

ALEXIAD

(ΑΛΞΙΑΔ)

\$2.00

Horse of the Year went to Saint Liam and not Afleet Alex. I think Joe expected me to be royally upset at the unfairness but I wasn't. Afleet Alex turned in two spectacular performances early in the year. Saint Liam plugged away through the whole year and built a substantial record, so I don't think it was that unfair. It would have been unfair had Afleet Alex won the Triple Crown but he didn't. But then again, I don't think any judge could have denied Horse of the Year to a Triple Crown winner. Had Afleet Alex been able to continue racing, I'm sure he too would have built a substantial record. Unfortunately he couldn't. While I liked Afleet Alex a lot, I haven't really been interested that much in any particular horse since Sunday Silence. I might have become interested in Seattle Slew's son Vindication had he not been injured before the Triple Crown because he was so much like Slew. Maybe it's not possible to feel that way about a horse more than once. The *Courier-Journal* is already starting to cover the Derby prospects. I don't like to choose a horse this early. I find it hard to deal with the disappointment if something happens to my horse.

— Lisa

Morse Wooster
 Comments are by **JTM** or **LTM**.
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 Sheryl Birkhead..... 15, 22, 25
 Brad W. Foster..... 18
 Paul Gadzikowski..... 3, 26
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February 20, 2006 St. Photini.
 Great Lent begins **March 6, 2006**.
 Pascha (Orthodox Easter) is **April 23, 2006**.
 Printed on February 2, 2006
 Deadline is **April 1, 2006**

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Reviewer's Notes

Why don't I want to move?
 Mostly because I am moving. At work, that is, into the office next to mine. One can accumulate a frightfully large quantity of Stuff in ten years in the same place. It all has to be boxed up, or sorted through and discarded. And some of the Stuff I have I inherited from my predecessor, eighteen years ago. (Yes, I've been in the same job eighteen years. There were times when I wished I could be in the same job for eighteen *days*.)
 There are unanticipated benefits from global warming. Natural gas prices have gone up. Yet, because we have had the warmest January that Louisville has had in some time (there have been days when I have gone out in my shirt sleeves), the heating bill has only been insanely enormous, instead of being bankrupting.
 The evidence that Leif Eirikson and his followers landed in L'Anse aux Meadows in Newfoundland has run up against the problem that, after all, Vinland is a land of grapes, a rare thing in Canada. But then, it seems, the climate was warmer, what they called the "Little Climatic Optimum". Which was followed by the Little Ice Age, freezing out the Greenland Colony, spreading the Black Death, and generally laying waste to the world. What exactly were the industrial emissions that caused the Little Climatic Optimum?
 Of course, everything has a price. I am not looking forward to summer with any pleasure. Time to go to Sam's Club and get a serious window unit for the bedroom.
 Lisa and I had a little fun along with my step-cousin Robley. One of Metro Louisville's aldermen is also U of L archivist. The library where Lisa works is showing a series of documentary films on World War One, and Dr. Owen the alderman & archivist gave an introductory talk on the World War Home Front here. (They shut down the red-light district.)
 We figured that a WWI talk would be improved by the presence of a WWI vet. So did Robley, and I took the day off work to bring him. It went over very well; he talked about training at Camp Taylor, the training camp here in Louisville.
 On the way back home we took him to a bank and he argued with the manager about having lost five days interest on a certificate of deposit. If I notice such things when I am a hundred and four (105 on May 4) I will be amazed and astounded, if not outright analoged.

RANDOM JOTTINGS

by Joe



L.A. Con IV has released the Hugo nominations ballot and added a special committee-chosen category (see Section 3.3.14 of the WSFS Constitution):

Best Interactive Video Game

What brought in all the other groups was that some of the “core fans” liked the other, so the con had to offer it, and it drew in people who liked the other but didn’t care a rap for SF. Here we go again.

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

Their Progress Report #3 had an ad for the Montreal 2009 bid. From their having a pre-membership category of “Bon Ami” for \$100, I presume they will stay in to the end of the race. As you know, Bon Ami™ hasn’t scratched yet.

I watched *Star Wars®: Clone Wars™, Volume One* and *Volume Two*, the brilliant animated series produced for the Cartoon Channel by Genndy Tartakovsky (as in *Samurai Jack*), and came to some conclusions:

- ◆ Can Jedi kick butt or what? All by himself, Mace Windu delivers a whole **drum** of whupass to an enemy force, including a giant ship I last saw in the movie *Kronos* (1957). (The Mean Joe Greene scene afterwards was cute.) And then there what Yoda did was . . .

- ◆ Anakin Skywalker is a hothead. Like you didn’t already know that.
- ◆ Amidala, or perhaps I should say Padmé, is a damn fine shot.
- ◆ Yoda goes out alone on an ice planet to rescue a couple of other Jedi. I was expecting him to say, “Just going out I am, yes, and some time may be.”
- ◆ Both sides bunch up too much, but the Grand Army of the Republic at least *tries* to act like a real military force, with artillery, vertical envelopment, special forces, and so on. (It’s only later on that they add fragging the general.)
- ◆ Shouldn’t the Jedi have known that something was wrong when they found out Chancellor Palpatine was reading *Slan* and *The Weapon Makers*? Oh, never mind. Then there was what General Grievous did setting up the opening of *Revenge of the Sith*.
- ◆ Seeing Anakin undergo that quest made me wonder how good a Jedi Knight Lucius Vorenius would be. (There was a scene that looked remarkably like the opening credits from *Rome*.) Now as for Titus Pullo, that would be a different kettle of pisces.
- ◆ Maybe Padmé ought to ditch C-3PO and hire Alfred Pennyworth, assuming Bruce Wayne will give him time off. What a mecha-putz!
- ◆ Jedi Master Shaaka Ti is kinda cute, for a girl who has giant Slan tendrils (see above about Palpatine) and worse taste in makeup than Betty Sorenson (of *The Star Beast*, and she had dreadful taste).
- ◆ Where is the Doctor when you need him? Some advice would be helpful.
- ◆ Did I mention that Anakin Skywalker is a hothead?

<http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0361243/>

And then I looked at *Batman: The Animated Series Volume Four* and concluded I like Selena Kyle, sometimes also known as Catwoman, better as a brunette. You have to respect someone who can make a cat obey.

Of course, there are a lot of other

references there too. Bruce Wayne [Batman]: “What are you doing tonight?” Barbara Gordon [Batgirl]: “The same thing we do every night, Pinky!” And then they checked and saw that the S.S. *Minnow* was coming into Gotham . . .

I also have the *Looney Tunes Golden Collection* #3, but until I find out how to crack the setup so I don’t have to watch Whoopi Goldberg every time I want to see a cartoon, I’m disinclined to watch.

Nancy Stouffer Lives! Ronnie Niederman and Judith Shangold sued the Poopy Panda Pals for plagiarism; it seemed, so they said, that when Disney did Michael Chabon’s novel *Summerland*, it was based on a movie script they had submitted in 1995.

Problem was, the script referred to the Palm Pilot. Which wasn’t out until 1997. Winner: Disney, which gets costs (i.e., probably nothing). Poop-poop-poopy!

<http://www.overlawyered.com/2006/01/scr ipt anachronism sinks ideat.html>

German researchers analyzing the heat emissions of the planet Xena [called in mundane circles UB₃₁₃] have estimated its diameter at approximately 3000 kilometers, larger than Pluto. Michael Brown, the discoverer of Xena, had originally estimated the diameter as being of that magnitude. This estimate, if confirmed, would put Xena between Titan and Luna in size.

Norman D. Vaughn, Antarctic and Alaskan explorer and educator, died on **December 23, 2005**, four days after his One Hundredth Birthday. Energetic to the end, he was planning to return to the southern continent to celebrate his personal centennial, having climbed the mountain named after himself in 1994.

Another bit of history has passed on.

OBITS

We regret to report the death of **Robert Sheckley**, famed SF satirist, on **December 9, 2005** at Vassar Brothers Medical Center in Poughkeepsie, New York after surgery for a brain aneurysm.

We regret to report the death of **Ken Bulmer**, pro and fan, author of the “Dray Prescott” adventure books and 1955 TAFF delegate, on **December 16, 2005**, after a long illness, in a nursing home in England.

We regret to report the death of **Howard DeVore**, “Big-Hearted Howard”, Fan Guest of Honor of L.A. Con IV, attendee of every MidWestCon, and co-author of *A History of the Hugo, Nebula, and International Fantasy Awards*, on **December 31, 2005** in Detroit. As he wished, there will be a fan wake for him at MidWestCon 2006. “Drink a shot of Jim Beam for me,” he said.

Our condolences to **Robert S. “Bob” Kennedy** on the death of his brother **John**, in Alameda, California, on **January 10, 2006**, at the age of 68.

MONARCHIST NEWS

On **December 3, 2005**, **Prince Sverre Magnus of Norway** was born to **Crown-Princess Mette-Marit** and **Crown Prince Haakon Magnus of Norway**.

In the name of God, the Mighty, the Omnipotent, Peace be upon the most excellent, the most wise, the most revered Emir and Ruler of Kuwait His Highness **Jaber bin Ahmad al-Sabah**, who entered into Paradise upon the **15th Dhul al-Hjja, A.H. 1426** (January 15, 2005 in the calendar of the infidels). May Peace and the Mercy of God be upon him. The new Ruler, chosen by the Kuwaiti cabinet, is the former Prime Minister, **Emir Sabah bin Ahmad al-Sabah**, after the succession and abdication of the Crown Prince, **Emir Sa’ad bin `Abd Allāh al-Sabah**, whose health did not permit him to assume the duties of Emir.

<http://www.4dw.net/royalark/Kuwait/kuwait16.htm>

Carol of Romania, born Mircea Gregor Carol Lambrino on **January 8, 1920** to Maria Johana “Zizi” Lambrino and her ex-husband, the then Crown Prince Carol of Romania (later King Carol II), died on **January 28, 2006** in London. For the past few years, his older son, **Paul**, has been waging a campaign to have him recognized as the heir to his half-brother, **King Mihai** [Michael].

ALL OVER

Review by Joseph T Major of
OFF THE MAIN SEQUENCE:
The Other Science Fiction Stories of
Robert A. Heinlein

edited by Andrew Wheeler
introduction by Greg Bear
foreword by Michael Cassutt
(Science Fiction Book Club; 2005;
ISBN 1-58288-184-7)

The intent of this collection is simple enough; to print all of Heinlein's short science fiction that is not in *The Past Through Tomorrow* (1967; NHOL G.162). Thus, it does not include his mystery story, "They Do It With Mirrors" (1947, 1980; NHOL G.042) which was published under the pseudonym of "Simon Riverside"; his sole "mainstream" story, "A Bathroom of Her Own" (1946, 1980; NHOL G.062); or his two girls' stories "Poor Daddy" (1949; NHOL G.067) and "Cliff and the Calories" (1950; NHOL G.088) both published under the arcane, recondite, and ineluctable pseudonym of "R. A. Heinlein". As it happens, all of these stories are in *Expanded Universe* (1980; NHOL G.193). It also doesn't include his fantasy stories, but those [along with some of these stories] are collected elsewhere (*The Fantasies of Robert A. Heinlein*; Tor; 1999, 2002; \$16.95).

Successful Operation (1940; NHOL G.019)

The operation is on a man identified only as "the Leader". One suspects that Heinlein is translating the title. The Leader needs a pituitary gland transplant, and only one physician in the Fatherland has the skills, even though he isn't quite up to the Fatherland's racial standards. It would be so easy for Dr. Lans to let his patient die on the operating table, but his treatment turns out to be far more subtle . . .

What makes this one really stand out is that, as Heinlein confessed, it comes from the time when he couldn't say "No!" The story was published in *Futura Fantasia* #4 — a fanzine. Ray Bradbury's fanzine. (And then, I hear, he got at odds with Bradbury because he wouldn't volunteer for WWII . . .)

"Let There Be Light" (1940, 1950, 1963; NHOL G.007)

Solar power has always faced the

problem of being just too diffuse. Also hard to collect, due to weather, poisonous compounds (some solar cells are made with selenium, the active ingredient in locoweed), and other such obstacles. And then there is the competition.

Although the citation is for *Super Science Stories* May 1940 (as by "Lyle Monroe"), the version is the 1963 "Marilyn Monroe" version; in the original, the good-looking woman with the big surprise looked like Heinlein's schoolmate Sally Rand. The edition was toned down, originally Douglas and Martin talked pretty raunchy, but that was too much for the delicate sensibilities of forties pulpdom. (The nudity, cohabitation, and polyamory of *For Us, the Living* (2003, NHOL G.004) would have really blown fuses.)

— **And He Built a Crooked House** — (1941; NHOL G.023)

An elaborate joke on two levels. First off, there is the "crooked house" itself. In *Beyond This Horizon* (1942, 1948; NHOL G.033) Monroe-Alpha Clifford asserted that a four-dimensional object would most conveniently fill his current need, and here an architect designs a building that turns out to be such an item. Which has its own interesting problems.

Secondly, the story is set in Heinlein's own neighborhood, and in fact he gives an address for one of the characters and says that the Hermit of Hollywood lives across from it. At that time, the Heinleins lived at the address given for the Hermit of Hollywood. Well!

The story itself contains several of what would become Heinlein's standard character types, including the wiseacre with the fluent tongue and the Whining, Useless, Middle-Aged Heinlein Matron. What were the people like who really lived at 8775 Lookout Mountain Avenue? (*Astounding Science Fiction* February 1941)

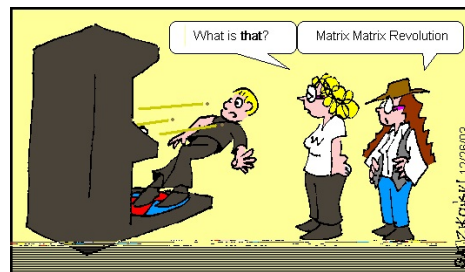
Beyond Doubt (1941; NHOL G.014)

This is one of the notorious "stinkeroos", the stories that Heinlein disliked and did not want reprinted. This is the only one of them that was prior to this publication (*Beyond the End of Time*, Frederik Pohl, editor (1952), as by Robert A. Heinlein and Elma Wentz). It is also his first collaborative fiction work. (Perhaps "only", depending on how you evaluate the degree of connection between

John W. Campbell's "All" and Heinlein's *Sixth Column*, (1941, 1949; NHOL G.022) or what weight you give to the detailed and elaborate notes (NHOL G.180) on the draft of Niven's and Pournelle's *The Mote in God's Eye* (1975).)

The co-author, Elma Wentz, was also associated with Upton Sinclair's End Poverty in California (EPIC) campaign. And the story deals with a political campaign that's really rough, and uses some really innovative methods to publicize the opposition's failings. If only the guy could have done the job properly . . . (*Astounding Stories* April 1941, as by Lyle Monroe and Elma Wentz; Fred Pohl was also the editor there)

They (1941; NHOL G.021)



"Have you ever had a dream that you were so sure was real? What if you were unable to wake from that dream? How would you know the difference?" Heinlein explored Morpheus's question long before the Wachowski brothers were born. But the Matrix established here is set up for one man, who discovered it thanks to a glitch. Or so he thinks, but it is impossible to tell from paranoia . . . from his point of view.

Solipsism is a recurring theme in Heinlein's work; a doctrine peculiarly attractive to an imaginative writer. This is one of the earlier examples of his exploration of the theme. (*Unknown* April 1941)

Solution Unsatisfactory (1941; NHOL G.026)

The atomic standoff story. A neutralist America finds itself with a war-ending weapon, and its application turns out to lead to a result more terrifying than not using it.

It's worth noting that the description of how the radioactive-dust project was

organized, and functioned is very close to how the Manhattan Engineering District was organized, and functioned. Heinlein's name came up peripherally in the investigation of Cleve Cartmill's "Deadline" (*Astounding*, March 1944), the notorious "A-Bomb" story. Given that RAH had described the real-world setup of the ENORMOZ Manhattan Engineering District, one would think they would have looked into his case a lot more closely.

The unsatisfactory solution was in effect proposed after the end of the war, albeit not under similar conditions. What made it a non-starter was that nuclear weapons turned out to be harder to make and even harder to deploy. For example, John W. Campbell imagined Belgium or Czechoslovakia getting the Bomb and using it against any or all of its neighbors (*The John W. Campbell Letters, Volume I*, Page 57; letter of November 21, 1945 to L. Ron Hubbard). There was more unsound fantasizing when the speculation was proven workable than when it had been only a scientific dream. (*Astounding*, May 1941, as by Anson MacDonald)

Universe (1941, 1963; NHOL G.025)

The generation-ship story. One can compare it to "They", in that both feature a man who finds out that his entire picture of the world around him is profoundly wrong. Only this time, the protagonist can do something about it. The world of the Ship is only sketched in, but the lines fill the frame, so to speak; there is a belief-system, a society, and a world-view consistent enough for the protagonist to have actual opposition.

This story is usually considered part of the [First] Future History, but as it is not included in *The Past Through Tomorrow*, Heinlein's collection of those works, it belongs here. (*Astounding*, May 1941; that issue also had Asimov's Robot story "Liar!", Eric Frank Russell's "Jay Score" [a different sort of robot story], and the last part of de Camp's "The Stolen Dormouse". Wow!)

Elsewhen (1941, 1953; NHOL G.008)

This time "They" had collective experiences. Heinlein continues exploring the theory of subjective reality by allowing some subjects to explore alternative time-tracks, with wildly varying results. We see here the early presentation of Heinlein's attitudes about reality as the five subjects of the time-line travelling professor undergo

five different fates in the great spread of Elsewhen.

The publication history is in some ways more interesting than the story itself. For example, the 1953 version used here restores one character, moves the important dates in the professor's life forward ten years, and has the original title; as first published it was "Elsewhere" by Caleb Saunders (the only use of this pseudonym) in *Astounding* for September 1941.

Common Sense (1941, 1963; NHOL G.030)

Now that Hugh Hoyland of "Universe" has found out what his world is really like, and that the whole point of it all was leaving it for a different type of place, what does he do about it? Run into established problems, mostly, and get out of them by an incredible run of luck.

Alexei Panshin argues that the plot problems of this one vitiate the original story, while Jim Gifford says that they work together better as a unified whole. The two were collected as one short novel (*Orphans of the Sky*, 1963; NHOL G.152). The idea is good, the execution a bit of a let down (those three pages of lucky breaks for example). (*Astounding*, October 1941)

By His Bootstraps (1941; NHOL G.029)

The recursive time-line story, at least until a story later on in this collection. (Notice how Heinlein invented so many basic science-fiction plots?) Bob Wilson is out of tucker and hard at work when he interrupts himself. And does so again. Then the manipulator behind these interruptions steps in, and eventually Bob finds out who is responsible . . . a short story with some huge ideas. (*Astounding*, October 1941, as by Anson MacDonald)

Lost Legacy (1941, 1953; NHOL G.013)

The "lost legacy" is that of vast and varied powers of mind. Somehow one thinks of the Martian powers of *Stranger In a Strange Land* (G.127; 1961, 1990) here.) The independent discoverers find a colony of others like them (see below about "Gulf") and get into a difference of opinion with others who have similar powers and quite different scruples.

This is a story of wizards zapping each other. It's hard to see what distinction it makes to the ordinary person. As for the powers themselves, in spite of all the comments about such powers being

commonplace, yet unrecognized, the Randi Million-Dollar Prize remains safe.

This is the version as originally written, the original published one (*Super Science Stories*, November 1941, as by "Lyle Monroe") was retitled for some reason "Lost Legion" and a historical character was renamed (out of fear that he might sue?).

"My Object All Sublime" (1942; NHOL G.009)

The second "stinkeroo"; it's hard to see why Heinlein didn't want this one reprinted. In some stylistic ways it anticipates "They Do It With Mirrors".

The Gilbert & Sullivan quote sets the scene; bad drivers in one part of the town are getting drenched with artificial skunk scent. The hard-boiled reporter sent down to smell out the reason finds him; a lone eccentric inventor who has discovered how to bend light waves to keep people from seeing him (unfortunately for the plot, it probably wouldn't work that way), and is annoyed with bad drivers. Some local intrigue ensues (the reader will recall "Our Fair City" (1947; NHOL G.068) and "A Bathroom of Her Own" for more along that line) and the reporter ends up with his own plans for doing more. (*Future*, February 1942, as by Lyle Monroe)

Goldfish Bowl (1942; NHOL G.032)

"CREATION TOOK EIGHT DAYS" and whatever would those beings created when the Lord was fresh after His rest, but had experience, would be like? For those who like to consider Heinlein as the Humanity-supreme type, there's this to explain away.

There are two inexplicable standing waterspouts off the coast of Hawaii; at the same time, people are getting sucked into ball lightning there. When two scientists investigate this event, not entirely intentionally, they learn humilatingly where humanity stands in the world. "The Horror of the Heights" (Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, 1913), anyone? But the surviving man can't even drop a "Joyce-Armstrong Fragment". (*Astounding*, March 1942, as by Anson MacDonald)

Pied Piper (1942; NHOL G.010)

The third "stinkeroo", and here it seems merely trivial. Two countries are having a war, and a scientist who has just invented a "wormhole" device proposes kidnapping all the children of the opponent's leaders. But

then, when his own leader suggests using it more selectively, he deselects a feature.

