

# ALEXIAD

(ΑΛΕΞΙΑΔ)

\$2.00

Archbishop Iakovos, retired head of the Greek Orthodox church, died just before the last issue of Alexiad went to print. I did not have time to write about his passing. Iakovos marched alongside King during the civil rights movement and wrote several books. He was a remarkable man and a great champion of Orthodoxy in this country. Christendom has lost two of its great champions this year, with the passing of John Paul and Iakovos. May their memory be eternal.

Emissions have been high in Louisville lately so the mayor came up with a new incentive to use the local buses, free rides for city employees. I have been taking advantage of this offer. It has required some adjustments. I have to leave the house around 7:15 to make it to work by nine. I learned the first day I did it that I couldn't leave the house at eight and make it to work by nine. Luckily I have only been late once before so I was allowed to make up the time without getting into trouble. I have been taking the time at transfer points to get some reading done and doing some writing while riding on the bus.

Next week I intend to start learning bus routes to places other than work, such as the noted Speed Museum. Eight years I've lived in this town and I've never been there. Nor have I been to the baseball museum, which I would now like to do. When it is cooler I would like to take the bus out to the zoo. I might even venture to ride the bus into Indiana.

It will not always be practical to take the bus. There is no way to get sixty pounds of kitty litter onto the bus. I suppose I might manage 20 pounds of catfood but I would really rather not. I can, however, see more of the scenery than I can when I have to pay attention to what all the other drivers are doing.

— Lisa

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The Dormition of the Theokotos is **August 15, 2005**  
 The 80<sup>th</sup> Running of the Hambletonian (1st leg of the Trotting Triple Crown) was **August 6, 2005** at Meadowlands Racetrack in East Rutherford, NJ. **Vivid Photo**, driven by his owner Roger Hammer, won handily.  
 The 50<sup>th</sup> Running of the Yonkers Trot (2nd leg of the Trotting Triple Crown) is **August 20, 2005** at Yonkers Raceway in Yonkers, NY.  
 The 113<sup>th</sup> Running of the Kentucky Futurity (3rd leg of the Trotting Triple Crown) is **October 1, 2005** at the Red Mile in Lexington, KY.

Printed on August 8, 2005  
 Deadline is **October 1, 2005**

## Reviewer's Notes

In a side note on the ephemerality of communication among the young, I have recently read that *the* way for the younger set nowadays to communicate is by text-messaging. Email is like so five minutes ago, like mom and her husband and dad and his wife (or "partner", either one) use it and like that's the only thing they'll do. Eeeew!  
 So much for time-binding. Have a nice day.

## RANDOM JOTTINGS

by Joe



**Janine Stinson** of *Peregrine Nations* has been hospitalized with ulcerative colitis. Whatever steps you wish to take in regard to her suffering and for her recovery will no doubt be greatly appreciated, no matter what they are.

Jan G. Stinson,  
Post Office Box 248,  
Eastlake, MI 49626-0248 USA  
[tropicsf@earthlink.net](mailto:tropicsf@earthlink.net)

I was looking at the Classic Fanzines listing on [Fanac.org](http://Fanac.org) after finding the pages with *Spaceways* and found the Program Book for Philcon II in 1953. This was the WorldCon that awarded the Hugos for the first time.

It had one (1) program track, and that included an auction (not just art), panels with people like Bob Tucker, also de Camp, Asimov, Theodore Sturgeon (the only man on the panel and its moderator, which may say something, on "Women in Science Fiction", which does say something), and so on, a Business Meeting and Site Selection, and a play. Milton Rothman had it a lot easier; a regional of that size (750) that had such little programming would never do these days.

As we have more experiences, we want more. "Where's the genealogy track? And the equestrian fiction one?" And then it becomes harder and harder to find your friends, because they're all doing something else.

Commemorating the two hundredth anniversary of the great naval battle between, er, the Red and Blue Fleets, Queen Elizabeth II reviewed an international fleet review from the deck of HMS *Endurance* on **June 28, 2005**. Among those who objected to the toning down of the celebration was Mrs. Anna Tribe, a descendant of Mrs. Horatia Ward (née Horatia Nelson-Thompson), whose father had something to do with the original battle.

*Soothsayer*, the first book in Mike Resnick's Penelope Bailey Series (1991, 2005; ISBN 1-93210-51-2; \$14.95), has been reissued by BenBella Books, Inc.

This volume covers the youth of Penelope Bailey, who at various times in her short, turbulent life was known as the Soothsayer, the Oracle, and the Prophet, and in this case found

out that being able to know what may come makes one very valuable to the unscrupulous. It's set in the same universe as his *Santiago* series and the gloomy *Birthright: The Book of Man*. Presumably they will be bringing out *Oracle* and *Prophet* as well.

(Thanks to Mike for having the book sent.)

Astronomers with the California Institute of Technology led by Professor Mike Brown have discovered a new planet, designated 2003 UB313. The team used the Samuel Oschin Telescope at the Mount Palomar Observatory in California (this is the 48" Schmidt telescope there, not the main 200" telescope) for observations over a period of several months, confirming the coordinates of the planet.

Its orbital period is 560 years and its orbit is highly eccentric, ranging from 97 astronomical units to 35. Its high inclination to the ecliptic, forty-four degrees, had kept astronomers from recognizing it before. The team has submitted their discovery to the International Astronomical Union for certification. A temporary, or perhaps proposed name has already leaked out to wild enthusiasm. Ladies and gentlemen, I present the planet . . .

## XENA

Professor Brown is a fan of the Warrior Princess, you see. "The Solar System cried out for a hero . . ."

In 1986 Sophia Stewart submitted her manuscript "The Third Eye" to a contest sponsored by the Wachowski brothers. She never heard from them and not until she saw *The Matrix* did she realize that she had been plagiarized. The *Terminator* series was also plagiarized from her work, and in 1999 she filed a RICO lawsuit against the Wachowskis, James Cameron, AOL Time Warner, Fox, and so on.

She turned out to be another Nancy Stouffer (you remember, the woman who claimed without proof that Harry Potter was a plagiarism of her work), unable to post any evidence of similarities, or even a copy of the alleged advertisement, and her case was dismissed in June of 2005. Right? Wrong.

The story has spread through the internet that in fact Stewart **won** her lawsuit and a settlement in the billions, but AOL Time-Warner, which controls 90% of the media, is not reporting it. For some reason this gets classified as an example of racial politics (Stewart is black) but considering that I have seen it resoundingly proclaimed that David Irving won his lawsuit but that da eevil Jooz suppressed the news, I have to wonder.

(Come to think of it, whatever happened with that guy in Calgary who sued LucasFilms claiming that he had invented the Ewoks™? He lost his initial suit, and why anyone would be proud of having invented the Ewoks™ is beyond me, but . . .)

## OBITS

**Art Rapp** has died, on **March 24, 2005**, after a long confinement with Alzheimer's. Born in 1924, Art became first known for his participation in SAPS, with his fanzine *Spacewarp*. In 1947, he proclaimed the revelation of Roscoe, the Fannish Ghod, the Beaver whose birthday, Labor Day, All Fandom annually celebrates. More recently, he rejoined SAPS in 1983 and stimulated it to a new wave of fannish production.

Five issues of Art's *Spacewarp*, as well as one of the Insurgent Issues produced by Francis Tower Laney and Charles Burbee while Art was serving in Korea, may be found on the Web at:

<http://fanac.org/fanzines/Spacewarp/index.html?>

World War II veteran and classmate of Leslie Nielsen, and oh yes he was in some TV show as well, **James Montgomery "Jimmy" Doohan** died on **July 20, 2005**, the thirty-sixth anniversary of the First Moon Landing and the sixty-first anniversary of the Bomb Plot against Hitler. A lousy birthday present for Guy Lillian.

We note that some of Doohan's ashes will be sent into orbit by Space Services, Inc., the same rocketry firm that did as much for Gene Roddenberry. Would it be too much for them to have a piper playing "Amazing Grace" at the launch?

## MONARCHIST NEWS

**The Lady Soames** has been named a Lady of the Garter; the first nonroyal Lady of the Garter who is the daughter of a Knight of the Garter. (Dame Mary Spencer Churchill Soames, L.G., D.B.E., &c. daughter of Sir Winston S. Churchill, K.G., of course!) Also knighted this St. George's Day was a fellow named John Ball, who had run away from the circus to become an accountant, then went into politics. But **Sir Ted Heath, K.G.**, former Prime Minister, died on **July 17, 2005**.

**H.I.H Prince Yi Ku**, the imperial Korean claimant, died in Tokyo on **July 16, 2005**. He was born in 1931 to the then Crown Prince Yi Un (son of Emperor Kojong), married Julia Mullock of New York, and adopted a daughter. He was a second cousin of the Tenno [the Japanese Emperor]. His heir **Prince Yi Won** conducted the funeral, which was attended by (among others) South Korean Prime Minister Lee Haechan.

**Fahd bin `Abd al-Azīz al-Sa`ūd**, Ruler of Saudi Arabia, died in Riyadh **August 1, 2005**. Born in 1923 in Riyadh to the expansionistic ruler of the Nejd, **`Abd al-Azīz bin `Abd al-Rahmān Ibn Sa`ūd**, Fahd held several positions in the Saudi government until succeeding his half-brother **Khālid bin `Abd al-Azīz al-Sa`ūd** in 1982. He was disabled by a stroke in 1995 and for the remainder of his life his half-brother and successor **`Abd Allāh bin `Abd al-Azīz al-Sa`ūd** was regent.

### LIFTING OUT THE HEARTS

Review by Joseph T Major of  
**NEVER CALL RETREAT**  
 by William R. Forstchen[, Albert S. Hanser,]  
 and Newt Gingrich  
 (St. Martin's Press; 2005;  
 ISBN 0-312-34298-5; \$25.95)  
 Sequel to *Gettysburg* and *Grant Comes East*

After Lee had handed that political johnny Sickles his head at Gunpowder Creek, I had thought all was well. Then that messenger showed up with orders for me to pull out and observe the other side. Saying goodbye to Private Bean in one night, I got out on the road north, then west and around the armies. Always stay as far away as possible from gunfire, says old Flashy, a maxim I've ended up being forced to disregard often through many long years of hidden cowardice. Soon enough I presented my credentials to General Grant, along with a box of two dozen of the finest Cubans

— Not from the Flashman Papers

In our last thrilling episode, the triumphant Army of Northern Virginia had repelled a last stroke from its old foe, the Army of the Potomac, when its new commander General Dan Sickles made a premature attack. However, General Lee cannot sit easy in Baltimore; this new Federal Army of the Susquehanna is about to strike.

But between them, in Washington City, President Lincoln is surrounded by enemies, some of them even secessionist. It turns out that Sickles had his orders from the high command. This was a surprise to Lincoln, who is facing mutiny in the nursery, er Cabinet.

About the only man who feels confident about it all is Ulysses S. Grant, busy gathering men and munitions for a devastating strike against the rebs. Which he proceeds to execute.

The authors continue the policy of following the course of the battle at all levels. By judiciously picking point of view characters they avoid the problem as in, say, David Westheimer's *Lighter Than a Feather* (1971) [aka *Downfall* (1972) and *Death Is Lighter Than a Feather* (1995)] or Alfred Coppel's *The Burning Mountain* (1983) where any point of view character has less than even odds of surviving to the end of the chapter. (Obviously George R. R. Martin read one or perhaps even both of these books and adopted that policy for his new series.)

This presentation also highlights the "fog of war": communication takes time and may not be as informative as the informer believes; observers may be biased or outright wrong, and sometimes it's just not possible to know what is going on on the other side of the hill. The reader is presented with the observations and decisions of both sides, having more information than the characters, but that's how it works.

There are some problems to be considered. In the penultimate chapter Lincoln offers, and the Confederate Congress is left with little choice but to accept, some very generous but far-reaching peace terms. I can't imagine that they would be accepted by everyone, even in the Confederacy as well. One can imagine among the other problems facing Lincoln (he's already set himself up for one tenure-of-office problem) is the accusation from New England ways of being soft on slaveholders. One further worries that the diehards out west may not think the final defeat final. Missouri is going to be a fun place, for certain values of "fun".

And didn't the French (or Napoleon III, who was all that mattered), decide to send more troops to Mexico last volume? Are we going to see a *Stars and Stripes Forever* (by Harry Harrison (1999)) type scenario, except against the French?

In general there is a certain carelessness to the story; as if the book were conceived backwards, with a set ending and then worked out to reach that ending. As a result a number of sloppinesses manifest themselves. Grant's command responsibilities tend to fluctuate from being General-in-Chief to being a front-line commander; Lee sounds far too melancholy. And I never did find out what happened to General Beauregard, last seen trying to rally fleeing men. Perhaps there will be a fourth book, clearing up all the loose threads. If there isn't there should be.

An interesting observation is that Gingrich has recently also brought out a nonfiction book, *Winning the Future: A 21st Century Contract with America* (Regnery; \$27.95). The reviewer for *Commentary*, Dan Seligman, raised the points that the book was written by a team of ghostwriters, is poorly organized, and sloppy. Hm. Seligman concludes, "This book is not serious. How could he have put his signature on it? More to the point, why didn't he sit down and write it himself?" (*Commentary*, May 2005, Page 77).

This is a reminder of the harshness and brutality of war, even then, along with a wish of defeat into victory.

Looking out over the ruins, I had occasion to call to mind one of our glorious disasters where as usual I had barely escaped grisly torture and death, and observed to General Barbicane (I was able to report that his house was in good shape except that the Rebels or someone had plundered his papers, and knew better than to mention that queer weapon I'd taken off the Dutchman), "It is nothing to Chillianwallah."

— Not from the Flashman Papers

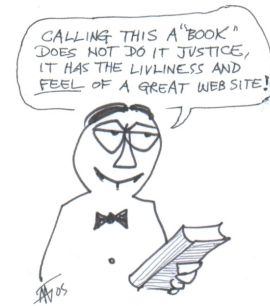
### FORTUNE IS A RIVER

Review by Joseph T Major of  
**LADY WITH AN ALIEN**  
 by Mike Resnick  
 (Watson-Guption Publications; 2005;  
 ISBN 0-8230-0407-4; \$15.95)

Speculations about Leonardo da Vinci and

his technological skills are not as common as they really ought to be. When I had been younger, I recall being enthralled by the "Medici" trilogy by thriller writers Martin Woodhouse and Robert Ross: *The Medici Guns* (1975), *The Medici Emerald* (1976), and *The Medici Hawks* (1978), tales of adventure, intrigue, and science. They were interesting and amusing and I think it's a pity that there weren't more. They certainly could have done more. The perceptive reader will recall the comment in Robert Heinlein's *The Door Into Summer* (1957) about the time-machine inventor and the disappearing graduate student named Leonard Vincent.

PARADIGM  
SHIFT!



Some of the speculation is not quite fictional. Besides the obvious one (of which more later), there is, for example, *Fortune Is a River* (1999) by Roger D. Masters, about the brief meeting where secretary Niccolò Machiavelli, on behalf of the government of Florence, hired

this engineer Da Vinci to divert the Arno river away from Pisa.

Watson-Guption Publications has this series of short novels for young adults on various works of art, explaining their creation and their creators; in this case, Leonardo da Vinci and his painting, "Lady with a Ferret". Resnick, being Resnick, has written a science-fiction story about a time traveler who wants to see the great Leonardo at work, and ends up becoming his confidante, assistant, and provider of a prop. In this case, an unEarthly creature that slightly resembles a ferret.

As time-traveler Mario Ravelli discusses the theory of art and its practice, he constantly deals with the problem of time paradoxes. Some of these things are tantalizing to the one man in that era who can actually begin to comprehend it. And then there are some matters of Leonardo's reputation to consider (no, not that little affair of il Sodoma):

"Speaking of codes, there was a time, centuries in my past, when you were thought to have hidden one in your work."

"A code?" repeated Leonardo.

"That's right."

"A code to what?"

"Believe it or not, the Holy Grail."

"If I knew where the Grail was, I wouldn't leave codes for others," snorted Leonardo. "I'd go find it and claim it for myself."

"So you believe the Grail was a cup?"

"A cup, a chalice, a goblet," said Leonardo. "Why? What do you think it was?"

"The same," said the boy. "Do you belong to any secret societies?"

Leonardo looked genuinely amused. "You've spent some time with me. When do you think I'd have as much as a spare minute for a secret society?"

— *Lady with an Alien*, Page 112

Dan Brown, eat your heart out! (Something of the sort needed to be said, given that so many readers will approach the subject by way of *The Da Vinci Code*, *Holy Blood — Holy Grail*, and other such conspiratorialist secret history books.)

Unlike, say *The Da Vinci Codes*, this being a serious book, Resnick discusses matters seriously. The reader will find material touching on such issues as the composition of a painting — not the physical makeup of the paint, but the arrangement of the figures in it. Which features, since Leonardo's current project involves a Lady with a cat . . . or an alien, or a ferret.

As well, the greater events of the world impinge on the discussion. There is much said of the doings of Italy, from Lodovico Maria "il Moro" Sforza and his political plans, to the consultation by Secretary Machiavelli, to the talk of this Genoese sailor named Colombo . . . (Thanks to Mike for having the book sent.)

#### **D BOON CILLED A DRAGON**

Review by Joseph T Major of  
**DRAGON AMERICA**

by Mike Resnick  
(Phobos Books; September 23, 2005;  
ISBN 0-9720026-9-3; \$14.95)

Daniel Boone was a man!  
Yes, a big man!  
And he fought for America  
To make all Americans free . . .

Fess Parker or somebody reused the costumes from the old "Davy Crockett" show for his new one, with the result that scads of kids growing up in the sixties thought that Daniel Boone wore a coonskin cap, just like Davy Crockett. (The show came on right before STAR TREK™, by the way.) But for all that he had the expert assistance of Mingo, famed tomahawk-thrower, and the love of a good woman, he never quite had to face dragons, and we had no idea how he would do under those circumstances. Until this came along.

Now the New World being the home of big ugly scaly things has been a staple of SF from Harry Harrison (the *Eden* Trilogy; 1984, 1986, & 1988) to Kurt R. M. Giambastiani (the *Fallen Cloud* Series). But this time it's personal!

The American Revolution is not going well. General Washington has been leading the Redcoats a merry chase up and down the coast, but they are grinding the Patriots down. However, the General has sent the famous frontiersman Daniel Boone west across the Alleghenies to look for dragons. And after some amusing and interesting encounters, he

finds them.

At which point his problems (which hve included having to fight an Indian who weighs four hundred pounds and none of that excess fat) have only begun. Tell me, how do you get a ferocious fire-breathing animal to do anything at all, much less go hundreds of miles and flame only the right sort of people?

This isn't quite serious but it is quite amusing and interesting. Now if only Fess Parker had had that idea . . .

(Thanks to Mike for having the book sent.)

#### **OUTSOURCING EVEN SF**

Review by Joseph T Major of

**RIVER OF GODS**

by Ian McDonald

(Pocket Books; 2004;

ISBN 0-7434-0400-9; £7.99)

**Hugo Nominee**

The Cyberpunk genre failed of its promise pretty quickly. The future of the Net turned out to be not hip young net surfers in mirrorshades who took designer drugs and cracked the ice of corporate entities in a world where governments were like so five minutes ago, but endless spews of shakily grammatical emails from eager and earnest Nigerian bank clerks needing help in setting up a foreign bank account to transfer \$127 MILLION DOLLARS out of the country. And al-Qaeda. Cyberpunk writers followed Fukuyama, who proclaimed the end of history, but 'Usama bin-Laden didn't read infidels.

Then there is the "orientalism" problem, of seeing another culture as you want to see it (I say "orientalism" but anyone reading the works of Bernard Lewis will see that the "East" has not even tried to understand the "West"). This is India as a foreigner imagines it. I wonder how Indian reviewers liked this book?

(But then, one cyberpunk prediction may be coming true. In the sixties, the prediction was greater amalgamations until there was a world state. Back then, McDonald would have said he was British. Now he is Scots, hostile to all and particularly the Sassenach. Soon enough, he will be of Clan Donail, at feud with all the other clans and all the non-Scots. Then, he will be of his particular sept, which has some severe disagreements with the other septs of the clan, and etc. And so on, down to his heart and liver being at war with each other. All thanks to identity politics.)

But his political sagacity is that of a quite well-informed sage: "Kerala's contradictions held him . . . its long and successful realisation of the political truth that Communism was a politics of abundance not scarcity," [Page 111]. Well this is a fantasy. For example, there is no Islamofascism of the sort that tears down Hindu temples to build mosques, which means either a political success that apparently McDonald wouldn't approve of or a decided expression of wish-fulfillment on the author's part.

As I've said, this is set in a fragmented India of the year 2047. The already-tired cyberpunk cliches don't go any better for being pinned on a different sort of people. It's a very easy book

to follow, but one that makes the reader wonder why.

His story is cross-social, presenting point-of-view characters from many levels of the bustling Indian society of 2047. Yes, society is more than one kind of person, doing many different things. . . Was McDonald thinking of John Brunner's *Stand on Zanzibar* (1968) with its multi-stranded plot? But Brunner categorized his strands, with main plot, illustrative examples, and info-sections. One of the ways in which André Norton's reach outraged her grasp was her having written many novels all set against a grand interplanetary war, which affected different people different ways. A hypothetical *River of Gods* Series with separate novels covering the different main characters of this book, with more detail on each of them, would be like this, only actually well written.

McDonald has pulled together a lot of ideas; he sets them in the society of his invented futuristic India but at the same time there seems to be an air of chiniserie, of not quite understanding. As when he has a character named "Ram Das". Ram Dass, né Richard Alpert, is a notorious neo-Hindu guru.

It's nice to think that a mere forty-two years (this must be coincidence, he can't be trying to evoke *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*) from now we will have all this. There's something Gernsbackian about it all, though a good revolutionary would surely disdain the connection. But the intricately detailed society seems all too much like the India of 2004 with a few additional items that really don't seem to affect much.

McDonald takes a dreadfully long time to bring his characters together, in the context of some really far out speculations about artificial intelligence. Again, that's interesting and imaginative, but it sinks under the weight of all the earlier maneuverings. It took a while to have this all come together; too long, really.

(Thanks to David Herrington for lending me the book.)

#### **THE EMPEROR OF EVERYTHING**

Review by Joseph T Major of  
**THE WILL OF THE EMPRESS**

by Tamora Pierce

(Scholastic Press; November 2005;

ISBN 0-439-44171-4; \$17.99)

Sequel to the Circle of Magic  
and The Circle Opens series

I reread David Weber's *Mutineers' Moon* (1991) recently. It's about Colin MacIntyre, an ordinary fellow except that he's not so ordinary, who stumbles across an Item of Immense Power (a Galactic Empire's interstellar spaceship which is the size of, and replaced the original of, our Moon), and promptly uses it to face a powerful foe. It's the first of a series.

Earlier in this issue, of course, you will find a recommendation for Mike Resnick's *Soothsayer* (1991). It's about Penelope Bailey, an ordinary girl except that she's not so ordinary, who *is* an Item of Immense Power (being able to predict and even influence the future), and finds herself being duelled over by

powerful foes. It's the first of a series.

Now there are good and sufficient reasons not to compare these works. They have different contexts, different means, different ends. ("Penelope, you could do so much for the Empire." "You know, Colin, I predicted you wouldn't understand the situation.")

Nevertheless, in these contexts these are examples of what Barry Malzberg calls the "Emperor of Everything"; an insignificant nobody suddenly possessed of immense power and using it well.

There's a good bit of backstory in this book, as might be surmised from the references to the two earlier series. (Four-book series each, at that; Pierce is a busy writer.) Fortunately, it comes off as backstory; there's very few if any "Huh?" moments, and Pierce manages to avoid the "as you know, in our last adventure this was explained" habit.

This is the story of Sandy, Daja, Tris, and Briar, four very young mages with great and interlocking powers. And most varied backgrounds, from Tris the street thief to Lady Sandrilene fa Torren. (Gee, already we're getting into "The Evil Overlord is about to make his bid for control of the world, and only a diverse band of adventurers can stop him" except there's no Evil Overlord in sight.)

Moreover (it would happen) Sandy, or Lady Sandrilene, is heir to vast and valuable estates. This would make any woman desired. However, having power makes her not want to give it up. Oh, you see, under the laws of the Empire, it is completely legal for a man to kidnap a woman, force her to sign a marriage contract (often quite restrictive and iniquitous), and have the marriage be valid.

The Empress Berenene doesn't want this prize to get away; but on her terms. Certainly this rich young lady, powerful young mage, must be properly tamed — but the way that she wants it to be.

Now, as Darrell Schweitzer remarked about a lack in Robert Silverberg's *Lord Valentine's Castle* (1980), an autocrat's court is bound to be a snakepit of intrigue. Being at the empress's disposal, particularly in her bed, is always significant. And the other way round, where the threat of an overmighty subject, whether wealthy heiress or mighty wizard, is to be stringently countered.

Evidently Empress Berenene never thought of the old "drop by and demand to be entertained" ploy, as did, for example, the pseudo-Valentine in Silverberg's work. Instead, she hits people up for taxes. It could be worse, she could be asking people from inland counties to pony up to buy ships. So, to get Sandy's lands fully under the imperial thumb, it's best that she be wedded and bedded.

Which mean that she and her friends have to use all sorts of means to escape that fate.

The marriage law seems a contrivance, to say the least. One would think that a legal code that had such a weak law of contract (shall we say) would have other such flaws.

Similarly, the Circle seems a little too able to overcome the great and parlous obstacles put in

their way. At least Kimball Kinnison had several thousand years of breeding, a long and painful career laden with learning experiences, the resources of a galaxy (or two), advisors and trainers of a higher plane of existence, and the love of a good woman on his side.

And Sandy's final answer to her problem seems just a little too pat, as if of someone who has never enjoyed authority. Yes, enjoyed. Recall Bonforte's musings at the end of *Double Star* about the purpose of his life. (Enjoyed — To present something not from *The Forensic Files of Batman* or *The Silence of the Lambs*: Agent Starling: "I understand you suffer from insanity." The Joker: "Suffer? Surely you jest. (And you're not very good at it, but I digress.) I revel in it!" A word can have different shades of meaning in different contexts.)

This is a lived-in world, with backstory, different nations, and other appurtenances of reality. The gritty bits — finance, trade, taxation — figure in the story (Daja the fire mage is from a trading family).

Pierce writes vividly and amusingly; the four mages are all different and of their own backgrounds and powers (it's been a long time since Alice Dagleish wielded her blue pencil, and even though this is a YA novel, one of the mages turns out to be a lesbian).

You'd probably want to hunt down the first ones to give your child for a proper start, but it'll give you a decent reading experience.

