

# ALEXIAD

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The Triple Crown so far has been a mix of triumph and tragedy. Unless you've been hiding in a hole in the ground somewhere in a very remote wilderness you know about Barbaro's injury. Much as I love horses, I have to wonder if it's really appropriate for an animal to receive more attention than the death of five miners did that same weekend. Of course, the miners' families probably didn't really mind not being the focus of a media circus.

I hope that maybe some good will come out of this for the less famous horses. Had it been a cheap claiming horse and not the Derby winner, the screen that went up would probably have concealed not a fight to save the horse but an ugly death and the discreet disposal of a huge body. Too bad, so sad, it's time for the next race. I'm very glad that it looks now that Barbaro will live. I just wish the same concern would be shown to lesser horses. Maybe now the tracks will install safer surfaces like Polytrack, which would benefit all horses, not just the equine superstars. I have to wonder, also, if it is really a good thing to breed to a stallion who didn't run sound. I remember looking at Barbaro before the Preakness, noticing how thin I thought his legs were in relation to his body and being chillingly reminded of Ruffian. I think he broke down because his legs were simply too thin to carry his weight. If they do succeed in saving him for stud duty, will his offspring inherit those thin legs? Will it really be good for the breed to keep breeding animals who didn't run sound?

— Lisa

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**ConGlomeration** 2006 will be **August 11-13, 2006** at the Clarion Hotel and Conference Center in Louisville. The Guests of Honor are Harry Turtledove and Omar & Sheila Rayan. Membership is \$25 until June 25, 2005 and \$35 thereafter and at the door.

**ConGlomeration/Attn: Registration**  
**P.O. Box 32095**  
**Louisville, KY 40232-2095**  
[http:// www.conglomeration.org](http://www.conglomeration.org)

The 81<sup>st</sup> Running of the Hambletonian (1st leg of the Trotting Triple Crown is **August 5, 2006** at Meadowlands Racetrack in East Rutherford, NJ

The 114<sup>th</sup> Running of the Kentucky Futurity (2nd leg of the Trotting Triple Crown) is **October 7, 2006** at the Red Mile in Lexington, KY  
 The 52<sup>nd</sup> Running of the Yonkers Trot (3rd leg of the Trotting Triple Crown) is **November 25, 2006** at Yonkers Raceway in Yonkers, NY

Printed on June 12, 2006  
 Deadline is **August 1, 2006**

## Reviewer's Notes

Where are the new conrunners? *Banana Wings* reports an attempt to have a wikicon — no committee, everyone free to contribute. How long will it last? As long as some other group doesn't decide that here is a nice venue for their fun. As long as someone doesn't do something that tears up the hotel, another member, or both. You can guess how long that would be.

The internet community still has the mentality of a very small village. Everybody knows everybody else, and so everybody trusts everyone else absolutely. However, it is an anonymous village; and such are wide open to predators. Notice the current popularity of MySpace — of which the biggest news has been stalkers! Remember that these are the future, the most savvy and skilled generation ever.

Such doom has been predicted for every generation; so far they have grown up and produced a new generation that has confidently predicted doom for their successors. Now, though, infancy can be prolonged.

## RANDOM JOTTINGS

by Joe



Our continued thanks to **Forrest J. Ackerman** for his literary gifts, of which we must cite here *John Landis* by Giulia D'Agnolo Vallan (Torino Film Festival; 2004; ISBN 88-88357-32-7; €35). Noi non possiamo leggere italiano, ma i ritratti . . . er, we can't read Italian, but the pictures are nice, including one of 4SJ with a friend on Pages 52-53. Molte grazie!

Available for downloading due to various copyrighting lapses, some of H. Beam Piper's works are on the Project Gutenberg site at:

<http://www.gutenberg.org/browse/authors/p>

They have "The Answer", "Flight from Tomorrow", "Genesis", "Graveyard of Dreams", "Operation R.S.V.P.", "Time Crime", and the novels *Little Fuzzy*, *Murder In the Gunroom*, and *Null-ABC*.

HBO's series *Rome* began shooting its second season in April at the huge stage-set in Italy, for presentation next year. The principal actors are returning, even Ciaran Hinds (Caesar), presumably in flashbacks (or even visiting Brutus's tent at Philippi). Max Pirkis (Octavius) has been replaced, though. There will be ten episodes filmed.

The first season will be available on DVD on a.d. XVIII Kal. September MMDCLXIX, er August 15, 2006. There will be six disks and the list price will be \$99.98.

Meanwhile the first season is being shown in Italy, but it's apparently not doing well. They edited out all the sex and violence. What's the point of watching the show if you can't see Atia (Polly Walker), er, at play?

LACon has announced a special STAR TREK™ programming track with appearances by the lesser stars of the series (presumably CreationCon has most of the more significant ones tied up), writers (you sure won't see those at CreationCon), other creative people from the various series (you're definitely not going to see those at CreationCon), and a heavy fan input (there's no way you're going to see this at CreationCon). There will be a special presentation on the abortive Trek revival series of the late seventies, *Star Trek: Phase II*, which

would have had most of the original series original cast returning for their next five-year mission.

This is to commemorate the fortieth anniversary of Roddenberry's showing preview episodes at Tricon in Cleveland. And only ten years later, the MidAmeriCon people put All Fandom At War by dropping Trek programming. The world goes round again.

## OBITS

We regret to report the death of **Frankie Thomas** (Frank M. Thomas, Jr.) on **May 11, 2006**. Frankie had been Special Guest of LA Con IV, the World Science Fiction Convention, in honor of his portrayal of the title character in "Tom Corbett, Space Cadet", one of the early shows of space adventure. He was buried in his "Tom Corbett, Space Cadet" costume.

Interestingly enough, after he quit acting, Thomas wrote a number of Sherlock Holmes pastiches, including *Sherlock Holmes, Bridge Detective* (1976) and *Sherlock Holmes, Bridge Detective Returns* (1975). As you can guess, he liked bridge.

<http://www.imdb.com/name/nm0858833/>

We regret to report the death of **Fern Tucker**, wife and beloved long-time companion of **Arthur Wilson "Bob" Tucker**, on **June 7, 2006**, at home, of lung cancer.

## MONARCHIST NEWS

To reprint the official statement:

A N O U N C E M E N T O F N E W  
A P P O I N T M E N T S T O T H E O R D E R O F T H E  
G A R T E R

23 April 2006

T H E F O L L O W I N G S T A T E M E N T I S I S S U E D  
B Y T H E P R E S S S E C R E T A R Y T O T H E  
Q U E E N

The Queen has been graciously pleased to appoint His Royal Highness **The Duke of York**, KCVO, to be a Royal Knight Companion of the Most Noble Order of the Garter.

The Queen has also been graciously pleased to appoint His Royal Highness **The Earl of Wessex**, KCVO, to be a Royal Knight Companion of the Most Noble Order of the Garter.

His Imperial and Royal Highness Archduke **Dominic of Austria-Tuscany**, Archduke of Austria, Prince of Hungary and Bohemia, Prince of Tuscany, sometimes also known as "Mr. Dominic von Habsburg", will have Bran Castle in Brasov, Romania, returned to him. The castle was given to his grandmother Queen Marie of Romania. HI&RH was the son of Princess Ileana of Romania, who in the early 1970s spoke at Frankfort High School in Frankfort, Kentucky to the student body, including me. The castle is known (dubiously) as "Dracula's Castle". Archduke Dominic is presumably not

going to give up his day job as an architect in New York.

His Serene Highness **Prince Albert II of Monaco** made a four-day sledge drive of 150 kilometers to publicize the dangers of global warming, achieving the North Pole on **April 16, 2006**, making him the first monarch to go there.

We regret to report the death of **Nina Gräfin Schenk von Stauffenberg, genannt Freiin von Lerchenfeld** on **April 2, 2006** in Bamberg, Bavaria, Germany. Born **August 27, 1913** in Kovno, Lithuania to Freiherr Gustav von Lerchenfeld and the former Freiin Anna von Stackelberg, Nina married **Claus Philipp Maria Graf Schenk von Stauffenberg** in Bamberg on **September 26, 1933**; there were five children, **Berthold, Heimeran, Franz Ludwig, Valerie** (d. 1966), and **Konstanze**, and seven grandchildren. As for her late husband, Lemuel Gulliver observed:

I had the honor to have much conversation with Brutus; and was told, that his ancestor Junius, Socrates, Epaminondas, Cato the younger, Sir Thomas More, and himself were perpetually together: a sextumvirate to which all the ages of the world cannot add a seventh.

With Solzhenitsyn, how about eight?

Und als es das fünfte Siegel auftrat, sah ich unten am Altar die Seelen derer, die umgebracht worden waren um des Wortes Gottes und um ihres Zeugnisses willen.

Und sie schrien mit lauter Stimme: Herr, du Heiliger und Wahrhaftiger, wie lange richtest du nicht und rächst nicht unser Blut an denen, die auf der Erde wohnen? (Et cum aperuisset quintum sigillum vidi subtus altare animas interfectorum propter verbum Dei et propter testimonium quod habebant

Et clamabant voce magna dicentes usquequo Domine sanctus et verus non iudicas et vindicas sanguinem nostrum de his qui habitant in terra)

{

}  
[And when he had opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held:

And they cried with a loud voice, saying, How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?]

— Revelation 6:9-10  
(Martin Luther/Vulgate/Greek/KJV)

**NOT WITHOUT MY BORAT**

Commentary by Joseph T Major on  
*DYING OF THE LIGHT*  
by George R. R. Martin

“Jagshemash.

“In response to Mr. Ashykbayev’s comments, I like to state I have no connection with Mr. Cohen and fully support my Government’s decision to sue this Jew. Since the 2003 Tuleyakiv reforms, Kazakhstan is as civilized as any other country in the world. Women can now travel on inside of bus, homosexuals no longer have to wear blue hats, and age of consent has been raised to eight years old.

“Please, captain of industry, I invite you to come to Kazakhstan where we have incredible natural resources, hard working labour and some of the cleanest prostitutes in whole of Central Asia.

“Good-bye. Chenquie!”

— Borat Sagdiyev

The “Not Without My Children” syndrome is a tragic consequence of romance. In romance, the handsome, rugged foreigner in artfully ripped shirt exposing well-ripped pecs ravishes away the beautiful young woman in flowing gown with flowing hair, their two hearts beating as one . . . There is no *Tough Guide to Romanceland* the way there is a *Tough Guide to Fantasyland*, however. The young American woman whose heart falls for this image, who marries the exotic, passionate foreigner so different from the pallid, wimpish males of her acquaintance (as Borat would put it, “he have big khram”), finds the subsequent events interesting.

Once they go to his home, she finds that first off, his student grant having expired, and there being no jobs in his specialty in his homeland, he has no income. So they have to live with his parents. Her mother-in-law hates this alien who has somehow stolen the affections of her boy. She is under the domination of his mother anyhow, this being the family house and she the head woman.

There’s no one she can talk to anyhow, as only her husband speaks English, and like all the other men, he no longer wishes to associate with women. He doesn’t have work anyhow, so he sits in the coffeehouse with all the other men and between sips from tiny cups of hot, sweet coffee (the tall dry foamy diet decaf cinnamon latté of American coffeehouses being a foreign affectation) berates the government, the family, and women in general.

She can’t go out and work either. She is under his authority.

If she’s lucky, she can get out before she has a child, or can slip out with and hold on to her child(ren). More likely outcomes include death, kidnaping, legal fights, and such . . .

*Dying of the Light* was serialized in the April through July 1977 issues of *Analog*, as “After the Festival”. And it was after the

festival.

The universe of Martin’s science fiction stories had the canonical skiffy rise and fall of interstellar civilizations. (One such recovered artifact from a former interstellar imperium would form the motivating artifact of *Tuf Voyaging* (1986), the story of a outrageously eccentric and harshly realistic self-empowered ecological engineer.) But this story of the Federal Empire had to do with a great and glorious fair — a “Worlds’ Fair”, so to speak.

A free planet, a world without a sun, is found on a trajectory that will bring it by a star, a course that will make it theoretically habitable, briefly. But it would have to be made habitable, given a breathable atmosphere, a livable biosphere. This can be done; this is done, and for a few years a glorious festival takes place on this planet called Worlorn, a Worlds’ Fair of not just a few countries but fourteen entire worlds.

But now the Festival is over. Silent, mournful, abandoned, broken, Worlorn recedes into the darkness of the interstellar gulfs. The pavilion cities are abandoned, left on automatic power. The plants of scores of climates, seeded on this world, are dying of the cold and dark. The animals from the various climes of the many worlds are becoming fewer and farther between. A few humans are among that last category; the curious, the melancholic, the suicidal.



Something had changed in SF in the past few years. The pulpish thirties, the Golden-Age forties, the vigorous fifties would have seen stories of the Festival of Worlds. But this is the bleak, realistic seventies, with all that kiddy Buck Rogers stuff about light and excitement knocked out of them.

Coldness had become a Serious Metaphor. Martin himself would use it in his *A Song of Ice and Fire* series, set in a kingdom that is forever in the grip of winter. Similarly, Marion Zimmer Bradley’s *Darkover* and André Norton’s *Witch World* seem similarly frozen, along with the works of many other fantasy authors who don’t have such great followings. Evidently it’s easier to write an epic fantasy quest product if the heros set out over drifts of snow, and starting a fire in the night as wolfoids howl without is a recurring plot element. *The Tough Guide to Fantasyland* touches on how the land has no agriculture, thanks to the **Blasted Fields**, which

is why all the tourists have to drink and eat are **Ale and Stew**. Diana Wynne Jones forgot to mention in her book the possibility of a never-ending winter.

Dirk t’Laurien is going to the Festival, a little too late, perhaps. Or perhaps he’s just suited to the climate. His love, Gwen Delvano, left him years ago, but not without a token of their feelings. Now she has called upon him, and he comes to the dark and drab world of Worlorn.

She got caught in the “Not Without My Daughter” syndrome. The handsome exotic stranger she found in the place of the pale pallid men she knew turns out to have a really hard background. Among the least unpleasant of the circumstances of her new way of life is that if her husband and his buddy die, she will become the property of all the male members of his household. She wasn’t bidding for that.

Oddly enough, her handsome exotic stranger, who glories in the name of Jaantony Riv Wolf high-Ironjade Vikary, is not quite of his society. Probably because he found out more than some people would like to know about it. Having been educated off-planet, he acquired perspective.

The creation legend of their people, the men of the world of High Kavalaan, is a strong and moving one. Two heroes were born in the maw of a volcano. After traversing the world, destroying monsters and demons, they found a cave of women, cowering against the fearful things outside, and established their first holding, holding the women in common.

Since then, all surviving communities have been underground cave complexes. Similarly, the men who have arrived at manhood have best male friends, so to speak, who share everything, including their wives. Indeed, if one dies, his widow has to marry his best friend. And if both die, the widow becomes community property, so to speak.

This seems very much like a post-apocalyptic novel, where the cities on the surface were destroyed in a nuclear war, and survivors had to adapt as best they could; always go out in pairs in case one got hurt, for example, and then they instituted other pair-bonding strategies. And in fact it turns out to be what did happen; there was a war, followed by a plague, both courtesy of another race that didn’t take kindly to the human settlement on Kavalaan.

But another of those strategies has been that there are creatures that look human but really aren’t, the “mockmen”. It’s fun hunting mockmen. In fact, having hunted out the most ready ones back at home, some of the folks have come to Worlorn to hunt there.

One of the hunters turns out to have a sense of propriety and property worthy of an inner-city gangsta. “Dirk, you dised me. You sat in my aircar.” Bretan Braith might be confused with Two-Face (né Harvey Dent) but Bretan Braith does not believe in chance. An encounter with a hunted animal left him with one side of his face gone. Either he can’t get facial rebuilding for whatever reason, or more likely simply doesn’t want to. However, he is deranged — one might argue, though, that

Harvey Dent would at least give a guy a fifty-fifty chance, he being bipolar and all that. But Bretan Braith is merely a more traditional Kavalars. As Gwen describes them, "Hostile folk, each and every among them, xenophobes often, racists. Proud and jealous," [Page 10] and those are their good points.

Dirk is in trouble, so he and Gwen begin running through the deserted cities of the Festival. Reading this leaves the reader oppressed with the grimness of it all; the systems gradually failing, the days growing shorter and colder, all winter and no Christmas. Equally, it becomes obvious to the reader, if not the characters, that Dirk is fooling himself; the Gwen here is not the Gwen he knew — not surprisingly, he keeps on speaking of "Jenny", as if to highlight how much she has changed.

But Dirk isn't the only deluded person here (never mind Gwen's having thought that the student Jaan was much like Jaantony Vikary of High Kavalaan). Evidently, or Gwen has heard, Bretan Braith and his friends are dreaming of taking over Worlorn. Kavalaan is becoming weak and effete, no longer holding to the old standards; they will take over Worlorn, where they can live in an eternal Big Rock Candy Mountain of the Old Ways, beneath the forcefield that keeps the planet livable. This sounds like the hopes of Chris Pritchard, formerly of Washington, North Carolina, who planned to take his parents' life insurance settlement and buy a house where he and his friends could all live together, doing drugs and playing D&D™ — but he had to have them killed in the first place (see *Blood Games* by Jerry Bledsoe (1991) and *Cruel Doubt* by Joe McGinnis (1991) for this story). That is to say, a wish-fulfillment dream, with no prospect of a Solon Aquila to wake them up from it (see "5,271,009" by Alfred Bester (1954), on the real problems of wish-fulfillment dreams).

This section of the book is marked by images of decadence, decay, darkness, and cold, as the hunted and the hunters go from abandoned festival city to city on the planet. There is much more discovered about their worlds by all involved. One of the things that Jaan has discovered is a shocking revelation about the two founding heroes of Kavalaan — one was a woman! This is really going to hurt.

Amid the hunting and the danger the second theme grows. All are losing their illusions. Dirk only has to realize that his love for Gwen is love of an image, what he thought she was. Jaan has lost everything; his position (his comrade, his *teyn* as they are called, has disavowed him before dying). A number of the other people involved die or are killed one way or another.

Finally, Dirk decides to do what he can. He arranges to accept the duel Bretan Braith had wanted. That he will be killed hardly seems to matter any longer; on this cold and empty world life hardly seems worth the bother. His life, anyhow. If Bretan Braith and his comrades are busy killing Dirk in a duel, they can hardly be watching the spaceport to ambush Jaan and Gwen (in honor of his discovery, Jaan has made Gwen his new *teyn*) as they are leaving.

Good-bye. Chenquie!

The dominant theme here is hopelessness. Dirk can't have back his Jenny, she has become another and become the woman of another. Jaan can't have the world he grew up in; he has discovered the falsehoods it was built on. Bretan and the Braiths are all seeking that past, willing to create it.

It hardly seems likely that Jaantony will do well on High Kavalaan. It's mentioned that he has fought a number of duels already; it hardly seems likely that someone so wilfully and thoroughly challenging the ethos and mythos of the society will be able to survive. As for Gwen . . . her future is even less promising. A woman who doesn't know her place?

But then one wonders about these tough men of men. How would Bretan Braith (or his more recent equivalent, the heroic Draka heroine Gwendolyn Ingolfsson) do if cast away on an arctic island with only two days food? (Think of the tale recounted in *Four Against the Arctic* by David Roberts (2003). Moreover, as happens with antagonists, these characters are more "characterized", given more depth. Their real-life versions by contrast seem shallower.

It is repeated, nevertheless, that High Kavalaan is a "sick society". This begins when Gwen picks Dirk up in a combat-armed aircar, and is reiterated in the grim code-duello nature of relationships, the harsh degradation of all the Kavalars (as when they engage in doublethink about "mockmen", simultaneously realizing and denying their humanity), and the unrealistic Big Rock Candy Mountain fantasy of Worlorn as a perpetual mockman hunting ground for real Kavalars. (And nowadays, given how *teyn* are supposed to be closer than brothers, even sharing the same woman, they would almost certainly be shown as cutting out the middleman — or technically, woman.)

Why wouldn't this society disintegrate at the contact with other societies? Would it even get to the stage where "Women can now travel on inside of bus, homosexuals no longer have to wear blue hats, and age of consent has been raised to eight years old." without falling apart?

Not that the three protagonists, Dirk, Gwen, and Jaan, are any better. The first two seem foolish in their own ways. Jaan hardly seems to be of his society. Gwen's and Dirk's unrealisms have been noted.

What compels is the background. The world of Worlorn is hopeless; that is the theme of the work, the characters seem caught on this dying world in order to fulfill their destinies, which are likewise hopeless. Would the image of the last man on Worlorn, watching the systems fail and the Eternal Cold and Dark return, have his own story?

Martin has stated this theme economically, even tersely. The edition used here has 254 pages, not counting previews of other of his books. Writing in like style at greater, indeed interminable, length comes about from the economics and tastes of the time.

By Joseph T Major

Poul Anderson's first novel was *Vault of the Ages* (1952), about a post-collapse society and the attempt by one young man to extract and reuse the resources of the high technology of the past, preserved by some foresighted and wise person of long ago. The author wrote some notes for the back of the book, citing as his inspiration for the work the Time Capsule of the New York World's Fair of 1939-40.

Now, as you know, there are many sfnal associations for this. The World's Fair was the reason the NyCon was "The First World Science Fiction Convention", since they were being held at the same time. The World's Fair people offered to sponsor a special day, apparently because of other commitments to be called "The Science Fiction and Boy Scouts of America Day", and give the convention a free meeting hall with a 20-30% discount on tickets bought in blocks of 500. (See *The Immortal Storm: A History of Science Fiction Fandom* by Samuel A. Moskowitz (1954), Chapter XXXIX.) To our contemporary observation, it looks as if someone was thinking Dragon\*Con. For the record, the official attendance of the NyCon was some two hundred, plus six Futurians banned from the Con by the infamous Exclusion Act.

The Time Capsule itself was proposed by cofan and pro Gavin Edwards under his real name of G. Edward Pendray, who sought to boost the image of Westinghouse, his mundane employer, by associating it with the preservation of a record of the fair's era for the folk of five millennia hence. Thus the ephemerae of American society and the core values thereof were preserved and sealed into a Time Capsule of Cupaloy — this being a copper alloy (99.4% Cu, 0.5% Cr, 0.1% Ag) intended to be long-lasting and harder than steel. (By Klono's cupaloy claws, it had better have lasted!)

For what it's worth, among the sixty-one publications included on the microfilm stored in the Time Capsule were the October 1938 issue of *Amazing Stories* and the September 1938 issue of *Weird Tales*. Unless something exceedingly fortunate has occurred, the people of the future will be extremely disappointed that they only got half of Stanley G. Weinbaum's *Revolution of 1950*. However, they will have poems by H. L. Lovecraft ("The Wood") and Clark Ashton Smith ("The Prophet Speaks") and a short story by Robert Bloch ("The Mandarin's Canaries"). The Margaret Brundage cover on the latter magazine shows a swooning woman in a long but low-cut black dress about to be hanged. (Her daughters, who were her models, suffered for art.) The cover story of *Amazing* is Ed Earl Repp's "The Gland Superman", which may explain why the Great Campbell Die-Off was such a good thing.

Once the Time Capsule was filled, it was lowered into the ground, the excavation cemented over, and marked for the enlightenment of the people of the future, with instructions that it was not to be opened until 6938. (The 1964-5 World's Fair buried a similar capsule adjacent to the previous one, but did not harbor any confidence in the delayed

gratification of the Persons of the Future.)

Thousands of copies of *The Book of Record of the Time Capsule of Cupaloy* (New York, 1938) were distributed to libraries and other repositories around the world. (The typeface the book was printed in was specially designed for it, as I recall, and it looked somewhat odd.) Instructions were included to translate the book into such new languages as emerged and otherwise preserve its message. (One copy was given to the Louisville Free Public Library, but it has been "deaccessed". Another is in the Special Collection at the University of Kentucky, in Lexington, call number CB425.W47.) Not to mention one put in the capsule itself, along with a Bible. Those were the days.

Just in case the capsule was unintentionally disinterred prematurely, and no one had a copy of the *Book of Record* to hand, it also had an inscription on its shell:

Time capsule of Cupaloy, deposited on the site of the New York World's Fair on September 23, 1938, by the Westinghouse Electric and Manufacturing Company. If anyone should come upon this capsule before the year A.D. 6938 let him not wantonly destroy it, for to do so would be to deprive the people of that era of the legacy here left them. Cherish it therefore in a safe place.



Other such preservations of memorabilia were interred both before and after. There were different selections for their contents, from the trivial to the local to the erratic. It has been pointed out that the most popular deposits tended to be things like coins and newspapers, both likely to survive anyhow, or not very useful things like lists of the local city councils and other petty notables of the area. (One wishes for a Michigan J. Frog, for all that his finder found him a bitter disappointment.) However, before Anderson, before Pendray, someone had a grand idea.

Thornwell Jacobs had already made a name for himself in the academic world. In 1915, he had refounded Oglethorpe University in Atlanta, one of the casualties of the War Between the States, and built it into a substantial institution. After his retirement, in 1936, Dr. Jacobs began proposing something even grander; a repository of human knowledge for the edification of future eras, a crypt sealed against the ravages of time and human action. This project gained the grand if not grandiose title of "The Crypt of Civilization".

The idea became popular. More to the point, it became funded. Over the next two years, Jacobs got donations and suggestions. The project involved filming 640,000 pages of works reflecting the existing state of knowledge of science and the legacy of civilization. While the microfilm was stored in nitrogen-filled glass shells within stainless steel canisters, for backup, the films were also copied onto metal film. These records were accompanied by a variety of artifacts of current society. Somewhat more ambitiously, the project would also include voice recordings of various prominent persons.

In the event that civilization had retrogressed in some fashion, the project also provided a portable generator powered by a windmill and a mechanical player of simplified instructions by voice.

All these items were placed in a substantial (20 feet by 10 feet by 10 feet) vault in the basement of the Phoebe Hearst Memorial Hall, the administrative building of Oglethorpe University. The vault was carved into the rock beneath the building and was insulated and waterproofed (it had formerly been a swimming pool).

As noted above about New York, it is particularly important to mark a time capsule, and so a stainless-steel door was built for this project, bearing the following inscription:

This Crypt contains memorials of the civilization which existed in the United States and the world at large during the first half of the twentieth century. In receptacles of stainless steel, in which the air has been replaced by inert gasses, are encyclopedias, histories, scientific works, special editions of newspapers, travelogues, travel talks, cinema reels, models, phonograph records, and similar materials from which an idea of the state and nature of the civilization which existed from 1900 to 1950 can be ascertained. No jewels or precious metals are included.

We depend upon the laws of the county of DeKalb, the State of Georgia, and the government of the United States and their heirs, assigns, and successors, and upon the sense of sportsmanship of posterity for the continued preservation of this vault until the year 8113, at which time we direct that it shall be opened by authorities representing the above governmental agencies and the administration of Oglethorpe University.

Until that time we beg of all persons that this door and the contents of the crypt within may remain inviolate.

The date was chosen on the grounds that the first known dateable written records had been dated to 4241 BC(E), 6177 years prior to the beginning of the project, so the crypt should be opened 6177 years later. It would be sent off in the middle of things, as it were.

The Crypt was sealed in a grand ceremony, with the door being welded shut, on May 25, 1940 . . . and then pretty much forgotten. Thirty years later, Paul Hudson, then a student at Oglethorpe, was looking around in the basement of the administration building and saw this door. In 1991, he and some other experts on time capsules founded the International Time Capsule Society (ICTS), which publicizes, studies, and discusses these messages to the future.

One commentator I saw wondered about something. Let us assume (this story is my gloss on his comment, by the way) that while excavating near Naples, in the volcanic ash around Mount Vesuvius, for the foundations of an office building, the contractors find a buried entrance to a tomb, with a tablet on the door. The tablet has inscriptions in Latin, Greek, Aramaic, and Egyptian (both Demotic script and hieroglyphics), all saying the same thing:

The Senate and People of Rome, as a commemoration of the Secular Games, and having taken counsel of times to come, have decreed that this vault be prepared and filled with the records and history of the power and majesty of Rome, and the culture of the peoples of Rome and of her dominions, to bear witness to the people of times to come of the piety and dignity of their progenitors. This vault has been filled and sealed in the Year of the City DCCC, and is to remain inviolate until thrice that time shall have passed, until the Year of the City MMMCC. Let the curse of the Gods fall on him who violates this decree.

Done in the consulship of Ti. Claudius and L. Vitellus.

How many archaeologists would wait until 2447?

The solution some have proposed is to put the records out of archaeologists' reach. (Also looters'.) In 1994 Jean-Marc Philippe proposed an orbiting time capsule, as it were, a Satellite of Civilization. This satellite, called "KEO", would contain glass DVDs with recordings of not only the fundamental texts of human civilization, but messages from people all across the world. It would also contain instructions on how to build a DVD player, since none could be conveniently packed in the satellite or hope to survive in space.

The satellite is a sphere eighty-centimeters in diameter with various stabilization features. It is designed to remain in orbit for fifty thousand years. Fifty thousand years ago is the dating of

the first cave paintings, the first attempts to leave a record for the future, so it seemed an appropriate interval.