There's not much to select here, it seems like one of the heavier-handed commentaries on contemporary events. (*Astonishing*, March 1942, as by Lyle Monroe)

Free Men (1966; NHOL G.050)

When this was first published, in *The Worlds of Robert A. Heinlein* (1966; NHOL G.160), it seemed like a post-nuclear war resistance story of the sort that was not uncommon between the Soviet achievement of atom bombs (including a story in this collection) and the demise of the Soviet Union. Yet Heinlein asserted universality for it; and one can argue that he is going back to the situation of *Sixth Column* (1941, 1949; NHOL G.022) and being more realistic, showing the results of a "Pan-Asian" invasion without any super-science to save the day.

From references, the fictional town of Barclay seems to be in Missouri (which was where Heinlein would put a story when no other specific location was required). The Barclay Free Company is a guerilla unit fighting an enemy that is brutal, ruthless, and exceedingly well-equipped. For example, right off there is a reference to the nuclear destruction of St. Joseph, Missouri.

The "free men" of the Barclay Free Company have to deal with betrayal, dissent, assault, and general debilitation. The story ends with a typical Heinleinian "wolfish" credo.

In a rare display of agreement, both Panshin and Gifford find the work less than satisfying. Panshin guessed, and Gifford showed, that the story was written earlier; 1947 in fact.

On the Slopes of Vesuvius (1980; NHOL G.066)

Heinlein said that after the end of World War II he wrote a number of stories warning people about the prospects of nuclear war. He seems to have overstated the number; and none of them sold. This is one of them.

This is a minor work at best; some people are talking in a bar and one of them reiterates the line about atom bombs being easy to make and easier to use. Another one panics, leaves town, realizes he was overstating the case, and then sees he was right after all. "Solution Unsatisfactory" was a better warning. (*Expanded Universe*, 1980; NHOL G.193)

Columbus Was a Dope (1947; NHOL G.053)

This one's in a bar, too, but this time the guy arguing is not the winner. Why go out on a "generation ship"? The bartender implies an answer. According to Panshin, it's a neat little puzzle story; Gifford thinks it would make a great intro to *Orphans of the Sky*. (*Startling Stories*, May 1947, as by Lyle Monroe — the last time Heinlein used a pseudonym)

Jerry Was a Man (1947; NHOL G.054)

The story of determining sapience (I said Heinlein invented a lot of basic SF plots). Jerry is a talking chimpanzee, created by genetic modification. The well-to-do and bored lady to whom he's been lent becomes quite taken with him. However, he's also the property of his maker, which has a schedule for disposing of obsolete equipment. Is this putting down an old animal, or murder? (No one seems willing to take the work-to-rule attitude demonstrated in Lois McMaster Bujold's *Falling Free* (1987, 1988).) It all has to be settled in court, and before it can be, some basic moral questions have to be addressed.

Gifford makes the interesting point that in this story we have a male version of the Heinlein Matron, while his wife, Martha van Vogel, looks like the female version at first, but very quickly becomes a resolute woman in the line of Dr. Edith Stone, Betty Sorenson, and Meade Barstow (a lady we shall meet later).

As biological science expands and is developed more thoroughly, the kinds of questions raised in this story become more and more inevitable. (*Thrilling Wonder Stories*, October 1947, as "Jerry Is a Man")

Water Is for Washing (1947; NHOL G.059)

Earthquakes are a natural disaster that people in Southern California are frequently made painfully aware of. Add to that the fact that the Imperial Valley is below sea level, and the prospects would be not very promising under the right conditions. Particularly to a man who doesn't like large bodies of water, but will protect helpless children and even help a hitchhiker. Who, in turn, earns himself a redemption of sorts. (*Argosy*, November 1947; the last two paragraphs cut by their editor and rediscovered by Bill Patterson are not restored here, unfortunately)

Nothing Ever Happens on the Moon (1949; NHOL G.074)

This was the first of his Boy Scout stories, of which *Farmer In the Sky* (G.083; 1950; published in *Boy's Life* for September 1950 in an abridged form) is the longest. The Boy Scout in this case is trying to be a triple Eagle, and finds that lunar conditions are not just adventurous, but potentially fatal — which is what Scouts are supposed to know anyhow. (*Boy's Life*, April 1949)

Gulf (1949; NHOL G.081)

By now you should know about Richard Hoen and his predictive review of *Astounding* for November 1949. A secret agent courier finds himself in big trouble — and even more from his superiors. Which leaves him with nowhere else to go but to a chance-met acquaintance, who turns out to have a new perspective on the progress of humanity. This turns out to be important when his original problem goes very seriously wrong.

Panshin argued quite pointedly that the plot shows a number of flaws, which he ascribed to the need to compose the story quickly. Bill Patterson describes how Heinlein had conceived the idea of the “trick issue”, which other sources attribute to Campbell. If he had had the idea, wouldn't he have been more careful about his contribution? Damon Knight, by way of contrast, liked it. (*Astounding*, November-December 1949)

Destination Moon (1950; NHOL G.086)

“This looks like a movie.” Well, mostly because it was intended to accompany the release of the movie *Destination Moon*. And if you've seen the movie . . . the first flight to the moon has to deal with legal obstacles, then physical ones. As the lunar explorers did in so many first-landing stories (e.g., John W. Campbell's “The Moon is Hell” (1951)), they landed on the far side of the Moon, out of sight of Earth, though in this case that was not intended. Which led to further problems on top of the existing ones. There is a firm underpinning of hard engineering and scientific detail here, but not much in the way of characterization. The story gives a good picture of how they thought it would be back then. Including how Moon travel would not stop after a success, or even a failure . . . (*Short Stories Magazine*, September 1950)

The Year of the Jackpot (1952, 1959;

NHOL G.097)

Of the principal characters in this game, one might well at first confuse Meade Barstow with the sex-obsessed female character of the author's later works, mostly because when we first see her, she is undressing. She proves to have in abundance, as her primary nature, the characteristics that in her later sisters are merely (so to speak) top-dressing.

This is, however, only a Meet Cute for Potiphar Breen, a statistician who is following trends . . . including women stripping in public. Making a personal acquaintance with this trend turns out to be a reassurance, overall.

However, other more violent trends led to problems, and Potiphar and Meade have to flee to the wilderness, for a less strident version of *Farnham's Freehold* (1965; NHOL G.154) [I've come to consider that novel Heinlein's “I could have been that”]. Where he has plenty of time to review the trends, only to find out that after this jackpot, the Great Calculator is going to take his toys and go home.

The portrayal of “The Silly Season” might remind one of the story of that title by Cyril Kornbluth (1950). The portrayal of Meade is more touching; the scene where they kneel down and repeat the marriage service, for example. Also more decisive, as when she shoots the would-be hijacker without qualms.

Due to a printer's error, the words “THE END” were left off, which leaves the ending somewhat more truncated. The version here is the anthologized version and not the one originally published. That had dates to indicate that the “year of the jackpot” was the current one. (*Galaxy*, March 1952)

Project Nightmare (1953; NHOL G.098)

I'm surprised this one didn't appear in *Astounding*. The army establishes a project to study “wild talents”. It turns out said “wild talents” include a way to influence atomic fission. At the time this gets proven, the Soviets hand down an ultimatum, enforced by atomic demolition munitions smuggled into the U.S., there being no *Fourth Protocol* (by Frederick Forsyth, 1984) barring such things in this world. It has to be stopped, of course. (*Amazing*, April 1953)

Sky Lift (1953; NHOL G.103)

This is a very real and tragic story about human cost. An epidemic has hit the research station at Pluto. The treatment can only get there in time if shipped at the maximum survivable acceleration. “Survivable” does not include a quality of life factor for the pilots, and the happy ending is very tragic indeed.

Panshin had a comment on this story and the previous one that is far more succinct and applicable than anything I could say:

The issues of “Project Nightmare” are artificial ones. Those of “Sky Lift” are real, immediate and important. That is the difference between a story that means something and one that doesn't.

— Heinlein *In Dimension*, Page 66

(*Imagination*, November 1953)

A Tenderfoot in Space (1958; NHOL G.133)

That last Boy Scout story was about an Eagle Scout; this one is about the lowest rank, a Tenderfoot. Or seeing as he was a dog, maybe a “Tenderpaw”.

If you thought Dan Davis was all soft eyed about his kitty Pete (*The Door Into Summer*, 1957; NHOL G.131), the story of Nixie the mutt should reassure the canineophiles. Nixie can't go to Venus. Well, maybe he can, at a risk to his life. The Dog Star shines on his good fortune, and once on Venus he returns the favor for his very loyal master. If you want a friend, get a dog — and when the lad who did so much for his friend was in dire peril, this one was a friend indeed.

This is apparently the published version and not the longer original, which was titled “Tenderfoot on Venus”. As you can see, this was written about eight months after *The Door Into Summer*. (*Boy's Life*, May-July 1958)

— **All You Zombies** — (1959; NHOL G.139)

Readers who had thought that “By His Bootstraps” was economical and recursive learned that they didn't know from economy and recursiveness upon reading this one. In fact, it's the ultimate version of Roger Ebert's **Mysterious Objects Antecedents Myth** [Ebert's *Bigger Little Movie Glossary*, Page 133]. A guy in a bar confesses his wildest story; he was not only a woman

once, but a woman scorned and then de-childed. The bartender knows that problem very well, surprisingly well, and has an answer for his problem. . . and works for a time-traveling security organization to boot, one that recruits unusual people in interesting ways.

Panshin exuberantly and enthusiastically characterized it as “A wild story with every knot tied.” [*Heinlein In Dimension*, Page 94] Heinlein himself said, “I hope that I have written in that story the Farthest South in time paradoxes,” [*Grumbles From the Grave*, Page 156, letter of December 5, 1958 to his agent Lurton Blassingame] and he has been proven right so far. (*Fantasy & Science Fiction*, March 1959)

This collection demonstrates the growth and consistency of its author. He had the same core ideas from beginning to end. (As should have been noted by comparing the conceptual similarities of *For Us, the Living with To Sail Beyond the Sunset* (1987; NHOL G.201).) What he did learn was the application of them; it is now possible to get a complete view of his writing, the “stinkeroos” now being available.

The Science Fiction Book Club has a program of reissuing Heinlein; for example, most of the juveniles are now available in combined volumes. These are:

Four Frontiers (with *Rocket Ship Galileo*, *Space Cadet*, *Red Planet*, and *Farmer In the Sky*)

To the Stars (with *Between Planets*, *The Rolling Stones*, *Starman Jones*, and *The Star Beast*)

Infinite Possibilities (with *Tunnel In the Sky*, *Time For the Stars*, and *Citizen of the Galaxy*)

Have Space Suit — Will Travel and *Starship Troopers* are available separately. With those (by the way, did I mention that Heinlein's *Children*, the collection of my essays on the juveniles, will be out from Advent almost immediately?) and this, the reader can see the scope and development of Heinlein's skills and opinions.

Entries from the New Heinlein Opus List

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CHALLENGER

by Johnny Carruthers

It was twenty years ago today . . .

Has it really been 20 years since the *Challenger* disaster?

I remember where I was January 28, 1986. You could ask anyone 25 or older where they were and what they were doing when *Challenger* exploded, and they would be able to tell you without a moment's hesitation.

I was at home. I wasn't even watching the liftoff. If I'm remembering correctly, NBC was the only network covering the launch, and I was watching something on ABC. I had completely forgotten that the launch was scheduled for that day.

The first indication I had that something had happened was when ABC interrupted program with a special bulletin (or whatever term they used.) I was wondering what was going on, and I started flipping the channels. I flipped to NBC, and that's where I stayed the rest of the day.

I remember seeing shots of the Kennedy Space Center, and something in the back of my head said, "Oh yeah, *Challenger* is launching today." NBC then replayed the explosion. It was probably the first time that shot was replayed that day — the first of all too many times. I don't remember how many times I saw the explosion that day. It seems like it was at least a hundred times, though in reality it must have been far less. It really doesn't matter how many times I saw it, because that first time was more than enough to forever sear the image in my mind.

As I watched the coverage over the next six or seven hours, I remember hoping and praying that the astronauts somehow managed to survive the explosion. At the same time, another part of me already had come to grips with the cold reality that none of them could have survived.

It took some time, but the launches resumed. I'm glad they weren't brought to a halt. That the last thing any of the *Challenger* astronauts would have wanted. It's also the last thing that the *Columbia* astronauts would have wanted after their shuttle broke up on re-entry a few years ago. Space exploration is, and will probably always be, a dangerous prospect. We can minimize the danger as much as possible, but we will never be able to completely

eliminate it. But just because the danger exists doesn't mean that we shouldn't go forward.

It was Tsiolkovsky who said (and I hope I'm not mangling the quote too badly), "Earth is the cradle of mankind, but we cannot stay in the cradle forever."

IN MEMORIAM MISSION 51-L

Gregory Jarvis
Christa McAuliffe
Ronald McNair
Ellison Onizuka
Judith Resnick
Richard Scobee
Michael Smith

OV-099 *Challenger*

CATCH-23

Review by Joseph T Major of
STARSHIP: MUTINY

by Mike Resnick
(Pyr; 2005; ISBN 1-59102-337-8; \$25.00)

Resnick writes of people in the boundary between settled and wild lands mostly because that's where the most interesting conflict is, and without conflict, what you have is several hundred pages of paper spoiled with some ink.

Wilson Cole, his protagonist, knows from conflict. Some of it even against the enemy. Perhaps it's a symptom of the doom that came to humanity (this novel is, by the way, set in his *Birthingright* universe, which includes most of his writings) that Cole seems to be unable to get a patron in the high command. Understandably, a repeat hero (and a survivor to boot) is an embarrassment for the neatness of the files. Bureaucracies seem to prefer dead heroes, who can't embarrass them. (If Captain Oates had gone back with Evans, Lashly, and Crean, Captain Scott's reputation might have had a little trouble, for example.)

If they can't bust him out and the enemy won't cooperate in bumping him off, then the best thing to do is to dump him. Therefore Commander Cole, a former Commanding Officer no less, finds himself relegated to Second Officer of the no longer so good ship *Theodore Roosevelt*, a junkheap relegated to backwater patrolling.

Understandably, a ship tabbed as a dumping ground for troublemakers is likely to be less than efficiently run.

He does his best, finding a few members of the crew who are wanting to save themselves anyhow. However, weariness and sheer envy at the top are a problem that can't be handled. Then, worse yet, Cole finds that he is lacking in reserves when a resolution to a crisis turns out to have further ramifications.

Now the one famous SF space warfare commander would have turned the *Theodore Roosevelt* into a top-notch ship, confronted an enemy ten times as strong, and eliminated them, losing 98+% of the crew (and possibly an extremity or organ of her own to boot) in the process. The other would have connived at some dreadful loss of the crew and afterwards sat in his quarters whining about how he was so loathsome and evil that he should kill himself but he couldn't because he would go to Hell for that even though he was going to anyway. Cole is a little more realistic. In spite of a less-than-supportive commander, he takes on a crisis situation, where all the alternatives are bad ones, takes the least-bad one, and lives with the consequences/.

Which doesn't do him much good when his superiors are willing to abandon him to suffer all the consequences. However, his subordinates have a more realistic view of the situation, and since both they and their ship are sort of on the discard anyhow, they take abrupt and not quite formal action, which will lead to many interesting events in the Inner Frontier when this is . . . **[To Be Continued]**

UP FROM CONJURY

Review by Joseph T Major of
DISAPPEARING NIGHTLY

by Laura Resnick
(Luna; 2005; ISBN 0-373-80233-1;
\$13.95)

Esther is suffering for her art. Before this book ends, though, the reader will be wondering which art (or Art) Esther is suffering for.

The filial part of the family is writing about the daughter of Wilson Cole and her search for . . . no, of course not. (I got annoyed reading *The Knight and Knave of Swords* (1988) because at the end Leiber

introduced two characters, one presumably the son of Fafhrd and the other presumably the son of the Gray Mouser, and it seemed to me that he was setting up something for his son Justin to write; but Justin didn't, and in fact, according to IMDB, hasn't done anything in the field since 1990). Laura is writing about a chorine who finds abruptly that there really is magic, and she's going to be blamed for it unless she does something like right now, if not sooner.

The show *Sorcerer!* is supposed to be using real stage magic to have its heroine, Virtue (played by the obnoxious Golly Gee [there are too real stage names this silly] and understudied by the desperate Esther Diamond, our narratrix and heroine) disappear. When she really does disappear through very real magic, that's where the problem arises.

Or is it the strange letter that appears in her dressing room?

*As you value your life, do not go into
the crystal cage.*

There is Evil among us.

— *Disappearing Nightly*, Page 15

Whoever this M.Z. who wrote the note is, he must know something. And he does. But then, in the three hundred plus years since Dr. Maximillian Zadok (Oxon. 1678) took the Elixir of Life, he's had time to learn a few things. Magic not being the least of them. (But not, sorry to say, how to **make** the Elixir of Life.) And yes, there is indeed magic in the air, and no, it's not good magic.

The quest to find out who is making the magic disappearance acts have real magic disappearances leads through some of the strange and outré characters who are perfectly normal in Noo Yawk, past a Magical Collegium that is hopelessly overstretched, into the arms of Detective Connor Lopez (and you thought the Collegium was overstretched, you should see the NYPD!), and over under around and through a good bit of the sidewalks of New York. The result turns out to involve a most hopeless quest, but also a most hopeful one, and one at least will be carried on when this fun romp is . . . **[To Be Continued]**

YOU BET YOUR LIFE

Review by Joseph T Major of
THRAXAS AND THE DANCE OF

DEATH

by “Martin Scott” [Martin Millar]
(Baen; 2002, 2005;
ISBN 987-1-4165-0907-3; \$22.00)

A *Thraxas* novel
<http://www.thraxas.com>
<http://www.martinmillar.com>

When last we saw Thraxas, the finest sorcerous investigator in the city of Turai (also the **only** sorcerous investigator in the city of Turai), he was doing pretty well, having secured the election of Liustaris, Mistress of the Sky, to the leadership of the Sorcerers’ Guild and avoiding too hard a collision between *Thraxas and the Sorcerers* (2001, 2005, reviewed in *Alexiad* V. IV #5). Alas, his unerring ability to bet on the best-placed chariot in the race has brought him to penury again.

Add to that the untimely death of the best pastry cook in Turai, the quarrel between Gurd the landlord and his cook Tanrose, and Makri (don’t get me started on Makri) having to deal with her own school problems, and you have the ingredients of a prime headache. The sort of headache best solved by drinking fifteen pints or so of beer and then withdrawing upstairs to toke up with a tharsis stick.

However, first off you have to be able to **afford** fifteen pints of beer, a tharsis stick, and the back tab at the Avenging Axe. Thraxas will have to find work (the curse of the drinking class). Fortunately work presents itself.

Indeed, before long, Thraxas is up to his ears in work. Some of it even remunerative. Did I mention that the Orcs might attack at any moment, and that Lisutaris is responsible for the one remaining artifact, the green sorcerer’s stone, er jewel, that might defend Turai against it? Except, oops, she lost it at the races.

Thraxas is hired to find it. And he does. Several times. Amid assassination threats, dead thieves, strange happenings and apparitions, and Makri’s problems at school. Oh, now I have to get started on Makri. When you are a quarter-Elf, quarter-Orc, half-human with an Attitude, problems happen. Well, if it hadn’t been for her Attitude, even being the best gladiator in the orc pits wouldn’t have been enough for her to get out, much less kill her owner and his entire family. But there’s prejudice against

people of her . . . er, sex. And some people are willing to use anything to keep her down. It takes some persuasion to keep her from solving the problem in the expected matter; but that hampers Thraxas’s other job.

There’s a lot to hamper Thraxas, including dwa addicts, charges of cowardice, problems with the other barmaid Dandelion (who talks to dolphins), fires, Orcs, wizards, and the betting pool on how many people will end up dead before it’s all over. Everything comes together at Lisutaris’s great masquerade, and Thraxas really has problems, but obviously there’s more abuse remaining to be heaped upon him when this saga is . . . **[To Be Continued]**

SHE TURNED ME INTO A NEWT

Review by Joseph T Major of
CHARMED & DANGEROUS
by Candace Havens
(Berkley; 2005;
ISBN 0-425-20691-2; \$14.00)

When Bronwyn, our narrator and hero, comments about finding herself in bed next to a dead man, it’s not what you would expect in the fantasy genre (i.e., he’s not a vampire) much less the mystery one (i.e., where it would be a setup, as Maureen Johnson found in *To Sail Beyond the Sunset* (1987; NHOL G.201)).

Susan Baugh, retired librarian and former president of Louisville’s NOTA SF club, has been telling me for the past year or two that most of the good new stuff in SF & F is coming from romance writing. Considering that what passes for fantasy in the SF line seems to be stuck in the theme of “in a world without gender differences, the poor little match girl fights gender discrimination” I can see her point, but.