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### MY NAME IS NEO

Review by Joseph T Major of  
*FIELD GUIDE TO THE APOCALYPSE:  
Movie Survival Skills for the End of the  
World*

by Meghann Marco  
(Simon & Schuster; 2005;  
ISBN 0-689-87877-X; \$12.95)

For some reason, Neo, Mad Max, the Postman, and the rest of those guys always know what to do when they discover that the world has come to an end and they're next. Maybe they've read this book.

This is a weird little book with semi-serious observations on those recurring situations in less than positive SF. Marco divides them into several categories, gives helpful hints for determining which one you may be trapped in, and recommendations for how to get out of them. Readers will be reassured to note that she does display an awareness of print dystopias, though as a commentary on modern culture almost all the illustrations are from cinema (but wait, she references *The Birds*, so maybe not all is lost!).

These include such practical tips as what to wear in a technological dystopia ("(1) dorky-ass lounging wear or (2) a uniform" [Page 7]), how to not be replaced by a robot, the dynamics of living down a mine shaft after the catastrophe ("Anyone who thinks that having ten women for every one man is a good idea has not hung around with ten women who all fancied the same guy." [Page 49]), how to tell if you are a Replicant, and so on.

Some of the advice is "for real" and useful even if you are not in a Mad-Max situation; for example the tips about guns. Other advice is just downright funny. In other words, the usual status for such works (see *The Batman Handbook* by Scott Beatty (2005), reviewed in *Alexiad* V. 4 #3, for example).

Marco also spices the commentary with wacky and sardonic humor. "Insects cannot grow up to 1,000 times their size or they would be 1,000 times their weight and therefore collapse. So you can cancel that order for 6,000 cans of Raid." [Page 192] Indeed, it's a fun little book. ("Still, even as a psychotic Donald Trump monster, I enjoy Biff Tannen." [Page 61])

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### PALE RIDER

Review by Joseph T Major of  
*KYŪKETSUKI HANTĀ "D"*

(*Vampire Hunter D*)  
by Kikuchi Hideyuki

(DH Press & Digital Manga Publishing;  
1983, 2005; ISBN 1-59582-012-4; \$8.95)

Animé, perhaps, draws its cross-cultural enthusiasm from its cross-cultural origins; Japanese artists and writers, intrigued by the culture of the West, reinterpreted it in their own way. Which in turn, returned to the eager fen of the West. Thus, for example, in this work, we have the vampire of Balkan history, reinterpreted in a more Eastern fashion. And indeed, the principal vampire is Count Magnus Lee, after Christopher Lee. Evidently Count Magnus Blasko wouldn't do. (Oh all right, Count Magnus Lugosi.)

As well as his adversary, a Man with No Name. This is indeed a stereotype bouncing back. The original Man with No Name, in *Per un pugno di dollari* (*A Fistful of Dollars*; 1964) dressed like Vampire Hunter D does and D in turn turns out to be about as mysterious and odd as the Man with No Name was. (Now that's a cross-cultural production; an Italian production of an American Western based on a Japanese movie . . .) Or even more like the Man with No Name in *Pale Rider* (1985).

However it turns out that D does have, if not a name, at least an ancestry, but I'm getting ahead of myself. Properly, this would begin with a info roll, you know, as in "A long time ago, in a galaxy far far away . . ." only this is Earth in the year 12,090, after a devastating nuclear war in 1999 (I must have been sleeping late that day), the rise of these creatures amid the survivors, their creation of all the beasts of legend as their servitors, and the war between them and humanity.

But that's the Chapter Two infodump. (Poul Anderson style.) Chapter One is the "meet cute" of the beautiful young woman and the Vampire Hunter, on a hill outside her home. She has been marked for his next victim/bride by Count Magnus Lee, you see, and a rescue is in order. Which the Vampire Hunter With No Name Except the Letter D undertakes to do. (The "D" is after his father, who is reverently referred to by Count Magnus as the Sacred Ancestor.)

This is done in a flurry of fights that probably go better in visual, imagined or actual, than in telling about them, as Vampire Hunter D faces the problems of his allies as well as his enemy, the would-be bride Doris fights her doom, and Count Magnus Lee's daughter Larmica struggles with her nature.

One can't quite reconcile the society; the background seems slapdash and rather thrown-together. How much of this is the translation and how much of this is the original idea is hard to say. The Yokohama '07 bid party was giving out booklets with Chapter One, wanting to show that Japan does indeed have written science fiction as well.

It's interesting to look at but says more about the nature of the medium than the idea of the writer. The field there seems more attuned to the visual.

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### VALERIA VIVA AUT RAISULIUS MORITUUS

Review by Joseph T Major of  
*THE LEGATE'S DAUGHTER*

by Wallace Breem

(Orion/Weidenfeld & Nicholson; 1974, 2004;  
ISBN 0-297-84880-1; £12.99)

Before Gordianus the Finder wandered the Suburra, informing on behalf of Cicero; before Marcus Didius Falco dragged a growing family around the Empire finding things out on Vespasian's behalf; before Decius Caecilius Metellus was pushed into one criminal crisis after another by Caesar and family; Wallace Breem wrote about another down and out soldier of Rome who had to do the necessary and get no credit for it.

The first work by Breem I had encountered was his *Eagle In the Snow* (1970), a painfully honest and sadly moving story about the last stand of an Obsolete Man; a Roman general tasked with the impossible task of holding the Rhene frontier in the frigid winter of the Year of the City MCLVII, or 404 of the Christian Era. Perhaps the fact that the general was named Maximus got the book reprinted recently, even though it has little enough else in common with the movie *Gladiator*.

Odd coincidences coincide again, as the protagonist of this work is named Curtius Rufus. He probably isn't the father of the historian, as our Curtius Rufus is toiling away at an unrewarding job for the prefect of the water supply. (The historian is believed to be the suffect consul under Claudius whose father was a gladiator.) When he saves an aqueduct from collapsing, without permission or orders, it attracts the attention of Marcus Agrippa, the valued right hand of Augustus. Seeing the material at hand, Agrippa dispatches Curtius on a mission.

Juba, the client king of Mauretania, really needs to be Romanized a little more, and his wife needs to be reminded of her place. The wife is Cleopatra Selene, daughter of the notorious queen of Egypt by Marcus Antonius.

Oh Curtius, and by the way, Valeria, the daughter of the legate of Hispania was

kidnapped by Mauritanian marauders who killed her parents. Do find her and bring her home, that's a fine fellow. *Roma Valeriae vivae aut Raisulii mortui avet!* ["Rome wants Valeria alive or Raisulius dead!"] Er, well . . .

Breem has drawn a solid, graphic picture of Rome in the early days of the Principate (Gordianus and Caecilius Metellus are elderly men, Falco hasn't been born yet). You feel for the characters; King Juba and Queen Cleopatra Selene both describing painfully their experiences at being marched through Rome in chains during a Triumph, for example. Curtius is an even more in-between figure; his grandfather was a Parthian, captured and made a slave, and he still feels an outsider in Rome. (But not so Romanized that he can't demonstrate some Parthian Shots for the Mauretians.)

There is also the brutality and cruelty of the society of the era. The reader is kept painfully aware that sudden death may strike down the characters at any moment. And what happens to the "legate's daughter" of the title . . .

Wallace Breem only wrote three books (the third is *The Leopard and the Cliff* (1978)) and died in 1990. He was an officer in the colonial Indian Army and then a librarian. Our loss.

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### THIS IS AN AWFUL PLACE

Review by Joseph T Major of

*BIG DEAD PLACE:*

*Inside the Strange & Menacing World of  
Antarctica*

by Nicholas Johnson

(Feral House; 2005;

ISBN 0922915997; \$16.95)

<http://www.bigdeadplace.com>

When Captain Scott looked around the barren white wastes of the Polar Plateau, broken only by the little black tent that proclaimed him a loser, and wrote, "Great God! This is an awful place," he meant "awe-inspiring" as well as "unpleasant". However, nowadays it's just an annoying and unpleasant place, and thus are the stations of the United States Antarctic Project.

In fact, it looks as if Scott Adams would never have to search for material for "Dilbert" again if he were to spend a few weeks at McMurdo or South Pole. Some of these people are insane, and so is the management. Where else can you find such considerate people as those who wait to make love until the generator in the Jamesway hut kicks on, so as to obscure the sounds of passion?

Johnson touches on recent events in Antarctic history, revealing the parts they didn't bother mentioning. The description of the New Zealand Airlines Flight 901 crash on Ross Island, and its investigation, for example. Or the real story behind the dramatic medical evacuation of Dr. Jerri Nielsen (not all that much earlier than Pole flights had been before the Navy squadron that had been doing the job was decommissioned).

Indeed, there is a great deal of tension all round, between the crew of McMurdo station and of South Pole station, between the wintering-over crews and the summer workers,

between the Raytheon business staff and the Antarctic workers. The wonders of modern communication make management by ignorance farther-ranging.

Johnson has also studied history, the underside of it. He explains why that one weekly poker game at Little America was so intense, the problems there with alcohol, and (a few years later and somewhere else) what the Russian doctor had to do that was so outre, not to mention difficult.

There is an undercurrent of scorn there. Given the growing popularity of Antarctica as an Adventure Travel location, one understands why. Johnson cites some bold skiers who had themselves flown to 89 degrees south and then **Skiied \* To \* The \* Pole!!!!** Or the skydivers who had paid \$22,000 each to punch holes in the Polar plateau — they were skydiving there and their parachutes didn't open. What we have here is a contrast between people actually trying to do something and people trying to show off.

The people there adapt in various ways. My relatives who admire yard sales would love what a "skua pile" is, and as I recall Dainis Bisenieks even more so (unwanted possessions dumped to be picked over by others). It's recycling.

And plays, costumes, parties, often with a morbid or even cruel edge. In her *Endurance*, Caroline Alexander included with the one Frank Hurley picture of the expedition's midwinter costume party an apology for the one man in blackface. She hasn't wintered over, she doesn't understand. These people are living on the edge, so to speak, and under conditions that provoke extreme reactions. One has to go mad in order to stay sane. For example, when the skydivers were killed, the Polies commemorated the event by punching two skydiving boots, soles up, into the ice.

Oh, and did I mention that John Carpenter's movie *The Thing* is extremely popular there? Now if only someone would make a movie of "At the Mountains of Madness" . . .

The isolation breeds extreme practical jokes. I'm thinking of the elaborate plan to work up a phony e-mail correspondence with a notional Russian Bride-to-be that fooled one of the guys. There must be some real tension there.

*Big Dead Place* is a story of the ebbing of the frontier; where real exploration becomes overtaken by bureaucracy and supplanted by faux adventure. It's a funny look at a very tragic place; an "awful place" in both senses.

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### THE ZODE OF DESTINY

Review by Joseph T Major of

*ROVING MARS:*

*Spirit, Opportunity, and the Exploration of  
the Red Planet*

by Steve Squyres

(Hyperion; August, 2005;

ISBN 1-4013-0149-5; \$25.95)

From: [tan.hadron@warlord.gov.br](mailto:tan.hadron@warlord.gov.br)

To: [mer.finance@nasa.gov](mailto:mer.finance@nasa.gov)

Subject: Monthly Billing

Kaor!

To maintenance (cleaning, service,  
and security) for two (2) Barsoom

Exploratory Rover Probes @ \$175/sol each for the month of July: \$10,500  
I have spoken.

The design service life of the Mars Exploration Rover probes, the famous Spirit and Opportunity, was ninety sols, ninety Martian days. A check of the NASA website will show that they are still functioning, over a Jasoorian, or Earthly year and a half after their landings. This anticipation was based on expected damage to the probes caused by the accumulation of dust on the solar cell arrays, which would reduce power and cause cooling in their electronic components. It is reported that somehow the solar cell arrays are getting cleared off. Lowering Tavia from a hovering flier with a feather duster in hand?

Steve Squyres describes here the long and painful process that it takes to get a probe to the planet Mars, and the wonderful results that lie at the end of this trail of broken glass.

This seems to be a guy who began at the beginning and worked all the way to the top; he describes how he started out interning at NASA, went on to get a degree and a professorship at Cornell (as in "Carl Sagan") and finally found a place. That is, an apprenticeship first as an associate working on the Voyager missions, then a long and laborious career of designing experiments that didn't and did get onto missions (the case where they mixed up "height" and "width" for a camera is amusing, if saddening), and finally he managed to get his own mission.

Actually sending MER-1 and MER-2 off to the Red Planet required much politicking, budgeting, and other such matters. To understand this, it's best to remember that the classic war movies such as *Zulu*, *The Wild Geese*, or *The Guns of Navarone* always have a long buildup showing the guys getting ready. This is no different.

But then, the two probes landed, one after the other, and began looking around. Squyres describes the little problems, such as the dislocation engendered by the Martian sol being 39.5 minutes longer than the Terran day. (They refer to Martian "hours" and "minutes"; now what's wrong with saying "zodes" and "xats"?)

The thrilling part is watching as the rolling probes gradually collect the evidence of ancient water flow; the signs of drainage channels and sediments.

This is a story of the struggle and the result of science. We choose to go to Mars, not because it is easy, but it is hard. Pretty hard, too, but the effort is validated by the result.

As usual, the investigatory team made some choices of names. Some of the craters, for example, were named after famous exploratory ships, and Endurance Crater proved interesting.

(Historical note, not mentioned by Squyres: The Spirit mission path has Marvin the Martian, while the Opportunity mission patch has Duck Dodgers. Looks like there is enough room on the planet for the two of them. Where's Space Cadet Porky?)

Squyres wanted to go back to his roots and get some perspective, so he made a visit to the

Discovery Hut on Ross Island, and it made him wonder:

. . . Will future explorers find our rovers? I hope so. Will they go to them knowing their location well, as I did with the Discovery Hut, or will they come across them unexpectedly, their histories and the people who built them long forgotten? There's no way of telling. . . Above all, I simply hope that *someone* sees them again. A word like *love* is one to be used advisedly, especially when talking about pieces of metal. But I love *Spirit* and *Opportunity*. They were built by a loving family. . . What I really want, more than anything else, is boot prints in our wheel tracks at Eagle Crater.

— *Roving Mars*

When I look back on those days I have no doubt that Providence guided us, not only across those snow fields, but across the storm-white sea that separated Elephant Island from our landing place on South Georgia.

— Sir Ernest Shackleton, *South*

## THE TERRIBLE SECRET — Part XI

Review by Joseph T Major of  
**THE PERVERSION OF KNOWLEDGE:**  
*The True Story of Soviet Science*  
by Vadim J. Birstein  
(Westview; 2001;  
ISBN 0-8133-3907-3; \$32.50)

"People like Sakharov should be locked up and put on trial!"

— Trofim D. Lysenko  
(*The Perversion of Knowledge*, Page 206)

Academician Nikolai Ivanovich Vavilov was, his fellow agricultural expert the sometime Vice-President of the United States Henry Agard Wallace explained, in a special lab performing highly relevant scientific research in plant strains. This was something Wallace himself knew well about. The plants, that is.

In reality, Vavilov had been sentenced to the supreme measure of criminal punishment under Paragraphs 58-1a, 58-7, 58-9, and 58-11 of the Criminal Code of the Russian Soviet Federated Republic, the application of which measure had only been suspended for the benefit of the workers' and peasants' state. You can look up the relevant clauses of the relevant legal code on Hugo Cunningham's Cyber-USSR site:

<http://www.cyberussr.com/rus/uk58-e.html>

Dr. Birstein is a geneticist and a member of the Russian Academy of Science. While he is informed, he is also constrained; he does not, for example, discuss the history of the Soviet rocket program.

The book begins with a discussion of the carrot-and-stick method applied to Russian scientists immediately after the Revolution. While scientists were provided with extra food

rations, the Academy of Science was forced to admit new members whose primary field of expertise was scientific socialism; in other words, Bolshevik hacks. That is to say, "Good Lenin, Bad Stalin" is as unsustainable a belief in this area as it is in general; repression and distortion began at the beginning.

Of the many such distortions, the one that is most notorious is the Doctors' Plot of 1952-3. Since Birstein is discussing the repercussions on science, he mentions neither Lydia Timashuk, the technician who provoked the case (one might compare her to Judy Johnson, the mentally disturbed neglectful mother who provoked the McMartin Preschool Case) nor the question of whether or not the Plot was the cover story for a mass evacuation to the east of Soviet Jewry. Rather, he discusses the doctors and how they were repressed in this action.

Once science was harmonized with Soviet doctrine, what was to be done? Birstein describes in painful detail the employment of scientific means of eliminating enemies of the Soviet state, up to and including Georgi Markov. The chekists, the officers of Soviet State Security whether it was Cheka, OGPU, NKVD, KGB, or whatever, were using highly advanced scientific methods on their enemies. This chapter reads like an evil version of Doc Savage at work — perhaps Doktor Krüger of *G-8 and His Battle Aces* working with Dr. No (Dr. Fu Manchu was anti-Communist, as those who have read *Emperor Fu Manchu* will recall).

And who was the evil genius of the Chekists? Birstein suggests it was Gregory Mairanovsky, a Georgian Jew born in 1899. He was a biochemist whose principal field of research was, it seems, poisons. His work seems to have been extensive and apparently satisfactory to his masters; he ran into the usual trouble after the fall of Beria, but lived until 1964, presumably not having encountered any of his own products in sufficient quantity.

Birstein's research ranges over fields which seem unusual when taken alone, but when seen in context prove quite in keeping. He discusses the odd minutiae of the State Security; for example, Sudoplatov shaded the truth in *Special Tasks* (1995). He managed to put off being tried for four years by faking insanity; had he gone to trial right away he would have been shot like Beria. (And indeed, there is a volume of his memoirs untranslated by the Schectors.)

At the same time some readers will be annoyed at the misleading title. Aside from some reflections on the nuclear program, Birstein concentrates on his specialty of biochemistry. There is nothing on, for example, the devious and confused history of the rocket program, with which its competing bureaus presented a plan more like the capitalist model. And the other way, there is a digression on the unhappy fate of Stalin's in-laws, all of whom turned out to have conspired against the Soviet state. (Including the one in whose name the pseudo-defector Gregory Bessedovsky produced a merry memoir telling about what a wonderful guy Uncle Joe Stalin was; see *The Storm Petrels* by Gordon Brook-Shepherd (1977) for the story of Bessedovsky.)

Birstein ends with a grim portrayal of the tendencies of the current Russian government, which he characterizes in an eerily familiar litany of characteristics as “national socialist”. Putin is no friend of democracy or liberal government.

He ends with a terrifying anecdote related by the man who Lysenko said should have been locked up and put on trial. Sakharov was rebuked by Marshal Nedelin (yes, he of the super-rocket explosion, and that would have made Birstein’s point all the more pointed) to the effect that the Soviet H-Bomb would be used as the Party and the Organs of state security required; no other input was called for.

### DER STERNFUCHS

Review of Blaine Pardoe’s

#### THE CRUISE OF THE SEA EAGLE:

#### The Amazing True Story of Imperial Germany’s Gentleman Pirate

(The Lyons Press; 2005;  
ISBN 1-59228-694-1; \$22.95)

by Joe

Gunnar Heim, the hero of Poul Anderson’s *The Star Fox* (1964) didn’t swear “By Joe.” However, it’s fair to say that Anderson knew what he was doing when he called the spaceship that Heim bought to turn into a privateer the *Pass of Balmaha*.

The story of Graf Felix von Luckner of the *Kaiserliche Marine* was told by himself with some verve and vigor. As an old sailing man, though, the count never let the truth get in the way of a good story. Finding the truth (which was interesting enough in its own right) took some effort.

Luckner had had what one might call an unusual life. He had run away to sea when he was thirteen, which is not the normal career path for an aspiring young nobleman. Turning up in Germany again after that, he managed to study well enough to get into the Imperial Navy, and after rescuing several people from drowning gained the personal acquaintance of the All Highest Supreme Warlord of Germany, Admiral of the German Ocean — er, Kaiser Wilhelm. (The Kaiser’s brother Admiral Prince Heinrich von Preussen had happened to witness the rescues.)

At the battle of the Skaggerak (“Jutland” in English), Luckner was serving in the battleship SMS *Kronprinz*, and after failing to break the English blockade that way got set to try it another way.

The American merchant sailing ship *Pass of Balmaha* had been hired to take a cargo of cotton to Russia. She was stopped near Britain, and the British captain insisted on putting on a Royal Marine guard and escort. Which turned out to be a real help when the Germans stopped her . . .

The ship was already at hand, having been brought into the naval base by the man who would become Luckner’s second-in-command, *Leutnant* Alfred Kling. Kling had some experience of sailing ships, having for a while commanded the Filchner Antarctic expedition’s ship *Deutschland* (you knew there’d be an

Antarctic connection somewhere), and he had picked other veterans of sailing ships to bring the ship down. In spite of being overridden, he seems to have accepted his position well enough, and was to prove himself in many ways a great aide and support to Luckner.

With a crew that seemed well fitted to play in *Das Verrückteste Schiff in der Armee* er, *Marine* [“The Wackiest Ship in the Army, er Navy”], including a gruff engineer who could do miracles (is there a German equivalent of “Scotty”?), a folksy doctor (not, however, a sexy mind-reader, a Czech-worker sort, or any of the folks from later Treks . . .), and a sailor bold and tough enough to pose as the Captain’s wife, Luckner set out to break through the blockade. Naturally, they had to put on a pose, and so SMS *Seeadler* became the Norwegian SS *Hero*, complete with forged log, forged “Captain’s wife”, and so on. He went to great lengths to build up the legend, even going so far as to sew nametags in his clothes bearing the false name he was using. And it worked, at least long enough for the *Seeadler* to get away. (When Ewen Montagu set about building the background of *The Man Who Never Was* (1953), this was the sort of material he had to provide. The section of the movie (1956) where the German agent comes to Britain to check out the information may stem from Montagu’s pique that all his work had gone for nothing because they hadn’t checked up.)

On Christmas Day in 1916, the Royal Navy patrol stopped the “*Hero*” north of Scotland and passed her. Luckner, much relieved, sailed south to the tropics and began his maritime depredations. Sometimes it was difficult, as when one captain had a plausible explanation as to why that other ship was firing off guns, until one shell went over his head. And sometimes it was sad, as when Luckner captured and had to sink a ship on which he had served during his wilder freer younger days.

Eventually they made things just a little too hot for them for the Atlantic, and after offloading the prisoners to the last prize, the *Seeadler* set sail for the sunny Pacific. There, they made more captures, including one Captain’s wife, and another woman who wasn’t, but was going as one. Then the *Seeadler* made her final stop.

Luckner knew he would be in trouble if he revealed that the *Seeadler* had dragged her anchors and run aground, so he made up (as I said, he never let the truth stand in the way of a good story) the tale of a great wave that drove the ship aground. What was real, though, was his daring voyage across the Pacific in a lifeboat, with the aim of capturing another ship to refit as a new raider. Pardoe is reminded of Shackleton’s voyage in the *James Caird*.

However, Shackleton got more cooperation at his destination. Balked at the last minute by incredible bad luck, Luckner was sent to a prison island. The New Zealand authorities were promptly embarrassed when history repeated itself; Luckner masterminding another escape, only to be caught at the last moment. (What the camp commandant found out about his dress sword was a humiliation *Oberst*

Wilhelm Klink, Kommandant of Stalag 13, never had to suffer, which is saying something.) Meanwhile, Lieutenant Kling decided that something had gone wrong; fortunately, a trading ship showed up and he was able to sail as far as Easter Island before the ship rotted out, from where the crew went to internment in Chile.

After the war, Luckner became famous, thanks in part to Lowell Thomas’s revision-translation of his memoirs *Der Seeteufel*. That book, *Count Luckner the Sea Devil* (1927) (including the bit where Thomas explained that, as a deliberate effort to control his use of sailorly language, Luckner had trained himself to say “By Joe!” whenever he would have used a curse word) made a big splash, and on the basis of that Luckner became a representative for Germany around the world. Even after 1933. But the Nazis found him a little too much to handle, and he was hauled up before a Court of Honor, but fortunately for him, the witnesses were in enemy territory.

He lived for twenty-one years after the end of that next war. Lowell Thomas himself wrote the obituary for him in *National Review*.

The book refutes several myths about Luckner, many spread by him himself. As I said, he never let the truth get in the way of a good story. The reality was interesting enough. (Except for the one man who died from shrapnel from a shell fired from the *Seeadler*. Luckner had hoped not to have killed anyone; he kept on claiming that.)

The book is illustrated rather erratically; many of the pictures in the photo section are very badly overexposed. They can do something about that nowadays.

### ERNST SCHÄFER UND DER TEMPEL VON VERDERBEN

Review by Joseph T Major of

#### HIMMLER’S CRUSADE:

#### The Nazi Expedition to Find the Origins of the Aryan Race

by Christopher Hale

(John Wiley & Sons; 2003;

ISBN 0-471-26292-7; \$27.95)

Originally published as *Himmler’s Crusade: The True Story of the 1938 Nazi Expedition into Tibet* (2003)

“Wenn Abenteuer einen Namen hat, muß es Indiana Jones sein! . . .”

“So, Herr Professor Jones, we meet again!”

The sordid bar in the outskirts of Chungking was not the sort of place where Indy had expected to have a Nazi telling him a gun on him, under the table. He had gone there looking for this kid pilot who could fly him to the fabled Valley of Immortals that Conway had told him about and that the Horace Holly Papers had described. No such luck.

There was a crash as two guns fired simultaneously; then, Captain Habsucht of the SS Ancestry Office flopped forward onto the table . . .



SS-Hauptsturmführer Ernst Schäfer of the SS *Ahnenerbe* did not have an encounter, fatal or otherwise, with Professor Henry "Indiana" Jones, Jr. However, the story of his explorations to Tibet reads like a combination of *Indiana Jones and the Temple of Doom*, *Lost Horizon* (by James Hilton; 1933, 1936), *Ayesha: The Return of She* (by Sir H. Rider Haggard; 1905), and *Seven Years In Tibet*.

Where did all this come from? Among others, Helena P. Blavatsky; Reichsführer Himmler picked up pretty quickly on the theosophical concept of Root Races, melding it with his own obsessions. (In "Two Dooms" (*Venture Science Fiction*, July 1958), Cyril Kornbluth didn't get the half of SS alternative thinking; they were premature New Ager.) And where did the Aryan Root Race originate from? Well, that's what Schäfer was going to find out.

But then, in many ways anthropology in the thirties was very much a field where SS methods could easily be applied. German researchers in particular had a fetish for making detailed measurements of natives' bodies, with much poking and prodding of the living, or robbing graves to get skulls for analysis and display. Later on one of Schäfer's men would accelerate that process.

Moreover, Schäfer had already had one expedition in China in the early thirties, where he seemed to be interested in shooting everything within sight. At least once he had blown away animals, he preserved them for later examination and investigation.