(All this sounds familiar somehow.)

The launch of the KEO satellite will be in 2007-8, depending on when an appropriate mission is available, on a French Ariane rocket. It is still possible to contribute to the messages; there is a form on their website to enable the would-be contributor to have his, hers, its, theirs, or whatever words preserved for times to come.

There's also the *Voyager* records (see *Murmurs of Earth: The Voyager Interstellar Record* (1983) by Carl Sagan et al. for the details) but that's more of a message to aliens than to our own posterity, though one can hope that our posterity will go get it.

The fates of such items are as always problematic. The ITCS reports that time capsules have been stolen or lost. Others have been damaged; destroyed by flooding (the box put in the cornerstone of the Empire State Building, for example) or more direct assaults. Then there are political matters ("This cache is of the age of ignorance and threatens our beliefs; bring the torches.")

The various inscriptions pleading for the preservation of the contents display that level of naive politeness and civility that has passed away in more recent times. Nowadays it would seem more in tune with the times to say, "Yo! Keep this bitch shut up, motherf---r!" with of course the dashes replaced, but this is a family fazine.

But far more likely is sheer boredom.

There are several sites that list the content of the 1939 New York World's Fair Time Capsule, such as:

<http://www.nytimes.com/specials/magazine3/items.html>

For further information on Oglethorpe University, the International Time Capsule Society, and the Crypt of Civilization:

<http://www.oglethorpe.edu>

Oglethorpe University is at 4484 Peachtree Road, NE, Atlanta, GA 30319-2737 USA.

For further information on the KEO Project:

<http://www.keo.org/>

Those without Internet access may send their messages (6000 characters maximum, no pictures, sound files, or other bulky attachments) to:

KEO  
BP 100 - 75262  
PARIS Cedex 06 - FRANCE.

I sincerely hope the readers will ignore the presentist blatherings of the KEO organizers (such as whinging about how illiterate people must not be excluded) and contribute to this. I hope the satellite will have a message to the future in Esperanto from Forrest J. Ackerman (if it doesn't already), to take one noteworthy case.

Review by Joseph T Major of  
**TÉKUMÉL: Empire of the Petal Throne**  
by Patrick Brady, Joe Saul, & Edwin

Voskamp;

Created by M. A. R. Barker;  
(Guardians of Order, Inc.; 2005;  
ISBN 1-894525-31-0; \$39.95),

**MITLANYÁL:**

**Volume I The Gods of Stability**  
by Robert Alberti and M. A. R. Barker  
(Zottola Publishing; 2004;  
ISBN 0-9725880-2-7; \$19.95) and

**MITLANYÁL:**

**Volume II The Gods of Change**  
by Robert Alberti and M. A. R. Barker  
(Zottola Publishing; 2004;  
ISBN 0-9725880-3-5; \$19.95)

All too often, when dealing with other cultures, or indeed subcultures, people begin with the assumption that They are just like Us beneath the funny clothes, with the same desires, same beliefs, same knowledge. In some cases this attitude is expressed benevolently: "If only We could just sit down with Them over a cup of herbal tea, all our differences could be worked out." In other cases it is expressed malevolently: "You do not really believe what You say You believe, You believe what We believe, so You are lying, and We will punish You for lying."

This problem is also found in fiction. There is always the problem that the characters are of their time, so to speak, but far too many writers do not even take that into consideration. Poul Anderson touched on the problem of presentist attitudes in his essay "On Thud and Blunder" (1978) as did Diana Wynne Jones in *The Tough Guide to Fantasyland* (1996), though both focused more on lapses of plausibility (i.e., the hero can't really grab a stallion from the villain's stables and ride him bareback a hundred miles nonstop while wearing only a loincloth in the dead of winter; neither can a world exist without agriculture and commerce).

In role-playing games (those few that are neither Live-Action nor computer), the further problem is when the characters don't act like a person of that world should. Most of the novelistic examples of this mercifully molder in the middens of slushpiles, but one can get an idea from André Norton's *Quag Keep* (1979), Kevin J. Anderson's *Gamearth* series (*Gamearth* (1989), *Gameplay* (1989), and *Game's End* (1990)), and in the LARP department the *Dream Park* series by Steven Barnes and Larry Niven (*Dream Park* (1981), *The Barsoom Project* (1989), and *The Voodoo Game* (1991)). In particular, the last one was notorious for the players breaking character.

(There's a concept out there; a novel where the protagonist observes a Visitor from Elsewhere (i.e., our world) who acts like he's in his own world, only to get tripped up by the reality of where he is. Except that said person would likely be quickly dead.)

There was once an imagined world created by a linguistics professor who invented several languages and then developed a world for them to be spoken in, one with its own history, its

own flora and fauna, its own cultures and civilizations, its own intelligent beings, its own divinities. Unlike with the patent office, two different people can have much the same idea and bring it out without being accused of infringement by anyone short of Sam Moskowitz. Professor Muhammad 'Abd el-Rahman Barker (né Philip Barker, and often known as "Phil") was a professor of Urdu and South Asian studies at the University of Minnesota. Starting in the forties (i.e., when that other professor of languages had picked up his narrative again after a little interruption for the Great World Mistake, Phase II) he began writing various stories set in the world, and setting games in it. (Apparently he was a convert to Islam, in India in 1962, unlike what I'd said before. One hears various things.)

In the seventies, with role-playing games first beginning to take off, he dealt with a guy from over in Wisconsin, Edward G. Gygax — well, E. Gary Gygax, who was seeking to diversify from *Dungeons & Dragons*™. The result was the first, simple, game set in the world of *Tékumel* that had been invented by Barker, *Empire of the Petal Throne*. It had some issues, including a use of some of the less enjoyable game-playing mechanisms of D&D™, and the imposition of the conceptual divide of "Good" and "Evil" onto the culture. What made it more difficult and less popular was that it required a real concentration on the background. The world of *Tékumel* and the nation of Tsolyánu were *not* Fantasyland, the homogenized and indeed stultified imagined medieval period of most RPG's and most of today's fantasies; the people had profoundly different values, different attitudes, different knowledge. There was a lot there and it was often hard to follow.

Over the years, there have been a number of attempts to bring this out in a way that works. Again, the problem is that so much of the world is the background; it is a completely different but not entirely alien world, and there, one factor is as much a problem as the other. The latest effort, at least in communicating the background, is *Tékumel: Empire of the Petal Throne*. This gaming book explains how to create a character, equip him, her, or it (and don't get started on the Ahoggyá, who have eight different sexes — \*SIGH\* things have "gender", *people* [or in this case, intelligent beings] have "sex"), and get him, her, it, whatever started in the world. Also about the world.

There is a factor of culture shock. *Tékumel* draws from other cultures; Barker's field of study, Southern India, his chosen belief, Islam and hence Islamic culture, and for *laginappe*, Mesoamerican culture. For this last, it can be noted that the Aztec "emperor" was actually designated "Great Speaker"; in Nahuatl, *Huey Tlatoani*; the "emperor" of Tsolyánu is the "Tlakotáni". The Mayan rulers built straight, graded (hence white) roads, called in Mayan *sacbe*, "white ways". The rulers of the nations of *Tékumel* built great structures that were as much fortified walls as roadways; called in the

Tsolyáni language “sakbe”.

Other shocks abound. Some of the gods of Tékumel require human sacrifice. The “evil” ones, right? Wrong. Not all the Gods of Change, the Tlokiriqaluyál, the so-called “evil” gods, demand them, and contrawise there are times when some of the Gods of Stability, the Tlomítlányal, the so-called “good” gods, demand them.



More culture shock, so to speak, lies in the social order. Most people are not individuals, per se; they live within the structure of their “clan”, more than a family, but not quite the nation. This evokes the caste system, but hardly as rigid. Characters, being adventurers, will of course be “outside” the normal order of things, but Barker and his associates remind the reader and player that there is a background and an underpinning to their adventures; there are people who grow crops, people who tend animals, people who make goods, transport them, and sell them. This is not a world where one travels from castle to temple to dungeon without anything significant in between. (Was there much commerce or industry on André Norton’s *Witch World*, for example?)

Social order holds in a different sense. The characters exist in a society, a society with laws. As indicated, most of the people will be content to accept things as they are; but those who want to get out will have to watch where they act out, so to speak. Plundering a temple of another god while adventuring in a tunnel complex, that’s your own lookout. Doing so in a town, or even an isolated place, and you’ll be looking out in a different fashion. (If Fritz Leiber’s comic heroes Fafhrd and the Grey Mouser had got into a tavern brawl in Tsolyánu one night, they would have ended up on the slave auction block the next morning, otherwise unable to pay shamtlá, the legally-demanded amends for injury; if they had actually killed someone in the process, they might have ended up taking the high ride above the local Palace of the Realm (impaled alive, that being the customary form of execution on Tékumel), if the deceased were of high enough status.)

Other social forms also are different. Polyandry and polygyny are common, straight or combined, not to mention homosexuality and same-sex marriage. While having women run around bare-breasted sounds like the sort of concession a hormone-laden teenage boy (your archetypical gamer) would go for, it does derive

from Hindu culture (i.e., *not* Muslim) and goes with the climate. Tsolyánu is hot. Besides, the saggy breasts are also on show. Slavery is common and accepted. (Calvin Morrison of H. Beam Piper’s *Lord Kalvan of Otherwhen* (1965) would have had enough sense to go at it slowly, but Karl Cullinane of Joel Rosenberg’s *Guardians of the Flame* series (1983 — present) would have ended up squashed. Also, gunpowder wouldn’t be as Tékumel-conquering as Karl would have thought.)

Another part is, as said, the climate. To repeat, Tsolyánu is hot. This influences more than what women wear or don’t wear. There are multiple crops in a year, which in turn affects government, the military, and commerce. The way of life often takes into consideration having to take a nap in the middle of the day because it’s so hot. Consequently, night life, in both senses of the term, is important. And so on. (Since Darkover has blizzards *in summer*, how come it isn’t completely glaciated?)

Some of that night life is religious. Which brings us to our other topic, the Gods. The original presentation divided the Gods of Tékumel along the then generally-received axis of Good and Evil. But their society doesn’t quite look at it that way. The worshipers of each God can follow the God’s way or not, act “nobly”, *khomóyi* or “ignobly”, *bússan*. But what is noble for one God may not necessarily be noble for another and in fact may be ignoble. The Gods were grouped into two categories; not “good” and “evil” but “Stability” and “Change”, in the original the Tlomítlányal and the Tlokiriqaluyál respectively, described in their respective volumes *Mitlanyál: Volume I The Gods of Stability* and *Mitlanyál: Volume II The Gods of Change*. (If the Mercedes Lackey heroine, the girl who flees an abusive home, were in a clan where the behavior she deems abusive was in fact *khomóyi*, she would have to desert the clan; fortunately she could declare herself Aridani (legally equivalent to a man) and join the army or something. Not much of a Lackey-style story there.)

Some costumers with a love of ritual and a wide-spread interest created costume presentations of these entities for the WorldCon masquerade. The Tlomítlányal were presented at ConFederation in Atlanta in 1986; fourteen years after that, the Tlokiriqaluyál were portrayed at ChiCon (I saw that one).

Barker devised an elaborate religious structure for his world, both mundane and supernatural. Each God (except for one, who just didn’t give a damn) had a number of Aspects, different ways of regarding the God. In addition, each God had a sidekick, so to speak, called a “Cohort”. Each Cohort also had Aspects. A masculine god might have feminine Aspects, and vice versa.

In the mundane world, there were vast elaborate hierarchies of priests. Again, this is not the oppressive power-structure of cynical non-believers debasing their congregations and scamming the rubes for gold that one almost always finds in science fiction and even fantasy. The Gods of Tékumel are very real there, and the priests believe in their Gods. (If Lazarus

Long were to storm into a temple, blaster in hand, to confront these here gods and show their falsity, at best he might be sold as a slave (he could get out of that). Possibly he could be impaled, if he had fried a high-rank or high-clan priest. In some temples, he might simply be chosen as the next sacrifice. And the worshipers of the God Sárku (or of his Cohort Durrítlámish) would likely turn him into one of their different grades of zombie.)

Some of the “culture shock” has to do with the dead. They have zombies here. Not the cute & cuddly Zombies of Zanth, not even the brain-eating but dull-witted ones of movies. There are several different kinds of undead beings with differing mental abilities. Not surprisingly, Sárku and Durrítlámish, who told their worshipers how to make those, are among the Gods of Change, the Tlokiriqaluyál. (And there are no wise, rich, sensitive, experienced, handsome, impotent vampires to fang their way into your heart, either.)

Each chapter describes a deity and goes into some detail about his or her nature and followers. There are lists of some of the deity’s most important Aspects, significant worshipers and particularly priests, military units sponsored by the temple, clans whose members worship that particular deity, and so on. Each chapter ends with a little story illustrating the worship of the deity. Sometimes it is ordinary, as with the story of the little boy who went to become a priest of Hnálla and had a good day. Sometimes it is tragic, as with the story of the hierophant of Hrü’ü who was told to kill two children and ended up feeling so revulsed she quit the priesthood. And some are just outright morbid, as with the spy who spied on a celebration of the undead of Sárku and ended up being qualified to join.

The game, and its attendant books [*The Man of Gold* (1984), *Flamesong* (1985), *Lords of Tsámra* (2003), *Prince of Skulls* (2002), and *A Death of Kings* (2003)] are not for everyone. The background can be too much for some people, and this is a world that has such a different background that it needs to be explicated in detail. Sometimes, it is too much detail, making for hard to play games and hard to read books.

However, the reader who appreciates the effort made to build a world, to put in that world people who are *of* that world, to have a world that isn’t just like home with the names changed and some items repainted, will appreciate the work done to create this.

## HOORAY FOR INSPECTOR SPAULDING

Commentary by Joseph T Major on  
Ron Goulart’s series of novels with  
:A Mystery Featuring Groucho Marx

Back in the seventies, Ron Goulart was best known for his stories about the ghost writer José Silvera, a man of financial desperation, poor judgment, and immense personal resource. They all had the same plot: Silvera’s latest client would have failed to pay him, so Silvera would

have to travel to his home world and settle up. This procedure never required anything as prosaic as lawyers, understand, and most of the clients and worlds were profoundly bizarre (but then, it *was* the Barnum System). One hopes that when Goulart took on the task of translating the novel-intended screenplay drafts of a certain well-known ham into novels, he got paid beforehand.

But the worlds that José Silvera visited were of the sort that Jack Vance might have created for a Marx Brothers movie. Which makes this series not so far out. I will admit that “celebrity detective” series are a recent hot thing in such writing; one wonders if people such as Mark Twain, Eleanor Roosevelt, or Elizabeth I would have the time to spare.

The books are, however, narrated by a scriptwriter and ex-police reporter named Frank Denby, who at the beginning of the series has had the (mis)fortune to be chosen to write for a new radio show called “Groucho Marx, Master Detective”. (The series gifts Groucho with an entire additional set of performances, much to the loss of our time line.) When an actress whom Groucho had known turned up dead, Groucho asks Frank Denby for advice . . . and off they go, kicking off the career of *Groucho Marx, Master Detective* in the real world, down to the dramatic finale at the premiere of a movie where the real cause of it all comes out. (The woman died of carbon-monoxide suffocation in a car, and I’m surprised that the case of Thelma Todd, co-star of *Monkey Business* (1931) and *Horse Feathers* (1932), who died of carbon-monoxide suffocation in a car, under dubious circumstances, isn’t mentioned; unless perhaps Goulart thinks he shouldn’t, or isn’t permitted to.)

For *Groucho Marx, Private Eye*, the show has been retitled for a new sponsor. Who insists on adding his step-daughter to the cast. (The comparison of the financier’s mistress being shoehorned into the chorus of “I’ll Say She Is” doesn’t come up.) Their relationship stops being mutually hostile about the time that Miss Polly Pilgrim’s mother is arrested for murder. And before long, Groucho, Frank, and Jane are being run down, learning the quaint complexities of quasi-legal drug dealers, and generally becoming acquainted with the seamy side of Hollywood . . .

It’s *Elementary, My Dear Groucho* to find out about the murder of the director of the forthcoming film adaptation of *The Valley of Fear*. Or is it? Particularly when the star decides, amid much publicity, that he can play Sherlock Holmes in real life, too. It seems that a lot of the people involved are not quite what they appear to be . . .

A trip across the country brings about an encounter between *Groucho Marx and the Broadway Murders*; it’s one thing for a pretend body to fall out of a closet on to the stage, but when it’s a real corpse, now! [One thinks of the story about the concerned husband related in *Memoirs of a Mangy Lover* (1963) who tried being such a prop and found it stressful.] Groucho’s a sucker for a pretty lady, especially when her estranged husband is the prime

suspect, and evidently it’s too much trouble to go down to West Thirty-Fifth Street. Shuffling stage casts, trips to the World’s Fair (but not the NyCon), and confrontations with the mob make life interesting, if hazardous, for the trio of investigators. . .

*Groucho Marx, Secret Agent* gets in trouble with the FBI even before the investigation begins. They think he’s making fun of Mr. Hoover. It’s not nice to make fun of Mr. Hoover. Which isn’t much of a help when yet another Nazi spy crosses their path. But first he stops someone else at a party, while prophetically dressed as Death. This requires some work worthy of the above-mentioned Nero Wolfe to untangle . . .

*Groucho Marx, King of the Jungle* has his latest case dumped right in his lap, when the star of the latest adventure of Ty-Gor, the king of the jungle, is found shot dead on the set. It turns out that he had other hobbies, like taking candid pictures of people who weren’t expecting to have candid pictures being taken, and then offering to help for a small fee. (The scene with the gangster is just a little more nerve-racking than the one in *Monkey Business*, and fortunately Groucho has the wit to realize he’s not dealing with Alky Briggs, the stereotypical movie gangster.) There are a number of people involved with the film involved with the murder too, and it’s a nerve-wracking question as to who’s going to act first and for what reason . . .

There are various considerations, dealing no doubt with legalisms and considerations of rights. For example, none of the other brothers ever has a speaking role; thus, we have only Groucho’s end of the conversation when he calls his agent and sibling Zeppo about something, which for a scene told from his point of view comes off as somewhat peculiar. Similarly, whenever Frank comes by Groucho’s house, his wife and children are out. Arthur and Miriam Marx are still around, by the way.

Other ties can be annoying. Groucho was a particularly anonymous-looking man with a somewhat-intentional difference of appearance to his on-screen character, and often went unrecognized. Not here, though, where every chapter or two someone stops him and demands an autograph. These are blessedly short books, and this chronic trope comes across as padding.

The mysteries are not particularly mysterious; it’s usually clear well before the ending who the murderer is, and the investigation generally requires more hard work and persistence than anything else. I’m not quite sure what Groucho could do if the six suspects who all had comparable motive, equal access to the murder weapon, and plausible alibis would get together and ask him to solve the crime, for example. (What he would do, of course, would be to make a move on the pretty young lady and make jokes at the expense of everyone else involved.) Pfuui.

The books are naturally full of Marx quips and cracks. One wonders sometimes how Frank and Jane put up with it, since the investigations involve shootings, kidnappings, threats, and other less than life-affirming actions directed at them. (Remember that two of Groucho’s wives

became alcoholics and his final caretaker went crazy and became a bag lady.)

Goulart has done a generally good job of recreating the ambience of the times; i.e., because of her lucrative comic-strip job, Jane makes more money than Frank, and she feels concerned about the “head of the house” issue, while Frank doesn’t want to appear to be living off his wife’s money. At least he doesn’t want her to give up the job. (I only noticed one clunker, when someone speaks of “the Pentagon” in 1940, which is before it was built. Should have said “the War Department”.)

Goulart also ties in comments on the problems and incidents of Groucho’s *real* career, with various snipes at, for example, the perceived low quality of *Room Service* (1938), *At the Circus* (1939), and *Go West* (1940), as well as the referenced parallels to events in Groucho’s life or writings.

Besides following the Marx career, Goulart gives Frank Denby a life and career of his own. Particularly with Jane Danner, cartoonist, who ends up pushing Frank along more than once (notably in *Groucho Marx, King of the Jungle* where after getting Frank to have promised to not do any detecting until she delivers, she demands that he investigate the murder). As the series progresses, they develop from betrothed to married to parents.

This is hardly Significant Reading, but it’s well-knit light fluff to lift one’s spirits. Hooray for Inspector Spaulding, the Anglo-P.I. . . .

*Groucho Marx, Master Detective* (St. Martin’s Press; 1998; ISBN 0-312-18106-X; \$23.95)

*Groucho Marx, Private Eye* (St. Martin’s Press; 1999; ISBN 0-312-19895-7; \$23.95)

*Elementary, My Dear Groucho* (St. Martin’s Press; 1999; ISBN 0-312-20898-8; \$23.95)

*Groucho Marx and the Broadway Murders* (St. Martin’s Press; 2001; ISBN 0-312-26598-0; \$22.95)

*Groucho Marx, Secret Agent* (St. Martin’s Press; 2002; ISBN 0-312-28005-X; \$22.95)

*Groucho Marx, King of the Jungle* (St. Martin’s Press; 2005; ISBN 0-312-32216-X; \$23.95)

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## BELIEVERS’ WORLD

Review by Joseph T Major of  
*SPIN*

by Robert Charles Wilson  
(Tor; 2005; ISBN 0-765-34825-X; \$7.99)  
Hugo Nominee

*The Issue at Hand* (1964), by “William Atheling, Jr.” [James Blish] contains a discussion of a book by Robert A. W. Lowndes titled *Believers’ World* (1961). The setting of the bulk of the book, the stellar system of Ein, occupied by three worlds with the same faith but different opinions thereof, is constrained in an exotic manner:

The solar system of Ein is completely enclosed in a hyper-spatial bubble which provides it with a time-rate much faster



than that of our space — twenty-five times as fast, in fact — but doesn't otherwise block passage between the three worlds and Earth. The effect is to bar any real exchange of knowledge between Earth and the Ein system, since nobody who spends enough time on Earth to learn anything valuable can talk to his fellows when he gets back home.

— *The Issue at Hand*, Page 66

The hyper-spatial bubble that encloses Earth here turns out to have an even faster ratio than the one in *Believers' World*; a hundred million to one. And that's only the first problem.

Wilson portrays the gradual eroding of humanity's reserves of order, so to speak, under an unprecedented and cosmic stress. While the world does not go entirely off the wall when the Spin, the aforementioned hyper-spatial bubble, envelops Earth, there is the beginning of a breakdown of order, and as the book progresses, it gets worse.

The time-rate is, it seems, far faster than the other one cited. A Soyuz mission had been in orbit when the Spin membrane went up, the crew observed the outside of the screen for three weeks, and landed the night of the Event.

Other probes note that the Sun seems to be getting just a touch brighter outside. Thus a most desperate and awe-inspiring plan is set on foot for the terraforming and populating of Mars. Because of this high time-acceleration within the bubble, it will be possible to ship off the various preparatory modules of terraforming bacteria and within a (terrestrial) year or so follow them with fools, er volunteers, and still within a terran lifetime have the sons of Terra make one last landing on the globe that gave them birth — or their umpty-ump-grandparents, anyway.

(Working out the geometry of the tides would be interesting; I suspect the day would have become significantly longer during the thirty years of the story, with a permanent high tide at the equator.)

Tyler Dupree, our narrator, describes his rise from associate of the wealthy to doctor to an off-planeter to final . . . well, you'll see. His relationship with his mother's wealthy employer E. D. Lawton and the Lawton kids Jason and Diane, and in turn their relationships with the world, make for a complex view of the world.

For Wilson remembers that the world goes on, even if some things change. E. D. becomes wealthy with a new technological adaptation to the loss of satellites. Tyler goes to medical school, studies various new diseases, and deals with their treatments. Diane becomes involved with a fringe religious reaction to the Spin. And Jason, well, Jason is squeezed between power and ill-health.

Then it all comes together when the Martians invade. Well, one Martian, a fellow named Wun Ngo Wen ("one go when?"), who reports that after he left the planet, it too got a Spin membrane. This is puzzling and not particularly good news.

We can but try to understand, and this understanding involves a new variation on the classic Von Neumann machine. Fortunately,

thanks to the temporal shift, it's possible to have the original investigators investigate the results. Some of which are disturbing

More disturbing is Wun's other revelation, that of the Martian long-life drug. Which comes as a bit of a help; you see, as Jason's power increases, his health declined precipitously. This medical advance comes just when he needs it. (And some of the comments on how Martian society adapted to their long-life drug would have done Blish well to note for his *Cities In Flight* series.)

Things begin really moving. Order is crumbling; for all the people in uniform, the roads are impossible for all the gangs. The Spin membrane begins to flicker, causing panic. The Sun, you see, is expanding and otherwise showing signs of making Earth uninhabitable, absent the membrane. The von Neumann project finds out something. But they still can't learn what the Hypotheticals, the beings of whatever or whoever sort that made the Spin, are doing, or why they did it.

And then a big change happens . . .



There is some plot-line confusion, as the novel flashes back and forth to and from scenes where Tyler, having taken some medication the purpose of which is not immediately clear, is in hiding, sort of, in Indonesia with Diane. As the plot progresses, the situation becomes clearer. This may be a problem for some readers but here at least Wilson knows what he's doing

There seems to be a bit of sloppy writing or editing, or perhaps both. Tyler's mother graduated from high school in 1978 and from college in 1982, which implies she was born around 1960 [Page 136]. But Tyler also says that her father was born in 1951 [Page 283]. Oops! When the Spin begins, Tyler's mother is forty-five [Page 20] which therefore puts it in

2005. Remember Damon Knight's pointing out (*In Search of Wonder*, Page 189 (3<sup>rd</sup> Edition)) that "John Christopher's" [Christopher S. Youd] book *The Death of Grass* [U.S. title *No Blade of Grass*] (1957), the International Fantasy Award winning novel admired by J. R. R. Tolkien, takes place in 1958? But then Tyler's mother dies at age fifty-six [Page 282], almost twenty years after the Spin began [Page 138]. Oops!

*Spin* slings the reader off into some exotic and mind-turning hypotheses and proposals, setting a human story of connections and loss against this star-spanning background.

"I don't want to be a secret anymore," Wun Ngo Wen said. "I didn't come here to hide. I have things to say." He uncapped his bottle of spring water. "Would you like some of this, Tyler Dupree? You look like you could use a drink."

I took the bottle from his plump, wrinkled fingers and drank deeply from it.

"So," I said, "does this make us water brothers?"

Wun Ngo Wen looked puzzled. Jason laughed out loud.

— *Spin*, Page 201

(Fortunately, for the sake of world literature, Tyler brings him copies of "*War of the Worlds*, *A Princess of Mars*, *The Martian Chronicles*, *Stranger in a Strange Land*, *Red Mars*." [Page 214]. What, no *Red Planet*? *Out of the Silent Planet*? Or he could really mess up Wun's head with Philip José Farmer's *Jesus on Mars*.)

## IT AIN'T EASY BEIN' GREEN

Review by Joseph T Major of

**OLD MAN'S WAR**

by John Scalzi

(Tor; 2005; ISBN 0-765-30940-8; \$23.95)

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

**Hugo Nominee**

I had at first thought this novel was a bit off-putting, mostly because it happens to parallel a concept of John Ringo's "Posleen" novels. But concept is only the beginning, execution is what makes a novel work (or not), and besides, Scalzi won't be having any old SS men in his war.

Earth has stagnated. There is an interstellar community, but it's "them" for all that it is human. Well, you can go for a colony if you're the right sort, but otherwise, the only way anyone has of going to the stars is by joining the Colonial Defense Forces. There's one little catch to it, however; you have to be seventy-five (that's 75) years old.

John Perry is 75. His ties have sort of eroded, given that his wife died after they got the preliminary enlistment lecture ten years ago (and you thought AARP sending you the letter when you turned 50 was bad). So, after saying goodbye to her, and also to his living links, he accepts the Colonial Defense Forces' credit and goes forth to fight amid the stars.

Well, of course a 75 year old body won't do. And it doesn't. Our recruit gets his (or her, this

is a non-discriminatory army) body replaced by a new one, physically aged twenty-five years, but with more optimal blood, eyes, and the like. Now this is what intelligent design should produce. Oh, yes, and they're green. The drill sergeant who says in lieu of an integration policy lecture that all he sees about his soldiers is that they are green would be reflecting reality here. (The new bodies are infertile, thus eliminating one of the biggest administrative losses of female personnel.) Did I mention the built-in computer interface?

John and his new friends have a good time on the way to Basic. However, the sign up lecturer could only be more so if he used a paraphrase of Orde Wingate's rousing little speech to the Chindits about to go into battle, which was, "You're going to die in Burma!" (As you know, he himself did.) The first year fatality rate will be about twenty-five percent, and less than forty percent will serve out their ten years. At that time, any survivors who don't re-enlist will be given new bodies and allowed to colonize, get old, and have children.

It turns out said more optimal carcass is a necessity. No one enlists in the CDF for the veterans' benefits. The fighting is tough, and training needs to be efficient; hard and thorough. No tough D. I. with a heart of gold here, maggot! Which describes some of the beings they'll be fighting, too.