Harlequin Books has apparently finally recovered from the Laser Books debacle of the seventies. (This isn’t the time or the place to talk about that but let me tell you, it was something else!) Their new fantasy line is called Luna Books. I hadn’t had much luck with them until I found Laura Resnick’s entry. As one of those pre-modern fantasy heroes said, “I will drink any wine once,” so, with it was to be hoped more sense than Jurgen, I tried this out.

Bronwyn is a witch. She lives in the plains of Texas (apparently a bit away from Cross Plains) but commutes, Texas Style.

Her job, you see, is providing magical security for VIPs; currently the British Prime Minister (no no you’re supposed to bring in the Tories, the Tories!) and a sheik from Dubai. Between special tasks, she works at the local hospital, where among other things she is working on a magical potion to counteract Alzheimer’s Disease.

If this sounds a bit fantastic (i.e., like wondering how it was that everything was the same in *Jonathan Strange & Mr Norrell* (2004) when a magic king had been occupying the north country for three hundred years), well, it’s based in a very homey sort of background; a small town where people have time and space to know each other.

This is however neither melodramatic nor mundane, for in the course of her duties, Bronwyn learns a good bit about love, life, friendship, responsibility, and family. It’s a novel actually about something, that is, for all that there is International Adventure and Romantic Passion. That just makes it fun.

LIGHTNING IN THE NIGHT

Review by Joseph T Major of
THE WORLD HITLER NEVER MADE:
Alternate History and the Memory of Nazism

by Gavriel D. Rosenfeld
(Cambridge University Press; 2005;
ISBN 0-521-84506-0; \$30.00)

From the Top 59 Mistakes Made by Adolf Hitler:

1. Land War in Asia
9. Chose “Deutschland Über Alles” over “Let’s All Be There” as party slogan
10. Lost the Ark to Indiana Jones
12. Referring to Stalin as “that old Georgian fat back”
14. Free beer in munitions plants
25. Always got Churchill out of bed for conference calls
30. Strong fondness for sauerkraut and beans made General Staff avoid him constantly
40. Spent jail time planning how to conquer the world instead of his own escape.
47. Used to make prank calls to FDR asking if he had “Prince Albert in a can”
49. Got drunk on schnapps and

suggested Tojo attack the U.S. saying, “The U.S. only has twenty times your industrial power, what are you, a wimp?”

56. Alienated Chamberlain at Munich by sticking an “Invade me” sign on his back

— Compiled by Brad Templeton

I once opined that the ultimate alternate-history novel would be *Die Gewehre des Südens*, the story of how a band of time-traveling Nazis help the Confederacy win the War Between the States, by providing them with MP-44s, so that the future Nazi Germany would have an ally in their coming war. Professor Rosenfeld doesn’t quite cover the full topic; he does discuss the one popular AH topic, that of a different World War Two. Will someday someone do a book on the topic of “The World General Lee Never Made”?

Nazi imagery is today’s political pornography; with historical knowledge being so stunted and blunted, about the only thing most people know in that line is “Nazis = Bad”. Of those who do know something about the history, all too many of them adhere to unrealistic images of Nazi Germany.

There are three main foci of alternate histories of this topic; the U.S., the U.K. — and Germany itself. You’d think the authorities in that last country would be worried about the popularity of that topic among certain people, and that certain people would take to it.

Rosenfeld identifies several trends. One is “normalization”, recognizing the Nazi era as just another historical event. Another is that of collaboration; British writers for example piercing the legend of the united hostile stance against Nazism.

The alternates he covers list everything from the Super-Führer (Gloder of Stephen Fry’s *Changing History* (1996), a book that takes hundreds of pages to say what L. Sprague de Camp said in his story “Aristotle and the Gun” (1958)) all the way down to Hitler hunted (Philippe van Rjndt’s *The Trial of Adolf Hitler* (1978))). He searches in popular culture, too, listing the Hitlerian satires put forward by P. J. O’Rourke when he was editor of *National Lampoon*. (And deriding them; as befits an academic milieu, missing the point.)

He lists what I think is the best portrayal of a Nazis-victorious world, Otto Basil's *Wenn das der Führer wüßte* ["If Only the Führer Knew"], translated into English as *The Twilight Men* (1966), with its portrayal of the irrational Nazi world, obsessed with pseudo-science, laden with Aryan kitsch, splintered amid competing National Socialist sects, each the truest of *Führertreu*. And of course utterly proud of having removed the threat of World Jewry. This is far truer to the Nazi theme than the super-scientific Reich of Brad Linaweaver's *Moon of Ice* (1988) or the angst-ridden "Ach Mein Gott, we killed the Jews!" discovery of Robert Harris's *Fatherland* (1992). No matter how implausible the point of divergence, though.

There are some issues. Rosenfeld never quite seems to get to the problem of the "demonization", or how throwing around comparisons to Hitler does far more to normalize and indeed trivialize the Nazi era than, say *The Iron Dream*.

Some of the more technical historians find the fantasizing of these works hard to take. Whether it be the miraculous removal of naval opposition and logistic difficulties found in such works as Kenneth Macksey's *Invasion* (1980) or the curious why not implicit in the non-ascension of Gloder of *Changing History*, there are issues. Indeed, the ultimate example of this is Gary Gygax's *Victorious German Arms* (1973), where the Germans make all the right decisions, and the Allies do all the wrong things. (Stirling is not original.)

"The World Hitler Never Made" has been used in a variety of ways, from power-wish-fulfillment to vengeance on enemies. Those who actually wish to analyze the circumstances and postulate the results, like David Downing in *The Moscow Option* (1978) [where the Germans and Japanese get whole bunches of breaks and still lose], or Cecil Lewis Troughton "C. S. Forrester" Smith in "If Hitler Had Invaded England" (1960) [where the Germans get the possible breaks and not the impossible ones, and still lose], don't have the cachet and don't get noticed. They don't have the thrill of Nazism, it's not, like, kewl to have the grody old Allies, like, win.

From the Top 59 Mistakes Made by Adolf Hitler:
54. Being born

SPY/COUNTERSPY

Review by Joseph T Major of
THE GUY LIDDELL DIARIES,
Volume I 1939-1942
Edited by Nigel West
(Routledge; 2005;
ISBN 0-415-35213-4; \$40.00)
<http://www.guyliddellidiaries.com>
<http://www.nigelwest.com>

Pentimento Paradigm.

Pentimento is when images from an old painting seep through and become visible in a newer picture that has been painted over the old. The Pentimento Paradigm is when what we know about a filmmaker or actor seeps into our perception of his film work. Example: Any old Rock Hudson movie, now that his private life is no longer private. Being aware of the reality behind the fiction may add to the complexity of the drama (Taylor and Burton in *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?*) or distract from its intentions (Woody and Mia in *Husbands and Wives*).

MERWEN GROTE, *St. Louis*
— *Ebert's Bigger Little Movie Glossary*,
Pages 159-150

This sort of insight is, of course, hardly limited to movies. For example:

24 September

I dined with Anthony Blunt and Guy Burgess at the Reform Club. . .
— *The Guy Liddell Diaries*, Volume I, Page 98

Reading in this diary the number of times when Liddell says he called Kim Philby about some matter only adds to that pentimento.

Guy Liddell was director of B Division of the Security Service, MI-5, during the Second World War. In this position, he oversaw much of the counter-espionage effort of the war. In particular, his field of authority included the managing of the Double-Cross Agents, that exotic and devious band of men and women who so thoroughly hoaxed the Nazis.

As with any person involved in that effort, he was branded the Fourth (or Fifth or

perhaps even Sixth or more . . .) Man, the unknown Soviet mole in the British intelligence services. Donald McCormick (who wrote under the name of "Richard Deacon", thoroughly bewildering fans of *The Dick Van Dyke Show*, who wondered why the actor who played Alan Brady's pompous putz of a brother-in-law should dabble in spy journalism), for example, speculated in *The Greatest Treason* (1989) that such had been the case, and he was joined by John Costello in *Mask of Treachery* (1988; West erroneously calls the book *Mask of Deception*). Later on, in his analytical history of the Soviet manipulation of Western public opinion, *Double Lives* (1994, 1995, 2004), Stephen Koch accuses Liddell of a number of crimes. He cites in particular the case of the playwright Em Jo Basshe, who was accused of being a Soviet agent, based on information from MI-5, at the time when Basshe was apparently in the process of breaking with the Soviets (*Double Lives*, Pages 246-249).

Liddell had an unexpected defender, however. Peter Wright, one of the arch mole-hunters and mole-publicists, co-author of *Their Trade Is Treachery* (1981, uncredited collaboration with Chapman Pincher) and the notorious work *Spycatcher* (1987; with Paul Greengrass), said that anyone who had read Liddell's diaries could not possibly suspect him of having betrayed his country. (West modestly glosses over his own *Mole Hunt* (1987) in which he also exculpates Liddell, but then he had in that book accused Graham Mitchell, who was cleared by the information provided by Oleg Gordievsky)

No one outside the service could have had that chance. Until now.

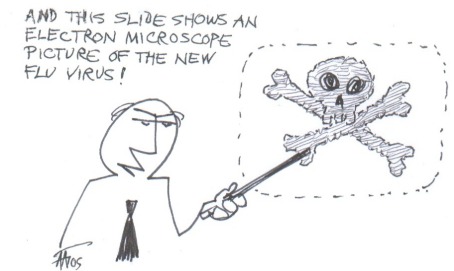
What surprises one about the diaries is the mundaneness of it all, in a sense. This isn't the vast knows-all controls-all Intelligence Agency of thrillers and conspiracies. What Liddell and his colleagues (well except for the Communist moles) are doing is trying to handle a difficult and desperate situation as best they can, gradually striving through to a sort of success.

Where the surprises are is in the confirmations. Ever since J. C. Masterman revealed the German questionnaire with all the questions about Pearl Harbor (*The Double-Cross System* (1972)) and its

receptient Agent TRICYCLE, Dusko Popov, popped his mouth off about it (*Spy/Counterspy* (1974)), conspiracists and theorists have been slamming each other over the head about whether or not it was true, or just a big fat Ragusan lie. Yet, Liddell said, ruefully, "TRICYCLE's questionnaire is now in our possession. It shows quite clearly that in August last the Germans were very anxious to get as full particulars as possible about Pearl Harbor." [Page 202, entry for 17 December 1941]

So much of the entries refer to internal matters. The attack on Pearl Harbor, let alone the change of government, are hardly mentioned. One thinks of Charles Stross's *The Atrocity Archives* (2004) where the heroic Bob Howard, having saved the world, has to explain why he worked overtime without having first filled out a request slip

What Liddell does is note the interaction, sometimes even positive, of different organizations with different aims. So much of this is meetings with other people in government; but in those interagency sit-downs, one finds things such as about "Felix Cowgill came to see me about the Lisbon agent Pujol," [Page 238, entry for 26 March 1942], which begins the tale of Juan Pujol Garcia, Agent GARBO, the spy who kept the German Army away from Normandy (for which see West's own *GARBO* (1985)).



Nigel West has been doing a yeoman share of work in bringing to public light first the people and now the documents that explain the real story of the secret war of World War Two. It was a lot different than fiction, and far more interesting and complicated.

The referencing and indexing are not quite up to what they could be. For example, Juan Pujol Garcia is not cross-referenced with his code names.

But then, this isn't really an introductory work. The more we know, the more we understand, and the more silliness is refuted. Or ought to be.

CVLTVRE MADE STVPID

Review by Joseph T Major of
THE GRIZZLY MAZE:
Timothy Treadwell's Fatal Obsession with Alaskan Bears

by Nick Jans
(Dutton; 2005; ISBN 0-525-94886-4;
\$24.95)

Readers of Tom Weller's inimitable *Cvltvre Made Stvpid* (1987), the sequel to the Hugo-winning *Science Made Stupid: How to Discomprehend the World Around Us* (1985), will remember the famous Shakespearian stage direction, "*They are eaten by a bear*".

The fate of the late Timothy Treadwell, hero of the documentary *Grizzly Man*, sometimes inspires the application of a less comical science fictional quotation: "Just think of it as evolution in action." Yet he wanted it that way. This is not a sympathetic figure of speech; in a letter to a bear biologist who was president of the International Bear association, Timothy said that he "would be honored to end up as grizzly shit." [Page 42] If he didn't, it was because more responsible game wardens killed the bear that ate him while it was still digesting.

Treadwell — actually his birth name was "Timothy Dexter", but he preferred Treadwell — had reinvented himself in other ways. He had begun as one of those middle-class kids who takes to drugs because life is like so bor-ing. But then, he found himself.

Timothy was a likeable person, affable, the sort of man who works his way into people's good graces and then departs with most of their assets. He soon found his metier, though, with the bears of Alaska. He would work in California during the winter, then head north and settle down with the bears.

As his reputation as a bear whisperer grew, he became known as a lecturer. He would go from school to party to grove, lecturing on how his friends the bears were just big gentle folks in fur outfits being persecuted by those stupid redneck hunters.

As I've said, he was attractive to women

and vice versa. Amie Hugenard was a surgical physician's assistant with a master's degree in biology — hardly your flutterbrained type. She was also interested in animals, with a strong mystical streak, so a bear whisperer would be just her sort of man.

On October 5, 2003, Amie was with Timothy in his place, so to speak, the Grizzly Maze of Katmai National Park in Alaska. He was, as usual, close to the bears. Shortly thereafter, one got fatally close.

Most painfully of all, when he began shouting for help, Amie turned on the video camera inside their sleeping tent and made a recording of the sounds of his death. After which a bear got her.

Jans works at presenting an even-handed picture of the man's life. To do so, though, he had to interview biologists who worked with bears and rangers who dealt with bears. Including the ones who, for example, shot the bear at Timothy's last camp that had a stomach full of human flesh. The biologists were even less approving; Timothy took a misleading and misguided approach to dealing with bears, they thought, a dangerous one that would harm others, both bear and human. The biologist Jans quotes describes his presentation as too disorganized to be worth considering scientifically. And did I mention that he kept on calling them "grizzly bears" when the Katmai population of bears is more properly called **brown** bears?

There is a lamentable human tendency to assume that nature is inherently good and incapable of harm. I have stood beside a woman who beckoned to John Henry, the famously aggressive Thoroughbred racing super-champion at the Kentucky Horse Park, asking him to come out of the stall to her (I moved away). Projecting our beliefs on other people can be problematic; doing so on animals can sometimes be even worse.

A CASE OF IDENTITY

Review by Joseph T Major of Ann Rule's
WORTH MORE DEAD
and Other True Cases

(Pocket Books; 2005;
ISBN 0-7434-4874-X; \$7.99)

"Ann Rule's True Crime Files #10"
<http://www.annrules.com>

I smiled and shook my head. "I can quite understand your thinking so." I said. "Of course, in your position of unofficial adviser and helper to everybody who is absolutely puzzled, throughout three continents, you are brought in contact with all that is strange and bizarre. But here" — I picked up the morning paper from the ground — "let us put it to a practical test. Here is the first heading upon which I come. 'A husband's cruelty to his wife.' There is half a column of print, but I know without reading it that it is all perfectly familiar to me. There is, of course, the other woman, the drink, the push, the blow, the bruise, the sympathetic sister or landlady. The crudest of writers could invent nothing more crude."

"Indeed, your example is an unfortunate one for your argument," said Holmes, taking the paper and glancing his eye down it. "This is the Dundas separation case, and, as it happens, I was engaged in clearing up some small points in connection with it. The husband was a teetotaler, there was no other woman, and the conduct complained of was that he had drifted into the habit of winding up every meal by taking out his false teeth and hurling them at his wife, which, you will allow, is not an action likely to occur to the imagination of the average story-teller. Take a pinch of snuff, Doctor, and acknowledge that I have scored over you in your example."

— "A Case of Identity"

Admittedly, Holmes also said that "There is a strong family resemblance about misdeeds, and if you have all the details of a thousand at your finger ends, it is odd if you can't unravel the thousand and first." (*A Study in Scarlet*)

Thus, the typical "worth more dead" case would have the spouse taking out uncommonly large insurance policies and then the deceased would perish during the grace period (the thirty days after the premium was due and unpaid), the precipitous demand for a death certificate, the rushed burial, the questionable grief, the

rapid relocation . . . but these are the "thousand and first" cases, and if there is nothing so eccentric here as damaging a perfectly good set of false teeth by throwing them across the dining table, there are enough unique features of these murders to make them out of the ordinary.

Roland Pitre was, one would think, bound for success, combining good intelligence with the firm self-discipline that service in the Marines will engender. And yet, because he thought himself so superior, and that not one but two Significant Others were **Worth More Dead** than alive to him, he is in prison.

The first S.O. happened to be someone else's husband, the husband of a sometime lover. When he died at the hands of an intruder, one who had thoughtfully locked the children in the closet, the police began to wonder. It turned out that the dead man's wife had been having an affair with Roland, and one of his friends had been the killer.

Then, when he got out of prison (a very short term, too) for that, he walked into the arms of yet another prisoner groupie. They got married. A while later, she disappeared.

After that his family situation became even more confusing. Roland had had a brief marriage, to a woman who already had children. The marriage broke up, and after breaking up her marriage he took up with yet another woman — who, it seemed, was willing at first to help Roland kidnap his late wife's son. That one they got him on.

Along about 2004, after he had done a few years for that, the police did some DNA testing on the body of the late wife, to learn that he was responsible. Now if he should live so long, he will be in prison well into this century.

The sort of man who is superficially charming and secretly self-centered is all too common. Ted Bundy was merely the most notorious, and the most energetic of late. By the time one finds out that the latest love is a Roland Pitre, or a Ted Bundy, it may be too late.

Gary Ridgway, the Green River Killer, displayed certain habits, or pathologies, in his depredations. For example, he took his victims' bodies to selected places. Before Ridgway, another killer made his selected victim have that feeling that "**It's Really Weird Looking At My Own Grave**". In 1979, the body of a young woman was

found; a police search turned up her identity. Shortly thereafter, one young woman reported having been dragged off the street and raped, having been tied up like the dead woman had been, and talked herself out of further abuse. Then a second escaped after similar treatment. The first rape victim identified the spot where she had been taken; the same place where the dead woman's body had been found. The rapist-murderer was caught and convicted before he got started on a really serious spree.

Teresa had had an unstable life, what with being in foster care, four marriages, and two children, which may have been why she remained emotionally a self-centered teen. She finally became an **Old Man's Darling**, as the mistress of Denver automobile dealer Justyn Rosen. But Rosen wouldn't give up his wife, and when he told Teresa they had to split up, she became furious and self-pitying. So furious that she shot and killed Rosen, being killed herself by two policemen in a shootout.

What made her life so sad was that she never grew beyond her childhood. She looked for an ideal male image, someone who would stay with her, and made herself so hard to live with that in the end each lover would leave her. She was pitiable, and yet dangerous.

Debra Sweiger was a nurse, and the creator of a contract nursing service. Larry Sturholm was a popular Seattle TV personality and the author of a book on a famous Washington train robbery (edited by Ann Rule, before she did her own book). Bill Pawlyk was a Boeing executive and a Naval Reserve officer. The problem was that Debra dated both of them. Bill wanted to commit; Debra didn't. One day he snapped and stabbed Debra and his rival, Larry (who was married to someone else, making things worse). Then he tried to cut his own wrists. Thus giving the police the creepy experience of seeing the dead man in the bathtub sit up.

There are no clear answers. Why should people so well off come apart like that? Such good lives and it was **All For Nothing**.

Holmes might be more familiar with "A husband's cruelty to his wife" in the final case; while there was no drink, no push, no blow, no bruise, Carolyn Durall was a **Desperate Housewife** entrapped by a controlling husband. He was, as were so

many of the people in this book, a self-centered and demanding person. Carolyn found release in organization, which led to work, which led to the prospects of escape. But before she could file for a divorce, she disappeared.

Her husband believed, seemingly, that he was proof against implication. Everything leaves traces, though, from blood in the house to recoverable computer files with bits of information on how to carry out a killing. In spite of his story that he was kidnapped by the real killers, he was convicted. Then the jury found out that he had led the police to her body.

What people are worth to others varies. Sometimes it is crude money, sometimes it's a thrill, sometimes it's freedom, sometimes it's an obstacle to be removed. The imagination of the average story-teller is far less expansive than reality, for stories have to make sense and have an ending.

SCOTT FREE

Review by Joseph T Major of
**AMERICAN TABOO:
A Murder In the Peace Corps**
by Phillip Weiss
(HarperCollins; 2004;
ISBN 0-06-009686-1; \$25.95)

William Gaylin's *The Killing of Bonnie Garland* (1982) is a memorial to the caring therapeutic society. In 1977, two Yale students had to deal with a breakup. Bonnie Garland wanted to see other guys. Her Significant Other, Richard Herrin couldn't live with that, so he killed her with a hammer.

It's not what you do, it's who you know. Thanks to a defense fund raised by fellow Yalies, keen psychiatric testimony, and public courtroom support and adoration by a convent full of nuns, Richard was found guilty only of manslaughter. He got out of prison in 1995.

