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Ever since I saw the first geese start flying south August 1 of this year, it has been in the back of my mind that this year I might see my second wolf winter. They are not supposed to occur more than one to a half century but stranger things have happened. Wolf winter. The term conjures up romantic visions of pioneers in sleighs. Unfortunately, I learned when I was fourteen there isn't much romantic about floundering through snow up to your ass or being dependent on the neighbor with four-wheel drive for necessities. I'll admit the frozen Ohio River was a magnificent sight or at least it was until the icebreaker from the Great Lakes came through around four a.m. In case you've never heard an icebreaker doing its job, it's like waking up to find yourself in a huge blender blending ice in Dolby surround sound. It is most decidedly not romantic. Nature at its worst is not nice. I have a healthy respect for nature but I don't idealize it, any more than I would put my fingers within John Henry's reach. (Those of our readers not familiar with aged Thoroughbred champion John Henry should know that I'm not sure whether it would be safer to enter a tiger's cage or John Henry's stall, but if the tiger has recently eaten the tiger is probably the better bet.)

— Lisa

Helgesen, John Hertz, Robert S. Kennedy, Trinlay Khadro, Rodney Leighton, Lloyd Penney, AL du Pisani, Steven H Silver, Joy V. Smith, Rod E. Smith, Milt Stevens, John Thiel, Martin Morse Wooster

Comments are by JTM or LTM.

Trivia: 34
 Art:
 Sheryl Birkhead 21, 33
 Brad W. Foster 25
 Paul Gadzikowski 17, 34
 Alexis Gilliland 23, 28, 29
 Trinlay Khadro 2
 Marc Schirmeister 18

Joe's Birthday is **December 24, 2005**
 Christmas is **December 25, 2005**

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Table of Contents

Editorial 1
 Reviewer's Notes 1

On the Feeding of Cats 17
 Why Live Theater? 18

Book Reviews
 JTM Andrew/Mitrokhin, *The World Was Going Our Way* 14
 EBF Bell, *Navohar* 20
 JTM Budiansky, *Her Majesty's Spymaster* 16
 JTM van der Does, *Storm. Us. en Walvisschen* 13
 JTM Fraser "ed." *Flashman on the March* 12
 EBF Landis, *Mars Crossing* 20
 JTM Lupoff/Lupoff eds, *The Best of Xero* 12
 JTM Mercy, *Berserk* 13
 JTM Minitzer, *Disinformation* 17
 JTM Murphy, *What Stalin Knew* 15
 JCS Pink, *A Whole New Mind* 19
 JTM Pratchett, *Thud!* 7
 JTM Roberson, *Here, There & Everywhere* 8
 JTM Turteltaub, *Owls to Athens* 11
 JTM Verne, *Les Cinq cents millions de la Bégum* 9
 RD Waite, *The Brotherhood of the Rosy Cross* 18

Film Reviews
 JTM *Rome* 3

Fanzines Received 20

Random Jottings 2

Con Reviews
 TK Ditto 18

Letters 21
 Dainis Bisenieks, Bill Breuer, Sue Burke, Carol Clarke, Richard Dengrove, Brad W. Foster, E. B. Frohvet, Alexis A. Gilliland, Marty



For some of you, this will be the **last** issue — unless you subscribe, write, or otherwise indicate your interest.

Reviewer's Notes

I went out to buy some winterizing material and some tools. The charger on my cordless drill was broken, so I had to buy a new drill — the charger couldn't be bought.

Afterwards, I went up to Borders to buy the DVD of *March of the Penguins*. They didn't have it, and if they had had it, the cost would have been \$28.95. They did, however, have the DVD and book of *Wal-Mart: The High Cost of Low Price*.

So I went back to Wal-Mart and bought *March of the Penguins* for \$17.96. There's a moral in that somewhere.

I suppose I ought to be glad that there's no round of medical tests for me to look forward to (if you can call it that) this year. The guy at Jewish Hospital who took patients from sign-in to treatment was recognizing me.

What we do have is parties; Lisa's library party, the Ahepa party (I was noting how much their rituals took from fraternal order rituals of the nineteenth century), the SF clubs' parties . . . and then there's family.

Alas, I can no longer enjoy parties quite as much as I used to. Much less my traditional Christmas morning breakfast . . . day-old birthday cake.

This year, Feast of Lights runs from Boxing Day to January 2; Kislev 25-Tevet 2, 5766. In the rush to make it an appendage of Christmas, people forget that it's a celebration of liberation and freedom.

RANDOM JOTTINGS

by Joe



We regret to report that the **Second Annual Wilson Tucker Ninetieth Birthday Party** has been postponed until after the New Year. Bob has the flu. For news and updates check:

<http://www.midamericon.org/dawnpatrol/tuckersbirthday.htm>

The Hugo nominations have long since begun being debated, but a couple of proposals have made particularly piquant notes. Tom Veal reports that, thanks to the vast sheaves of material he left behind him, **Bill Rotsler** is still eligible to be considered as Best Fan Artist. He also mentions that Ron and Val Ontell are trying to get **Ellen Asher**, editor-in-chief of the Science Fiction Book Club, a nomination for Best Editor.

Tom also reports (from Loscon) that there's nothing to report on Worldcon bids; the Chicago 2008 and Denver 2008 Worldcon bids are still going strong, while the Columbus 2008 bid is still doing nothing. Kansas City and Montreal are still actively contending 2009.

Is This Really Necessary? Department: According to Trufen.net: "we are told by the BBC, Sky One is planning a remake of 1967's **The Prisoner**, long a favorite of many sf fans"

We note with interest the flight of the Shenzhou 6 [Shenchou 6] spacecraft with taikonauts (properly yuhangyuan [yü-hang yuan]) Fei Junlong [Fei Chün-lung] and Nie Haisheng [Nie Hai-sheng], launched on **October 12, 2005** from the Jiuquan [Chiuch'üan] Satellite Launch Center, Gansu [Kansu] in the Gobi Desert. The Shenzhou "Heavenly Vessel" space capsule is an adaptation of the Soviet/Russian Soyuz vehicle; the Long March CZ-2F rocket booster was developed in China.

The flight ended on **October 17, 2005**, apparently without problems. The taikonauts were in good health and spirits. Future Chinese plans reportedly include a walk in space, a space station, and by 2010 moon probes as precursors to a landing. The next Shenzhou mission will, it is reported, have three taikonauts and take place in 2007, with Fei, Nie, and first taikonaut Yang Liwei [Yang Li-wei] among the candidates to fly that mission.

Joy V. Smith mentioned that she would be autographing copies of her book *Building a*

Cool House for Hot Times Without Scorching the Pocketbook (2004). Where she lives, perhaps the key element would be building a house that wouldn't blow away in a hurricane.

Then I checked the publication data and saw . . . PublishAmerica.

They are just going out and may be some time. The Numis Polar Challenge expedition has announced its plans for departure for the South Pole, leaving London on December 16, flying to the Patriot Hills base in Antarctica, and thence to the Ross Ice Shelf. They intend to recreate the Scott expedition of 1911-12, clothing, equipment and all, down to the method of transport (man-hauling) and the rations. British Army vets Simon Daghish, James Daly, Roger Weatherby, and Ed Farquhar (any from the Royal Dragoon Guards [the successor regiment to Captain Oates's 6th Inniskilling Dragoons]?) under the leadership of Polar veteran Geoff Somers (who reached the Pole in 1989 and 2000) will form the Polar team.

<http://www.numispolarchallenge.com>

(Note; it's only recreating the last four weeks or so of the expedition, given the date. This is very close to being a stunt, albeit a stunt for charity.)

It couldn't happen to a nicer bunch of guys. Richard Leigh and Michael Baigent, two of the authors of *Holy Blood, Holy Grail*, are suing Dan Brown, author of *The Da Vinci Code*, for plagiarism. (The third author, Henry Lincoln, is apparently too miffed that he didn't get to contribute to "Leigh Teabing", the Great Old One of *The Da Vinci Code* ["Teabing" is an anagram of "Baigent"].)

The Science Fiction [and Fantasy] Writers of America have announced that **Harlan Ellison** will be named a **Grand Master** at the Nebula Awards Weekend in Tempe, Arizona, **May 4-7, 2006**. Also honored will be **William F. Nolan**, who will be named **Author Emeritus**.

In his introduction to *The Short Life and Happy Times of the Shmoo* (1948, 1959, 2002, 2003) Harlan describes how in 1953 he went looking for the Headquarters of the Communist Party USA. He was expecting some vast Red Headquarters Edifice. What he found was a cluttered office in a run-down neighborhood, occupied by four or five "terminally, cosmically old, old men" [Page x], and filled with stacks of records. He concluded that these people were hardly the Evil Commie Menace the government made them out to be.

He couldn't have known that those stacks of records included those of the subsidies from the Soviet Union that kept the Party going. Perhaps one of those "terminally, cosmically old, old men" was Morris Childs, who had been an FBI agent for about two years by then (see *Operation SOLO: The FBI's Man In the Kremlin* (1995) by John Barron for the details); certainly he knew them.

I decided that Leonard Peikoff's *The*

Ominous Parallels (1982) had a bit too much Ayn Rand terminology to be useful. Now for the rest of us, there is a book on the Nazification of a culture (making the connections is left to the reader). The second volume of Richard J. Evans's Third Reich trilogy, *The Third Reich In Power, 1933-1939* (Penguin; 2005; ISBN 1-59420-074-2; 960 pages; \$37.95) is now out. Evans describes in detail how the Nazis assimilated German society and ruthlessly crushed opposition, political and intellectual alike. There were no Space Vikings in the offing to throw Adolf out.

. . . "It wasn't the war that put Hitler into power. It was the fact that the ruling class of his nation, the people who kept things running, were discredited. . . What they have on Marduk is a ruling class that has been discrediting itself."

— H. Beam Piper, *Space Viking*, Page 191

Former Canadian Defense Minister Paul Hellyer has called for an investigation of the U.S. government's dealings with intelligent aliens. Former Stargate senior officers General George Hammond and General Jack O'Neill have reportedly declined comment.

OBITS

We regret to report the death of Southern fandom's persistent conplanner **Irvin Meyer "Irv" Koch**, on **November 19, 2005**. Irv was responsible for con bids for over thirty years, from the Weaponcons up to Worldcons and NASFiCs. (I remember the DeepSouthCon bid he put on that had the misfortune to be up against a bid by Khen Moore, who donned tunic and laurel crown to pitch his bid to much humorous applause.)

The funeral was **November 22** in his wife's hometown of Jackson, Georgia. Our condolences to his wife, Kay Pinckney, and all con-going fandom.

MONARCHIST NEWS

An heir and an heiress have been born. On **October 14, 2005**, in Copenhagen, **Crown Princess Mary of Denmark** had a son, likely to be named Christian in order to keep up the alteration of royal names.

Then, on **Halloween**, in Madrid, **doña Letizia Princess of the Asturias**, had a daughter, **Infanta Leonor**. (See the letter from Sue Burke for an on-site report.)

Meanwhile, a bill has been put forward to amend the Japanese Constitution to (again) permit a female Tennō.

The ousted Bulgarian Prime Minister has declared that he intends to run for President. That wouldn't be the first time he's been Head of State of that country, but the first time it was as **King Simeon II** and now it would be as **Simeon Saxecoburggotski**.

FACIAM UT ANIMUS MEUS SCRUTETUR — PARS II

Review by Joseph T Major of
ROME

<http://www.hbo.com/rome/>

Me semper rogo, Quid faceret Iulius Caesar?

Immo, si de miraculis agitur, ille "I Ce" nullos mortuos ad vitam revocavit, sed tamen multos vivos ad mortem sane misit.

— *Lingua Latina Extrema* (MMDCCLVII), Henricus Barbatu scripsit, pagina XLV

I always ask myself, What would Julius Caesar do?

No, as far as miracles go, this "J. C." never raised the dead, but he certainly lowered a lot of the living.

— *X-Treme Latin* (2004), Henry Beard, Page 45

At the end of our last thrilling episode, the Pompeians had slid off to Greece, Caesar had pursued, Marc Antony was following with Lucius Vorenus and Titus Pullo, Octavius had been packed off to Mediolanum for studies (having had Manhood 101 already). While Niobe had to deal with a distraught sister, Atia with a disobedient daughter, and Servilia with a fit of anger. And now on with the show!

Episode Seven: "Pharsalus"

a.d. VII Idus October
(October 9)

"I saw Caesar and Pompey at the head of their troops, just ready to engage," but fortunately they didn't notice Lemuel Gulliver and his sorcerous associate from Glubdubbdrub. As our story resumes, the outnumbered Caesarians are marooned in Greece, while the overweening Pompeians are already deciding the allocation of offices for the coming year. Pompey has seen a performance of *Henricus Quintus* by Shakepearus (or Bovadium, or Verulamium, or whoever), wherein the Gauls bragged of their puissance, only to be resoundingly defeated by the Britons, and so counsels restraint among his subordinates.