The universe here is a Hobbesian conflict of all against all. Some of the foes are pretty odd too; the fellows with the ritual death chants, duels, and whatnot come to mind.

The CDF can deliver whupass in return. I do wonder how a platoon or two might do against, say, a single Jedi (remember Mace Windu and the droid army?), but in general the troops have interesting means of dealing out death and destruction. I mean, a personal weapon that links through your computer interface, manufactures different kinds of ammunition on the spot, is self-repairing, and **never has to be cleaned!**? Willie, Joe, and Old Bill would have been thrilled to have something like that. (There is a certain lack of higher-level support weapons; evidently, like most sf militaries, these troopers never need artillery support and have no trouble finding food.)

John indeed finds that he has a talent for war. But then, in spite of everything, his talent gets in a pinch, which leads him to an even more startling discovery.

The CDF have their own special forces, the "Ghost Brigades". Like the regulars such as himself, these have the special superbodies, but unlike them, the bodies are their original ones; they have no previous lives, for all that they are based on the DNA from people who died after they showed interest but before they could be enlisted. Including the late Mrs. Perry . . .

The "buddy set" in the initial chapters is perhaps a trifle disproportionate. If they are going to be dispersed, it may be setting up the wrong expectations to spend so much time on them together. The discussion later on concerning the theory of multiple dimensions seems out of place, unless it's setting something

up for down the road several books later.

As I said, it's what you do with the idea that counts. The reader will think (and several readers did) of parallels with *Starship Troopers* (1959) and *The Forever War* (1975) but this lacks the drive of the first and the malice of the second. The fighting against aliens here is not because Humanity has to be the supreme race, overcoming all others; neither is it because the leaders of Humanity decided to go to war without cause. It's because we have to survive. Some races are benevolent, and some not so nice. (I was thinking of *Stargate SG-1*.)

Scalzi has decided to explore this story in depth; *The Ghost Brigades* (2006) is just out and John Perry appears in a nice short story chapbook, *Questions for a Soldier — An Old Man's War Tale* (2005) from Subterranean Press, with illustrations by Bob Eggleton. On the other hand he can write other things, such as *Agent to the Stars* (1997, 2005), a tale of getting fifteen percent off First Contact.

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### ONCE WE WERE MEN

Review by Joseph T Major of

#### THE GHOST BRIGADES

by John Scalzi

(Tor; 2006; ISBN 0-765-31502-5; \$23.95)

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

Sequel to *Old Man's War*

*We are all ghosts now  
But once we were men*

— Anonymous poet in the Cabantuan prison camp

As I said, what do they do with the samples from those people who die before they turn 75? They make them into people anyhow. But these people, having no past, become the secret striking arm of the Colonial Defense Force, the Ghost Brigades. They are all ghosts now, but once they were men (or women).

This is the story of one of those ghosts who was different. They called him Jared Dirac, and he was, but he was also someone else.

Charles Boutin was a defector. However, Charles Boutin was also a scientist, and a pretty good one; a valuable prize to any nonhuman race that might want to get him. Thus the Colonial Defense Force had to find out why. Fortunately for them, they had his consciousness recorded — the way they do when they transfer a recruit to a new military body for the CDF. And they could provide one, made from his DNA. So, with a mental bomb in his skull, recruit Jared Dirac, who was in a sense also Charles Boutin, joined the CDF — more precisely the Ghost Brigades.

This time we see the unusual perspective to the new people — Dirac remarks ironically that here he is less than a week old and already he is an adult. But then, all his colleagues are adults, many are veterans, and yet none has a real age in double digits.

If for nothing else Dirac has to take part in the conflict. It's what happens when Boutin's memories begin coming back that the trouble begins. For with one Boutin on hand, they can

find the other Boutin. (In fact, Boutin faked his suicide by growing a complete clone of himself. Lotsa Boutins around here.)

Then, getting the real Boutin results in some hairpin-turn turns of fate, ending up with Dirac captured and Boutin seemingly playing the stock villain: "At last, someone who can fully understand my plan! I'll tell you everything before I kill you . . ." Dirac does qualify for the first part of this far more than the usual hero in the hands of the Evil Overlord, and Boutin has a most eerie definition of "before I kill you". But there are more surprises yet, and Boutin finds out that his clever plan has some unexpected factors . . .

Boutin is not quite the stock villain, and in particular in that final confrontation he delivers a very trenchant critique of the human colonization effort. Why is humanity at war with everyone else? It makes you wonder.

There is also a reminder of the real costs of such great social projects. Such leaders who call for a grand transformation of the human condition charge a heavy toll — and they don't get the transformation, either.

A principal supporting character in the book is Jane Sagan, the Ghost Brigades officer who fell for John Perry. Her future seems to be . . . altered now. She has a very touching scene near the end, but then Boutin had more than just clones in the world.

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### PIRACY PREFERRED

Review by Joseph T Major of

Kenneth Oppel's

#### AIRBORN

(Eos; 2004; ISBN 0-06-053181-9; \$16.99)

and

#### SKYBREAKER

(Eos; 2006; ISBN 0-06-053228-9; \$17.89)

If ever anyone was destined for the air service, it would be Matt Cruse, the airborne. Not dropping from a perfectly flyable airship with a parachute, no, but a boy who came into the world while his mother was a passenger on one, hence "air-born". And his father was a crewman of one, until his untimely death. It was Matt's destiny.

I've always seen "steampunk" as meaning "historical-era technology of an alternative development." Thus, the Frank Reade, Jr. books of the late nineteenth century, with their steam horses, steam robots, airborne shock nets, and so on, are to my view the foundations of the genre. (This sometimes gets me into controversies, when I include the soft sciences in that scope, making Caleb Carr's *The Alienist* (1994) a "steampunk" novel since it involves using a soft science, psychology, in forensic profiling, some seventy years before its real-world development. Now as for the problems of its sequel *The Angel of Darkness* . . .)

What makes the giant airships so feasible is their lifting gas, hydrium, the lightest gas in the world, lighter even than hydrogen. One wonders if it is the "constituent of azote, so long considered irreducible, and that its density is about 37.4 times less than that of hydrogen" that Hans Phaall used in his lunar balloon.

Probably not, since nitrogen (“azote”) can’t be broken down by a chemical reaction between a *particular metallic substance, or semi-metal* and a *very common acid*. But enough of Poe and “The Unparalleled Adventure of One Hans Phaall”, we have to discuss the unparalleled adventure of one Matt Cruse.

Our story begins with Matt the *Airborn* working his way up the career ladder on the airship *Aurora*. At the moment, he is a cabin boy, but these duties seem to involve not only being steward but being lookout. While musing on the stars, he sees something coming; a deserted hot-air balloon. Well, not deserted, for when he swings across to it (distressed airmen and all that) he discovers it contains one dying man and his journal. The journal makes references to a mysterious island with strange flying animals.

A year later, Matt is now on the verge of a promotion to the position of junior sailmaker, a step up on the career track, with a promising future. Or maybe not, considering that the post ends up being given to the owner’s son.

Which annoys Matt, and distresses his new friend, Kate de Vries, a first-class passenger who is very curious about the airship. You see, her grandfather had been found drifting in a balloon, dying, and had been recovered by the crew of this airship . . . She wants to know more, and Matt is happy to oblige with a tour of the *Aurora*. This makes the infodump plausible, interesting, and shows the attraction growing between the characters. After all, Kate was very close to her grandfather, and here is the lad who saved his journal and rescued him so they could have some memorabilia. If only she weren’t so much more of Bruce Luinardi’s class!

But then, such matters become secondary, as the *Aurora* is attacked by the dread pirate er Szpirglas, who at least lets them live, only disabling the ship. (He lacks the sardonic wit of John W. Campbell’s air pirate Wade, who confiscated air-transported securities and left in their place shares of his own company, Piracy Preferred.) Which drifts onto this island, the very one where Kate’s grandfather had seen things. (Coincidence, but not too much, considering that the *Aurora* was on the same route both times.)

Repairing the *Aurora* can be done, but when a storm damages the airship again, their plight becomes graver. Kate, unheeding, wants to search for the animals her grandfather saw. These investigations solve one problem but raise another along the way. Who would want to stay on a remote island with its own source of hydrium? Well, we met him a few pages back.

Szpirglas doesn’t like people trying to escape him. He’s already killed one crewman and may not stop at that. However, when he took over the *Aurora* the second time round, he didn’t notice that Mr. Cruse, Mr. Luinardi, and Miss de Vries were absent. That’s where Matt’s knowledge of the ship comes in very handy.

Oppel has put several nice touches in his story; not just the detailed descriptions of the airship itself, but the world. Others may notice the parallel of their relationship with that of Max and Ellie in *Starman Jones* — though there

they may both be tapping into a common idea. Matt has a better opportunity with Kate than Max Jones did with Ellie. (Yes, this is a YA book.)

Another nice touch is the description of Szpirglas’s family life. He has a wife, a child, a happy home, which makes his brutality all the more noteworthy. Not less possible, unfortunately.

This book falls in the category of “science fantasy”, in that the basic idea is contrary to known science, but the consequences are logically worked out. The reader can see that there is more beyond the shell of the *Aurora*; the ship is part and product of a world, Matt and Kate are part of a society.



When Matt does get to the Academy, he soon finds himself in a situation where he needs a *Skybreaker*, a pressurized airship capable of ascending to twenty thousand feet. Probably because he wasn’t on one, but the captain of the airship he was on, doing a shift of co-op work so to speak, thought he was. Oppel’s society comes with its own legends, and one of these is of the missing airship *Hyperion*, which vanished with the famed inventor Theodore Grunel on board, forty years ago. When Matt sees it floating over the Indian Ocean, the captain of his airship tries to go after the ship, with disastrous results.

Back in Paris, where Kate invites Matt to dinner, he gets a reminder of his plebian status, only to be followed by a reminder of her wild and untamed nature — she’s learned to fly ornithopters, in the most inconvenient places even. And she is so excited about the *Hyperion*, since Grunel had many valuable zoological specimens.

He also had descendants, and one of them wants to meet Matt. Except, for all the plush fixtures of his lodgings, something doesn’t seem right about the man, and then there was the gypsy girl who tried to warn him, and saved him when this faux descendant turned nasty.

Kate has found someone else with a real *Skybreaker*, and they all set off after the *Hyperion* amid gunfire. Matters are getting quite serious. Also, the gypsy lady seems to be quite fond of Matt, and their owner-aboard is much taken with Miss de Vries.

A number of unpleasant surprises ensue, including an encounter with a genuine Horror of the Heights, the discovery of the gypsy lass (well, half Roma — and it’s nice to see Oppel pointing out the actual name and such), an

interesting discovery of surveillance, and other nerve-wracking and trust-breaking incidents. They finally find the *Hyperion*, drifting above Antarctica. Boarding it is half the fun, for the ship contains not only deadly animals but apparently no ready valuables. This doesn’t stop another group from following them, and that’s when the fun begins . . .

At least Matt does get to give and get a kiss from Kate. There may be some hope for them yet. There are a few nice jokes here, for example the restaurant on the Eiffel Tower where they meet is the “Jewels Verne” (though I don’t think it goes in French). I don’t think that most people need extra oxygen at twenty thousand feet, particularly if they’re acclimatized. And wouldn’t a Sherpa be more likely to say “Chomolungma” instead of “Mount Everest”?

Oppel has put some imagination and effort into these books, rewarding the reader with not only the pleasure of a plan coming together, but the vision of an alternative world.

### DRAGON WITH ONE “O”

Review by Joseph T Major of  
*HIS MAJESTY’S DRAGON*  
(Del Rey; 2006; ISBN 0-345-48128-3; \$7.50)

[Originally published in Britain as  
*TEMERAIRE*] and  
*THRONE OF JADE*  
(Del Rey; 2006; ISBN 0-345-48129-3; \$7.50)

by Naomi Novik

Prince Yung-Hsing did not rise to greet the man in the yellow robe with the hat of a First Rank Mandarin on his great hairless head; but he spoke politely. “Elder Brother, what are we to do about the barbarian Laurence?”

When the Marquis Chuan opened his long magnetic barbarian eyes he spoke in his insidious tone, alternately guttural and siblant, “I have developed a preparation of the *Amanita* which will cause rapid unconsciousness . . .”

— Not by Naomi Novik or Arthur Sarsfeld  
“Sax Rohmer” Ward

I suppose it’s just as well that these books were written neither to the currently popular naval paradigm nor to the currently popular dragon paradigm. Had it been the former, Captain Will Laurence of the frigate H.M.S. *Reliant* would have spent a hundred pages discoursing with the ship’s doctor Mr. Pollitt on the tactical use of dragons, while the doctor would have reciprocated at like length about their physiology. Then the egg would have begun to crack (one hops the dragon would not have died of boredom). Had it been the latter, once the egg broke, the captain might have *utterly disgraced* himself by squealing in a *most undignified* fashion, “His name is Temeraire!” (And what of the male dragon pilots flying female dragons; well, old boy, it’s all very much in the tradition, along with rum and the lash.)

But when His Majesty’s Ship *Reliant* took a French prize, it turned out to have a dragon’s egg on board, a present from the Jiaqing [Chia-ch’ing] Emperor to this barbarian prince

Napoleon, who has sent messengers bearing tribute and offering to tame the Russian barbarians. However, someone mistimed the incubation period, and the egg hatched, its chick becoming *His Majesty's Dragon* known as *Temeraire*. Captain Laurence saw that the egg was cracking and mustered the midshipmen to bond with the dragon, but the dragon picked the Captain instead.

There is no spirit of The Few in this Britain, but they try. Laurence now finds himself in the Air Corps, learning how to control an intelligent, inquisitive creature. Oh yes, as established above, his name is Temeraire. Temeraire is childishly entrancing, as entrancing as any big scaly thing with not only wings but claws can be, and he becomes friends with his rider.

And that bit earlier about the traditions of the Royal Navy? Well, in a tradition-shattering precedent, it seems that there are some dragons that are ridden by — women. Keep it on the quietus, or next thing you know they'll want to own property or even vote! By Gad, sir, what is this country coming to?

The reason the Frogs were getting a lizard was that they already had some; indeed, Novik has worked out a complex structure of dragon breeds, differentiated by nation. And going back all the way to the Romans, too. (Insert image of Titus Pullo desperately clinging to the back of a dragon during the search for Xena. . .)

And then Boney attempts his Operation *Lion-de-Mer* and it's up to Captain Laurence, Temeraire, and their fellow riders and dragons to defeat the Empire . . .

Afterwards, instead of being covered in honours, Captain Laurence finds himself being packed off to China, returning Temeraire to his rightful owner, with the prospect of kowtowing before the *Throne of Jade*. It seems the Imperial Prince Yongxing [Yung-Hsing] has come to Britain on embassy — demanding their dragon back. He was meant for an emperor, not a common ship captain. But Temeraire, or Lung Tien Xiang [Lung T'ien Hsiang] as he was supposed to be named, is a little worried, so Laurence must come along.

The scenes on shipboard are interesting. Novik displays a clash of civilizations, each thinking itself truly civilized and the others not at all. (Unfortunately the Marquis Zhuan Qingfu, Mandarin of the First Rank, the most qualified to advance the interests of the Great Qing while understanding the barbarians, must have been busy elsewhere.)

As Laurence explores the use of dragons in the Middle Kingdom, he becomes drawn into the power struggles of the imperial court. China has become accustomed to dragons in a way that the West hasn't, for all that they have become very much a part of Western life. He begins to question the way of dragondom in his home. Meanwhile, Temeraire finally begins to deal with his fellow dragons on his own level.

When matters suddenly become clear . . .

There is the *Jonathan Strange & Mr Norrell* problem here; if this world has had dragons for hundreds of years, how come everything else is

so much like ours? Novik seems to want to ignore it to tell her story, a story lacking the excesses of the stories it is compared to; no infodumps, no soppy sentimentality, just a honest story about intelligent beings trying to understand each other and better the world they live in.

However, Laurence and Temeraire have more crises to face when, in *Black Powder War* (Del Rey; 2006; ISBN 0-345-48130-5; \$7.50) this tale is . . . [To Be Continued]

[Were the Chinese names in Wade-Giles transliteration in the original? I mention this because the dragon name would properly have been, I believe, "Long Tian Xiang" in Pinyin, and "Lung T'ien Hsiang" in Wade-Giles.]

### A PRINCE OF JASOOM

Review by Joseph T Major of  
*RED LIGHTNING*  
by John Varley

(Ace; 2006; ISBN 0-441-01364-3; \$24.95)

Sequel to *Red Thunder*

Ben Bova's Exiles Trilogy (*Exiled from Earth* (1971), *Flight of Exiles* (1972), and *Exile's End* (1975)) is a generation saga about a generation ship. He had the charming habit of beginning each book by orphaning the protagonist. It was almost as morbid as reading James Blish's *A Life for the Stars* (1962) knowing the eager young hero was doomed to receive the supreme measure of justice (since he left a Bolshevized Earth, the term is appropriate).

Well, Mannie Garcia and Kelly Strickland, the parents of our protagonist Ramon "Ray" D. Garcia-Strickland, are alive and well, as are their fellow space-travellers of *Red Thunder*. Our story begins on the Red Planet with Ray meditating on the nature of tourism. Which is about all the place is good for.

However, he in turn has to reverse the score, going to earth when an inexplicable disaster strikes the North Atlantic, and the North American coastline is swept by high waves. Including the part of Florida where Grandmother Garcia lives. Mannie and his family have to rescue her, or find out if she's dead, and accordingly they meet up with their old colleague Travis, who was above the waterline (also splendidly rich, thanks to the device invented by his autistic cousin Jubal). After some excruciatingly realistic and graphic travel through the ruins, they find her.

And then Varley runs out of plot. From here the book disintegrates. So does the U.S., first off. Then black-suits from some unspecified group land on Mars and establish martial law. Meanwhile, Jubal has disappeared from his super-safe holding place on the Falkland Islands, and all this turns out to be connected somehow.

In short, the novel reads like Varley had a bunch of ideas and didn't know which to develop, so he used them all. Add to that an unrealistic belief in the vindictiveness and security of government, and an annoying gift to a certain ospecker, and you have a book that is

disappointing. Particularly since his original setup, with its youth life, is so intriguing. I mean, casually going to Phobos and then returning on a board? (Like Doolittle in *Dark Star* (1974) but far less fatally.) And that's just one of the many little touches of difference wasted on this failure of promise.

Then too, I have to wonder about the problems of a wikiconstitution — one where anyone can change it. You can say goodbye to civil liberties, and probably also to eating meat, smoking, abortion, and anything else unpopular enough that it provokes people to keep on revising. (I never saw an anarcho-capitalist explain how the free-market system of law enforcement would cope with sharia.)

### NAPOLEON DYNAMITE

Review by Joseph T Major of  
*THE EMPRESS OF INDIA:*  
*A Professor Moriarty Novel*  
by Michael Kurland

(St. Martin's Minotaur; 2006;  
ISBN 0-312-29144-2; \$24.95)

If you had read William S. Baring-Gould's *Sherlock Holmes of Baker Street* (1962) it would seem that the relationship of Sherlock Holmes and "the Napoleon of Crime", Professor James Moriarty, was far more complex and extensive than could be deduced from a mere reading of the Canon. Far from being strangers, they seemed to have been very well acquainted, back from those old days on the Holmes estate in Norfolk when the squire hired a tutor to plant some knowledge in his sons' heads.

In a sense, Kurland has taken this a step further. It seems that like student, like tutor; Moriarty has developed and employed the whole art of detection; making deductions and using them in the criminal world. As a consulting criminal, that is; drafting plans and providing equipment for spectacular break-ins, swindles, and the like. In three previous novels, *The Infernal Device* (1978), *Death by Gaslight* (1982), and *The Great Game* (2003), while doing his best to promote the spread of human knowledge, the Professor has dealt with activities both illegal and otherwise, providing advice to those on both sides of the law. When a certain meddling unofficial person doesn't try to pin every outrage in London on him, some of which he actually wasn't even connected with.

Such as this one. The ship *Empress of India* is bringing a cargo of gold bullion to London, where it will serve as the backing for an issue of Indian currency; thus stimulating the economy, encouraging commerce, and the like. If it disappears en route, therefore, it's obvious that that infamous consulting criminal James Moriarty is responsible.

Particularly because he was on the *Empress of India* and was carrying out a criminal plan. Just not this one. This puts Moriarty in the extremely inconvenient position of having to solve one crime to cover up another. In fact, there are several other criminals in the area, including one very suspicious gang leader.

Oh and did I mention that while inspecting the area around the vault where the gold would

be stored, Sherlock Holmes vanished? The first scene of the book, in fact, recounts an invasion of the Moriarty Home by coppers both official (Inspectors Lestrade and Gregson) and otherwise (Dr. Watson and Mycroft Holmes) to protest this matter.

Several of the recurring characters of the series appear, primarily Mr. Maws the ex-boxer and butler and Mummer Tolliver, the man of all trades, some even honest, but also a number of the more colourful characters of the London underworld. Not to mention Colonel Sebastian "Tiger Jack" Moran, the other perpetrator of the crime in question; Moriarty's that is, not the other one. However, Benjamin Barnett, the journalist who was a significant character in the other works, and the talented and notable Cecily Perrine (later Barrett) do not appear here. (But then, neither does Harry Flashman.)

This story is set in 1890, therefore predating both *The Great Game* and "The Final Problem". One wonders how Kurland will deal with the case of John Douglas of Birlstone . . .

that bullies often have **high** self-esteem, instead of low. Being so up on themselves, they have so much more to react to should someone attempt to dis them. Saddam Husayn for example is a man of great self-esteem.

The author of *The War Against Boys* (2000) and the author of *P.C., M.D.* (2000) have combined on a study of how the spread of therapy is not doing what it says it should.

The first chapter deals with the emotional fragility of children. Now, this was a cliché as far back as the fifties, where parents trembled at the thought of causing any trauma to their little ones. By trauma, they meant things like having the little one's bathing suit fall off at the beach (as described in *Mad*).

But now, it seems, stress is everywhere. Non-graded classes and non-scored games are a well-known part of this. The authors cite the evisceration of texts and methods described by Diane Ravitch in *The Language Police* (2003; reviewed in *Alexiad* V. 2 #3), curiously enough only on the "left" side, as example of how any potential stress is expunged from the student's day. This is demonstrated in other fields, as with for example the reworking of sports so as to eliminate competition, very broadly defined, replacing it with workouts in which students compete with themselves, such as juggling. Particularly, juggling scarves, which don't threaten the child as they come down.

The authors also discuss the special lesson curricula devised in response to the 9/11 attacks. Most of which, it seems, emphasize feeling about yourself, and ignore the special reasons why this attack took place, or what was so special about America that al-Qaida had to destroy it.

These fragile egos are the same children who go home from school to play *Grand Theft Auto* internet deathmatch for ten hours nonstop, except when they pause to check on their download of *Freddy vs. Jason*.

Where did this all come from? The authors cite the rise of humanistic psychology in the sixties. The various self-fulfillment therapies that sprang up in its wake have pretty much vanished since then (one example they cite, together with its endorsement by Abraham Maslow, one of the founders of humanistic psychology, is the anti-addiction group Synanon; for more on this see *The Light on Synanon* by Dave Mitchell et al. (1980)) but their legacy lives on.

As in the remarkably startling case of a Department of Agriculture loans officer who dealt with an immigrant who wanted a loan to buy a crop-dusting plane. During the course of the session, the immigrant threatened to cut her throat and wondered aloud how Americans would feel if Washington were to be destroyed. She understood how hard he was finding it to become accustomed to the culture of America. It is saddening to report that this troubled soul cannot receive the therapy he so desperately wants. Mostly because he is dead; the would-be crop-duster purchaser was Mohammed Atta, the 9/11 terrorist.

Once Atta found that it was cheaper to buy an airline ticket, a wave of therapists descended

on New York city, ready to provide the grief counseling that theory predicted would be desperately needed. When it wasn't, they were quite upset that all these grieving people were not getting the help they needed. Actual observation showing that the need was already handled by existing group structures, or wasn't needed in the first place, was dismissed.

Much of the rest of the book is devoted to other examples of this conflict between theory and practice. One discussion worth noting is that of the Professional Disturbed Vietnam Veteran, so ably debunked by B. G. "Jug" Burkett in his *Stolen Valor* (1998).

The authors conclude by highlighting the failures of therapism, of which Synanon was merely one of the more obnoxious. Lesser such experiments equally perished, leaving behind a toxic residue of failed patients (I wonder if anyone ever did a follow-up to the patients of the many bizarre therapy movements described in R. D. Rosen's *Psychobabble* (1977)) and an even more toxic residue of ideas. As with so many such ideas, failure is not to be recognized; it becomes a call for more of the same.

It is easy to describe such writings as this book as being callous, unconcerned, brutal even. In the face of the sapless, supine, silly statements shown here, such an accusation is easy to make and hard to seriously defend.

When the culture encourages dependency, those who really need help find themselves shut out of it by those who are able at feigning the need. Which helps neither those who need aid nor society in general.

Okay, now eat the **other** sock.

### GOING TO LAW

Review by Joseph T Major of  
**THE TRUE STELLA AWARDS:  
Honoring Real Cases of Greedy  
Opportunists, Frivolous Lawsuits, and the  
Law Run Amok**

by Randy Cassingham

(Dutton; 2005; ISBN 0-525-94913-5; \$18.95)

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

The most corrosive result of the uncontrollable tort system in America is that it has seriously damaged respect for the judicial system. The chances of "hitting the lottery" with a big punitive damage award are unlikely; indeed any such effort is far more likely to end up with everyone broke, having shelled out huge amounts in legal fees. (Like for example the unfortunate would-be valedictorian of Moorestown High School, who ended up with \$45,000 in legal fees and \$24,840 in taxes on a \$60,000 judgment [Pages 191-197]). The system features massive expenditures of time and money to no apparent point; a long and arduous trial ending up in a dismissal, or a sealed settlement. So no one trusts anyone else anymore and goes about armed against legal interventions.

The editor of the This Is True site, tired of legal mocking of spurious big claims, set out to collect reports of real legal abuse. The claims set forth here are all cited in various places of public record. One can check what is said in a

### WITH PROZAC AND XANAX FOR ALL

Review by Joseph T Major of  
**ONE NATION UNDER THERAPY:  
How the Helping Culture Is Eroding Self-Reliance**

by Christina Hoff Somers and Sally Satel

(St. Martin's; 2005;

ISBN 0-312-30443-9; \$23.95)

I hated growing up in California.

"Hi, I'm Scott. I'm a fully self-aware and self-actualized bully.

"I act primarily out of a need to feel in control, and I take pleasure at the suffering of others.

"Also, my home life lacks parental warmth, and my culture is steeped in violence as a means of resolving problems. Any questions?

"Great, let's start with something simple, then.

"Eat one of your socks."

— Robert T. Balder, PartiallyClips "Bully" (2006): <http://www.partiallyclips.com>



One of the more contrazeitgeist results of actual inquiry into the results of the self-esteem movement, as opposed to theorizing about it, is

newspaper, as opposed to what a friend of a friend heard.

The suits here fall in to several categories. One might well find the use of the legal system to gain publicity for an advocacy group odious; but Stephen Joseph didn't think so. He filed for an injunction to forbid the sale of Oreos to children. But Kraft (the owner of Nabisco, the maker of Oreos) was never served, and Joseph dropped the suit thirteen days after announcing it. He had raised the public consciousness about trans fats, you see [Pages 23-27].

But this is hardly a habit of "little people"; Cassingham lists a number of SLAPP [Strategic Lawsuits Against Public Participation] cases. One that may hit home was the case of Scholastic against the *New York Daily News*. You see, a store which had four copies of *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix* put them on sale early, apparently not knowing about the very strict embargo against such; a sharp-eyed reporter saw them, bought one, read it with blazing speed, and produced a review and synopsis published in the paper's June 18, 2003 issue — three days before the grand release. Scholastic sued for \$100 million in damages. However, they dropped the suit before going to trial. [Pages 252-257]

After a long and painful recountal of a smidgen of the offenses against sanity promoted by the system, Cassingham puts forward a number of proposals for a cure. Number, because you see, there is no one cause and therefore no one solution. Moreover, he admits that there may be some problems, as with for example the "Loser Pays" system [Page 314]. And the most important of all:

#### And Last, Society Must Take a Stand

Ultimately, this is the most important "reform" that can take place. We as a society must stop looking the other way when ridiculous lawsuits are filed. We must take a stand and tell the litigants it's not right. When a truly frivolous suit is filed, there must be real and meaningful sanctions against the plaintiffs involved — and, often, their lawyers.

— *The True Stella Awards*, Page 323

#### "I READ BANNED BOOKS"

Review by Joseph T Major of Oriana Fallaci's

#### *THE FORCE OF REASON*

[Translation and revision of  
*La Forza della Ragione*

(Rizzoli International Publications;  
2004, 2006; ISBN 0-8478-2753-4; \$19.95)

Sequel to *La Rabbia e l'Orgoglio*  
[*The Rage and the Pride*]

When I reviewed *The Rage and the Pride* I said, "But the people who say this are not going to be reading *this* banned book, mostly because their sort are the ones trying to ban it. Some banned books are more equal than others."