The year before that murder, another couple had a similar encounter. Dennis Priven was even more fortunate; Deborah Gardner even less so. *American Taboo* is the story of a crime that was remade so as not to embarrass the Corps.

The Peace Corps is one of those Kennedy-era creations that is not what it promised to be but of some value anyhow. It traces its roots to *The Ugly American*

(1958); like the title character, the Peace Corps volunteers would work among the common people, sharing their ordinary lives, without diplomatic privileges.

At the end of 1975, Deborah Ann Gardner, a pretty American, went out to the Kingdom of Tonga to teach biology. Already there was Dennis Priven, a math and physics teacher.

The volunteers socialized with each other, but then Tongans have a easygoing nature and they tried to understand these crazy foreigners. If you want to know where the *Star Trek: The Next Generation* people got that one script idea about "the *Enterprise* visits a planet where some trivial act incurs the death penalty" — one of those script ideas they had to shoot all of when the writers' strike left them with no new scripts and all the on-spec ones — the Polynesian *tabu* system gives one an idea.

Deborah got along well; the Tongans liked her, her fellow Peace Corps volunteers thought she was one of the bunch, and she marked the good and bad of it all.

Then, on October 14, 1976, she was stabbed to death. Dennis Priven was arrested before too long and that was when the trouble began.

The Peace Corps Administrator for the area was, not surprisingly, a political appointee. She wanted to cover up the mess. (Weiss implies that it was because she was a self-centered ex-model, but I can't imagine a academic thirdworldie being any less defensive of The Corps.) She brought in a psychiatric expert witness to explain that Dennis really hadn't known what he was doing. After all, he had said that she was evil and deserved to die and he really really had been intending to kill himself afterwards but they caught him too soon.

The Tongans didn't really feel up to it. There hadn't been a murder trial there in years, and no one really wanted to be responsible for having a man hanged. All this made it easy to acquit the defendant.

So Dennis was returned to the United States — where he walked. He'd already been acquitted, see?

The therapeutic society is hard on the survivors of murder victims; the murderer is alive, he gets understanding and support, while the survivors are shunned as primitive vengeance-seekers. Accordingly, Bonnie Garland's parents worked on building victim

support groups. Another prominent survivor, Dominick Dunne, whose daughter Dominique had the same fate as Bonnie and Deborah, wrote about it (*Justice: Crime, Trials, and Punishments* (2001)), and managed to put the murderer in fear. (Dominick's ex-wife, Dominique's mother, passed out flyers at restaurants where her daughter's killer worked reminding patrons of that fact.) Deborah Gardner's family didn't have these securities.

Any organization puts the survival of the organization higher in priority than the performance of its ostensible task. The scandal of one Peace Corps volunteer killing another might have destroyed the Peace Corps; far better to get over it and go on.

Deborah Gardner's family didn't have that option. Weiss describes his research in interleaved chapters. Almost the first thing Deborah's mother said to him was, "I just wanted to make sure you're not Dennis."

No, none of us are Dennis, none of us are Richard Herrin, none of us are John Sweeney [Dominique Dunne's murderer]. They are all our burden and our fear.

WHEN FIRST WE PRACTICE

Review by Joseph T Major of
**BATTLE FOR EUROPE:
How the Duke of Marlborough
Masterminded the Defeat of the French at
Blenheim**
by Charles Spencer
[the Right Honourable Charles Edward
Maurice Spencer, Earl Spencer]
(John Wiley & Sons; 2004;
ISBN 0-471-71996-X; \$30.00)

SUN TZU said:

15. If a general who heeds my strategy is employed he is certain to win. Retain him! When one who refuses to listen to my strategy is employed, he is certain to be defeated. Dismiss him!
16. Having paid heed to the advantages of my plans, the general must create situations which will contribute to their accomplishment. By "situations" I mean that he should act expediently in accordance with what is advantageous and so control

- the balance.
17. All warfare is based on deception.
 18. Therefore, when capable, feign incapacity; when active, inactivity.
 19. When near, make it appear you are far away; when far away, that you are near.
 20. Offer the enemy a bait to lure him; feign disorder and strike him.
 21. When he concentrates, prepare against him; where he is strong, avoid him.
- *Ping Fa (The Art of War)*, Book One “Estimates”

John Churchill, Duke of Marlborough, had an inimitable way of getting books of praise written about himself. The biography by his even greater descendant Winston S. Churchill is now not alone. The “S.” stands for “Spencer”, you see, and the heir of the junior line of Marlborough’s daughter and heiress Anne Churchill Spencer, Countess of Sunderland, has now joined his illustrious relative in writing of their glorious ancestor. However, I don’t think either of them points out how Marlborough followed the recommendations of Sun Tzu.

Spencer begins with a description of the general state of Europe and in particular France. It is somewhat disconcerting to learn the degree to which France was militarized a century before the levee en masse.

Louis XIV was what Sun Tzu called a “Hegemonic King”, and a remarkably well-served one. He had praise for a number of people, even those among his allies. For a while, England was in those ranks; and he appreciated one Ensign John Churchill. They call this irony. (Especially after the bit that Dumas left out of the *Three Musketeers* books about how d’Artagnan and Churchill saved the life of the Duke of Monmouth. Really.) But the world shifted and England found itself fighting the Hegemonic State, France.

Internal politics were as problematic as external ones, and Spencer lists several problems. One was his ancestor’s well-known avarice. The first Sir Winston Churchill, the Duke’s father, had been fined very heavily for backing the Cavaliers, and

his son never quite got over the feeling that a few thousand spare pounds in the vaults was always a good idea.

Another was his friends. In a counter-zeitgeist attitude, Marlborough married for love, to the beautiful Sarah Jenyns (or “Jennings”), and remained faithful. (Spencer could use in this case the example of the second thing the Duke did after getting back to England, home, and Sarah after one campaign; he took off his boots. Really.) And Sarah had a friend in an important place: the Palace. This wouldn’t be the last connection between the royal family and the Churchills, of course.

A third was international relations. The traditional English attitude to such war was to stitch together a coalition, and this was no exception. On the negative side, there were the Dutch Field Deputies, who combined ignorance with forwardness. (The most infamous case being that of Field Deputy Slagenberg, who kept Marlborough from winning the battle of Waterloo. Really.)

Not all the wogs were quite so obnoxious. Indeed, one of the best allies had been born, raised, and educated in France. However, Louis had decided that his cousin Eugene de Savoy-Carignan was a natural-born abbé, and ridiculed his military ambitions. Prince Eugene gave him considerable arguments to the contrary, and much opportunity to regret the insults.

SUN TZU said:

6. That you may march a thousand li without wearying yourself is because you travel where there is no enemy.
7. To be certain to take what you attack is to attack a place the enemy does not protect. To be certain to hold what you defend is to defend a place the enemy does not attack.
8. Therefore, against those skilled in attack, an enemy does not know where to defend; against the experts in defence, the enemy does not know where to attack.
9. Subtle and insubstantial, the expert leaves no trace; divinely mysterious, he is inaudible. Thus he is master

of his enemy’s fate.

10. He whose advance is irresistible plunges into his enemy’s positions; he who in withdrawal cannot be pursued moves so swiftly that he cannot be overtaken.

11. When I wish to give battle, my enemy, even though protected by high walls and deep moats, cannot help but engage me, for I attack a position he must succour.

12. When I wish to avoid battle, I may defend myself simply by drawing a line on the ground; the enemy will be unable to attack me because I divert him from going where he wishes.

— *Ping Fa (The Art of War)*, Book Six “Weaknesses and Strengths”

In the march down the Rhine, which was a lot more than 500 kilometers (1000 li), Marlborough made good use of his enemies’ weaknesses and his strengths. To begin with, he had to deceive his own allies the Dutch into believing that that year’s campaign would be along the Moselle.

That also helped confuse the French, which was convenient. Louis massed his troops there, reducing the reinforcements intended for Tallard in Bavaria.

Then there was the subordinate problem. Not the Dutch this time, but the Imperial subordinate, Prince Louis of Baden. A general so useless that he’s worth giving up ten thousand troops to get rid of is one thing, but being able to get rid of him diplomatically is quite another.

But then, in spite of everything, the Allies met the Franco-Bavarians in Bavaria, at the little town of Höchstadt. The Bavarians had the home team advantage, their foe was deep into hostile territory. They had the backing of Marshal Tallard and behind him King Louis, the French, the premier military power of Europe, putting the enemy in a desperate position. How could they lose?

SUN TZU said:

47. To assemble the army and throw it into a desperate position is the business of the

general.

48. He leads the army deep into hostile territory and there releases the trigger.

— *Ping Fa (The Art of War)*, Book Eleven “The Nine Varieties of Ground”

Well, they did. Marlborough was in command of the battle from the beginning, by his brilliant maneuvers and effort making the French and Bavarians do not what they needed to do but what he needed them to do. The result was a stunning victory that knocked Bavaria out of the war completely.

Spencer has had to assume the reader doesn’t necessarily know what’s what; he describes in detail many of the most elementary items. This book is not, therefore, primarily for the expert. Rather, its primary appeal is to the reader who wants to know why the palace where Winston Churchill chose to be born and to marry was named after a small town in Germany. How did Marlborough fight?

SUN TZU said:

13. When campaigning, be swift as the wind; in leisurely march, majestic as the forest; in raiding and plundering, like fire; in standing, firm as the mountains.

— *Ping Fa (The Art of War)*, Book Seven “Maneuver”

MARCONI

by Joe

It all started that day we went to see Robley, my WWI vet stepcousin. Robley was not in. However, it was Yard Sale Day in his neighborhood and we found enough to entertain ourselves. Including one guy who was selling a Linksys wireless router for \$20.

Time passed. Gradually, as we got used to the DSL connection, it became a better and better idea to have a local wireless network. I tried to get the router set up but it just didn’t seem to go. Finally, in January, Grant got enough free time to help me.

The computer turned out to have had some interesting unanticipated disconnections. This involved tipping the computer over more than once to get at the ports in back,

Once we got the network set up (it turns out that there's another one in the area) we began to configure my laptop computer. Which included downloading antivirus software, since thus far the laptop had not been hit by viruses but . . . Grant recommends Grisoft, a Czech firm that provides free anti-virus software:

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

Lisa's computer turned out to have some funny problems in recognizing its connection hardware. The solution to that would be to re-install Windows 98®TM SM Bill Gates is GOD! but there was one little problem. We couldn't find the CD. Therefore, Grant had to go prepare a new one, which with one thing and another took him until Wednesday night.

The next Sunday Grant came again. I had re-installed the operating system, and with great labor we managed to install the new drive. Which after all our labor (the switch to pop a disk from the drive was too short on the new drive) still didn't work!

In other connections, the computer now recognized the Ethernet board which we had been using for some time. However, the wireless connection was still a mystery. New BIOS will be in order, looks like.

On Monday I bought a new laptop. The two laptops recognize the wireless network just fine.

THE ANNUAL VACCINATION

Yesterday, Saturday, January 14, we took four of the cats in for their yearly shots. This duty cannot be evaded, since Animal Control knows where all responsible pet owners live and how many animals they claim responsibility for. This time it was comparatively painless.

We lured two of the cats, Elfling and Gemellus, in by the simple expedient of leaving the bedroom door open. The other two Joe snared and brought upstairs. I then shoved C'Mell and Delenn into the bathroom as they are generally the worst about going into their cages. Joe came upstairs and we secured Elfling and Gemellus in their cages.

Then I knelt down by the bathroom door. Joe took the backup spot behind me and very cautiously I opened the bathroom door. Delenn ducked through but was unable to evade four hands. We shoved her into the

cage quickly before she had a chance to scratch us badly trying to escape. C'Mell went making likewise. At this point Delenn began making distress calls which we managed to ignore.

We lugged the cages downstairs, secured them in the car and away we went. Snow began to fall as Joe started the car. We shrugged and hoped it would deter others from getting to the vet as early as we were. We arrived at the vet and found that indeed there were still many empty parking spots. We were able to leave less than two hours later with our animals.

— Lisa

What Lisa fails to mention was that when we entered the bathroom in search of C'Mell she was nowhere to be found. Unless she could teleport we were sunk. We looked in all the cupboards, without result. However, a second look under the sink revealed that she had pulled out the lower drawer and was hiding behind it. She was unwillingly extracted and confined.

We arrived at the vet's just before seven in the morning. I haven't driven at seven in the morning on Saturdays since I gave up the paper route.

The vet's treatment room had a poster of a ferret. Evidently they are getting more popular as pets.

— Joe

What Shall We Do With the Skull of Nicephoros the First? (A.D. 1014)

So they've finally recovered it, after two centuries, the infamous cup made out of the skull of Nicephoros the First, from which the inhuman Bulgars forced our ambassadors to drink, to the everlasting shame of our Empire.

He wasn't a bad ruler, this Nicephoros. He greatly improved the condition of the state, especially finances, and even won a victory in the field, before being suckered into chasing the enemy deep into the mountains, where, amid sunless ravines, they made short work of him.

Now our glorious Basil has utterly crushed the Bulgarian army, blinding the survivors, sparing only one eye of one man in a hundred, so he can lead the other ninety-nine home. They say that when the Bulgar king Samuel saw his soldiers returned to him thus, he went mad and died.

So Nicephoros is avenged. Should his skull then be laid to rest, with solemn prayer and ceremony? But, look — that gold plating is *expensive*, and, barbaric though it is, the workmanship is *exquisite*. The gems dazzle my eyes! To the treasury, then. Nicephoros was a treasury official before he was emperor. He'll understand.

— Darrell Schweitzer

A FISTFUL OF SKY

by Nina Kiriki Hoffman
(2002; Ace; \$23.95 hc)

Book Review by E. B. Frohvet

Gypsum LaZelle had come to admit herself the untalented child of a magical family. Thus she ignored the teaching figuring she -would not need it. At twenty, far past the usual age of transition, she burned with fever and had reluctantly to accept that she was gifted with the unkind power of curses. Gyp's transition promised to be among the more interesting in family lore, with help from Great-Uncle Tobias, her brother Flint (who could channel her curses into making brownies), and Aunt Hermina's computer, which helpfully re-programmed Gypsum's mind. For once, Gyp could compete on equal terms with her family. The question was: did she want to?

All of Hoffman's writing is about the intersection of people and magic, and the often unplanned consequences thereof. The effect is less narrative plotting, more stream of consciousness; if Jack Kerouac had written urban fantasy it might have come out something like this. The æproblem I have is that I keep expecting Hoffman's stories to have a point, a beginning, an end. Instead they have a sort of organic flow, a random wandering, with no apparent conclusion or destination in mind. This might even be, TO

BE CONTINUED? With this author it's hard to tell.

SUMMERLAND

by Michael Chabon
(2002; Hyperion Books for Children;
\$22.95 hc)

Book Review by E. B. Frohvet

Summerland is the westernmost end of Clam Island, Washington, where it never rains; and where, from time immemorial (or at least 1883) the Clam Islanders have played baseball. Eleven-year-old Ethan Feld is distinguished as the worst ballplayer in the history of the island. Yet it is Ethan who is recruited by the werefox Cutbelly, to be the hero of another world, where the Little People (among other activities) also play baseball.

This is a very specialized book, and frankly, one that seems to lack a natural audience. It's too nostalgic for the pre-teen boys who are its ostensible target audience, and who probably don't play baseball anyway (very much an adult's idea of the sort of book they ought to like, but won't); and too cutesy for most adults. The people most likely to enjoy *Summerland* are the sort of literary critics who can describe it as "deliciously ironic".

READING THE ROCKS The Autobiography of the Earth

by Marcia Bjomerud
(Westview Press, 2005, 237 pages/indexed,
\$26.00, ISBN 081334249X)
Reviewed by Jim Sullivan

Rocks: Igneous ("formed from the incandescent state"), metamorphic ("modified in the solid state by heat, pressure, deformation, or some combination of these factors"), and sedimentary ("deposited at Earth's surface and derived — ground down or eroded — from preexisting rock") make up a large part of the earth. And for the first time, this reviewer, thanks to this writer, understands the basics of geology, which is the study of the origin, history, and structure of the Earth.

Bjomerud, a professor of geology at Lawrence University, is first and foremost a teacher. Using analogy after analogy to explain complicated terms, like plate tectonics, uniformitarianism, catastrophism,

she explains in easy to understand terms and comparisons how the earth comes by its existence, chemistry, and physics.

The author shows how combinations of those factors are used to calculate the dates of birth and the ages of surrounding fossils, various minerals, and ores. She also elaborates on how this planet, contrary to the other terrestrial orbs, has maintained its various ecosystems to remain a hospitable place in which to live but that now has become imperiled.

The author writes:

Earth is a very pleasant planet and, according to her stone diaries, has been so for millions of millennia. It is easy to forget just how remarkable this condition is, in the same way that we tend to be unaware of good health until becoming sick. For at least four billion years, through meteorite impacts, climate changes, and continental reorganizations, liquid water has remained stable at Earth's surface, and life has thrived for nearly as long. Earth is a supersystem of countless smaller, interconnected systems involving rock, water, air, and life. These systems operate at spatial scales from microscopic to planetary, over time periods from seconds to millions of years. Anyone who has ever struggled with diabetes, depression, or debt knows how hard it is to achieve and sustain his or her own physiological, emotional, or financial equilibrium. The electrical blackout that hobbled the eastern United States and Canada in the summer of 2003 also illustrates how difficult it is to build stable systems of any complexity. How did a messy tangle of systems without a centralized control mechanism (e.g., a brain, a band director, or a board of trustees) maintain Earth's equipose over time?

The fact is, we don't entirely know. But if this equilibrium had not prevailed, we would never have emerged to wonder about such things. [...]

Bjornerud specializes in structural geology and has studied mountain

formations in Norway and Canada as well as details of the Precambrian Shield region of North America (Northwest Territories, Manitoba, Ontario, Quebec, the Upper Peninsula of Michigan, and Minnesota's Boundary Waters region). With her three children, she resides in Wisconsin.

Recommended.

(Originally published in *Midwest Book Review* for October 2005.)

WONDERS AND THE ORDER OF NATURE 1150-1750

by Lorraine Daston and Katharine Park.

New York: Zone Books, 1998.

Review by Richard Dengrove

Daston and Park's book is about a subject that we are really interested in but we can never put our finger on, Wonders.

Traditionally Wonders have been equated with that which is unexplainable, like the Shroud of Turin or telepathy. However, a Wonder can be something explainable too, like dwarfs and giants. Traditionally, their size has been regarded as explainable by the science of their time.

In fact, it is true that while those who explain Wonders are often considered wet blankets, the explanation for a phenomenon can at times be a Wonder. Sherlock Holmes' clever explanations have often been regarded as Wonders.

It is obvious from Daston and Park's survey a Wonder or Marvel is an emotional rather than objective category. It both astonishes and give us pleasure.

You can see this in the derivation of words. According to the book, the word Marvel, which means the same as Wonder, ultimately derives from the word Smile. That tells about the pleasure we derive from Wonders. Daston and Park have not been able to trace the word Wonder. However, they think it has something to do with the complexity of the phenomena; and, I might add, the confusion over it.

Certainly Daston and Park often confuse Wonders with the unexplainable. However, I cannot blame them. Writers have been doing that for at least a thousand years..

According to Daston and Park, in the 12th Century, the Church's view was that Wonders and the Unexplainable were the same. Church doctrine opposed the academics who, through pride, tried to

explain everything. Nature was up to God, not man. However, to be any good, the pleasure caused by Wonder had to bring you to a mystical state.

Many churches displayed 'griffins'claws' and ostrich eggs for the public. These, it was hoped would give them a petite mystical state. However, gems that were wonders were reserved for churchmen, who were thought to be capable of a much higher mystical state. Still, churchmen did not spurn humbler objects. In 1276, the Holy Roman Empress sent a porcupine to the Dominicans of Basel so they could better achieve a mystical state.

Popular secular writers portrayed much the same view, that the world was filled with Wonders. Wonders from the Ancient world, like the dog-headed men of India. Wonders from folk beliefs, like the barnacle goose that developed from a barnacle. Wonders from national prejudice. Gerald of Wales, a Britain, made much of the degenerate Irish, whom, he claimed, commonly committed incest and bestiality.

All these phenomena were unexplained by natural causes in the Aristotelian thinking of the day. Academics, like Adelard of Bath, who were solely preoccupied with explaining Wonders naturally, must have aimed at a small audience indeed.

On the other hand, these secular writers differed from religious ones. The idea behind all these Wonders was pleasure alone. That was the idea behind the Medieval rhetoric they were practicing, too. There was no hint that you had to gain some mystical insight. There was no hint either, like with later writers, Wonders should spur you to scientific curiosity.

By the 18th Century, belief had taken a 180 degree turn. We are in the Age of Reason now, and both the religious and secular had to believe that everything is explainable. The religious went even farther: they had to believe in natural explanation's religious equivalent, that we can trace in all phenomena God's plan for the world.

