in a more adult fashion, and he did in later works, such as *Have Trenchcoat — Will Travel* (of which I am the proud publisher, \$20 postpaid). And I still like his piling-Pelion-on-Ossa style of depicting space battles, though it is out of fashion in current military science fiction (which didn't exist as a sub-genre when Doc was writing). His attempts at future slang and banter were often painful; he was far better in recounting the conferences of the Boskonian villains, using a more formal voice which I suspect is what came most naturally to him.

Doc Smith deserves an award, not for his writing style, but for his development of the interstellar epic. We may now denigrate it as "space opera," but it was a huge advance in the science fiction of that time. His very real accomplishments were as an imaginative pioneer, not a stylist. And apart from sex and slang, as noted, his style was quite serviceable, and at least as good as most pulp writing. And maybe even a little better.

QX and clear ether to that. And by Klono's carballoy claws and gadolinium gizzard, he certainly was an innovator — first to really write about other solar systems.

— JTM

Richard Dengrove at least partially grants my point that the Constitution should not be changed by reinterpretation, but then asks, "wouldn't people find it radically inconsistent if, after fifty years, all the laws that had been reinterpreted were interpreted back?" Yes, that would be a radical change, and I don't expect it to happen, precisely because it would be too much to swallow in one gulp.

Some would argue that when a wrong is righted, it should be done as quickly as possible — when a robber is forced to disgorge his loot,

he has to give it back all at once, not by easy installments. But, as a conservative, I prefer to make changes incrementally, to avoid getting more unintended consequences than we can cope with.

It would depend on the particular case. Undoing the absurdly wide interpretation of federal power over interstate commerce would have to proceed gradually to avoid disrupting the economy. You may imagine with horror what might happen if the Supreme Court held that (as I believe) there is no constitutional warrant at all for Social Security or Medicare.

Well, no doubt a judgment striking down a long-standing and popular program such as Social Security would set off a rush to pass a constitutional amendment re-establishing it. And in the interregnum we would politely pretend that it was still in force.

* * * * *

Jim Stumm and I seem to have more or less converged on the idea that the incorporation of the First Amendment into the 14th began in the 1920s. He cites *Gitlow vs. New York* (1920), in which the ACLU “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.” However, Justices Holmes and 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.”

Now that is a crucial point: this dissent opened the way to holding that obscenity and pornography cannot be punished, since they don’t involve violence or incitement to violence, thus destroying every state’s right — until then taken for granted — to censor publications, movies, and other public utterances. Note well that the Court was not just construing the Constitution, but making a value and policy judgment that words alone should not be punished.

Mr. Stumm continues, “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.” I know nothing of this case beyond what Mr. Stumm says, but I must say that while the law seems to have been self-evidently silly, that doesn’t make striking it down “sensible.” It is not the business of the Supreme Court to decide that a law is silly or otherwise unworthy; silliness does not violate the Constitution. Whether it is silly is a policy decision to be left to the legislators who passed the law and the voters who elected them.

* * * * *

I am strongly puzzled by Dainis Bisenieks’ statement that “George Scithers absolutely does not believe in [the possibility of] turning on one’s heel.” Scithers, of all people, should know

it’s possible — he must have done it hundreds of times in his career as an Army officer. (He retired as lieutenant colonel shortly before becoming the founding editor of *Asimov’s SF* magazine.) “Turning [or spinning] on one’s heel” is an exact and literal description of executing “about face.” Ask anyone with military service to demonstrate it to you, and watch his left heel.

Of course, when someone “spins on his heel” in fiction, he usually is not a soldier, and doesn’t do it quite so literally. It’s a way of saying that he is moving in a rigidly controlled manner, like a soldier on parade, as he might do when trying to keep his temper. As description, it seems quite reasonable to me.

From: **John Hertz** August 3, 2009
236 S. Coronado Street No. 409, Los
Angeles, CA 90057-1456 USA

“Scarlet Muse” instead of “Ruse” for Typo of the Ish! But when Darrell Schweitzer won’t spell tsar it’s a sad world.

“Czar” is the Polish spelling.