Meanwhile, on an uncharted desert isle, Pullo, the prefect too, but not the magnate and his wife, the actor, the paedagogue, and not even Maria Anna, drag themselves out of the surf. There's no fresh water, which may mean that the lives of Vorenus and Pullo may be short indeed. Vorenus spends his time carving a final message to Niobe on a convenient stone, which is very nice, but what are the chances of its ever getting delivered?

Finally Pompey gives in and decides to attack. Caesar accepts the challenge with equanimity. They have to win or die, the Pompeians have less motivation. (And the producers passed on the opportunity for a stirring battle speech, sigh.) Which they do.

Communication is not what it would be. In Rome, we see Niobe making up with her sister-

in-law. By an interesting coincidence, Atia sends her daughter Octavia to make up with Servilia — who accepts!

The Pompeian high command and their surviving troops, which are almost the same thing, flee for Amphipolis. There is some dissent among the generals; Cato wants to go to Africa, Pompey is going to flee to Egypt, it's not quite clear what Metellus Scipio will do, and as for Cicero and Brutus . . . they are going to surrender. Spent, Pompey watches his fellowship break up, and there aren't even any Orcs in the vicinity.

Vorenus notices that corpses, a very abundant item around the island for the moment, float. Now this was something that Professor Hinckley never thought of! Or had the opportunity to think of. After some gruesome labor they set off across the bounding Adriatic towards the shores of Greece and rescue.

Which isn't going so well for Pompey, as most of his escort deserts. As if losing a battle with the odds in his favor didn't depress him enough already. He should have listened to Asimanus and not gone into that room in the little temple in Judea. His guide is rather suspicious-looking, and like every other guide in the world, wants more money. Although they aren't that far from Amphipolis and safety, Pompey decides to go by a false name. (But Xena knows what he looks like.)

Some of the deserters ride into Caesar's camp. Trembling and expecting a last few minutes to make their peace with the Gods, Cicero and Brutus find an even more terrifying welcome. Caesar says hello, hugs and kisses them, and brings them in to have dinner with the staff. When you see Caesar hand Brutus a roll from the table, you can understand why Brutus was where he was when Vergilius Maro and that other guy, Danteus or something like that, took the tour of Hades . . .

Pompey, excuse me, Asinius Mela, finds two unemployed soldiers to serve as guards. Since they happen to have washed up on the beach, they don't have much choice in the matter. Vorenus has met this "Asinius Mela" before, and has his speculation confirmed when the guide says they can sell Pompey to Caesar for much much gold. Vorenus gives him some steel, right in the neck.

After a poignant scene where Pompey explains to Vorenus how he lost the Battle of Pharsalus, they go their separate ways. Much to Pullo's disgust, they end up taking only a mule, instead of Pompey, to Caesar.

For some reason, Octavia has become enthusiastic about going to Servilia's to do some weaving. Well, that's one way of describing it. And one would have guessed that something is up when Octavia gives Servilia a friendly kiss that gradually shifts along the spectrum of friendship. Indeed, in a while we see how friendly they are. Will they go on a pleasure cruise to Lesbos?

In the Caesarian camp, Caesar begins reaming out Vorenus for not having brought Pompey in. He ought to be scourged and crucified. But somehow, he and Pullo have the Gods on their side. (Ask Xena about all those

items.) What's done is done, and it's off to Egypt after Pompey for them.

Meanwhile Pompey wades ashore there, but there's no "*Aegyptii: reveni.*" ["People of Egypt: I have returned."] in store. He gets murdered before he can even get his feet dry, as that Hibernian Druidical mountebank, Georgius Bernardus Shavius, predicted . . .

(They keep on saying that the battle odds were "three to one" but the odds weren't quite that lopsided; the figures I've seen for Pharsalus were 45,000 Pompeians against 23,000 Caesarians. The demands of the plot require a very allusive version of the battle, I suppose, and thus the scene with the soldiers fighting it out followed by the mobbing of Pompey's command tent. Such a pity we can't get a version of *Gladiator* with thousands of CGI legionaries in ranks, cries of *Venus Victrix!* from the Caesarians and *Hercules Invictus!* from the Pompeians, Caesar pulling cohorts out of the third line to surprise the advancing Pompeian cavalry, saying to Marc Antony, "At my signal, unleash Hell." . . . well, er. I found a download for *Rome: Total War™* that has Pharsalus, but it's not the same thing.

(It's amusing to hear the welcoming centurion Lucius Septimus refer to the Egyptians as "Gyppos"; brings back the old days of the British occupation. Watch for the scene where Asterix's chief, Vitalstatix, in alliance with Queen Boudica and King Herod, tries to retake the Canalis Suezus . . .)

Episode Eight: "Caesarian"

a.d. XVII Kalendas
November (October 16)

Speaking of Asterix the Gaul, she must have sent him away because he kept on commenting on her pretty nose (see *Asterix et Cléopâtre* [*Asterix and Cleopatra*] (1965) for this). The little guy could have been useful.

We begin in Rome, but Brutus doesn't even say "Mother, I'm home," though Servilia greets him warmly anyway. Outside, the Newsreader is announcing that no one is to bother such loyal folks as Marcus Tullius Cicero, Gaius Cassius Longinus, or Marcus Junius Brutus. Offering Cassius Longinus a good meal, however . . .

Caesar has to have a little talk with the authorities in Alexandria-by-Egypt. There's a little matter of seventeen thousand thousand drachmas they owe him, or Rome anyhow. That's what you get when you order stuff from the Domus Shopping Network. Being the top man, Caesar goes right to the top, the Pharaoh and Basileus Ptolemaios XIII Philopator (Shaka Bunsie) with his top aides Achillias (Grant Masters) and Pothinus (Tony Guilfoyle). The fact that the king is a creepy little kid and his advisors are creepy older guys may explain why the country is in such a mess.

They can't pay the debt right off but they do have a little bonus. They have heard those rumors about Caesar and King Nicomedes and they decide to give Caesar some head. Pompey's, that is. This does not please him. "**He was a consul of Rome!**" Caesar bellows. What is this world coming to when consuls can be murdered so casually by the Gyppos?

The money problem has to do with the notorious rebel Princess Leia, er Cleopatra, who is messing up the tax collection. The IRS should have it so bad. They have to bring her in, but Caesar politely offers to take care of that himself, for rather broad values of "himself".

Next scene has Vorenus and Pullo [he must have sent Caecilius Metellus back with Antony] sitting out in the middle of the desert, waiting. Sure enough, Achilles has dispatched a team of crack Nubian assassins (sounds like an early James Bond movie) to bump off Cleopatra (properly Kleopatra VII Thea Philopator) and all the guys have to do is follow them.

Caesar has to give Pompey a decent burial, and so we see him cremating what little he has by the ocean, crying as he does. They took away his opportunity to forgive the man. Rome is going to need all the leaders it can get, provided they recognize who is *capo di tuti capi*, er Boss.

Following the crack Nubian assassins, Vorenus and Pullo find Cleopatra (Lyndsey Marshal), smoking all the smoke she can get. (I guessed wrong; it wasn't hemp, it was opium.) The Nubians enter, inform her that she is about to join her ancestors, but then a scuffle breaks out and two of the assassins have to go out and, er, get assassinated. Then Pullo crashes through the door, fights the chief assassin, in a take no prisoners mode stabs him repeatedly; then, remembering his manners, politely asks the ladies' forgiveness. That's what she gets for having sent Asterix away; don't be such an asp, Cleo . . .

Achilles and Pothinus had watched this pair of plays the other day, "Amletos Archegos of Denmark" and a satyr-play lead-in titled "Rosenkrantsos and Guildensternos Are Dead", and they got an idea. Lucius Septimus gets sent to Caesar with a message. Said message informs him that this is the guy who killed Pompey. Shortly thereafter we see five guys doing a circus act in order to get the head of Lucius Septimus stuck on a spike outside Caesar's headquarters. **He was a consul of Rome!**

As we see Cleopatra's palanquin being carried towards Alexandria by several very weary slaves, inside her personal maid Charmian tries to persuade the princess to quit cold turkey. Since they haven't discovered turkeys yet this is going to be difficult. (Worse yet, Xena has business elsewhere.)

In the Senate house, Cicero is preparing another of his great speeches, unfortunately without Gordianus to research the details, and for a very limited audience at that. He proposes to Brutus that you know, if they were to just happen to write to their old friends in Utica, just to say hello, you know . . . One never knew what Marc Antony would do next and neither did he (saith Richard Armour) and so he turns up there. While there, he hands out a little reminder about loyalty, treachery, and what he [or his cousin Antonius Soprano] does to people who make trouble. "Eh, Cicero, you squeal, I whack you, cut you hands off and nail them to the door of the Senate House. Capisce?" (Which of course he will do later, but that's

another story, in the second season.)

Cleopatra is settled down for the night, except that she isn't. She can count the days, too, and has determined that this is her prime fertility period and here she is stadia and stadia from Caesar. Caesar can use a son. Well, one of the other two Romans here will have to fill the gap. She summons Vorenus. Who fumbles and begs and finally gets out of the task (he won a bet from Tribune Aemilius Scaurus all those years ago and the forfeit was biffing a Princess and he had thought it was a joke). Pullo is more obedient to orders, and soon we hear the ululating of handmaidens trying to drown out the yelps of copulation inside the palanquin. As you know, Pullo knows about the clitoris.

In the morning a couple of rug merchants arrive at Caesar's headquarters, bringing their wares to the Dictator. Well, he is going to lay her, after all. (Yes, they finally did get in one of the historical stories everyone knows.) Once Cleopatra gets her breath back she gets her regalia on and goes to see her brother/husband, who pouts and blames it all on his advisors. Achilles and Pothinus promptly accuse each other. A few minutes later we see the head squad putting two more heads on the spikes.

The natives are restless. One almost expects to hear the crashing of iKlwa on shields while Lieutenants Chard and Bromhead ask Heer Addendorf, if not Allan Quatermain or Colonel Flashman, what is going on. Vorenus turns out the troops, and they watch the mob gathering outside the door. Come to think of it, about now they could be using *centurion pilus posterior Bourne* and the rest of the *legio XXIV Limitanei Silures* from Britannia, singing "Homines Harlechii" . . .

The Boss isn't paying any attention. Cleopatra is there and she is willing. Is she ever, and they go at it with considerable zest and zeal. For contrast, the shots cut to Servilia and Octavia er practicing her weaving.

While Caesar and Cleopatra are humping, Vorenus, Pullo, and the rest of the garrison are getting stoned. By the mob, that is. This evidently goes on for a while, but matters eventually improve, since in the next scene we see a number of bodies floating in the Nile. There aren't going to be any babies floating in these bulrushes, unless you count the late Ptolemy XIII among them.

But there is a baby in hand, for Caesar and Cleopatra emerge, presenting Ptolemaios XV Kaisarion (some time has passed, obviously) to the cheering army, including Titus Pullo, who is really cheering . . .

(More condensation, of course, including omitting the scene where the Jewish Army came down to relieve the Romans. Such gratitude people have.

(Steven Saylor (chronicler of Gordianus the Finder) says that this is the episode where the show jumps the pistrix, due to its treatment of Cleopatra.)

Episode Nine:

Utica

a.d. III Kalendas November
(October 30) [dies natalis
Lisae]

We begin our story with Cato discussing natural philosophy, namely the matter of elephants lying down. An elephant is lying down in front of him at the time; however, it's dying of its wounds. Caesar followed him and Scipio after wrenching himself from the scented arms of Cleopatra (they've elided the "VENI ♦VIDI♦VICI" campaign) and has won again.

Here isn't the time and place. Their few poor remains of friends withdraw to Utica. While eating dinner, Cato excuses himself for reasons of bladder and stabs himself in the latrine (if they had taken ship he could have stabbed himself in the head). The next morning Scipio has him cremated, then dismisses all the soldiers except one, who under orders cuts Scipio's throat. (They were listening too hard to that Ioannes Belushius at Dyrrachium with his grunting about the Samurahi . . .)

We cut to the streets of Rome, where Caesar, Brutus, and Atia are watching a bawdy street farce about the preceding events. Brutus feels just a trifle embarrassed about being pardoned when as a noble Roman he should have gone down with the bunch. The farce ends with the head actor congratulating Caesar on bringing back the soldiers to Rome.

Thus we see Vorenus and Pullo (the latter with his "Marius's Mules" shoulder-pole load of gear, but then he's a legionary, while Vorenus is an officer) coming home. As Niobe leads Vorenus into their bedroom and throws him down on the bed (Roman women were so forward) she explains how she has set up a successful business (see above). Meanwhile, Pullo says hello to Eirene.