Thus, when he returned to the Reich in 1936, Schäfer began immediately to plan for a penetration to the roof of the world. Hale makes perhaps too much of his favorable reception in Britain by people like Sir Francis Younghusband and so on, who were trying to be sporting and not stand in the way of the advance of science. (Younghusband had gone to Lhasa in 1904 with a somewhat larger and better armed expedition; for more on him see *Younghusband: The Last Great Imperial Adventurer* by Patrick French (1995).) There was a presumption that explorers were doing things for normal reasons.

Schäfer was, it's fair to notice, a zoologist; his anthropologist, Bruno Beger, had got his start with a professor of strictly Aryan lineage and thought, and I'll let you guess what that meant. These two, and others, departed for India in 1937. After being stuck in Sikkim ("It had to be leeches!") for a long and exhausting time, they crossed the border under a dubious permission.

Tibet turned out to be less than advertised. Nobody mentioned the endemic gonorrhea. It had to do with widespread monasticism, polyandrous marriages, and what else could the extra women do but become prostitutes? Beger, the closest thing to a doctor available, used a lot of a good German medicine, Salvarsan, on those venereal monks. (I am a little curious on how they could possibly blame all this on the Jews, but the resources of human ingenuity are limitless.)

Hale discusses the history of the

reincarnations of the Dalai Lama. This rule by an amazingly fortuitous set of circumstances took power away from the secular government and concentrated it in the monasteries. Which might not seem very monastic to the western eye; aside from the VD issue there was their known habit of staging wars. Add to that the habit that previous Dalai Lamas had of departing the existing incarnation abruptly and an all too familiar picture of intrigue ensues. The current incarnation, the Fourteenth, was found just before Schäfer's expedition, and Hale discusses the remarkable political savvy of the Thirteenth, along with the questionable events surrounding his disincarnation.

Events in the world outside forced the Tibet Expedition to go home, and burdened with kilos of animal skins, sheafs of measurements, and other items of scientific detail, they made the triumphant return to the Reich. Then things started getting really hairy.

With a broader and more differentiated population of samples available, Beger started doing some more anthropometrical surveys. He could pick out the samples and then get their skulls without any of this Jewish nonsense about human rights. Somehow, after the war, he was never brought to account for this. In fact, Hale interviewed him in 2001.

Heinrich Harrer of *Seven Years in Tibet* (1953; the movie version came out in 1997) is barely mentioned at all, for what it's worth. Apparently he returned the favor for Schäfer. But then he's not exactly relevant to this story.

During that era, the advance of technology and traditional standards of ethnocentrism combined to produce some lapses of morality that had previously been unimaginable and in retrospect are particularly abhorrent. Societies which had gained a reputation from rumor were revealed by direct observation. So much of what passes for popular history is legend and romance; the truth can be more interesting.

### WAS THIS REALLY NECESSARY?

Amazon.com lists two sharecropped sequels to *Lost Horizon*, by an odd coincidence published about two years apart: *Messenger: A Sequel to Lost Horizon: A Story of Shangri-La* by Frank DeMarco (1994) and *Shangri-La: The Return to the World of Lost Horizon* by Eleanor Cooney and Daniel Altieri (1996).

### THE PHANTOM MENACE

Review by Joseph T Major of  
**THE "JEWISH THREAT":  
 Anti-Semitic Politics of the U.S. Army**  
 by Joseph W. Bendersky  
 (Basic Books; 2000;  
 ISBN 0-465-00617-5; \$30.00)

French movies in the thirties contained a product-placement style public service announcement. Whenever the mood suited it, and (I would think) often when it didn't, a functionary of the government would comment that any good Frenchman (or Frenchwoman) would, should he see anything untoward, write to the *Deuxième Bureau*, Military Intelligence,

informing them of the matter.

American military staffing is based on the French version, and so the Army's Military Intelligence Division is also known as G-2. In this age of terrorist infiltration, it is reassuring to know that, even during the twenties and thirties, the MID was devoting prodigious effort to tracking, surveying, and evaluating a perilous threat to America and American ways posed by this hostile, secretive element that had wormed its way into our nation.

Can anyone say "Dreyfus"?

Bendersky, a professor at Virginia Commonwealth University and Book Review Editor of *Holocaust and Genocide Studies*, has looked into a dark section of American history. During the twenties and thirties, the American military establishment worked tirelessly to stem the tide of this conspiracy so immense as to dwarf any previous venture in the history of man. There wasn't an absurd, preposterous, and implausible anti-Semitic theory that they didn't like, note down, and send on to the files. Some of the names listed here will be astounding.

For example, Herbert O. Yardley's *The American Black Chamber* speaks well of Ralph Van Deman and Marlborough Churchill (yes, he was related), the successive directors of military intelligence, the two officers under whom Yardley served when he was cracking ciphers for the Army. It was probably just as well that he wasn't William F. Friedman; both Van Deman and Churchill collected and distributed information about the Grand Conspiracy of World Jewry, presumably including Friedman.

Other high-ranking officers expressed similar sentiments, including George Van Horn Moseley, who was deputy chief of staff under Douglas MacArthur and maintained contacts with many high-ranking Army officers, including Dwight Eisenhower, after his retirement. (Moseley was also the father of Flying Saucer historian James W. Moseley; and well, this book is shockingly close to the truth.)

The most disturbing name of all listed in this collection is that of George S. Patton. From his restrictions on Moroccan Jews after the landing in North Africa to his contemptuous strictures on the demoralized and weakened concentration camp survivors in DP camps, Patton emerges as an unlovely figure. Other well-known people with such bias include George C. Marshall himself and Albert Wedemeyer.

This pattern persisted during the war. George V. Strong, the chief of Military Intelligence, had proposed a wartime ban on meetings that defended the Jewish cause in occupied Europe, for example, and continued his hostility afterwards. The British intelligence officer who had to work with him, Rex Benson, characterized Strong as "a narrow patriot of little education and less experience of the world" (quoted in "*C*": *The Secret Life of Sir Stewart Graham Menzies, Spymaster to Winston Churchill* by Anthony Cave Brown (1987), Page 486). And in many MID reports there appear comments equating Zionism and National Socialism, so that particular attitude is hardly a modern one.

After the war, as the officers in question

retired, their efforts continued. So many of those petty rightist organizations, the ones too extreme even for the John Birch Society (Robert Welch, the founder of the JBS, followed a strict policy of opposing and denouncing anti-Semitism, admittedly seeing it as a divisive ploy by the real conspirators), were led by former military officers who took up the struggle against the hidden enemy. In short, they were not the heroic fighters for American Liberty against the New Deal tyranny of some people's imagination, but an even more authoritarian sort.

### SEA POWER IN THE PACIFIC

Review by Joseph T Major of

*FLYBOYS: A True Story of Courage*

by James Bradley

(Back Bay Books (Little, Brown and Co.; 2003, 2004; ISBN 0-316-15943-3; \$14.95)

Chapters XI and XII of Hector C. Bywater's eerily predictive "future war" novel *The Great Pacific War: A History of the American-Japanese Campaign of 1931-33* (1925) describe the ill-fated attempt by the Americans to capture Peel Island in the Bonin group and bring out the Japanese fleet for a decisive battle. Bywater gives the alternative name of the island as "Chichi Shima"; it is now known as Chichi Jima.

Unlike the hapless Admiral Morrison of Bywater's book, the war planners of the real war did not plan to capture Chichi Jima; they focused their efforts on an island that Bywater never considered: Iwo Jima. Nevertheless, some Americans did indeed land on Peel Island/Chichi Jima. This is their story.

This author's connection to Iwo Jima is familial; his father John Bradley having been one of those who raised the flag on Mount Suribachi in the famous photograph. John's fame was burdensome, and considering the aftereffects of combat and the intrusiveness of the press, the evasive tactics James describes seem to be the least one could expect in order to stay sane (he would tell the reporters that his father was off fishing, while his father looked at him and tried to let his paternal pride come out). But the survivors of Chichi Jima had a different sort of traumatic stress to endure, one that even Bywater could not imagine.

As background, James Bradley describes the horrors of the war, which at first are the dehumanizations of the enemy. He seems almost to revel in describing how racist and unkind and racist and mean-spirited and racist and nasty and racist and cruel and racist and unfair and racist and ethnocentric and racist and biased and racist and bigoted and racist American attitudes towards the unfortunate Japanese were. Oh, and we were racist, too.

However, they were worse. The Japanese military was not only cruel and inhuman, it was incompetent. They had about the same grasp of logistics as most Military SF writers, with the exception that soldiers who are only characters in a book can't starve to death because the High Command sent them to New Guinea and told them to find their own food, in a subsistence-

agriculture area.

Well, they did find their own food. Bradley quotes a general order making it a court-martial offense to eat human flesh, except that of the enemy.

A few planes of various types went down near Chichi Jima, and some of the pilots and crew made it to the island. The pilot of a TBM Avenger torpedo bomber was rescued by a picket submarine, much to the fury of many, but then his name was George Bush. The others were treated in the usual fashion.

The State Shinto-Bushido ideology that evolved in the nineteen-twenties and thirties was a gross distortion of the historical ideology it purported to be the modern successor of. *The Great Pacific War* includes praise for the conduct of Japanese towards their prisoners, which was a reasonable extrapolation from their conduct in the Russo-Japanese War and the World War. However, there were things in the real great Pacific war that Bywater didn't predict.

Such as the ration supplements the commander of Chichi Jima had fall into his lap, as it were. The regulations said that enemies were exempt from the eating rules.

Some readers may want to skip this paragraph. The testimony of the witnesses for the war-crimes trial and their statements to Bradley nearly sixty years later are explicit and gruesome descriptions of human butchery. The island commander and his staff officers seem to have acquired a fondness for liver. Would it have been too much to ask for them to get toxic doses of Vitamin A? (See *Mawson's Will* (1977, 2000) by Lennard Bickel for more on this.)

Bradley's grasp of samurai culture seems less than perfect for all that he understands that the version in World War Two was as much a distortion as, say, the animé-chambara culture that SF and fantasy present, even though slightly more cruel. When he describes a certain beheading as "inept", it is actually how a kaishaku should help at a seppuku, though whether that applied under the circumstances was a different matter, and if you know, you'll understand.

In a less multicultural comment, the constant grating and grinding and gritting of oh how racist the U.S. was weakens his argument. Arguing from that point of view, isn't opposing the killing and eating of prisoners an attempt to privilege one discourse? There are many cultural texts in which this behavior is an acceptable and admirable one, so deriding this is cultural hegemonism. Bradley is pandering to the academic hegemony, unless he actually believes it himself, which would make it worse. (If he wants to cite the cruelties of the Indian Wars, tenuous though the connection to WWII may be, he ought to read Mark Twain's "The French and the Comanches" for some context.)

One advantage of the trade paperback edition is that it is a true second edition, with a final chapter giving the resolution of a mystery presented earlier. A reader of the book was able to identify an American airman whose name his consumers had not bothered to record. For

every question there is an answer somewhere. *Flyboys* tells the story of one minor, except for those who suffered it, and forgotten, except for those who lost by it, incident in the war.

### BUMBERBOOM

Review by Joseph T Major of

*GUNPOWDER:*

*Alchemy, Bombs, & Pyrotechnics: The History of the Explosive that Changed the World*

by Jack Kelly

(Basic Books; 2004, 2005;

ISBN 0-465-03718-6; \$14.95)

PTOSPHEES, Prince of Hostigos, to SESKLOS, calling himself Styphon's Voice, these:

False priest of a false god, impudent swindler, liar and cheat!

Know that we in Hostigos, by simple mechanic arts, now make for ourselves that fireseed which you pretend to be the miracle of your fraudulent god, and that we propose teaching these arts to all, that hereafter Kings and Princes minded to make war may do so for their own defense and advancement, and not to the enrichment of Styphon's House of Iniquities.

In proof thereof, we send fireseed of our own make, enough for twenty musket charges, and set forth how it is made, thus:

To three parts of refined saltpeter add three fifths of one part of charcoal and two fifths of one part of sulfur, all ground to the fineness of bolted wheat flour. Mix thoroughly, moisten the mixture, and work it to a heavy dough, then press into cakes and dry them, and when they are fully dry, grind and sieve them.

And know that we hold you and all in Styphon's House of Iniquities our deadly enemies, and the enemies general of all men, to be dealt with as wolves are, and that we will not rest content until Styphon's House of Iniquities is utterly cast down and destroyed.

PTOSPHEES

Prince of and for the nobles and people of Hostigos

— H. Beam Piper, *Lord Kalvan of Otherwhen*

I say, Your Highness, why don't you tell us what You really think?

In the story "Bumberboom" (*F&SF*, December 1966), Avram Davidson told the tale of a giant cannon and its crew, an inbred family of, well, different people. They survived by dragging the cannon from one place to another, pointing it at a village, and leaving the inhabitants thereof with the impression that some sort of transfer payment was urgently in order. Then two sharpers of the typical Davidson sort, which is to say fond of ornate language and acquainted with obscure historical

trivia, came upon the gun and its company. One of them had a book which gave instructions on how to make gunpowder.

Not Kalvan's book, or this one either, and I think I'll leave it at that.

Kelly recounts the story of how, over several centuries, and across several lands from China to America, the powder that went "BANG!" influenced the world. It began under the T'ang Dynasty, with alchemists figuring out how to imitate the burning of unsplit bamboo. (Sections of bamboo explode in a hot fire, as the air heats and ruptures the chamber walls.)

The technology drifted west. Contrary to some beliefs, the Chinese did not just use it for fireworks; Kelly describes Chinese bombs of various kinds. It was in the West, though, that the use of gunpowder in semi-enclosed metal items first became popular.

To make it really usable, the technology described in the fourth paragraph of Ptolemy's, er, letter above had to be developed, and Kelly discusses the development and details of powder manufacture. This involved advances in chemistry, mechanics, and site planning. The Du Pont mills had some spectacular explosions, for example. (See also *The Medici Hawks* (1978) by Woodhouse & Ross, where Leonardo da Vinci discusses such matters as differing formulas for gunpowder, then demonstrates the difference in an exceedingly nerve-racking scene involving fifty cannons pointed at him . . .)

The development of weapons entailed advances in the sciences and in engineering. Like Jared Diamond, Kelly takes up the challenge implicit in "History is bunk." Explanation: Henry Ford said that "History is bunk as it is taught in schools." At that time, it paid no attention to technological advance as an impetus to historical change and development; in other words, Asimov's opinion. The man had enough real problems without attributing imaginary ones to him. This work takes the latter approach, putting the development of weapons technology in its context, unlike, say, Mark Kurlansky in *Salt* (2002), where salt seems to be the root cause of everything.

There are of course other uses, and Kelly discusses the employment of powder in mining. With all the hazards and worries that entailed. Can you say, "hangfire"? It was still easier than cracking stone with fire and water.

Eventually, gunpowder gave way to more advanced propellants. See the discussion in Verne's *De la Terre à la Lune* (1865) on propellants in Chapter 9, "The Question of the Powders", for some early talk of this. Kelly ends his story where it began, with a discussion of modern fireworks.

There are some errors. Kelly says of the Battle between the Red and Blue fleets, or the Battle of Trafalgar, "That two bands of poor, illiterate, scurvy-ridden men . . ." {Page 107}. This may be true of the Spanish, and maybe even of the French, but British sailors were paid above the poverty line and as writers from Dudley Pope to Peter Padfield point out, Nelson's fleet did not have scurvy. But that's nothing to do with gunpowder. As for

something that did, just remember the cannon in the *Bellerophon*.

## VICTORY OR DEATH

The benefits of weapons have always been ambiguous. The effects work both ways; we can be destroyer or destroyed. In the end the survivor is the one who best controls his environment.

### FAMILY TYINGS

by Joe

I am a troll.

I had this satori while looking at my trim, tanned (or, depending on your point of view, premelanomic) brother who plays golf seven days a week, while I sit in my house or at my workdesk. He is tan, rested, ready. I am pale and stout (and bitter, too, not to mention a porter of family information; could I be a pub?)

But I am a different sort of troll. When folk desire to pass over the bridge, I challenge them thusly: "Hold. Declare unto me thy sires and grandsires, and their sires and grandsires, gin thou knowest them. Declare also thy issue, and should they have issue of their own, them as well. Enumerate and proclaim thy siblings, and their spouses and get. Enumerate also thy spouses and their sires and grandsires, so that I may have knowledge if thou be kin. This be Kentucky, after all."

When the Three Billy Goats Gruff come by, my final words will be, "Oh, yes, you're the Caprids who came over from Italy in the eighteenth century, and kin to Billy Whiskers on your mother's side. You know, the one who was associated with the adjectival inventorrrr . . ."

## SATIRE ALERT!

THIS IS A PUBLIC SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENT!  
JOE MAJOR IS GOING FOR FUNNY RATHER THAN FACTUAL!



The reason, though, I was with my older brother had to do with an assistant he got at Sunday School class earlier this year. Jeff's father is a pharmacist, and he seems to be following the old man into the trade. Like my cousin Mary Catherine, who works at her husband's pharmacy; like her father, who is a pharmacist (well, retired), and her late grandfather, who was a pharmacist. (Then there was what I said to the teacher about Mary Catherine's older sister, but aside from its showing that Mrs. Yancey was *not* from Kentucky, I shan't go into that.)

Jeff seemed very personable. At least my brother thought so at first. Then he met my niece.

Sarah had been working at a school for troubled children. The job was, understandably, quite wearing and wearying. She needed a helpmate . . . and along came Jeff.

We were somewhat surprised when we learned that Sarah was getting married in July. But I talked to Jeff and he seemed nice enough. I could hardly object.

They were registered with Wal-Mart, which appealed to Lisa's practical soul, and after buying some practical things I decided to get something impractical, but appropriate anyhow: *My Big Fat Greek Wedding*. If I were ever to meet Nia Vardalos, the star and conceiver of that movie, I would inform her that all my southern relatives find the film speaks to them; they have families and weddings like that.

The wedding would be at the Presbyterian Church in Madisonville, and given the situation it was probably a good idea for us to spend the night at a convenient nearby location. Besides, we hadn't seen Lisa's father and stepmother in a while.

So on Saturday, we took off for the drive down to Madisonville. Understandably, as it was a ninety-ninety day (temperature and humidity both in the nineties) we did not put on our good clothes to drive down there. We got us to the church on time, early in fact. My brother showed us where we could change.

The family was what could be called "immediate", the three brothers and their spouses, and the bride's brother and his Significant Other (*their* wedding will be in November). There was also, of course, Sarah's mother and her stepfather and stepsiblings. The only first cousins within reach weren't there.

First the groom and then the bride posed for photos, professional and other, before the altar. This seems to be the martyrdom of newlyweds. I took photos, Jennifer (my nephew's fiancée, S.O., etc.) took photos, and others took photos.

The other guests began filing in. Two of my mother's friends had been invited and arrived somewhat after the photo session wound up. Carolyn looked about the same; she lived four houses around the circle from our house in Hopkinsville; still has the same house. Marge was also fine (her niece is a relative of mine). They were pleased to see us all.

But then I had to quit wandering around. The church has Bibles in the pockets on the backs of the pews along with the hymnals. I spent some time reading the Dry Bones chapter of the Book of Ezekiel, Chapter 37:

- 1 The hand of the LORD was upon me, and carried me out in the spirit of the LORD, and set me down in the midst of the valley which was full of bones,
- 2 And caused me to pass by them round about: and, behold, there were very many in the open valley; and, lo, they were very dry.
- 3 And he said unto me, Son of man, can these bones live? And I answered, O Lord GOD, thou knowest.
- 4 Again he said unto me, Prophecy upon these bones, and say unto them,

O ye dry bones, hear the word of the LORD.

The point being that the word translated as "valley" can also mean "plain". Like the Silesian plain near Osweicim (in German, Auschwitz).

By contrast, the story of David's naughty doings with Bathsheba (and he couldn't even say "I did not have sex with that woman.") seemed almost refreshing (2 Samuel Chapters 11-12). After he made an honest woman of her, their next child was Solomon, try not to be too harsh.

But then the organist started the rendition and we all had to pay proper attention. Jeff and the groomsmen filed in and stood at the front, and then the procession began; flower girls, a pair of bridesmaids (a refreshingly small number), the ringbearer, carried by his mother (and apparently not thrilled by the occasion), and then the whole point of the festivities.

Sarah had to be escorted by her father and her stepfather, so they somewhat filled the aisle. But as soon as the pastor got to "Who gives this woman," she got to go up and stand there holding hands with Jeff and sensibly ignoring the whole charivari down below to look into each others' eyes. Down below, the rest of us had to consent to the giving, first parents, then family, then friends. Once it was certain that no one was going to disrupt the ceremony (there's a chance some people will see this so I won't mention the proposed gag for Oscar's and Star's wedding in *Glory Road*) the pastor went on with the blessings, the rings, and so on. All went off well and it was a moving and beautiful moment. Oh, and he called her "Sarah" throughout, not "Elizabeth" (her middle name).

Then Sarah and Jeff went down the aisle — only to come back and start embracing all the guests. Well, it's one way to get the church cleared out, and quite nice and friendly, too.

The reception was in the church gym. By good fortune, we got a good seat. Sarah and Jeff did not smash the wedding cake into each others' faces. (What idiot invented that "custom"?)

Meanwhile, I managed to encounter Sarah's mother, who said that she had met a cousin who had done more research on her family, and Jeff's father, who had done that himself. As soon as things get settled down, I have some more entering to do. One of the things I had given Sarah was an Ahnentafel Report, for all her ancestors (that I knew of) for thirteen generations, back to Richard Major who arrived in the Virginia Colony in 1634. It ran to ninety-three pages and, as her father noted to her, was up to date (I had pre-entered the marriage).

They drank the toast to each other, she threw her bouquet to the female attendants, he snapped the garter at the male ones, and then after some rejoicing we had to adjourn to the outside (remember, that's ninety-ninety weather). They dashed out of the church under a barrage of birdseed, obviously wanting to get into an air-conditioned vehicle, and then we turned to and began to clean up inside. About eight we took a break for dinner, eating at a place with the ominous name of "El Bracero" (a "bracero" was

a Mexican guest-worker). After that, Lisa and I went back to the Thomases' for the night.

Being sensible (see above about the dash to the car), the bride and groom did not leave for their honeymoon in Gatlinburg, Tennessee until the morning. While we went to our home town, where I managed to pull a muscle in my chest while sneezing, but that's another story.

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### DIGGER: A DOG

by Lisa

At the Fosfa picnic I chanced to see a Doberman. The sight of the big black and tan dog brought back memories of the neighbors who brought home a Doberman from the local shelter.

Our first reaction was to think they had gone totally insane to bring such a savage monster into the neighborhood. They named the dog Digger and promptly Digger began running up and down the fence, sounding off with savage-sounding barks.

My mother promptly assigned me the chore of clipping the fence next to him on the grounds that if anybody could charm the dog it would be me. I was still careful to keep an eye on the dog for several minutes. He went over to the far side of his yard and I lost track of him. The next time I saw him his black muzzle and long teeth were inches from my hand. I sprang back and called him a name which technically he was. He sat back on his haunches and laughed at me.

I had never seen a dog with a sense of humor before. Shaggy, our cute-looking little mutt, was a dour, solitary creature except when it came to cats. The unexpected humor in such a fierce-looking animal was the last thing I had expected. I began to suspect this particular dog might not be as fierce as he looked and sounded.

It took me several days to work up the courage to actually put my hand through the fence and touch the dog. When I did, I discovered that Digger was an attention hound of the first caliber. The long teeth I had so feared at first were set in a mouth so sensitive the dog could take food from between fingers without ever breaking the skin of fragile human fingers.

Eventually I had permission to walk the dog whenever I wanted and spent many long, happy hours with the dog I'd initially seen as fierce and dangerous. It was always fun to watch people look at Digger and Shaggy. I never saw anyone choose the right dog to approach.

Another neighbor had their little granddaughter visiting her. I brought out Shaggy and carefully told the child where she could touch. I kept a tight hold on Shaggy and myself between her and his teeth. After about five minutes I put Shaggy back and brought out Digger. The child's parents had the standard look of "is this really safe for my child?" on their faces. The child had no such doubts. She ran up and put her little hands all over Digger. When the small hands got close to his muzzle and big teeth, Digger turned his head and swopped up her face with his tongue. Her parents relaxed at that casual gesture of affection.

When the neighbors moved away, part of my heart went with Digger. I was glad for him, though, as his new home was in the country and he would finally have room to run. Because of Digger, my first reaction to the sight of a Doberman will never again be the fear most people have of the breed. The memory of a big black head pressed happily against my leg will always be with me. Our yard is too small to keep such a vigorous, active dog even if Elfling would allow me to have a dog, which he wouldn't.

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### CAR TALK

by Lisa

The time for replacing my car is looming on the distant horizon and so I am beginning to think about what I would like in the next one. Given the high gas prices, its gas mileage is a very important consideration.

So far, the highest I have found are two Japanese hybrids, the Toyota Prius and the Honda Insight. This gave me pause. Proper American driveways have proper American cars parked in them. They most definitely do not have Japanese cars parked in them.

I reflected on the moral issue involved and after some thought realized that a certain percentage of every dollar spent on gas goes to countries that are not really friends of America. Was it really that unpatriotic to buy the highest gas mileage I could find, regardless of the car's physical origin? No, I decided, it was not.

I'm not sure I want a hybrid car because I have some reservations about the technology and replacing a battery after warranty is up can be a very expensive matter. But neither will I rule out a car just because it is Japanese made.

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### MY LOCAL MYSTERY

by Lisa

All places, I think, have odd quirky little things to them. One of Henderson, Kentucky's little quirky mysteries was a tugboat named the *Virgie Mae*. She grounded one night and her crew abandoned her there. She was to remain there for the next seventeen years while periodic attempts were made to find her owner. The Coast Guard had no record of her. A man who had at some time owned her was located but claimed he had lost her in a poker game and didn't remember who had won her. Eventually it was determined that after seventeen years she could be considered legally abandoned and thereupon the city hauled her off to the Great River in the Sky. It was a sad end for one of Henderson's mysteries but after all, there is not much practical use for the rusted hulk of an abandoned tug.

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### CANDY BAR REVIEW

Violet Crumble

Review by Johnny Carruthers

I discovered this bar in Meijer's international foods aisle. The Violet Crumble comes from Australia, and is made by Nestle.

I have no idea why this particular bar is

called "Violet Crumble." The only thing violet about it is the wrapper. Along one side of the wrapper, the bar is described as "Australia's crisp golden honeycomb," but when I looked at the ingredients, honey was not listed among them.

The center of the bar is what I suppose could best be described as a type of spun sugar. It's like someone took some cotton candy and gave it a firmer, more solid form. This airy, sugary block is then coated in milk chocolate.