People want a court, especially the U.S. Supreme Court, to “simply recognize what everyone already knew.” Enough of us know what lies down that road that we take the trouble of reason and evidence — and among judges and juries, do nothing without them.

And of course, the job of a
lawyer is to make reason and
evidence go separate ways.

— JTM



From: **Dainis Bisenieks** August 5, 2009
921 S. St. Bernard Street, Philadelphia,
PA 19143-3310 USA

There is more to be said about the Sharing Knife series and the fourth book, *Horizon*. Science fiction is a literature that sometimes asserts and sometimes asks what the good of intelligence can be. That makes this tale science fiction. In spades. Intelligence in all its aspects is called for, chiefly the art of dealing with difficult people, extending to social engineering, but not omitting a technical fix here and there, like use of the crossbow.

Any sufficiently advanced magic is indistinguishable from technology, and Dag keeps insisting that “ground” and the Lakewalkers’ talents are part of the natural world. It dawns on him that all is not yet known, and he looks toward increased understanding and control. The mystery of the malices may never be fathomed; they can be classed as supernatural. But how different is the Challenge posed by the supernatural in, say, the novels of Charles Williams:

In each novel the characters are presented with an unexpected supernatural invasion which threatens the existing order. Because it decisively and irresistibly challenges their self-centredness, their attitude towards it becomes a gauge of their attitude to any fact outside themselves.

(Glen Cavaliero)

The unity of the “natural” and “supernatural” worlds requires to be found. The gods, in this Bujold work, are stated to be absent. (Which need not prevent people from fabricating gods, to be believed in by their descendants. But in the story this has not happened.)

By a downright unavoidable convention, this World Elsewhere has a perfectly normal moon, and normal day, year, months and seasons. Stars are seen at night. There are perfectly normal fauna and flora, with some additions; we note that while wild nature is North American, the people are Caucasoid and have such fruit trees, cultivated plants, and domestic animals as we know — most, but not all, of Old World origin. This, of course, is totally fantastical, but gives the background of normality against which the fantastic elements stand out.

As we rarely bother to consciously consider, English represents the language spoken in such a story: Westron in Middle-earth. Word play represents other word play. In one place, the bit about “unconscionable”, Bujold makes it seem as though it was English, which would add another layer of the totally fantastical. In the main, she has avoided the words which would most make us think of their origins. Nobody welshe on a bet, or goes berserk or amok; nobody is mesmerized, silhouetted, or boycotted. I did notice (in exposition, not dialogue) the forsythia; looking it up, I find that it is of Asian origin. I would quibble, too, about “period” — “do it, don’t argue.” It implies not only widespread literacy but printing. Which brings up again the idea, which I have not found in my very limited reading in the modern fantasy genre, of lithography being invented instead of movable type. How far Solnhofen limestone was

a sine qua non, I do not know; but a fictioneer can deliver it at the stroke of a pen.

One sees in Bujold's fantasy, from the first, a less strict literary decorum than in the highest of high fantasy. Undergarments are not unmentionable. Or socks! Natural functions, and facilities or the lack of them, ditto. Yes there are love scenes — but without any Naming of Parts. Oh, the naming of parts I've seen in other writers, everything except the cervix . . .

I would wonder what you would think of M. A. R. Barker's novels, all set on his role-playing world *Tékumel: The Man of Gold* (1984), *Flamesong* (1985), *Lords of Tsámra* (2003), *Prince of Skulls* (2002), and *A Death of Kings* (2003) [last three reviewed in *Alexiad* V. 3 #6]: a world with different moons, different flora and fauna, and so on. Oh and love scenes without Naming of Parts (though the scene in *A Death of Kings* where Lady Eyil shows off her vibrator is kind of funny . . .).

— JTM

Of the original series of hardcover American Heritage mags, I have acquired on the cheap all but one; the collection continues into soft covers for some years (all but a few from the same lot). At a sidewalk sale by the Friends of the Free Library, I saw a whole bunch of the later issues, in their premium-price hardbound version, going at a two bucks each. No thinks — but I did get the 45-year Index. A substantial remnant of these is now among library discards going at 25¢ each, and I am still not buying. After month's end, unsold books are free; only then will I choose from what is left. Only through price ceilings can I keep my library from getting out of hand.