If the unexplainable fared poorly, Wonder itself fared even worse. Pleasure from it was a low emotion we should avoid. All the writers of the 18th Century, except Adam Smith, agreed that it inevitably led neither to religion nor to science but to unreason and superstition.

That which had previously been

unexplainable became at least potentially explainable: phosphors, stones that glowed in the dark, did, as did figured stones, stones ornamental in color and pattern. If Wonders could not be made potentially explainable, they became a peasant superstition. The belief in meteorites, i.e., stones falling to Earth, was at the time considered a peasant superstition.

A good deal of the book concerns times in-between the Ages of Faith and Reason, maybe 1350-1660, when Wonder was good for both science and religion. Also, it was a time when Wonders could be explained, unexplainable, or a sign sent from God.

Human anomalies, for instance – giants, dwarfs, two-headed men – could be all three up until the 1660s. Explanation and God's sign being the way authorities handled wonders, and an Unexplainable Wonder being the common folk's true view of Wonders.

Such anomalies have often been referred to by the un-p.c. term Monster. That derives from the Latin, to show. They were considered a sign from God that people should repent their ways.

However, Wonders for pleasure's sake nonetheless dominated. People never stopped gawking at giants, etc. Although the Krakow monster, a sort of potpourri of creatures, was regarded as demonic in origin, the 16th Century was nevertheless fascinated by it.

Also, for this period between Faith and Reason, especially the 16th and 17th Centuries, Daston and Park discuss how connoisseurs, or virtuosi, of Wonders arose: for example, Ficino, Cardano and Della Porta. Their books described Wonder after Wonder.

More and more, however, they explained Wonders naturally. For instance, while Cardano believed the influence of the stars was an unexplainable Wonder, he explained that Ireland had no snakes because its soil was bituminous.

According to Daston and Park, these explaining virtuosi led the way to Sir Francis Bacon, who advocated in his *Great Instauration* systematically taking Wonders and explaining them. For that, he is often called the father of the scientific method.

Even so, Wonders continued to be mentioned without explanation even in the most prestigious scientific circles. Daston

and Park point out that the papers of the royal scientific societies of the later 17th Century saw their job as being mainly to report Wonders. For instance, one of their correspondents might report that he saw three Moons one night, and another correspondent might report about a deaf man who started to hear after church bells began ringing.

On the other hand, all through this period, a whole class of Wonders had a perfectly good natural explanation: namely, a craftsman made them. These Wonders mixed art and nature. Some were prized by royalty then even though all would be considered kitsch today.

For instance, even the primitive automata of the time were considered Wonders. One that elicited particular Wonder was reputed to have been built at the court of Kublai Khan. It was a silver tree. When an angel blew a horn, it belched mare's milk and other drinks. Even though it needed human beings for a good part of its operation, it was considered a great Wonder.

Another Wonder mixing nature and art was a statuette where Atlas carried on his shoulders an ostrich shell, which looked sufficiently like the world. The statuette was art and the ostrich shell nature.

Other such Wonders were tromp l'oeil art, either paintings or figurines where the duck or lizard of the art could not be told from a duck or lizard of nature.

Daston and Park basically end their account where they promised, around 1750, give or take a few decades. Then they typify Wonders today. Wonders have been laid low, they mourn. The Wonders of today are only fit for tabloids and tabloid TV. They are not much more than the smile that the derivation of Marvel said they were.

Yes, you can pick up an edition of the Weekly World News, which laughs at them. In it, you can read such headlines as 'Interview with a Sasquatch: Why We Love Twinkies, Why We Fear Halle Berry.' Also, 'Ship attacked by Gefilte Fish.' The all time favorite seems to be 'Flying Saucer lands in the Last Minutes of the Superbowl at the Forty Yard Line.'

However, have Lorraine Daston and Katherine Park lived under a rock? In the 21st Century, Wonders are alive. Many influential people have strived to make our pleasure serious stuff, with flying saucers,

the Shroud of Turin, the Loch Ness Monster, telepathy and other Wonders too numerous to mention.

Even Daston and Park give the lie to their account of the present. It is obvious they are very sympathetic to Wonders and uneasy with science and materialism.

My own belief is that we need both Science and Wonder. Since Wonder is at base an emotional response – pleasure, a smile – and science is anything but, they are very different animals. I think they could learn to live together.

BRACH'S CIRCUS PEANUTS

Commentary by J.G. Stinson

A while back I purchased two bags of Brach's circus peanuts from one of the local grocery stores. I love circus peanuts even though they really don't have any flavor other than sugar; it's the texture that grabs me, I guess. Circus peanuts, when fresh, are soft enough to squeeze but not as soft as marshmallows. When they're stale, you can't squeeze them at all, but like most sugar-based foods, they will eventually melt in the mouth with some concerted chewing.

As a circus-peanuts aficionado, one would think I'd have tested the Brach's product before I purchased it. Circus peanuts are easily tested for freshness by gently applying pressure to one or two of the peanuts while they're in the unopened bag, as some folks do with tomatoes out of the bag. But for some reason I didn't test these peanuts, and only discovered their stale state when I opened the first bag at home. Of course, I ate them anyway. Then I looked at the back of the bags and noticed that Brach's put a freshness guarantee on them. One only had to call the toll-free number provided and have the product bag in hand.

So I called, and the lot number turned out to be from 2004, and the nice woman in the Brach's customer service department took my name and address and said on behalf of Brach's she apologized for the stale product and that I'd receive some coupons in the mail as reimbursement. Being a cynic, I wondered how long it would take the coupons to get here, and how much they'd be worth.

It took about a week, and the two coupons for free Brach's candy (up to \$2.00 per bag) came with a nice letter which also

included apologies.

While I was waiting for the coupons to arrive, the next time I was in the store where I'd purchased the stale peanuts, I asked to see the manager. When he arrived at the service desk, I told him about the peanuts, and that I'd just checked the rest of the circus peanuts bags the store had on the rack that day and they were all stale as well -- a half-dozen bags. So he thanked me for letting him know and said he'd take care of it right away.

The last time I checked that store, they still hadn't put more Brach's circus peanuts out, though they had plenty of other Brach's candy products available. But I want the circus peanuts!

My advice to anyone considering purchasing Brach's circus peanuts: check the product for freshness before purchase, and then check other stores in your area for Zachary's circus peanuts. They cost less.

FANZINES

Beyond Bree December 2005, January 2006
Nancy Martsch, Post Office Box 55372,
Sherman Oaks, CA 91413-5372 USA
beyondbree@yahoo.com
Not available for The Usual; \$12/year,
\$15 in envelope or overseas.

Catchpenny Gazette #13 December 2006
(?), #14 February 2006
David Burton, 5227 Emma Drive,
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catchpenny@mw.net
<http://www.geocities.com/cpgzine>
<http://www.efanzines.com>

Challenger #23 Winter 2005-6
Guy H. Lillian III, 8700 Millicent Way
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eI # 23 December 2005
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<http://www.efanzines.com>
<http://ourworld.compuserve.com/homepages/mglyer/F770/index.html>

The Knarley Knaws # 115
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MT Void V. 24 #23 December 2, 2005 — V.
24 #30 January 27, 2006
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Nice Distinctions #12 December 2005
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<http://www.efanzines.com>
<http://www.livejournal.com/users/supergee>

Opuntia # 59.3 December 2005
Dale Speirs, Box 6830, Calgary, Alberta
T2P 2E7 CANADA

Vanamonde # 613-622
John Hertz, 236 S. Coronado Street, No.
409, Los Angeles, CA 90057-1456 USA

Visions of Paradise #104
Robert Michael Sabella, 24 Cedar Manor
Court, Budd Lake, NJ 07828-1023 USA
bsabella@optonline.net
<http://www.efanzines.com>
<http://visionsofparadise.blogspot.com>

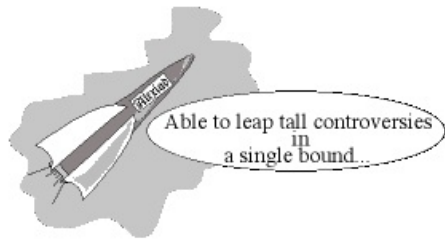
THAT TIME OF THE YEAR

Yes, Friendly Readers, it's time again for Hugo nominations! Some chronic recommendations of my own:

Challenger for Best Fanzine
Dale Speirs for Best Fan Writer
Sheryl Birkhead for Best Fan Artist

I'd recommend *Thud!* for Best Novel, but given how PTerry declined a nomination last year, there may not be any point in it.

I can see nominating *The World Hitler Never Made* for Best Related, but it'll probably lose to an art book of media characters drawn in tight outfits . . .

Letters, we get letters


robertlichtman@yahoo.com

Thanks for *Alexiad* 4:6, on which I have a few comments, first of which is in Joe's "Random Jottings." While it's true that Bill Rotsler left behind thousands of cartoons — my own fan art larder is well-stocked with them, probably more than enough to hold me the rest of my life, at which point they'll go to someone still publishing fanzines — and is, as Tom Veal points out, "still eligible to be considered as Best Fan Artist," I would much prefer to see that Hugo going to a living fan artist. And preferably one who's not yet been awarded a rocket, although his or her lifetime work more than merits one. In this regard I'm thinking of Ross Chamberlain, Dan Steffan and Steve Stiles, all of whom have been active fan artists for three decades or more. (No doubt this observation will earn me a snipe from E.B. Frohvet, who will incorrectly observe that they're part of the so-called "Corflu Cult.")

I enjoyed your review of *The Best of Xero*, which I feel was incorrectly overlooked by Hugo voters. I *did* know that Donald Westlake wrote science-fiction and then left the field in something of a huff because I read it in *Xero* when that issue first came out. In the anthology at hand, I particularly enjoyed being one of the fans mentioned in Roger Ebert's introduction. At the time *Xero* was appearing, I was also publishing a fanzine for general distribution, and Roger was doing a regular (and popular) book review column for me. He also wrote a short article about the closing of his childhood theater, the Princess, that preceded by several years the one he wrote professionally on the same subject.

If I was editing your letter column I would have cut out all the material in Rodney Leighton's letter about his ongoing predilections concerning his rate of correspondence, whether or not to buy a typewriter ribbon, etc., as being boring and repetitive — how many places and times have I read his meanderings on the same subject(s) over the past decade? — but I did notice that he paid \$800 (Canadian ones?) for a set of four new tires. Since that's nearly twice what I paid for a set for my Corolla a year ago, I surmise that Rodney is running a much larger vehicle with much larger tires than me. Later he mentions a GM truck — was that what he bought tires

for? In your comment to him concerning oil change places, you mention that "they offered a cheap price, but they nag you into getting other things that jack the price up." You *can* say no; I always do. I go to an oil change place between trips to the Toyota dealer for other oil changes and scheduled services. As for your getting a tire rotation but not availing yourself of their suggestion that you get the tires rebalanced (and also Rodney on the same subject), it's my observation that it's a good idea to both rotate and rebalance your tires periodically in order to extend their useful life. I do this every 7,500 miles and also generally get a four-wheel alignment at the same time. As a result I always get at least the rated wear from my tires, and usually at least 10-15 percent more. Yes, it costs some extra money, but it's what is *recommended* by tire manufacturers as part of proper care for your expensive tires.

Frohvet's blast at the FAAn awards seems short-sighted. If he and others who think there's an exclusionary "Corflu Cult" somehow controlling the outcome of the voting, a better way to deal with it rather than opting out would be to make sure one votes. The voting pool is more representative of fandom as a whole when more people participate. The same goes for TAFF which, so far as I can tell, continues to be supported by fandom at large (based on checking out who's voting in the recent elections: an electorate that goes far beyond what Frohvet considers to be the "Corflu Cult").

As Samanda b Jeude
observed during her run for
TAFF.

John Thiel observes that both Ben Indick and "Li'l Kim" live in Teaneck, New Jersey, and wonders "if Ben Indick was acquainted with her." I would be really amazed if the answer was yes.

Finally, Marty Helgesen correctly notes that "an e-zine published on the web can have lots of art." Not only that, but the art can be in full color — something seldom done in paper fanzines due to the expense involved. As for sending it as an attachment that "some people would be unwilling to open . . . because of the danger of viruses," a better way to distribute one's e-zine is to

send it to Bill Burns for posting on his wonderful "efanzines.com" Web site.

Happy holidays to you both!

Frohvet had a bad
experience with Corflu
Valentine; whether it "opened
his eyes" or "embittered him"
depends.

— JTM

From: **John Hertz** November 28, 2005
236 S. Coronado Street, No. 409, Los
Angeles, CA 90057-1456 USA

Shouldn't that be "Mother Very Excellently Made a Jelly Sandwich Under No Protest"? We may have to revise. "Mother Very Excellently Made a Jelly Sandwich Unless Neighbors Played Xylophones."

Lesee . . . Mercury, Venus,
Terra, Mars, Asteroids, Jupiter,
Saturn, Neptune, Pluto, Xena . .
. don't see no problem there.

I think human nature has a unifying tendency and a fragmenting tendency. Either may come forward. I think the civilized man looks around Barbarians don't. Let us, therefore.

Caesar salad is of course not named for Julius, but poets get license.

Thanks for your horse and candy reviews. The "Anticipation" bid for a Montréal Worldcon in 2009 was at Loscon XXXII with spruce beer and Samanties.

Dancing and Joking is ready. Want one?

Sure.

— JTM

December 30, 2005

Hurrah for Covadonga! Hurrah for turrón!

From: **Robert Lichtman** December 18, 2005
Post Office Box 30, Glen Ellen, CA
95442-0030 USA

From: **Alexis A. Gilliland** Dec. 16, 2005
4030 8th Street South, Arlington, VA
22204-1552 USA

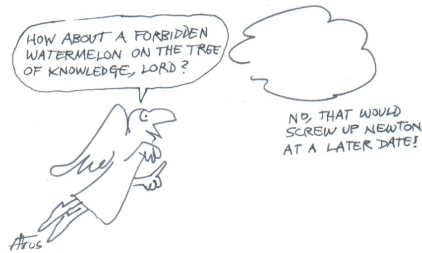
Was *Alexiad* #4.6 waiting for us when we got back from Philcon? Well, no, it arrived the following Wednesday, due no doubt to circumstances beyond your control, but a close enough approximation of the ideal for government work. Many thanks.

We enjoyed Philcon; I had five panels and Lee had three, although there wasn't much going on Friday evening. Lots of parties on Saturday though, on the 6th and 7th floors, and we hit most of them, but spent a lot of our time in the SFWA suite and the Nth Degree party. Taking a nap in the afternoon is a help, but (sigh) I still turned in before midnight. One of my Sunday panels made some interesting points about religion, though. Noting that Europe was far more secular than the US, the initial speculation was that this was due to the heavy losses in WW I and WW II, a recoil from religiosity being the result of ecclesiastical support for the various national war efforts which resulted in appalling losses. The panel then decided, no, the European churches tended to be state churches, supported by the taxpayer, while America never had a national state church (because we never had a majoritarian denomination) and so our various churches were left free to compete with each other for members. Lacking competition, the state churches of Europe became moribund, as their members went secular, while as a result free enterprise competition, American churches became more member friendly. The result is that America as a whole is more religious than stodgy old Europe.

Oh, Europe is quite religious.
They're building a mosque in
London for the 1433 Olympics,

one that can hold forty thousand people.

And yet, this pursuit of the almighty tithe-dollar has not been without adverse consequences, notably the erosion of theological rectitude. The trendy mega-churches were cited as having nothing in their doctrinal essence that would discomfit the congregation, being mere panderers to their parishoners. A viewpoint supported by some bizarre statistics, namely that of the people who believe in the afterlife, 99+ percent thought they were going to heaven, a far cry from the days of Calvinist predestination when it was thought the heaven bound amounted to less than 10 percent of the total. Did they even do polls in those days?



Marty Helgesen challenges my assertion that the 415 AD murder of Hypatia was carried out by monks (Which he dismisses as “a rioting mob of Christians.”) at the orders of Bishop Cyril, saying that Cyril’s responsibility for that atrocity “is widely disputed.” No doubt it is, Saint Cyril being one of the major saints in the Coptic Church and all. At the time Cyril denied that it had even happened, saying that Hypatia had simply left the city. However, when the old Bishop of Alexandria died, Cyril, then the head of a monastic order, made himself the new bishop by force and the threat of force, using the muscle supplied by the monks of his order. Traditionally, control of Alexandria had been divided between the religious and the secular, the Bishop of Alexandria, now Cyril, and the Imperial Prefect, a man named Orestes. Seeing the weakness of the Empire — Rome had been sacked in 410 — Cyril was emboldened to take on Orestes, who was wounded in an assassination attempt by monks, and fought

back. In this fight Orestes had the support of Hypatia, then in her fifties, who was effective in rallying the pagan Greeks of the business community to the Imperial cause.

Now for all the protestations of innocence made in his behalf — Hypatia’s murder being a major blot on his escutcheon from day one — we note that Cyril had the motive and the means, and that the monks who killed Hypatia were led by Peter the Reader, a religious zealot who was one of Cyril’s partisans, if not technically a henchman. After the murder of Hypatia, Orestes was either murdered or he left the city, depending on your source, whereupon Alexandria, which had been a major commercial center in the Roman Empire — rivaling Constantinople — came under the sway of Bishop Cyril and his religious orthodoxy. You can’t do only one thing, of course, and when Christianity became mandatory, the business community, pagan Greeks and Jews for the most part, left for the more tolerant environment of Constantinople, while Alexandria — which had been a contender — became a pious backwater until Islam swept in a couple of centuries later to supplant Christianity as the ruling faith in the region

Elsewhere Marty notes that Googling “Josephus Pontius Pilate” gave him around 96,100 results, then goes on to say that my image of a secular life of Christ assembled from bits and pieces on the cutting room floor is interesting “but I’m not aware of any bits and pieces available for assembly.” Perhaps the commentary on Josephus would qualify? Or Josephus himself? Some assembly would be required, of course, but if he’s interested, I would recommend *The Last Temptation of Christ* by Nikos Kazantzakis, a scholar and a believer of genius. Written at the end of a long and productive life, TLToC is a non-Gospel life of Christ that is emphatically not secular even as it is consistent with the secular history presented by Josephus.

Just as long as you ignore the movie, of which Mad said quite rightly that video renters missed the most interesting part, which was getting through the protesters around the theater.

— JTM

From: **Trinlay Khadro** October 18, 2005
Post Office Box 240934, Brown Deer, WI 53224-0934 USA
trinlay63@wi.rr.com
<http://stores.ebay.com/Silly-Kitty>

On a Saturday in mid-November, Elric Ferret passed away. He is survived by Trinlay, KT, and Omeko Megumi-hime. He is well missed.

Elfling, C'Mell, Delenn, Gemellus, Sarang, and Red Wull send their condolences.

We are considering getting a male kitten from the Humane Society in Spring for Megumi to raise as her companion.

Autumn and Winter are difficult seasons for us; the cold wet weather causes the Fibromyalgia to flare up. We also seem susceptible to seasonable depression. Some days the best I can do is remind myself that it’ll pass. Tomorrow I’ll be assisting Uncle as the plumber is coming to replace the water heater. A high-anxiety event for him. After that I make his bank deposit and pick up his medications at the pharmacy and maybe get some odds and ends from Sam’s Club.

In the Milwaukee *Journal-Sentinel* a few months ago one of the big stories was about Wal-Mart as one of the largest employers in the city . . . and also the employer with the largest percentage of employees getting general assistance, aid to families with dependent children (AFDC), and medical assistance from the state. I’m not sure what to make of this: does this mean they have more employees who otherwise would have NO job? Or that they use the lack of benefits to artificially squash prices down? If someone had a similar job at K-Mart or Target would they have better benefits? If they didn’t have Wal-Mart to provide a bare-bones job would they be employed? In my humble opinion the newspaper and t.v. coverage rarely give me enough detailed information to come up with an opinion based on reality.

I very much enjoyed *Thud!* — we particularly enjoyed the near Death experience wherein Death must also have a near Vimes experience and “Don’t worry about me, I brought a book and a chair.”

Young Sam’s need for Dad Sam to read

the same book at the same time every day is VERY much like a REAL child of toddler age. We are also very amused by *Where’s My Cow?*. Our household joke goes something like “Where’s my kitty?” “Is this my kitty?” “No it is a mostly unrolled roll of toilet paper, that is not my kitty,” and on through the stuffy toy ferret, jingle bell, and so forth until either until we end up hugging said kitty with the declaration “Yes, this IS my kitty,” or dissolving into giggles. I love that KT and I love the same books. :-)

We recently got Uncle signed up for the Library for the Blind and Handicapped, who send him books on tape — soon we will get him some Terry Pratchett books.

I suspect Jules Verne perceived Oregon as “the vast wilds of America” rendering territoriality a non-concern. <sarcasm alert> Remember, these are the days before Starbucks™. (Yes, I know that Seattle is in Washington, but I hear Portland, like Milwaukee, seems to have a Starbucks™ on every corner of some trendy neighborhoods.)

Re: my con-report: I left out a lot . . . in particular who all was there. In addition to Hope’s list, the Smiths and all the Welches as well as some caving friends of the Welches were there.