When you bite into a Violet Crumble bar, there is a clean break to the bar. There is a solid crunch at first, but the core of the bar quickly dissolves in your mouth – almost as quickly as cotton candy would. After a few seconds, all that remains is the chocolate, and a very sweet aftertaste.

On the other side of the wrapper, it states that "It's the way it shatters that matters." This is just a guess on my part, but that would seem to suggest that a favorite way to eat a Violet Crumble is to bang the bar against some hard surface before opening the wrapper, and to eat the pieces. Personally, I prefer opening the wrapper, and eating it in one piece. Much less mess that way.

I'm still trying to decide whether or not the Violet Crumble would be a hit if Nestle should ever decide to give the bar a wide release here in the US. If Nestle were to play up the shatter angle, it might prove be very popular with kids – and less so with parents who find themselves having to clean up the smaller fragments that the kids overlook.

Since this is an import, I have no idea where to find this bar. You aren't going to find it at Kroger. Other than Meijer, I would have to suggest looking for stores that carry similar imports.

## CANDY BAR REVIEW

Hershey's Nut Lovers  
Review by Johnny Carruthers

I was a little surprised when I opened the wrapper on this limited edition bar from Hershey. Surprised, because the Nut Lovers bar uses the same mold as the regular Hershey bar. Considering the contents of the bar, I would have thought that Hershey would have used the same mold as the Hershey With Almonds bar.

As the name suggests, the Nut Lovers bar contains nuts. To be specific, it contains almond, cashew, peanut, and pecan pieces, all held together by Hershey's milk chocolate.

I really can't detect any different flavors among the various nuts in the Nut Lovers bar. I don't find this particularly unusual; if I have a bowl of mixed nuts, and I scoop up a handful of nuts, the only way I can distinguish any difference in the flavor of the nuts is if I eat that handful one nut at a time. If I pop two or three different nuts in my mouth at the same time, they all sort of blend together in one generic nut flavor.

What I am able to distinguish, however, is the different textures of the nuts. Almonds have a harder crunch than pecans, for instance. And that is what I notice with the Nut Lovers bar. As

I'm chewing, I feel the different degrees of resistance of the nuts between my teeth. And I said, the four nuts blend together into a generic nut flavor, particularly against the background of the milk chocolate.

The overall taste is enjoyable, but I don't think it's distinct enough to become part of Hershey's regular product line. Then again, several of Hershey's 2004 limited editions are being re-released this year. It might sell well enough to merit a future limited edition release.

## WISCON '05

Madison Wisconsin, Memorial Day Weekend  
Trip Report by Trinlay Khadro

I need to start by thanking several people for making my trip to the con possible. My parents gifted us the membership, the Drake family (Milwaukee Fans) gave us a lift to the con, & Jan Stinson gave us space in her room, and yet another Milwaukee Fan gave us a ride home. I was tickled to be able to meet Jan face to face, and to see Lyn McConchie again.

Despite being tagged a "Feminist SF Con" it's quite possible to go to panels and enjoy the con, without partaking of anything feminist or girly – that being said, I enjoyed both the girly and regular events. It's got a nice sized track of panels and events with a wide variety of themes. A moderate sized Huxter Room, and an Art Show of moderate size. This was my first time putting art work IN the art show and I was quite excited about that. I'd brought a flight of origami dragons, several origami cranes, as well as some journals and fannish scarves. Sales went well particularly the origami & the journals. It was pretty exciting to stop by the art show every few hours to count what had been sold.

KT brought a plushy penguin, Sushi, along to help break the ice, and over come her social anxiety. Soon after check in and setting up my part of the art show, he went off on his own, resulting in a bit of a panic and the publishing of a Lost Penguin Notice. I found him when I spontaneously looked under a "free books" table, where he's apparently stopped for a nap. We constructed a con badge for him #556 1/2 with the room and my cell number in case he became adventurous again. Eventually we may see Sushi post a con-report of his own on-line, as HE became quite a celebrity at the con with fans calling out "hey Penguin Girl!" to KT.

Friday dinner, Jan, KT and I met up with some Milwaukee Fans: Leah Fisher, Orange Mike, and Mary Prince-of-the-North at the hotel restaurant. Leah shared a taste of her elk with me, and it was Very Good – but so was my Walleye. Eating in the hotel restaurants was a bit hard on the budget for the weekend, so we didn't do it much.

Friday evening, KT did some baby sitting for the Drakes, so that they could meet with publishers, and I could go to the panel "Using Alternate Mythologies". I was tickled to see my friend, and Milwaukee Author, Sue Blom on the panel. My comment from the audience that mythologies continue to evolve got quoted in the con newsletter on Saturday. (And a panel member cornered me later to say she

appreciated my input! Gee wow!)

Saturday morning I awoke VERY early, wide awake and Hungry. Jan and I scouted the downtown of Madison for breakfast but nothing was open yet, and as we arrived back at the hotel the breakfast buffet was open. So we ate it. We finished in time to meet up with the gathering of fans planning to shop in the farmers market just outside the hotel. I missed a Buffy panel as, even though I was back in time, I needed a rest. Around noonish though my sister, Rosey, who lives in Madison met KT and me for lunch and we ate at a nice Italian place on State Street. Rosey day tripped for a few hours at the con, enjoyed the art show, and tagged along to laugh at us as we tried to shake our booties at the "Feminism and Belly Dance" panel – the basic point seemed to be, "I'm not doing this Belly Dance thing for my husband/boyfriend/S.O. I'm doing it for Myself." Even at Belly Dancing I am a clutz, and never got the shimmy down, but I do have some new physical therapy exercises. I really needed 2 of me to get to all the panels I wanted too. Things I missed (choice #2 out of sometimes 3 things I was very interested in) included Buffy panels and papers, Chicks of Horror flicks, the clothing exchange . . . and so much more.

Saturday evening was my turn to babysit the Drake kids, and KT went to the Haiku Earring party. The Haiku Earring party was quite an event, I was able to go after the parents returned. The host had crafted, and was crafting pairs and singles of earrings, and the guest picked a pair, handed them to the host, who gave the guest a title to be turned into a haiku. Upon approval of the haiku (rule #4 It does Not have to be Good) the guest is gifted the earrings. KT picked a pair with lotuses called "Buddha in Elfland", and gave them to me as a late Mother's Day present. Her haiku rocked too! My haiku was pretty lame, but I got a pair of heart earrings from it. The host says the haiku from the party may soon become a chap-book.

Sunday morning, we met with Lyn & Jan for breakfast. Lyn regaled us with cat and farm stories. After breakfast I went to "SF & F films of 04": some recalled comments re *The Grudge* "Imagine how happy the Real Estate agent must have been to see the gaijin and an opportunity to unload the haunted house." And "With *Van Helsing*, you have to go in with the realization that it's a 50's B movie – and then it's pretty good."

Lunch was in the Con-suite.

Later I went to to the "Taoism & Buddhism in SF" panel and realized I should have volunteered to be ON the panel. KT went to "Meet the Weapons" and she really enjoyed it. Then an Animé panel, which was handled rather clumsily, there wasn't enough interaction with the audience . . . and people had good questions which the panel never bothered to answer. Groan. Then "Fannish Clutter", I hadn't realized this was such an extensive issue in our community. Some good recommendations: donate zine collections to libraries and historical societies (and make sure you can visit when you want . . .). If you haven't worn something in

over a year, it's bored and needs someone to give it a good home

Dinner and rest in the con-suite and chatting with some new friends, including some of KT & Sushi's new friends then the Dessert Salon, and the Fancy Dress Party where I met up with my ride home, and fell asleep during the festivities. KT & Sushi had acquired some minions who were sad to see them go. We headed at about 1am. Arrived around 2:30- 3 am, and were joyfully greeted by Megumi-hime and Sir Elric, who fussed over us the next few days. We had a great time, but were also glad to be home in our own beds.

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**LONELY PLANETS:  
(The Natural Philosophy of Alien Life)**

by David Grinspoon, Ph.D.  
2003; Ecco (a Harper/Collins imprint);  
\$25.95 hardcover  
a book review by E.B. Frohvet

Dr. Grinspoon (credits include "adjunct professor of Astrophysical and Planetary Sciences at the University of Colorado") writes with a cheerful openness which in my limited experience, is atypical of academics: "A book summing up everything we *know* about alien life would contain only one word: *nothing* . . . If Jerry Seinfeld can do a sitcom about nothing, why can't I write a book about something we know nothing about?" The book is divided into three broad sections: History, Science, and Belief — the last could as easily have been labelled Speculation. Not surprisingly, the Science section comprises more than half.

Grinspoon begins by proposing Copernicus's *De Revolutionibus Orbium Coelestium* as Most Radical Book Ever Written. ("I get letters from people all around the world with elaborate theories of everything . . . Maybe in the kook files of the world's astronomy writers is an obscure tract containing the seeds of the next Copernican revolution." Judging from his picture, Dr. Grinspoon is still young enough that neither his belief system nor his sense of humor have fossilized.)

The History section recapitulates a background that ought to be familiar to anyone who has read generally on the history of science. The Science section follows a similar trend. "It is surprisingly easy to make the organic prelude to life . . . Take a source of carbon . . . add sane hydrogen, nitrogen, oxygen, sulphur, and phosphorus, tap into a sufficient energy source, and you almost inevitably get amino acids . . ." In short, the lineal descendants of the epochal 1953 experiments of Harold Urey and Stanley Miller. The author zips through the history of Earth, from nebular condensation to humanity, in about 50 pages; dropping a few bricks along the way: of the assumption that humanity is the purpose of creation, "We now know better than to believe any of those egotistical fantasies." (Dr. Grinspoon describes himself as "secular humanist Jewish".) His humor will not appeal to all, but is at least wide open: "What if we find that some multigalactical corporation owns the patent on DNA-protein biochemistry and they

came back through our system demanding licensing fees?"

The Belief section covers such well-travelled ground as SETI, Fermi's Paradox, and — an improbable risk for a serious scientist — UFO's, concerning which he remains unconvinced. This is distinct from Chapter 24, "Astrotheology", which manages to avoid altogether that irritatingly imprecise noun, "God". ("It appears that monotheism is failing us.") Grinspoon seems to think that contacting extraterrestrial intelligence would be spiritually a good thing. He 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.

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**WITCHCRAFT:  
Its Power in the World Today**

by William Seabrook (1940)  
Review by Richard Dengrove

I really liked this book. Basically, it is a series of anecdotes where black magic plays a role. This was written several decades before Wicca. Witchcraft had not yet been associated in any way with white magic.

I am sure that the book is full of blarney. William Seabrook admits that the names have been changed. I suspect other things have been changed from the real incident "â C'" if any. I have a hard time believing he played a big role in this many incidents.

Similarly, Seabrook claimed to receive training in entirely too many traditions of magic and mysticism. He is well-read on magic and mysticism, but this well read? And well-trained? Could anyone be an expert in African fetishes; European hermeticism; and the art of the Melewis, the Whirling Dervishes.

In any event, the blarney does not matter; I am sure he wrote the book mainly to entertain. Seabrook never lets the wit or the action flag. Somebody claimed the night Seabrook and some notables spent with the modern mage, George Gurdjieff, was far more boring than Seabrook let on. That, I am sure, would not be the idea behind this book. Seabrook has some great characters too. I do not know whether I like best the evil phoney priest or the emigre Russian countess who loved being possessed by a wolf.

Where critics complain, that is what they take this book to task for: it is light weight. To them, that it is about personal anecdotes rather than scholarly research shows this. Also, that the incidents are all so delightful shows this too.

In fact, the one critic I read who took the book to task for being light weight, before that, repeated a number of its choice anecdotes. In short, like me, he loved the book.

Seabrook was particularly wise to write it this way. It enabled him to lob some bombshells unnoticed. He has a lot here that would otherwise anger both believers and skeptics. Through most of the book, he says that he has never seen anything that cannot be explained

naturally. That, I am sure, would have angered the believers.

Then he says that, nonetheless, if people believe in magic, you have to act as if it exists. One reason is that, as one critic put it, it has the power of autosuggestion. Therefore, a spell will often need a counter spell. Other times you have to threaten the practicing magician to back off.

While I believe magic is a cultural truth and have no objections to this, I am sure he would have angered many skeptics if his book had been considered more than light weight.

Here is an instance of counter magic. A London actress has a doll replica made of a woman she hates. The woman believes and grows ill. She takes a stab at real counter-magic but she deems her measures too weak. Finally, Seabrook and a private detective find the doll, and save the day.

An additional would-be bombshell for skeptics is who is affected by black magic. Skeptics would not have much objection to most of the believers. Obviously, it would be credible for the natives of Africa to be believers. In addition, they probably suspected that, in both Europe and America, the less educated, more rural would be susceptible. Furthermore, the skeptics would probably find it credible to believe a European might go native, and believe. Conrad's "The Heart of Darkness" would have made this notion credible.

Seabrook had an interesting example of this. A White French husband keeps his wife in a metal cage because he believes she is a hyena demon. The wife submits voluntarily because she too believes herself a hyena demon.

As well, skeptics would have found it credible that magic would not only flourish in backwaters but at the highest levels of society. This, I suspect, had been a staple of the tabloids for many years. For instance, the adherents of Gurdjieff and Om the Omnipotent were fabled to be wealthy and high on the social register. Also, bohemian types, like artists and musicians, were reported to have some pretty weird beliefs.

No, I am not saying that skeptics would object to any of these as believers. What many skeptics would not be able to stand are skeptics as unconscious believers: people who doubt consciously and believe in their heart of hearts. Their assumption is that if you doubt consciously, that is the end of it. Otherwise, what would be the advantage of being a skeptic?

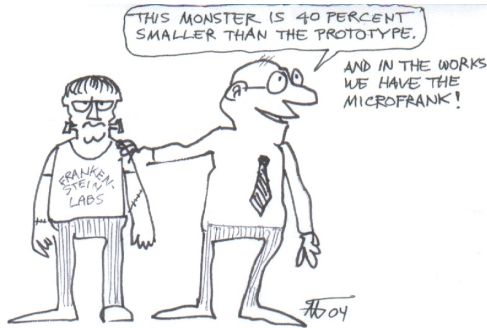
However, in Seabrook's book, conscious skeptics succumb to black magic. On the Ivory Coast, natives kill a rather loathsome European by placing a curse on him. Although he laughs at it, he succumbs.

In another example, a folk witch curses a young mechanic. He loudly mocks the curse, but he starts losing the ability to walk. Seabrook succeeds in destroying the magic charm and saving the day.

Also, he has the contrary to this happen. Many skeptics make the assumption that believers in magic are irrational; that someone believes in magic means that they do not know how to handle it. However, some of Seabrook's anecdotes show that they do.

In the Ivory Coast, a native "emperor" finds

that some priests, bribed by jealous sisters, had tortured to death this one thirteen year old whom they claimed was possessed by a demon. We do not know what the native emperor does to those witch doctors, but you can be sure they paid for their crime



In most of the book, Seabrook would have affronted many skeptics partially had they taken the book seriously. In the last part of the book, Seabrook would have affronted many skeptics totally. He intimated that all magic is not just imagination; a little of it might be real, a fact. Also, it might eventually be proven scientifically.

He finds some “experiments” of his and his girl friend compelling. He suggests if we can somehow cut off the normal workings of our senses, we would become more psychic. The static of our daily lives would not interfere. The normal working of the senses is the key here. As well as the senses actually being closed off, the person might be experiencing pain, fatigue and drugs; and might not be in his right senses.

This is quite an old belief. Seabrook himself points to shamans and mystics of the past. Also, I might add this theory has a long history in America. It was big among Mesmerists in the first half of the 19th Century.

One of his many girl friends who are high on the social register volunteers to be the guinea pig. Because he more than notices that her behavior borders on the masochistic, he calls her Justine, as in the Marquis de Sade’s *Justine*. She was very enthusiastic about these experiments. She altered her normal senses by suspending herself from ropes hours at a time, like Islamic monks in Algeria. Sometimes, Seabrook had to insist she stop. Also, she practiced not touching anything. Finally, she had a special leather mask made so she could not see, smell or hear.

Seabrook found two predictions she made interesting. One had to do with a lion peeing at a carnival and the other with a present of fish she received. Seabrook admitted neither prediction was spectacular, or useful for very much, but he pointed out that they did at least predict the future.

All the while, he admitted he did not use even elementary scientific controls. In other words, this is his normal blarney. I like it. As I said, I believe magic is cultural or literary as opposed scientific. This magic is certainly revealing a cultural truth about magic.

There is an irony here. Sensory deprivation has been the most successful approach in parapsychology. In the 1980s, the late Charles Honorton studied sensory deprivation in depth in Ganzfeld experiments. Of course, the effect of drugs and pain were not studied; Honorton only made sure that his subjects’ seeing, hearing, feeling, etc. were closed off. He found that they guessed others’ thoughts far beyond chance.

Not everyone was happy with his methodology, however: a skeptic, Ray Hyman, made several criticisms of these experiments. Obliging, Honorton incorporated these criticisms in new experiments. However, Honorton, in 1994, still found his subjects in the Ganzfeld experiments guessed others’ thoughts far beyond chance.

It does not matter that the skeptics were not convinced. The more astonishing thing is that believers have not celebrated their victory. If they were reveling in the streets, I never heard of it.

I would imagine that, for them, magic is in good part a cultural truth too. Honorton’s evidence does not have the right pizzazz. The Shroud of Turin, Flying Saucer abductions, Ramtha and Simon the Magician have had the right pizzazz.

While Seabrook and Justine proved nothing spectacular, all that blarney has pizzazz. For that reason, we are nonetheless on our way to true magic.

### DRAMATIC ANNOUNCEMENT

by Bill Breuer

It’s true! History is about to repeat itself! By popular demand, Sight & Sound productions is to once again bring horror master Clive Barker’s “History of the Devil” to The MeX theater at Kentucky Center For The Arts. Popularity for the work is expected to increase due to fact that the Sci-Fi Channel will present the mini-series of this dramatic work.

The story of the “Greatest Trial of the Millennia”, in addition to Lucifer and his demons demanding parole to return to Heaven, has a healthy blend of love, sex, violence, betrayal, deceit, war, intrigue and every commandment and social rule gets broken in the space of just a couple of hours!

After a sold out run in April 2005 (A MeX record was set for the most tickets sold for a four night run — along with a few other records) the word is that there will be a full restaging this fall. Plans are for the set to be more intricate, more elaborate special effects, and the costuming redesigned. Many of the parts will be portrayed more dramatically and have a greater audience impact. There will changes planned in the production team and among the actors and their roles. Many of the members of the original cast will return along with some new additions to the ensemble.

The show is scheduled for August 31, and September 1,2,3.

<http://www.thehistoryofthedevil.com>

And Bill also found a review:

### A Trial for the Ages in “History”

Clive Barker’s “The History of the Devil” is a fascinating, dark journey that proves compelling independent theater in Louisville can successfully compete on a commercial level

WHILE the clanging piano of Billy Joel’s musical biography “Movin’ Out” thumped from Whitney Hall, a select crowd flowed from the balmy late April air toward the labyrinthine corridors of the MeX to view a performance of Clive Barker’s hagiographic paean to a much darker fallen saint in “History of the Devil”. This was the final night of a four-night run that sold out well in advance, due to the reputation of local impresarios John Hetzel and Troy Colon, better known as Sight & Sound Productions from their successful variety shows at the Rudyard Kipling.

Barker, best known for the “Hellraiser” series (currently in its 7th incarnation, “Hellworld”), sets his epic drama of the Devil’s attempt to regain his place in heaven by calling a court trial at Lake Turkana, a desert lake in the Great Rift Valley of Kenya surrounded by barren volcanic lava beds — quite fittingly the likely home of ancestral man (and also host to the world’s largest crocodile colony).

Using a narrator — equal parts reporter and roustabout, and played with verve by Ragan Martinez — Barker takes us to Africa by way of North London to acquire the Devil’s Advocate — a task carried out with zestful malice by Herschel Zahnd as Verrier, the Devil’s favored demon. Barker’s original instructions insist on Verrier to be played by a woman, but Zahnd is truly menacing as a near-albino garbed in mirrored sunglasses and motorcycle leather.

Keith Franklin’s naturally sardonic delivery serves Samuel Kyle well as the Devil’s Advocate, as he is abruptly taken from a quiet existence as a well-appointed barrister to sub-Saharan Africa to defend the Indefensible. Kyle honors his professionalism in assuring the Devil a faithful and fair hearing, but his natural conflict as the Devil’s Advocate has a surprise twist towards the end that strips away his noblesse oblige and makes him an even more sympathetic character. Franklin has some of the play’s best lines — “Thanks for the invitation, but I can’t manage Africa this morning!” — and wryly delivers to great effect.

Belial, a lesser demon played joyfully over the top (calling to mind Rik Mayall’s “Drop Dead Fred”) by Anthony Wentzel, is sent forward to torment the prosecution assembling at Lake Turkana. Christol Sweeney is perpetually in motion as the prosecutor Catherine Lamb, effectively challenging first Samuel Kyle, then the Devil himself, particularly when the latter puts mankind on the defensive in the final denouement.

Breck Lyvers as Jane Beck — Catherine Lamb’s partner, both in and out of the courtroom — effectively supports Lamb, although their physical chemistry is muted. Beck’s transformation from erstwhile lesbian paralegal to the Devil’s paramour, while ably

acted by the smoldering red-headed Lyvers, is the lone toe stub of Barker's script.

Their furtive exchanges and eye glances say little until they find themselves suddenly alone among the shadows in Act 3, but nothing much is said — running out of trading bon mots at the end of a quick clipped discourse, the Devil offers her some hash. This exchange is supposed to build the foundation for their eventual pairing for all eternity, but proves emotionally unsatisfying.

Rich Williams, a MeX regular (The Man Who Came to Dinner, Sordid Lives) is delightful as a peptic Judge Popper, issuing rulings and summons to his bailiff Milo Milo, portrayed by the reedy Tyler Patterson as the full embodiment of a facial tic. Williams manages to flospsweat in the air-conditioned MeX and brings bewildered mirth to throwaway lines. Patterson's pure quaking fear in every line leavens sometimes heavy courtroom scenes.

At the edge of a minimalist set reflecting the arid wastelands of northern Kenya, the Devil makes his entrance. And what an entrance! Devised by technical wizard Troy Colon (the "Sound" in Sight & Sound Productions), the shrill screech of a million birds swirls around the top of the MeX accompanied by a deep rumble underneath the desert floor. Lights swirl and fog rises off the Lake. The Devil emerges stage left, walking slowly and with purpose, a smile upon his face.

Greg Bone is a discovery. First of all, he looks the part of a devilish satyr, sans horns and hooves. And his refined delivery fits Barker's portrayal of the Devil as a sophisticate capable of infinite charm, moving with ease into Shaw-like soliloquies from the docket as he ruminates on his fate — "I tell you, when I saw them fall down on their knees at Golgotha, I wept. I was tricked, tricked! And you called me the Father of Lies." — frequently giving way to raw outbursts, revealing at the Devil's core a "protean evil", in Barker's words.

The narrative follows Bone as he moves quickly after cast out of heaven; from murdering a feral Russian girl in the throes of rapture to inciting mayhem at the edges of Greek civilization; surprisingly bested by a Romantic-period Gallic architect and his young mistresses; aiding a suicidal woman accused of being a witch in pre-Renaissance Lucerne; building a soulless android for his amusement as a fight promoter in Elizabethan England; later betrayed by a concubine who could have been his wife; then finally deceiving Kyle's grandfather in wartime Germany, before the final sentence is passed.

Neatly dividing these vignettes, J. P. Lebangood has a stunning turn as Jesus devolved into dessicated Christ as Barker restages the Temptation in the Desert. Lebangood's Christ has been driven over the brink of madness by hunger and thirst four weeks into his 40 days in the desert. Barker's tome reaches perfect pitch here as Christ and the Devil duel in messianic one-upmanship, and Hetzel's energetic staging delivers the most engaging scene in the play.

The first act is engrossing. Hetzel has stayed

true to Barker's emphasis on the language and his focus on each of these vignettes — produced seamlessly as the set goes from trial to flashback and back to trial again — initially portraying the Devil as an innocent, in fact, an amnesiac upon his exile to Earth.

But after quickly regaining his senses living among a peasant family in the ancient Caucasus, The Devil begins his trail of woe moving forward in time to the Hellenic Empire, where he taunts the cuckolded Callimachus into eventual bloody on stage suicide by the sword. Bill Breuer (who has done a superb job with the foreign accents and special visual effects used throughout the production) is spot on as this Grecian nobleman ruling an outpost on the edge of nowhere, and Heather Helm brings a rapturous accent to his wife, the voluptuous Polyxene, mad with boredom and sexual frustration.

After the Temptation in the Desert late in the second act, the narrative is compromised slightly by Barker's repetitious verbal volleys between the Devil and prosecutor Lamb, compounded by an overlay long stay at Nicolas Vidal's (Jaymes Fowler) construction of the Chartres Cathedral and subsequent deconstruction of the Devil's Palace ("Merde!"). An appearance by a insanely mad Dante (T. J. Moreschi) at the end of this scene nearly sends the production off course, until the drama catches its collective breath at intermission and neatly recovers its footing early in Act 3 with a well-paced fight scene set in Elizabethan England.

The Devil, in his megalomania, has constructed a pre-modern android in the shape of fighter Jack Easter, a robotic physical specimen perceptively brought to life by Tim Brown, who will reject his soullessness with a moving soliloquy after throwing a bout with Daniel Mendoza, viscerally depicted by Scott Sullivan, a genuine bantam rooster who looks like he just stepped out of an undercard flyweight win in Cinderella Man. After losing a bet on the bout with the Duke of York — Lebangood as a hilariously sauced-up prig — the Devil destroys Easter in a fit of rage.

The sentiment tilts decidedly against the Devil at this point, and it does not take much more than a visit from the Devil's former wife, embodied by Jessica Gasser as a woman scorned, yet still retaining her pride and relishing the opportunity to unload on the Devil's dalliances and all-too-human lack of commitment. Gasser convinces the audience that the Devil, while not explicitly immoral, has no conscience. This may be Barker's final sentiment, a familiarity that modern man cannot shake so easily.

It would be remiss to reveal the ending. Several twists, including a fireworks display and a murder by crocodile, wrap up in a shocking Revelation, and a stunning elopement. A happy ending? That's for you to decide.

The phenomenal success of the production — which had a waiting list for tickets before opening night (a rarity for The MeX), and was also competing against Derby Week festivities — convinced Hetzel and Colon to re-stage the production in The MeX over the upcoming

Labor Day weekend (Aug. 31-Sept. 4), with Bone reprising his breakout role as the Devil. Ticket information will soon be available at the show's website — [www.historyofthedevil.com](http://www.historyofthedevil.com).