In other household duties, Servilia and Octavia are actually weaving. Servilia wants to know anything really nasty that's going on.

And Timon is bringing Octavius back from Mediolanum (no doubt after mourning the long-vanished Aemilius Scaurus with his family). Nasty things are going on.

Eirene actually talks! Not so nasty things are going on.

She doesn't have much to say, particularly when two thugs come in and start insulting Vorenus. When he hits back, they stalk off, saying the Boss will be here soon. Meanwhile, we've been seeing Titus Pullo getting oiled down by Eirene, stand up (covering himself, he ain't Marc Antony), and put on a punch knife, which would have solved one problem if Vorenus hadn't stopped him.

Octavia starts pestering her brother about any really nasty thing he knows. He finally caves in and admits he helped Pullo do in Niobe's brother-in-law lover. [But he could have said something really nasty like: "I'm going to take Claudian's daughter Livia Drusilla away from her husband while she's pregnant with his son, and marry her; and that son's grandson, who will also be your great-grandson (as well as mine), will be a worse monster than every Greek tyrant and Persian king rolled up into one."]] That isn't nasty enough for her, and she responds by doing what Cleopatra was supposed to be doing with the late Ptolemy XIII.

Erastus the gang boss, last seen telling Vorenus to break a man's arm and not getting

obeyed, comes back and describes in lurid detail what he and his thugs will do to Vorenius and his family unless Vorenius humiliates himself in public. Instead, we see Vorenius seeing his children off and begging Niobe to join them (no, if he's killed she wants to be raped over his body; it's a Roman thing, you wouldn't understand) while Pullo hides knives and swords all over. However, when the boss shows up to wreak his vengeance, there are a few people in line ahead of him.

Caesar wants a few good men to be district magistrates. One of these is Lucius Vorenius, and Caesar has dropped in with a few bodyguards to discuss the situation. Vorenius is not exactly fond of the idea, because he is a strict constitutionalist, never mind that the Roman constitution has been in a complete and total mess ever since the Gracchi. Finally, he gives in, and appears with the Dictator to great cheering, except from Erastus, who realizes that he has totally blown it.

Atia is not particularly happy with her children, either. Sleeping with each other? That's the kind of behavior she might try, but her children? Octavia taxes her with the killing of her ex-husband, which leads to a fight and Atia's swearing that she did not kill him. All she said was *Quis me huius tumultuosae generi quondam abiciret?* ("Who will rid me of this turbulent ex-son-in-law?")

Pullo is finding himself shut out. After getting rebuffed from the candidate Vorenius in his candidate's candid white toga ("You'll get it dirty.") he goes out for a drink, comes home to find Eirene waiting for him, moans about being the fatherless son of a slave, has a loud argument with people just trying to get some sleep, and orders up a lap dance, except here he can touch.

Such an odd way to celebrate Yom Kippur Timon has, he's wearing his kippot [yarmulke] at work in the statue factory, and we didn't even know he was Jewish. ("Graven image" my tochus!) Servilia comes by in her litter. Thugs appear from nowhere, kill her bearers, pull her out of the litter, tear off her dress, cut off hunks of her hair, and depart, leaving her naked and cropped. Somebody is not happy. (Where is Xena when you need her?)

Episode Ten: Triumph

a.d. VIII Idus November
(November 6)

Lemuel Gulliver's sorcerous friend also took him to see Caesar's last great triumph. How Gulliver took being among so many Yahooii he didn't say.

Cicero is in a position so desperate that Gordianus the Finder can't possibly find a single thing that could get him out of it. He has to propose the thanks of the Senate to Caesar. He does so. (The proposal is to make Caesar "imperator". Not only would it have been historically correct, but it would have reflected the attitude at the time and conveyed the attitude of today, if he were made "dictator". Oh well.) Unanimous consent, so ordered. (The guys who might have disagreed are dead.)

The grateful leader rises, takes the floor, and

explains that he's forgiven everyone, that he's not looking out for vengeance, and please will they join him in rebuilding the Roman state, which has been rather in the dumps of late? Caesar gets applauded, but of course.

Brutus has been bucking up Cicero; he seems to have taken to the new state of affairs, unlike Servilia, his mother, who is still distressed about having been dis-tressed. Then someone else turns up; Quintus Pompey. (It is explained that he is a natural son of the Great One, thus getting around that particular historical glitch.) Quintus has a grudge.

Vorenius has a grudge too. The candidate has going over Caesar's *novus ordo* with Posca, and raises the point that he has to win. Posca reminds him who's counting the votes. This disillusioned him. Out on the hustings, he has to deal with the racial issue, being accused of being part-Gallic himself. (*Di melora*, he *was* related to Aemilius Scaurus!)

Octavia has fled and is cutting herself. (And here you thought that was such a *modern* thing.) Octavius finds her and persuades her to come home and get the cuts patched up. They have to be there for the triumph.

Meanwhile, Brutus finds himself somewhat startled to be a widely-distributed writer. The item in question is not exactly favorable towards Caesar. [Has someone been reading Thornton Wilder's *The Ides of March* (1948)?] He goes and apologizes to Caesar and then goes home to talk it over with Servilia, only to find Cassius Longinus there with her and Quintus. There's something suspicious going on here.

Oh yes, Caesar is going to have a triumph over the Gauls.

*Gallias Caesar subegit, Nicomedes
Caesarem.*

*Ecce Caesar nunc triumphat qui subegit
Gallias!*

*Nicomedes non triumphat qui subegit
Caesarem.*

Er . . .

Caesar subdued the Gauls, Nicomedes
Caesar.

Behold Caesar in Triumph, who subdued
all the Gauls!

Nicomedes does not Triumph, who
subdued Caesar.

"Subdued" is in this context an euphemism. You do remember that bit about "Every man's woman and each woman's man"? [They're not going to be saying, "*Xenam Caesar cruci adfixit, Xena Caesarem subegit*," now, are they?]

Vercingetorix (remember him, surrendering to Caesar back at the beginning of Episode One?) gets hauled out of his cell for a final interview with Caesar. Then he gets strapped to a garroting post for his part in the Triumph. There's also the matter of giving the elephants their enemas. It's a very serious thing, to give an elephant an enema. (And there were forty of them.) If you thought horses were hard on the streets . . .

Pullo reports for duty, except he can't find his plume. He's going to march with the lads of the Thirteenth Legion, he is. No he isn't. He got discharged, remember? Got that *phalarae*

anatum rupit ("ruptured duck badge") just a little too soon. Maybe he should have got a job with the elephant corps.

Finally, the victorious and triumphant general has to be prepared. "When I am old I shall wear purple," the poem goes, but Caesar isn't old. So far he's been worried about dressing too purple (remember, one of the points the producers made was that everyone in ancient Rome didn't go around wearing white all the time); now he has to paint his face red. Or, rather, have Octavius do it. The lad has a job. As Caesar points out, he is a god. For the day, anyway; that was a part of the ritual of the Triumph.

Then it's "Io Triumpho!" and we see the soldiers, the elephants, and then Caesar in his triumphal chariot going to the Temple of Jupiter Optimus Magnus, where he joins the rest of his family: Calpurnia, Marc Antony, Atia, and Octavia. The doomed Gallic king is brought before Caesar and then at his signal, unleash . . . er, is strangled. He has lived, as they said then. (Asterix and Obelix aren't showing up, for reasons that will become apparent.)

Pullo is going to get to the temple on time, but before he can marry Eirene, and go to this land grant the Newsreader has announced, he has to emancipate her. As usual, he's broke. He borrows the money for the fee from Vorenius and they go down to the registry of slaves. Clerks are the same throughout space and time. Then, when he gets back, another of Vorenius's slaves thanks him for his kindness, you see, they were saving up their money to buy their own freedoms so they could get married and . . . and she hadn't even told Pullo, who proceeds to kill the man and then have an argument with Vorenius. Destroying his property without permission or prior notice, see. Pullo leaves before more blood is shed.

The garrotted corpse of Vercingetorix gets dumped onto a trash heap. After a while, some people pick it up and take him off for a proper funeral (that's where Asterix and Obelix were).

Octavia is still melancholic (we're too early in history to say "depressed"). In a desperate measure, her mother — that's right, Atia — tries to comfort her

In our final scene, Pullo is drowning his sorrows when Erastus the gang boss (last seen looking at Caesar's escort and realizing there are times not to go to the mattresses) approaches him about an opening. Pullo demurs; he's a soldier, not a murderer, but . . .

(There were four triumphs, the Gallic, the Pontic [this was where "VENI ♦ VIDI ♦ VICI" came in], the Alexandrian [this was where Cleopatra's sister and brother came in], and the African [where the dioramas of Cato's suicide came in]. That was fun to take part in but perhaps a bit tedious to watch on the screen.)

Episode Eleven: The Spoils

Idibus November (November
13)

Pullo took the job. Now he has to go whack someone. Vito Corleone said to Michael that you have to find someone who is trying to kill himself, then make yourself the only one he's

afraid will not kill him. Of course, Luca Brasi, the Godfather's recruit, ended up getting garrotted, but eh, who you wit'? Pullo's wit' Erastus.

In more open categories, Vorenus is doing what a magistrate does, even today. In the land of the Seres (China to us barbarians) a magistrate, such as Judge Dee (Ti Jen-chieh [Di Renjie]), was more of a lawman, but Vorenus does administration. Such as what to do about these veterans who are sitting around looking unemployed and dangerous.

Some of whom are very high up. Example, Brutus, who is acting rather disturbed at seeing graffiti (those damned taggers just won't quit) showing himself stabbing Caesar (who, according to the Newsreader, has just been chosen Dictator for Life; actually it was *dictator perpetuus* ["perpetual"]) but that was of course effectively the same thing). Brutus has a reputation to keep up, and is getting very nervous that Someone won't understand.

Someone is aiming at dealing with the veterans. Thus Magistrate Vorenus finds himself before the Dictator for Life, tasked with Doing Something about the unruly veterans. He wants to settle some in Pannonia. What the Croats did to deserve that . . . they want to settle in Italy. Caesar can't do that without confiscating land from people, and he realizes he can't politically afford to do that. So he asks Vorenus to settle the affair. The veterans' leader wants twenty thousand sesterces but Vorenus eventually bargains him down to twelve. This pleases Caesar, who wants Vorenus to be in charge of all his bribes now. Also, Vorenus and Niobe get an invitation to Atia's next party. They could ask Timon about Daniel, the lions' den, and their time together.

Pullo's next hit goes bad. He has no trouble whacking the bum, but there's a witness, and rather than kill her (saying "Pullo Chokes Three for a Denarius" doesn't have the same verve) he wanders off and waits for them to get him.

Vorenus and Niobe survive Atia's party. Octavius finds Vorenus talking to his great-uncle and asks after Titus Pullo. There's nothing that can be done about Pullo. Worse yet, the man he had killed was a known critic of Caesar and it looks bad. At least Caesar didn't know about the man. Marc Antony also shows up, and he begins by trying to get Octavia to help him reconcile with her mother.

Timon, with funds provided by someone who we won't name, but knew Pullo from those wild old sewer days (Octavius: "Torture him.") Pullo: "I don't know how, they have experts to do that!") goes looking for a lawyer. All the lawyers are enthusiastic until they find out who he's trying to hire. You'd think that they'd be more so, lawyers being used to defending guilty men but . . .

The case of *Populi v. Pullo* does not go well. The pathetic excuse for a lawyer Timon has found gets literally knocked out of the box, and Pullo gets sentenced to the arena. (Where's Xena? Not around, and in our next thrilling episode she . . . Gordianus is doing Findings for Cicero, while Caecelius Metellus is doing so for the Boss. Everybody's busy.)

That night, Caesar has Brutus over for a friendly game of draughts. (If this were an American production, such as for example the pathetic *Empire*, they'd be playing checkers.) Over the chequerboard he offers Brutus the governorship of Macedonia. A governorship was something Senators cut each others' throats to get, sometimes even figuratively. Besides, from Macedonia a week's vacation in Corinth is always possible. But Brutus sees the offer as a bribe to get him out of Rome, and turns it down.

In the morning, we see Pullo catch the only living thing he can find, a rather large bug, and sacrifice it to the Gods for Eirene's forgiveness and future happiness, and for the well-being of his unit and his friends. Then it's time, and they lower a ladder into the cell. But he has to bury the bug, carefully, before going out to the arena for his own sacrifice. (It's almost too much for the viewer to bear.)

Whereupon he sits on the sand, his weapons ignored, and waits to be killed. The pro gladiators who are assigned to the job want to have a good show, so they taunt Pullo. That he can take. Then they insult the Thirteenth Legion. Oops.