Rodney — I hope things pick up for you soon. Wish that I were able to help. I’ll try to write semi-regularly and I don’t expect a reply letter.

Dainis and Majors: Megumi associates the cat carrier with going visiting, and will sometimes climb in or knock it over with an insistent “mew” to go see uncle. On the way to the vet she doesn’t panic till she realizes we just went past where we turn into Uncle’s neighborhood.

E.B.: Megumi just knows she’s royalty in our home or maybe I’m just a compliant sleeper. “Move over” she says and I go “O.K.”?

I know Social Security is backlogged 18-24 months, what do people do for income in the meantime? When I worked for SSA’s information line (temporary job many many years ago) we could tell when there were layoffs or plant closings as we’d be flooded with calls asking for disability forms from the particular city. When the economy is rough employers are less likely to take on, or keep on, a less than optimal employee.



TRINLAY KHADRO

I just delete the phishing mails — a real notification from eBay will show up on my eBay account. I'm kind of surprised how simple working with eBay has been.

Martin: Re "[they] wanted people to wear colorful togas, so as to avoid the notion from spectacle laden

movies that Romans only wore white" . . . and of course they'd never wear white after Labor Day. :-)

Ah yes, *Dies Laboris*, the day after the first market day after the Kalends of September. As Darrell Schweitzer has noted, that was when Emperor Tiberius gathered together all his friends of the speculative bent for parties, lectures by various writers, sophists, and scholars, and the awarding of the *Palma Lucianae* for best speculative poem, play, and discussion of the year.

Rod: KT does like *Helsing*, she also recently borrowed *Applesseed* which she really enjoyed. She returned it before I had a chance to watch it.

Robert K: I have to admit though that *March of the Penguins* shows us that the tuxedoed ones are tough kick-butt birds! I'm not so sure of the "family values", though parental devotion to the eggs and chicks is certainly something humans can mimic. (A new wife and a new kid every year . . . not a human standard — I hope.)

Marty: My point about the Sudanese doctor is that he fits in perfectly with his neighborhood (suburban) and would be just as uncomfortable in the inner city as I would be.

E-zines are usually posted on the web in

a website (art intact much as in a print zine) or as an Adobe file that has text and art in place as a single file. (It opens like a web page with actual download as optional.)

If your security and anti-virus software is kept updated it wouldn't be a concern in email either.

From: **Jason K. Burnett** Dec. 20, 2005
4903 Camden Avenue N,
Minneapolis, MN 55430-3544 USA
BritHistorian@aol.com

Having just returned to Minneapolis from a Long Drive Down South to visit my family and Angel's family, I was very pleased to find the latest *Alexiad* in the Big Bin of Mail which had accumulated during our absence. This pleasure was, unfortunately, tempered by the memory that I really had not done as well with keeping up with LOCs as I should have this year. And so, rather than let the moment escape, I sat down to write to you, even before I finished reading the issue.

This year has been one of big changes for Angel and me: Moving from New Orleans to Minneapolis. Starting to homeschool Dylan. Helping our families as they attempt to recover from Katrina. Watching in amazement as Logan learns to walk and talk and really begins to blossom as a person. Finding new employment as technical writers (for both of us) and finally getting out of the medical records field. And, last but not least, getting things ready for me to start library school in January (distance learning program through University of Wisconsin at Milwaukee). All in all, a very exciting and personally satisfying year.

Recent reading has been pretty much all light reading: *Ellery Queen Mystery Magazine*, the Brother Cadfael mysteries, Mercedes Lackey novels, a reread of Gail van Asten's *Charlemagne's Champion*, and a reread of the Harry Potter books. I'm rather nervous about starting back to school, especially looking back at the near-burnout that was my last semester in my history MA program, so I'm deliberately not starting any big projects right now and not reading anything too taxing.

My first semester in school I'll be taking Intro to Reference Services, Intro to Library Management, and Special Topics in

Library/Information Science: Metadata. That knocks out two out of my five core courses and gives me one really interesting-sounding elective (which may or may not live up to the promise of its name). I had originally been considering children's/YA librarianship as a focus, but after seeing the way some parents let their children behave at the library, I'm leaning more towards either academic librarianship (maybe getting a chance to actually use my history training after all) or cataloging. I suppose only time (and the job market) will tell.

Well, I'm off to go fix dinner. Here's wishing you a Merry Christmas, Happy New Year, and a Happy Birthday to Joe.

Thank you and best wishes for an even better next year. Maybe you can succeed Colleen Cahill in Joe Mayhew's chair at the Library of Congress.

— JTM

From: **Joy V. Smith** December 21, 2005
8925 Selph Road, Lakeland, FL
33810-0341 USA
Pagadan@aol.com

<http://journals.aol.com/pagadan/JoysJournal/>

I enjoyed your Wal-Mart/*March of Penguins* anecdote. We have a big Wal-Mart supercenter near us and shop there a lot, often for gardening supplies.

Did Paul Hellyer really ask for an investigation of our government's dealings with intelligent aliens?! That would make an interesting addition to one of those UFO documentaries.

Read *Watch the Skies!* by Curtis Peebles (1994) for the story of how that particular idea changed and twisted.

I enjoyed your review of *Thud!* I've read it at least twice and enjoyed *Where's My Cow?* too. And your usual eclectic round-up of fiction and non-fiction books. I've learned a lot about history in *Alexiad*. *The World Was Going Our Way: The KGB and the Battle for the Third World*, *What Stalin Knew*, and *Her Majesty's Spymaster* were especially interesting — among others.

Re: Feeding the cats. Lisa, I read two

books in a series of fantasy books by Tanya Huff recently — *Summon the Keeper* and *The Second Summoning*. I think you'd enjoy them and the cat characters.

Re: Letters. E.B., I knew you'd disagree with me when I said it, and I looked forward to your response. You, sir, are a gentleman. Re: Yorkie candy bars "not for girls." We discussed this candy bar or another on an AOL folder recently. Apparently they're for truck drivers; and I asked if there weren't women truck drivers in Britain. There are. Apparently the manufacturer thought it a clever marketing idea? I am not amused.

Re: comics. I have a Hiroshima comic by a Japanese, which is very interesting; *Cadillacs and Dinosaurs*; *Duncan and Mallory*; and early Phantom reprints, which are funny, among others. Speaking of the Civil War, the United Daughters of the Confederacy will be marking a CSA soldier's grave at a church cemetery just down the road from us in a ceremony in January. They've already marked a number of CSA graves there.

So "Do they love us still in Dixie?" still has an answer. But for how long?

— JTM

I liked the idea of the Tardis landing on the bridge of the *Enterprise*. (I always love a good crossover.)

From: **E. B. Frohvet** December 17, 2005
4716 Dorsey Hall Drive #506,
Ellicott City MD 21042-5988 USA

As we just passed the 64th anniversary of Pearl Harbor, let's take a moment to honor the memory of Lieutenant Commander Francis Thomas, U.S. Navy. As watch officer of U.S.S. *Nevada*, he did not wait for orders, or to locate the captain, who was ashore. Commander Thomas slipped the anchor, got the ship under weigh, manned the guns with whatever crew members were available, and charged out firing back at the enemy. Of course, this made the *Nevada* an obvious target, and the Japanese hit her with so many bombs the ship had ultimately to be run aground to save it from sinking. Still, Thomas did the right thing. (If anyone cares, the only surviving vessel from Pearl Harbor still afloat is the retired Coast Guard cutter

Roger Taney, which is maintained as a tourist attraction in Baltimore Harbor. Every December 7th there is a memorial service held aboard.)

Rear Admiral (ret.) Francis J. Thomas died January 21, 2005 in Aloha, Oregon at the age of 100. He liked to say he was the only guy who got the Navy Cross for running a ship aground.

"The tiger is probably the better bet. . ." I suspect there's still a difference between a carnivorous predator, however lazy, and a vegetarian quadruped, however ill-tempered.

I'm not talking a lengthy stay, merely walking in and out.

— LTM

Possibly a nomination for Rotsler could be justified within the letter of the rules. It is still clearly misguided.

I had never really thought of time-travel stories being inherently pointless, but there's something to be said for that. Most time-travel, and much alternate history, is clever merely for the sake of being clever.

"Why Live Theater?" — In general I agree with Bill Breuer, live theater (or live music) have a magic not transcribable on disc/tape. On the other hand, the recorded/filmed version has probably done twenty takes on each scene, out of which is edited what the director and editor think is the best version.

I recently re-read *Navohar* and decided to keep it. The book has a certain wilted charm. One of these years I should do an article on the virtues of good mediocrity; if I resume doing articles some day I will have to consider it.

Even supposing your receipt thereof to be fairly recent, the listing of a fanzine I should get, and didn't, is irritating.

Joy Smith: Hard to imagine why anyone would order "personalized M&M's". However, in my childhood there was a shortlived fad for personalized pencils with your name printed on them in gold letters. That was back when schoolchildren used pencils.

Dainis Bisenieks: I don't know about female gladiators (may be a fantasy trope, or

an idea inflicted on history by Political Correctness). However, to fill the gaps between bouts, they held executions. I recall reading once of a gladiator kindly telling the victim to hold still and close his eyes, it would hurt less.

They were quite real; see *Gladiatrix: The True Story of History's Unknown Woman Warrior* by Amy Zoll (2002). *Gladiatrices* were another way to fill the gaps between (male) bouts.

I agreed with Joseph to give Bujold credit for working outside the comfort zone of Vorkosigan books, if with less entertainment value.

Defining "Patient thinking he's not mentally ill" would depend on defining mental illness. Certainly that's common in psychotics, largely separated from reality. It is certainly possible for a person to be miserably unhappy, even have a definable condition according to the DSM (*Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*), without being psychotic.

Trinlay Khadro: Keeping the performers warm, cocoa may be helpful for the young crew; consider the merits of brandy for the geezers. Umm (third time), that's **Nhi Vanye**. I never used a sword or battle ax, but in my time I could field-strip, clean, oil, and reassemble an M-16 as well as the next guy.

Martin Morse Wooster: Read in the paper the other day that Virgin Galactic, the "commercial" program based on Spaceship One, already has several thousand reservations including quite a number pre-paid in full (c. \$200,000).

Rod Smith: The concept is well established in law as "felony murder" — any death which results from the commission of a crime is murder. Suppose you stick up the local convenience store and wave a gun, and the clerk has a coronary and dies. You can be tried for murder. Of course, terrorists are unlikely to be deterred as they intend to commit murder.

Robert Kennedy: An article in *Baltimore City Paper* on "Ten best films of the year" began: "Fuck *March of the Penguins* . . . God, it feels good to finally say that." So Taras Wolansky is not alone in his opinion. (Myself? Have not seen it; I rarely go to

movies any more.)

Marty Helgesen: I don't recall having been to a Catholic wedding; they may still "publish the banns" (a custom I associate mainly with historical novels). I have attended weddings where the question is asked, if anyone can show cause why these two should not be married. . . It is not specified that only certain persons have right to object, or only for consanguinity; it's open to anyone present. It's ritual, but serious ritual. I respectfully disagree with you about the sex abuse scandal.

I am looking forward to my pre-paid copy of *Heinlein's Children*. Maybe I will review it.

Are you getting an autographed one?

— JTM

From: **Brad W. Foster** December 20, 2005
P.O. Box 165246, Irving, TX 75016-5246 USA
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Greetings folks —

Well, getting down to the last few days of the calendar year, and looks like got about as many print 'zines this year as last. Those numbers are way down from previous years, but I'll take a holding pattern over an even further drop. Thanks for keeping the meaty issues of *Alexiad* coming!

I feel I have to make special mention of the 'toon by Schirm on page 18; and the one by Alexis on page 23, as both causing me to laugh out loud when read them. Great stuff!

Also enjoyed Lisa's tale of "Feeding the Cats". Of our three inside cats, two of them are pretty laid-back about feeding time. They know the food will arrive, and they don't worry about it. The third cat, Vlad, seems to be in a constant state of worry that we have forgotten about him, and will never give him food again. A couple of hours before usual feeding time he will start to hang around, sitting and staring a hole in the side of our heads, with this wide-eyed look of "I know I look well fed, but I assure you I will fall over dead from malnutrition any second now." When we do actually dole the food out into three bowls for them all, he will attack his, but usually only eat a few bites, and then go and sit as close as he can to the other two cats, staring at them, with

that "Are you gonna finish that?" look. I can usually distract him from that by picking up his abandoned bowl and bringing it to him, telling him it is the bowl from the other cat, at which point he will dive in and finish it. The other two cats will often only want to browse, then come back later. So to save their food from him, we put those bowls up on a high shelf. I have now come to the conclusion that Viad can count to three, as he will be pretty agitated until all three bowls, full or empty, are on the floor for him to check out. Bear in mind this cat is something like eight years old, and has never missed a meal in that entire time. Yet twice a day, every day, he goes into panic mode that the food train has come to an end.

The cats get so desperate that as I'm pouring they knock the cup of food aside to get to what's in the bowl, and food goes flying all over the floor.



Speaking of cats, in one of your local responses you mentioned taking your cats to the vet for shots. If you are not already aware of it, we are trying to get the word out to all cat owners of the dangers of VAFS (or V F S) Vaccine-Associated Feline Sarcoma. This is a rare condition that, unfortunately, seems to be starting to show up more and more, where the cat will grow a cancerous tumor at the point of injection. And since most injections are given between the shoulder blades, this is the worst possible place for a growth to happen. We already lost one cat to this a couple of years back, and now we have a second one who is a victim of the growth, though it might be early enough that we are trying some treatments (much too expensive, but we can't handle losing two of them this

way, so using the credit cards to cover the bills . . . first step on the slippery slope?)

Most vets are aware of this problem now, and will give injections in the tail, or an arm. Thus if a tumor develops, it is still possible to save the cat's life through amputation. There is no such option when it is in the middle of the back. If your vet is not aware of this, CHANGE VETS. There is no reason to have to do the injection at the center of the body knowing this risk.

We are not advocating stopping getting shots (though others debate that), simply that there is a safer way to administer them with knowledge of this growing problem. Cindy has given me a couple of websites to pass on to folks for more info:

<http://www.petplace.com/article.aspx?id=215>

<http://www.avma.org/vafstf/ownbroch.asp>
<http://www.vin.com/VINDBPub/SearchPB/Proceedings/PRO5000/PR00109.htm>

With all the fannish folks out there who have cats, hope you can pass this info along. We are only a week into treatments now on Duffy, and she will have about four weeks of daily radiation treatments, along with several chemo sessions, all to try to reduce and control the present tumor, then surgery sometime in January. If she was older, or the tumor further along, we might not have elected to go into all this cost. But she should still have a long life, and having already lost one, would be tough to have a second die from this.

Thanks for the various links to info on the "Ellison event" at Foolscap. Can only say from what I read that a couple of guys who didn't know him were surprised by his telling them to fuck off, and then it just kind of grew. If it was anyone other than Ellison, we probably wouldn't even have heard about it outside the con. Lots of writers and artists out there whose work I greatly admire, but would avoid any personal contact with!

All I can say is that if I were a guest of honor at a convention, I would try to find out about the other guests. I mean, Ellison even has a website, Ellison Webderland:

<http://harlanellison.com/home.htm>

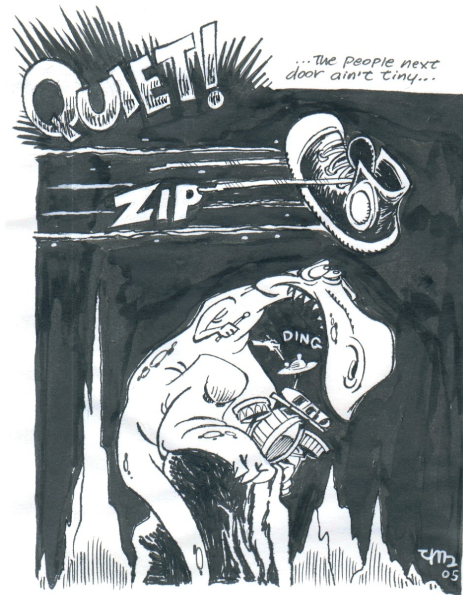
— JTM

From: **Henry L. Welch** December 27, 2005

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<http://people.msoe.edu/~welch/tkk.html>

I've kept terrible records this past fall and I apologize for my delay in locating and if any of this is a duplicate of a previous letter.



Vol 4 No 3

I find the ear lobe is a much more agreeable blood sample site than the finger tip. It hurts less and the likelihood of infection is much lower because you aren't sticking your ear lobe into dirty things afterwards. The sound on the other hand takes some getting used to.

Response to Rod E. Smith: I toured the Canadian Rockies in August and there has been a significant retreat in the glaciers since I last visited in 1976. Even more so if you review the records for the earlier part of the 20th century.

Vol 4 No 4

Re: "My Local Mystery": When they removed the dam just downstream from my house there was all kinds of debris in the river bottom. Most curious to me was the large cast iron boiler. I have no idea how it

got there unless it was the boiler from some boat scuttled in the river a long time ago. The odd part about that is that the river was not really navigable because there was another dam upstream only 3/4 mile from the one removed. It makes no sense that a large boat would have operated on this stretch of river.

Vol 4 No 5

Read and enjoyed, but no comment.

Vol 4 No 6

I caught an interesting typo on your zine listing pages. Apparently I've moved all the way up to issue 133. :-)

You are far more productive than most of fanzine fandom, or the people who call themselves fanzine fandom anyway . . .

— JTM

From: **George W. Price** Nov. 24, 2005
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Dainis Bisenieks asks, "How much was letter-rate postage in the 1920s. I rather believe it was 2¢ . . . and didn't rise to 3¢ until the 1930s." That sounds about right. My memory as a child in the late 1930s was that it was 3¢, except that local mail (within the same city; no ZIPcodes then) was only 2¢. Somewhat later — I don't remember exactly when — local mail went up to 3¢ also, but greeting cards could still be sent at 2¢ as long as they were not sealed.

At the end of AL du Pisani's letter, Joe comments that in Louisville "we are talking about building a light rail system (if it's anything like the ones I've seen, it'll do no good)."

Amen, brother. I grew up with streetcars, and am somewhat of a streetcar buff. (Chicago reputedly had the world's largest system, about 5,000 cars, and the longest straight route — the Western Avenue line ran 22½ miles in a dead straight line.) But I admit that this is all nostalgia. In the automobile age, streetcars are highly impractical.

They are indeed more pleasant to ride than buses. They don't stink of diesel fumes, and modern ones are nearly noiseless. The ride is smoother — no potholes — and since

they are on rails they don't swerve from side to side to go through traffic (but being confined to rails has a very serious downside, which I'll get to in a moment).

The first impracticality is that light rail require a lot of expensive and high-maintenance infrastructure: tracks and overhead wires. (Washington, D.C. used to have streetcars with the power wires under the street, with the power pickup extending down through a slot between the rails, like a cable car's grip; this cost more but eliminated the unsightly trolley wires.)

Second, streetcars are highly incompatible with heavy automobile traffic. It's not just that the traffic moves slowly (though that is bad enough). When a bus encounters an obstacle, it can swing over to the other side of the street, or even detour on side streets. But when something blocks the tracks, the streetcar is stuck right there until the obstacle is removed. And so are all the streetcars coming along behind it.

The only way a streetcar can detour is to switch to a track on an intersecting line before the blockage, run a half-mile or so over to the next parallel line, go a mile or so on that one, and then come back to the original route on the other side of the blockage (traveling three sides of a rectangle). And that's assuming that there are the necessary switching tracks at the intersections of all those lines. That's what was actually done when streets were blocked for a long time, such as by a major fire. It is not a practical way of dealing with automobile accidents, etc., that block the tracks for twenty or thirty minutes. The streetcars just wait.

From a traffic standpoint, "light rail" is usually practical only when it has its own limited right of way and does not share streets with automobiles. As was said in another context, the pleasure is fleeting and the expense is damnable. No mass transit system in this country, as far as I know, comes anywhere near supporting itself — they are one and all heavily subsidized for political reasons. (Chicago's system is required by law to pay half its expenses out of the fare box — and has constant trouble doing even that much.) When you add all the extra infrastructure requirements of light rail, compared to buses, plus the expense of acquiring limited right of way, it becomes even more of an economic white elephant.

In sum, light rail may be fun to ride, and can be a tourist attraction, but it is the taxpayer's enemy.

Except the people with the nostalgia often also have the lawyers and lobbyists to get such a system rammed through. Transport nostalgists can be something else; ever met a dirigible buff?

— JTM

Joe asked me by e-mail what I thought of Harry Harrison's "Stars & Stripes" trilogy (*Stars & Stripes in Peril; Stars & Stripes Forever; Stars & Stripes Triumphant*) which I had told him I was reading. This is alternate history in which the Trent incident in the American Civil War did not get smoothed over by Prince Albert, but instead led to war with Great Britain. Now that I have finished it, I can recommend it, with certain reservations.