## FANZINES

### *Banana Wings* #22 May 2005

Claire Brialey and Mark Plummer, 59 Shirley Road, Croydon, Surrey, CR0 7ES, UK

[banana@fishlifter.demon.co.uk](mailto:banana@fishlifter.demon.co.uk)

**Best Fanzine Hugo Nominee**

**Best Fan Writer Hugo Nominee**

### *Catchpenny Gazette* #9

David Burton, 5227 Emma Drive, Indianapolis, IN 46236-2742 USA

[catchpenny@mw.net](mailto:catchpenny@mw.net)

<http://www.efanzines.com>

### *Challenger* #22

Guy H. Lillian III, 8700 Millicent Way #1501, Shreveport, LA 71115-2264 USA

[ghliii@yahoo.com](mailto:ghliii@yahoo.com)

<http://www.challzine.net>

### *eI* # 20, #21

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[earlkemp@citlink.net](mailto:earlkemp@citlink.net)

<http://www.efanzines.com>

### *The Knarley Knews* # 112 June 2005

Henry & Letha Welch, 1525 16th Avenue, Grafton, WI 53024-2017 USA

[welch@msoe.edu](mailto:welch@msoe.edu)

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

### *MT Void* V. 23 #49 June 3, 2005 — V. 24 #5 July 29, 2005

Mark and Evelyn Leeper, 80 Lakeridge Drive, Matawan, NJ 07747-3839 USA

[eleeper@optonline.net](mailto:eleeper@optonline.net)

[mleeper@optonline.net](mailto:mleeper@optonline.net)

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

### *Museum Replicas Limited Catalog* #86

Museum Replicas Limited, Box 840, Conyers, GA 10010-0840 USA

<http://www.museumreplicas.com>

In which may be seen the fine hand of Hank Reinhardt.

### *The New Port News* #222 July 2005

Cuyler "Ned" Brooks, 4817 Dean Lane, Lilburn, GA 30047-4720 USA

[nedbrooks@sprynet.com](mailto:nedbrooks@sprynet.com)

<http://home.sprynet.com/~nedbrooks/home.htm>

### *Nice Distinctions* #10

Arthur D. Hlavaty, 206 Valentine Street, Yonkers, NY 10704-1814 USA

[hstavaty@panix.com](mailto:hlavaty@panix.com)

<http://www.efanzines.com>

<http://www.livejournal.com/users/supergee>

### *Opuntia* # 57.3 July 2005, #58 Late July 2005

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



**Prix Aurora Award for Best Canadian Fanzine**

*Peregrine Nations V. 5* #1 April 2005  
 Jan G. Stinson, Post Office Box 248,  
 Eastlake, MI 49626-0248 USA  
[tropicsf@earthlink.net](mailto:tropicsf@earthlink.net)  
<http://www.efanzines.com>  
**Neffy Award for Best Fan of the Year**

*Vanamonde* # 588-597  
 John Hertz, 236 S. Coronado Street, No.  
 409, Los Angeles, CA 90057-1456 USA

**LATE-BREAKING  
 WORLDCON NEWS**

**Prometheus Award**  
*The System of the World* by Neal Stephenson

**Prometheus Award Hall of Fame**  
*The Weapon Shops of Isher* by A. E. van Vogt

**Sidewise Award Long Form**  
*The Plot Against America* by Philip Roth  
**Sidewise Award Short Form**  
*The Ministry of Space* by Warren Ellis

Hot off the presses...  
 and the Hugo winners are....



**HUGO AWARDS**

- Best Novel:**  
*Jonathan Strange & Mr Norrell* by Susanna Clarke
- Best Novella:**  
 "The Concrete Jungle" by Charles Stross
- Best Novelette:**  
 "The Faery Handbag" by Kelly Link
- Best Short Story:**  
 "Travels with My Cats" by Mike Resnick
- Best Related Book:**  
*The Cambridge Companion to Science Fiction* edited by Edward James and Farah Mendlesohn
- Best Dramatic Presentation, Long Form:**  
*The Incredibles*
- Best Dramatic Presentation, Short Form:**  
 "33" — *Battlestar Galactica*
- Best Professional Editor:**  
 Ellen Datlow
- Best Professional Artist:**  
 Jim Burns
- Best Semiprozine:**  
*Ansible* edited by David Langford
- Best Fanzine:**  
*Plokta* edited by Alison Scott, Steve Davies and Mike Scott
- Best Fan Writer:**  
 David Langford
- Best Fan Artist:**  
 Sue Mason

- Best Web Site:**  
 SciFiction ([www.scifi.com/scifiction](http://www.scifi.com/scifiction))
- John W. Campbell Award for Best New Writer**  
 Elizabeth Bear
- Special Interaction Committee Award:**  
 David Pringle
- James White Award:**  
 Elizabeth Hopkinson
- Big Heart Award:**  
 Walter Ernsting, John-Henri Holmberg, and Ina Shorrock
- First Fandom Hall of Fame:**  
 Howard DeVore

Congratulations to Mike.  
 It seems that *Going Postal* got enough nominations to get on the ballot, but Pratchett declined the nomination. *Alexiad* got ten nominations but needed fourteen more to get on the ballot. I got ten nominations but needed twenty more to get on the ballot. There were fifty-two Langford Voting Bots (ballots that voted Langford only for Best Fan Writer).  
 The Barkley Proposal to split the Best Editor Hugo into Best Magazine Editor and Best Book Editor has passed first vote and will be voted on again in Los Angeles.

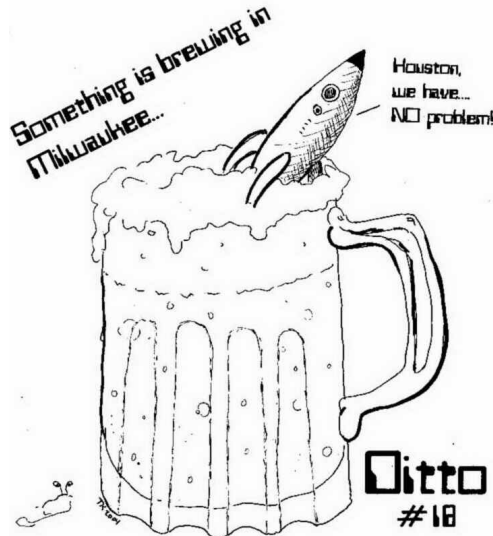
- Bottle Cap Inspectors:** Smith, Laverne DeFazio and Shirley Feeny
- Hardware Consultant:** Howard Cunningham
- Location:** Best Western Airport Milwaukee (877) 461-8547
- Room Rates:** Mention Ditto for Convention Rates of \$84.96 single or \$94.96 double. Featuring a spacious inner atrium swimming pool, lounge, and game area.
- Memberships:** \$35
- Make Checks to:** Milwaukee Science Fiction Conventions, Inc. (MSFCI)

**For more information contact:**  
 Henry Welch  
 1525 16th Avenue  
 Grafton, WI 53024-2017 USA  
[welch@msoe.edu](mailto:welch@msoe.edu)

Tom Feller reports that *Xanadu* is on hiatus indefinitely. He found *Hypericon* to have been fine, except that programming of all kinds ended at nine.

**CON NEWS**

Ditto 18 in Milwaukee, WI  
 October 14-16, 2005



**October 2005**

- Brew Meisters:** Henry and Letha Welch
- Brew Crew:** Trinlay Khadro, Henry Osier, Greg Rhin, Georgie Schnobrich, Dick Smith, Leah Zeldes-

**AWARDS**

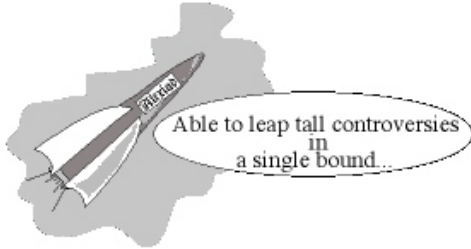
The National Fantasy Fan Federation, or N3F, now has its own awards, called the **Neffys**. *Alexiad* was nominated for Best Fanzine, along with *e-APA*, *Emerald City*, and *Peregrine Nations*, and the winner, *Ansible* [\*SIGH\*].  
 In the Fan of the Year category, **Janine Stinson** (of *Peregrine Nations*) beat out Phil De Parto and Howard DeVore. Congratulations.  
 There were also a number of other awards, covering a variety of categories. Strangely enough, there were no fiction categories per se, just "Best Writer" (C. J. Cherryh).

<http://www.nfff.org/neffys/indexa.html>

Congratulations to **Dale Speirs** for winning the Prix Aurora Award for Best Fanzine for *Opuntia*, awarded at Westercon 58 in Vancouver, B.C.



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**Letters, we get letters**


From: **Joy V. Smith** June 15, 2005  
 8925 Selph Road, Lakeland, FL 33810-0341 USA  
[Pagadan@aol.com](mailto:Pagadan@aol.com)  
<http://journals.aol.com/pagadan/JoysJournal/>

Thanks for the background and the episode guide for *The Prisoner*. Patrick McGoohan was perfect in that series. Interesting that two unproduced scripts exist. Were they published? So, there's still a fan club. I enjoyed your Wild-Ass Speculations. Please, no, not a dream! (Unless it was done as cleverly as on *Newhart*.) And a great tribute to Frank Gorshin by Johnny Carruthers.

Lots of great book reviews, as usual. I don't think I'll bother reading *Jonathan Strange & Mr Norrell* or *Iron Council*. *Shackleton's Stowaway* sounds interesting, as does *Collapse: How Societies Choose to Fail or Succeed*. I hadn't heard of *The Twilight of Atheism*; it sounds interesting but incomplete, and I have to wonder about what he's basing his premise on.

That was a busy and full trip to DeepSouthCon 43 (so Xanadu 8 and DSC were the same con?). Thanks to Lisa for her mention of the Triple Crown. (I wasn't as aware of it this year — less promotion because less chance of a Triple Crown winner?) Re: candy bar reviews, I haven't tried the Nestle Crunch with Peanut Butter yet, and I didn't like the Butterfinger Crisp at all.

Lists of fanzines is always helpful for sharing with newbies; thanks for your list and Rodney Leighton's in his look at fanzines. Time for a rant. Isn't there anyone on AOL to contribute fanzine news and recommendation to the Fanzines folder?! Thanks for the Hugo recommendations and the Nebula and Sidewise Award winners.

LOCs: Thanks for the clarification about The Day of the Boomer Droogs. The Pohl story sounds intriguing. Trinlay: Too bad about your great-uncle's letters about the WWII camps! They probably would have been a good addition to Holocaust history. Lots of interesting literary (*Dangerous Visions*, etc.), fan, and more background and history (including the Spanish monarchy — thanks, Sue — and South Africa — thanks, Al) in the LOCs. I hadn't realized that *Farscape: The Peacekeeper Wars* didn't make the Hugo ballot. Hmm. What did?

Re: the last page. Was that a real e-mail,

Joe?! (I enjoyed it; it's funny.)

You mean it wasn't? Oh, the embarrassment!

— JTM

From: **Rod E. Smith** June 16, 2005  
 730 Cline Street, Frankfort, KY 40601-1034 USA  
[RodE.Smith@mail.state.ky.us](mailto:RodE.Smith@mail.state.ky.us)

Recently, an electric sign on a post has been installed, rising from the grass to the right of the west garage for the new Transportation Cabinet building. It spells out FULL in small, amber light bulbs. The only thing this sign can do is turn on or off. The message is fixed, and clearly visible even when the sign is off. (I haven't seen it on, yet; no surprise, since the garage has never had more than two-thirds occupancy.)

The managers know how many spaces there are in the garage. Access is limited to those with electronic transponders in their cars. Does this mean they've issued (or are planning to issue) more transponders than there are spaces? Or did the facts that access is limited and they set the limit just not occur to them?

Now, there could be some obscure state regulation requiring all parking garages to have such a sign, regardless of intended use. But I don't think so.

I don't know. I have posted by the printer at work a sign with the sign inscription from Jurgen that begins "Read Me!"

July 19, 2005

In re. *The Prisoner*: I saw this first US run and was hooked. I was disappointed, later, to learn that much of the mystery was accidental. I was also surprised to learn that it was inspired by real events of WWII, when the British government used a holiday camp (I've read that it both was the Hotel Portmeirion and that it wasn't) to detain people it didn't have enough against to arrest but didn't want running around lose.

Or, as one of m .SIGs puts it: During World War Two, Germany and Russia put their undesirables into work camps and death camps; the US put theirs into detention camps; and Great Britain put their into holiday camps.

Note that there is considerable argument over which title should go with which episode. Some fans even claim that the "wrong" titles were deliberately used. For example, "Do Not Forsake Me Oh My Darling" is the theme from *High Noon*, considered by many to be the ultimate western (I have the Pioneer laser disk special edition), and should have been used for the "western" Prisoner episode.

One speculation I've read about the show is a variation on the "It was all a dream." concept; that it is what P is imagining could happen as he drives to resign. Which explains why the stories vary from quite definitely set in the real world to blatantly fantastic. His concentration and mood are changing as he drives.

By the way, how Rover operated is quite obvious to anyone exposed to a certain toy I had back in the Sixties. It used a small, steerable fan to pick up and maneuver balloons around. You see, a sphere tends to stay in the center of a moving column of fluid. A tight enough stream can even capture a sphere on the floor and lift it almost vertically. Rover didn't do quite that, but from the way its surface keeps deforming it is obviously in a stream of moving air.

In re. Hadrian the Seventh's color photography: There is a method, using black and white film, to produce color images which are actually true color, as opposed to the three- and four-color systems used in conventional color film and digital cameras. Known among aficionados as The One True Way, it was developed in the late Nineteenth Century, using a glass plate negative floated emulsion down on mercury. The light comes in, hits a 45 degree mirror and goes through the glass, then bounces back and forth between the mercury and the emulsion, creating interference patterns. These patterns, when viewed at the correct angle, reproduce a true, color image.

I don't think Hadrian would have wanted to make Sir Junio mad as a hatter. It would have been ever so superfluous.

— JTM

One of the scientists studying the bones of the Kennewick Man, after these were released for study following a long and contentious legal battle, said "We're past some of the politics and finally going to learn some things." What a sad commentary on our society.

— Stickmaker

From: **Cuyler "Ned" Brooks** June 13, 2005  
 4817 Dean Lane, Lilburn, GA 30047-4720 USA  
[nedbrooks@sprynet.com](mailto:nedbrooks@sprynet.com)

Thanks for the June *Alexiad*. Hard to believe the law would concern itself with the color of a bulldog. . . . As I understand it, neither the dog nor any of his canine acquaintances could tell the dog was pink instead of white, as dogs are colorblind. Why anyone would want a pink bulldog is another question!

My mother and sister said they saw a rat in the yard at their house over in the next county, at midday, eating the seeds that had fallen off the bird feeder. I thought it must have been diseased or an escaped pet, so I set a cage trap — all I got was one of the numerous squirrels, and let it go. The squirrels here must be more cautious, the trap never succeeded with the ones that were getting into the attic. I have had shields installed and that seems to work.

Excellent reviews. It's been decades since I read Rolfe's *Hadrian the Seventh*. I remember I enjoyed it at the time just because it was so bizarre and outside my own experience — one of the pleasures of reading SF. I had the samereaction to Nabokov's *Pale Fire*.

I don't like the "Village" font — the "e" is strikingly inappropriate.

You missed a possible spelling of the surname of Shackleton's stowaway — it could have been "Blackborough" rather than Blackboro, Blackborow, or Blackborrow. Are these your typos or McKernan's or was the stowaway himself only semi-literate and varied the spelling of his name?

I checked my work copy of South (doesn't everyone have a copy at work and another one at home?) and Shackleton rendered it "Blackborrow". Robert Lansing rendered it "Blackboro". Caroline Alexander and Victoria McKernan rendered it "Blackborow". McKernan talked to his children.

— JTM

Fascinating about Dos Passos. I never cared for Hemingway, and know little about Dos Passos. I have often seen his books, and might have read one in the summer of 1954 — there was a highschool course in American Literature that I was allowed to take the exam on after reading the books, rather than wait another year to graduate. The only title I actually remember is Walter van Tillburg Clark's *The City of Trembling Leaves*.

When I first heard that OutsideCon had won the 2007 DSC I thought it must have been the only serious bid, but apparently not. I would be very doubtful about camping out myself — I know people do it, but I never have.

Interesting about the affect of style on atheism — I don't know that, if my idea of God were based on the style of the church building and decor, I would see much to choose between the gaudy Catholic and the plain Protestant . . . My own idea of what is pleasing in a building falls somewhere in between and off to the left. But then so do my feelings about religion in general — I have a sort of psychic allergy to ritual, and find the idea of God wanting to be worshipped somewhat doubtful.

If you actually deal with getting blood samples, I'm sure you know more about it than I do, but I don't see how it's easier to get blood on a "test strip" from the finger than from the earlobe. I hate having a wound on my hand — I would much rather they just drew some from my arm.

From: **Alexis A. Gilliland** June 15, 2005  
4030 8<sup>th</sup> Street South, Arlington, VA  
22204-1552 USA

Alexiad 4.3 arrived the same day Michael Jackson was acquitted, a splendid synergy of weirdness triumphant (he beat the rap, you pubbed yer ish). Lisa's editorial about the millions of pets in animal shelters reminded me of my Aunt Connie's remark that people have the duty to take care of their pets, including not letting them suffer unnecessarily. A few times I have had to put down terminally ill cats, but the military pets are a hard case. When forced to give them up, should one put them down, or turn them over to the animal shelter, where they have only a small chance of survival? I have no

answer, but when my dad went on active duty in 1940, he left my first cat, American Blue Pigeon, at the University of Maine's cow barns. A year later he took me back to look for him, but of course my cat didn't come when I called. Moving out of your apartment and abandoning your cat — which has no survival skills — in the hall is simply wrong, however.

We saw "The Revenge of the Sith," which I liked a lot. Once you understand that Anakin Skywalker is lying about (or doesn't know) why he is attracted to the dark side of the force, the movie becomes a character study of Darth Vader. My stepson, Jim, hated it because he thought it was too depressing. The key incident is when Anakin, having gone over to the dark side of the force, kills his pregnant wife when she refuses to follow. A nit: The climactic duel between Obi Juan Kenobi and A. Skywalker was visually spectacular but way too long, cartoonish, and obviously done in front of a blue background. All that strenuous exercise in proximity to all that hot magma, and nobody even breaks a sweat? Come on! A coming attraction was "The Lion The Witch And The Wardrobe," a big budget movie based on the C.S. Lewis novel, clearly inspired by the commercial success of *The Lord Of The Rings*.

But it's from Disney™. Eek!  
Eek! Eek! Or perhaps Poop-Poop-Poopy.  
<http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0363771/>



A bit of a stretch here, but Lewis touches on Frohvet's review of *The Twilight of Atheism*. Last winter I picked up a copy of Lewis's *Surprised by Joy*, which is a highly edited (he omits his stormy first marriage as irrelevant) autobiography dealing in part with his education and the trajectory of his faith. Relating how he progressed from a pro forma and uncritical acceptance of what he was taught, to youthful rejection of parental stupidity and parental authority, to the embrace of atheism in college because it was intellectually exhilarating, and how, finally, because he found atheism emotionally sterile, he became a Christian once again. From Lewis, one gets the impression that atheists can be political, but that atheism is a state of mind, as immune to logic and sweet reason as any other faith. In short that atheism; like Islam or Christianity, is what the individual makes of it.

The failure of Soviet sponsored atheism no more discredits atheism than the disappearance of the Albigensians or the Shakers discredits Christianity, since the particulars of all three cases overwhelm the generalities. We do note that in post-Communist Russia, the indigenous religion, Russian Orthodoxy, has reverted to type by sucking up to the state to keep out the competition, those awful western Catholics and Evangelicals.

One suspects that many people compelled to embrace a state-sponsored religion, despite any theological doubts they may harbor, become closet atheists, despite their compulsory church attendance and knowledge of the catechism. The same might also be true of sexually active Catholic women using abortifacients (the anti-choice name for contraceptives) in defiance to the teaching of the Church, though most of them will surely return to the faith after menopause. A just God will not judge harshly the non-compliance with one's professed faith, when it was done to obtain some small temporal advantage, like not (a) having a lot of unwanted children, or (b) being burned at the stake.

As Catherine the Great said: "My job is being an autocrat. And the Good Lord, his job is forgiving me." So if there is hope for autocrats, then maybe also for atheists as well. My apologies to Marty Helgesen for misspelling his name.

I should have caught that in scanning the letter.

— JTM

Joe's commentary on "The Prisoner" reminds me that Lee has been in touch with other "Man From Uncle" enthusiasts on the internet, and is discussing an east coast MFU con, which might draw 30-40 people sometime in 2006. So much for the stamina of media enthusiasm, Dragoncon's 60,000 paid attendance to the contrary notwithstanding.

From: **Brad W. Foster** June 18, 2005  
P.O. Box 165246, Irving, TX 75016-5246 USA  
[bwfoster@juno.com](mailto:bwfoster@juno.com)  
**Best Fan Artist Hugo Nominee**

First, apologies for not loccing you on the previous issue. After some four years of taking care of him through various stages, the last one being nine months here in our home for 24 hour care, my father-in-law passed away in early April. If we thought our time was constrained caring for him, it got *really* crazy taking care of all the million and one items that came up after his death. So, zines and such got kind of short shrift for a while. Still got much to work on, but his house is in order, as it were, and looks like, by the end of the summer, I might even have time back to start thinking about some of the projects I've been putting off for years. Life goes on.

Our condolences on your loss.

Your opening comments on the Animal

Shelter also struck a bit home. Before Dan died, we also ended up taking a big stray dog into our house, and we now know officially fostering him (how appropriate) while a permanent home is found. Big old sweetheart, so we hope we can find someone he can lay all that love on, before he tears up what tiny bit of backyard we have here. Plus the cats aren't too wild about him, though I think if he had the chance, he'd just curl up and cuddle them.

I was mesmerized by "The Prisoner" when it was first broadcast over here, so totally different and, well *weird* in comparison to everything else on TV then. Still fascinated by it all. And, I have a trivia question for everyone. Way back in my college days, mid seventies, someone got some tapes of the program to show at a small sf convention. At the end of the episode I had time to watch, when the credits were over and it did that zoom-in on the bike wheel, instead of changing to a Rover balloon, the wheel became the entire globe of the earth, spinning about. Anyone else ever seen this version? Or was I hallucinating something? Seemed to be just dripping with even more added symbolism for the whole series!

Yes, it's real. That's the  
Alternative Version of "The Chimes  
of Big Ben".

— JTM

And all of the wonderful fannish over-analysis you report here is a kick to read. My favorite is to hear that comma added into the opening credit of each episode, of "You are, Number Six". If people go this nutty over a clearly fictional item, no wonder stuff like *The DaVinci Code* sends 'em even crazier. I always thought of the show, especially as it progressed, as one of the finest example of surrealism on TV.

Great Gilliland toon on page 5, encapsulates my own vibe of Hunter's writings so perfectly.

As usual, more books in here to add to the "find" list, particularly *The Twilight of Atheism* and *The Meaning of Everything*, two titles which somehow seem to belong together, now don't they?

On "Handicapping the Hugos", I will only note that I am a major fan of Freas, but if he does win, it will be for "body of work", as the work that came out the last few years is very weak, and sad to see that talent breaking down. And also a big fan of Teddy Harvia, but if he wins, it will be for body of work, as Teddy stopped drawing and sending out art over a year ago, concentrating on writing, and doubt there has been much published in the past year. Who will win? I never know year to year.

Finally, regarding "Email I Never Finished Reading", I thought I would bust a gut laughing on that one.

From: **Henry L. Welch** June 19, 2005  
1525 16th Avenue, Grafton, WI  
53024-2017 USA  
[welch@msoe.edu](mailto:welch@msoe.edu)  
<http://people.msoe.edu/~welch/tkk.html>

Thanks for *Alexiad* 4.2. I have been very behind in my loccing, etc. and even though I just received 4.3 I haven't had a chance to read it yet.

Thanks for the plug for Ditto. I look forward to seeing you in October.

Your review of *Dangerous Visions* caught my attention. I read it way back in the 1980s and recall that it was OK, but nothing particularly special. Perhaps as a later devotee to SF I simply didn't find it very avant garde. I, of course, look forward to your review of *The Final Dangerous Vision* if and when it should ever see print.

But by then it wasn't "special",  
only the way things normally were.  
The revolution had won.

— JTM

From: **E. B. Frohvet** June 16, 2005  
4716 Dorsey Hall Drive #506, Ellicott  
City MD 21042-5988 USA

It is much feared locally that this year may have been the last Preakness in Maryland. The multinational conglomerate that now owns Pimlico has all but openly threatened that if they don't get slot machines, they will fold Pimlico and move the Preakness to one of their more attractive and profitable venues. (Gulf Stream Park in Florida has been mentioned.) Of course they would not take the Woodlawn Vase, which belongs separately to the Maryland Jockey Club. Still, this would be a serious blow to area prestige, not to mention its economic impact. I fear that horse racing as a sport is on its way to becoming a minor niche sport, like lacrosse.

I rather like the Meisha Merlin publishing house; mainly as they are the hardback/trade-paper publishers of Sharon Lee & Steve Miller. The definitive Heinlein collection seems like a worthwhile project even if much of Heinlein is beyond readability.

I recall *The Prisoner* but my interest in it passed away with the end of the show. The only one of the nominated novels I even attempted to read was the Susanna Clarke one, and I found the first 200 pages so slow and mannered that I did not bother with the remaining several hundred.

Interesting that the faned quoted as preferring "an actual mailed and printed zine" (somehow I wonder about the chronology of that sequence), hasn't mailed one in over a year.

It said in *Sports Illustrated* that racehorse Afleet Alex has a particular fondness for peppermints, of all things, and after winning the Preakness he was given as many as he wanted. Since these candies do not contain chocolate, I guess they don't fall under the ban on feeding certain candies to racehorses.

Chocolate has theobromine which results in testing positive for banned drugs and will get a horse disqualified.

— LTM

Disagree with both you and Johnny on the "Fan Artist" award. Vote Steve Stiles. One of

these years. (Steve is now working in a bookstore in the area, I talked with him last month.)

Taral Wayne illustrates in some detail the two main failings that can bork up a Worldcon; overambitiousness, and the ability to appoint anyone to any important job regardless of competence. I wonder if these are not a side effect of the fact that each Worldcon is seen as a separate entity, rather than as the current manifestation of an ongoing process.

I did indeed send my order for *Heinlein's Children*. I hope the publisher is more timely than the one to whom I sent an order in February, still waiting . . .

It may depend on the author,  
who at the request of the guy  
writing the introduction wrote an  
additional essay, on Podkayne of  
Mars, in some 21 days.