We now discover the ancestry of Mr. Scott of *Star Trek*. It would be mildly amusing to see Pullo fighting Klingons who had said *legio XIII* was garbage. Pullo proceeds to take the first gladiator's spear and kill him with it, then the other two. The managers summon up three more gladiators, and Pullo proceeds to dispatch them, sometimes quite bloodily, but at considerable cost to himself. At which point they send in the Big Guy.

Vorenus has been watching this, most saddened. (Indeed his struggle between grief and duty makes this a most notable performance.) Now they've really begun to piss him off. He jumps into the arena, grabs some of the discarded arms and armor (their owners won't be needing that stuff any more) and proceeds to duel the Big Guy, who uses a long mace with a skull on one end. He ends up hamstringing the Big Guy, who collapses. Then, Vorenus grabs the Big Guy's mace and shoves it in at his collarbone all the way down, until the skull is next to his, making him look like Zaphod Beetlebrox, the two-headed Galactic ex-president from *The Hitchhikers' Guide to the Galaxy*. Now playing Ford Prefect to Pullo's Arthur Dent, Vorenus helps Pullo off the sand, looking for a towel no doubt.

Home life prospers. Marc Antony finally gets close to Atia, explaining how he really likes her. She slaps him. He explains some more. She slaps him again. He explains some more. She slaps him a third time. He explains some more. Evidently she can't say, "What part of O-Ch-I [O-X-I] don't you understand?" (Since Latin doesn't have a word for just "No", they have to use the Greek one.) Or maybe not, as now when he gets close she kisses him. Perhaps she wants to try something new in foreplay. Atia likes new stuff.

Brutus meanwhile comes home and explains to his mother that maybe it's time he started talking to Cassius Longinus after all.

Finally, Posca, Caesar's personal secretary,

hunts down Erastus and explains some things. Such as, don't use veterans to whack the bums we want whacked, it can blow back. Um-hmm. I guess Cousin Antonius Soprano's people were too closely tied to the Family.

Episode Twelve: Kalends of February

a.d. XII Kalendas December
(November 20)

What happened on the Ides of March? Everyone knows that; Callisto betrayed Xena and Gabrielle to the Romans, who had them crucified . . . oh, you mean something else.

We open our story with the battered, bedridden Titus Pullo having visitors. One is an artist, making sketches for the mural. You see, the story of Pullo being triumphant in the arena, and Vorenus descending to save him when he was exhausted by his stirring fight against the odds, has become an instant legend, and needs instant memorialization. Watching Pullo concede the needs of the media is amusing.

As in the play going on, recreating the fight. (Is it me, or does the guy playing "Vorenus", with that absurd red wig, look like Carrot Top?) Atia didn't go to the original, but this is different. Also in the streets is the Newsreader, announcing that Caesar is going to add a hundred Senators, the House having become somewhat depleted of late.

Pullo wants to see this mural, so he checks himself out of the hospital against doctor's orders. Then he finds out why doctors give such orders. At least he collapsed on the road.

Vorenus has a land grant and has to dedicate it with Niobe. Unfortunately for us admirers of the lady, it's only symbolic.

At home, they have to tie Pullo to the bed (remember the bit about stray dogs?) lest he make his injuries worse. Which makes him a bit of a target. Eirene slips into the bedroom, dagger in hand, ready to avenge her dead lover. Not that Pullo doesn't admit that he might deserve it. Which gives her pause. Forgiveness isn't everything, but it's the next best thing.

Having failed to stab him, Eirene gets told off to feed Pullo. She brings him a bowl of porridge. Then she adds the personal touch; she spits into it before giving Pullo a spoonful. It's somewhat surprising, particularly to her, when he smiles at her thoughtfulness.

Magistrate Vorenus gets called up before the Dictator to account for his dereliction of duty. Caesar explains that such interference in the due course of law deserves punishment, so he had the biggest punishment he can think of in mind: Vorenus will be named to the Senate.

Brutus is listening to Cassius and Quintus. It's getting worse, Caesar is letting just anyone into the Senate; Gauls (presumably the Gallic chief Abraracourcix [known as "Vitalstatistix" in Britannia], from that one village that has held out for so long, thanks to Asterix, Obelix, and so on, is not one of them) and other such riffraff. Rome is for the old families, no one else should take part, and if anyone tries to change it, then it's time to haul out the daggers. Brutus lectures his fellow assassins about the need to do the deed honorably, with their own hands. Which means they have to get Caesar's new follower

out of the way, a man known for defeating gladiators twice his size . . .

Eirene isn't the only one having trouble sleeping either. Calpurnia (you do remember her, Caesar's wife) is having grotesque dreams. Thanks to modern CGI, it is possible to see a flock of birds take off and fly in skull formation, so the viewer too can experience the unsettling sight. Caesar knows that he's in trouble anyway (he had commented that he could defend himself from his enemies, but the Gods ward him from his friends), but Vorenius should be enough. Shouldn't he?

Pullo has recovered, and mentions to Eirene that he's going to go to a sacred shrine and pray for forgiveness, and after that, look over a local land grant. It wouldn't inconvenience him if he didn't go alone, either.

Atia gets an invitation herself, from Servilia, for herself and Octavius. Servilia has some important news to tell Caesar's niece.

Caesar isn't going alone, either. He sets out for the Senate House with his escort of lictors, secretary (Posca), Master of Horse (Marc Antony), and bodyguard (Vorenius). In the background we see a man crying out for notice for his petition.

Does it, perchance, say something like:

Caesar, beware of Brutus; take heed of Cassius; come not near Casca; have an eye to Cinna; trust not Trebonius; mark well Metellus Cimber; Decius Brutus loves thee not; thou hast wronged Caius Ligarius. There is but one mind in all these men, and it is bent against Caesar. If thou beest not immortal, look about you. Security gives way to conspiracy. The mighty gods defend thee!

Thy lover, Artemidorus.
[*Julius Caesar*, Act II, Scene 3]

Somebody does get interrupted by a petitioner; Vorenius gets flagged down by the old slave woman of Servilia's, who has some news that stirs him to drop out and run for home. Caesar notices after a while. Then the procession gets to the Senate House where someone has to talk to Marc Antony.

Vorenius gets home and begins wrecking things. Niobe comes down and asks what's wrong, whereupon he confronts her with the evidence of her infidelity. She is terrified, even after he lets her go, and pleads for understanding as she backs away. He is, after all, fingering a large enough knife, and he has both the ability and even the right to use it. Slowly, terrified, she draws away, pleading for mercy as he sits there, atremble with his wrath.

And then . . . she says, "Don't hurt the boy," and flips herself backward over the railing into the courtyard.

In the Senate, the now unescorted Caesar confronts Metellus Cimber about the issue of his brother, who still won't get his exile revoked (see *Julius Caesar* Act III Scene 1). And then it happens . . .

Brutus stands by, trembling, as the men whom he guided do their dirty work. (Up above, in the confusion, Quintus coshes Posca.)

Then, at the end, having already dropped one dagger, he gives the bloody and dying Caesar the final thrust. There's no "ΚΑΙ ΣΥ ΤΕΚΝΟΝ" ("Kai su teknon?" ["You too, my son?"]) or even anything else.

In the silence, Cassius holds up Brutus's hand and in a John Wilkes Booth mode cries "The Tyrant is dead!" And then all look up to see Marc Antony, who counts their number, and leaves. He has to know who to whack. See you in Hell, guys.

But others are dead. Vorenius is holding Niobe's body, crying (a most un-Roman thing, but real) and regretting his harshness. Then little Lucius, her son, comes in and sees the events.

Servilia's news is very simple; Caesar is going to die. She gloats over Atia's unhappy future as a refugee in some low and unseemly corner of the Roman dominions. After a moment Octavius takes his mother away.

All unheeding, Pullo and Eirene are at the shrine outside the City. They make their offerings, pray, and set off. Together.

(Octavius was nowhere near Rome at the time. You'll note that they've cut out any significant role for Cleopatra, probably to get away from the clichés of most fiction on the subject. Also, the baldness — "You're Bald." (*Caesar and Cleopatra*, complete with Shaw's a-apostrophiac eccentricity) — and the laurel wreath.

(Similarly, Caesar's campaign plans against the Persians and Dacians are elided, as is the proposal to let him call himself "Rex" outside of Italia. Also, there would be seats for the Consuls in the Senate House, even if the Dictator was the *capo di tutti capi*. If you remember *I, Claudius*, the Emperor sat on the dais, behind the consuls.)

Notes

There is something almost classically tragic in how one little slip grows and spreads until it leads to monstrous destruction.

Another real world problem seen is that of conciliating irreconcilable enemies. Most of those here took the easy way out. Cato did not want Caesar to forgive him and could not forgive Caesar. But Caesar forgave too freely; which was why Brutus was condemned so severely in the afterlife.

For some reason the British theater produces an endless stream of able, talented actors and actresses. We'll be seeing these people again and again, not just in this production. Wouldn't Kevin McKidd (Vorenius) make a great Aemilius Scaurus in the epic miniseries *The Misplaced Legion*? "It's a sure winner — Rome meets *The Lord of the Rings*!!!" [And that's truer than you think.]

Production will begin shortly on the second set of episodes. Now we have to wait until MMDCCLX (2007). Di infernales! What are we going to do on Sunday nights!

Multiple dead bodies, six breasts (4 reruns), the guide with a silver nose, a less than friendly greeting, killing the messenger, heads on spikes, paternity questions, dead elephants, dirty plays, bakery advertisements, odd ways of keeping

Yom Kippur, discharge blues, marital problems, proactive street cleaning, multiple little old ladies, really public justice, plausible deniability, early docudramas, engineering plans, the villainess revealing her fiendish plot, multiple aardvarking, raft fu, dinner fu, assassin fu, riot fu, treachery fu, opium fu, family fu, haircut fu, cutting fu, triumph fu, funeral fu, patronage fu, *Gladiator* fu, conspiracy fu, media fu, dream fu, reconciliation fu.

Check it out.

FROM THE FIELD OF BLACKBIRDS TO ANKH-MORPORK

Review by Joseph T Major of *THUD!*

by Terry Pratchett

(HarperCollins; 2005;

ISBN 0-06-081522-1; \$24.95)

"A Novel of Discworld®"

In June of 1389, at Kosovo Polje, the Field of the Blackbirds in Serbia, the army of Sultan Murâd attacked the Serbian forces under the command of Prince Lazar, utterly crushing them and killing the Prince, destroying the Guardians of the Gate of the Balkans and opening up Europe to the Islamic assault, or bringing about a further expansion of the Dar al-Islam into the lands of the polytheist unbelievers. Even today the Albanians and the Serbs will still ethnically cleanse each other as revenge for that battle.

That Murâd did not survive the battle himself, that after the battle the Ottomans withdrew from not only the field but the country, and that they did not conquer Serbia until seventy-five years later, after they had taken Byzantium, are mere bagatelles in the face of such heartfelt belief. In fact, it's not quite even clear *when* the battle took place, who was on which side (it seems that there were Turks and Serbians on both sides), or who (if either of them) won.

Captain Sam Vimes has little enough time to go reading fantasy, stuff about battles between people called "Serbs" and "Ottomans"; he's too busy dealing with recruiting vampires into the Watch, not to mention tamping down the running undeclared war between the Dwarfs and the Trolls over the Battle of Koom Valley. It doesn't help that they're all *Going Postal* (2004) over the new issue of stamps even-handedly showing each side winning. It's been a few years since Ankh-Morpork got burned down (in *The Colour of Magic* (1983)), he'd like to make the interval before the next such conflagration a little longer, and he has enough problems with his *Guards! Guards!* (1989) as it is.

And so Pratchett launches into yet another tale of the very real problems that Fantasyland will still have. At first, the comic elements seem more predominant, such as the discussion between Vimes and his unflappable butler about the gang weapons he had used in the old days. Not that a cap with sharpened pennies would do much good against Dwarfs, who wear armour, or Trolls, who are made of stone. (Would the ultra-unflappable Alfred Pennyworth, butler to Master Bruce Wayne, disapprove more of his

colleague or of Vimes?)

Then things start getting worse. The great and famous cyclorama picture “The Battle of Koom Valley” has been stolen. Listening to the two detectives — that’s what they are, gov’nor, straight out of a thirties country-manoor murder tale — interviewing the museum director — and for that all Pratchett had to do in the way of research was to go down to the London art museums — about the theft is quite amusing. Particularly when they can’t tell the difference between an art exhibit and a pile of dropcloths, but then we the readers (and for that matter the author) can’t either. (You can’t make up this stuff; it makes it hard on a writer, who has to be plausible.)

And of course there’s the initial “Thud!”, which was produced by a club landing on the head of a very prominent Dwarf. By all indications, too, a club wielded by a Troll.