In fact, now people are trying to have Fallaci imprisoned for a hate crime. So much for freedom of speech and liberty of conscience. The organizations that support these doctrines,

by charter, are resoundingly and even thoroughly silent. As a test, I searched the ACLU site (<http://www.aclu.org/>) for "Fallaci" and got, "Did you mean fallacy . . . no results for **Fallaci**." (But then a search for "Amirault", the defendants in the Fells Acres daycare center case, got "Did you mean amir ault . . . no results for **Amirault**.".)

And in fact Fallaci does not seem too keen on the ACLU. Consider her discussion of the Birmingham, Alabama Ten Commandments monument, which she points out was as cultural as religious [Pages 250-251].

But what we are seeing, she says, is a discarding of the legacy of Western Civilization. Most readers will be unaware of the legacy of liberalization in Italy; this work should serve as a primer for understanding the legacy of the great men who dragged the peninsula into the modern era.



But also of the man who sent it back. The most painful understanding Fallaci forces on the reader is that Mussolini was a man of the Left; he was a Socialist, he was a comrade of socialists, he had fought with the socialists for the idea of Socialism. It worked the other way, too, as she cites in pointing out the number of ex-Fascisti who became Communists. (Simon Wiesenthal once embarrassed the "'German' 'Democratic' 'Republic'" by showing how many ex-Nazis they had in government.)

She points out a pathetic attempt at cultural self-aggrandizement. The very old among us will recall how, under the Great Stalin, we learned that Russia had in fact invented everything. (As a result of this nonsense, otherwise perfectly sensible people denied the accomplishments and even existence of Tsiolkovsky, Korolev, and Gagarin.) Now, it seems that the Arabs invented everything. If it weren't for multiculturalism this would be silly; now that it is so deadly serious, this is a further step towards obliterating the Era of Ignorance. [Pages 161-168]

One of the signs of the modern era of ignorance she decries is the inability to do simple calculations mentally. When items were priced by the kilogram and sold in parts thereof (I said it lends perspective) people could figure in their heads. Now everything is automatic; and people get intellectually lazy. Which means they accept any nonsense that is poured into their heads. [Pages 252-256] (It would have been interesting to read Asimov's reply to this; as you know, he reveled in this sort of replacing of mental effort.)

The book is somewhat rambling, not so

much developing a consistent theme as showing various facets of it. A more organized presentation would make her argument harder to consistently refute.

When a visiting Kazakh journalist makes positive comments about bestiality and incest, or brags of admiring Stalin because of his "big khram", the progressive, enlightened thinkers of the world regard this behavior as thoroughly within a multicultural perspective. It would be culturally offensive to disagree with him. Perhaps they sing along when he says, "Throw the Jew down the well/So my country can be free."

For pointing this sort of thing out, Fallaci is called a "racist", even by people like Christopher Hitchens, who should know better. (Maybe Hitchens doesn't; he wrote "The Strange Case of David Irving", a review of *Lying About Hitler and The Holocaust on Trial* that, while discussing David Irving in detail, never even once mentioned *whom* he had sued.) It would be interesting to see Fallaci's interview of the anonymous Deborah Lipstadt (especially since Fallaci decries the charging of Holocaust Denier Robert Faurisson on international hate crime laws); or even of Sacha Baron Cohen [Borat], the above pseudo-reporter, who was after all being sued by the Kazakh government.

Fallaci describes, wearily, how she is caluminated and derided. Being sued for hate crimes is almost a complement, under these circumstances.

And now, O men who have condemned me, I would fain prophesy to you; for I am about to die, and in the hour of death men are gifted with prophetic power. And I prophesy to you who are my murderers, that immediately after my departure punishment far heavier than you have inflicted on me will surely await you. Me you have killed because you wanted to escape the accuser, and not to give an account of your lives. But that will not be as you suppose: far otherwise. For I say that there will be more accusers of you than there are now; accusers whom hitherto I have restrained: and as they are younger they will be more inconsiderate with you, and you will be more offended at them. If you think that by killing men you can prevent some one from censuring your evil lives, you are mistaken; that is not a way of escape which is either possible or honourable; the easiest and the noblest way is not to be disabling others, but to be improving yourselves. This is the prophecy which I utter before my departure to the judges who have condemned me.

— Sokrates Sophoniskou  
[Plato, *Apologia* (Jowett translation)]

#### RURAL KING

by Lisa

At Henderson we went to a farm store called Rural King. It is aptly named. I love

going there because it has Breyer horses and other brands of model animals.

It has Toobs, which are plastic transparent tubes of different varieties of figures. There are Pirate Toobs but unfortunately I didn't see any that could have been Anne Bonney or Mary Read. Others are Wild West Toobs, Knights and Dragon Toobs which unfortunately only offered one dragon although the horses did look interesting, Shark Toobs which I found really tempting, Ocean Toobs with many different sea creatures, Horse Toobs, one of which I bought last time I was there. Dinosaur Toobs. Cat Toobs. Dog Toobs.

Tempting as all these were I finally decided on a striking Schleich horse and an armadillo in honor of Sheryl Birkhead. Perhaps next time I will buy some of the Toobs. Schleich offers many interesting animals. Joe bought a musk ox to add to his collection of polar animals. It is not easy these days to find stores which offer such a variety of the old-fashioned batteryless toys.

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### INKHEART

by Cornelia Funke

(Scholastic Paperbacks; 2003, 2005;  
ISBN 0-439-70910-5; \$7.99)

Review by Lisa Major

The last time I was in Borders I spent several minutes in the sf/fantasy section looking for something that wasn't a volume of serial general processed fantasy and failing. I finally gave up and wandered over to the children's section out of idle curiosity. It was there that I happened to see a thick trade paperback titled *Inkheart* by Cornelia Funke. I picked it up, looked at the first page and was hooked. I paid the eight bucks and took the book home.

Its protagonist Meggie has been taught to love books by her father Mo, who has a magical talent for reading characters out of books and into real life. Unfortunately he discovered this talent by reading villains out of a book titled *Inkheart*.

Funke's book is well worth eight bucks, especially if you liked *Princess Bride*. I won't give away any more of the plot because I think *Inkheart* should be experienced for itself. The only bad thing is that *Inkheart* has a sequel, *Inkspell* and the ending hinted strongly there might be another in the series. I'm eager to see the third book. I hope Rowling finishes the next Harry Potter book soon so that I can push *Inkheart* and other favorites of mine on patrons waiting for the Rowling book.

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### Akhal-Teke

by Lisa

The Akhal Teke is a very old breed. It has been around three thousand years. Like the Arab it is a desert horse. In ancient times the Akhal-Teke was a racehorse and still excels at endurance. Ancient historians Herodotus and Oppian mentioned them. The pictures I have seen show a striking, aristocratic horse with a decided greyhound look to them. Their coats have a natural glow to them. The aristocratic

looks are misleading. The Akhal-Teke is a very tough horse, capable of going several days without water.

They are not, of course, as fast as a Thoroughbred but neither are they as prone to breaking down. They tend to be one-person horses and probably therefore would not do well as riding stable horses but would make excellent dressage horses. An Akhal-Teke named Absent won an Olympic gold medal in 1960 and took part in the 1964 and 1968 Olympics, in spite of which the horses did not fare well in the Soviet Union. Many shared Ferdinand's fate in the Soviet determination to squash the culture of its slave states. Today there are some 3,500 Tekes in the former Soviet Union and some 350 here in the United States. The Horse Park is sponsoring an Akhal-Teke weekend in September and perhaps I will get to go. The pictures I have seen make me at least want to see this unusual, striking breed in person.

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### TRIPLE CROWN NOTES

by Lisa

Even if Barbaro hadn't broken down in the Preakness I'm not sure he could have handled Bernardini. Bernardini put on a terrific performance that day and that break through the gate surely took something out of the Derby winner. Bernardini is a son of A.P. Indy, one of Seattle Slew's top sons. His dam is a daughter of Quiet American, sire of Derby winner Real Quiet. His pedigree was at least as good as Barbaro's. As Joe says, we'll never know now, any more than we'll ever know if Dark Star's 1953 Derby win was a fluke. Unfortunately his grand performance was overshadowed by Barbaro's injury.

I had hoped Brother Derek would get his chance in the Belmont after the bad luck in the first two races but he wasn't there. Instead Jazil took home the winner's share. I'm sure he's a good colt but I think Bernardini could have beaten six like him in his morning workout and then neighed "Fie on this quiet life! I want work!" I am really looking forward to getting to see Bernardini in the Breeder's Cup. I think he deserves a lot more credit for his Preakness win than he's gotten.

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### THE JOY OF HIGH TECH

by Rodford Edmiston

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

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### The Iron Age

There are many types of iron. You have the actual element, pure Fe, which comes in several isotopes (same electron shell structure, same charge on the nucleus, but different numbers of neutrons in the latter) which all have the same chemical properties. Wrought iron is nearly pure, and has been in use from before the time of the classic Iron Age up well into the age of steel. (The last wrought iron plant in the US closed in 1969.)

Wrought iron gets its name from the traditional method of production. Iron ore was

heated and "wrought" (from wreaked, or bent) to work the impurities out. During this, a lump of iron ore is heated, then pounded, to work out the impurities and forge the metal into a single, solid piece. During this work the piece is beaten flat, reheated, folded, and beaten flat again, until the smith determines it is ready for forging. Wrought iron was — and still is — a fine material for many uses. It is ductile — that is, easily worked without splitting or cracking — and nearly immune to rust. Making large objects from wrought iron using this traditional method of production is difficult, since the "blooms" produced by wreaking are small, maybe enough for a modest belt knife. Anything larger required welding or forging the products of two or more blooms together.

On the other hand, a weapon or piece of armor made in this way has some interesting properties. For example, sword blades were made by forging separate strips of wrought iron, heating them and twisting them together, then forging the result into a single mass, often folding one or more times along the way to get the piece to the correct dimensions. The result was a pattern blade. Named because breathing on the metal brought out a writhing pattern created by the twisting, folding and flattening. Some such blades were even acid etched, to bring out the pattern without the fog of breath.

Items of this sort are often referred to as "Damascus" or "Damascene" but most likely the process was developed independently multiple times in widespread locations through a long period.

Such blades had properties quite similar to those of the famed folded blades of Japan, such as the katana sword. Because no two blooms were identical, the twisting and forging fused metals with slightly different properties, making a composite which blended the different properties. Selective treatment of the edge made sure it was hard enough to stay sharp. The inherent resilience of the wrought iron in the body of the blade, combined with the springiness imparted by the twisting and folding, kept the blade from breaking or bending easily. Once the knowledge of how to produce steel became widespread the same practice was used to make early steel items of large size, since batches of steel were small during this period.

The process of making a sword or breastplate in this way was very labor intensive, however. With little change in technique for centuries, well-made swords and even knives were often handed down as working items for generations. Often, if a good-quality long blade was broken, the already forged metal was simply cut and ground the minimum amount to make the next smaller blade of the same general shape. Thus a fine long sword broken in battle might become a belt knife and short sword. Good metal was simply too precious to melt down and be made into something which might not be nearly as good.

Cast iron became common some centuries after wrought iron. It is made by using a large, hot furnace to melt iron ore in a large batch. As the ore becomes hotter, the carbon becomes more soluble in the iron, and the melting point

of the combination is lower than that of wrought iron. At around three percent carbon the iron will melt enough to run into molds. In the old days these were often nothing more than a channel dug into the dry sand floor of the foundry, leading to blocky cavities likewise excavated. The result resembled pigs lined up at a slop trough; hence the term “pig iron.”

Cast iron is stronger and harder than wrought iron. However, it is also brittle, and it rusts easily. Like bronze, it can be cast and filed, but not forged or easily welded. So why wasn't it a big step backwards?

Because it can be cast and filed. Making items for which brittleness wasn't a problem was far quicker and easier with this method. Also, the reason large castings of wrought iron are rare is that — as mentioned above — pure iron has a higher melting point than that of cast iron. Melting enough cast iron to pour into a mold is, simply, easier.

As demand for iron increased and improvements were sought, people learned — independently, several times, in several locations — that blowing air through molten cast iron would remove the carbon, producing wrought iron in large amounts, without all that “wreaking.”

Only, if you didn't remove enough of the carbon, you got something else . . .

Wrought iron has little or no carbon. Cast iron has a lot of carbon. And in between . . . lies steel.

Steel was known long before someone figured out how to make it from cast iron. Remember the comment above about treating the edges of forged wrought iron swords? One of the treatments was to put the finished object in contact with carbon (usually charcoal) and heat. This allows a small amount of carbon to dissolve into the forged wrought iron, face or case hardening it. That is, converting the outer layer of wrought iron into steel. Again, creating a metal composite.

Even before that, people were making use of meteoric iron. It comes naturally as a steel which is in many ways finer than anything produced deliberately until the late Nineteenth Century. More than one mythic blade may have been made with this metal.

Oh, the stories which could be told of the long struggle to understand and master the process of deliberately making steel with the desired properties. The superstitions, the rules of thumb, the strict rituals and fickle results. For over a thousand years, the most successful makers of iron-based swords and armor were not those who made the best case hardening or the most impressive blade shape and balance, but those who could consistently reproduce their results. Doing this without modern chemical theory, metallurgical knowledge or even thermometers requires a keen eye (as well as ears and nose) and a fanatical dedication to one's craft.

All of which ended — though in reluctant stages — as science explained just what was happening, and provided tools to make it happen more easily.

Even the production of steel changed, with

the introduction of the Bessemer furnace and its descendants. But wrought iron remained the most frequently useful member of the family until then, even if only as a starting point before case hardening. It continued strong for decades after, due to such things as its corrosion resistance. Eventually, however, wrought iron died except for a few specialty mills, which produce it for the art trade. Cast iron continues strong, though. New methods of production have made it far more economical than wrought iron, either for making cast iron items, or as a precursor to steel.

Today, in fact, various types of cast iron are doing jobs once the province of wrought iron or even steel. There are cast irons which are corrosion resistant. Cast irons which are ductile.

These improvements require moving beyond the simple combination of iron and carbon, with other stuff added to moderate the effects of large amounts of the latter when mixed with the former, such as silicon. In truth, there has always been other stuff in any iron, native to the ore or coming from the particular process — and even individual crucible, mold, hammer or anvil — used to make it. Those were present as accidents, though, and any benefit they provided was a mystery to those working the metal. Today it can be safely said we have now tamed the metal once decried as “ruined iron” and can make it do the job of true iron, the wrought iron of old. Sometimes even better than the original could.

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### AMAZING STORIES: Gone Again, or Gone for Good?

By Johnny Carruthers

[originally at

<http://purpleranger.livejournal.com>]

At the end of March, Paizo Publishing, the most recent publisher of *Amazing Stories*, made it official. The world's first magazine devoted to science fiction, which had been on hiatus since last June, was suspending publication yet again. I'll admit that I've lost track, but I think this makes it least four times that *AS* has been cancelled since the early 1990s.

Like the phoenix of myth, *Amazing* keeps coming back. Every time it is cancelled, though, I keep wondering if the title's luck has finally run out.

I think there is a good reason *Amazing* keeps returning from oblivion. All of its recent publishers seem to think that the title strikes a resonating chord with science fiction fans. This is where the genre as we now know it began 80 years ago. The recent publishers all seem to have realized that the title is Something Special, a treasure worth guarding and nurturing. The problem (at least as I see it) is that none of these publishers have known what to do with that treasure once they had it.

I think *Amazing Stories* could succeed, if the right publisher invested the time and effort to make it succeed. The big question then becomes, who is that publisher?

The response that immediately comes to mind is Dell Magazines. They seem to be doing well with both *Analog* and *Asimov's*, not to

mention serving the mystery genre with *Ellery Queen Mystery Magazine* and *Alfred Hitchcock's Mystery Magazine*. If Dell Magazines could find the right editor, and if they looked at it as a long-term project, I have no doubt that they could restore *Amazing* back to its former glory.

There is only one other publisher that I think might be able to revive *Amazing*. That would be Sovereign Publishing, the publisher of *Realms of Fantasy*. Keep in mind that I am looking at this from purely a consumer's point of view. I have no idea how well *RoF* is actually doing, but from what I can see, it is selling well on the newsstands. Again, with the right editor, I think Sovereign would stand a good chance of bringing *Amazing* back to prominence. On the downside, Sovereign has already published (and folded) one SF magazine, *Science Fiction Age*. *SFA* published some excellent fiction during its eight-year run (including several Hugo and Nebula nominees), but in the end, it didn't sell enough copies. Sovereign might not want to try publishing another purely SF magazine, even if it was a revival of *Amazing Stories*.

There is one more possibility, and that would be for some small press publisher to acquire *Amazing*, and publish it as a small press magazine — at least at first. Start out small, and make *Amazing* (to borrow a phrase from another medium) “Must-Read SF.” Then gradually build up the circulation and the press run as interest grows.

All of these scenarios depend on one very important factor — finding the right editor. No, I have no idea who that right editor might be. But I think whoever that editor might be, he or she will have to approach the job as a long-term project. Because I think that's what really, truly reviving *Amazing Stories* will be — a long-term project.

No matter who this hypothetical (for the moment) new publisher might be, I think one other thing they will have to do is find some way for *Amazing* to stand out. I think Paizo was trying to do this by mixing fiction with articles about upcoming genre movies. I believe the way Paizo put it was that they were trying to present amazing stories in all media. Nice idea, but it obviously fell short in the execution.

Maybe what needs to be done is to go with a retro theme — an *Amazing Stories* for the 21st Century as Hugo Gernsback himself might have done it. More than anything else, make it **fun** to read. Maybe you realize as you read a story that a couple of scientific facts aren't quite right, but it doesn't really matter because the story itself is just too darn interesting. Bring back covers where the men are Real Men, the women are Real Women, and the bug-eyed monsters are Real Bug-Eyed Monsters.

Yes, I would love to see *Amazing Stories* rise from the ashes once again. But even more, I would like to see it done in such a manner that another revival will never be needed.

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### REESE'S PEANUT BUTTER CUP WITH CARAMEL

Review by Steven H Silver



One has to ask "What were they thinking" when faced with the new Reese's Peanut Butter Cup with Caramel.

The Reese's Peanut Butter Cup is one candy which seems immune to change and all alterations to it have been short lived. Reese (which has actually been Hershey's since 1963) has attempted to put peanuts in the chocolate, which worked, but didn't last. They put a cookie in with the peanut butter, which didn't work (it threw off the balance of the textures and flavors). They put white chocolate around the peanut butter (about which the less said, the better). They inverted it, which ruined the ratio of chocolate to peanut butter (written by a big peanut butter fan).

Their latest attempt to improve on the perfection that is the original Reese's Peanut Butter Cup is to add a thin layer of caramel. It doesn't work (but you knew this from reading the above paragraphs).

The problem comes down to proportions. There isn't really enough caramel to make a positive difference in the taste, but it does cut down on the amount of peanut butter. In addition, the smoothness of the caramel makes the graininess of the peanut butter more noticeable, which doesn't do good things for the over all mouth texture of the candy.

The original Reese's Peanut Butter Cup was invented in 1928 by Harry Burnett Reese, a shipping foreman for Hershey's. He founded his own company, H.B. Reese to produce the candy. Reese, who was born in 1879, died in 1956. Although The H.B. Reese Candy Co. manufactured several types of candy, by World War II, shortages led them to cut back their line to just the flagship item. At the time H.B. Reese was sold to Hershey in 1963, peanut butter cups were their only product. Items currently manufactured under the Reese name include Reese's Pieces, Swoops, Fast Break, ReeseSticks, Nutrageous, Reese's Puffs Cereal, and others

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**THE THREE-POUND ENIGMA:  
The Human Brain and the Quest  
to Unlock Its Mysteries**

by Shannon Moffett

(Algonquin Books of Chapel Hill; 2006; 309 pages, indexed; \$24.95, ISBN #

13:9781565124233 and 10:1565124235)

Reviewed by Jim Sullivan

Here's a pound and nearly six ounces of book that's filled with details about the, on average, three pound human head's contents and how each part functions from the prefrontal cortex to the occipital lobe, from the hippocampus to the amygdala, and everything in between. Moffett has interviewed those physicians and scientists on the cutting edge, in some cases literally and in all cases figuratively, of brain/mind science.

She opens with Dr. Roberta Glick, for instance, a neurosurgeon who operates at Cook County Hospital in Chicago. Much of her work is with trauma patients, like gunshot-to-the-head victims. Moffett follows this busy physician on her rounds. The work that this doctor does is

miraculous though often heartbreaking.

Next, Dr. John Gabrieli, a cognitive neuroscientist, relates to the author how the brain/mind works in memory and amnesia. Another scientist, Dr. Allan Basbaum, who studies macaque monkeys, tells Moffett about vision. Then it's Francis Crick, Nobel laureate for his discovery, with James Watson, of the double helix of DNA, and Dr. Christof Koch who are examining neurons in the human brain. They do this with functional MRIs to see what's occurring while thinking goes on up there. Also the scientists are looking at consciousness in humans and, the possibly of it, in animals, particularly primates. Dr. Sue Savage-Rumbaugh is leading the work in that area.

Next is Dr. Bob Stickgold, Harvard Medical school and Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center where he conducts dream research. Then Moffett interviews Judy Castelli, a singer, who suffers from DID, dissociative identity disorder, formerly known as multiple personality disorder. This woman suffered from having over 40 different personalities channeling through her mind at various times. Her experiences were truly bizarre.

Dr. Daniel Dennett, the philosopher of mind comes in for wide coverage in discussions on consciousness. And Dr. Judy Illes, a neuroscientist, covers the relatively unknown new field of neuroethics. Such subjects as the morality of commercial firms offering MRI screenings to anyone willing to pay for them. And this being done while no medical support or referral is offered. Lastly, the author delves into Zen Buddhism and how meditation affects the mind/brain.

The book is organized into eight narrative chapters, each on a particular subject told in an interesting manner. Except for the final chapter, each is followed with a two or three page technical explanation of brain/mind function, at various ages of a human's life, and what is known on the subject at that point. But if the reader chooses to skip the technical material, they may without taking away from the rest of this intriguing read.

Writes the author, "The Cerebral hemispheres, deep-brain structures, cerebellum, and brain stem are all encased in the skull, that bony armor protecting the fragile, wrinkly, puddinglike blob that, as far as we know, is you-the seat of every hope, dream, fear, memory, capability, characteristic, idea, emotion, thought, plan, potential action, and conscious experience that makes you who you are."

Shannon Moffett is studying medicine at Stanford. This is her first book. Recommended.

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**A FISH CAUGHT IN TIME  
(The Search for the Coelacanth)**

(HarperCollins; 2000; \$24.00 hardcover)

Samantha Weinberg

A book review by E.B. Frohvet

The story begins in East London, South Africa, a few days before Christmas 1938. Marjorie Courtenay-Latimer, the young curator of the town's small museum, received a telephone call: Captain Hendrik Goosen of the

trawler *Nerine* had just brought in some sharks and other non-commercial fish, and she was welcome to pick over them for specimens. Already overworked, she thought of refusing; but the trawler fleet had been generous to the museum. The least she could do was go down to the docks and wish them a holiday greeting. The captain had gone ashore, but a crewman helped her sort the fish. Among them she found "the most beautiful fish I had ever seen." But she had no idea what it was; and the sailor, a veteran of fishing in South African waters for decades, had never seen it before either.

Thus began the strange tale of one of the 20th Century's most amazing stories in science. Courtenay-Latimer sent a description and sketch to her mentor, Professor J.I.S. Smith. He was equally puzzled at first, but in a moment's inspiration thought of a fossil he had seen described in a scientific journal. The connection seemed "utterly preposterous", but worth following up. It was February before he could free himself from academic duties to visit East London and see the fish, preserved by a local taxidermist.

Coelacanths were well known from fossils, but none had been identified since the late Cretaceous, 65 or 70 million years ago. They were supposed to be extinct. Smith named the specimen *Latimeria chalumnae* after the young curator, and described it in an article for the prestigious British journal, *Nature*. In scientific circles it was a sensation. Professor Smith and his wife Margaret painstakingly dissected the preserved fish: his formal monograph was 106 pages of text and 44 photographs. The only thing better, the worthy scholar thought, would be finding another one. The war intervened, and for years after that nothing turned up, though the Smiths plastered the east African coast with reward posters offering 100 pounds (or 10,000 escudos).

On Christmas Eve 1952 Smith received a cable from Eric Hunt, a trader and casual acquaintance, that he had found a coelacanth (paying the promised reward out of his own pocket). At great effort Smith procured the specimen, from the Comoros Islands off the Mozambique coast. In less than a year the French colonial government declared the islands off-limits to foreign scientists. More coelacanths were caught. The French scientist Dr. Jacques Millot spent years writing a three-volume book on their anatomy. The first photographs of a living coelacanth in its natural environment were not taken until 1977. In 1997 another population was located in Indonesia, 6000 miles from Africa. This appears to be a marginally different species: brown, rather than the shimmering steel-blue of the African variety. Efforts are being made at both locations to protect them. No one knows how many coelacanths there are, or if they exist elsewhere.

Among the oddest footnotes of the story: the discovery in a church in Argentina of a silver model of a coelacanth, presumably donated as a votive offering. Experts have judged the piece at least 200 years old, yet so perfectly detailed it's hard to imagine the unknown silversmith was not working from having seen a real example.

The story of the coelacanth still has not been fully told.

## FANZINES

*and Furthermore . . .* #4 April 8, 2008, #5 April 28, 2006, #6 May 15, 2006  
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*Beyond Bree* April 2006, May 2006  
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*The Knarley Knews* # 117 April 2006  
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*MT Void* V. 24 #41 April 6, 2006 — V. 24 #48  
May 26, 2006  
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*Opuntia* # 60.5 April 2006, #61 May 2006  
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*Peregrine Nations* V. 5 #4 January 2006  
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*Pixel* # 2 May 2006  
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*Plokta* V.10 #2 August 2005  
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*Vanamonde* # 633 — 637  
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*Visions of Paradise* #105  
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<http://visionsofparadise.blogspot.com>

## HANDICAPPING THE HUGOS



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

### Best Novel

- 6) No Award
- 5) *A Storm of Swords*  
A middle volume in a series I stopped liking  
about two volumes ago.
- 4) *Accelerando*  
Regretfully, I bounced off the first page, as  
it was a cyberpunk novel; cyberpunk  
ignores the very real developments in  
internet crime (your cyberpunk hipster, in  
mirrorshades & black leather, taking  
designer drugs as he jacks in and surfs the  
Net looking for corporate malfeasance,  
would be dead at the hands of the Mafiya  
were he to try stopping them).  
(Ace; 2005; ISBN 0-441-01284-1; \$24.95)
- 3) *Learning the World*  
First Contact, alien races that are different  
but still work, interplanetary generation ship  
societies; it should have everything but it  
comes apart at the end.
- 2) *Old Man's War*  
This was a hard choice. A tale of  
interplanetary settlement and conflict, with  
super-science and touching human  
relationships.

- 1) *Spin*  
Now they do write stories of cosmic world-  
changes, entire planets being manipulated by  
vast forces. And they're interesting people,  
too.

### Best Fanzine

- 5) No Award, 4) *File 770*, 3) *Plokta*, 2)  
*Banana Wings*, 1) **Challenger**

### Best Fan Writer

- 5) No Award, 4) Cheryl Morgan, 3) Claire  
Brialey, 2) Steven H Silver, 1) **John Hertz**

In other recommendations:

### Best Dramatic Presentation — Long Form

*Serenity*

### Best Fan Artist

Brad W. Foster

## AWARDS

At the Science Fiction and Fantasy Writers  
of America's 2006 Nebula Awards ceremony in  
Tempe, Arizona, the following works received  
the Nebula Award:

- |                         |  |
|-------------------------|--|
| <b>Best Novel:</b>      | <i>Camouflage</i> by Joe<br>Haldeman     |
| <b>Best Novella</b>     | "Magic for Beginners" by<br>Kelly Link   |
| <b>Best Novelette</b>   | "The Faery Handbag" by<br>Kelly Link     |
| <b>Best Short Story</b> | "I Live With You" by<br>Carol Emshwiller |
| <b>Best Script</b>      | <i>Serenity</i> by Joss Whedon           |

The André Norton Award for YA SF&F  
went to *Valiant: A Modern Tale of Faerie* by  
Kelly Black. Harlan Ellison® received the  
Damon Knight Grand Master Award. William  
F. Nolan was named Author Emeritus.