Joy Smith: The author of the Hubble book noted that Hubble always used "nebulae", never "galaxies". Force of habit, perhaps: at the time, no one knew there were other galaxies.

Trinlay Khadro: Bats are good for you. (Frohvet's Fourth Law: "Anything that eats rats or mosquitoes is a friend.") See the raising of bats in Janet Kagan, *Mirable*. Several thousand bats live under the Congress Avenue Bridge in Austin, Texas, and come out at dusk; they have something of the status of municipal pets. The doctor might not respond to the pharmacy's call requesting a clarification of a prescription because he was busy, not in the office, or just didn't want to bother.

Thanks to Martin Morse Wooster for clarifying his group and its membership. Ironically, I voted on TAFF, which I think the less useful of the two major fan funds (and the one that has been taken over and run as a subscript of CorfluCult), and declined to vote on DUFF this year. But I was very late getting ballots for either — the TAFF ballot was sent to me by a candidate.

After this, would you like me to go back to reviewing science fiction rather than non-fiction? I have reviews of both backlogged, and very little market for any of them.

As I came in the other evening, a neighbor was walking her dog; who came up and greeted me

cheerfully. I scratched his head for a minute, exchanged a word or two with the neighbor, and I started off one way as she went the other way. After a second I looked down and discovered the dog had come with me. I petted him again, turned him around, and said, "That's your person over there, at the other end of this leash."



Did you not go to bed on the evening of April 12th?

### After midnight.

Review of *Ill Met by Midnight*: “The Bazaar of the Bizarre” was a Fafhrd & Grey Mouser story by Fritz Leiber. As there was another story in the same sequence called “Ill Met in Lankhmar”, if the authors were alluding to another famous fantasy writer, it was probably Leiber rather than Asprin.

It seems to me that Dainis Bisenieks is doing copy-editing, in which one reads the content for sense and consistency of style; rather than merely proofreading, in which one is merely concerned that spelling and punctuation are correct. Both are admirable and underutilized skills. A spellcheck program will merely confirm that a word is spelled correctly, not that it was the word the author intended. (See in the first chapter of Heinlein’s *I Will Fear No Evil*, where the secretary Eunice reassures her computer on the spelling of “thanatotic”.)

I probably read *Hadrian the Seventh* once, long ago: the general outline of the story seems familiar though I have forgotten the details. It seemed pretty absurd to me even at the time. There was a similar book recently, *The Accidental Pope* (don’t recall the author’s name). There was a film (*Saving Grace*, 1985) about a Pope who gets bored and runs away.

The *Accidental Pope* (2000) is by Raymond Flynn (former US ambassador to the Vatican) and Robin Moore (*The Green Berets*, *The French Connection*), and concerns the papacy of a laicized priest who in the meantime has become a fisherman, married, fathered four children, and become widowed. There’s also *Vicar of Christ* (1979) by Walter F. Murphy about a Pope who was a Medal of Honor winner with the Marines in Korea, then Chief Justice of the US, then widowed, whereupon he became a monk, and then Pope . . . I think I prefer *Hadrian the Seventh*, at least the prose is more enjoyable.

*Saving Grace*: IMDB lists seven movies with that title but I believe you mean this one:  
<http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0091895/>  
— JTM

From: **Sheryl Birkhead** June 17, 2005  
22509 Jonnie Court, Gaithersburg, MD  
20882-3422 USA  
[catsmeouch@yahoo.com](mailto:catsmeouch@yahoo.com)

Greetings that are *sooo* extremely late. I have a fillo at home to include with with this . . . but I’ve had it for a while and just *not* gotten to doing it.

I’m not one for constantly gasping (at traffic . . . eh) **BUT**, when I saw A fleet Alex stumble in the Preakness I *knew* he was going down and

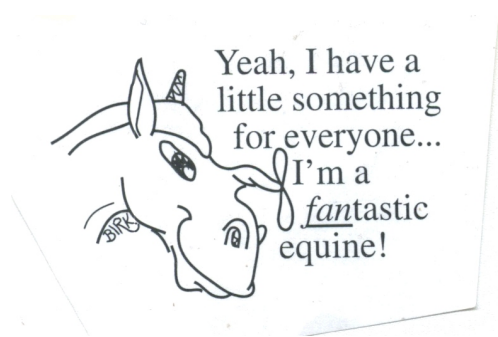
would break a leg — couldn’t believe the recovery and win in the Preakness, then that spectacular win in the Belmont (without the heart pounding stress of the stumble).

The “most recent” case of human rabies locally was (I think) a death in 2003 in Virginia. Identification of the strain of rabies pinpointed it as the strain carried by bats.

Hmm . . . of the zines listed I get eight out of fourteen — or a tad over half — not particularly good for me, but good for the status of pubbing.

Ever read (well, I listen) to the “Kinsey Millhone” mystery series? The one I’m listening to right now is *C is for Corpse* — and one of the people she had interviewed has Crohn’s Disease . . . so he gave a *really* short definition!

You mean Sue Grafton from Louisville?



Nice illo by Brad Foster on page 20 — good look at Glasgow.

Trinlay — for about three years I had a therapeutic (i.e., in my case deep tissue) massage weekly. It hurt and never *did* make things better (plus it was not covered by insurance). I stopped quite a few years ago. Recently I decided to try again, on a monthly basis (what I was told previously was that, while it might not heal, it would prevent progression — sheesh). Had the first visits (she came to the house — a licensed masseuse who is also an R.N. and is recommended by the place where I had physical therapy) — I’d forgotten just how *much* it hurt. She suggested Reiki, but I think the first few sessions, presuming I can afford to continue, will probably be deep tissue. From past experience, I knew it would hurt *more* tomorrow. Great . . . just great (that’s cynicism, not a “real” comment).

I’m guessing that DUFF will extend to cover Nippon, but I’m probably wrong, just thought it’s as “close” as Down Under.

Umm . . . Joe Siclari won DUFF (I believe the Natcon was last weekend) and Suzle won TAFF.

Budesonide is/was/has been used in human medicine — it’s a synthetic steroid — and made the trip over to veterinary medicine for felines. As a species cats tolerate steroids remarkably well (especially when compared to humans and canines). Since IBD is a very common diagnosis in cats, budesonide was tried and

found to have many *fewer* systemic effects — acting, primarily, in the GI tract which made it very attractive/safe and a good choice for long term therapy.

I tried the extra chocolate and extra peanut butter Reeses — I’ll go for that deep regular Reeses. I saw, but now cannot find, Hershey’s kisses with toffee and almond bits (I checked online, so I know it was made, but no one has it for sale). One Walmart had a Kisses display — “Orange”, vanilla, and choc creme (did not like), and toffee etc. — I went back a week later (after checking two other Walmarts) and they were sold out. Sigh — I’d like to track them down.

Oh yeah, I *did* get my Hugo nomination form in on time, now to try to read some of the fiction nominees and fill out the ballot . . .

Joe — how did the publishing of your book work? Any “income” or “just” copies?

George Price gave me a small advance, and I get some author’s copies.

My sister’s idea of SF is Star Trek and Star Wars, she was truly shocked that I did not know all the stories in Star Wars, that I had not read the plethora of spun off SW books . . .

Rodney — **Smarties bars**? I kinda thought they were akin to M&Ms. Yes? No?

I renewed my driver’s license by mail. To do so, one had to have “approval” — I simply had my ophthalmologist fill it out, so I don’t know if an optometrist would do but it *did* require comments, from a vision specialist.

Just today I had the directions for the start-up procedure of the emergency generator photocopied large enough to read *very* easily (i.e., if the electricity is off and it’s dark . . . the fine print is self-defeating), then had Kinko’s laminate it. Now to try to start it up just for practice.

I’ve heard of Wikipedia — what does it actually stand for? Just curious.

I still wish Lloyd Daub would put out his own zine. I always enjoyed *The Prisoner*, although I never claimed to have *any* idea what was going on.

Hugo ballot — as far as fan writer is concerned, um, er — well no matter what I say, I’ll get in trouble, so personally I wish writers such as Sharon Farber were still around, writing. In Fanartist — sigh — Teddy didn’t do much (any?) fan art the past year. Brad is seen everywhere, but Sue Mason is everywhere “over there”, so that would not surprise me (but Frank Wu’s win last year *did* surprise me, so what do I know?).

Fanzine. . . hm, we’ll see.

Point of interest: *Emerald City* is not generally available on paper, but it *does* appear in the fanzine category and *again* in the website category. Isn’t that getting *two* shots at the Hugo for the identical product? Just an observation. Regardless, the results from an European Worldcon *should* have a unique flavor — we’ll see.

Makes one wonder what the

Japanese Worldcon will be like.

— JTM

From: **Jason K. Burnett** June 28, 2005  
4903 Camden Avenue North,  
Minneapolis, MN 55430-3544 USA  
[BritHistorian@aol.com](mailto:BritHistorian@aol.com)  
<http://www.livejournal.com/~brithistorian>

It was a great pleasure to find the June *Alexiad* in my mailbox. While it wasn't the first zine I received at my new address (that honor goes to the latest *Banana Wings*), it was the first which was actually addressed to me at the new address (the *BW* having been forwarded from Louisiana), so that's a significant first too.

After seeing the Mundane SF movement mentioned, I went to their website today and read their manifesto. The more I think about it, the more I think they're missing the point. By eliminating anything which is not felt to be possible my today's science, they are, first and foremost, eliminating the "sensawunda" from science fiction, and, secondly, they are shackling the minds of the authors, keeping them from dreaming beyond the bounds of today's knowledge. This is just a bad thing. In the interest of trying to be fair to them, I even thought about the examples they presented of works which, even though they were not intentionally written in a Mundane manner, fit their ideas of Mundane SF: Things such as *Neuromancer*, *Blade Runner*, and most of Philip K. Dick's works. What I think they're failing to consider is that these works, in order to decide if they are mundane, have to be compared not to the state of science today, but to the state of science at the time that they were written. Based on that standard, I think they're all pretty radical. I think the Mundane SF movement is just an attempt to reconstruct science fiction into what they think it should be to suit their ideology.

I presume they mean Ridley Scott's movie and not Alan E. Nourse's novel *The Blade Runner*. The most interesting review of the movie was the one in *Commentary* (August, 1982), which pointed up the Christian symbolism in, for example, Batty's last fight with Deckard.

I greatly enjoyed Joseph's write-up on *The Prisoner*. Even though I had, of course, heard of the series, I am far too young to have seen it in its original airing, and have never gotten around to seeing it in recordings or reruns. Your summary has sufficiently intrigued me that now I'm going to have to seek it out.

The book reviews were, as always, excellent. I think it's a very good thing for my pocketbook and my bookshelves that *Alexiad* doesn't come out more often. Next time I make it out to the post office, I'm going to send you a copy of *Rain Storm* by Barry Eisler — I haven't read it yet, but I just got two copies free and I think you'd enjoy it. At any rate, it seems like it would be your sort of book, and I hope I'm not

inflicting a clunker on you.

Thanks for passing it along. As for the other, we'll see when it gets here. It can't be any worse than *Curse of the Vampire*.

— JTM

From: **John Hertz** June 24, 2005  
236 S. Coronado Street, No. 409, Los Angeles, CA 90057-1456 USA

Thanks for *Alexiad* 4/3. Twenty-five years has shown that being dangerous, or not being dangerous, is no better guaranty of good writing than being sexy, or patriotic, or melancholy, or Uzbeki.

Re-reading D. Dunnitt's *Checkmate* (1975, Warner Books printing 1994), I find "Proofreading is to typography what the soul is to the body of man", p. 180, six lines after someone put "aesthetic" for "ascetic".

The "Murphy's Rules" column of implausible, unrealistic, or absurd rules in wargames described the same error in a D&D™ rulebook.

— JTM

I don't think money or anything has killed SF yet. Complacency is a worse villain. So is preaching.

From: **Martin Morse Wooster** June 27, 2005  
Post Office Box 8093, Silver Spring, MD 20907-8093  
[mmwooster@yahoo.com](mailto:mmwooster@yahoo.com)

Many thanks for *Alexiad* 21.

Thank you for the kind words about my father's passing. My father didn't exactly write a paper with Robert Heinlein. In 1961, my father was with the Air Force Office of Scientific Research, where he was in charge of grants to information science. He wrote Heinlein asking him whether or not "xenobiology" or "exobiology" was the preferred term. Heinlein wrote back (he preferred "xenobiology") and my father wrote a letter to *Science*, which offered a preface and conclusion to Heinlein's letter. The jointly published letter appeared in June 1961. For some reason, this publication has never appeared in Heinlein bibliographies, even though it is a published Heinlein letter. My guess is that Heinlein responded because he was impressed with being asked for expertise by an official with the Air Force.

I hate to disappoint Rodney Leighton, but I am not the "M.W." who wrote a letter to "The Playboy Advisor". *Playboy* did reprint two paragraphs of an article I wrote for *Reason* in 1986 denouncing the Reagan Administration's war on pornography. This led to an assignment from *Playboy*, which I subsequently had to turn down because I had gone to work for the *Wilson Quarterly* and couldn't do outside work for a while. I will confess that I haven't read *Playboy* since I stopped being able to get free samples from Publisher's Clearing House. (I confess

that one of my proudest achievements is being taken off the Publisher's Clearing House mailing list after they realized that I wasn't going to buy anything from them.)

Lloyd Penney brings up a problem: how are we going to find new authors we would like to read? We often get in ruts, after all. One strategy I am trying is taking books at the freebie section of the coffee shop in the university library where I do a lot of research. I've got a Walter Jon Williams novel that I'd like to try at some point that I got that way. Prozines are also a good source of ideas, since authors you like at shorter lengths might be interesting novelists. I am a fitful reader of *Asimov's*, a magazine too dark and gloomy for me. But the issues I've read convince me that Allen Steele might be worth reading.

I think Allen Steele is well worth reading.

— LTM

Sometimes I just go into the SF&F section of the bookstore and pick a writer or two that I don't know about. I have read a lot of lousy fantasy this way.

— JTM

Milt Steens raises the notion of the G. M. Carr Theory of Egoboo, which makes sense to me — as long as you correct all errors of fact that are out there about you. (Opinions you should ignore.) But why did Carr's fanzine theories cause her to have her head stuck in an elevator door? Was she mixing a particularly toxic batch of hekto jelly that exploded? Does the answer to this question in any way involve Ted White? Fan historians demand to know.

From: **Dainis Bisenieks** June 19, 2005  
921 S. St. Bernard Street, Philadelphia, PA 19143-3310 USA

What with all the talk about them, I actually watched those three horse races on the boob tube. There's always a first time. . . That runaway victory at the Belmont kinda makes me wonder about the other horses.

There's pulp fiction, and then there's *pulp* fiction. I think now that the difference appears in the attitude I take to errors in the text. Do I want to spare the reader, or do I want *not* to spare the author? In either case, I do fix ordinary copy-editing errors, typos, and misleading punctuation as a matter of course. Here the reader is served. I have written elsewhere about the errors in Mervyn Peake's novels, vulpine for lupine, martin for marten; I do not regard them as immutable and sacrosanct in the way that Piggy's eyeglasses or the rising new moon at Weathertop are. (Should a translator translate the *wrong* word, I have asked.)

But at least some pieces of pulp writing seem to be presented as clinical specimens. They *do* invite comparison with what we have on the small or large screen today: how are they worse than the car chases and fiery explosions

we have today? Their like, in fact, appears, but confined to words on a page. The formula is to get the hero into one tight spot after another, to be made captive and to escape, to make last-minute rescues. Of the three heroes of their own magazines that I worked with recently, Secret Agent X, Phantom Detective, and Operator # 5, the stories of the last-named are by far the worst. His specialty in opponents is global conspiratorial organizations and empires beat on world conquest, never mind, that we've actually had perfectly genuine specimens of both. Indeed the behavior of the leaders and troops of the invading Purple Empire has nothing on what the Nazis and the Soviets did in Poland not many years after those stories were published. The only difference is that the real-life conquerors weren't so damn theatrical. Banality of evil, you know . . .

But you know Secret Agent Brass Bancroft defeated the Evil Empire. (Ronald Reagan played Brass Bancroft in four B movies in the thirties.)  
<http://www.imdb.com/name/nm0001654/>

Be that as it may, we have in a conquered America a dam, 500 feet high, across the Ohio near Pittsburgh . . . and the conclusion is inescapable that in the universe of the story the Ohio flows east. Alongside this, the unrealistic height of the dam is but a trifle; and the numerate reader may get a giggle out of the statement that it holds back six million gallons of water.

Expressed in acre-feet, that's eighteen and a bit. Nothing should be done to spoil the reader's delight!

By contrast, J. Allan Dunn, in his tales of piracy ancient and modern, is a good pulp writer. He writes well and sets the scene very nicely throughout. To be sure, all the tropes of this sort of fiction are there — captivity, escape, rescue. Peril follows peril. The characters are a good grade of cardboard. So, I was rather sorry when I found waning moons becoming visible at sunset. Alas, a fix is decidedly not called for — regardless of whether other scenes are moonlit. This sort of tinkering is Not Done.

I confess that in one of the awful pulps I did change "galvanometer" to "electroscope", recognizable as such from a description earlier and being in fact a primitive means of detecting ionizing radiation. (This was in 1938, when pitchblende was considered an ore of radium.) Shall one or two readers be allowed to say "Aha!?" Better, in this one case, than "Huh?"

As we know, your typical god-in-a-dirty-bathrobe was prone to anachronism. What would Caribbean pirates in 1640 know of carronades? Answer: nothing, as they were developed in the 1780s. How pleasant it is to know this, or to know where in one's own library one can ascertain the details. For the date, I have *Fighting Sail*, a Time-Life coffee table book which is mainly about Nelson and his time. And I have David Howarth's *Voyage of the Armada*, in which is a table of the classes

of cannon of the earlier era, so that I know my saker from my culverin.

That wealth in the form of gold, silver, luxury goods or the makings of them (pearls . . .) should figure in such stories is only to be expected. All such wealth is, of course, deemed as nothing beside the survival of loved ones. Even so, the desire for power, for wealth, for luxury (\$5000 shower curtains) figures largely in such stories. How . . . mundane! I recall vividly the moment when I came to the crystal-clear realization that luxury-goods-as-wealth had no place in science fiction. It was back when I was reading slushpile for George Scithers. In this story there were gems being smuggled inside a "pig" (if that's the word for it) passing through an oil pipeline. "Claptrap!" I exclaimed. That was the point past which I needed to see no more of the story.

It does not require science fiction to point out that the inability to cast aside such wealth can be fatal. One reads now and then of shipwrecks in which people went straight to the bottom weighted down by the gold in their money belts.

On hand are a couple of short novels by Talbot Mundy from magazines of the early 1920s, with Jimgrim and his friend and chronicler Ramsden. I may have more to say about these another time; my present thought is that Jimgrim has more than a little in common with E.R. Eddison's heroes. "'Thou fallest all of a holiday mood,' said Juss, 'at the first scenting of this great hazard.'" And Lessingham somewhere says, "I must have action." I am reminded, indeed, of Miles Vorkosigan, whose eyes went all bright when the call of duty interrupted a pleasure voyage in *Diplomatic Immunity*. But at least Jimgrim and Miles exercise their skills in allaying trouble lest it erupt into violence, while Eddison's heroes aren't happy unless they're measuring themselves against worthy opponents, without whom their occupation would be gone.

I never read Mundy until about twenty years ago, when a copy of *Tros of Samothrace* came my way.

About history coming out the exact same way, we just have to accept it as a convention of fiction other than explicitly Alternate History — in which, most usually, natural events take a different turn somewhere. On any realistic assessment: how much does it take to perturb a gamete, of any organism whatsoever? Before long, the divergence between time lines would be visible (to the All-seeing) in gross motions, and their populations would be totally different, and all bets would be off. In the case of mundane fictions, we don't trouble our minds with such speculations; but, now, would we have a world like ours if there *really were* vampires? It would be a whole another world from *Pithecvampyrus* on down.

Do we ever wonder (as I've noted before) why fantasy worlds should have, though with additions, perfectly normal fauna and flora in a Swiss Family Robinson mix, and a perfectly normal Moon to boot?

Vaguely a propos of this, the Nones in Pratchett's "Bromeliad" are not really miniature

people (like the Borrowers) but sort of Pillsbury Doughpeople or little Michelin Tire Persons. But after this has been pointed out, we can largely ignore it.

"Etherized" as in patient upon a table?? I have long been of the opinion that the merit of canonical literary works, in especial quotable poems, is beside the point. We don't have to like them or admire them; their only function is to give us a shared language of allusion.

And other sources there are in plenty: Stengelisms, Goldwynisms, Runyonisms, Marxisms (which in reality we owe to the scriptwriters), and so on.

SF titles: who wrote "Black Friar of the Flame"? Not Jay Omega . . .  
 P.S. Spell **Howard** Alan Treesong.

F - I - M - F - L - E. "Fimfle".

— JTM

From: **Milt Stevens** June 30, 2005  
 6325 Keystone Street, Simi Valley, CA  
 93063-3834 USA  
[miltstevens@earthlink.net](mailto:miltstevens@earthlink.net)

I enjoyed the TV show *The Prisoner* when it was on, and I enjoyed Joseph's summary of the show in *Alexiad* V4#3. As I recall, *The Prisoner* was discussed more in fanzines when it was being broadcast than the original *Star Trek* was when it first appeared. Everybody was trying to figure out what was going on in *The Prisoner*. If Number Two was secular power, then Number One must be God. Or something like that.

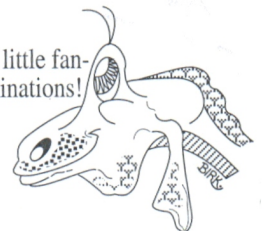
Of course, I have accepted one of the theories as to what was going on. If you notice (or even if you don't), all the doors in the Village close with a whoosh as if they are being closed pneumatically. When P escapes from the Village and gets back to his flat in London the door also closes with a whoosh. P never escapes from the Village. Or alternately, the whole world is the Village, and everybody has the problem of distinguishing appearances from reality.

Yes, I've seen that, too. Since the last scene in "Fall Out" is P whooshing along in his Lotus, same as the opening of "Arrival", there's also the theory that the whole thing was a daydream of his while driving.

— JTM

It does appear to be Hugo time again. I've read all the nominees except for the Bujold novella, so I might as well inflict my choices on a wider audience.

Yeah...I'm a good little fan-I sent in my Hugo nominations!



**Novel**

This was a better selection of novels than has appeared on the ballot in recent years. I only actively disliked one of them. The choice between third and fourth place was quite close. I finally decided the bad guys in *Iron Sunrise* were too evil to be taken seriously. The ending also seems contrived with long confessions to explain what has been going on. *The Algebraist* has something of the same problem with the bad guy, but in that novel it is limited to one sadistic lunatic which I can accept more easily. Banks does do info dumps, but I found them interesting, and I didn't have any problem with understanding what was going on.

1. *River of Gods* by Ian McDonald
2. *Jonathan Strange & Mr Norell* by Susanna Clarke
3. *The Algebraist* by Iain M. Banks
4. *Iron Sunrise* by Charles Stross
5. *Iron Council* by China Mieville

**Novella**

1. "The Concrete Jungle" by Charles Stross
2. "Elector" by Charles Stross
3. "Sergeant Chip" by Bradley Denton
4. "Time Ablaze" by Michael A. Burstein

**Novelette**

1. "The Clapping Hands of God" by Michael F. Flynn
2. "The Faery Handbag" by Kelly Link
3. "Biographical Notes to 'A Discourse on the Nature of Causality, with Air Planes' by Benjamin Rosenbaum" by F. Rosenbaum
4. "The Voluntary State" by Christopher Rowe
5. "The People of Sand and Slag" by Paolo Bacigalupi

**Short Story**

1. "The Best Christmas Ever" by James Patrick Kelly
2. "Shed Skin" by Robert J. Sawyer
3. "Decisions" by Michael A Burstein
4. "A Princess of Earth" by Mike Resnick
5. "Travels With My Cats" by Mike Resnick

And now to see what actually wins.

From: **Trinlay Khadro** June 25, 2005  
Post Office Box 240934, Brown Deer,  
WI 53224-0934 USA  
[trinlay63@wi.rr.com](mailto:trinlay63@wi.rr.com)

Locally, the Humane Society will allow pets to be gifted from them, usually via gift certificate to assist the match making. I think they'll also allow one to pick up a pet to be gifted to a family member under certain circumstances.

Gee whiz — what's the point of "Mundane" SF . . . how dreary. Though I gotta admit I wish I had some kind of fantastic drive sometimes. . . or a transporter.

Yesterday, on t.v. I caught *Kagemusha*, a movie I haven't seen in over twenty years. As far as I can tell, it's a fantasy that's very much set in real history. I can't tell how much is history and how much is "just story telling"

since I know almost nothing about Takeda Shingen. Many of the principal actors looked quite a bit like younger versions of portraits I've seen of the personages. I think I'd forgotten how delightful Oda Nobunaga is for costumers (we get to mix European Renaissance with Japanese — nifty!). As you can tell I like this sort of thing. I don't see many movies anyway, even on t.v.

I've only seen a few episodes of *The Prisoner*, usually while visiting, so I enjoyed the episode guide.

Re: *Hadrian the Seventh* — modern forensics, using what we now know about psychology, etc., have concluded that "Little Hugh" was in all likelihood killed by his own father, who post mortem planted "evidence" that drew attention away from himself. The result is that Hugh's father is responsible for many more murders over history. Perhaps he ought to be the patron saint of abused children . . .

Meiji always had his hands full anyway. I don't think any reigning Emperor has ever left Japan — but it's a "impending storm" day so my memory sucks today.

Showa left Japan on several occasions — I have seen a picture of him with Mickey Mouse — and I believe the current Tenno has also gone on state visits.

Apparently *Hadrian the Seventh* is a "Mary Sue"? :-)

We went this week, with friends, to see *Batman Begins*; it really does the original justice. One of the things I've always liked about Batman is that he works with law enforcement. The most moving few panels in comic history brought tears to my eyes on the screen . . . even knowing it's comign.

I've just finished book three of Liam Hearn's *Otani* series. It's obviously a "fantasy", set in medieval Japan and done quite nicely with an interesting main character who gives us a broad view of three different "lifestyles" of the period. No major character seems to be standing in for anyone historical and it falls together in a realistic way. He never comes right out and calls the fantasy nation "Japan" but it obviously is. (A good way to do a fantasy about a real place and culture that isn't your own is to put it on another planet or to only hint at where it is supposed to be . . . OR to clearly identify it as fantasy fiction.)