Pratchett gets in some worldbuilding. Originally, Ankh-Morpork was a satire of a satire, a preposterous over-the-top place which was to, say, Fritz Leiber’s Lankmar (or Minas Troney from *Bored of the Rings*) as that was to a real medieval city. But, as Pratchett has become guilty of literature, he has had to put a real background behind that. Given the outré collection of beings that inhabit the place, they have to live together somehow. Which, in turn, implies a Watch, who can’t just be the hapless security guards, red-shirts, and night watchmen (“**Short Life Syndrome**. Night watchmen in horror movies have a life expectancy of twelve seconds.” *Ebert’s Bigger Little Movie Glossary*, Page 177) of genre.

Thus Vimes’s concern about integrating a Vampire into the Watch, with concerns about refraining from human blood, and in general the denatured vampirism of the fifties. At least it’s better than the sensuous signifiers of erotic empowerment that you see today, if Anita Blake Vampire Hunter came to Ankh-Morpork she’d be as disappointed as her cousin Buffy or their complaining target Ragozy Francisco de Saint-Germain and various versions thereof. These aren’t the vampires you’re looking for, pass on.

As a factor of this worldbuilding, they actually do scientific crime investigation here, yes, it’s *CSI: Ankh-Morpork*. Or maybe not, considering that a considerable part of the investigation seems to need to be held in a strip club. They have those here too. On the other hand, they also have audits, and having survived an audit at work recently, I can assure you that Pratchett has got that bang to rights (but he manages to make it funny, which is a lot more than we could do).

One of the ways that Pratchett keeps it light and witty is to consider the real world. This is hardly new, of course, one has but to think of Poul Anderson’s utterly realistic and side-splittingly funny “The Barbarian” (1956) where Krankheit the Barbarian had a severe collision with reality. Or this:

Fred Colon peered through the bars. He was, on the whole, a pretty good jailer; he always had a pot of tea on the go, he was, as a general rule, amiably

disposed to most people, he was too slow to be easily fooled, and he kept the cell keys in a tin box in the bottom drawer on his desk, a long way out of reach of any stick, hand, dog, cunningly thrown belt, or trained Klatchian monkey spider.*

*Making Fred Colon possibly unique in the annals of jail history.

— *Thud!*, Pages 256-257

And as for other real world problems . . . Between worrying about Vampires reverting to type at inconvenient moments, Dwarfs and Trolls bashing each other’s heads in, the auditor wondering about the missing petty cash, and other such mundane concerns, Vimes needs a break. Little Sam comes to mind, his son. Like a Dave Barry child, Little Sam Vimes has to be read to from the same book every afternoon at six. This sometimes leads to practical problems. The bit where Vimes’s carriage jumped over the ship in the canal to get him home on time, for example. (If he’s Sheriff Pepper, who’s Bond?)

And the book . . . the book that Little Sam loves and can’t do without is titled *Where’s My Cow?* (HarperCollins; 2005; ISBN 0060872675; \$16.95). This is why Terry Pratchett is very rich and you are not. You’re not my cow!

These things turn out to have a common center (centre? Whatever) and the most odd things turn out to be relevant. Before too long Vimes and his family and associates are setting out for Koom Valley in a magic coach (it looks like Q Branch again, though Q never quite figured out how to get the cabbages to explode) in order to find what it was that the painting “The Battle of Koom Valley” was meant to be the key to. It sounds like *The Da Vinci Code* except that here it makes sense.

THERE’S NOTHING YOU CAN DO THAT CAN’T BE DONE

Review by Joseph T Major of
HERE, THERE & EVERYWHERE

by Chris Roberson
(PYR/Prometheus Books; 2005;
ISBN 1-59102-331-9; \$15.00)

In the seventies, Philip José Farmer announced that he would launch on a vast project of biographies of all his favorite pulp characters. This was a period when pulp revival was big; the *Weird Heroes* (1975-1977) anthologies by Byron Priess were launched then (with contributions by Farmer, among others).

But only Farmer’s obsessions came out; *Tarzan Alive* (1972) and *Doc Savage: His Apocalyptic Life* (1973). Then Farmer got sidetracked into writing pastiches of other works, ending up with pastiching himself in the endless Riverworld books (each on the theme of “Everything you know about the Riverworld is wrong”) and Dayworld books. And the *Weird Heroes* series floundered and floundered because, I believe, while the people who edited them and wrote the stories for them read and abundantly enjoyed pulp fiction, that made up a

significant proportion of those who do so. That was also the era that saw *Doc Savage: The Man of Bronze* (1975), which — like *The Adventures of Buckaroo Banzai Across the Eighth Dimension* (1984) — was intended to establish a franchise, and conspicuously failed to do so.

A writer who tries too hard to evoke a certain idea, that of thirties pulp stories as in our example above, or to be complete anything else, can get so entranced with the idea that he fails to communicate it. And trying to get the minutiae down Just As It Usta Be can leave no room for the broad idea.

As in the beginning of the novel, with the researcher who is assembling a Beatles special for television; six hours of background, interviews, reminiscences, and the like. Since the three surviving members have agreed to reunite, recruiting a fourth to fill the space of the murdered member, an old friend from the early Liverpool days (and no, not a fan as in Michael Bishop’s “With a Little Help from Her Friends” (*F&SF*, February 1984)), the documentary is very topical.

While going through the accumulated pictures, the researcher notices something most peculiar. There is a woman turning up at all the great moments of the Fab Four’s history, from those early days in the Liverpool clubs, up to that last great impromptu rooftop jam-session-cum-concert. Same woman. Same clothing, even. Doesn’t age a day in some fifteen years. He can’t find out a thing about her.

The researcher goes to the big press conference, watching the surviving Beatles announce their new member and old acquaintance. Then he looks to one side — and there she is! The conference is done, she leaves, he follows . . . and she disappears.

Roxanne Bonaventure is, for all her hard personal life, having a dead mother and a distant father, being a bright girl in a school which can’t take variation, a cheery imaginative sort. Some teachers don’t care much for that kind of student, either.

Then, while off by herself, a dying old woman gives her a bracelet. That seems odd, but what’s even odder is when she wishes herself far far away — and abruptly finds herself confronting several large angry scaly ugly things, which is not the sort of affair for which one wears a new prom dress. When she gets back, the item that comes to mind is “A Sound of Thunder”.

And, unfortunately, for all the lively writing and careful thought that goes into this story, that’s it. Roxanne follows through on almost every established trope of time travel fiction, from meeting H. G. Wells down to finding the right person to give the bracelet to. (The book is remarkably free of sex, which explains the one missing trope.)

Now mind you, the writing is good. Roxanne approaches her new ability intelligently, none of this “I’ll save a Good Man [fill in the blanks] from being killed,” or “I’ll buy Yahoo at \$0.50 and sell it at \$400,” or “I’ll seduce Daddy and be my own Mommy,” or so on. One thinks of the hero of Poul Anderson’s *There Will Be Time* (1973), although this book

has a decided apolitical air about it; there is no “Withit’s Political Dictionary” here.

Perhaps this is the point, that there is no point to time-travel works, as Larry Niven put it. I must admit that for a moment, given the compartmentation of the work, I was wondering if this were a grand collaborative venture, each of several people writing a chapter on a distinct topic, then the whole work getting a polish.

It’s an intriguing and amusing idea, on the stylistic level well written, but not doing much in the way of plot. It doesn’t help that Roberson, like Farmer, hints at a vast universe of other works he plans to write, using scenes and settings from this work as teasers. Such plans somehow never seem to survive.

(That Beatles bit — which you’ll notice is never followed up on — has an unexpected twist, but that too is never followed up on. Roxanne has been playing, if not God, then *Paperback Writer* (1979) with the Fab Four.)

THE NIGHT OF THE FIREY SHELL

Commentary by Joseph T Major on
*LES CINQ CENTS MILLIONS DE LA
BÉGUM*

[*The Begum’s Millions*]

by Jules Verne

[and Paschal “André Laurie” Grousset]

Translated by Stanford L. Luce

Edited by Arthur B. Evans

Introduction & Notes by Peter Schulman
(Wesleyan University Press; 1879, 2005;
ISBN 0-8195-6796-5; \$29.95)

“*Un Voyage Extraordinaire*”

“PROCEED MOST URGENTLY TO STAHLSTADT OREGON STOP UNIDENTIFIED CATASTROPHE OCCURRED STOP” Colonel James West, now of the U.S. Secret Service, lowered the telegraph tape and looked at his colleague. “Artie, you know about this ‘Stahlstadt’, don’t you?” he said.

Artemas Gordon, the tinkerer end of the partnership, said, “Sure thing! Professor Schultze is the artillery maker to half the world. He’s casting cannon for the Navy’s new ships even now.”

“Well, evidently not any more. But that’s what we’re supposed to find out.”

— Not from *The Wild Wild West*

The interesting textual history of *Les Cinq cents millions de la Bégum* [“The Five Hundred Millions of the Begum”], translated as *The Begum’s Fortune* or (as here) *The Begum’s Millions*, is one of the many items explained in this latest of the Wesleyan University Press’s annotated and properly translated editions of the works of this Father of Science Fiction. Verne pioneered the tropes and ways of SF, including covert collaborating, it seems.

But then, Paschal Grousset, whether under his own name or his popular pseudonym “André Laurie”, had at that time good reason to want not to be publicly noted. Something about certain events in Paris in the last days of the late war; it wasn’t particularly a nice community . . .

He had written a utopian book about a Good City (founded by a Frenchman) and a Bad City (founded by a German) and had to get his ideas out. So he sent it to M. Hetzel, who remembered how Dumas *père* used to work and put his Number Un writer, M. Verne, on it. There was a good bit of the manuscript that Verne thought wouldn’t do, but he managed.

Our story begins with Docteur François Sarrasin in Londres, attending the International Hygienic Association Conference. He is reading the morning papers, noting with great pleasure the excellent coverage therein. (Recall that back then the front page of *The Times* would be classified advertisements, and Page Three would have print like all the rest.)

A solicitor arrives. (For the comprehension of the French reader [American, too] there is an explanation of what a solicitor is.) The solicitor, Mr Sharp, has some genealogical questions for Dr. Sarrasin, which he answers readily enough. Then he has a real shocker: Dr. Sarrasin, or precisely Sir Bryah Jowahir Mothooranath, Baronet, is the heir to a fortune of some £527,000,000. It seems that his grandmother’s brother, Jean-Jacques Langévol, had left France for India after the Napoleonic Wars, become general, consort, and heir of the Begum Gokool, was given a baronetcy by the government, and died leaving only an imbecile son as heir, who died childless in 1869, leaving not only his title but the huge private fortune of the Begum to the next heir. Which apparently is M. Sarrasin.

(In the earlier translation I first read, the I. O. Evans “Fitzroy Edition” translation of 1959, the translator had more plausibly made the title an entirely Indian one, “Rajah Bryah Jowahir Mothooranath”; and indeed even if this Langévol baronetcy were to heirs whatsoever, which it would have to be for a collateral descendant of the original grantee to inherit it, Dr. Sarrasin would be Sir François Sarrasin, Bt. (or Sarrasin-Langévol, Bt.), (third) Baronet of Bryah Jowahir Mothooranath. But enough of being picky on a petty point.)

Dr. Sarrasin, or Sir François, or whoever, finds that he is now Accepted in Society, at least by the noble patron of the Hygienic Association. With his millions all but in hand, he proposes before the Conference to establish an ideal city, built on the hygienic principles they have just been discussing. It goes over well and gets into the newspapers.

Including the one read by a professor at the Universität von Jena im Sachsen, Deutsches Reich — er, the University of Jena, in Saxony, Germany. Why would a German spell the place in the French fashion, “Iéna”? It’s like calling Regensburg “Ratisbon”! Herr Professor Schultze, a most particular man (and what else would a professor at a German university be), reads the local newspaper with his very precise dinner, at a precise moment goes to sleep, and then, in the middle of the night, his thinking goes on even when he is supposed to be resting. And in the morning he checks his ancestry.

Shortly thereafter, yet another claimant to the Langévol fortune turns up at Mr Sharp’s offices. But this one is the real thing, descended

from another sister of Jean-Jacques Langévol. For five years they had no heirs, now they have two. A *Bleak House* situation (and, unlike the earlier translation, this edition contains the text naming that book; Verne liked Dickens, it seems) is in the offing.

In an incredible act of restraint, the solicitors offer a compromise: Sarrasin and Schultze will each get 10,000,000£, while they will take the remaining million as fee (they tell Sarrasin that his share is £250,000,000, while presumably Schultze will get 200,000,000 Marks). Sarrasin has read *Bleak House* too, it seems, while Schultze figurs that half a loaf is better than none.