Turtledove he's not. The story is fast-moving, but not with much depth of characterization. In contrast to Turtledove, almost all the main characters are movers and shakers: Lincoln, Lee, Sherman, Grant, Davis, Farragut, Lord Palmerston, (most surprisingly) John Stuart Mill, and so on. These all behave more or less as I expect their namesakes really would have, with the possible exception of Victoria, who is portrayed as stupid and petulant (which is not what I have heard of her). Only occasionally does Harrison show events from the standpoint of low-level soldiers and civilians; mainly he follows the conferences and deeds of the top dogs.

The story line is not entirely plausible. Early in the first book a British general makes a serious mistake and attacks the wrong place. When the mistake is realized, he does not fall back and apologize and try to smooth it over; he bulls ahead and makes matters enormously worse. That's bad enough, but even worse, his superiors let him get away with it, with utterly disastrous results. And this implausibility is the key turning point in the alternate history (although it is not the point of divergence from real history — that comes earlier). But once you swallow this, the rest of the story follows a more or less plausible (though highly unlikely) trajectory.

On a more subtle level, the story is perhaps too sanguine, presumably in the interest of speeding things up. New weapons are developed quickly and work perfectly the first time used; complicated maneuvers are pulled off without a hitch. Our heroes get tricked a few times, but plans don't get derailed by just general fuckups. And I suspect Harrison vastly underestimates the logistic difficulties of the strategies he invents. The last book ends with some massive political changes being imposed on the British Empire, which I'm sure would really have been enormously more difficult than shown.

As I said, Harrison is no Turtledove, but I think you might enjoy the series as lightweight fun.

From: **Milt Stevens** January 5, 2006
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In *Alexiad* V4#6, Joseph mentions as part of his review of *The Best of Xero* that Robert Silverberg was among the writers of the seventies who quit SF forever and ever or maybe for several weeks. Nope, he didn't. You may notice he hasn't missed a worldcon since the early fifties, and he is still a member of FAPA since 1949. At one point, he cut back on his writing, because he was a workaholic and was working himself to a frazzle. He limited himself to only one huge novel a year. By now, he sits around on his three acre estate in the Berkeley Hills and wonders whether he is retired-retired or only sort of retired.

Later in the review, Joseph is incorrect that Dick Geis sold the rights to *Science Fiction Review* to some group, and then the publication flopped. He considered selling it, but the deal was never completed. The rub was that Geis wanted \$900 a month as a license fee. If you paid Geis that much, you couldn't even have broken even on the publication, so nobody actually made an offer.

All I know is that I bought semiprozines titled *Science Fiction Review* with columns by Geis and Darrell Schweitzer.

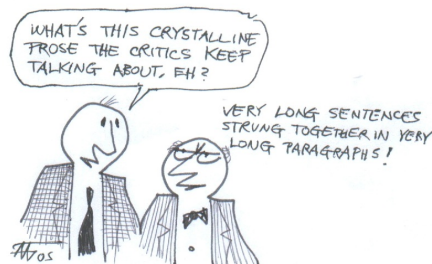
Under the heading of media myths,

Joseph says "When you were young you knew that the stuff inside golf balls was poisonous..." Gee, I never knew that when I was young or even while I've been not so young. Not that I've ever really wanted to swallow a golf ball. Is swallowing golf balls some sort of a new teenage craze?

In the letter column, I noticed some secondary comments on the idea of giving Betty Ballantine a lifetime achievement award at the worldcon. I commented on this matter when it first appeared in *Argentus*, but maybe I should repeat myself. Being guest of honor at the worldcon is a lifetime achievement award. Ian and Betty Ballantine were pro guests of honor at Noreascon 3 in 1989. I think the matter has already been taken care of.

Carol Clarke mentions a comics series *Infinity Inc.* which features the children of classic DC heroes. I remember another series like that, *The Inferior Five*. One of the characters has all of his father's super strength and X-ray vision, but he is honestly sort of clumsy. That's why he's known as Awkward Man. At one point, Awkward Man was lamenting that his grandpa was considered a crackpot for predicting the destruction of Krypton. Actually, grandpa was a crackpot and the planet was still there. Naturally, the Inferior Five face equally inept bad guys.

Joseph informs me the information I was wondering about appeared on Trufen. Fancy that. I've subscribed to Trufen for quite awhile, but that obviously doesn't mean that I read it. Trufen seems to be mostly political garbage, and I try to ignore all political garbage. In theory, I might read something if the subject line identified it as something which might interest me. That idea doesn't work worth beans in practice.



Five people have written LoCs to every

issue of *Alexiad* since you've been publishing LoCs. I know I'm not one of them, because I didn't even receive the first issue. I checked the files on my PC, and my first LoC seems to be on the third issue. I don't know what happened to the second issue.

The faithful loccers are E. B. Frohvet, Alexis Gilliland, Robert Kennedy, Trinlay Khadro, and Milt Stevens.

— JTM

From: **Martin Morse Wooster** Jan. 4, 2006
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Many thanks for *Alexiad* 24. I attended Capclave this year, and agree with Alexis Gilliland that it was a pretty good little convention. After all, it was held in the hotel closest to my apartment. That's a very fine place for a con! But Alexis notes that the program book for Capclave wasn't done until the Friday of the con, and wasn't available until Saturday. I should also note that the Splendid Collectible Chapbook of Howard Waldrop stories, which excited at least one Australian to join the convention, still hasn't appeared nearly three months after the con. No doubt there have been explanations at WSFA about why this chapbook hasn't appeared, but since I'm not a member of WSFA, and thus can't be expelled from the Gillilands' house, I have no idea why the chapbook hasn't appeared.

Marty Helgesen: of course the most famous person to identify herself as an "African-American" because she was born in Mozambique was Teresa Heinz Kerry. I thought her calling herself "African-American" was a spectacular act of tone-deafness, that showed that even Bold Spirited Feminists like herself can, well, do some really stupid things.

Thanks for your review of *Disinformation*. I should say that as the indefatigable researcher, I didn't write the book and I don't agree with some of Minter's conclusions. For example, I oppose the Iraq War and oppose the rationale for the Iraq War (that there were WMDs in Iraq). But my job was to give my client the facts and let him draw his own

conclusions. For example, it is fair to say that a) lots of people thought that Saddam had WMDs, including UN inspectors Richard Butler and Rolf Ekeus b) Saddam acted like he had WMDs. It seems that intelligence agencies took ambiguous evidence about WMDs and smoothed out the ambiguities.

As for *The World Was Going Our Way*, I'd love to know what the evidence was that the SVR was spreading disinformation about Bin Laden having been paid by the CIA. Also, what do you think of Nigel West's criticism of this book — that, unlike volume 1, it's very hard to tell what Mitrokhin's evidence is vs. Christopher Andrew putting in speculations not based on Mitrokhin material? I gather there is far less Mitrokhin and far more Andrew in volume 2 than in volume 1.

Andrew is a very good historian. I would find it amusing if he were able to trick G. Gordon Liddy into having him as a guest on his popular radio talk show, because in his history of the American intelligence services, *For the President's Eyes Only* (1995), Andrew cites Liddy's antics as part of the inadequate understanding of intelligence displayed by the Nixon administration. But yes, it would be better to show the Mitrokhin notes "raw" and have Andrew footnote them.

The Dan Brown item reminds me that when I was in Scotland, the production of *The Da Vinci Code* was filming in Roslyn Cathedral, which is apparently a Nexus of Hidden Information. Now where did Mark "Deep Throat" Felt tell Bob Woodward the sordid secrets of Watergate? In a garage in . . . Rosslyn. Coincidence — or conspiracy?

Yes, but where does Bonnie Prince Charlie, Master of the Masonic Blessing of England, who transferred it to George Washington, come in? And what about the Babylonian Conspiracy to hand Silicon Valley over to the saucerians? Inquiring minds want to know.

— JTM

From: **Dainis Bisenieks** January 9, 2006
921 S. St. Bernard Street,
Philadelphia, PA 19143-3310 USA

Watch who you call erudite, John Thiel! I am not erudite. No. I have a jackdsw accumulation of knowledge not uncommon among fans, plus a certain urge to understand *some* matters and to make them clear without u undue verbiage. The natural length for some of these can be very short indeed. I recall wondering, long ago, how many words were required to point out that in *The Lord of the Rings*, light was associated with good and darkness with evil. More to the point, I seized on the fact that the persons of the story sing songs and tell tales, on occasions when they did the most good. Tolkien himself was found to illuminate the relation of work and play in "Leaf by Niggle" . . . he reconciled the grasshopper and the ant.

It was no less to the point that the stories were about heroes, who were remembered for the best of reasons. In a later work, Le Guin's *The Farthest Shore*, an old man asks a young man, "Which of the heroes is yours?" And the young man has a good answer. How extraordinary!

How would I answer? The names that come to mind are Flora Macdonald and Joshua Slocum.

When [Thoralf Sørle] saw the three men he stepped back and a look of disbelief came over his face. For a long moment he stood shocked and silent before he spoke.

"Who the hell are you?" he said at last.

The man in the center stepped forward.

"My name is Shackleton," he replied in a quiet voice.

Again there was silence. Some said that Sørle turned away and wept.

— Endurance, Alfred Lansing

There is, by the way, an absolutely charming book *Much Entertainment* by Virginia Maclean, "A Visual and Culinary Record of Johnson and Boswell's tour of

Scotland in 1773" (N.Y., Liveright, 1973). I will not elaborate; those who seek it physically are alerted to the oblong format, shared (incidentally) with *The Eating-in-Bed Cookbook* of Barbara Ninde Byfield, another precious possession.

But to return to our sheep, I mean to "erudition": now for instance Christian Meier's biography of Caesar, of which I've managed to read some chapters, is a work of erudition. He knows, and makes clear, what Romans thought of themselves; what kind of box they thought in, and how far Caesar was out of it.



On the other hand, he does not, as Fletcher Pratt did in *his* book, give an introductory account of Vercingetorix in the style of the Norse saga. Nowhere does he dramatize:

He sat down. The startled senators, charmed dumb by reason where they had expected force, glared empty, all of them sure they did not want that bill nor any other, none of them able to find anything wrong with it. Then up sprang Cato, yammering like a beagle. He could see it all; this apparently rational proposal was the thin edge of a wedge. This Caesar was bribing his way into the good graces of the populace with the Republic's money. And for what purpose? Yah! TO MAKE HIMSELF KING!

Alas, none of Pratt's solo fiction is as good as his historical writing. The style of *The Well of the Unicorn* is opposed by the protagonist's complete lack of color.

I have at last seen the 50th Anniversary Edition of *The Lord of the Rings*, enough to read the new front matter. Only then did I realize what lay behind what had puzzled me in 1965, when the revised second edition appeared: why the revision did not include correction of certain typos such as "described" for "descried". Tolkien's check copies were the first printings, in particular of *FR*, in which those typos occurred. When the printers were asked to do a second printing, they said to one another, "Oops! But let's not tell anyone!" and set the whole book anew, introducing those errors and some other little changes. This remained undiscovered for the longest time.

I was in a position to make the discovery as early as 1959. My first readings had been of library copies of the American edition, well known to have been bound by Houghton Mifflin from sheets printed in England. Then, in 1959, I got a secondhand set from England of which *FR* (and *RK* as well) was a first printing. What happened, however, in Our Time Line, was that I shortly gave the books to a young woman whose elfin charm captivated me. Her response to the books was everything it should have been; toward me she remained cool and eventually married someone else. The marriage soon proved inharmonious; her letter telling of this pointedly asked nothing and offered nothing; but I took it upon myself to keep up a supply of imaginative literature (*Little, Big and To Say Nothing of the Dog* being among the high points). There was a hiatus; after my wife's death I learned of her divorce. I can at least hope that we can bring one another some healing even if we remain apart (separated geographically by some five hundred miles).

I gave a set of *LoTR* to a young woman whose elven charm captivated me. But I am not the Emperor Claudius; the young woman is my niece, see.

Anyway, in the other leg of the Trousers of Time I would have noticed, and I would not have kept the knowledge to myself.

It is interesting that one error, "Elrond and Halfelven" (in Boromir's account of the Council) is corrected.

The first-edition test is represented on my shelves by Betsy's tattered copies of *TT*

and *RK*; *FR* had fallen prey to a borrower and was replaced by a secondhand purchase, an odd volume not breaking a set and the only one with the dust jacket that some so dislike.

The earlier piecemeal correction of the books is a sad muddle. At a bookshop I spotted a copy of *FR* with an unfamiliar cover: it was QPBC '95, and "Elrond and Halfelven" (in Boromir's narrative) was still there! But "bride-price" and "descried" were OK. The exact contrary is the case in the 1969 fourth printing of the Second Edition (British editio) which is what I ended with after several more sets left my hands. A later round of corrections is represented by trade paperbacks that I got secondhand; the Tolkien Estate is rich enough without further contributions from me.

In the weekly Latvian newspaper appears a column by Frank Gordon (a longtime resident of Israel; he had been a journalist in Riga), devoted largely to the iniquities and chauvinism of Russians past and present, and the efforts of a few good men and women to declare the truth. His view is that the evils of Stalin's rule were fully on a par with Hitler's and should receive the same attention. He tells of an exposé by Mikhail Davidson in an Israeli-Russian newspaper of the uranium mines in Soviet Tajikistan in which thousands of German POWs slaved away, none of whom ever emerged to tell of it. For their bosses and executioners the Germans had built a little town, Taboshar, in the Bavarian style. Not far away was the refining and enrichment facility of Chkalovsk, which seems to have corresponded to the "Atomabad" of Francis Gary Powers's map. No mention is made of the place with the huge radiation spill; that must be some other place.

Atomsk? I have read the thriller, published around 1947, by a certain Carmichael Smith, in which an American spy and saboteur infiltrates such a facility and causes an explosion and radiation spill which was to severely discourage development of the Bomb. Tough luck — we know that in reality the Soviets carried on at all costs.

As you know, "Carmichael Smith" was really the CIA advisor Paul Myron Anthony

Linebarger, who was of course also known as Cordwainer Smith. Atomsk is available on line as an ebook from Linebarger's daughter for \$9.95:

<http://www.cordwainer-smith.com/atoms.k.htm>

It is known that the Soviets kept their German and Japanese POWs for years and years; sadly diminished numbers ever returned. The figures for Stalingrad, not exactly representative, are known to me. There was a certain justice in putting prisoners to work, but no mercy and no sense in compelling them to work under inhuman conditions. A correspondent in Komsomolsk-on-Amur lives (last I heard) on Pervostroiteli Avenue — "First Builders", a name redolent of Sovietism. But a great many of those first builders were Japanese POWs.

"Jeopardy" seems to mention Benjamin Franklin in either a question or an answer at least once a week. Can this be deliberate? I was thinking of this only the other day, and I tuned in a few minutes late, just in time to hear the name!

It's his three hundredth birthday. All right, for four hundred: 72.

What was Ben Franklin's agent number for British Intelligence?

— JTM



From: **Rod E. Smith** January 17, 2006
730 Cline Street, Frankfort, KY
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RodE.Smith@mail.state.ky.us

In re. Exploring the New World: I knew it wasn't long before the first "I can do it too!" trip. I'm still surprised that was so soon. But even major looting took time to

organize, and proper exploitation longer still.

Carol Clarke: I loved *Infinity Inc.*, and feel it was sabotaged by the changes made throughout DC to accommodate the Crisis. BTW, the villain was Brainwave (and the hero Brainwave, Jr.) rather than Brainiac.

Reading some of your other recommendations, we seem to have similar tastes.

Robert S. Kennedy notes that Dan Brown will use Freemasons as villains in an upcoming book. A rogue "secret branch" were major villains in several of the Wild Cards books.

Marty Helgesen notes Caucasians born in Africa attempting to claim African-American status. On a related note, in one of my stories I have a dark-skinned man claiming to be Caucasian, because he was born in the Caucasus Mountains.

Consider, for example, the Russian version of Kafka's "The Metamorphosis": "One morning, as Grigori Samsov was waking up from anxious dreams, he discovered that he had been changed into a gigantic Armenian." Russian slang for people from the Caucasus is tarakan, "cockroach". So this means that all white people are bugs.

— JTM

JTM comments about the problems of building a new bridge across the Ohio River in Louisville. I actually worked on one of those projects, about 15 years ago. There just isn't any good place to do this. Locations which meet the criteria for not disturbing existing homes or infrastructure are too far from town to help much. I haven't done that kind of work in a long time, so I don't have any inside information about the current effort, but I suspect the designers just wound up choosing the least bad alternative.

From: **Sheryl Birkhead** January 12, 2006
22509 Jonnie Court, Gaithersburg,
MD 20882-3422 USA
catsmeouch@yahoo.com

Greetings — now I'm sure I have at least two issues of *Alexiad* here somewhere

— but since I just "found" the October ish, I'll go ahead.

It will be heartbreaking and interesting to see what happens to/with New Orleans. On the one hand, it is a flood area; on the other hand it is a unique culture. No matter what happens, it was unforgivable what happened (or did *not*). We'll see.

I just noticed a Reeses cup that says "Caramel" — luckily, such a combo doesn't tempt me. I'm going cold turkey — no chocolate as chocolate — but I am a chocoholic, so once I start again . . . sigh.

Repeat after me: "My name is Cheryl B and I am a chocoholic." Then you can have a Klondike double chocolate ice cream bar.

We have the Grand Master Award, but I wonder if a lifetime Hugo might have to be given posthumously. Ummm — not exactly a plus!

My sister (who is not a chocolate fan) never seemed to like breakfast — so my mother would bake a \$300 cake (moist, heavy dark choc! cake), ice it, slice and freeze it. For some reason that became a frequent breakfast on the run (the cake issometimes called a mayonnaise cake — but we use Miracle Whip).

My neighbor has a Prius and loves it. My Matrix (solely internal combustion) is still getting 30-36 mpg, so I'll settle. I'd looked at the Prius but needed a car **now** and they were doing some heavy changing in design, and I didn't want to wait the extra few months.

Trinlay — hope you can (or am I too late?) put art in the con Randy Cherry contacted you to participate.

To those eligible — remember, it is time, once again, to start thinking about Hugo nominations. If you nominate, stick to the categories you know, and in *those* categories, fill in **all** the blanks — spread that egoboo around!

And nowadays, with the con having nomination forms on the Internet, there really isn't much excuse for any member not being able to nominate. But the numbers of those who do are so low.

— JTM time. I can try to promise to do a little better the next time around.

From: **Lloyd Penney** January 25, 2006
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M9C 2B2 CANADA
penneys@allstream.net

It's time for my usual catch-up efforts. They're often successful, especially when responding to a zine that has an advertised deadline, as you do. Here's some fast comments on *Alexiad*, WN24.

I haven't heard much from any of the bids, mostly because we haven't supported any of them. There's been little information coming out of Montreal; they've almost been secretive, and this comes from some Montreal fans. I am hopeful that with local conventions starting in a few months, there will be more info coming from Anticipation. I might also wind up getting supportings for Chicago in 2008.

There haven't been any new bids in the past year or two, but I think it may be because of the shift to two years lead time. Perhaps by LACon there'll be something.

— JTM

Henry Welch didn't seem all that happy with Ditto in 2005, but it does seem that those who did go had a weekend to remember. With all the food to be enjoyed, perhaps fanzines were a secondary interest that weekend? I will finally be able to get to a Corflu . . . with it being in town this year, I can at least say that.

My loc...there should be something about nominating for this year's Auroras. They are being awarded this year at Toronto Trek, the local mediacon. But, no ballots yet. I expect they may not appear until March or April. I think the idea of having to have passports to get across the border is being shelved in favour of some kind of identity card, with a bar code or magnetic strip, and it's been put off to 2008, iirc.

Sue Burke mentions a Star Trek fan film...I've been told about a similar fan film to be shot in Toronto, and I've been asked if I'd like to participate. Sure, why not? Overact in front of a camera? I am so there . . .

It's not much, but I didn't have much

From: **Sue Burke** January 27, 2006
c. Agustín Querol, 6 bis - 6 D, 28014
Madrid, SPAIN
www.sue.burke.name

Leonor de Todos los Santos de Borbon y Ortiz was baptized at 1:10 p.m. Saturday, January 14, 2006, at the Zarzuela Palace by Archbishop Antonio Rouco Varela with water from the River Jordan using the 12th century baptismal font reserved for future rulers of Spain. It was an intimate affair attended by only a hundred people, including family members, heads of Spain's government, the doctors who attended the birth, and a whole lot of news media. The name Todos los Santos (All Saints) is traditional for royals in Spain, but unlike other relatives, she did not get a long string of additional middle names. The fat-cheeked, fuzzy-headed, blue-eyed future queen, who slept through almost the entire ceremony, goes simply as Princess Leonor. Her godparents are King Juan Carlos I and Queen Sofía.

JTM thought that the other pretenders to the throne might have some interesting comments. Maybe they did, but no one cares. When he was head of state, Generalísimo Francisco Franco named don Juan Carlos as his legitimate successor, and though Franco is still dead (I have visited his grave to be sure), his ghost is still alive and busy; if you know where to look, you can see it often.