Indeed Charlie Brown died with his boots on. We shall not look on his like again. Winston Churchill measured feminine beauty in millihelens. Though no round number is before us — the August *Locus* is #583 — might we not measure fannish achievement in millicharlies?

Will I ever go to another worldcon? If I could avoid the weariness of travel, I could chance the weariness of congoing, given the chance to retire for a siesta at a nearby hotel room. Oh, the things I did when I was younger! Several times I resorted to a not-too-distant YMCA. Other expedients you know of . . .

From: **C. D. Carson** August 2, 2009
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The work of Edward Elmer Smith, Ph.D., seems to have very vocal detractors; perhaps I may speak for the other side, having once been told that I was unfit to hold opinions about science-fiction, on the grounds that I admitted to having read, re-read, & enjoyed his writing. If the stories contain ideas & assumptions which

we of today find difficult to handle, that hardly seems like a hallmark of bad science fiction. If his human interactions seem somehow unrealistic, it cannot be denied that he explores a variety of social norms, with their implications. The style lacks the maturity which modern sophistication demands? well — but I had rather read *The Galaxy Primes* (some of his weakest work, to be sure) than anything by Updike or Vidal. Smith's real claim to fame, in my opinion, lies in his exemplifying the description of science fiction as the 'literature of ideas'. His paragraphs are packed to bursting with ideas, as though he feared he would die before reaching the bottom of the page, & so put every thought down just as it occurred to him. This, of course, detracts from the coherency of his stories, & reinforces the impression of ever-escalating ultimates, a problem to which he was not asleep, as anyone who has ever read *Children of the Lens* (in which Kim Kinnison masquerades as spaceopera writer Sybly Whyte) well knows. To others I will only mention (capitals in the original) QADGOP THE MERCOTAN!



I wonder where Alexis Gilliland gets the idea that the only viable method of humanizing space (or, better, cosmifying Man?) involves creating "self-sustaining habitats, necessarily with robots or remotely directed machines." Only under the least favourable assumptions would such a procedure even be desirable, & I have doubts that it would be successful; Jerry Pournelle observed (ye gods!) almost thirty years ago, & it still is true, that it is very difficult to get the last man out of the loop. In any case, those assumptions are very likely as unnecessary as they are unfavourable. Most of the 'breakthroughs' being evaluated by the Breakthrough Science & Technology Committee of the National Space Society, in which I have had the honour to participate, would be quite superfluous to a programme of space development begun & carried out as such.

I should note in matters

monarchist that you did point out that Syria also has a de facto monarchy. As al-Malik al-Baššār al-Asad, son and successor of al-Malik al-Hāfiz al-Asad of the Assadian Kingdom of Syria could testify.

— JTM

WAHF:

Lloyd Daub, with various items of interest, and also thanks.
Pat McCray, with thanks.

A little story of Jack Ryan that Tom Clancy never quite got around to writing down . . .

One of the burdens of being President, Jack Ryan concluded, was having to engage in informal foreign relations with foreign media. Like this reporter from one of the new post-Soviet states in Central Asia. The man seemed like a back-country boy, amazed by the wonders of the Big City. They said he spoke English, more or less. That gray suit . . . had he ever washed it?

The technicians finished putting the microphones on, then everyone else stepped back and waited for the signal. The man's assistant, a big fat balding man, said in a thick accent, "Rolling."

The reporter's eyes lit up and he smiled. "Jagshemash. Borat Sagdayev here, reporting from Washington, U.S. and A, here in the big white house with the President himself, Mr. Jack Ryan. Mr. Ryan, we in Kazakhstan want to know, you kill many people on way to become President?"

Ryan was more than a little startled at the bluntness of the question. "I was in the Marines before I was injured, and I have participated in anti-terrorist activities both in service and afterwards. It's all a matter of public record. I'm not particularly proud of it, but it's something I've come to accept."