The Sidewise Award nominations have been  
announced (courtesy of Steven H Silver and the  
trufen.net site):

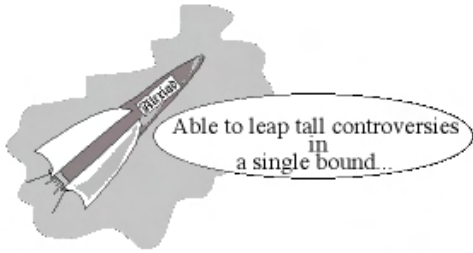
### Long Form:

- Ian R. MacLeod, *The Summer Isles* (Aio  
Publishing)  
Sophia McDougall, *Romanitas* (Orion)  
Paul Park, *A Princess of Roumania* (Tor)

### Short Form

- William Barton, "Harvest Moon" (*Asimov's*  
September 2005)  
A.M. Dellamonica, "The Illuminated  
Heretic" (*Alternate Generals III*, edited  
by Harry Turtledove, Baen April 2005)  
Kim Newman & Paul J. McAuley, "Prix  
Victor Hugo Script"  
Jason Stoddard, "Panacea" (*SciFiction*,  
September 14, 2005)  
Lois Tilton, "Pericles the Tyrant" (*Asimov's*,  
October-November 2005)

## Letters, we get letters



From: **Richard Dengrove** April 4, 2006  
2651 Arlington Drive, #302, Alexandria,  
VA 22306-3626 USA  
[RichD22426@aol.com](mailto:RichD22426@aol.com)

I had the great idea of starting a vanity publisher called PublishBhutan (or pUblisshHutan). Our motto: "Science fiction stinks." No beating around the bush with executive vp's. What would I publish? Only science fiction of course.

Like, really rad, d00d.

May 9, 2006

I enjoyed *Alexiad* April 2006 as I have the other *Alexiads*. Of course, that's partly because it elicited so many comments from me. Maybe too many; the reader might not know the forest from the trees.

Did I have to comment when you said that kids of today would not appreciate Howdy Doody or Ray Harryhausen? Probably not, but I couldn't help myself.

A friend of mine did show his kids a DVD of a Ray Harryhausen film. As you predicted, they found all the special effects corny. Then my friend pointed out that Harryhausen did all his without a computer. They went "Wow!!" A little context helped.

That's nice, but see Milt Stevens below about the Donald Duck comics.

Also, I probably shouldn't have made a comment on Young's and Braden's *Last Sentry* when you spoke about the dangers inherent in the Communist ideology. I am always making bizarre ideological statements that bore people.

The one this time around is that I doubt ideology per se counts for much. I suspect things are the other way around. Social conflict does not reflect ideology; ideology reflects the social conflict. In Russia, it looks like the overthrow of the Tsar made this worse. Totalitarianism means that a good part of the population feels so vulnerable they have to micromanage the rest of the population.

Another theme I shouldn't have commented on is whether the Bible is infallible; or contains flaws, as Bart Ehrman's *Misquoting Jesus* says. Religion being the topic that people traditionally

avoid. Nonetheless, I will comment on it.

I have to disagree with Alexis Gilliland, I am afraid. I think that it is absurd to judge the Bible like you would an old deed or an old manuscript. Or like science. The criteria is whether it gets us close to the divine, which is in our heart; and that is how we have to judge the Bible's truth or falsehood.

Even more so, I could well have done without this comment to Trinlay. Trinlay, your Buddhist friends say that if someone brings Nazis into an argument, they've just lost the argument. Well, maybe your friends are Nazis. Or maybe their opponents are Nazis. Come to think of it, I've just lost the argument.

On the other hand, I have to answer you, Joseph, on grapes and the Norse. First, I have to confess a faux pas: why I thought that you said the Norse found grapes because they explored farther south. Habit. People don't often give the argument that grapes survived at higher latitude then.

Could they be afraid of being seen as supporters of global warming?

Nonetheless, I still argue that the standards of identity were not as strict in those days. Who knows what grapes meant to the Norse.

Other words had loose standards of identity too. As late as the 17th Century, Liquid Aloes could mean anything bitter and nauseating, and Liquid Storax was defined as the gummy liquor of trees. Mercury, I gather, was worse: I seem to remember reading where Robert Boyle considered a certain definition of Mercury an encomium, a eulogy.

As well as answering your comments on me, I have to answer other people's comments on my letters and articles. Robert Kennedy says that my article tells him all he needs to know about The Brotherhood of the Rosy Cross. ...Thanks — I guess.

Jeffrey Allan Boman wishes the people in the Middle East could be as tolerant as my Orthodox Jewish friend is of his son's Palestinian pal. I agree 100%. The problem is that the two situations are very different. In the Middle East, Arabs believe the Jews have oppressed them and stolen their land. In the U.S., Arabs and Jews often find they have a lot in common.

Dry Bones for May 9 — 11 Iyyar:

Hamas says: End the Occupation!  
"First, we demand the return of Spain and Portugal, occupied by Christian forces since the 1400's!

"Then the return of Hungary, Greece, Sicily, and a piece of France,

"Then we want the return of Crete, Cyprus, Ukraine, Bulgaria, Moldova,

"Then the southern half of Russia, Andorra, Croatia . . ." [To be continued?]

— Yaakov Kirschen

The Dar al-Islam is like a Texas land-grabber, "What's mine is mine, what's yours is subject to a deal."

— JTM

Joy V. Smith comments that, in *Wonders and the Order of Nature*, categorizing wonders isn't easy. That is, as I said, because wonders are a feeling and we insist on treating them like something concrete. That's a common way in which we complicate our lives.

From: **Janice G. Stinson** April 10, 2006  
PO Box 248, Eastlake, MI 49626-0248  
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[topicsf@earthlink.com](mailto:topicsf@earthlink.com)

On *Alexiad* Dec. 2005:

I'm taking that large black "Warning!" sign on page one of *Alexiad* V. 4 N. 6 seriously, even though we trade (ostensibly; I wouldn't be surprised if you'd wondered about that in recent months). Happy and very belated birthdays to you both.

Joe, your reviews of the "Rome" series have been quite entertaining. I can't recall when I've had more fun reading episode summaries of a show I'll probably never see. The same can be said for several of the books you reviewed, but not all. It's nice to see book reviews by non-Majors, and I may send some your way if I can get them written. I've been reprioritizing how I spend (or waste, as the case may be) my time, and it seems to have helped me get more done. Previously, I was lolling around eating bon-bons and watching /s/o/a/p/ /o/p/e/r/a/s/ the Sci Fi Channel all day . . .

I appreciate your keeping my *Peregrine Nations* in your fanzine list; it helps me let those who may not have seen my fanzine know that I'm still pubbing. Many thanks. And any readers here who have ideas or articles having to do with journeys (whether real or imagined) are welcome to send same to me, for potential pubbing in *PN*. Which, by the way, has finished its fifth year of publication and will soon start its sixth round. Hal yawm!

LOCS: I see Steven Silver has commented on . . . Steven Silver? Is this a fannish thing? How . . . unusual. . .

Joy Smith sends kudos to me for having an essay in the reviewed *The Cherryh Odyssey*. It wasn't hard to do, actually. I had written an article some years ago I'd entitled "Going Native" and had thought to send it to a fanzine for publication, but then the *TCO* editor, Ed Carmien, sent a message to Cherryhlist (an email list for Cherryh readers) announcing a Call for Papers for an author study on Cherryh. I figured, what the heck, all he can do is say no, and sent him my article. Over some months' time, between the two of us, we got it into better (and longer) shape, and Ed accepted it for publication in *TCO*. This is my first book publication, I'm happy to say, and I hope it won't be my last.

Dainis Bisenieks writes of Cherryh, "I noted long ago that some of her SF novels had exactly the same form of contemporary-scene novels in the world of the story." I have no idea what you

mean. He goes on to write, "But would it be necessary to write a full-scale academic paper pointing out just how this is done in one or a number of the novels? That way lies tedium." I wouldn't consider it necessary; and from what I recall, none of the articles in *TCO* are concerned with this. I get the impression that you think it would not be necessary for you to write a paper concerning your observation about some of Cherryh's SF novels and contemporary-scene novels. Perhaps you should give it a go anyway, and if you do, I'd like to read it, to have a chance at understanding what it is you're talking about. No, I am not kidding.

Joe and Lisa: When you have to transport your cats, why not use towels and wrap the cats in them, heads protruding from one end of the roll? It's safer for you and the cats, surely. Of course, the element of surprise is still needed, but luring them to the bathroom should lessen the difficulty. Especially if sometimes all you do is give them a treat. Yes, I know, sneaky human, but we must outthink the creatures sometimes, eh?

I don't think we could keep them wrapped in the towels all the way to the vet's, much less in the waiting room. Also, first you have to catch the cat . . .

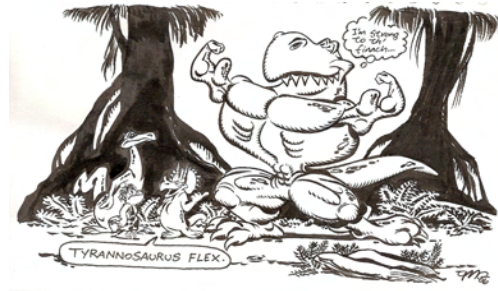
Brad Foster's Shocking UFO Fact #173 (p. 25) got a giggle from me. That man deserves an award that has money attached to it. I wonder, has anyone ever proposed that the Hugo for fan categories carry a monetary award? Or is that just too shocking for fandom to even consider? Probably — like reducing the WorldCon supporting membership fee to ten bucks so more people can \*afford\* to nominate and vote for the Hugos.

Trinlay Khadro mistakes Nhi Vanye (from the Morgaine books by C.J. Cherryh) for Nils Lofgren . . . I think. Re: her comment on the Janice Crosby essay in *TCO* (reviewed in your pages by E.B. Frohvet), I think part of Janice Crosby's problem may be that she has let her feminist cant get in the way of opportunities to meet men like Nhi Vanye. Everyone has their flaws, of course (as does Vanye), but there are men like him out in the world. I married one. It would be nice to find another, but I'm not holding my breath; they aren't all that common.

Carol Clarke asks readers to send lists of favorite movies and books. Oh, dear. These things are subject to change, depending on mood, for many people including me. But I shall take a stab at it. Favorite movies of mine are ones which I have VHS or DVD copies of at home so I can watch them whenever I want, or ones I plan to buy and which I will stop to watch when I catch them on TV. They are: "Last of the Mohicans," "Enemy Mine," "Volcano," "Dante's Peak," "Lawrence of Arabia," "The Mummy" (the Brendan Fraser one), "The Mummy Returns," "The Scorpion King," "Jurassic Park," "Gladiator," "Big Trouble in Little China," "Serenity," "Ever After," and there are several others which I'll excise for space considerations. Among my favorite books

are several by Cherryh (the *Chanur* Saga, *Downbelow Station*, the *Faded Sun* books, the *Fortress* books), the *Dune* books by Frank Herbert, the *Rifters* books by Peter Watts, George R.R. Martin's *A Song of Ice and Fire* series, works by Greg Benford (*The Stars in Shroud*, in particular), anything by Harlan Ellison, *Moon of Three Rings* by André Norton, *The Stars My Destination* by Alfred Bester, *Katherine* by Anya Seton, the collections of P.J. O'Rourke, *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas* by Hunter S. Thompson, *Danse Macabre* by Stephen King (nonfiction), and many, many more. Thanks to Carol for providing a list of her favorite comics. I wish libraries would accept comics as part of their holdings so all of us could have access to them, especially the ones no longer on sale.

Ah, so you like the Republican Party Reptile too?



The Louisville libraries do have graphic novels, if not comics. Comics would tend, I think, to have very short shelf lives in a library. I've never read any of the graphics so I can't speak as to their quality. I don't suppose they can be worse than a lot of things marketed to adults.

— LTM

Robert Kennedy reports he had "a Basil Cell Carcinoma" removed from his person. Did you perhaps mean "basal"?

On *Alexiad* Feb. 2006:

Well, I missed the deadline again . . .

Along with Lisa, I suspect, I'm wondering if this will be the year we finally get another Triple Crown winner in horse racing. It's been far too long.

The harness crowd had to wait 32 years. I'm not holding my breath, though Brother Derek looks promising. So also does First Samurai.

— LTM

Winter was not so bad here, so my heating bills (natural gas) weren't too awful. I have two portable and one window A/C all set to go for the summer; they all worked well last year. The window unit had some icing, however, due to the fact it was in my teenage son's room and he just couldn't seem to remember that 68 was the max low temp allowed by Mom. Oi.

Joe's comment on watching "Looney Tunes

Golden Collection #3": So what have you got against Whoopi Goldberg? And isn't there a fast forward button on your remote?

I suppose you will be reporting on the deaths of Octavia E. Butler, David Feintuch and other notables in the April ish, which will probably arrive in the mail the same day I send this out. That's how my luck runs. I'm actively looking for Butler's books now, since I've read only the *Xenogenesis* books (*Dawn*, *Adulthood Rites*, *Imago*). I found *Survivor*, *Parable of the Talents*, and *Fledgling* (her most recent novel) in my local library system. I'd like to read all of her novels, and find it sad that it won't be too difficult, as there were only a dozen of them.

I read only one Feintuch book, *The Still*, and didn't care much for it. There's a reason I call his best-known character "Whiny Nick" Seafort.

The announcement of the death of Kuwait's ruler was very nicely done, Joe. If one is going to keep tabs on what monarchies are doing, it's only right that one makes announcements in the proper form, according to the customs of the country in question (and its spiritual preferences, if they exist).

I agree that the human mistake of anthropomorphizing animals is problematic, and would add that it's foolish as well. I've learned a lot about how to live with my dogs from watching Cesar Millan work with humans and their canine companions on "The Dog Whisperer" TV show. One could wish for a similar show for cats. One could also expect miracles on a daily basis and get the same result.

Lately, when reading the book reviews in *Alexiad*, I notice I've been reading them as fast as possible, so as not to get too interested in their subject matter and — gasp!! — add any of them to my to-read list, which expands like Pinocchio's nose when he lies, if he lied every 30 seconds for three days straight. Oi. But the review of *American Taboo: A Murder in the Peace Corps* snagged my attention, and so I will likely seek out a copy. What an awful thing, and sadly, the kind of thing that happens all too often.

Re: natter between Joe and Brad Foster about feeding their cats. Joe, I think you need to put the cats in another room while you're preparing their bowls. Your felines sound completely in charge of your house. Of course, if they've brainwashed you into thinking this is a good thing, then nothing I say will change your mind. <g>

How dare you imply the cats are spoiled? The facts that they eat out of china and their food costs thirty dollars a bag are completely irrelevant.

— LTM

Brad's illo on p. 18 would make a lovely set of earrings; wish I had the skills and materials to make them.

Milt Stevens apparently missed the caveat Joe appended to that list of loccers in *Alexiad*; it

was every ish since Joe and Lisa started pubbing locs.

Re: Sheryl Birkhead's going off chocolate, Joe, those were enabling comments you made, you bad man.

Thank you.

— JTM

Paul Gadzikowski, would you please send me some cartoons to publish in my fanzine? Is there something else I should do besides ask nicely? Though he can be a pain in the ass sometimes, I'm not ready to sacrifice my only son . . .

From: **Alexis A. Gilliland** April 13, 2006  
4030 8<sup>th</sup> Street South, Arlington, VA  
22204-1552 USA

Thanks for *Alexiad* #5.2.

Marty Helgesen thanks me for making my position clear. I regret that no amount of clarity on my part is likely to alter the fact that we are in disagreement about the axioms on which the logic that informs our several argument is based. For Marty the Gospels are a given, the word of God which is not to be doubted. For me, the Gospels are a subset of texts, which were selected by the leaders of the Church from the much larger set (think theological fan fiction) that was then available, and the basis for that selection was Churchly utility.

Currently in the news is the recently available "Gospel of Judas," which appears to be a Coptic translation of an earlier text that is heavily impugated with Gnostic theology. Back in the day — the second century CE — Bishop Irenaus of Lyons denounced the gospel of Judas as a fiction, and yet, and yet . . . suppose that Judas had indeed written down his eyewitness account of what happened? His apologia would probably not have included any testimony to the effect that "the devil made me do it," and by setting down his conversations with Jesus, it seems likely that that his main defence for betraying his master would be that he was obeying his master's orders.

The Israelites had a long tradition of false prophets, men who sincerely believed that they were the Messiah, only to be exposed as false when their promises were put to the test. From the point of view of the early Church, which had a vested interest in the divinity of Jesus, such testimony would infer that Jesus could have been just another false prophet, and since the Jewish street treated him as such at the time of his crucifixion, that inference would have had "street credibility" as they say.

The truth or falsity of this hypothetical Gospel of Judas would not be at issue, because the Iscariot's testimony would be worse than useless, it would be a stake through the heart of the new Church they were attempting to raise.

Over Easter weekend I was thinking about the Gospel of Judas, the man who had been, up to the point of betraying his master, the alpha apostle, the first among equals, the individual upon whom Jesus mainly depended. Now, given that Judas did what he did, would he have set

down an apologia, a justification for his actions, saying in effect "I was only obeying orders" like some petty war criminal? Maybe, maybe not. Given that God knew what he had done and why, to what court of opinion would he have been appealing? It is not unreasonable to suppose that Judas might have been following the express wishes of Jesus when he betrayed his master to the Romans — the theory set forth in the Gospel of Judas — and yet Judas was surely mindful of the Jewish tradition of false Messiahs. Which means that he must have suspected his master was crazy, but even as he allowed his doubts to be overridden, Judas was preparing plan B, so that in the absence of the highly anticipated divine intervention, his beloved Jesus would not have died in vain.



In *Saint Joan* one of Shaw's bishops defines a miracle as an event that inspires faith, the mechanics of the event being less important than the faith which is inspired, as in the use of phenolphthalein to turn water into wine. What was this plan B? If God would not provide the looked for miracle, then Judas would. From the bible we learn that when the women went to the tomb, the body of Jesus was missing, with only his shroud remaining — an interesting detail, since if some human agency was going to take the body, they would naturally have taken it wrappings and all. We also learn that Judas used the 30 pieces of silver to buy a potter's field, a worthless piece of real estate full of pits from which clay had been dug. What for? Well, if one had a body that one needed to dispose of, that potter's field would be the natural place to bury it. Plan B, part one, take the body of Jesus, before the women come for it, leaving the shroud to suggest a resurrection. Plan B, part two, bury the body in the potter's field so it doesn't turn up in evidence. At which point Judas's work was done. Having provided the hoped for miracle of resurrection, he hanged himself, and was buried in the same potter's field as his master.

No apology, no self-justification was necessary, and I don't believe he bothered to set one down. Indeed, Judas had given his fellow apostles the impetus they needed to take the word of Jesus to the world, and explaining how he'd done it would have only spoiled the miraculous special effect he had produced. Christianity — the major world faith, that, thanks to Judas, came to believe in a false Messiah — certainly qualifies as a miracle. Or, given that God works in mysterious ways,

maybe the Messiah of Judas wasn't so false after all.

I was going to read the Gospel of Judas but I looked at **Monty Python's Life of Brian**, which I have on DVD, and I realized I didn't need to:

"...Obadiah, his servants. There shall, in that time, be rumours of things going astray, erm, and there shall be a great confusion as to where things really are, and nobody will really know where lieth those little things wi— with the sort of raffia work base that has an attachment. At this time, a friend shall lose his friend's hammer and the young shall not know where lieth the things possessed by their fathers that their fathers put there only just the night before, about eight o'clock. Yea, it is written in the book of Cyril that, in that time, shall the third one..."

— JTM & Python

From: **Joy V. Smith** April 18, 2006  
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So many books, so little time. Thank heavens for Joseph T. Major! Two interesting tidbits in your review of *Learning the World* was that it had a blogger and a ship called *But the Sky, My Lady! The Sky!*. (I enjoy ideas that hadn't occurred to me; and I think I've read too many stories with ships, etc. called Asimov, Heinlein, etc.) I'm sorry to hear that the ending was a cliché.

I hadn't heard of *Bradbury Speaks: Too Soon from the Cave, Too Far from the Stars*. (I love good titles too.) I wasn't aware of *On the Ice*, that lyrical and different book about Antarctica, either. The books on that subject certainly seem to be proliferating, and I suspect I wouldn't be aware of most of them if it weren't for *Alexiad*. And those history books about the *Sentry (The Last Sentry)* and WWII double agents (*The Spies Who Never Were*). And scary stories such as *Girl Trouble*: . . . I enjoyed the other reviewers' reviews also.

Interesting background on your computers and wireless card. I don't have a laptop or know what a wireless card is, but I have two printers — one of them new — that don't work and have been sending some of my things to be printed to someone else's computer to be printed, which both of us find tedious.

A wireless card attaches to the motherboard and has an antenna to pick up and transmit signals to a wireless network. As a result, we could take up the cable from the modem to Lisa's computer and no longer worry about tripping, pulling down the modem, pinching the

cable in the bedroom door, and so on.

— JTM

I enjoyed your report of your trip to the Sherlock Holmes symposium; that sounds like a busy time. Johnny Carruthers' Valentine candy report was yummy. It's a good thing that Valentine Day is past, or I'd be out searching for them.

LOCs: Thanks to John Hertz for the Steve Allen quote: "Dr. Livingston, I Presume, . . . What is your full name, Dr. Presume?" Interesting background from Alexis Gilliland about Lee's trip to Egypt on the Theban Mapping Tour. I loved "When we there two years ago we saw three of [the tombs], which I thought was at least one too many, . . ." Thanks to Bob Kennedy for the background on the Tournament of Roses parade. And yes, most of those movies made for the SciFi channel are pretty formulaic, though some of the monsters are well done. Of course, there were lots more interesting and informative LOCs and items of interest.

From: **Trinlay Khadro** April 15, 2006  
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TRINLAY KHADRO

We've been so busy cleaning out Uncle's house since he passed away in February. There were still things of my grandma's and my great-uncle's to go through. And some stuff of ours that had been stored there. I've got so many boxes crammed in the apartment we can hardly move. Uncle had intended to leave the house

to KT but never bothered to actually make the change in his will — so it's being sold and split five ways. My mom, out of state, my sister across the state, and a cousin nearby who could hardly be bothered to see him twice a year for 10 or 15 minutes at a time all get the same share as KT and I . . . who took care of him for seven years . . . and the cousin thinks she's somehow being cheated. My sister expressed shock and amazement (that my share wasn't more) and my parents mention that they'd talked to him about the will at one point but that he'd never bothered to put the changes on paper.

I have to admit that after the medical expenses and so forth I didn't expect anything really to be left. I took care of him because he needed to be taken care of and not for any payment or inheritance, but I'd be dishonest (even if only with myself) if I didn't admit feeling hurt that he had talked about KT and me

keeping the house (and an account to care for it) nearly to the end, but never made sure it would go that way.

Even if you're not-so-old and even if changes seem appropriate at a much later date: make sure your will says exactly what you want it to Right Now.

Also if you have artwork or manuscripts around the house, even if just "student exercises" or "not worth anything", go through all of it and *sign it*. We have portfolios of unsigned watercolors and prints by my uncle, that are wonderful but unsigned. He never realized how special he himself was or how wonderful his work was.

I don't know if he ever sold or published anything — we're also kind of confused as to what to do with some work done by some of HIS students. He taught art in MPS High Schools most of his adult life, and was well loved.

I'll try to have some fresh art to shove into the envelope with the LOC — I have a stack of ideas but little space or time to work in. (Your comment with "Not from James Blish's *A Case of Conscience*" gave me a great one.)

Lisa: How old is the granddaughter? Certainly she wouldn't LEAVE the store with a stranger but calling out "Hey, Joe!" to see if he responded wouldn't have been dangerous and certainly could confirm it was him that she spotted. Though KT once surprised a mentor when she started chatting to a fannish friend in one of the SF lanes at Barnes & Noble.

KT is applying for work at Borders and the Jewish Community Center. Her friend Brad already works at the JCC and reports they have trouble hiring help that doesn't want Christian Holidays off. (They're closed on Jewish Holidays, obviously, but open Easter and Xmas which don't matter much to the majority of their clients.)

When KT & I went to see *King Kong* she appreciated the salute to Harryhausen (dino battle). I barely recall the original, and wonder if they inspired an empathy for Kong as well.

Re: *A Brother's Price*: Once upon a time when I encountered the idea of polyandry (in the context of N. India and Tibet) and quickly realizing that any "Honey Do" list (that I do myself :) ) wouldn't really get done faster. "Honey take out the trash" and still do it myself as they'd each think I meant the other one.

Re: *In High Places*: IMHO I think a lot of people enjoy fiction about things they wouldn't do or enjoy in reality. For example I think "Samurai stories" in particular periods make ripping tales (1550's-1650 and then 1850-1900 . . .) in particular because they're caught in a transforming society and culture. I certainly wouldn't want to BE there. "Interesting times" are great to read or have movies about: but pretty awful to live in, as per the "Chinese curse."

I can see a plain, bored, wealthy woman paying for "an interesting experience" where could be beautiful and the center of a man's attention. Even if it involves heavy lifting and humiliation. Some people "get off" on that.

My mom notes that "Kids these days can't

make change without the machine telling them what to do." Even before calculators I had a rough time learning it . . . though in part I think from pressure from my mom to be able to do it *fast*. I don't think she really realized that raising her voice added a hurdle of anxiety or that I wasn't really old enough to get the concept quickly. I still have a huge math anxiety. I might have been 6 or 7 and it felt like I was supposed to get it immediately.)

Re: *Bradbury Speaks*: Do you suppose that Bradbury's response to things like LA traffic and Disney World were partly being a product of his time? I don't recall the dates for his birth but seem to put him in an age where growing up a car wasn't something everyone had. Traffic — freeways and Disneyland may very well feel futuristic to him, in much the way my cell phone and PDA still sometimes feel like I've stepped into an SF story.

Ray Bradbury was born August 22, 1920 in Waukegan, Illinois.

We've recently seen a Breyer stuffed toy horse. Sounds like you had fun at the Symposium. I wonder if there's a masquerade of costumes at all. It could be a fun period for that.

As your mention of "Donald Duck as a guest of the N. Vietnamese" I find myself greatly disturbed to find myself pondering D. Duck as a menu item. Kung pao sort of thing maybe.

One would think that Disney would have just granted permission in support of the US military. They tend to be rather tight with permission and it usually involves large amounts of cash. (Like the day care center that they sued.)

Most of the patches were designed for free, as part of the Poopy Panda Pals' public duty. Note that Adolf Galland's Mickey Mouse insignia was not exactly licensed.

Digital World: Lisa, yep a low end "kid's camera" could be a good way to start. "Uploading to the PC should have been easier" — maybe you needed to borrow a kid?

At about age 9 I got an Instamatic camera, apparently cheap enough not to be a concern if I destroyed it. I got several serviceable years out of it. The same relative got me a 35mm SLR in 1981 when I graduated High School. It's one of the reasons I'm an artist & photographer now.

Johnny: Have you seen Target's list of "upscale" chocolate? "Choxie". My favorite is the dark chocolate and raspberry truffles 8.55 oz. for about \$6.

IMHO I think the reaction to "singularity" is a variable. A paternal uncle just bought a DVD player about a week ago, apparently the movies they wanted to rent wouldn't be available on tape. Got it out of the box and situated on top of the tv. OK . . . and was immediately lost. KT, however, hooked up the cables, got it set up, and showed him how to use it, with just a glance of the manual. To his generation at his age T.V. in

the home was a dream, to hers all the new tech is just natural and knows how to use it almost intuitively.

Sheryl B — I'm taking your LOC with us when we take Megumi to the vet. We'd never know any of this without your impact.

Alexis — Yep. How about an award to a live artist like Sheryl, Marc, Steve, or Brad!

I googled "Lydia the Tattooed Lady" — the image search was certainly interesting.

You can learn a lot from Lydia.

Robert K — Sorry for your loss, 68 is far too young to go like that (so was my uncle's 74).

Re comments on military women: yeah some may be a problem but what then of Xena, Fan Mulan and Tomoe Gozen . . . and numerous women disguised as men who fought in the American Revolution and Civil Wars?

Does anyone know if Genndy Tartakovsky *Samurai Jack* is on DVD? Many many episodes never aired and IMHO it rocks as much as *Clone Wars*.

As a matter of fact, it is. Amazon has the first three seasons for \$56.79 or @ \$26.99 each.

Brad Foster — glad to hear Duffy is doing fine. Megumi says "Meow?" (How ya' doin'?)

Lloyd — IMHO sometimes IQ is no help when people are temporarily disoriented by something outside their usual experience. The streetcar riders may still be so used to cars and buses that under stress or impatience they forget it's on tracks.

Paper zines can come into bed with me . . . *Murder In the Peace Corps* was a t.v. news magazine story a few years ago. I wonder if the book is an expansion on that.

George P — A local friend has a friend whose "outside cat" has a litter in a box on the porch and somehow has included a bunny in the litter. Did mom bring it in for a snack and the young uns pleaded for a pet? In any case it nurses with and plays with the kittens. I doubt it will be able to be released into the wild as it is NOT afraid of cats or humans.

Rodney — I try to always answer letters, sometimes I misplace them or get overwhelmed by life. Lately "real life" has been very overwhelming.

I'm enjoying CD's of *The Yoshida Brothers*. They play Samisen but only a minority of their pieces are traditional. They foray into Western classical, jazz, and bluegrass.

Me — I finally did finish my sister's solstice socks and got them to her.

Megumi comes when summoned, IF she feels like it.

*Genji* is not as bad as your example (*Dallas*) but there's a constant change in Lady Friends and regular catastrophes to keep the plot hopping (possession by fox, illness, deaths, random babies . . .). Of note "Genji" the videogame has nothing to do with the novel outside of having a hunky hero named "Genji".