Currently I'm reading *Samurai William* by Giles Milton (non-fiction), which I'm enjoying. William Adams's logs give us a view of Ieyasu as a person which I really enjoy. The author also shows us the errors in picking goods the Dutch and English made. They made several trips to Japan with products that didn't interest the market (Wool? Nah . . . we want SILK). Adams himself comes across as quite a character.

Are you the one who sent me the link to the Cthulhu comic "Who Will Be Eaten First?"

Iä! Iä! Shub-Niggurah! The Great Black Goat of the Woods

with a Thousand Young says no.

Re: *Collapse* — does Diamond also address the restrictions on travel and how common abortion and infanticide were throughout Japanese history? (Japan's population remained about the same from the beginning to the end of the Tokugawa era.) Everything in the world has a trade-off, and it gets more graphic when a population is restricted to an island or group of islands.

Sorry to hear about your automotive trouble, but glad to hear you had a good visit with elderly relatives.

As for **Piteous Mews™**, Megumi-hime scolds us ("How could you!? I was WORRIED!") if we are out "too late". She was definitely happy to see us when we returned from WisCon . . . and covered us in snuggles, kisses, and purrs. She's such a Good Kitty.

Aflect Alex as cancer-fund spokesperson? Tell us more!

Alex's owners lost a child to cancer. Before she died, the girl started lemonade stands to raise money for research. The stands are still going strong, especially wherever Alex and his stablemates run. I believe ten percent of Alex's earnings go to the cancer group.

— LTM

Johnny C — Thanks for the candy bar reviews, but they're making me fat(ter). :-)

E.B. re *Rise and Fall of Disbelief* — I think that religions evolve and react, as in individuals, cultures also have varying levels of faith, interest/lack of interest, sometimes in conjunction with political or social trends rising and falling. Individuals become more active faith-wise in crisis . . . it's just the way humans are ("There are no atheists in a foxhole . . ."). I find I've felt disturbed over quite a long while seeing fundamentalism/fanaticism on the rise across the world . . . it is not just Christianity and Islam showing that trend . . .

Rodney L. — I owe you a letter, but I'm a bit behind on correspondence. Thanks for the ish of *Media Whore* — I don't know yet if I'll drop them a line.

John Thiel — "Computers NOT the devil himself?" Have you ever had yours crash irreparably? I find I'm way too dependent on the net and email and the word processor.

Cuyler — KT's doctor regularly does a needle stick of a finger tip for a blood test. More extensive tests take a bigger specimen via the arm. When testing for fibro they took about six little test tubes of blood (well, more like testing for everything else . . .).

EB — are you taking CQ10+ or fish oil capsules? The combination brought my cholesterol count down significantly in slightly less than a month . . . then again I tend to watch what I eat, too.

I don't know what's up with French gerbils, aren't gerbils native to Mongolia? :-)

I still haven't gotten around to seeing *Revenge of the Sith*. KT went to see it with



friends and said it's good (not great) and has a few large plot holes "You could taxi a 757 through them." (Apparently living as a hermit in the desert has affected Obi-Wan's memory.)

My cousin's battle with cancer seems to be going well. We get letters from her occasionally.

I think I should expand a bit on my amazement at your wide range of relatives. I kinda know most of my first cousins (one has cut off contact with the family since the mid-seventies), kinda sorta know some second cousins. Grandparents and Great-Aunts and Uncles all passed away within the last twenty years and I knew many but not all of them. I don't think I could even recognize any third cousins as if I've ever met them it was only one or two times my whole life; probably at a wedding or funeral. So for you to know a fifth cousin two times removed amazes me. I think I'd have to go overseas to find such a relative.

Well, I did — Nancy Wittchell Langhorne Astor, who lived overseas. But I now am in touch with all my first cousins. Saw a second cousin in Hopkinsville Fourth of July weekend, told him the story about our great-grandmother and what she said as she was dying. Also saw a third cousin, who was one of the guys I played with in second and third grade. But Hopkinsville is full of my relatives.

— JTM

As for Shakespeare leaving the majority of his property to his daughter, this may not have been unusual. William Adams's will splits property between the family in England and the family in Japan. With the wife and daughter in England he also leaves the majority to his child saying "The wife may remarry and carry the property away . . ." How old was the wife at this point and how likely remarriage would have been is a mystery to me.

The origami cranes at WisCon were all bought by the same person. I wonder if they're to be a mobile or were gifted to friends. The dragons also sold well as did a couple of journals. I'm sending more dragons and some fannish scarves to CONvergence by way of some friends. Other cons may see my work as well, if I know a Milwaukee fan going there. Windycon may also have works of KT in various roles done by Milwaukee Fan and illustrator Dave Martin.

Newswise I've had a few rough days here and there but basically OK. I've actually been able to do quite a bit of fannish things, with care, like going to WisCon, as well as local things — weekly social evening, animé, the monthly APA collation and pool-party.

I'm hopeful of making it to more cons in the future but money is tight. (Griffendor, Slytherin, and other Harry Potter scarves as well as Dr. Who are available, as well as origami and other knitted goods.)

The filk lovers among us would probably

enjoy:

<http://www.moosebutter.com>

Their *Star Wars* and *Harry Potter* songs are free downloads and the other songs are also a hoot. *Ghost Chickens in the Sky* and *Organic Vegetable Man* cracked me up. "A chicken may haunt you but tofu never will . . ."

We were having a bit of a drought, but the last three evenings and nights we've had substantial rain.

Robert Kennedy — we like to use the closed captioning on certain shows as we often quite can't catch a line here or a line there . . . It's particularly helpful if we're watching with uncle who'll interrupt to say "What did they say?" So we can tell him AND not miss the next line or two.

From: **Rodney Leighton** June 26, 2005  
11 Branch Road, R. R. #3,  
Tatmagouche, Nova Scotia B0K 1V0  
CANADA

Ordinarily I would be at work now. But, hell, it was already 70 when I got up an hour ago; yesterday it was 94 on the glass. Too hot for slashing trees. Decided to stay home and write a few letters; drag out the lawnmower after awhile and cut some of the grass and the tiller. Haven't planted any garden yet; it was too cold and wet earlier and what with this and that. Younger sister called the other night and said: "If it doesn't give you any pleasure I wouldn't plant anything." But I have the seed and, well, it's sort of a habit.

Anyway, I think I can go out and do a bit and then come in and read. Read, yes. The latest *Mira* book, which is actually one I've had quite awhile, is *The Baby Farm* by Karen Harper and is set in Lowe County, Kentucky, up in the hills, don't ya know? I'm halfway through. It's quite good although it does have that idiotic "strong woman meets guy and they despise each other but then start to fall in love and strong woman begins to allow guy all sorts of liberties" plot which runs through a lot of these novels. NO sex scene yet but I suspect it's close. Her *Dark Angel* came in the package last month and is a great mystery with no sex scenes and not even that silly stuff; the romance is there but it seems more real. Kind of like a Western where the guy marries the gal at the end.

Thanks for the latest *Alexiad* which arrived someday last week. It's too bad that Lillian is having financial problems although it is not all surprising given his publishing habits and what used to be his distribution habits. Of course, he took me off the *Challenger* mailing list long before I requested he do so.

Thanks for the info on Ms. Hoffman.

I don't think names really indicate gender in a lot of cases. I don't suppose there are any women named Joseph but using Jo would certainly make people think you were female. I get these *Mira* books under my own name and the people there seem to believe I am female. I have one of those novels which has the name Curtiss Ann Matlock. All these books are female written. But Curtiss? I have a neighbour

named Curtiss. (His wife is hot as hell!) Looking at the photo of this Curtiss, I discover she appears fairly hot; the epitome of the stereotypical Southern belle.

I have two cousins named "Madison Major". They go to the same doctor. When either goes, the clerk getting the records says to the receptionist, "Boy Madison or Girl Madison?" And they are both descended from my great-great-grandfather, Madison Sims Major. I've sometimes joked about their getting married to each other.

Well, the clothes are washed. Gonna stick them on the line outside, although it looks like thundershowers might appear.

Hoo, lots of blackflies!

I know Stephen George. I once knew a guy named George Steven. And it used to amuse me sometimes; I would occasionally write to my friend Lyn McConchie, whose name is actually, I believe, Elizabeth, and then go see my parents and talk some to my father whose name was Lynfield but who was known by most people in Amherst as Lyn

Have you read *Holy Blood, Holy Grail*? Probably reviewed it at some point. What a boring book. I haven't abandoned it yet, but I don't know how much more of it I can endure.

Yes, I have read it. What shows up Baigent, Lincoln, and Leigh is that one of Pierre Plantard's associates was a forger who planted the whole Merovingian ancestry file in the French archives. He was as phony as Michel "Prince Michael of Albany" Lafosse.

Ah, but nothing freezes here in November. It's muck and more muck. I recall a few years ago seeing one guy trying to harvest corn with three tractors hooked together. Besides that, all the feed value is gone if it does freeze.

I can understand how Lisa feels. As you have probably noticed, I get worked up over this thing and that as well.

At some point recently I received a copy of a zine from Memphis which is all artwork by some guy I have never heard of. They are blatantly promoting this chap for a fan artist Hugo and apparently don't know that I don't go to cons and can't afford to buy memberships just to vote for Hugo awards and besides Sheryl Birkhead would get my vote if I had one. Then, reading *Alexiad*, I looked over Johnny's list and your list, leaving me to wonder who and what you left off each list.

Toyed with an idea about an article suggesting it is time for a set of awards limited to paper fanzines and those people who actually participate in them. But I see the problems inherent in any such idea. And I don't have the energy to do it. Of course, all such things are personal opinions and a big problem would be

avoiding the clique voting (how many people outside Andy Hooper's circle ever see a FAAN ballot, much less an award?) and also people would vote for their favorites based on what they receive.

My fanzine nominations would be 5. *FOSFAX*; 4. *Alexiad*; 3. *Visions of Paradise*; 2. *Plokta*; 1. *The Knarley Knews*. Only one matches your list. Best Fan Artist; I happen to think pros should be in a separate category or something, which would eliminate Brad and Steve Stiles and let them win another award and give fan artist awards to true fan artists like Sheryl, Sue Mason, Trinlay Khadro, like that. And there ain't anyone on your list for best fan writer who would be on mine other than Claire, who would be near the top if I still got *Banana Wings* but since I don't. In my article I was going to call for separate categories for letterhacks and writers. Best letterhack is clearly Milt Stevens. I guess I will refrain from listing my best writer nominees; you would be in the middle.

It wasn't "my" list, the nominees were out by then. I had some people to nominate, many of them on your list. As for the other, since I've never been to Corflu — they didn't seem to want people like me — I can't seem to get on the FAAN list. Why bother?

— JTM

Anyway, as you can see, letter writing is taking me some time to do and this will continue until winter, I imagine. Don't have the energy or ambition to battle with this machine after work. Locs, per se, are done with until winter.

From: **Lloyd Penney** July 8, 2005  
1706-24 Eva Road, Etobicoke, ON M9C  
2B2 CANADA  
[penneys@allstream.net](mailto:penneys@allstream.net)

Many thanks for *Alexiad* 21. Always welcome, and a daunting task to respond to because of its size and content. Today, I am up for the challenge, so here I go, giving it my best shot. Fire away!

The Toronto Human Society produces many programmes local channels show about how inhumane we can be to cats, dogs, and other animals we keep as pets. Neutering and spaying just doesn't seem to be enough; the Society offices are jampacked with animals, and some of them stay for years, even living out their remaining lives in cages, unwanted. The conflict about what your heart wants, and what your mind and wallet tell you, is so difficult, especially when you see those furry faces on television or in person, begging for something we assume for ourselves everyday, a home to go to.

Mundane SF . . . I think I've heard it all now. I remember some years ago people demanding more reality in their SF, and that it had to be scientifically accurate, not just feasible. I've always enjoyed fiction that added a little fantastical science; it also added

imagination and a little wonder to see where the author took this little extrapolation, or flight of fantasy. I believe the realistic science fiction these people want would remove much of the imagination we've always liked about SF. If you want total reality, read thrillers or general fiction. Leave us fiction we can wonder at as we read!

All hail Prince Albert II of Monaco, who I believe just a few days ago, announced that somewhere, he has an illegitimate child. Don't know who the mother is, but already, good old Al looks just like one of the Monacans.

I did not see *The Prisoner* in its original run, but I do remember watching episodes, and I expect they were shown out of sequence, as many television channels at the time were content to have something to fill time; they didn't care about things like order and telling a complete story. Not that *The Prisoner* had a concrete story to tell in the first place. If McGooohan rejects the idea that P is John Drake from Secret Agent, he never gave firm proof or at least a convincing argument. I did watch it, and remember usually being confused, but intrigued enough to try to figure it out.

The sainthood of John Paul II is in the distance, but is becoming visible, with his successor putting him on the beatification fasttrack. John Paul created more saints than any other Pope in history; perhaps it is only fitting he become one himself. Toronto has a large Polish community, and I often take the streetcar through that area on my way to and from work. This is a golden statue of John Paul II, and his death brought such a flood of grief, and a flood of flowers and candles by his statue. He was in Canada often, and visited Toronto several times.

I notice that few convention these days plan fanzine panels, and when they do, they are scheduled against major events, almost as if they feel those fanzine fans are so different, they couldn't possibly be interested in things like meeting the authors, or doing anything else at a con except hole up in a room and talk fanzines . . . how little they know us. Or do they?

**Yes, I remember how TorCon put two fanzine panels opposite each other — and the opening ceremonies! InConJunction in Indianapolis (two hours drive from Louisville), for example, didn't even have any fanzine program items.**

Rod Leighton's got me . . . I often spell Bill Kunkel's lastname as Kunkle. Well, I see Penny a lot, so I sympathize with you, Bill. Mea culpa, and I will try to do better.

Taral sums up the whole Torcon thing rather well. There were problems stemming from an over-restrictive attitude on the part of the senior committee (they handed out official written reprimands if anyone dared showed any initiative), and anyone with experience was quickly turfed out. There were some people who did great jobs at Torcon, and it's a shame their achievements were overshadowed by the general malaise of the convention itself. Montréal has been given a fine example of what not to do, and

I hope they've learned from it.

E.B. Frohvet reminds us all that in a few years, getting into the US from elsewhere will be extremely difficult, even for American citizens. Last time I crossed the border, it was a couple of months ago going to the annual convention in Niagara Falls, NY. I don't need a passport to cross (yet), but I had mine with me anyway, plus a copy of the convention flyer, and my printed hotel confirmation sheet. We got through in less than 15 seconds. The fact that the convention hotel is the first tall building on the left as you cross the Rainbow Bridge also helped.

When we went to Canada for the second time, we had a much harder time getting into Canada than we did getting back into the United States. Joe had to explain the concept of science fiction convention several times and that we did not want to immigrate, just spend money in Canada for several days.

— LTM

My cousin Marcia, who lived in Texas then, went on a day tour into Mexico once. She brought along her birth certificate, that being all most people needed to get back into the country then. However, Marcia's father Dick was a world-wide consulting engineer and Marcia had been born overseas. In Iraq. And this was during the First Gulf War. After surviving the INS, Marcia got a passport. When we went to Canada for TorCon, we made sure to have them too.

For Joy Smith . . . Travis Tea (read as "travesty") is, according to the official website, a pseudonym for a group of science fiction and fantasy authors who were amused by specialty publisher PublishAmerica's claim that those authors were "writers who erroneously believe that SciFi, because it is set in a distant future, does not require believable storylines, or that Fantasy, because it is set in conditions that have never existed, does not need believable every-day characters."

The book that was written, *Atlanta Nights*, was designed to be as bad a book as could be written, and PublishAmerica published it, despite their claims that they are a traditional publisher in that they would closely scrutinize each submission for quality. This was the literary community's version of a sting operation, and PublishAmerica got stung.

Google up Travis Tea, and see the fuss over all of this. Albacon in Albany, NY has Travis Tea as a GoH; no doubt some authors behind the pseudonym will detail their work towards the creation of *Atlanta Nights*. I do know that some of the book was actually computer-generated, and the editors didn't catch that. I think Lisa has written about this earlier.

Joe has written about the literary sting. I have written an article about PublishAmerica in which I detailed what I consider its faults.

— LTM

Trinlay, I'm at second-hand bookstores quite regularly. I find very little there, and many of them are shutting down because of lack of business. Big box book stores are replacing them, but it's usually the giftware and coffee that brings people in, rather than the books themselves.

Rod Leighton is finding out, as do some of us, that there is a small, elitist group in fanzine fandom for whom we are not the right people. I participate in fanzine fandom as best as I can, but I cannot publish the zines I might like to, or go to the conventions I might like to go to; money and time do not allow for it. I do not have the experiences others might have, or just different experiences. I do what I can for other fanzines, and I enjoy the fact that I can write to contribute. I'm not expecting a big, happy family, but fanzine fandom, perhaps more than most other areas of fandom, tends to eat its young, and we then bemoan our fate, not learning from our mistakes.

Rich Dengrove is only too right about an incoherent world . . . 9/11, the train bombs in Madrid and now London . . . We need more than ever some community in our communications, but blogs are difficult to find, and as you say, they have a heightened level of ephemerality (is that a word? should be, and the spellchecker seems to like it). Add to that most bloggers use a pseudonym in their blog entries, and the whole process of blogging seems almost anonymous. We don't know who said what when, and even if we could figure it out, the blog itself is a needle lost somewhere in the enormous haystack of the Web. (If only the Nigerian spam could be lost in similar fashion. I've received so many offers to retrieve large sums of money from arcane African banks, I should be a trillionaire by now.)

I'm not getting the "Dude, where's my money!" emails. I feel neglected. Left out.

— JTM

It's Friday, at the leading edge of what promises to be a hectic weekend. One of the big local cons, Toronto Trek, starts on the 15th, and there are various cons and other things we're helping to promote, so we've got to start getting things ready now. Writing locs has become a relaxation, compared to other things I could be doing. Take care, and see you next issue.

From: **John Thiel** July 11, 2005  
30 N. 19th Street, Lafayette, IN 47904-2950 USA  
[thiel@dwci.com](mailto:thiel@dwci.com)

With reference to your question in the letter column of issue #21, I got a SoBig and a MyDoom on my computer, both reported to me and taken care of by Norton AntiVirus; neither

to my knowledge was in the Trojan Horse category, and it is my opinion that neither could stand up to one.

The e-mail on the back cover is pretty much like the e-mail I receive from nameless sources — the same banked money, humility, business suggestions and foreign affiliations. I wonder how many receive this sort of "URGENT REQUEST"? I get up to ten of them a day sometimes. They all seem to have the same ideas. Does anyone have a clue what it's supposed to represent?

The Third Annual Nigerian Email Conference has some answers:  
<http://j-walk.com/other/conf/>

— JTM

From: **Robert S. Kennedy** July 15, 2005  
1779 Ciprian Avenue, Camarillo, CA 93010-2451 USA  
[robertk@cipcug.org](mailto:robertk@cipcug.org)

Thank you for Vol. 4, No. 3

I finally read *Heaven* by Ian Stewart and Jack Cohen. Enjoyed it immensely. On page 101 they say: "...anything not mandatory had been forbidden." This could have come straight out of the *Illuminatus!* trilogy by Robert Shea and Robert Anton Wilson. The commentary on "rights" (pp. 166-167) is excellent.

I rented and watched Hayao Miyazaki's *Castle in the Sky* again and enjoyed it just as much as the first time

I saw *Howl's Moving Castle*. It was rather disappointing in that it seemed to get lost toward the end. Not as good as Miyazaki's *Spirited Away* and *Castle in the Sky*. Also, watched *War of the Worlds*. It was disappointing too. On my scale of 1-5, I gave it a 3. When the invaders started rising out of the ground I said what's going on here? I'm not sure the movie ever knew where it was going. If others have different opinions about either or both movies, I would like to hear their comments.

For those who enjoyed Joe's review of *The Seven Daughters of Eve*, the book itself, and the use of DNA as depicted in that book and in genealogy, I have a book to recommend: *Trace Your Roots with DNA: Using Genetic Tests to Explore Your Family Tree* by Megan Smolenyak Smolenyk and Ann Turner (Rodale, 2004, ISBN: 1-59486-006-8, 272 pp., \$14.95). I found out about this book at a LDS Genealogy Seminar last year in Simi Valley.

Good site **Buzz Aldrin's Conspiracy Smackdown!**

Wasn't Bill Bowers one-half of the fanzine *DOUBLE:BILL*? Or, do I have him confused with someone else? I received that fanzine many years ago. What happened to my copies I don't know.

Yes, he was half of Double:Bill.

Excellent commentary on *The Prisoner*. *Xanadu 8/DeepSouthCon 43*: Concerning your problem with the early morning sunlight—When traveling I always take an eyeshade just in case there is that problem (or

too much light at night from the outside). Also, earplugs in case of noise.

Thanks for the HUGO recommendations and commentary (Johnny Carruthers too).

On Thursday, June 23, I drove to Ben Lomand, California for the 50<sup>th</sup> Wedding Anniversary of friends. Back home on Monday, June 27<sup>th</sup>. Stopped in Buellton at Andersen's famous Split-Pea Soup restaurant and shop to purchase some of their fine Tomato Soup. Stores here have their Split-Pea Soup, but not their Tomato Soup. Then, on Thursday, June 30, it was a tour trip to the King Tut Exhibit at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art. Very interesting even if we did have to stand in line for an hour before getting in which lost us an hour of looking. (We had tickets for 1:00 p.m., but didn't get in until 2:00 p.m.) Apparently, some 5,000 people go through the exhibit each day. On Friday, July 1, I woke up with a sore throat, by the evening my nose was running and I was sick.

By Isis and Osiris, the Curse of the Pharaohs strikes again! And Bast. Particularly Bast. \*MEOW\*

A few issues back I mentioned *Secrets of the Code: The Unauthorized Guide to the Mysteries Behind The Da Vinci Code* edited by Dan Burstein. Now he has a new book out, *Secrets of Angels & Demons: The Unauthorized Guide to the Bestselling Novel* (CDS Books, 2004). I recommend it for anyone interested in Dan Brown's novels. As one of the contributors, David A. Shugarts again does his masterful analysis.

I read *Into The Looking Glass* by John Ringo (2005). A good read. Now I have to obtain the latest book in "The Prince Roger Saga", *We Few*, that he wrote along with David Weber. It's out and I didn't know it. It looks like I can obtain it on interlibrary loan from a library in Santa Barbara County.

**Trinlay Khadro**: You may be right about arranged marriages; I've had the same thought a few times.

**Joseph T Major**: I'm trying to find *The Hidden Family* on Interlibrary Loan.

**Richard Dengrove**: Thanks for the site for Robert Richardson's Gnosis article. I've mentioned it previously, but I have his tract *The Unknown Treasure: The Priory of Sion Fraud and The Spiritual Treasure of Rennes le Chateau* (1998, NorthStar Publishing Group, 46 pages of very small type). It is mentioned at the end of the article to which you referred me.

**Taras Wolansky**: I've never walked out on a movie although there are several times that I should have. *Stargate* should have been one of them. Another should have been *Cyborg*. But, *Stargate SG-1* is excellent.

**Martin Helgesen**: Yes, the statement that "Words have gender, people have sex" obviously has a double meaning. I rather enjoy that. And, as Joe Says: "How can you deny words their right to sexual expression in their own fashion?" :-)

**Joe**: I've seen that E-mail before somewhere. Either in print or someone sent it to

me. (You?) My friends in Ben Lomand are Catholic and I told them about the e-mail and that I wasn't sure if it was a joke or for real. So, was it a joke or was it a real e-mail?

Yes.

— JTM

From: **Richard Dengrove** July 22, 2005  
2651 Arlington Drive, #302, Alexandria,  
VA 22306- USA  
[RichD22426@aol.com](mailto:RichD22426@aol.com)

Of course, I enjoyed *Alexiad*, June 2005. Here are some comments.

For one thing, the subject of religion raised its head in your issue. Or, in Professor McGrath's case, lack of religion, Atheism. I don't think he gets to the heart of the philosophy, though. People do not become Atheist because the Protestant Churches were not beautiful enough or because they are rebels against the established order.

People become Atheists because they take literally the assumption of the modern world that only seeing is believing. Most everyone else fakes it. How can you do anything but fake seeing God? We all die and horrible things can happen to us at any time. In addition, virtue is too often its own punishment. To believe these things aren't the case takes faith.

However, while we can't see God, we can see decent people. Even Atheists should love Hadrian the Seventh, in the novel of that name by "Baron Corvo." His orthodox Catholicism would not be all that attractive; but his tolerance, combined with that, would be.

That is finally why you gave the novel praise even though it is not written like a 21st Century book, is too Polyannish for our blood. And is imperialistic at all.

Magic is something different. Not only do we have to be Pollyannish about religion; in the modern world, we have to be Pollyannish about magic. The way people write about it, it would be a wonderful world if magic existed. Even the stodgy Victorian era could have been spruced up.

However, the Ancients knew that would not be so. They knew some people want to do evil things, and magic would give them unlimited power to do it. It is no wonder the Ancients enacted severe punishments for it.

Therefore, it is in Susanna Clarke's favor, in *Jonathan Strange & Mr Norrell*, that she hints that all wouldn't be well in a world of magic.

On the other hand, that modern magic, the internet, is slowly degenerating into trash. I agree with your comment to me that the blog and chat are ephemeral. However, they still should be coherent. What is the purpose in words no one can understand? What is the purpose in a layout that looks like a battlefield, and no one can understand? Yet, I have to admit that even writers who are clear on paper are completely oblique on net.

There is a certain "in-groupness" about writing, say, in 133+ ["leet"]. Like, d00dz, no one

who isn't kewl doesn't, like get it. Slang of one group seemes incomprehensible to outsiders. Which is, I suppose, a point in favor of the ephemerality of the Net; it won't stay around to embarrass its producers later.

— JTM

Then again, it is often the appearance that makes for magic. So I wouldn't worry about looking like your grandmother in your hospital gown. It's the gown that does it.

From: **Taras Wolansky** July 25, 2005  
100 Montgomery Street., #24-H, Jersey  
City, NJ 07302-3787 USA  
[twolansky@yahoo.com](mailto:twolansky@yahoo.com)

**Alexiad 4.3: "I had a good time at TorCon in spite of such things as the programming mixups."** Same here; I always had a good time at all the notoriously "troubled" worldcons.

The "Virginia Edition" of Heinlein's work reminds me of the *Vance Integral Edition*, the 44 volumes of which have been proofread by dozens of volunteers. The \$3000 deluxe edition is already sold out, but the \$1500 "readers' edition" is still available. (I'm putting in my order before they run out!) Also, certain subsets of the whole may be purchased separately.

One difference between the two is that Vance never wrote a bad book — while the "Virginia Edition" is opening with *I Will Fear No Evil!*

You didn't hear David M. Silver, the president of the Heinlein Society, proclaiming that that book was a masterpiece, did you?