Meanwhile across the channel, the news has gone to the next generation, Octave Sarrasin, the doctor’s son and heir. Octave has been inclined to lead a pointless life, but fortunately for him he has fallen into the toils of Marcel Bruckmann, a fellow student, from Alsace, who drags Octave into actually doing his schoolwork. As well as leading him into joining the army during the late war, where by his audacity Marcel has received honor and wounds, while Octave tags along behind him, spared either. Marcel has evidently chosen France over Germany. (Historically, Verne would be less than charitable to a famous real-life Alsatian who chose France over Germany. Not many people want to know that Verne was an anti-Dreyfusard.)

Of course, there’s also the consideration that Marcel is attracted to the young Mme. Jeanne Sarrasin, Octave’s sister . . .

Five years pass. Schultze is now one of the biggest industrialists in the world. He has built a giant vertically-organized arms manufacturing plant in Oregon, U.S.A., bringing in fifty thousand Germans to work there, mining his own coal and ore, refining it, casting it, and producing artillery of immense power and unprecedented reliability. One sort of wonders what Chancellor Bismarck, much less President Grant and Prime Minister Disraeli, have been thinking while all this has been going on. (From a reference in Chapter Two, the first section took place in late 1871, so now it’s 1876. Will Sir Harry Flashman find himself dragged, kicking and screaming, into investigating this?)

To get ahead of ourselves, Stahlstadt is in Coos County, Oregon, about 25 miles (ten leagues) inland, near the town of Bandon (a later chapter gives a geographical position). Coos County is in the southern part of the state near the coast, and the location given is about a hundred and fifty miles or so south of Salem, the state capital. They probably gave him a property tax break, and being near the coast means he can ship products in and out easily (though he would probably have been better advised to put his port in Coos Bay). And, by a fortuitous coincidence, Coos County does have coal and iron ore. (Verne, remember, put a 600 foot high hill in Florida (in *De le terre à la lune* [*From the Earth to the Moon*] (1865)) and a volcano in North Carolina (in *Maître du monde* [*The Master of the World*] (1904).)

Among the many experienced, talented, and skilled men applying for work there, we follow

one Johann Schwartz, an immigrant from Switzerland, who applies for work as a steel puddler at Stahlstadt. After it is discovered that his will is more equal to the task than his body, he gets reassigned to casting, which is his line. Stahlstadt is a very compartmentalized place, understand, and he has to be passed from section to section as if on an army base. After surviving his first day of work, Schwartz finds a room to let; the lady is the widow of a miner, and her little boy tends the pit ponies and manages the ventilation system in the mines.

But before he goes to bed, he writes up his observations of the plant and its surroundings, in an exotic alphabet for security (decypherer Edgar Poe, the writer celebrated by the Boston Gun Club in *De le Terre à la Lune* [From the Earth to the Moon] (1865), would have laughed at the weakness of it all, not to mention these Frenchmen who can't call him "Edgar Allen Poe" like everyone else). Then he falls asleep with the name of Dr. Sarrasin on his lips and awakes with that of Jeanne . . . as you might have guessed, it's Marcel, now a deep-cover illegal engaged in industrial espionage.

Johann, or Marcel, advances rapidly through the ranks. Stahlstadt is organized like the military, complete with German veterans (an American veteran wouldn't have "medals", not then) as security guards. Professor Schultze finally has this outstanding employee called to his attention, and as worker and designer, Johann Schwartz is the man he needs.

During his ascent to the offices of power, Marcel observes most closely a tragic incident. His landlady's son works in the mines on the ventilation system, with a second job tending the pit ponies and a hobby of searching the mines for biological specimens, you will recall. During that last, he wanders into a section of the mine where carbon dioxide has accumulated and suffocates. Having lost her son, now she has to lose her tenant. Marcel, or "Johann", has been promoted to doing Schultze's classified work, so he has to live in secure quarters.

Although Stahlstadt is polluted, grim, and grimy as can be, Schultze's living quarters are a splendid garden in the middle of which is his residence and central lab, the Bull Tower. (The editors compare it specifically to the STAR TREK™ episode "The Cloud Minders" and more generally to *Metropolis*; under the circumstances the inverse ranking would be more appropriate, I would think. But then, Schultze lacks even the modicum of humanity that Joh Fredersen (of *Metropolis*) had.

Schultze finally gets around to showing off his latest development; a 1500-cm caliber cannon with a range of over 40,000 meters. It is installed somewhat precariously (or so it would seem to me) in the top of the Bull Tower. It can fire incendiary shells capable of incinerating, say, a large town with one shot, or asphyxiating shells using carbon dioxide to suffocate and freeze the target (remember the landlady's boy?).

"As I've told you, before long, a decisive experiment will be conducted!"

"How? . . . Where?" cried Marcel.

"How? With one of these shells, which will cross the chain of the Cascade Mountains, shot by my cannon on the platform! . . . Where? On one of the cities from which we are separated by at most ten leagues, which can't be expecting such a thunderbolt from above, and, even if they were expecting it, would be just as powerless to ward off its slaughterous results. It's the 5th of September now! . . . Well, on the 13th, at eleven forty-five in the evening, France-Ville will disappear from the American soil! The incineration of Sodom will have had its equal! Professor Schultze will have unleashed all the flames of heaven in his turn!"

— *The Begum's Millions*, Page 101

This is one of those situations where "If I told you I would have to kill you," applies. Since he's already told him . . . And not even, "Do you expect me to talk?" "No, Mr. Schwartz, I expect you to die!"

Since Schultze did not use concentrated light or even circular saws to ensure "Schwartz's" imminent death, he has time to plan. But there are two bodyguards, Arminius and Sigimer (and never mind that in history they ended up fighting each other) to outwit. Fortunately, Schultze's garden has one take-off from Dr. Shatterhand's establishment in *You Only Live Twice*, namely belladonna. Marcel manages to trick Arminius and Sigimer into smoking it, then while they are comatose starts a fire in Schultze's model room and escapes during the confusion, using the breathing apparatus Schultze himself gave him with the intent of rescuing the model of the cannon.

(The two giant bodyguards Arminius and Sigimer are said to be the bases of the two supporting characters from the Belgian graphic novel series *Tintin*, Dupont and Dupond. It would have been nice if the editors had pointed out that in the English translations of the works they are called Thompson and Thomson. The only basis for this that I can see seems to be that Dupont and Dupond (Thompson and Thomson) occasionally start growing long strangely-colored hair and beards, and Arminius and Sigimer have long hair and beards.)

The next chapter was put in by Heltzel the editor, from the original manuscript, against Verne's better judgement. It consists of the standard-order description of the Utopia; or more relevantly here a puff-piece describing the establishment, growth, and organization of France-Ville, Dr. Sarrasin's ideal hygienic city. All the picky details of the Ideal City are laid out before the reader, including how the houses are kept clean and sanitary, the futuristic health-care facilities (which do little for trauma and not much else for long-term stays), how no low facilities are permitted (which should disappoint Sir Harry Flashman, should the Colonial Office dispatch him to investigate this threat to the new Canadian commonwealth), and so on. Indeed, the place seems like a steampunk city. So much for that being a recent development. (Is a research visit from Brisco County, Jr. in order?)

The article gives the city's coordinates, which happen to be several miles off the Pacific coast of Coos County, Oregon. Verne would write a novel about a floating city (two, actually: *Une ville flottante* [The Floating City] (1871) and *L'Île à Hélice* [Propellor Island] (1895)), but this isn't it. More to the point, France-Ville happens to be just ten leagues (25 miles; 39 kilometers) from Stahlstadt.

This sounds like one of those Tarzan novels from the later period, with the two opposing cities, the girl, the American adventurer, the wicked king who wants the girl (or the wicked queen who wants Tarzan) [or both], and of course Tarzan. Or bad planning, anyhow. Remember the range of the Schultze Supergun?

Also, one would think that the Oregon state government would be exercised about a foreign enclave within its boundaries. Moreover, among those ideal hygienic arrangements in France-Ville is a full military education for the young men. Don't you think that President Grant might be a trifle concerned about this?

But then, the genial director, Dr. Sarrasin, his loving family (including the penitent son, Octave, who had a fling in Paris and then went to be with his père), and the admiring associates are having a charming dinner when the latest edition of the *New York Herald* arrives, having crossed the continent in less than five days. (Verne had a thing for the *Herald*; it features in his "La Journée d'un journaliste américain en 2889" ["In the Twenty-ninth Century: The Diary of an American Journalist in 2889"] (1888, 1890, 1910).) With the astounding news that something is brewing at Stahlstadt. Emergency action is indicated, and after a telephone party-line conference of the city council, a town meeting is summoned. (Their voice-recognition software must be pretty good if the newspaper can print up a transcript of the council meeting in time for the town meeting. And given the extreme centralization and high security evident in Stahlstadt, how did the news of the planned action leak out?)

Presumably F Troop is busy elsewhere, so they are thrown on their own resources to defend themselves against this attack, though one would think the U.S. Army just might be concerned. Then, in the usual dramatic finale, the wild, bedraggled, filthy figure of Marcel Bruckmann appears before them with a prophesy of imminent doom. In less than ninety minutes, Professor Schultze will fire his supergun, turning France-Ville into a fiery ruin.

But as Civil Defense preparations swarm around him, Marcel sits down (not much else he's up to) and refigures the figures, making a surprising discovery. Schultze has goofed! He is going to fire his shell *at escape velocity*. Were his assistants the Herr Professor Oberth and the Herr Engineer von Braun? Also, the cannon is likely to burst. Sure enough, the shell goes into orbit and the gun bursts. How it is that the Bull Tower is not toppled or blasted apart, or that Schultze does not go up with his creation, is not specified. (This event is later referenced in *Robur-le-conquérant* [Robur the Conqueror] (1886) where Robur's airship is initially thought to be Schultze's orbiting shell;

so that's the sequel to this.)

As the notes point out, goof-ups in calculation are one of Verne's favorite plot elements for showing up the grand plans of the characters. In *Sans dessus dessous* [*The Purchase of the North Pole*, also titled *Topsy-Turvy*] (1889) J. T. Maston is talking on the telephone with his girlfriend while doing the calculations for the Gun Club's supercannon, to be bored into the slopes of Mount Kilimanjaro, intended to tip the world over and make the lands around the North Pole habitable. A lightning strike on the phone line makes matters interesting, and in the confusion Maston forgets a conversion factor of a thousand, leading to a huge squib.

In history, the "Paris Gun" (*Kaiser Wilhelm Geschütz*) used by the Germans in the spring and summer of 1918 to bombard Paris was [initially] 210 millimeters in caliber and had a range of 130 kilometers (i.e. three and a quarter times that of the Schultze Supergun), but fired only a 94 kilogram shell. The barrels wore so badly that successive shells had to be of larger caliber, and after sixty-five firings, the barrel had to be rebored to 240 millimeters. The calculations for the trajectory had to take into account the Coriolis force from Earth's rotation.

In the Second World War, Krupp developed a cannon that was 800 millimeters in caliber; two were built, the "Schwerer Gustav" and "Dora", named after Herr und Frau Krupp. These fired a 7100 kilogram shell to a maximum range of 38 kilometers (yes, about ten leagues). They were used during the sieges of Sevastopol and Stalingrad (and against the Lizards in Harry Turtledove's *Worldwar: In the Balance* (1994)).

Given that neither the *Kaiser Wilhelm Geschütz* nor *Schwerer Gustav* burst on the first or any subsequent shot or fired a shell into orbit, we can see that cannon technology has advanced beyond that of Professor Schultze. (And then there was the Bull Supergun . . .) As for the shells themselves, unfortunately we do have far smaller shells that can wreak even more damage than Schultze's fire shell. (The U.S. Army's M65 "Atomic Cannon", a 280 mm caliber weapon with a maximum range of 31,000 yards or 28,000 meters, was deactivated in 1963, but other nuclear munitions exist.)

For all that Schultze provided an amusing demonstration of his inability to do any harm to France-Ville, the inhabitants are preparing for the defense of the city. (Including Marcel writing him a mocking letter revealing his real name.) We've already mentioned the militia; the council now hires Chinese workmen to dig a trench system (one sees a certain set of attitudes involved; the earlier article hailing the construction of the city mentioned that the Chinese laborers were paid in San Francisco, and any one who went to get his back pay was forbidden to return; where is Fu Manchu when you need him?) and waits in trembling concern for the new assault from Stahlstadt. And you thought *American* thrillers ignored the sovereignty of other countries. It hardly seems likely that the U.S. would ignore all this martial activity, extraterritoriality or no extraterritoriality; General Custer and the

Seventh Cavalry would come riding over the hill . . .

Speaking of San Francisco, the San Francisco stock market begins having problems. It seems that Stahlstadt has ceased production. Schultze is no longer giving orders, and the firm is now in dire financial straits. These in turn spread to his suppliers and customers; a depression is in the offing.