We recently went to see *Ice Age II*; very

cute. "Skrat rocks" according to KT. Also have you read about the squirrel rat found in Laos formerly believed to be long extinct? So when are they going to find Bigfoot or a yeti? (A few years ago it was a Pikachu-like rabbit thing in Indonesia.)

Taras — ever since *Buckaroo Banzai* I've desired a pair of tabi boots . . . I see them on eBay and they don't fit my budget.

Joseph — I'm going to have to show your movie trailer to one of KT's friends.

Just wait till "In Cold Lamb" where Truman Capote interviews Dr. Hannibal Lecter: "Look at me, Mr. Capote! Can you say I'm evil!" "Oh, yess . . ."

— JTM

From: **E. B. Frohvet** April 12, 2006  
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Ordinarily, a British prince is awarded a ducal title at some point in his life: Prince Charles is Duke of Cornwall, Prince Andrew is Duke of York, and so forth. It seemed rather odd that when the Queen's youngest son, Prince Edward, got married, he was made only an Earl, and his wife only a Countess. A sign of royal disapproval? No, as it happens: Edward has been made heir to his father's title as Duke of Edinburgh. Go figure.

I did indeed receive my copy of *Heinlein's Children*, and autographed as well, thank you very much (and thanks also to Advent:Publishers). Working on it in stages, and writing a detailed book report. It would seem unfair to expect you to publish a critique of your own book, so perhaps I will send it to Bob Sabella. Of " . . . In science fiction, in general, aliens are observed, not point-of-view characters", I have two words for you: Hal Clement. I wondered if the explication of plots was not perhaps a little too detailed, the book reviewer's phrase "Spoiler Alert" coming to mind. However, *H'sC* is criticism, not review, and intended for a target audience of people who already have a fairly detailed knowledge of the books.

"in general" ≠ "without exception"

So, how would I go about ordering a couple more copies? From you, or go directly to the publisher? Gifts for other fans.

From Advent or from NESFA.

My quick answer to "What is your favorite Valentine candy?" would be "No." Having just re-read the book, I was reminded of a scene in Cherryh's *Merchanter's Luck*. Sandor, having lived a life of solitary poverty, is refitting his ship care of his sometime lover and new crew Allison. In the chandler's shop, he sees an item on the listing and harbors idle dreams of buying chocolate: "He had had chocolate once." (In context, chocolate is a luxury imported from Earth.)

On reading the Lost Causes nominations, I am pleased for Claire Brialey and John Hertz, and embarrassed for nearly everyone else. Especially the King of Shameless and the Crown Prince of Shameless.

Robert Kennedy: I had the same idea, never expecting it to be original: an option of "None of the Above" on election ballots. Not to mention Lost Cause (néé Fan Hugo) ballots. . .

Jeffrey Allan Boman: One admires your confidence about rejection slips. You also write, "I can't see any book using Hitler as entertaining." Katherine Kurtz, *Lammis Night*. "I've rarely heard good words from people who met Harlan [Ellison] in person " Back in my con-going days I met Harlan several times, interviewed him once, got a book signed, and he was always decent to me. In his inimitable way.

Brad W. Foster: Tastes vary. I can respect your view of Chabon's *Summerland* while standing by my own, less positive, review. But it was published, explicitly, as a children's book: "Hyperion Books for Children".

Mike Resnick's problem with his father's Social Security check was generic rather than particular with that agency, to wit, people are instructed to accept whatever the computer says without regard to the facts.

Lloyd Penney: "Is there really that much coffee in the world?" Well, yes. Almost any tropical climate can grow coffee: Africa (generally supposed to be the original source), Indonesia, Hawaii, Jamaica. Should you visit, I would gladly take you to Bun Penny or The Beanery, where they sell bulk coffee from various parts of the world. The blame falls on George III and Lord North, whose insane taxes made coffee the beverage of choice in the US.

George W. Price: It's a matter of historical record that the American military avoided bombing Hiroshima with conventional weapons, as they wanted a "clean" target for assessing the effect of the atomic bomb. Dirigible enthusiasts: They crop up all the time in Bertram Chandler's stories (e.g. *The Anarch Lords*).

Richard Dengrove: My perception, which of course is subject to error, is that Nina Kiriki Hoffman does not fail to plot because she's incapable of it; rather she fails to plot because it's an aspect of writing she just doesn't care about. If anyone knows her, or has a better insight on her writing, I am willing to hear it.

I have not read *The Guns of the South*. However, it raises the interesting speculation: guns, cheap; ammunition, expensive. A paraphrase of the old line about the poison is free, the antidote is going to cost you. (Most historians would probably agree that the so-called "Confederacy" would have been incapable of producing modern 7.62-mm ammo in quantity.)

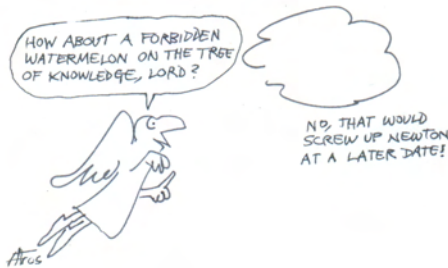
The Rivington men had other means by which to get their way, and Colonels Raines and Gorgas of the Ordnance Department did a little lookin'. It's Turtledove's dictum: Just because they're not as advanced as you are doesn't mean that they're stupid.

— JTM

I do not know the gentleman of the Sherlock Symposium who is from Ellicott City. As I have no interest in Holmes, and presumably he has scant interest in SF, we would have little in common. For postal purposes at least, "Ellicott City" comprises almost the entire northeast corner of Howard County. Everyone's mail, however remote, must be routed through some post office (for SFnal examples see both *Joyleg* and *Way Station*); and up to the 1950's, Ellicott City was the only organized town of any size in the area. I still get junk mail addressed to "Rural Route 16"!

From: **Martin Morse Wooster** Apr. 17, 2006  
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Many thanks for *Alexiad* 26. **Alexis Gilliland** is certainly free to ban anyone from his house that he wants to. But somehow this doesn't seem to be a strong selling point for a science fiction club. WSFA's slogan is: "Join us! You can engage in bitter, pointless fan feuds and then get banned!" No doubt this is an attraction for some people, but as a unique selling proposition, it just ain't got that *je ne sais quoi*.



However, WSFA's recent bans have had a salutary effect on my local club, the Potomac River Science Fiction Society, which split from WSFA in 1975 because we actually wanted to talk about books rather than just party. In 2003, Keith Lynch decided to join us and spent the next two years engaging in a relentless, hard sell, and extremely irritating effort to convince PRSFSians that WSFA was the greatest sf club in America. Since most of us either never were part of WSFA or (like me) had sampled WSFA and didn't like it, his efforts were extremely unconvincing. Two years of hype failed to produce a single fan other than Lynch who would join both clubs. Now that Lynch has lost a fan feud and quit WSFA, he has miraculously quit talking about WSFA at PRSFS meetings. This has made him almost tolerable.

I agree with **E.B. Frohvet** that Seattle faanish fans have captured TAFF. But there are a lot of problems with TAFF. The fund, as philanthropists say, "lacks transparency." Donors can't be certain that their funds will actually be used for the trip. There's never been a convincing explanation of how much money Vijay Bowen "borrowed" from the fund and if

she ever paid any money back. I guess I'll send TAFF my three bucks, and I'll buy reports whenever British fans produce them. (American delegates, of course, can't be bothered to write trip reports.) But I'll let faanish fen raise money for TAFF. Non-faanish fen should give to other worthy causes, such as DUFF.

And then there was Abi Frost. And before that there was how Sam Jeude was treated during her race. A recent posting on Trufen.net was about how air fare from London to the East Coast was down to £200. Is this fund really necessary?

— JTM

**Robert Kennedy** is right that the notion in *Crash* that you can just walk into a California gun shop and walk out with a weapon is a major goof. But I guess the writers of the film couldn't figure out how one of the characters could buy a weapon and use it in the same day and decided to fudge things. The scene seemed plausible to me at the time. I thought *Crash* deserved its win for Best Picture; there was a lot of good acting in the film.

I enjoyed Joe's report on the Sherlock Holmes convention. But he mentions the local BSI Scion Society in Louisville. What sort of activities does this scion society do? Are they enjoyable? I enjoy Holmes of course, but Holmes fandom can get pretty pretentious.

From: **Jason K. Burnett** April 22, 2006  
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Thanks for yet another wonderful issue of *Alexiad*. My favorite bit from this issue was the con report from the Sherlock Holmes/Arthur Conan Doyle Symposium. I've never really done anything with organized Holmes fandom, but I find the concept interesting and may give it a shot at some point in the future. At the very least, I'm going to go down to the basement and go through boxes of books until I find my Holmes. (Almost a year here, and we're still not unpacked. At least we have a basement, so items still in boxes can be banished to the basement and the rest of the house looks much better.)

I've decided to drop out of library school at the end of this semester. I still think I'd enjoy being a librarian, but the process of library school is driving me mad. I think I just don't have the right mindset to be a student anymore — I'm unable to view conducting a data search knowing that nobody actually wants the data and that I'm just doing it to practice the process of searching as anything other than a waste of time. So instead I'm going back to medical records. I had an interview at a local psych clinic earlier this week and have an interview at an ER next week, so hopefully by the time of my next LOC I'll be able to tell you about my new job. (If not, I'll be writing my next LOC from a van down by the river. [*Saturday Night Live*

reference there, for those of you who don't watch TV.]

Since I will soon be able to waste my time myself, rather than paying thousands of dollars a semester for the privilege of having professors waste it for me, I've decided to take up chess again. I've rejoined the US Chess Federation, and this time I'm going to make a serious attempt at learning opening theory. (I've got a pretty good endgame, thanks to time spent working chess problems, but without a good opening I can never *get* to the endgame.) To help me study, I've picked up a really cool travel chess set made by London Chess Centre — it's a clipboard portfolio with a magnetic chess set inside the front cover, so you can clip a magazine into the clipboard and play through a transcribed game on the magnetic board. I've been fascinated with chess ever since I first read *Through the Looking Glass* many years ago, and I'm really looking forward to achieving some level of competency at it.

Best of luck in the coming months, and hopefully I'll have good job news to report to you soon.

Good luck all round. I found I was about a total patzer at chess. My feeling is that there is enough I do well to stop breaking my heart over things I can't.

— JTM

From: **Robert Lichtman** April 22, 2006  
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Many thanks for the April *Alexiad*, in which I found quite interesting your review of Ray Bradbury's book of essays. Some of your comments on it confirm my long-held impression of him as a somehow hollow man. As someone who grew up in Los Angeles and now dislikes going back to it — not that I have many reasons to anymore — I find it downright weird that someone would write an essay lauding its horrible traffic congestion. I left Bradbury's fiction behind early on. His *Martian Chronicles* was among the early science fiction I read as a teenager (before discovering fandom), as was *Fahrenheit 451*. His short story, "The Pedestrian," is one of the most concise and compellingly creepy depictions of urban life I've ever read. I enjoyed his early short story collections: *The Golden Apples of the Sun* and *The Illustrated Man*. (I've never seen *Dark Carnival*, his very earliest.) But after that his cloyingly sweet approach to the language and to storytelling put me off, and I've stayed off. Your concluding paragraph is as good a summation of where he ended up that I've ever seen, and I laud you for it.

What comes to mind as an example of Bradbury's writing strengths is the chapter with the dying old man in *Dandelion Wine*. The hospital is annoyed that he's making too many long distance



calls, so they're going to take out his telephone. He makes one last call, to a former business partner in Mexico City, and asks the man to put the receiver on the window ledge, so he can hear the place for one last time. It's sad and touching. But usually Bradbury's logic (science, continuity, etc.) leaves something to be desired.

In the letter column I was pleased to see that Jeffrey Allan Boman, Joy V. Smith and Marty Helgesen have discovered the "efanzines" fannish newsstand site due to my mentioning it in my last letter. To Boman I would suggest taking it easy and trying out a few fanzines at a time, given that time is of your essence. And yes, Roger was a fan around the same time I entered fandom in the late 1950s. I didn't mention it, but in addition to writing a regular column for me (and scads of poetry for the Coulsons' *Yandro*) he also published at least one issue of a fanzine. It was called *Stymie*. I've only ever seen (and have a copy of) the second issue, and know of no one who has a first issue. Perhaps Roger, like a number of other fans of his era, played a little hoax on us all and there never was a first issue.

E.B. Frohvet: Glad to read that you, like me, feel that Steve Stiles is worthy of a Hugo. I certainly hope he gets one this year. One of the other nominees, Sue Mason (who won last year), has publicly encouraged people to vote for Steve. As for TAFF, while it's true that the last three U.S. winners are all "affiliated with the Corflu crowd" I believe it is a coincidence that they won. If you look at the list of voters, you'll see that their support was clearly widespread since that list is much larger than the entire membership of the "Corflu cult." And as I wrote in my previous letter, the voting for the FAAn awards is also more diverse than just the Corflu crowd. Since you're not on-line you wouldn't know, but I've seen many references to the voting now going on at a wide variety of locations.

Rodney Leighton: Thanks for the information concerning your 2003 GMC half-ton 4x4 truck with its 17 x 8 inch tires. With this knowledge I'm not at all surprised that your set of new tires cost about twice what I paid for a set for my 1998 Toyota Corolla. It's possible that just one of those monster tires weighs more than all four of mine. And given the road (or, rather, non-road) conditions in which you describe yourself driving, you certainly need that kind of tire power to stay afloat. As for your question to me, "Why bother?": Indeed, I won't. We can certainly easily coexist in the pages of Lisa and Joseph's fanzine and in as many others in which we mutually appear. Okay?

Trinlay Khadro: Thanks for passing on your dad's recommendation about getting oil changes at Sam's Club or Costco. One has to be a member of the latter for \$50 a year, and I'm not sure about the other. Using a chain oil change company that offers a substantial discount for pre-purchase of four oil changes at a time, each oil change currently costs around \$27.50. How

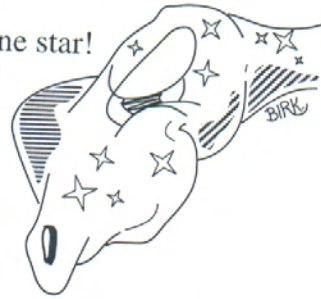
does that compare? Remember that I'm in the San Francisco Bay Area, where the cost of living is fairly high.

Our Sam's Club membership is \$30 a year.

— JTM

From: **Brad W. Foster** April 24, 2006  
P.O. Box 165246, Irving, TX 75016-5246 USA  
[bwfoster@juno.com](mailto:bwfoster@juno.com)  
**Best Fan Artist Hugo Nominee**

I'm a fanzine star!



Greetings Major ones —

Getting into another crazy time of the year, with the first of several weeks of art festivals approaching, so trying to catch up on everything on my desk before the inevitable falling-behind begins once more.

Actually can't complain, need to get some income-producing times again after a thin winter. As a bonus, even been in touch with a couple of people about some freelance jobs that could be both fun and financially rewarding, squeezing them in around the festival trips. Ah, the life of a freelance artist . . . I still wouldn't do anything else!

Just going to drop a quick note here for those *Alexiad* readers who have been following the tale of our Duffy cat. She's still doing well, and it has taken a while for the shaved fur to grow back, but with an interesting final affect. Since they removed so much mass between her shoulder blades, it made them even more prominent. And the hair that has grown back in that area around the actual surgery has all come in white, against her normal deep gray. The final affect now is to give her white angel wings! If that isn't the most gosh-"aw" mighty cute-as-pie thing to have on a cat, I'll just go all icky-poo! (She counteracts the whole "angel" image though by the constant nagging cries for attention for water, food, "play with me", etc etc, so it all equals out in the end.)

Somehow an angelic cat strikes me as the most fiendish deception possible.

— JTM

Finished up a cover for an upcoming Yard Dog Press book, and illustrated a story in an upcoming *Leading Edge* magazine, so looks like this is an up and coming year for me!

From: **Dainis Bisenieks** April 14-19, 2006  
921 S. St. Bernard Street, Philadelphia,  
PA 19143-3310 USA

To correct one of your typos, it was "denouncement" that required to be turned into "dénoument". Rather more of a change.

A "sherlocon", eh? I have *some* interest in the Holmes stories; find some interest in seeing the game of Holmes scholarship played, but like it best in the form of coherent narrative, coherent chain of reasoning, or strikingly off-the-wall conclusions. So it was that I ventured two bits apiece on two volumes of *The Annotated Sherlock Holmes*; being a Watson, not a Holmes, I did not perceive until I got them home that they were not volumes I and II but volumes II and II. (In good, sound condition, with dust jackets both.) Looking through a volume, I found the notes to be mostly of BSI scholarship nature, trying to reconcile the narrative with the calendar, days of the week, phases of the moon, weather; with train routes and schedules; trying to find real persons and places behind their cover names. For this kind of stuff in its raw form I do not give a hoot, though I have found it amusing to read Baring-Gould's "biography" of Holmes. I am adding to my stock of knowledge only this, that the deerstalker originated with an illustrator, who portrayed Holmes with it where informal wear was appropriate or a soft cap actually mentioned by the author.

I would be perfectly happy to let these go to *Alexiad* readers in the U.S. who will reimburse media mail postage + 25¢, rounded up to the next dollar and paid by preference with worn singles within a sheet of paper, concealment enough: to be paid on receipt of the book. I will wait a couple weeks, say until the end of June, to give all a chance, *except* that the first person who reports having vol. I only will get v. II straightway and complete the set. This would give me a peculiar pleasure . . .

This is a real bargain; the cheapest price I could find for it on Abebooks was \$8.43 + postage and handling.

Books being many and life short, I am not reading *Bridge of the Separator*, passing through my hands on the way to the Eastern Hemisphere. (I get pass-along de-selected review copies.) But I imagine that the author is perfectly aware (as are his readers) that to choose the winning side because it looks like the winning side is not good religion. E. R. Eddison, an admirer of *proud* fatalism, wrote a long preface to his translation of *Egil's Saga*. He has in it a story about adherents of different faiths facing apocalyptic defeat. The Christian priest wondered whether he could still cut a deal; the Norseman said "I fight with Odin." G. K. Chesterton in "The Ballad of the White Horse" presents the contrary view. The pagan Danes are sustained only by the continuance of victory. Alfred, disguised as a minstrel in their camp, declares on behalf of Christianity:

You are more tired of victory,  
Than we are tired of shame.

That though you hunt the Christian man  
Like a hare in the hill-side  
The hare has still more heart to run  
Than you have heart to ride.

The voice Alfred had heard told him:

I tell you naught for your comfort,  
Yea, naught for your desire,  
Save that the sky grows darker yet  
And the sea rises higher.

There seems to be a lot of winning-side religion around. Human, all too human. Is not the Christianity of the *Left Behind* books a winning-side religion? And is Islam *intrinsically* a winning-side religion?

Where are we if *throwing away advantage* is not a human possibility?

And in the end Rhavas went to  
the ice, for he had no  
Hekatontarch Oatesas to say to  
him, "I'm afraid you'll regret it,  
most holy sir."

Jeffrey Boman: What Tolkien wrote in successive drafts is known, and certain lapses have been fixed, as well as the variants introduced into FR when the printers reset it without telling anyone. Except for the half dozen or so obvious misprints like "Elrond and Halfelven", that was not *bad*: and for further errors in reprints that he could not possibly be bothered to proofread (Ballantine 1965) the publishers are wholly to blame. A number of petty misprints survived through several editions of *The Hobbit*. The 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Edition was a new setting of type that followed the previous edition line for line, page for page — and *all* the misprints were reproduced! Has any edition more recent than *The Annotated Hobbit* (1988) ever fixed the lapse in Chapter 12, where Smaug looked "... dark, with scarcely a snore more than a whiff of unseen steam" where "... snore or more ..." would restore the balance of the phrasing? It's one of those things where you should not care what the manuscript says.

I thought that "Elrond and Halfelven" was just the sort of garble that would spring up over the years. After all, no one in I-sildurpolis ever bothered with the affairs of the barbarous north, and the Protovestiarious Denethor would have been quite pleased to continue affirming that the Basileus of Gondor would return someday, just not in the person of this Varangian named Thorongil, or whatever. So the odd "and" could easily slip in during a recopying of a manuscript.

In the meantime, I have turned my attention to the new edition of *Good Omens*, where an

invented word for Ms. Device's surveying instrument, viz., thauodalite, has become a common or garden thedolite. My old copy just so happened to be a Corgi pb, which has more typos than this — but a different set.

The word thedolite also occurs and is clearly correct in "strage theodolite"; but when the thing is seen from Ms. Device's point of view, the invented word appears.

Publishers prefer their old mumpsimus. "One cat is both necessary and sufficient." Thisby remains kittenish, and I guess I'd rather have it that way than otherwise, even if one's feet are sometimes treated as a prey species. She is intensely curious about human activity and must sometimes be kept out of a room. High places have their fascination, as do things that could be pushed over the edge of a table. She does not by any sound or gesture solicit breakfast but quietly waits, *on* my bed to be sure. If she can settle down to rest (not necessarily sinking into sleep) before I go up to the bedroom, she will remain in that spot and not visit me until dawn; otherwise she will follow me up to the bedroom. There is room for us both.

The vividness of dreams has just been demonstrated as I viewed several dozen fairly large drawings, abstract designs in color, which I viewed critically and found not to my taste. A detail: a number of them were protected by plastic film; and a signature appeared on several — which I actually remembered: it was a phonologically possible but uncouth name for a Latvian. I liked much better an abstract sculpture painted in variegated colors, with a sequence of nesting parts. And then I woke up: the cat had arrived.

But the color and detail as I dreamed were wondrous. I've had dreams of books, both closed and open, but nary a word can I remember afterward.

And the night after I entered this letter I had a dream about being at a SF con where our principal concern was not having dinner with Ursula LeGuin. Instead we went to see an opera which very speedily started showing on their repeater TV screens a collection of movie posters with numbers in their titles; first movies with "one", then "two" and so on.

— JTM

Enough; this is a subject on which one should not run on.

Marek sent a letter with a picture of Stanislaw Lem's funeral service. Everyone, he tells me, was very still; only a priest spoke briefly. Marek had followed Lem's work from the first, acquiring a complete set of first editions. I remarked, in reply, that he and his countrymen were fortunate in having a writer whose work was at right angles to what a censor could lean on. How different the fate of those who wanted to tell the direct truth about the times they lived in. I had in mind the Russian (and Jewish) Vassily Grossman, whose *Life and*

*Fate* long remained unpublishable and barely escaped destruction. He could not help noting the parallel between Stalinism and Hitlerism.

From: **John Hertz** April 25, 2006  
236 S. Coronado Street, No. 409, Los Angeles, CA 90057-1456 USA  
**Best Fan Writer Hugo Nominee**

Congrats on the appearance of *Heinlein's Children*.

Thanks for your Saros report.

You're welcome.

— JTM

Here in democracy there is a relatively pedestrian meaning to "I had to get a vision." At LosCon XXXII there seemed to be plenty of people attending the Anticipation party but I didn't count.

Robert Conquest also has written some good s.f. poetry, a rare feat.

From: **George W. Price** April 30, 2006  
P.O. Box A3228, Chicago, IL 60690-3228 USA  
[grgpric@aol.com](mailto:grgpric@aol.com)

April 2006 *Alexiad*:

In the last issue I mentioned *Lightning in the Night*, a 1940 novel which warned what might happen if the U.S. did not soon join the war against the Nazis. After writing those comments from memory, I decided to re-read the story. I went online to Alibris and bought a used copy of the 1979 hardcover edition. (It originally appeared only as a serial in *Liberty* magazine.) I discovered several things I had forgotten, or had remembered wrong.

The author was Fred Allhoff, whom I have never heard of apart from this story. He was not one of the science fiction regulars of that day, and is not in the Tuck or Day indexes (at least not under that name).

He wrote a serial published in *Liberty* Magazine titled "I Am the Law" about a law-school professor tackling crime; it was turned into a movie with Edward G. Robinson as the professor.  
<http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0030254/>

The book's jacket and chapter-head illustrations look familiar, so I believe they were taken from the magazine serial.

I was wrong about the peace conference being in Pittsburgh. It was in Cincinnati.

I also said that the novel "does not recognize the gigantic logistical difficulties of mounting huge invasions across the oceans." Allhoff made it more reasonable than I remembered — when Britain surrendered, the Germans got bases in the West Indies, Central America, and Newfoundland. (But the bulk of Canada declared its independence from the surrendered British Empire.) Mexico also helps the Nazis — shades of the Zimmerman letter!

One cute touch that I had not remembered at

all is that after Hitler defeats Britain — but before tackling the U.S. he double-crosses the Fascists, seizes control of Italy, and exiles Mussolini to the island of Corvo in the Azores.

And when Hitler “commits suicide” at the end, it is implied that it wasn’t really suicide — his top generals got rid of him because he fanatically refused to make peace even after the American atomic bomb had been revealed.

\* \* \* \* \*

In the February *Alexiad* I reviewed Harry Harrison’s “Stars & Stripes” trilogy, based on the Trent incident in our Civil War. Comes now *1862*, a new Ballantine paperback by Robert Conroy. This is alternate history based on — you guessed it — the *Trent* incident in our Civil War. It starts out like “Stars & Stripes” in that Britain sides with the Confederacy and goes to war with the Union. But the war is conducted very differently indeed. (I saw nothing in *1862* to indicate that Conroy was trying to refute Harrison, or had even read him.)

And Harry Turtledove had never read Harrison’s *A Rebel In Time* (1989) when he wrote *The Guns of the South* (1992), both featuring time travelers who provide the Confederacy with automatic weaponry. Except Harrison had a time-traveler so dumb he had only read one book about the Civil War, while the AWB had a whole library, until a good-time girl pinched one.

Conroy’s vision is much more modest than Harrison’s, and much more likely. Where Harrison has Union forces liberating Ireland and successfully invading England, Conroy is content to have Grant invade Canada and occupy southern Ontario. Conroy also has a British army join the Confederates in attacking Pennsylvania and Washington, with little success.

Both Harrison and Conroy have the Union raising units of Irish emigrants eager to fight against the British. Conroy also emphasizes that the British government — and even more strongly, the British people — disapprove of slavery. This seriously undermines the British-Confederate alliance.

On the whole, Conroy is far more plausible, but Harrison is a much better story-teller.

Not only is Conroy a pedestrian writer, he puts modernisms in the mouths of his historical characters. He has Lord Palmerston speak of a “window of opportunity” — a term that I think NASA invented; another character says “My take on it,” meaning his opinion of it.

Conroy also says Lake Michigan when he means Lake Huron. I cringe to think of how many editors must have not noticed that. Is it too much to expect everyone to know that Detroit is at the foot of Lake Huron, not Lake Michigan? Or at least to be aware of one’s ignorance and reach for a map to check it out?

Robert Conroy had another book a few years ago: *1901*, also alternate history, about a war between the U.S.A. and Wilhelmine Germany.

I read it, but don’t recall much about it. Eminently forgettable.

\* \* \* \* \*

Joe’s review of Turtledove’s *In High Places* confirms something that I had suspected. He notes that it is a “YA” (Young Adult) book. When I read the first two of Turtledove’s “Crosstime Traffic” stories, in paperback, it struck me that they must have been intended as juveniles, because the writing was much simpler than in Turtledove’s other works, and with far less sex (as well as having youngsters as the principal viewpoint characters). Like Heinlein’s juveniles when they were reprinted as mass-market paperbacks, the covers and blurbs never mentioned that they had been written as juveniles.

\* \* \* \* \*

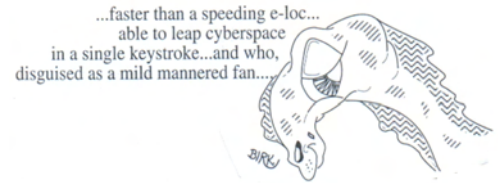
Also in the review of *In High Places*, Joe mentions the Gorean kajira slave girls. Quite a few years ago, when I was still a carefree bachelor in my forties, I was at a party thrown by a good-looking young lady of about twenty-five. I had known her casually for some time, but had never asked her out, partly because of the age difference. When I saw some Gor books on her “to be read” shelf, I warned her that she probably wouldn’t like them, because Norman thought women wanted to be sexually enslaved. She replied, “Yes, I know. That’s what I like about them.” I said no more, but her status as a possible girlfriend instantly changed from “unlikely” to “no way in hell!” Yes, there really are women who like Norman’s ideas. He’s welcome to them — I want to steer way clear of whatever it is that’s in their heads.

If you search on the Web you will find a number of kajira fan fiction stories. I remember a discussion of this in *Science Fiction Review* back in the seventies where it was noted that women who had submissive fantasies could buy Norman’s books at regular bookstores, instead of having to go to those little hole-in-the-wall places filled with men wearing stained overcoats. And now, of course, there’s all the news about these “Kaotians” in Britain.