If that were not enough, the Spanish Constitution, Article 57, paragraph 1 says (my translation): "The Crown of Spain is the inheritance of the successors of His Majesty don Juan Carlos I de Borbon, legitimate heir of the historic dynasty." So to change the lineage, you'd have to change the Constitution and/or start another civil war.

And the Act of Succession limits the succession to the British Throne to the heir of Kurfürstin Sophia. That hasn't stopped Jacobites one whit; I see them going on about what King Francis will or won't do . . .

(By the way, Article 56, Paragraph 3

says, "The personage of the King is inviolable and is not subject to responsibility." This means that no matter what he [or she] does, you can't take him to court, much less throw him in jail. The King is above reproach and the law.) The baptism, carried live on television, captured 25% of the viewing public.

Speaking of television, Channel Cuatro just finished showing the series "Roma," the HBO-BBC epic super-production. Dubbed into Spanish, of course. My husband, who is a history buff, watched it and reported there was a lot of sex, violence, and nasty politics. Every now and then, I'd pause in my writing and wander through the living room, and that seemed to be true. We live in the former Roman Empire, and I can testify that these days there is somewhat less sex and violence, but the politics are still pretty brutal.

My favorite TV show is "Cuentame como paso" (Tell Me How It Happened), the story of a Madrid family during the late Franco years, www.cuentamecomopaso.net/. In a recent episode, they recreated the 1973 assassination of Luis Carrero Blanco by Basque terrorists. At the time Carrero was the president of Spain (Franco was semi-retired), and he was scheming with then-Prince Juan Carlos to make Spain a democracy when Franco died because don Juan Carlos wanted to reign over a free people — plans that the Prince managed to keep from Franco. His Highness was meeting in secret with political activists to arrange a peaceful transition, and they were being smuggled into his palace in the trunks of cars or disguised as pizza delivery guys on motorcycles wearing helmets.

The show "Cuentame," however, deals with family problems, though often tinged by the times. The father struggles to support his family despite the corruption that dictatorships seem to engender. The pubescent son is hopelessly girl-crazy, though the girl he loves is pro-Fascist and the boy leans toward the liberal politics of his family; his grandfather was executed by Fascists during the Civil War. In this season, the overarching issue was that their neighborhood faced demolition to build the M-30 freeway. At the last minute, the neighborhood's patron saint, San Genaro, caused a spring to bubble up and make the ground unstable so the road had to be built

elsewhere. At least, that's how the residents of this fictional neighborhood tell people it happened; the viewer may believe a less miraculous version. There is quite an aquifer in Madrid — hence its name, which means "many springs."

The patron saint of my neighborhood is the Virgin of Atocha, www.dominicos.org/atocha/, who is also the patroness of the royal family. The 7th century statue is carried in solemn procession through the neighborhood in early November, dressed in splendid robes made from the wedding gowns of various queens of Spain. Although we are not Catholics, my husband and I go to the procession to applaud and cheer as she goes by. The current mayor of Madrid is overly fond of public works projects, and you never know when you may need friends in very high places.

And right now someone is suing because a new state historical marker in Louisville mentions the appearance of the Virgin Mary at Lourdes. ["That Dreyfus, such a nice boy; but oy, such troubles he has, I wouldn't wish them on my worst enemy!"]

— JTM

From: **Richard Dengrove** January 28, 2006
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As with all the *Alexiads*, I enjoyed *Alexiad* Dec. 2005 because there were so many comment hooks.

This first comment is in reply to some comment hooks by both of you. It concerns Arabs. I disagree with Lisa on why the Arabs have come here. I am not certain they haven't come here to work and build, like the Hispanics have. I do not know how things are in Louisville, but I see plenty of Moslem Arabs living and working in the D.C. area.

Also, I have seen a lot of signs of assimilation which aren't reported in the media. Some have been striking. I remember seeing an Arab boy grooving to rock with an iPod to his ear. He was wearing those awful baggy pants with the low crotch and his t-shirt read "Saudi USA."

Another sign was a young woman I saw at a mall a year or two ago. She was wearing a hijab, the kerchief which, among Moslems, is supposed to be a sign of modesty. Also, she was wearing a stylish pantsuit, which clashed a bit with the hijab. What really clashed, though, was the enormous padded bra she wore on her very petite figure.

Another sign of assimilation, I have heard about. My friend Larry is far more Orthodox Jewish than I am. He had his son in Jewish day school for a time. Right now, however, one of his son's close friends is a Palestinian kid, named Baha. Larry doesn't seem to mind it. That, I guess, is the way the area is.

Another sign of assimilation takes a different approach. When I was at Toastmasters' Officer Training recently, the woman who taught the secretary and treasurer's course wore a hijab. Also, a rather flowing pantsuit. I associate flowing clothes with the Middle East. That would show that she wasn't assimilating except for one thing. Because her skin was whiter than snow and her accent distinctly Midwestern, I had her pegged as an Anglo. It was the other side of the coin of assimilation. She was an Anglo assimilating Arab ways. Probably married to an Arab.

Many of us are assimilating Arab culture, though to a much much lesser extent. Hummus anyone?

By the way, she didn't seem to be a doormat. In fact, she was an articulate speaker and gave a lively course. Go figure.

This is not to say that there isn't terrorism and Arab fundamentalism isn't on the rise. Also, this isn't to say I wouldn't be bitter, like Bat Ye'or, if I were an Egyptian Jew.

In fact, I suspect that assimilation might bring on terrorism. Arabs, like all of us, are subject to conflicting forces. In their case, both Westernization and tradition, i.e., intense action and intense reaction.

Having had my say about Arabs, I figure the above sets the tone of my letter. The idea behind it seems to be to tell people they are wrong and correct them.

Something that will, of course, make me incredibly popular. In the case of the series Rome, I am going to give this criticism: Joe, you should have included a program, like for plays, to keep track of the characters. Any

plot summary would have to be confusing because there were too many characters in Rome.

I bet this criticism is going to make me especially popular because you have finished your plot summary of Rome, and are going on to review other shows, books, etc.

Also, I want to criticize you, Joe, for mentioning Yarbrow's Ragozy Francisco de Saint-Germain and not mentioning this: according to A.E. Waite, the real Count Saint-Germain, the actual person behind legend and fiction, was associated with the name Ragozy.

Waite believed the good count when he said he was the son of Prince Rakoczy of Transylvania. Since legend claims that the good count lived thousands of years, it is easy in the early 21st Century to see how someone, with this information, could turn him into a vampire.

If the real Comte de St-Germain, the king's minister of war, had gone to Ankh-Morpork, no one would have noticed, and who was this Hungarian poseur anyhow?

Why should you have given this information when you were just mentioning the name in passing as a lark? People, like me, who are hypercritical do not have to give reasons for being hypercritical.

Another criticism is that the Norwegian whale ship *Sir John Ross* was not the only time the Norwegians took to Anglo names. The administrative center of Svalbard, a Norwegian possession, is Longyearbyen. It is named after a Mr. Longyear. He was an American who had a coal operation there at one time.

Of course, it doesn't matter that you didn't say that there weren't other examples besides the *Sir John Ross*.

Like, for example, the Sir James Clark Ross.

You, Joe, aren't the only one I am going to criticize. I am going to criticize Trinlay Khadro. In fact, I can criticize her more easily. I didn't say that skull size was a sign of intelligence. I said that was what they said in the old days.

Of course, misinterpreting words is easy.

In the old days, people would have criticized me for saying that size had nothing to do with intelligence. People are looking for faults. Seek and ye shall find.

I myself have done my own misinterpreting. I have twice gotten angry about an offending passage, re-read it, and found it was not offending after all.

Then there is E.B. Frohvet's comment to me. While I agree with him, even on my first reading, I still will find fault with that comment nonetheless. I admit that teenagers have been making up new slang, music, etc. for generations to piss off their elders. I did it to piss off my elders. On the other hand, I was very taken aback when they took umbrage at it.

I guess that's a criticism.

Also, I guess that's it for criticisms this time. Correct me if I'm wrong.

From: **Marty Helgesen** January 31, 2006
11 Lawrence Avenue, Malverne,
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Reviewing the latest Flashman book Joe says that when Henry M. Stanley appears he does not say, "Sir Harry Flashman, I presume". That reminded me that some years ago in MINNEAPPA Doug Hoylman asked if anyone knew what Livingstone replied to the original question, adding that it was not, "You certainly do, young man." I looked it up and, as I recall, found a statement that it was "Yes, that is my name". If that was what I found, it may have come from an account by Livingstone. Nowadays the web makes it easy to find things like that. Here is an excerpt from *How I Found Livingstone* by Sir Henry M. Stanley:

"So I did that which I thought was most dignified. I pushed back the crowds, and, passing from the rear, walked down a living avenue of people until I came in front of the semicircle of Arabs, in the front of which stood the white man with the grey beard. As I advanced slowly towards him, I noticed he was pale, looked wearied, had a grey beard, wore a bluish cap with a faded gold band round it, had on a red-sleeved waistcoat and a pair of grey tweed trousers. I would have run to him,

only I was a coward in the presence of such a mob — would have embraced him, only he being an Englishman, I did not know how he would receive me; so I did what cowardice and false pride suggested was the best thing — walked deliberately to him, took off my hat, and said: —

'Dr. Livingstone, I presume?'

'Yes,' said he, with a kind smile, lifting his cap slightly.

'I replace my hat on my head, and he puts on his cap, and we both grasp hands, and I then say aloud:

— 'I thank God, Doctor, I have been permitted to see you.' He answered, 'I feel thankful that I am here to welcome you.'"

The review of *Storms, Ice, and Whales* is an occasion to mention that several years ago at a local whaling museum I saw an old, black and white silent movie documentary (with a sound track of instrumental sea chanteys added) of a real whaling voyage on an sailing ship. The whole thing was interesting, but what impressed me was a real Nantucket sleighride pulled by a harpooned whale. I hadn't realized there were movies of any of them.

When we were in San Antonio for WorldCon we went to the museum there and discovered that they had a movie of a buffalo hunt by Indians. It had been recreated for the filming, but nevertheless it was a real hunt by real Indians.

Commenting on Trinlay Khadro's letter, Joe asks what she does about phishing e-mails about her eBay account. I forward phishing e-mails about my non-existent account to spoof@ebay.com. Similarly I forward e-mails purporting to come from PayPal to spoof@paypal.com. I have those addresses in all of my e-mail accounts so it's easy to do and it might help the companies to find and prosecute the phishers.

Trinlay comments on Rodney Leighton's mention of "that old saw about all knowledge being found in fanzines", "I heard it was All knowledge is contained in

fandom.” Apparently Charles Burbee originally said, “All knowledge is contained in fanzines”, but the expression later was expanded. Even before the Internet there were fans who were interested in clubs and conventions but not fanzines.

And now they're the mainstream, while fanzine fans are the fringe.

She asks about the fundamentalists' problem with evolution. Young Earth Creationists, who think the Bible gives an exact chronology of the history of the universe with no gaps say there's no time for evolution to have occurred, but, so far as I know, they are a minority. It seems that one major objection is not to evolution in itself, but to the claims by some writers and, apparently, some teachers and textbooks that evolution eliminates the need for a creator at all. A standard oversimplified reply to that claim is that the survival of the fittest does not explain the arrival of the fittest.

Robert S. Kennedy mentions being inundated by pornographic emails. I used to report spam offering pornography by using the Make a Report form at <http://www.obscuritycrimes.org> to send the URLs contained in porn spam. I have the report form itself bookmarked. The people there will file a complaint with my local U.S. Attorney. I haven't done it recently because all the porn spam I've been getting has long strings of letters and numbers in the URLs. In the past I got some with my e-mail address in the URL, apparently so the senders could see who responded even if he didn't buy anything. It occurred to me that those long strings could include a coded personal identifier so I just delete those. If I get any without an identifier I'll forward them.

The last phishing spam I got began, “Your account was take by a third part!” I know the standard of literacy in America is nil but this is too much for even the credulous people who sent money to help Malgorzata Wojtyla get the deposit of her husband the late Pope out of Italy to believe.

No, the reason the idea of the book *Fighting Sail* being a biography of Fulton led me to think of a temporally dislocated Ralph Kramden arguing against Fulton was Kramden's frequent statement to his wife, “Don't steam me, Alice!”

I see from Al du Pisani's letter that the problem of judges usurping legislative power — rewriting laws and amending constitutions under the increasingly transparent pretext of interpreting them — is a world wide problem.

Here are some belated comments on the August issue, which I somehow missed commenting on at the time:

At the end of a review of a book about the possibility of alien life and extraterrestrial intelligence E. B. Frohvet says the author “suffers from the usual open-minded person's inability to grasp that nearly all of organized religion would reject the idea outright regardless of the evidence. The Vatican will declare the subject needs twenty years of study and that only elderly white male theologians are competent to have an opinion.”

Catholic theologians have already said there is no reason why God could not have created other intelligent species throughout the universe. A modern theologian discussing the question wrote, “Cardinal Nicolo Cusano (1401-1464) wrote that there is not a single star in the sky about which we can rule out the existence of life, even if different from ours.” At the popular level, over the years I have seen many quotations by Catholic writers from the poem “Christ in the Universe” by Alice Meynell (1847-1922), an English Catholic poet and suffragette, which contemplated the possibility of God becoming incarnate in many forms throughout the universe. It concludes,

But in the eternities,
Doubtless we shall compare together,
hear

A million alien Gospels, in what guise
He trod the Pleiades, the Lyre, the Bear.

O, be prepared, my soul!
To read the inconceivable, to scan
The myriad forms of God those stars
unroll

When, in our turn, we show to them a
Man.

Sheryl Birkhead asks what Wikipedia actually stands for. According to Wikipedia itself, it got the name because it uses “a type of software called a ‘wiki’, a term originally used for the WikiWikiWeb and derived from the Hawaiian Wiki Wiki, which means ‘quick’.”

Richard Dengrove says that people become atheists because of the evils in the world. After mentioning a few evils he writes, “To believe these things aren't the case takes faith.” But Christians do not deny that evil exists. We say that God permits the evils and we try to understand why. In one sense we will never understand it, at least not in this life, but we don't understand all of the physical universe either. Why should we think we can understand the infinite God who created it?

I don't even understand
other people.

— JTM

From: **AL du Pisani** January 31, 2006
945 Grand Prix Street,
Weltevredenpark 1709, Republic of
South Africa
akaine@intekom.co.za

I am well. Not as good as I had hoped, but still things are not too bad.

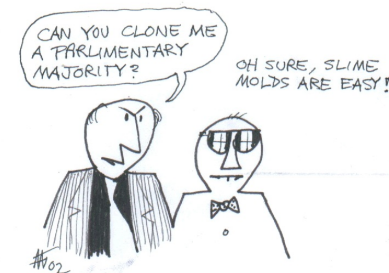
I had a wonderful holiday over Christmas. I spent the best part of three weeks resting out at my family's shack by the sea. They were all there, and it was a good time to catch up with all they are doing.

Back at work, and unfortunately, things are continuing their old miserable way. I want things to change, if necessary by taking the geographic cure. But I have as yet been unable to find a new job. It looks as if I would have to find something else to do, as there is no market for my current skill set.

In South Africa, the current news is the local government elections of 1 March. Since the new year, election posters have gone up all along the roads, and in some places a second round of posters have gone up. The ANC is campaigning on the ticket of “Give us another chance”, and their opponents on the ticket of “You have had your chance, now it is time for somebody else.”

The core issue at hand is service delivery: The ANC controlled municipalities have had a lot of trouble delivering the services they had promised, with large amounts of money disappearing in the process. This have lead to riots, with people toyi-toying in the streets and burning tyres.

At the same time, our new Deputy President got into a lot of hot water, when it came out that she used Government resources to go overseas and take a holiday at the taxpayers' expense. To the tune of R700 000. (Enough to buy a three bedroom house in my area of Johannesburg.) This, while it may have been legal and according to the rules, was not the behaviour that somebody who claims to be all for the poor, was expected to show.



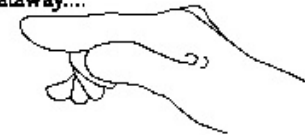
We seem to be stumbling into darkness, but carrying some light. I hope and pray that we emerge into the light once again.

Sounds like you're having an
American-style election.

— JTM

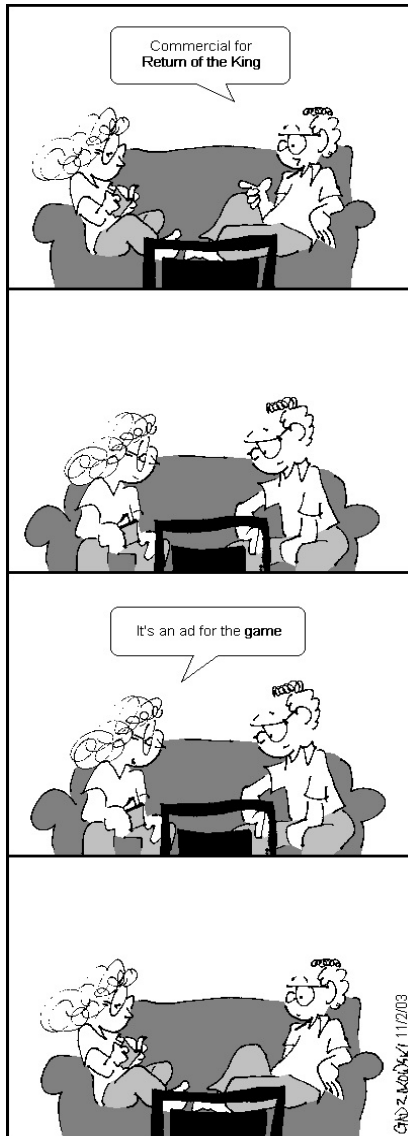
WAHF:
Lloyd Daub, with various items of
interest.

Alexiad...thataway...



CATEGORICAL IMPERATIVE

by Paul Gadzikowski.

**“How the Brigadier Met the English Colonel”, or: *Flashman and the Frog***
(Part Four)

It was the old Brigadier who was talking in the café.

I see where the Soviets have renamed their city of steel. Ah, Stalingrad! It was a ruin then, but I would gladly raise a glass to the brave Russians there. They suffered so, with little to eat and drink — you are a true friend, and a true Norman, to order this excellent Calvados!

You must know, then, that barely had my wounds gained during my desperate and daring incursion into Indochina healed, but that I was dispatched to take a special message to our Normandie-Niemen Squadron, upon the steppes of Russia. But when I had returned to Moscow to get my papers, the distinguished ambassador summoned me to his office, with most desperate news. “Gérard,” he said, “In the city of Stalingrad, under siege by the Boche even as we speak, is a French cipher machine, buried under the floor of the consulate when the staff was evacuated.

“It must be recovered if possible, destroyed if necessary. There is but one man I know of who can essay this. Can you do it, Gérard?”

There was but one answer I could make. “I am at your orders, Monsieur le Ambassadeur.”

Within the hour I was on a train south. The gallant Russians made my path as easy as they could, but the journey was still arduous. It was upon the fourth day that I reached the far bank of the frozen Volga, and there my fortune, which had been good that far, turned most excellent.

The hardest part of hiding in that “comfort women station” the Japanese had was not being able to have one. The girls had to be ready at any moment, you see, and their clients would come in at all hours of the day and night. Not that I was in more than ordinary danger. They were Koreans and Chinese to a woman, you see, hated the Nips, and never would have turned me in. But that was all they could do. If any of them had actually tried something, well the Nip officers could always use sword practice.

I did get a good-bye romp when that one girl figured we could make a break, and we got Gérard out of his hidey-hole under the officers club. If I’d left him it would have looked bad, you see. The three of us got into China, where she took up with some Nationalist general, and we got flown out by that Yank lout Chennault.

Eventually I got home again, reported in to the Firm, and hoped to settle down. I should have stayed with the comfort women, I would have been in less danger.

Some ass in the Foreign Office had been working with the Chechens during their Revolution, and was absolutely persuaded that they would make splendid fighting material. I got dispatched there with a letter to his old friends urging them to rise up against the nasty old Nazis.

Now the journey there was comparatively easy, but of course all his old friends had been liquidated as agents of imperialism. I looked around for a few days, made the acquaintance of a young widow who spoke a little Russian and needed some consolation, and then took off when the German offensive got near.

Flying was a little tricky, so I had to go by motorcar. During the first day’s trip, my driver stopped for a baggy figure in uniform, which turned out to be a sniper on leave. Once she got that winter coat off she was quite young and shapely, most willing to help an Ally.

All would have been well had Olga not been going to Stalingrad. There, as we were saying goodbye on the shore of the Volga, my luck took a turn for the worse, as it usually does.

I heard that all too familiar voice of doom ring out, “Why if it is not the Commandant Flashman!” I tried to put on a smile as I turned to confront him. “Gérard,” says I with insincere welcome. “What brings you here?”

The brave Commandant Flashman was most willing to be of assistance, and had the aid of a brave Russian soldier to help us get through the Boche lines. And so we demonstrated again the Grand Alliance of the Nations United . . .

— Not edited (or “edited”) by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle or George Macdonald Fraser

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