"In Kazakhstan we pick President by mud-wrestling contest. You wrestle with President Nurabayev, they make you President of Kazakhstan too! Now, Kazakhs want to know, you have many wife?"

All the mud; those accusations never would seem to die. "No. Cathy and I have been faithful to each other, and we love each other and our children very much. An opponent of mine tried to smear me with an accusation that I was keeping the widow of a friend as my mistress, but that was publicly disproven."

"So you have two wife. High five!" The man held up a hand, to have it slapped like a ball player. "I have wife, she killed by bear. Very good news. Now I free to marry Pamela Anderson, who I see on big screen."

This made him consider relations with Kazakhstan . . .

A BLOOD PUDDING IN MUNDANIA

It was a rich, ripe day in the green belt of land that encompassed the great metropolis of the Empire. The morning sun cast its golden beams over the small Tudor house.

A shaft of golden light cut across the desk wherein the serving-man had laid the morning post. Edward Lessingham, smelling the rich vapors of a China tea, black and hot, with the most subtle hint of fresh Spanish lemon, surveyed his future with some diffidence. Whatever he turned his hand to . . . it was but a question of choosing what to do.

Then, amid the tumble of envelopes, he spotted one that stood out. Its worn paper surface bore the postmarks of half a dozen nations, having been forwarded from one land to another, and finally now to this temporary refuge for the man to whom it was addressed. The stamps that had been pasted to it bore overprints of new values that were as nothing. The name on it was one that was familiar, a fellow researcher whose contributions to Lessingham's great and authoritative biography of his ancestor, the Emperor Frederick II, had been as vivid as if he had been there himself.

A strange imp perched itself in the corner of Lessingham's mouth, hid amid the rich sable beard that veiled his features, as such a beard might have done so for his Viking ancestors. He took up the envelope in one great hand and surveyed it, closely, then with a decisive move tore it open and withdrew the contents.

The letter of many pages that was within was scribed with an ancient, precise hand, at great contrast to the cheap and inadequate paper. Lessingham perused the measured, gracious words with careful attention.

To Mr Edward Lessingham
Nether Wasdale
Cumberland, United Kingdom

My dear Lessingham,

I write you a brief letter because I have no leisure at the moment to write a longer one, incarcerated here as I am in the palace of Sheng Shih-ts'ai, the governor of Sinkiang. My latest efforts in the search for the learning of the legendary High Priestess of Kaloon have not met with success.

Were it not for the presence of Mistress Chiang . . .

The imp that lurked in the corner of Lessingham's mouth trembled more and more as he continued the careful perusal of the missive from the depths of peril in Central Asia. His morning tea cooled to the point of undrinkability as he turned over page after page.

He read the final words:

. . . when more time, resources, and liberty are available I shall discuss further the prospects of alchemy and its many secrets and powers, as I have heretofore promised you.

Your friend,
Francis Ragozy
(His seal, the eclipse)

Lessingham tossed the letter on the desk and let out a mighty oath. How weak was Ragozy! How timid and self-effacing! Had he been in that place, he would have not only escaped but overthrown this Chinese warlord and made himself Emperor of the Steppes. The great Ungern-Sternberg would have been his model. And then he knew it was time to act, to do.

With that resolve made, he went to a cupboard there in the corner of his study. He would give them something to remember him by. Drawing forth his key-ring, he unlocked it and spread wide the doors, surveying the many precious and valuable things that were stored within. He reached out one mighty hand into the depths of the shelves and drew forth one item from its trove.

The Flower of Forgetfulness had been one of Lessingham's great acquisitions. His writings on its provenance had brought him recognition in the recondite field of Chinese porcelain; it was not only unique but was heralded as one of the great, if not the greatest, pieces of the Yung-lo period of Ming porcelain ware, and from his paper alone describing it he was universally acknowledged as one of the foremost experts in that field. Cradling the unique item in his great and powerful hand, he bore it to his desk.

Placing the bowl in the sunlight, he admired it for a brief time. Then, he raised one mighty arm, and with one forceful move, brought his palm down on the bowl, reducing it to shards and dust . . .

— Not by E. R. Eddison or Chelsea Quinn Yarbro

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