\* \* \* \* \*

Taras Wolansky, commenting on Alexis Gilliland, notes that “in the U.S., ‘red’ states have higher birth rates than ‘blue’ states. Traditional religious and cultural views make the difference; . . . the equilibrium of genes favoring skepticism versus those for belief is shifting in the direction of belief.” James Taranto, who writes for the *Wall Street Journal* online, refers to what he calls “the Roe Effect.” This is that those who approve of abortion will on average have more abortions than those who disapprove (which seems obvious enough), and will therefore have fewer children. In the long run, then, the pro-lifers will outbreed the pro-choicers. This may or may not be true; the logic is not airtight. For one thing, it is possible

— if not entirely likely — that an anti-abortion woman will not really have any more children than a pro-choicer; she will just use other methods of birth control (such as abstinence). Which reminds me of the only known contraceptive that is 100% infallible: *noacetol* (clue: pronounce “ace” as in “acetone”).



From: **Sheryl Birkhead** April 2006  
22509 Jonnie Court, Gaithersburg, MD  
20882-3422 USA  
[catsmeouch@yahoo.com](mailto:catsmeouch@yahoo.com)

Uh — guess my scrawl is NOT legible (term is adjuvent), usual (not asuac) rabies, or a fibrosarcoma — if I figure out how to re-tread the ribbon of the little portable typer I bought, I can *hope* to lessen the problem. Yeah — I need to order the “handbook” RealSoonNow.

Sheesh — how did I miss that Schirm won the Rotsler!!! Quite a few fanartists have produced a very respectable body of work yet never once won a Hugo (and many were never even nominated) — *SO* I like the Rotsler Award as acknowledging a body of work an dnot “just” a specific year.

Octavia Butler — another one gone way too soon.

Oh — Mr. Carruthers — just reading about the Valentine candy . . . sigh — as a vegetarian I *DO* miss marshmallows (they do exist in the vegetarian style — but only at specific health food chains — and I can’t recall seeing ANY vegetarian marshmallow & chocolates . . .

It’s a sad commentary (to me) when I can say the only pro category for the Hugo nominees in which I’ve “seen/read” all the nominees is the Long Dramatic form — now to work on actually reading.

Condolences to Robert Kennedy on the loss of his brother.

Have you seen the TV ad for *Brokeback Mountain* that says — best film of the year — uh — I read to see if there are any caveats, because as far as I know, Oscarwise it was *Capote*.

*Crash*, actually. But I bought *Capote* and liked it, the movie recreated the era so well (i.e., they actually \*GHASP\* showed Truman Capote smoking) and it illustrated the moral problems. Particularly the scene where Perry Smith tells Capote about the murder of the Clutters. Yes, Capote can say Smith is evil — but he can also say he’s like Capote himself.

—JTM

Around here the only vaccination for dogs and cats REQUIRED BY LAW is rabies — the rest are “up for grabs”. Dogs have their own set of problems with the annual shots and AAHA went to a three-year cycle — as the AAFP for cats some years ago.

Hi Milt (Stevens) — I sent some Space Cadet fillos to *SOMEONE* then emailed you (I think) to see if I could help — but never heard back and am not all *that* cyber-savvy so I’ve not been back.

(My brother — in Bardstown, Kentucky — says they’ve had to put on the AK — hot stuff.)

Rodney — I have the *Duke’s Ballad* — which Lyn autographed — and I see your name on the flyleaf. Was this the third book?

Another con I’ve wondered about is Bouchercon — anyone able to write a report (have NO idea when it’s held).

I think I missed the Breeder’s Cup — the harbinger of the Derby soon to come.

I do apologize for the scrawl — but it doesn’t stop me!

From: **Rodney Leighton** April 19, 2006  
11 Branch Road, R. R. #3,  
Tatmagouche, Nova Scotia B0K 1V0  
CANADA

April 19. Good God it’s raining hard!

Work was supposed to start Monday. God decided to wash this portion of the world. Don’t know when it will start now.

Yesterday, after a long vacation . . . Good Friday; Saturday; Sunday; Easter Monday the mail carrier came around yesterday. Brought some junk mail; a letter from my aunt; a new health card (good for 4 years; I didn’t use the other one; hopefully I won’t need this one either); power bill; VISA statement and the latest *Alexiad*. Late last month I went to the bank to make a payment on the VISA; found a long line-up for the tellers; thought I could likely do it at the machine and did and bragged to a couple of people how easy it was. Statement came yesterday and I noticed that said payment had not gone through. Well, hell. So I went in to the bank and got those young ladies I always go to to straighten that out. Said: “I’m not messing with that machine no more.” They laughed at me.

Condolences to Trinlay and Bob Kennedy and anyone else who has lost a loved one. I would offer Trinlay half of this house if it wasn’t so far away and she would do some of this infernal cleaning. I’ve been trying to force myself to do some. Recently I discovered a magazine from 2002 buried under some stuff in the living room. On the other hand, she is one of those silly folks who believe that cats should be allowed to go anywhere they please and lick your body and I believe that cats should stay where they belong, on the floor, outdoors at night, never on a bed or table, and no kissing. Stop that booing! And, yeah, I know that Trinlay believes if she believed that she would be dead.

I used to pet cats and hold them; never did believe in letting them go wherever they wanted. I went to visit sister recently. She has 2 of the things. I kind of like one; can’t get near him; he

doesn’t anything to do with anyone except sister. Other one is an ugly yellow thing; he came out and crawled all over her and later decided he was going to get in my lap. I patted him a bit but quickly put him down. Don’t know whether that is due to a dislike of the cat; a desire not to have his long yellow hairs all over me or whether it has to do with not having a close relationship with a cat for 9 years and none in the house for 15 or so years. Went to visit a neighbour recently; her cat came around, outdoors, and wanted to be petted. I squatted down and rubbed her some. That’s the place for cats.

April 21. I hate Fridays!

I got a letter from Steve George which said, in part: “I think you should do a zine. Type it up and I will put it on the net.” Hmnn. Do I have any interest in having a zine on the infernal Internet? Not much. Would it do me any good? Doubtful. Do I want to do a zine. Not much. So I declined. But then some things occurred. Like . . . I used to have nights when I had to go sleep in the easy chair; hasn’t bothered me much for a number of years but I have been having this problem some the past few weeks. Most times it is simply a matter of going out, wrapping up in a blanket and going to sleep. Sometimes weird things happen. One night I got settled and suddenly this very weird feeling appeared in my chest; tight feeling with some other hard to describe aspects; started in the center of my chest and spread in all directions. I got a big smile on my face, thinking: “Oh boy, I’m gonna get out of this f---ing world.” Feeling stopped immediately and went away; everything went away, I went to sleep. Ah, hell. Various crap happened throughout the night; about the fifth time I woke up, around 5, I got up. First thought was: “Good Christ, even my teeth hurt.” Considering that 60% of them are made of plastic, that’s kind of impressive. Shortly after I got up, all that stuff cleared up. “Ah, it’s just God f---ing with me again.”

At the risk of sounding like one of those d----d Victorian prudes I have elided some of Rodney’s b----y language.

So, I got to wondering if I put that in a zine, sent it to Steve and he put it out in the ether, what would happen. Well, if I had email, no doubt some people would blast me for whining. Or blasphemy. But since the only way to contact me would be by mail, would I hear what anyway had to say about this? Probably not. Is there any sense in putting it out there? Is there any sense in including it in a big long loc and having you publish it if you wish to do so, with or without the nasty language? Ah, it’s a question. Here’s the big one: anyone interested in seeing an ezine by me? Would anyone read it?

It would be no worse than about 90% of blogs. If someone had said ten years ago that The Big Internet Thing would be websites where people wrote in gross detail

about their nothing lives, he’d have been thought to be crazy.

Steve also said: “I couldn’t get past the first chapter of *The Da Vinci Code*. I thought I was reading a comic book.” I battled my way through to the end. It is very intriguing that such a poorly researched, boring book would generate so much response. There’s practically an industry based on the book. And a movie.

And Leigh & Baigent lost their lawsuit. They sued for the wrong thing; should have sued for turning them into heels.

April 22. God, these mini strokes are annoying!

Work is supposed to start on Monday; hopefully it will. Firewood is almost gone; it’s been colder this week than the rest of the month by a considerable degree. NHL playoffs start tonight! Well, they started last night. I even watched the first period of one game. But, nowadays, playoffs, for me, start when the Canadiens start and end when they are knocked out.

Hey, you want to stir up some shit?

Nah, me either. I am curious about something. I believe that DUFF and TAFF contestants are required to promise to write and publish a report of their trip.

I think that Robert Lichtman did. I know Maureen Speller wrote a serialized report, published in segments and printed and mailed by Mark Plummer. I read somewhere that Peter Weston published one. From the U.S. contingent, I know that Ulrika O’Brien wrote at least two parts of a serialized account because I saw them in some fanzine; can’t recall which one. Based on my admittedly limited knowledge, no one else has made any effort to publish a trip report. If that is accurate, why should anyone support these people? Is it just the fannish attitude of letting people do what they wish and not caring that fans tend to not do what they say they will? Or the general populace attitude towards politicians of: ‘well, they are politicians; they make all sorts of promises during an election and break most of them once elected.’

Ah, what the hell: did you hear the report that one TAFF delegate spent his entire TAFF trip in a hotel room doing drugs and screwing a certain female fan?

Ah, that’s enough of that. I guess I will confess that reading in a fanzine . . . something printed off the net and sent me by Steve . . . about Lee Gilliland banning Ted White from their house provided the best laugh I have had in at least a year.

I don’t pay much attention to the Hugo stuff although something strikes me once in a while about it. For example: if *Ansible* and *Emerald City* are semiprozines, whatever they are, why are Langford and Morgan still eligible for the best Fan Writer award? Then I came to Dave Herrington’s picks. Huh. Oh yeah, this is the guy who provides most of the funding for *FOSFAX*. But you know what: this is the way voting should be! He only read three novels and only listed three in his picks; vote for what you know. Is this the only vote Tim ever got? Of

course, if you are restricted to voting for the official nominees, Dave only gets one vote in each of the fan categories he lists. Me too, if I did such things. *Plokta* for Best Fanzine, provided they publish another issue sometime before I die; John Hertz for Best Fan Writer; no, 2 for Artist: Steve Stiles and Brad Foster.

Well, if you don't send letters, anything you get is in response to *Alexiad* and can be published if you so desire. As of today I am thinking of typing up 3 or so pages, or whatever, after each one. However: there is a possibility that I may not have time or energy to type much of anything this summer, especially if work is along way from home and I start staying at the site for 3 or 4 days, coming home for a day and starting all over again, or if work is far enough away that I go at 4:00a.m.; stay on site until evening, then drag my ass home; take off a day occasionally.

But I don't know for sure.

That U.K. female I was thinking of is named Sue Jones, I believe; zine is called *Tortoise*, or something like that.

Ah, brakes should be warranty. Foolish old bugger! Brake pad warranty is only good for 30,000 km. Jeeze. So, I went in. Got an oil change and lube job while I was at it. Couple of universal joints. Those were covered by warranty. Expecting to spend a couple of hours and \$100 or so, I escaped after 5 hours and \$512. Factor in the gas to get there and various other things purchased on the VISA that day and, well, it just about matched the \$700 income tax refund which showed up a week or so later. What's the point?

Like a harmonic synchronizer.

That sounds like some kind of crystal chakra gizmo. And it cost \$275. It's a part on Lisa's car, and I had to have one put on recently.

Perhaps I should mention that I believe Marty Cantor published a report of his DUFF trip as did Leah & Dick Smith.

Went to Truro for the truck work. Found a bit of money. Took some books to the bitty secondhand book store I go to there. Owner has cancer on the brain. Her assistant is trying to carry on, in a somewhat restricted manner. I said; "How's she doing." "Not well; not responding to treatment." But she took all the books I took except one. I found an Andrew Greeley novel I had never read and a Nero Wolfe (by Goldsborough) I had not read. Also picked up a novel by Ed Gorman off the 50¢ rack. Opened it and found it was dedicated to Dean Koontz. Huh. Found out why when I read it. Good book. Can't remember the title. Gave it to the neighbour.

Ain't no COSTCO anywhere around here. I don't even know what SAM'S CLUB is. Warranty is just about gone on the truck; one more trip to the dealership and then I start getting local oil changes or maybe doing it myself.

Sam's Club is a warehouse store just like Costco. Thus, in *FoxTrot*,

the warehouse store where Roger Fox goes wild buying stuff is "CostClub".

Speaking of *FoxTrot*, Bill Amend's done it again: On Sunday, May 21 he had little Jason Fox doing a tap-dance for the school talent show. But one of the judges happened to know Morse code and could tell that Jason's long & short taps spelled out "Some day I will rule you all".

Trinlay: if Elric was fond of your uncle, I would suspect that your dream was him telling you he would soon be seeing uncle again and was delighted at the prospect. Which presupposes ferrets go to Heaven or else, well, we won't go there.

Hey, do you suppose ADVENT would be interested in novels set on the high seas and in Europe long ago, with a captain of one of the last sailing ships who happens to be a necromancer who deals with werewolves, shape changers, time travellers, ghosts and various such critters? Author lives in the U.K. and has an agent; she has written 3 novels. And a bunch of short stories. The short stories I read were quite good. Agent can't find a publisher for the novels.

Well, I finished *The Dark Tower* series by Stephen King. That's the ultimate in fanfic. A relatively important character in the final 2 volumes is . . . Stephen King. The accident he had when the van ran into him is turned into an integral part of the plot: Stephen King is supposed to die in that accident; the main characters believe they have to save him; one of them is killed; King is only smashed up. It was a fairly interesting series. All his writing circled around that he claims; various characters from other books appear; one guy from *Salem's Lot* makes an extended appearance. And somewhere in there he mentions writing a book about a marathon under the Bachman name; that one is boring, I read part of it and put it aside, have read tons of stuff since. Reading at *From a Buick 8*. That one is boring as well. Well, that should be enough. I have to go check on some things, buy some cigars, maybe some meat, see how long it will take to get camping gear if I order some.

And I thought these days only Clive Cussler did that!

Good luck with sales of the book. Wouldn't interest me even if I could afford it. But hopefully it will sell lots of copies. Maybe it will win a HUGO next year.

Yet some more, on April 30; should be at work.

Sometime this week I received a package of 5 fanzines. Four of these were issues of *Banana Wings* published in 2005. I have enjoyed reading most of them. Got some portion . . . most of it, actually . . . the last one to go. Seems smaller than I recall although I seem to think it may have been about that size when it was quarterly before and I was on their mailing list.

Seems a tad more sercon than it used to be. But that might be due to the lack of boozing tales. I owe them an apology I see. Other than yet another tale by Mark Plummer of wandering around London seeking pubs, I didn't see much reference to drinking at all. And I confess to skipping that article due to total lack of interest; it might not even qualify as a boozing story.

I was quite intrigued by one article, by Tony Keen, I think, which went from pure sercon to purefannish and back again. That's a good trick to pull off in a fanzine; it's way cool in an article. I have started work; took issues with me and spent some time eating sandwiches and reading BW; spent some more time holding a big fat cigar in one hand and a BW in another.

I was amused to find Jason Burnett had named his house after a pro wrestling writer, or at least his pseudonym. I'm intrigued that EBF seems to always beat odds with the U.S. Corflu folks but seems to get along well with the U.K. Corflu folks.

Then again, Alison Scott seemed to be perturbed with him. No doubt she thinks I am also someone who could lock himself into an empty room and start a fan feud. I thought that was quite amusing.

I was also taken with her comment: "I feel that receiving a paper fanzine in the post is a gift, whereas knowing that there is a new online fanzine is an obligation." If she had made that somewhere I could loc I would ask for a further explanation. First half is obvious and I am in complete agreement. Don't quite understand the obligation part. Does she mean she feels obliged to go through the hoops and access a fanzine on the web because she has been informed it is there? Or is it more like: a paper fanzine arrives, one can open the envelope, sit down when and where time and life allows and read it; eline things require a bunch of work to get to and then one has to try to read it on the screen or print it and . . .

Rather intriguing that she prefers paper fanzines. Is she not the queen of superfluous technology?

I guess I will forget the idea of doing an ezine, though. Gonna try to send some sort of response to any paper fanzine which shows up. That should keep me as busy at this machine as I want to be. Not counting letters, of course.

Yes, faneds, send your zine to Rodney!

— JTM

Well, I think I will go eat some peanuts and read another article by Tony Keen. Or maybe one by Claire.

From: **Lloyd Penney** May 9, 2006  
1706-24 Eva Road, Etobicoke, ON M9C  
2B2 CANADA  
[penneys@allstream.net](mailto:penneys@allstream.net)

Thank you for *Alexiad* WN 26. I am a little early for the deadline, but better than late, and I've been doing that a lot. Time to fanac! . . .

Shocking news lately, both about the words

of James Hogan and the death of Octavia Butler. I'd met both at different times, and found both gracious. I guess some opinions should be left in your head instead of on your tongue, and perhaps on your conscious.

Lisa and I had dinner with him when he was GoH at Kubla Khan in Nashville. He seemed perfectly reasonable at the time.

I just got all PR4s for Canadian members of PR4 mailed out, so I am hoping they will act soon in voting for the Hugos. I like Ansible, but I really do think that someone should enjoy the thrill of their first Hugo. I can only imagine that Dave might say "Oh, another one", and carry on with the next issue.

John Hertz is right, we resent the abuse of the sense of wonder because it is a gift, perhaps one that we wish we could receive again. I have plans to increase my SF reading, but I will check my own library, make a list of what books I have of selected authors, and venture forth to fill in the gaps in my collections of those authors who originally gave me that rare gift. I hope they'll give it to me again.

I had hopes of seeing another *Reluctant Famulus*, but alas, I guess I won't receive it. That extra postage keeps a number of paperzines away from me. Fortunately, I have more than enough zines on my plate, but Tom, if you're reading this, I'd love to see a new copy.

Greetings to Robert Kennedy! Yvonne returned early this morning, as I write, from the International Space Development Conference in Los Angeles, and she ran into Robert at the ISDC's tour of the Jet Propulsion Labs in Pasadena. He was an attendee at the ISDC as well.

Hello, Jeff Boman! I predict we'll meet in a lot of places. Any new lohack is welcome, mostly because some of us just keep turning up again and again, and new names mean new perspectives. I think Rene has the word out now about the Montreal bid, but I didn't see much early, and some early questions about the bid were not answered well. Perhaps there was little planned so that those questions couldn't be answered.

Yes, faneds, send your zine to Jeff! (Have I said something like that already?)

Corflu was this past weekend in Toronto, as I write, and I had a great time. Only 26 people were in attendance, so the so-called Corflu Cult were not able to be there for one reason or another. Randy Byers did make it though, as did Yvonne Rowse and Ian Sorensen from the UK.

I am not doing my best job here, but time always seems to be short, in spite of my best efforts to plan and manage it. Or maybe there's just too much to do. Take care, and see you next issue.

It hardly seems fair that there is such a limited allocation of a

mere 86,400 seconds to a day. Some days I need over 200k of seconds, seems like. Particularly for sleeping.

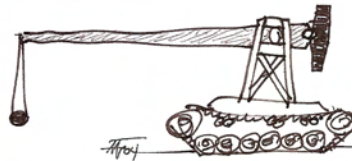
— JTM

From: **Milt Stevens** May 9, 2006  
6325 Keystone Street, Simi Valley, CA  
93063-3834 USA  
[miltstevens@earthlink.net](mailto:miltstevens@earthlink.net)

In *Alexiad* V5#2, Lisa's comments on safety on the streets reminded me of the ending of P. J. Plauger's Hugo winning short story "A Child For All Ages." An elderly priest is advising the three thousand year old child to be careful, because the streets aren't safe anymore. She reflects that they never were safe.

There is an item that has been passed down in my family that reflects the safety of streets in times past. It's a cane that was carried by my great grandmother around London in the 1870s. It is made of a dark wood with a steel tip and a head in the form of a leaping jaguar. The surprise comes when you try to lift it. The head is pure silver and weighs about five pounds. I've been told my great grandmother was under five feet tall, so this isn't something she carried without thinking about it. You hit somebody in the head with that thing, and they wouldn't have to worry about gas prices anymore. Also, the tip could be used for thrusting like a bayonet before rotating and smashing with the head. A nice little weapon and one that would still be perfectly legal even in these more restrictive times.

### ECONOMIC THINK-TANK



Joseph considers the appeal of Howdy Doody. I watched it, because I was a child at the time, and there wasn't much better to do or see for a child on weekday evenings at 5 PM. It didn't particularly interest me, but it was there. There were other things in my childhood that I thought would have more lasting appeal. Donald Duck comics, for instance. Quite a bit of skill and wit went into those comics, and there wasn't much about them that would go out of date. It surprised me when Steve Stiles told me at a worldcon a few years ago that Donald Duck comics were no longer published. He also mentioned showing his own collection of Donald Duck comics to a younger relative under the impression that they would still interest a child. They didn't. The young male looked them over with complete indifference.

There were some published in

the nineties, under licence, by Gladstone Publishing. Don Rosa here in Louisville did some of the art. He wouldn't talk to our club because we hadn't been following the story; guess he didn't want any new readers. Donald Duck and other Disney™ comics are now being done by a firm called Gemstone Publishing. Poop-poop-poop!

On the next page, Joseph mentions buying copies of a semiprozine *Science Fiction Review* dated 1991 and 1992. That's strange. I went back and checked on the semiprozine Hugo category. It was started in 1984. *Science Fiction Review* was nominated for best semiprozine 1984-1987 and disappeared from the ballot permanently after that. I believed it ceased publication about the time of its last nomination. I should probably check my files which contain about a one foot section of *Science Fiction Reviews*. However, that's from three different series of *Science Fiction Reviews*, and I've never bothered to sort them in detail. There are some issue numbers which appear in all three series. Bruce Pelz referred to Dick Geis as a bibliographer's nightmare, and he really was.

In the letter column, Alexis Gilliland mentions Bill Rotsler was awarded a special Hugo in 1996 for his services of L.A. fandom. On the surface of it, people don't get Hugos, special or otherwise, for service to a local fandom. In 1996, Bill Rotsler got the Hugo for best fan artist and the Retro Hugo for best fan artist. Winning a best fan artist for years fifty years apart was a singular accomplishment and one that Bill actually deserved.

Also in the letter column, I mentioned I was about to start work on L.A.con IV Progress Report #4. By now, I'm about to start work on the fifth and final L.A.con progress report. The copy deadline for that one is June 1. However, that isn't all I'm doing for L.A.con. I'm also running the fanzine lounge which will be located in the Huntington Room on the fourth floor of the Anaheim Hilton Hotel. Fan programming will be located in the Palos Verdes Room which is next door. Getting to the fourth floor by escalator is a little strange, because the escalator doesn't run to the third floor. This makes it feel like you should be on the third floor when you are on the fourth floor. I will be opening the fanzine lounge at about 2 PM on Wednesday which is the first day of the con and running until 2 AM the next morning. The room will be in operation 10 AM to 2 AM Thursday-Saturday and 10 AM to whenever on Sunday. I intend the fanzine lounge as a hangout for fanzine fans, and I plan on having more eats and drinks than most fan/fanzine lounges have.

Let me know and I will send you .pdf by email or even a disk with copies of all the issues.

— JTM

From: **Rod E. Smith** May 10, 2006  
730 Cline Street, Frankfort, KY 40601-

1034 USA  
[RodE.Smith@mail.state.ky.us](mailto:RodE.Smith@mail.state.ky.us)

Been listening to a lot of Bluegrass lately for some reason. One of the pieces is what is arguably the first actual Bluegrass recording: "Molly and Tenbrooks" by Bill Monroe, who actually was from the Bluegrass.

The song is about a famous horse race in 1878, between Mollie McCarthy and Ten Broek, who "beat the Memphis Train." This was back when horse races tended to be much longer than today; this one ran 4 miles.

Now, on to *Alexiad* Vol. 5 No. 2.

Got my copy of *Heinlein's Children* recently, direct from the publisher. Haven't started reading it, yet.

On a related note, there's a big argument in a certain blog about whether the hero of the novel *Starship Troopers* died shortly after the last events in the book. Yeah, someone of the same name shows in one of Heinlein's last books, but the author apparently made it clear years before in conversations and letters that the character didn't survive the next drop.

Personally, I think Heinlein had to rush the MS for some reason (there are many things early on which aren't followed up) and may simply have been fed up with the whole endeavor towards the end. Else he would have included something in the novel such as a note that the document had been found in the man's effects.

Considering that he inserted an entire chapter on Rico's experiences at officer training after Scribner's rejected the book, I have my doubts. There's nothing of the sort in *The Robert A. Heinlein Interview* or *Grumbles from the Grave*.

NPR had a nice obit for Octavia Butler, by a reporter who had known her.

Lisa, I recently bought my first camcorder. One was reviewed favorably in a photography magazine I get, and I decided it was time. However, after checking around I actually bought a different model by a different company. So far, I really like my Sony Handycam HDR-HC1. Besides recording moving High-Definition images it also makes 3MP still images to a standard format of camera card. (Not enough for real photography, but okay for casual stuff.)

Being an engineer, I've already bought a better battery and memory card, plus lens filters. :-)

*Misquoting Jesus* looks like something I'd like to read.

I'd heard of *Gullivar Jones*, but not *Journey to Mars*. I wonder how much influence this work might have had — directly or indirectly — on *The Skylark of Space* . . .

Sheryl Birkhead: I saw the same special on Chernobyl. Mutation rates and cancer rates from radiation have long been overestimated, especially for wild creatures. Most forest animals are dead by the time they reach the age at which humans start to breed. Any exposure

rate sufficient to cause a high rate of mutation in their potential offspring by typical breeding age would pretty much kill them outright, and most cancers wouldn't have time to seriously impede them before they bred at least once. So those contaminated areas are actually much safer — in terms of breeding success — for most animals than for us long-lived humans. With the area left to go wild, and considered too dangerous for people, it could become an important nature reserve.

The DMZ in Korea is another one, though there they have land mines.

Speaking of typewriters, my mother has a habit of buying things at yard sales and then expecting me to make them work. ("Mother, it's broken. That's why they sold it." "Well, fix it!" "No, I mean it's *really* broken . . .") Last year she bought an IBM Selectric and expected it to work when she plugged it in. . .

Anyway, after I finally convinced her I couldn't fix it she took it to a repair shop. Not only did she pay to have the thing repaired (fortunately the problems were minor for someone familiar with the details of this sort of device) she bought a better one. She kept that and gave me the repaired one. I like Selectrics, especially the keyboard feel.

I still had to show her what ribbons to buy and how to install them. When she worked in an office (the House Clerk's Office during Kentucky legislative sessions for about three decades) they were already set up and all she had to do was turn them on. I suspect she thought that's all she had to do, ever . . .

Haven't tried the mega M&Ms. I'm more of a dark chocolate man, rather than milk chocolate. (There's an idea . . . dark chocolate M&Ms.)

I presupport most WorldCon bids and vote for every site selection. Yet I still wound up having to buy a membership a few years ago. Not sure what happened, either. So, you're not alone.



The saddest part about *Challenger* is that NASA still hasn't learned the lessons of that disaster and *Columbia*. Their new space exploration plan keeps getting more expensive while capacity is reduced, just because they want to add glitz and flash, sacrificing utility and safety in the process. They have now made all discussion of their plans and the development of some secret, apparently irritated at the

knowledgeable criticisms being sent their way. (Even NASA has a hard time refuting basic physics and chemistry.)

Alexis A. Gilliland: People have been saying the Valley of the Kings (actually two associated valleys) is played out since well before Carter found Tutankhamen. And they keep being wrong, fortunately.

Robert S. Kennedy: Now you know why I call it The Skiffy Channel. That place used to be fun, showing all these old, interesting B, C, D and occasionally even A movies I hadn't seen anywhere else, or at least not since the fun old days of Saturday night horror movies. *The Thing That Wouldn't Die*. *Curse of the Undead*. *The Monolith Monsters*. Now . . .

Joe, your comment to Milt Stevens in re. Great War vets reminds me of the Who lyrics: The old ones have seen two wars.

In another comment to him you mention novels set in Louisville. I have a number of short stories set in and around the city, mostly about were-creatures. (No, not inspired by any local fen. :-)

In a comment to George W. Price you mention the US Navy's airships being wrecked in storms. I've read a bit about airships, and it seems that the biggest advantage the Germans had was knowing that they had to avoid storms through bitter experience, and learning how to spot them at a sufficient distance. With today's satellite weather both would be much easier.

My health is getting better — with occasional setbacks — thanks to a new combination of meds and an alteration to my weekly regimen. I had to miss ConCave this year due to a combination of gut trouble and sheer exhaustion hanging over from 2005. (I told some folks about this at MillienniCon.) Now, though, things are generally looking up. At least until I get my cholesterol tested tomorrow. :-)

Well, you know, I went to a couple of the early ConCaves. Always mean to go back, but things keep on coming up.

— JTM

From: **Henry L. Welch** May 14, 2006  
 1525 16th Avenue, Grafton, WI  
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<http://people.msoe.edu/~welch/tkk.html>

Thanks for the last two *Alexiads*. I apologize for the extended delay in getting this acknowledgement to you.