Marcel resolves to investigate the situation, taking Octave as his assistant. They proceed to the vicinity of Stahlstadt, finding the place not only shut down but abandoned. (And he doesn't even look up his old landlady.) They climb over the outside wall, into Marcel's old section, where he knows where the explosives are. Which when used leads to:

Suddenly the edifice and the basement itself shuddered as though from an earthquake. A formidable detonation, like that of three or four batteries of cannons, triggered at the same moment, burst through the air, following on the heels of the explosion itself. Then, after two or three seconds, an avalanche of debris began to fall back to earth. For a few moments, they could hear a continuous roar of roofs caving in, beams cracking, and shattered windowpanes cascading to the ground.

Finally, that dreadful din came to a close and Octave and Marcel left their retreat.

As used he was to the prodigious effects of explosives, Marcel marveled at the results he saw. Half of the sector was blown up, and the dismantled walls of the Central Block looked like those of a bombed city. There were heaps of debris everywhere, shards of glass and plaster covered the ground, and clouds of dust, drifting down from the sky where the explosion had thrown them, were settling like snow on the ruins.

— *The Begum's Millions*, Pages 171-173

Or as the man said, "Think ya used enough dynamite there, Butch?"

With this pathway opened they proceed to their ultimate goal. Arminius and Sigimer, the last defenders of the Bull Tower, stage an epic resistance, but in vain. Then there comes the problem of finding the new secret entrance to Schultze's private office. Evidently Schultze can get contractors to do work on time. They search the walls and the floor in vain and then Octave pulls on the chandelier, which lets down a ladder that they climb to see the new secret entrance to Schultze's inmost stronghold.

Fortunately, there is an air-tight glass hatch to Schultze's office. This is fortunate because, you see, one of Schultze's carbon dioxide shells had broken open, and he froze to death. Even more fortuitously, thanks to the bright lighting in his office, the fact that the bulb did not crack in the sudden chill, the good luck that the glass hatch magnifies, and the remarkable coincidence that there was no frost rime on the paper, Marcel can read the last letter Schultze was writing,

which was an order to speed up his latest fiendish plot against France-Ville. Quality control can be a problem.

Verne figured the story was over at this point but Heltzel suggested that he wind up all the plot threads, so Sarrasin takes over Stahlstadt and continues production, saving the U.S. economy, Marcel marries Jeanne Sarrasin, Octave starts dating, and everybody lives happily ever after, except for Schultze.

Grousset (remember him?) had written a Good City Bad City story, and Verne kept that. One wonders which is which, though. France-Ville has a very regimented system. Schultze didn't care what the ordinary workers did as long as they showed up on time and put in a full day's work, but Dr. Sarrasin decides how you sleep, what you eat, your schooling down to the last day, and where you work. While it's an unpleasant form of baiting, P. J. O'Rourke did refer to those sort of people as Safety Nazis, whose greeting was "Sieg Health!"

Not of course that Schultze was that much better, just different. As an air pollution professional, I hate to think of how much sulfur dioxide, particulates, and the like are pouring from the stacks of Stahlstadt, never mind groundwater pollution, mining problems, and the like. And then there was what happened inside the high security block. It's not surprising that Schultze was not a Nice Guy, since the first thing we see about him is the essay he's writing on how all the French suffer from hereditary degeneracy.

The notes are erratic. Since the league (*lieue*) features prominently in the text, would it not have been helpful to the reader who would not have known the French "traditional measures" to be informed that one *lieue* (league) was 3.898 kilometers?

Even the notes that are there are often scanty. Not many of us read Tintin in the original and know that Dupont and Dupond are the originals of the two daffy detectives Thompson and Thomson. (Or might appreciate the irony that in the German translations, Dupond/Thomson is named **Schultze**.)

The Wesleyan University Press has performed a service of immense value (perhaps even five hundred million Francs worth) to us all in bringing this book into print in a durable edition and with a decent translation.

COALS TO NEWCASTLE

Review by Joseph T Major of

OWLS TO ATHENS

by "H. N. Turteltaub"

(Forge; 2004; ISBN 0-765-30038-9; \$25.95)

Sequel to *Over the Wine-Dark Sea*,

The Gryphon's Skull, and *The Sacred Land*

. . . Lucius Vorenius retained his doubts about these two Greeks, but he also refrained from the expression of said doubts to others, particularly the ones he was doubtful of. He spoke slowly and carefully. "Caesar has ordered me to find the woman Xena and bring her to him. Your ship is ready to sail now and capable of taking us where we need to

go. I am authorized to pay you one talent now, one Attic talent, and two more when Xena is delivered to Caesar."

The one named Menandros said, "I don't doubt your orders, despotes, and the *Aphrodite* can sail wherever there's water. But how are we to find one woman in all the Hellenic lands?"

"She is easy to find . . . infernal gods, what is that!?"

Titus Pullo was staggering down the docks, his arm around a little man, both singing in their own languages. They stumbled over the gangplank, and sat down on the deck with two thumps. "Vorenush . . . thish ish my good frien' Careys, or sumpin' like that," Pullo said drunkenly. "He's gonna build the biggest statue in the worl'! I tol' 'im, 'Build a statue of Caesar and you'll never hav' to work agin . . .'"

— Not from *Xena: Warrior Princess*

Sostratos wanted to take *The Gryphon's Skull* (2003) he had bought in the agora to Athens. Pirates decreed otherwise. Skull or no skull, he gets to go there anyhow in this latest adventure of Hellenistic mercantile affairs. And other affairs; Harry Flashman would be proud, and Oscar Gordon might comment on the insularity of his home universe.

In this latest episode recounting the sailings of the good ship *Aphrodite*, of Rhodes, "Turteltaub" gives a harrowing description of the moral death of a democracy. For this year's trading voyage, Menedemos and Sostratos sail to Athens with papyrus, a popular item there, and stay for the Dionysia. Watching plays is always fun, and for Menedemos there's the usual quest after someone else's wife. (He wouldn't appreciate the hospitality of the Doral; what's the fun when it's *given* to you?)

But there is a little interruption to the theatrical season; Demetrios son of Antigonos arrives to chuck out his namesake, Demetrios of Phaleron, the chief agent of Kasandros. That's when the fun begins, for some values of fun.

Mostly because the liberated democrats of Athens begin figuring out new and innovative ways to suck up to their liberators. At least the Alexander had to die before *everyone* started calling him a god. Add to that renaming the months, setting up new divisions of the Athenian polity . . . this sets the standards for Sucking Up. (For another perspective on this, read Alfred Duggan's *Besieger of Cities* (1963), his novel about Demetrios. For another perspective on Demetrios, read L. Sprague de Camp's *The Bronze God of Rhodes* (1960), his novel about Rhodes. For another perspective about Rhodes read . . . well, you know.)

The Piraios-to-Acropolis perspective on all aspects of Hellenic life continues. Reading this book will leave you with an appreciation of how they lived back then. The past is a different country, understand, and historical fiction is not all that different from science fiction or fantasy in the evocation of a different world where not everything is like what they have in your little old home town. Damon Knight discussed this.

After the happy return, Menandros finally achieves one long-standing ambition of his, which may lead to trouble when this story is . . . [To Be Continued]

AN ETHIOP'S PEARL

Review by Joseph T Major of
*FLASHMAN ON THE MARCH:
from the Flashman Papers, 1867-8*

"Edited and arranged by
George MacDonald Fraser"

(Alfred A. Knopf; 2005;
ISBN 1-4000-4475-8; \$24.00)

About halfway down the front page of *The Times*, there was a boxed item that caught my eye. "ARE YOU A COWARD?" it began. Whenever I get the chance, thinks I, but what makes my flesh creep is that the rest of the advert has me down bang to rights. I put that aside and picked up the *Telegraph* and in their advertisements was . . . "ARE YOU A COWARD?" word for word.

Then the maid handed me the morning mail and there was an envelope with "Sir Harry Flashman, By Hand" on it. I opened it and sure enough there it was: "ARE YOU A COWARD?" and so on.

The address was two streets over from the Cavalry Club and I figured I could scout the place out and still get in lunch . . .

— Not from the Flashman Papers

It's been about time for another installment of the Flashman Papers, those mercilessly observant descriptions of the seamy side of the rise of the British Empire, with abundant contributions of greed, cowardice, lechery, and knavery by their devoted narrator, Sir Harry Flashman, V.C. Well, we like him anyhow.

This twelfth packet of recollections is not, however the long-awaited recounting of how Flashman caused General Lee to lose the Battle of Gettysburg, or anything else about the American Civil War. Rather, it touches on a little-known but fascinating campaign in which British arms prevailed outstandingly. Among the notable supporting characters of this little excursion are G. A. Henty the writer of *Imperial Tales for Boys*; no less than Henry M. Stanley himself (though he doesn't say "Sir Harry Flashman, I presume?"); Captain Charles Speedy, one of those supremely eccentric Englishmen, if that's not a redundancy, that the country seems to produce when needed, and an even more eccentric general, Robert Cornelis Napier, later Lord Napier of Magdala, of the great military family of Napier. This is where ERB got Carson Napier from. Really.

Not to mention a truly mad monarch, Emperor (*Negusa Nagast*) Theodoros II of Abyssinia..

As usual, Flashman has managed to get himself in the midst of one of history's great crises, only to get out by the skin of his teeth, and into the bed of an available and willing woman with a less willing protector, see above.

This packet of the Flashman Papers begins with Flashy describing his hair-raising escape from first the Mexican executioners of Maximilian and then the escort of the late Archduke's body home to Austria. This last had something to do with his having seduced one of the young ladies in the escort.

Broke, down on his luck, Flashman encounters one of his old roistering friends, Speedicut (see *Tom Brown's Schooldays*). Speedicut has a job that needs to be done, running a shipment of Maria Theresa silver talers to General Napier in Abyssinia.

The tale of sailing down the Red Sea in a gunboat, wiping out slaving ships, sweltering in the heat, and so on would have been enough for a G.A. Henty tale of boy's adventure. I did mention that Henty is a minor character in the book.

Once the money is in hand, Flashman discovers that as usual he has to do one more job before he can go home, seeing as he is so talented and valorous and all that. He is dispatched on a reconnaissance into the wilds of Abyssinia, inwardly trembling at the violence that is sure to be done upon his carcass.

The reader knows what to expect, and sure enough, romps with attractive bloodthirsty women ensue, along with intimate portrayals of primitive savagery, civilized cruelty, and natural viciousness. The research needed . . . er, to confirm the story is as always deep and broad; reading this book will give the reader a clear and thorough picture of nineteenth-century Abyssinia, along with inimitable portraits of some highly exotic and singular individuals.

Admittedly there isn't as much room for Flashmanic greed, cowardice, lechery, and knavery as usual, and he seems more a spectator than an actor in the great events (though the scenes where he is hung in a cage over an abyss, or thrown into a fire while tied to a stretcher, are the sort of things that encourage being a spectator).

Damn your eyes! Get this.

NOTHING FROM NOTHING

Review by Joseph T Major of

THE BEST OF XERO:

*Selections from the Hugo
Award Winning Magazine*

Edited by Pat & Dick Lupoff

Introduction by Roger Ebert

(Tachyon Publications; 2004;

ISBN 1-892391-11-2; \$29.95)

<http://www.tachyonpublications.com>

2005 Best Related Work Hugo Nominee

Once upon a time (all good stories should begin "once upon a time") pros actually mixed with fans. Not just their specific and devoted fans, but fans in general.

They mixed at cons. Of course, there weren't a lot of cons in those days; there'd be the WorldCon. There was MidWestCon. There was WesterCon. There was PhilCon — and a few more here and there. In far-off and distant places like England there were cons, too, even the WorldCon, once upon a blue moon. Everyone got together and heard the same

speakers, then gathered at the same party.

What else was there to do? Well, there were these things called *fanzines*, which were sort of like the item you're looking at now. Pros wrote to some fanzines. Yes, really, and they published articles in them, articles discussing real issues. And fans wrote in to comment on the articles, or did their own, which were about the topics of books, hard as that may seem to believe. (Lupoff discusses the topic of the fanish fanzine, one that disdains any mention of SF or anything outside the faned's life, in terms that are still relevant today.)

Many of the names here are still familiar: James Blish, Lin Carter, Avram Davidson, L. Sprague de Camp, Harlan Ellison, and Frederik Pohl, to mention a few. Some of Blish's work here was reprinted in his books of SF criticism, for example, and the others contributed commentary of like nature. Or just plain wit, as in the story told by Hoy Ping Pong, scribed down by his loyal acolyte, Arthur Wilson "Bob" Tucker.

And there are surprises, too: long before the "Goodbye, Cruel Skiffy" dramas of the seventies which saw people like Silverberg and Ellison announce they were quitting the field forever (for values of "forever" of a few years), a writer quit SF prodom, blasting it and its practitioners in a style suitable for Francis Towner Laney (as in "Ah! Sweet Idiocy!"), the famous excoriation of LASFS). But this was of all people Donald E. Westlake [Pages 120-125]. I bet you never even knew he had written SF.