"Harold Wooster, [late] father of Martin Morse Wooster . . . wrote papers with Robert Heinlein and was the Air Force officer in charge of such matters as the Dean Drive." Sounds like there is much more worth telling here.



Obviously, "The Village" in *The Prisoner* is a sanitarium. We're just seeing it through the eyes of someone suffering from paranoid schizophrenia. ("Many of the events in the Village have a dreamlike quality".) The people "Drake" calls "Number Two" -- how Freudian can you get — are the psychiatrists: they "want information". There may not actually be as many different individuals as "Drake" perceives.

Personally, I prefer *Secret Agent*, the beautifully made and grittily realistic espionage drama that preceded *The Prisoner*. This is the hour-long version of *Danger Man* shown in the U.S.; it is also available on DVD.

With its escapes and returns, *The Prisoner* had something in common with *Gilligan's Island!*

(Review of *Jonathan Strange & Mr Norrell*.) "Jane Austen, say, or Charles Dickens described a very detailed and intricate world . . . That it was as much of a creation as Zimiamvia or Amtor is less acknowledged." This is an exaggeration, to say the least. True, Dickens was notorious in his own time for his melodramatic (and tendentious) depiction of Victorian society; he is parodied as "Mr. Popular Sentiment" in Anthony Trollope's *The Warden*, for example.

But Austen was known in her own time for her realism. Reacting against the wildly absurd Gothic romances of the time, she sought to base everything on things she knew first-hand. Thus the narrow range of society depicted; though, judging from extant fragments, if she had lived she would have encompassed a wider scope: her increasing fame was exposing her to a wider range of people and situations to write about.

"And indeed for all its potential, magic seems to have made little difference in British history." It's a version of the usual problem of alternate history, that things should be very different, but that wouldn't be as much fun for the reader.

Hugo recommendations: Instead of leaving off certain nominees (and we both know who I mean), I merely put them below "no award". Of course, I don't publish my Hugo picks.

"... I looked like my own grandmother." True story: at a con, a rather noticeable individual came into view, and my first thought was: "Look at that Jewish grandmother in a red T-shirt!" My second thought was: "Oh! Harlan Ellison!"

**E.B. Frohvet:** (Review of *The Twilight of Atheism*) "a large part of the original motivation behind atheism was political rather than theological, e.g., Karl Marx." I think this puts the cart before the horse. Marx surfed the waves of materialism, providing an emotional substitute for religion.

In Henry Hazlitt's *Time Will Run Back*, the Communists actually say things like, "Dirty son of a Trotsky!" and otherwise treat the appurtenances of Marxism like religion. It filled a gap they had made. Which was why, say, the utter irreligiousness of the Pernese makes no sense.

— JTM

**Richard Dengrove:** During the occupation of parts of Columbia University in 1972, one of the radical occupiers was very perturbed when a couple of conservative students burned a North Vietnamese flag. When the chips were down, the New Left was not "pro-rebel", but anti-American. All enemies of America were its

*de facto* allies.

When I saw the Beatles impersonators who call themselves “The Fab Four” in Las Vegas, I noted that the only song they had to “put in context” was Lennon’s “Imagine”. Maybe some earlier audience had booted.

**Trinlay Khadro:** “if you put out a casting call for [minority] roles you’ll get plenty.” But actors aren’t interchangeable. If you limit yourself to, say, 10% of available talent, you’ve reduced your chance of getting the best actor in the pool by 90%. In the commentary on the *Wonderfalls* DVD, the producers describe how they cast the critical role of a young shoplifter. For reasons of racial sensitivity, they did *not* want to cast a minority actor in the role; but as it happened, the best actor who presented himself was a minority; so they hired him anyway.

**Rod Smith:** Recent accounts indicate that JFK had absolutely no interest in space travel, except as a propaganda weapon in the Cold War. While that is a creditable goal, it does explain why he was interested in “beating the Russians”, rather than in building a permanent infrastructure for manned space exploration.

**Bob Kennedy:** “Female voices”: when I watch *Buffy* I usually put on the English subtitles, so I don’t miss any of the clever dialogue. Sometimes other shows as well, especially if the room is noisy.

From: **Timothy Lane** July 29, 2005  
2265 Bradford Drive Louisville, KY  
40218-1559 USA

I rather enjoyed the article in Volume 4#3 on *The Prisoner*, that being one of my favorite weird shows. For example, if I ever visited Britain (not very likely, admittedly), Hotel Portmeirion is one place I’d definitely like to see. But I have a few observations of my own to add.

For one thing, there was a very practical reason for insisting that the Prisoner was **not** John Drake, it was pure coincidence that P looked and acted just like that famed secret agent. If P were really John Drake, then the makers of *Danger Man/Secret Agent* would be in a position to seek royalties. It’s interesting that in two late episodes (“The Girl Who Was Death” and “Once Upon a Time”) there are comments that seem to indicate that P in fact was Drake; perhaps by then they had decided that the legal concerns were insignificant for such a limited series, or perhaps they had quietly settled matters.

I remember hearing from Bruce Gardner the theory that Number Two in the litany says, “You are, Number Six.” However, in listening carefully to the episodes after that, I never heard any such pause.

Incidentally, in the middle of “Arrival”, the new Number Two, when P objects to being assigned a number, responds, “Six of one, half dozen of another.” Presumably this is the inspiration for the name of the fan club that runs the convention.

There are also a couple of interesting addenda to your discussion of the episode

“Checkmate”. For one thing, another previous example of the use of chess played with living pieces came in *The Man From UNCLE*, in “The Alexander the Greater Affair”. For another, in this show P’s own strengths work against him in the end. He points out that one can tell prisoners from hidden warders by their reactions if approached: the real prisoners show fear, the warders don’t. By that logic, P seems more like a warder than a prisoner — so his fellow would-be escapees ultimately don’t trust him.

Actually, the common idea that “The Chimes of Big Ben” locates the Village in Lithuania isn’t really accurate. P is **told** this, but since the rest of the story turns out to be false, there’s no reason to believe that particular part.

The English connection to *The Prisoner* doesn’t just involve the language, of course. The local newspaper is called *The Tally-Ho*. This clearly indicates that either the Village is run by English aristocrats who unconsciously used the name, or it’s run by someone who wants it to look that, or else they expect most of the prisoners to be English.

UNCLE running the Village is an interesting point, but I most note that Alexander Waverley is not shown as running the whole organization, merely the New York office. Of course, that may well be the main office, but I don’t believe it ever specified that.

I see a few comments on Intelligent Design, but I believe most of the readers are unaware of the actual beliefs of that theory. As best I can tell, Intelligent Design does **not** deny the reality of evolution; it merely disputes the mechanism. Nor does the theory say who the designer is, though I’m sure its adherents generally have the Christian God in mind. Thus, Grant’s fine exegesis on the eye can be considered a refutation of either creation or intelligent design by someone who is not only omnipotent but omniscient and omni-benevolent, but ID requires no such designer.

All this leads to an interesting situation. If indeed ID is the last refuge of the creationists, then the Darwinists have largely won: their opponents now concede the validity of evolution. On the other hand, this also means that most of the evidence they rely on is no longer relevant. We have proof that species can be changed by intelligent design because it actually happens in the real world, even before the advent of genetic engineering. I’m aware of no actual **proven** example of the creation of a new species (much less genus, family, order, class, or phylum) by small, random, unguided changes. So, if ID is not truly considered testable and thus not a valid scientific theory, then we must realize that the modern, Darwinian version of evolution is as yet unproven (unlike evolution in general).

From: **Martin Helgesen** July 31, 2005  
11 Lawrence Avenue, Malverne, New York 11565-1406 USA  
[mnhcc@cunyvm.cuny.edu](mailto:mnhcc@cunyvm.cuny.edu)

Lisa’s discussion of the problem of shelter animals being killed is an occasion to mention an item that appeared in July in This Is True, a

free e-mail newsletter of off-beat news items, which, incidentally, I recommend. There was an item about PETA killing large numbers of animals for which it had promised to find homes and illegally disposing of the bodies in dumps. The editor linked to a site that includes copies of PETA’s own filings with government agencies that said it killed 86.3 percent of the animals entrusted to its care. The item led to a lot of e-mail to the editor so he put some of it, and his own added comments, on his web site at <http://www.thisistrue.com/peta.html>. The page contains links to other sites. I did a little Googling while at the Reference Desk at work and found this additional site:

[http://www.consumerfreedom.com/news\\_detail.cfm/headline/2833](http://www.consumerfreedom.com/news_detail.cfm/headline/2833)

The mention of U.N.C.L.E. and THRUSH reminded me that David McDaniel (active in fandom as Ted Johnstone) wrote several of the U.N.C.L.E. novels. In them he said that THRUSH stood for the Technological Hierarchy for the Removal of Undesirables and the Subjugation of Humanity. I understand from other fans that he tried to say that Ilya must have been a member of the Communist Party because the Soviet Government would never let a Russian out of the country to work in that kind of organization who was not a Party member, but couldn’t get away with it.

**He was an officer of Naval GRU (referred to by the authors for simplicity's sake as "Soviet Naval Intelligence"): of course he would be a Party member.**

In E. B. Frohvet’s review of *The Twilight of Atheism* by Alister McGrath, which I have not read, he says, “However, McGrath — a self-styled failed atheist who has returned to Christianity — having concluded that atheism is a failure, is conveniently satisfied to ignore any reality that conflicts with his idea. The sexual abuse scandal of the last decade is not mentioned at all; it’s irrelevant to his premise.” That scandal, like all other scandals, is irrelevant. The truth of Christianity depends on the truth of two statements. One is that God exists. The other is that God became a man in Jesus Christ. If those statements were true when Jesus was walking around the Holy Land they are true forever and no actions of sinful Christians can change the past and make them false. Also, a basic teaching of Christianity is, “for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus” (Romans 3:23-24). Illustrating this doctrine, the Old Testament contains many accounts of people called by God who fell into serious sin: not just the chosen people as a group, whom the prophets frequently denounce, but individuals including David and Solomon. In the New Testament Judas betrayed Jesus, Peter denied Him, and the other Apostles ran away. In other words, the observed results are what one would expect on the basis of the doctrine. This is not usually considered a good

reason for rejecting a doctrine.

Also, there are similar sex abuse scandals in other churches and in public schools. I haven't seen numbers, but I've seen the claim that the pervert priest scandal has distracted public attention from a greater sex abuse scandal in the schools. Around the time that Mary Kay LeTourneau finally married the now grown boy she had seduced when he was 12 there was a rash of stories about married female teachers sexually using boys in their classes. (Whenever a story like that gets media coverage orthodox Catholics are likely to comment, "If only teachers could be married, if only women could be teachers, that would never happen," because people say silly things like that about priests when a priest molests young people.)

Alexis A. Gililand writes of me "admitting" that the accounts by Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John are necessarily incomplete, but "admit" is a loaded word. It implies that I would prefer that they hadn't written incomplete texts. While, naturally, I would like to know more about what Jesus did and said, from the point of view of an apologist the existing Gospels, with their different emphases and ordering of events, are solid evidence that the authors were writing independent accounts.

He says his letter "argued that a secular text of Jesus (based largely on the history of Josephus) might also be valid. Putting "Josephus Jesus" into Google produced this text among many similar ones:

Now there was about this time Jesus, a wise man, for he was a doer of wonders. He drew many after him When Pilate, at the suggestion of the principal men among us, had condemned him to the cross, those that loved him at the first did not forsake him, and the tribe of Christians, so named from him, are not extinct at this day (Antiquities 18:63-64).

(I have omitted the obvious Christian interpolations written centuries later, which were printed in all upper case.)

That's it. That's all Josephus wrote. It doesn't seem like much on which to base a secular text of Jesus.

Apparently, the Slavonic Josephus had a great deal more, according to my Penguin edition of *The Jewish Wars*.

I am fascinated by his remark about "the incorporation of the Gospels into Christian dogma". In fact, the dogmas grew out of the Gospels, the Epistles and other books of both the Old and New Testaments, and the traditions passed on by the bishops as the successors of the Apostles. The canon of the New Testament was settled by the regional councils of Carthage in 393 and Carthage in 397.

Alexis admits acknowledges that the Inquisition was instituted in the 13th Century but says, "but the Church has always had other means of enforcement, which it rarely hesitated

to use". What a marvelous statement, meaninglessly vague but ominous in what it hints at.

He says, "Thus, when the needs of the Church were in conflict with the facts of the life of Jesus, it was the historical facts that gave way to provide the well edited and ultra sanitized version that the Church had to have." Would there be any point in asking what the "historical facts" were and how he knows they are true?

Taras Wolansky writes of statements about James P. Hogan, "Or is it one of those "guilt by distant association" deals; e.g. Planned Parenthood publishing Nazi eugenicists back in the 1930s?" But Margaret Sanger was a eugenic racist herself. She did not merely consort with them. See, for example,

<http://blackgenocide.org/sanger.html>  
<http://blackgenocide.org/negro.html>  
[http://www.spectator.org/dsp\\_article.asp?art\\_id=6738](http://www.spectator.org/dsp_article.asp?art_id=6738)



I wrote that I watched the first Star Trek episode but missed the rest of the season because I had to attend Army Reserve meetings on that day. That's what comes from writing at the last minute. I did miss all but the first episode of the first season, but that could not have been the reason. I checked and the year it premiered was after I had been discharged. Some other commitment that day of the week kept me from watching.

That fake Nigerian Scan spam claiming to come from the widow of Pope John Paul II is funny, but if I had received it without a warning that it was a joke I would never have read enough of it to see that it was a joke. As soon as I had read the beginning, which looked like a real Nigerian Spam, I would have forwarded it to the Treasury's Nigerian Scam office at [419.fcd@ussstreas.gov](mailto:419.fcd@ussstreas.gov) which I have named "Nigerian Scam Task Force — No Financial Loss", the latter part being the approved wording to indicate that I did not fall for it.

From: **George W. Price** July 31, 2005  
 P.O. Box A3228, Chicago, IL  
 60690-3228 USA  
[grgpric@aol.com](mailto:grgpric@aol.com)

In your obituary for Bill Bowers, you mentioned the decision by Harlan Ellison, as Pro GoH at Iguanacon in Phoenix in 1977, "to protest the failure of New Mexico to ratify the Equal Rights Amendment."

It was Arizona, not New Mexico.

And the way Ellison protested was to refuse to spend any money in Arizona while attending Iguanacon. He announced that as part of the boycott he would camp out instead of staying in any Phoenix hotel. But anyone who expected to see him in a pup tent in the Arizona heat was disappointed. What I saw was a big luxury motor camper — practically a small bus — parked beside the main hotel. I presume he brought food with him, as well as air conditioning. Now that is what I call boycotting in style!

He could have used the money and time to get the manuscript of *The Last Dangerous Visions* ready for the printer.

\* \* \* \* \*

E. B. Frohvet's review of *The Twilight of Atheism*, by Alister McGrath, finds that the "worst fault of this book is that it defines atheism as a movement — i.e., Communism — determined to impose itself, rather than a personal decision." Max Eastman (a real atheist) observed in *Reflections on the Failure of Socialism* that communism actually is a religion disguised as atheism, and in that guise permits itself to commit atrocities that no honestly acknowledged god could get away with.

If there is a specific location in the human brain for religious belief (as Sawyer posited in *Hybrids*), I am betting that it is also the site of faith in both communism and militant atheism. What the True Believers have in common is absolute certainty in the rightness of their beliefs, a faith which is usually quite impervious to evidence or reasoning. At the worst, it is coupled with a determination to impose their beliefs — or unbeliefs — upon everyone else. I say it is all religious fanaticism, and to hell with it. While I don't believe in a literal hell, I could hope that there is one just to hold the fanatics who think they have a right to kill anyone who disagrees with them.

See above about Time Will Run Back.

— JTM

From: **AL du Pisani** July 31, 2005  
 945 Grand Prix Street, Weltevredenpark  
 1709, Republic of South Africa  
[akaine@intekom.co.za](mailto:akaine@intekom.co.za)

It has been a bit quiet lately, as I took a three week holiday, and visited my family in the Northern Cape. A very restful three weeks. I caught up on lost sleep, rested, and potted around a bit on the farm. I did not realise how tired and out of sorts I was, until after I had finished resting up, and could feel human again.

Things on the farm had been dire, and even after some rain (including while I was there), the veldt is still pretty bad. They had to sell off half the sheep, to be able to buy fodder to keep the rest going. But they are hopeful that the next year will be better. After all, it had rained.

Driving down there and back again was not

pleasant: The roads were bad at too many places. And most municipalities seems to think that the best way to deal with the bad roads was to pull the speed limits down to too slow, and then put up a bunch of speed traps, and fine everybody who thought to defy the too slow speed limits.

There was some improvement: One stretch of road was better than a previous time I drove there. On the previous occasion the road was badly potholed, and the potholes had been filled with soil. This time around, the potholes have been filled with tar.

To some extent life in rural areas are getting desperate. I do not know how much of that is due to incompetent people trying to uplift the People, but I do know that the municipalities in rural areas are definitely not prospering.

Not that it is always as clearcut as all that: How do you uplift a fifteen year old girl who hates school, and think that she will be able to look after herself (and a baby) with R180 a month government child support grant? And who can always get pregnant again, to get more money from the Government. (The above situation is not grasped from thin air. I know of at least three girls who seems to be heading that way.)

And one of the legs of rural life, namely agriculture, is under serious threat. How do you convince somebody to keep on farming under situations that may include any or all of the following: Extremely violent murders of farmers; Claims against your land, which the government has to address within the next three years, and where they have been dragging their feet; Calls upon government to disown farmers of their land, so that the landless peoples can get it; Government granting your farm workers title to your land; Production costs that are going up, while you keep on getting less for your products? (While the price the consumer pays has remained the same, or increased.)

We are something like seven years into the government's land "restitution" process, and only now does government start to accept that giving a man land does not ensure that he can make a living off it. None the less, there are still too many people believing that once they own a little piece of land, they will be all right. They do not understand that subsistence farming is a ticket to poverty. In most countries in Africa people are trying to convert subsistence farmers to commercial farmers. South Africa is one of the few countries that are trying the reverse.

I do not believe the present government understands how fiercely competitive commercial farming in South Africa is, and how good the sector is. For instance, this year South African farmers are expecting a bumper crop of maize. Almost all of that due to good rains and advances in farming, so that farmers are averaging a harvest of 8 tons a hectare. (Which is unheard of. In exceptional years, some farmers had harvests of 10 tons a hectare. But on average farm land half that or less was the norm.) This is a disaster: The farmers are only going to get R600 a ton for the maize. And that is almost the average production cost of maize.

But our government have more important

things to worry about: Like bailing out Robert Mugabe, to carry on destroying Zimbabwe. (I am tempted to raise a proposal that an organisation that want to do good, and help Zimbabwe in their (latest) crises, should use the money to raise a mercenary group to go and kill off the current government of Zimbabwe. Too bad such a proposal would be illegal, immoral and unethical.)

**As Sir Mark Thatcher, Bt. found out, when he decided to finish the job Frederick Forsyth had to leave undone.**

A bit of further news about what have been happening in South Africa: Shabir Shaik was eventually convicted on three counts of fraud and corruption. But was granted leave to appeal against two of the convictions.

Once he was convicted, all eyes turned to his good buddy Jacob Zuma, at the time Vice President of South Africa. Now, Zuma had and still have a lot of support. Mostly because he is most definitely not Thabo Mbeki. Mbeki seems to be disliked in the ANC, but tolerated. After Shaik's conviction, just about every known group in the ANC came out in support of Zuma. This support was not only for him as person, but was supporting him as a candidate for President of the country, in another three years time. (When Mbeki's second term lapses, and the ANC's term limits policy for Presidents comes into effect.)

Mbeki apparently approached Zuma, and asked him to voluntarily step down as Vice President, while the case against him is hanging. Zuma said no, and Mbeki fired him. And then the ANC held a bi-annual conference, where the party (Liberation Movement, actually) decided to throw their full support behind Zuma. This full support included paying him a large salary. The last is a problem. The ANC has and will continue to have cash flow problems. Partly this is due to the extremely low annual membership fees of the ANC. (R5, I believe)

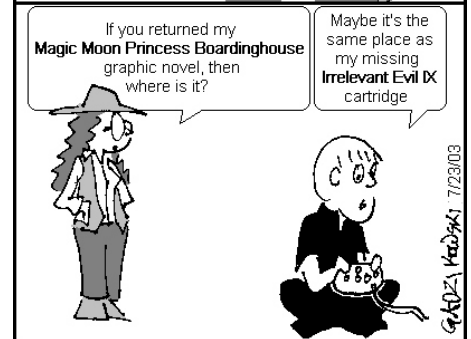
And so we stagger on to new crises. But for me: I had a holiday, got the outside of my house painted, and have a line on a new job.

Good luck.

— JTM

**WAHF:**  
**Lloyd Daub**, with various items of interest.  
**Jim Sullivan**, who sent his usual two book reviews, which package promptly disappeared into the house. Sorry.

**FAMILY TIPS**  
 by Paul Gadzikowski



GADZIKOWSKI 7/23/03

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**AND NOW YOU KNOW . . .**

We've spoken of the fate of dom Manuel de Poitescme (tried to bluff Saruman with a brass ring in a piece of red silk and got eaten by Orcs when his bluff was called) and Jurgen, son of Coth (tried to talk Faramir into making himself king and found that appeals to invented authority aren't always authoritative enough) in Arda. What of the other heroes?

**Conan** of Cimmeria and Aquilonia acquitted himself mightily. During the dreadful fighting around Minas Tirith he was ever and always in the front rank, impressing Aragorn, Gandalf, and all with his burning courage, unflinching zeal, and unfailing strength. At the dire battle of the Morannon, he cried, "You monsters, see how a Cimmerian can die!" and hurled himself into the Orcish ranks, laying about him and smiting them in heaps, keeping up the pursuit as the abruptly Sauron-less horde collapsed.

However, when he proposed invading Valinor, and wouldn't listen to what happened to the last guy who tried, he was pointed in the direction of Far Harad, advised to go looking for Alatar and Pallando (the two other Istari who went off east and vanished), and wished well.

**Fafhrd and the Gray Mouser** of Lankmar decided to go steal the Palantir of Minas Tirith so they could sell it to a junk dealer back home. They ended up in cells next to Jurgen.

**Lord Gro** of Goblinland, Witchland, Demonland, etc. saw Sauron's army break when the Ring was destroyed, decided that since they were losing, it was, as usual, time to switch sides, and went riding after them, crying "Hold, I would make common cause with thee!" Someone shot him in the back.

**Titus Groan** of Gormenghast Castle was last seen wandering down a road into Mirkwood muttering to himself, "There aren't any weird people around here, I have to find some weird people so I can be normal, there aren't any weird people . . ."

**Aysha bint Yarab**, "She-Who-Must-Be-Obeyed" helped Marhsal Elfhelm of Rohan drive off a reinforcing army from Harad, smiting many of their powerful ones dead, but when announced she was going to Valinor to find her beloved Kallikrates, got sent off after Conan.

**Rand al-Thor** of the Wheel of Time really meant to come, but his just going down to the market to buy a backpack set off seventeen crises among his supporters. He is reliably reported to be considering an appearance on the latest CBS reality show, *Survivor: Krakatoa*.

**Lord Lessingham** of the triple kingdom of Rerek, Fingiswold, and Mezria (not to be confused with Mr Edward Lessingham, sometime dictator of Paraguay, though they favor each other) had seen the Black Fleet arriving from the south, in the customary Zimiamvian way of spontaneously quoting writers from other places cried "Blow wind! Come wrack! At least we'll die with harness on our back!", and when one man with good eyesight descried Aragorn's banner on the flagship, cried, "A lie! And here's your death for it!", drew his dagger, got pushed off the wall before he could stab the observer, and spent the rest of the war in the Houses of Healing.

**"Sparrowhawk"** [Ged — but you don't know that] of Earthsea was grabbed by the Black Fleet while he was sitting in a hut trying to learn the name of every stream in Arda. As a prisoner, he beheld the Dead crossing over from ship to ship, announced, "This will all change soon enough," and as soon as the Rangers unchained him, slipped back on shore to pick up his studies where he had left off.

**Shadowspawn, Lythande, Jamie the Red**, and the rest of the gang from Sanctuary sat on the streets in Minas Tirith waiting for something to happen. (They were accustomed to some Great Motivating Force from beyond kicking off a radically motivating event, after which they would spend some time outdoing each other.) After Gandalf tripped over them for the third time, he had one of his famous fiery fits of fury and had them rounded up to be put to work fixing walls, but no two agreed on what the route to their workplace looked like, so they never got there.

**Duke Alaric Morgan** the Deryni lord of Gwynedd was rather disappointed at the lack of political action at the Last Council; he was expecting there would be some purges, if not executions, and was startled that there wasn't even a quorum call. Nevertheless, at the battle of the Morannon, as the Orcish arrows began to fly he mobilized his corps of Deryni evocators and they began to perform the complex, elaborate, symbolic, evocative rituals for their spell, at which point the Oliphaunts attacked. Morgan himself just barely got away but three of his most powerful Deryni mages became the red stuff between the oliphaunts' toenails.

**Thomas Covenant** told Galadriel that she didn't exist. She patiently explained that there was healing available, both spiritual and physical, and he cited that as further proof. He was last seen fleeing north along the Anduin complaining about the state of his health.

**Tarl Cabot**, of Gor, wandered off, from the Rohirric host, searching for panther girls, to enslave, without his finding out, what it was, about Dernhelm, fortunately, for both of them, and got cracked, over the head, by a Drug, while trying, to talk, to him, commas, and, all.

**Elric of Melniboné**, disgusted by the bourgeois nature of the West, decided to offer Stormbringer's and his services to a proper lord. On his way to join Sauron, he passed out near Cirith Ungol, got wrapped up in Shelob's web, and by the time he broke out of it the War of the Ring was over and he went off to Texas in a snit.

After several friendly-fire casualties, the **Dragonriders** of Pern pulled out. Or were they "friendly"?

The **Renunciates** of Darkover and the **Heralds** of Valdemar decided to send a joint party, but first off they had to hold a giant encampment at which they would work through their childhood tragedies and traumas. By the time the stories were all told, everyone was all cried out, the stories were worked up into songs, the songs sung and re-sung, judged, corrected for bias, and published in a collection, King Eldarion sent his thanks for their kind offer of assistance, but it really wasn't necessary any longer, and by the way could they compose a lament for his late sire King Elessar, also known as Aragorn?

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

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**ALEXIAD**

c/o Lisa & Joseph Major  
1409 Christy Avenue  
Louisville, KY 40204-2040 USA  
[jtmajor@iglou.com](mailto:jtmajor@iglou.com)