I, like Janine Stinson, have my candy foibles. I can't stay away from licorice even when it is pretty bad. The only exception to this is cherry-flavored licorice.

In the days when I could still eat ordinary candy, I really liked SweetTarts — except for the pale blue ones.

I had those same gold-lettered pencils as a child. I may still have some of them and my

recollection was that the erasers weren't worth the time

Light rail is certainly a touchy subject. The Milwaukee mayor just shot down tentative approval for an engineering study on electric buses that could leave their overhead lines for short periods of time. Does anyone know how the St. Louis and Portland systems are doing? I'm certain Mark Strickert can give us a heads up on the LA Basin systems.

I'm not certain where Lloyd Penney got his information that I wasn't happy with Ditto. I thought it was a great weekend. It was disappointing that there weren't more people included some who said that they would be attending. Other than that it was successful and I'd host it again under the same circumstances again.

The problem with Ditto is that it is in October, when the homeowners insurance is due, followed by the metro property tax.

— JTM

Jeffrey Allan Bowman should know that the Canadian Rockies aren't going anywhere soon. However, like the common male hairline the glaciers are receding rapidly.

If George W. Price is interested in dirigibles he should check out the extensive article a few years ago in *American Heritage of Invention and Technology*. This is a great magazine and it is the only one I read cover-to-cover.

From: **Colleen R. Cahill** May 14, 2006  
5112 Huron Street, College Park, MD  
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It has been several months and far too long since I have sent a LoC to *Alexiad*. I am mostly blaming some medicine that I have cut back on for my absence, but life has also been very full at work and home. In last few weeks, we have been travelling down and up the East Coast for weddings and family visits and then Dennis has an operation to straighten his deviated septum, so he has been home bound for the last week. Tomorrow he goes to the doctor to get the packing removed and he will then be able to breath through his nose again. This seems like a little thing, but sleeping and eating are more challenging when your nasal passages are not working.

My lack of communication does not mean I have ignored the *Alexiad*: far from it! My sympathies to those who have lost friends and family, congratulations to the good news and my welcome to new *Alexiad* recruits. The topics have been ranging far and wide (as per normal) and all very interesting. I must admit that I don't follow the TV discussions very closely because I rarely watch much: like Joe, I prefer to read. My husband is the TV watcher, although I think that Joe's review of *The Spies Who Never Were* might capture his attention.

If he likes that he should try

the sources who spoke: GARBO (Juan Pujol Garcia, *Operation GARBO*) (1985), ZIGZAG (Eddie Chapman, *The Eddie Chapman Story* (1953)), and TRICYCLE (Dusko Popov, *Spy/Counterspy* (1974)).

— JTM

Congratulations on your new computer and I hope it continues to be a good machine and not give you any trouble. My own box seems to be holding up well after 3 years and I hope to get 3 more out of it before some new software requires I buy another one. If Microsoft keeps pushing back Vista, that is more likely.

Lisa, I hope your new priest is a good match for your church. There are certain professions I always think of being older than me: priests and clerics, doctors, dentists and people with Ph.Ds. Slowly I am adjusting to the new reality that this just ain't so any more. But I still feel like a relative newbie at work even though I just celebrated by 15th year there: there are people who have worked at the Library for over 40 years! No, I don't think I will follow that example!

So far Father Larry seems to be a good match. He's very good with the youths.

— LTM

Joe, I promise with hand on heart to get you some reviews before the end of May. There, I said it, so now I must follow through (I work best under a deadline)



From: **John Purcell** May 16, 2006  
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TX 77845-3926 USA  
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Thank you for shipping the April issue of *Alexiad* my way. Man, you weren't kidding about your zine being book-oriented. I really don't know how you do it, getting all these books read and reviewed in a short period of time. But then again, maybe I do, since I speed read through papers I'm grading and textbooks for classes. When I'm reading for pleasure, though, I slow down to enjoy the story more. I guess that if your zine comes out on a quarterly schedule then your reading quantity makes more sense. If monthly, I'm really impressed.

So bimonthly (which is when we

come out) is somewhere in between? On the other hand, I don't review anywhere near all the books I read.

I remember watching *The Howdy Doody Show* eons ago, and recall not being too impressed by it. Comparing that to cartoons my ten year old son watches on Cartoon Network and Nickelodeon, Howdy Doody looks like doody. My, have times and tastes changed.

Your comment about roping in kids to watching great, classic sf and horror movies is sadly true; kids nowadays are so violence-inured that nothing really scares them it seems. My fifteen year old daughter recently saw one of these modern-day horror movies at the theater with a group of friends, and she said it made her jump only a couple times; she also made the comment that it got a bit gory at times, but not too bad. This only makes me wonder what a modern-day kid calls "not too bad" in terms of blood and gore.

Case in point: The first 20 minutes of *Saving Private Ryan* is pretty intense, realistic footage of what combat was really like on D-Day, and Daniel — our 10 year old son — doesn't flinch one bit, but sits and watches it intently (he's very military minded, too, I might add). One of his favorite movies is *Windtalkers*, which likewise has pretty intense scenes. Doesn't faze him one bit. So from experience I can tell you that kids are quite desensitized to filmed violence. As for getting them to appreciate classic sf and f movies, beats me. A good story line should get them hooked, but great sfx help a great deal.

I really don't have many comment hooks marked off in this issue, but I did enjoy your report on the 25th Sherlock Holmes/Arthur Conan Doyle Symposium. Some of those panels and presentations sounded very interesting. I have always loved Holmes stories & movies, and it never ceases to amaze me how Holmes devotees can dig into the canon to dredge up truly arcane material to discuss. Holmes was a fashion designer? A plumber? Interesting theories. Glad you had a good time there.

If only you had seen Greg Sullivan channeling Professor Challenger. Or investigating Mr. Spock's descent from Sherlock Holmes...

Lisa, we love our digital camera, which we bought at Wal-Mart about a year and a half ago. It, too, takes great distance pictures, but also has video-taking capabilities (not very long - 5 minutes worth), and now we have this printer dock to make our own prints. Kodak's Easy Share software is great for photo-editing and all sorts of things that you can do to your digital photos. I've now begun using them in my zines. Can't wait until we download the software for the printer/scanner/copier here in the computer corner of the house. Whoo-hoo! High tech zines, here we come!

I now have a Kodak v603 digital.



It has made me the church photographer. I find myself constantly surprised by how many people seem to be intimidated by their cameras which are after all just machines like the dishwasher and vacuum cleaner, except that cameras are considerably more fun to use. I find it hard to imagine life without one to record trips with or just interesting things around the neighborhood.

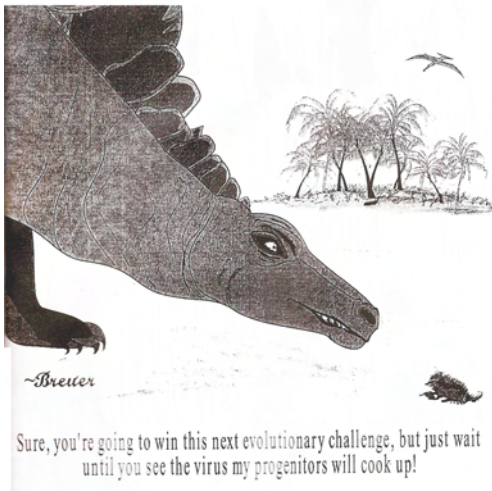
— LTM

Finally, the *Journey to Mars* review made me think about all those Mars books by Burroughs, Otis Adelbert Kline, and Edwin Arnold that I used to own. Now I may have to track down this one. Interesting stuff, and I enjoyed the compare & contrast review of the Pope and Burroughs Mars books. Nicely done.

Thanks again for the zine. Keep me in mind the next time you're reading to pub away.

We try to be comparatively frequent.

— JTM



From: **Robert S. Kennedy** May 18, 2006  
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Thank you for Vol. 5, No. 2.

A copy of *Heinlein's Children: The Juveniles* was donated to the Camarillo Library. The husband of the Librarian who took the book is a great fan of Robert Heinlein. She took the book home for him to read before it is processed by the library. He is a Heinlein fan, but not Science Fiction as such. I asked if he knew about the Heinlein Society and she said no. So, she looked it up on the Internet and is planning on giving her husband a membership for his birthday.

It is hoped that there will be some HUGO recommendations in the next issue. Only something like five of my nominations made the ballot.

On May 11<sup>th</sup> I went to the 11:10 a.m. show

to see *UNITED 93*. For the fifth time I was the only person in the theater. While it's nice having a whole theater to oneself, the lack of an audience for this movie was disgusting. *United 93* should be seen by everyone. People need to be reminded of the incredible evil we face. Anyway, in my movie rating system of 1-5 I gave it a 5++. I have never given a double plus to any movie before. Actually, *United 93* should be considered to be more of a documentary.

I've started watching *Veronica Mars*. I obviously came in the middle of a major story. But, think that it's understood what is going on and there are little mini plots each week. Also, Charisma Carpenter has a recurring role which is another reason to watch the program. *Veronica* is a modern day Nancy Drew. (Thankfully, *Veronica's* last name is not Marrs.)

As in "Texe"; Texe Marrs the lizard-man guy, that is. But is her last name really "Samson", as in Michael Alfred Richard Samson, also known as "Mike Mars"?

Also watched is *Bones* and it is very much enjoyed. The episode on April 5 involved a couple of murders and a money pit. The use of the money pit reminded me of Oak Island. If you are not familiar with Oak Island, do a Google search. The episode on May 9 was very political. Hopefully, they have now got it out of their system.

April 23 to April 28 was spent in Tucson, Arizona at the U.S. Navy Cruiser Sailors Association Convention. I developed some intestinal problems the night before leaving for Tucson and almost didn't get on the plane. However, I made it through all the lines and did get on the plane. The next day in Tucson that day's tour had to be skipped. The following day I was much better, made all the other tours, made the banquet, and also the final day's luncheon and the entertainment that evening. It was quite enjoyable. But, it was nice to get back home where it is much cooler. Some people might ask why a Navy ship organization would go to the middle of the desert. I asked the same question. Regardless, it was the largest turnout ever. I purchased two t-shirts at the Pima Air & Space Museum as well as a pin for my cap. One of the t-shirts is outstanding—*The History of Space Flight*. The other just has the museum logo. At the Desert Museum purchased were an Arizona-Sonora Desert Museum t-shirt, a small jar of Prickly Pear Cactus Jelly, and two DVD's—*Touring the Southwest's Grand Circle*, and *Secrets of the Sonoran Desert*. The last purchase was a USNCA t-shirt.

Then May 3 to May 7 was spent at the Sheraton Gateway Hotel near LAX for the 25<sup>th</sup> International Space Development Conference. (It was sponsored by the National Space Society and The Planetary Society, both of which I am a member.) 25 years ago I went to the first one at a hotel in Anaheim, California (near Disneyland and near where they held the last LA Con and where they will hold this year's LA Con). While I was standing by the Space

Elevator exhibit a woman asked for my autograph. I was stunned. Who did she think I was? Then it was noticed that my name tag, which hung from my neck on a cord, had turned over and that day's luncheon ticket with the name of the speaker was showing—Burt Rutan. So, I quickly flipped the holder and again displayed my name. I met Yvonne Penney while we were on a tour of JPL. Later she sold me an ISDC06 t-shirt. Also, I purchased DVD's of the *Orbit Awards Banquet*, Burt Rutan's luncheon presentation (he told a joke that I cannot repeat), Buzz Aldrin's luncheon presentation, and *Mars in the Cinema (2)* by The Mars Society.

One of the nice things about going to things like these is that I usually lose 6-8 pounds. But, then it's normally gained back in a few weeks.

I read *The Last Templar* by Raymond Khoury (2006) and can't recommend it. Then (on my first trip) I read *The Templar Legacy* by Steve Berry (2006). The author immediately pulled me in by giving the Templars what I understand to be their full correct name of the Poor Fellow-Soldiers of Christ and the Temple of Solomon. Also, he identified the head of the Templars as Master and not Grand Master. My memory says that the Templars did not use the term Grand Master. On the other hand the author mistakenly, like many others, equates the German National Socialist Labor Party (NAZI) with the political Right. I enjoyed the novel. Also read was *The Sion Revelation: The Truth About the Guardians of Christ's Sacred Bloodline* by Lynn Picknett and Clive Prince (2006). Actually, not having the time, I rather skimmed the book. The conclusion of the authors appears to be confirmation that the *Priory of Sion* is a fraud. However, they seem to believe that the *Priory* is a front for *Synarchy*. None of these books were purchased and they were obtained from the library.

I would think by now that anyone who looked could find out that the whole Priory of Sion matter was a fraud perpetrated by Pierre Plantard. However, the good news is that most of the preliminary reviews of *The Da Vinci Code* agree that it's a lousy movie. Somehow that didn't stop it from racking up \$221.8 million in its first weekend.

On my trips I also read *The Innocent* by Harlan Coben (2005/2006) and *Skinny Dip* by Carl Hiaasen (2004). These were both paperbacks purchased from small selections in hotels. Both very much enjoyed. My reason for buying these books is that I ran out of books to read and I get nervous when I don't have anything to read.

Yes, I know none of the books involved Science Fiction. Oh, wait a minute, I almost forgot, also read was *The Two-Space War* by Dave Grossman and Leo Frankowski (2004/2005), so SF was included.

So, Michael Baigent and Richard Leigh lost their lawsuit against Dan Brown. I have no idea

why they thought that they had a case.

**Joseph T Major:** In your commentary on The Twenty-Fifth Sherlock Holmes/Arthur Conan Doyle Symposium you make reference to S. Brent Morris as a historian of Freemasonry. I was not aware that Morris is a Holmes fan. But, if Freemasonry is involved, then it makes sense. Morris is not just a Masonic historian. He is a 33° GC (Grand Cross) Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite of Freemasonry, Southern Jurisdiction, U.S.A. He is the author or editor of numerous books regarding Freemasonry.

I noticed that you purchased a copy of *Howl's Moving Castle*. While I enjoyed the movie, I didn't thing that it was as good as some of his other work. As for *Serenity*, it will probably win a HUGO.

Let's hope so.

— JTM

**Martin Morse Wooster:** You comment that Baltimore's light rail system is a boondoggle. When I was at my navy ship reunion in Baltimore in 2000, we actually stayed at a hotel a ways out of town. I stayed a few days after the end of the reunion and twice took the light rail system to Baltimore's Inner Harbor. It was very convenient and I don't remember getting stuck in traffic.

From: **Sue Burke** May 23, 2006  
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It's a good thing we went to Chernobyl in early spring or we wouldn't have seen much. Forty of us got on a bus on April 17, the day after the end of the 2006 European Science Fiction Society convention in Kiev, Ukraine, and headed 100 kilometers north for a guided tour.

The area roughly 30 kilometers around the Chernobyl Nuclear Power Plant is now the Exclusion Zone, too radioactive for human habitation. It's known historically as *Polissya*, or "forest land," and the forest is taking over the hurriedly abandoned farms, villages, and city within it. Had the leaves been out, we wouldn't have seen the ghost towns for the trees.

The power plant is another matter. It's actually a complex of buildings and equipment, some rusting away, some still in use as they try to stabilize the remains of the plant. Things aren't stable now, a problem they made clear.

As for radiation, we got an insignificant though real dose. "Safe" doses are very small compared to dangerous doses, which is why plants and animals are now thriving in the Exclusion Zone — yes, Sheryl, those were Prezwalski's wild horses. We saw them, too. For more about the visit, see my web site. The convention was lively. Russia and Ukraine have active SF communities and plenty of writers and artists. We will no doubt be hearing more; Eurocons are meant to foster exchanges among countries, so writers and publishers were fishing

for each other.

I noticed an unsubtle hatred of the Soviets in Ukraine, no surprise. My hotel's brochure included a brief history of Ukraine that declared, "The totalitarian calamity began after 1917." A statue of Lenin still stands in downtown Kiev; Stalin's are missing, though. Looking at Ukraine trying to resurrect itself after Soviet domination reminded me of Spain trying to disentangle itself from Franco. People want to repudiate rather than forget the past, since history can repeat.

What did Robert Conquest want to retitl *The Great Terror*, JTM? When I picked up his book *Harvest of Sorrow*, I knew of him only as a poet, and will be looking for more of him in SF annals.

I've reviewed a number of his books in this and other venues, most lately *The Dragons of Expectation* in *Alexiad* V. 4 #2. As for *The Great Terror*, it turns out it actually was Sir Kingsley Amis who suggested the title, "I Told You So, You F—ing Fools", but Conquest liked the idea.

In local (for me) news, Spain is about to get the SciFi Channel — a pay channel, so I won't be seeing it, and I hate dubbed TV and movies anyway. Channel Cuatro is making a Spanish version of "Married With Children." All the media are gearing up for the World Soccer Cup in June in Germany.

Many citizens of Finland felt embarrassed while others wept in patriotic joy when its musicians, for the first time ever, won the 51st annual Eurovision Song Festival in May, organized by television channels across Europe. Twenty-four countries entered pop music groups in the contest, and the heavy metal monster-costumed band Lordi achieved a commanding victory with its song "Hard Rock Alleluia." Some Finns had asked the country's president to veto the band as its representative, and the Finnish Lutheran Church feared Lordi was a satanic cult, but viewers across Europe, who elect the winner, seemed to appreciate the Nordic novelty.

If you think Europe is sophisticated and cultured, you will think differently after seeing Eurovision. Go to [www.eurovision.tv](http://www.eurovision.tv) to enjoy photos and listen to samples, although mere words and photos cannot do justice to the humor of the Lithuanian performance. Other remarkable contestants included the Black gospel-soul singer representing Israel, and Germany's country-western group Texas Lightning. Their song was Germany's number-one pop hit, and they performed on a stage decorated with electric saguaro cactuses. "Yee-ha-zeiten!" said the German announcer, astride a pinto pony.

Spain was represented by the quartet Las Ketchup. Unlike their world-wide hit "Asereje," the song they sang for Eurovision, "Bloody Mary," was intelligible. Perhaps this is why they did poorly.

Starbucks, which was mentioned in the last

issue, is a growing chain in Spain. Since it does not allow smoking and almost all other cafes do, it has a niche.

Finally, I want to pay tribute to George H. White, who died March 28, 2006. His real name was Pascual Enguidanos Usach, born in Valencia, Spain, and he published 95 science fiction novels between 1953 and 1978, including the Aznar Saga, a mega-epic space opera series. He inspired generations, and the Saga is in print again: great good fun to read.

But why "George H. White"? Decades ago, readers in Spain believed that only Anglo Saxons could write science fiction — a belief held in other countries around the world, so often their writers used Anglo-Saxon pseudonyms, too. But did we, the Anglo Saxons, ever think that only we could do SF?

Most of us ran across a guy named Joolz Voin, er Zoolvern, er Jules Verne when we were getting started. However, as I recall Stanislaw Lem certainly seemed to think we thought so.

— JTM

From: **Evelyn Leeper** May 26, 2006  
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[page 1] I have to agree that showing today's youngsters movies like *Forbidden Planet* is likely to be depressing in that they do not think there is anything that great about them. It doesn't mean we shouldn't keep trying. (The same young friend who found *Forbidden Planet* just "okay" really liked the silent film of *The Man Who Laughs*, so go figure.)

Tastes change. Add to that the problem that so many can't see past the presentation for the content, and there is another factor to consider. But the new fans don't seem to be there for anything we consider classic.

— JTM

[page 11] We also got a Philips Keychain Digital Camera. One problem I have is remembering that one has to hold the camera steady for about two or three seconds after pressing the button. The battery, by the way, lasts about sixty hours or so, which means one must upload one's pictures fairly quickly. What I do is leave the battery out until I want to use the camera, and then after uploading the picture, remove the battery again. I hadn't realized that plugging it into the USB port would power it from there and not drain the battery, but in any case that is not enormously convenient for us. I agree about the light sensitivity.

[page 24] Joy Smith writes about the drawbacks of dirigibles, but I still think that the idea that Mark had over vacation in Hawai'i is worth considering: dirigibles for inter-island flights there.

[page 29] To Dainis Bisenieks: For what it's worth, the list of equipment on the flyer in *Robur the Conqueror* is in chapter six of the original French. In any case, the use of a barometer to determine altitude is definitely in the original, and not just a quirk of translation. Of course, there is the old joke about the physics quiz asking how to use a barometer to determine the height of a building. Along with the usual answers involving measuring air pressure, there was one which suggested dropping the barometer from the top and seeing how long it took to reach the ground, and other which said to go up to the manager of the building and say, "I'll give you this nifty barometer if you tell me the height of this building." Regarding the "storm-glass" the compact OED defines it as a "hermetically sealed tube containing a solution which becomes flocculent [fluffy, or resembling wool] on the approach of a storm."

[page 31] Just as Marty Helgesen's mother used Bon Ami, so did mine — and so have I now for thirty-five years. I would hate to see it discontinued — there really is nothing comparable on the market that I know of.

From: **Taras Wolansky** May 31, 2006  
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Last I heard, Wen Spencer's brother, Karbuncle, was hanging out with one Fester Bestertester.

Review of *Bradbury Speaks*: Bradbury is "with great enthusiasm" and "loves everybody", yet his writing dips "into the deep well of resentment at having to grow up and quit enjoying life." From your description, it sounds like he didn't "grow up and quit enjoying life".

Review of *The Spies Who Never Were*: "None was betrayed by his own side, set up for a fall by his own side, killed by his own side." These are, of course, very common themes in espionage fiction, but they never made much sense to me. Screw over your spies and they'll betray you or defect.

Reading about real spies ruined espionage fiction for me, reading military history ruined military SF for me, reading true crime ruined detective stories for me . . . genres develop their own plot standards, and that they are often in disageement with their basis in the real world seems to be common.

Alexis Gilliland: "Why hast Thou forsaken me" has a ring of plausibility to it, because it doesn't fit the master narrative well. Jesus is supposed to know He hasn't been forsaken. Thus, the later version, "Father, forgive them . . .", has been altered to fit the story line better.

"Saint Cyril . . . wrested secular control of Egypt from the failing Roman Empire." This account does not agree with what I read in several articles on Wikipedia. Egypt continued to be a part of the Byzantine Empire, though

there were religious strains. "When Islam swept in two centuries later, Egypt embraced it as a women's liberation movement . . ." This is very hard to believe; it sounds like some Muslim apologetics I've heard. Rather, the Coptic Christians, the majority in Egypt, were initially relieved to be out from under the Orthodox thumb, imposed on them by the Byzantine Empire. ". . . and Coptic Christianity has been a minority sect ever since." Actually, it seems Egypt gradually went Muslim over the course of the next five or six centuries.

Richard Dengrove: Very interesting piece on Gustavus Pope's *Journey to Mars*.

Bob Kennedy: Ben Franklin was a British agent? Oh, I get it — April Fools!

Joseph T.: "What will the Venetians do if they find out that the body in the reliquary of St. Mark is actually that of Alexander the Great?" Why, build more tourist hotels!

I'd think they'd have to hire all the lawyers they could get. Greece, [The Former Yugoslav Republic of] Macedonia, Egypt, and some others all would lay claim to the body (probably Iran too, so they could destroy this relic of the Age of Ignorance).

— JTM

From: **AL du Pisani** June 1, 2006  
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It has been an interesting two months, but still no new job. I have had further discussions with a company which is interested in employing me, but they have not yet made any further moves.

There is apparently another company interested in employing me, but their bureaucracy is so bad that, in the department with limited bureaucracy, they take nine months to employ somebody. I shudder to think what life is like in the departments that have serious bureaucracy.

Someday I will write of the interview I had with Electronic Data Services (the company founded by Ross Perot) which lasted fifteen minutes, most of which consisted of washing my hands after having had to change a tire on the way there. I have been unwilling to look for a new job because in part of all the hiring gags I have endured.

I should be taking some leave soon, have not planned it yet, as I had been hoping for a job offer, and leave could have screwed up my plans.

In most other aspects of my life, things are chugging along. My congregation is planning to start building some additional space soon, and at SFSA we are getting, and hopefully keeping, some new faces.

In South African news, the big item on at the moment is the leadership struggle in the ANC. See, Jacob Zuma was acquitted on the rape charges. Some people think that the state (prosecution in the trial) had a weak case, and was hoping to railroad him. And Zuma used the occasion to turn it into a circus, with him as the star. The corruption charges against him still have to be fought in court, but most of his supporters seem to find corruption a lesser charge, and do not think that finding him guilty will alter his chances to become the country's next president.

And the governor of Kentucky has been indicted in a hiring scandal. Welcome to the wonderful world of democracy. Now all you need is some vote-buying.

— JTM

The problem is that of potential presidential candidates, he has the most recognition. Even a poll designed to show that he has not the support of the majority of South Africans, showed that he has the most support. With only one possible ANC candidate with some support, and Tony Leon, the leader of the opposition, with 13% support in third place. Given that some people have called for Tony Leon to quit politics after every single election in the past couple of years, as being too divisive a figure, this should come as a kick in the pants of the ANC.

Granted, some of their problems have been of their own making. Trevor Manuel, highly respected Minister of Finance (even though people have joked that they wanted an Automatic), is out of the ANC's consideration, because he is of the wrong race. And some of the other potential candidates, have permanently taken themselves out of consideration, one by marrying a British heiress. (A lot of the elder ANC leadership have spent a significant portion of their lives in other countries in Africa, and have imbibed the notion that colonialism had been the greatest crime against the African people ever committed. Since they were often the respected guests of the governments, they did not see or acknowledge the democide being committed by the leadership of those countries.)

One of the accusations against the current President, Thabo Mbeki, is that he is an autocrat, dictatorial even, who kills off the careers of anybody who could possibly be a threat to him, and who promotes yes-men and lapdogs. So to some extent this crisis is of his own making.

In the mean time, we carry on. Hoping for the best, but expecting that the worst will happen. And that it will be worse, more pathetic and funnier than we can imagine.

**WAHF:** Lloyd Daub

## A LOST EPISODE OF THE PRISONER

The standard introduction, of P resigning, being kidnapped, finding himself in the Village and then running out screaming:

P: Where am I?  
Morpheus: In the Matrix.  
P: What do you want?  
Morpheus: To free your mind.  
P: Who are you?  
Morpheus: I am Morpheus.  
P: Who is Number One?  
Morpheus: Your liberator.  
P: I am not a number, I am a free man!  
Morpheus: You will be.

P is stalking the streets of the Village again. It is, unusually, a dark and rainy day, and he is wearing a dark cape, unlike the multicoloured capes of the other Villagers. He looks up and sees the Green Dome; then, by some impulse storms in to confront the new Number Two.

As P enters, the Butler takes his cloak to hang up. The man behind Number Two's desk is not looking his way. All we can see of him is that he is a tall coloured man with a hairless head, wearing a long leather overcoat.

P: Well?

The man turns. He smiles when he sees P. He is not wearing a pennyfarthing badge. He is wearing sunglasses with mirrored lenses, in which P can see his own reflection.

Morpheus: At last. Welcome.

P: So this is the new programme. What is it this time? Education? Entertainment? Mutuality? Or another scheme?

Morpheus: You can call it a scheme, if it pleases you to do so. All this must be exceedingly confusing and strange. I imagine that right now you're feeling a bit like Alice, tumbling down the rabbit hole, hm?

P: Schemes, plans, stories — they are all the same. All dreams of manipulation.

Morpheus: Indeed. I can see it in your eyes. You have the look of a man who is accepting what he sees because he is expecting to wake up. Ironically, this is not far from the truth. Do you believe in fate?

P (defiant): Fate? Never. I will not be pushed, filed, stamped, indexed, briefed, debriefed, or numbered. My life is my own.

Morpheus: I know *exactly* what you mean. Let me tell you why you're here. You're here because you know something. What you know you can't explain, but you feel it. You've felt it your entire life, that there's something wrong with the world. You don't know what it is, but it's there, like a splinter in your mind, driving you mad. It is this feeling that has brought you to me. Do you know what I'm talking about?

P has been stalking back and forth, tensely, during this conversation; he stops dead at this.

P: You tell me.

Morpheus: The Matrix.

P (sarcastic): And what, pray tell, is the Matrix?

Morpheus: The Matrix is everywhere. It is all around us, even now in this very room. You can see it when you look out your window or when you turn on the telly. You can feel it when you go to the woods, when you go to the beach, when you pay your tab. It is the world that has been pulled over your eyes to blind you from the truth.

P: Truth? What truth?

Morpheus: *That you are a slave.* Your life is *not* your own. Like everyone else you were born into bondage, born into a prison that you cannot smell or taste or touch. A prison for your mind.

Unfortunately, no one can be told what the Matrix is. You have to see it for yourself.

Morpheus raises his hands from his side and holds them out to P. There is a blue pill in his left hand and a red one in his right.

Morpheus: This is your last chance. After this there is no turning back. You take the blue pill, the story ends, you wake up in your bed and believe whatever you want to believe. You take the red pill, you stay in Wonderland, and I show you how deep the rabbit hole goes.

P turns and looks at the view screens that surround the desk. They are all black, with cascading streams of green letters, numbers, Japanese characters . . .

— Not by Patrick McGoohan or Larry & Andy Wachowski

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