This is one of the two articles that is buttressed by the cascade of replies. Westlake implied that other writers were accompanying him in shaking the dust of skiffy off his shoes; many of those implicated replied with their progress reports. And similarly, the discussion of [Sir] Kingsley Amis's *New Maps of Hell* (1960) triggered by James Blish's review [Pages 61-65] went on for some issues.

The guy who wrote the introduction was also there. If Roger Ebert still doesn't believe there are any fanzines left now, perhaps he can be enlightened. Back then he was actifan enough, and "My Last Annish — Dedicated to Metropolitan Mimeo" [Pages 100-101] is a brilliant filk of "My Last Duchess", one that stands on its own as a faned's comment on pubbing his ish. Or having someone else do it, with the implication that he got what the "Last Duchess" got.

But this is only a selection. *Xero* was better known for its material on comics, being the origin of Lupoff's own *All In Color for a Dime* (1970), the ground-breaking book of comics criticism. (One of the essays selected for that book, "Captain Billy's Whiz Gang" by Roy Thomas, is reprinted here [Pages 207-227].)

All good things must come to an end, and the Lupoffs found that fanpubbing at the rate they were doing wasn't fun any longer. They set a terminus at ten issues (for the amount of energy and activity here, it's surprising to learn that the zine lasted only about two years) and stuck to it. As a sort of going-away present, *Xero* won the Best Fanzine Hugo in 1963 at

Discon I.

There is an odd parallel to Richard E. Geis's second series of *Science Fiction Review*, which had had the same announcement of its termination. The Lupoffs had it suggested that they should go pro with the zine, and realized that to do so would mean doing without all the distinctive features of *Xero*; they would have to change the putting-together of it beyond recognition to get something that would work as a semi-prozine. So they declined. Geis sold rights to a group that wanted to do *Science Fiction Review* as a professional magazine about written SF, and it flopped.

It's interesting to note that the run of *Xero* was at the same time as that of Ted Cogswell's *PITFICS*, which discussed similar matters (well, similar to the ones selected here; the contributors didn't go on about comic books). There was a lot more connectivity in the field in those days; that's what we've lost in the great expansion that we have sustained. (This book came in dead last in the Hugo balloting. Well, I said there had been a great expansion . . .)

THE WILD MEN AND THE SEA

Review by Joseph T Major of

STORMS, ICE, AND WHALES:

The Antarctic Adventures of a Dutch Artist on a Norwegian Whaler

[*Storm, Ijs, en Walvisschen*]

by Willem van der Does

(Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing; 1934, 2003; ISBN 0-8028-2125-1; \$29.00) and

BERSERK:

My Voyage to the Antarctic in a Twenty-Seven-Foot Sailboat

by David Mercy

(The Lyons Press; 2004;

ISBN 1-59228-227-6; \$22.95)

In 1928, as the Byrd Antarctic Expedition set out from America across the bounding waves for the Bay of Whales, and eventually the Pole itself, to preserve the lives of their dogs they were shipped south on the whaler *Sir James Clark Ross*, which in spite of her name was Norwegian-owned and Norwegian-crewed.

Whether any of these whalers mentioned a guy who had sailed with them back in 'twenty-two didn't seem to concern the Admiral, or his covert writing assistant Charles J. V. Murphy, when they produced the history of the expedition, *Little America* (1930).

The Heroic Age of Antarctic Exploration was over; the *Quest* had come back to England without her Boss, Sir Ernest Shackleton. The southern seas had been explored; now they were to be exploited. "I ask jouse ven I am heer vy don't jouse tak dese vales at jour doors — dems vary big vales and I seen them in hundreds and thousands," Carl Anton Larsen had said in 1903 after being rescued from the sinking of the *Antarctica* in the Weddell Sea. Now, he had the backing and the means, and the *Sir James Clark Ross* was in 1922 about to set out to "tak dese vales" in the Ross Sea.

Willem van der Goes was an artist, living in Schiedam in the Netherlands, seized with an unaccountable desire to see what the poles were

like, to face *Storms, Ice, and Whales* amid men of men. After rejecting other alternatives, he decided to go whaling, and after trying to sign on with other whalers, found that only the Norse were there and available. So there he went, signing on the *Sir James Clark Ross*.

That's about it; but it's far from saying all that can be said. Does provides portraits in words and in ink; his work is illustrated by himself, we see the men who made this trip and the items they wielded against the great whale.

His writing is more explicit. The reader comes to understand the sheer filth of living on a whaling ship at work. At the same time, the whalers come alive, Does recounts the stories of his fellow sailors (yes, he worked his passage; he had been a sailor before) with humor and kindness.

He describes the great ice, during its last era of repose (as it were). Larsen knew that the Ross Sea would be ice-free north of what they called then the Ross Ice Barrier — in Dutch, *die Grote IJsmuur*, as Amundsen, Scott, Shirase, and Macintosh had found it. (The translation, done by a relative of his, Ruth van Baak Grillioen, highlights some of the usages in the original. Some of the words Does used are very very obsolete.)

Does describes the fauna of the frozen south in both of the ways available to him. His pictures of penguins courting (Pages 313, 314, and 315) are amusing.

Does went to live in the Netherlands East Indies after these events; the book was first published by a company that specialized in works in and for the colony. The notes say he went back to the Netherlands in 1946. One wonders what had happened to him in the previous few years . . .

Today's reader will be appalled by the lack of concern for Saving the Whales; not only did these men (even Does) not agonize over their deeds, they didn't even think they were doing anything particularly wrong! It didn't work that way back then; you should be reminded that the Man of the Year Million (by H. G. Wells) or even of Day Million (by Frederik Pohl) would be appalled by us no matter what.

Seventy-five years later, there came independent film producer David Mercy. He likes to wander, and at the end of 1998 found himself in Ushuaia in Argentina, the southernmost city in the world. By sheer good luck or ill fortune, he fell in with two other guys. One of them, called for reasons that will be apparent only "Manuel", also wanted to go to the South. The third, a "crazy Viking" named Jarle Andhøy (rendered "Andhoey" in the book for typographical ease), had a boat, the apparently appropriately-named *Berserk*. They had the wish, he had the boat. They could come together.

This ill-assorted guard then set sail in the dead of the Antarctic summer to recreate Shackleton's epic voyage from Elephant Island to South Georgia. Things happened.

They endured the storms of the Drake Passage south to Antarctica, and then Manuel couldn't take it any more. He demanded to be

let off at the first place they got to, and the fact that it was an abandoned Argentine base didn't bother him any. Given that he had been disinclined to even learn about sailing, and had spent most of the time when he was off watch using up all their matches (he smoked), that shouldn't have bothered Jarle and David much, but it did.

The modern Antarctic is full of bases and crawling with tour ships. But continuing the anti-traveller attitudes noted by observers from Sir Ran Fiennes down to Nicholas Johnson (of *Big Dead Place* (2005; reviewed in *Alexiad* V. 4 #4)) it was small wonder that the third USARP station, Palmer, declined to take on the burden of Manuel. Eventually they found a tour ship that would take him.

This population and familiarity should have meant that the final trip would be easy. It wasn't and the fact that they had shed themselves of a man who was as troublesome as Chips McNeish and "The Colonel" Orde Lees combined, without any of their good qualities to boot, wasn't any help. Storms pounded the *Berserk*, and when the waves smashed in a porthole the ship became exceedingly unsafe.

Reluctantly, Jarle and David decided to head to safer waters. Short of cash, worn out, David headed back to familiar lands. Jarle put in money and labor getting the *Berserk* repaired; and then she was rammed and sank. (Evidently they stayed in touch, as IMDB reports a documentary on this voyage, which was followed by another about their trip to the Congo.)

This is one of the few inherently untamable places left in the world. If we can't pave it over and put up a McDonald's, we'll ignore it. The few who want to go where you can't buy the latest Nikes will just have to give up.

THE TERRIBLE SECRET - PART XII

Review by Joseph T Major of
*THE WORLD WAS GOING OUR WAY:
The KGB and the Battle for the Third World*
by Christopher Andrew and Vasili Mitrokhin
(Basic Books; 2005;
ISBN 0-465-00311-7; \$29.95)

It isn't widely realized, but the title character in *The Ugly American* (by William J. Lederer and Eugene Burdick; 1958) is one of the good guys; Homer Atkins that title character actually gets down and dirty with the ordinary Sarkhanese peasant, while the Embassy staff prefer to sit in the capital and accept what the government tells them, seeing as they can't read or speak the Sarkhanese language anyhow. (Lederer was, of course, a language teacher, and saw his field as sadly neglected and full of the necessary answers, the way that philosophy professor Alan Bloom blamed *The Closing of the American Mind* (1988) on the decline in the taking of philosophy classes.)

The book, and even more so its sequel *Sarkhan: a Novel* (1965), portrayed dimwitted, lazy, self-centered, ethnocentric American diplomats being easily outwitted by a brilliant, vigorous, flexible, sensitive, diverse, forward-

thinking Soviet foreign service that, for example, carried out a program of identifying potential opinion leaders among the Sarkhanese and having them sent to the Soviet Union for education (and indoctrination). It was the *Corps Diplomatique Terrestriene* of Laumer's Retief stories (and after all Laumer had seen it himself) without any Retief to save the day.

Perhaps in response to this image of a "Three-Meter-Tall Ivan", the conservative writer Victor Lasky wrote *The Ugly Russian* (1965), a sordid tale of Soviet errors, blunders, miscalculations, and goofs in what was then becoming known as the Third World. It didn't get as much public notice as the other book. (And then there was Robin Moore's *The Country Team* (1967) with the American ambassador having **Hot Sex™** with the book's version of Mme. Nhu, while the exiled emperor and his efficient team of intelligence analysts keep track of the situation and his stable of mistresses — think Nicholas van Rijn.)

Now that the Iron Curtain has rusted up and blown away, who was right? They both were: Lederer about us, Lasky about them. There was no Comrade Retief either. Those Sarkhanese chiefs' sons getting educated in the Soviet Union would very quickly have learned the Russian for "Chink". In the real world there was the future Mzee, Jomo Kenyatta, who was denounced as a "petty bourgeois" by a South African communist during his education in the Soviet Union. Somewhat miffed, he replied, "I don't like this 'petty' thing. Why don't you say I'm a big bourgeois?" [Page 4]

When the final history of the Cold War is written, a generation or ten from now, one of its key persons will be Vasili Nikitich Mitrokhin. Mitrokhin defected to the British in Riga, the capital of a newly re-independent Latvia. With him he brought six trunkloads of copies of highly sensitive Soviet information — the archives of the KGB, laid open to their enemies. (Admittedly, Riga had been notorious in the days before the Soviet annexation as a place where the confidential archives of the Kremlin were regularly sold (manufactured, even).)

This second volume of the Mitrokhin Archives has the material that was supposed to be preserved forever on the Cold War in the Third World. To every appearance, the Soviets could (and did) justifiably boast of how "the world was going our way". The events of *Sarkhan* were coming true, over and over again.

Yet, this mighty world empire proved singularly useless when the ultimate crisis came. The Organs of State Security — the KGB, its despised opposite the GRU, and other Soviet intelligence-gathering organizations, internal and external — labored long and hard in the vineyards of the Third World, and for all their effort got little reward or result when the crunch came. The fruits of their efforts will be surprising to some, confirming to others.

The first section of this volume discusses efforts in Latin America. What kind of man reads *Playboy*? The sort who discovers that Fidel Castro was never going to be pro-American, no matter how many progressives wailed about how reactionaries in America were

driving popular revolutionaries into the arms of the Soviets. Mitrokhin is missing the centerfold with Comrade Apryel (or Miss April), but otherwise he says as much as Castro himself did in his interview for *Playboy*.

The degree of Soviet aid and assistance to such crucial and controversial places as Allende's Chile and Sandanista Nicaragua turns out to be surprisingly high, and often thoroughly wasted. For all the aid the Soviets poured into Allende's government, they could not get him to do as they thought best, even when the coup was rolling and aimed at him. While the *commandantes* in Managua were amenable (and their victory took the KGB by surprise — the CIA doesn't have a monopoly on failure of analysis) their impression on the population, there or in neighboring nations, was less so.

It should be noted that organizations and forces that seemed significant both to themselves and to those of us on this side of the argument were, from the KGB perspective, hardly worth mentioning. Thus Mitrokin says nothing of the Tri-Continental Conference in 1966, where Castro hosted a meeting calling for third-world revolution. The American radicals who offered aid and comfort to the Sandinistas, who formed groups like CISPES [Committee In Solidarity with the People of El Salvador] were of no significance to the Chekists, even as potential recruits. (There was the CPUSA leader who used to fortify himself for meetings with New Leftists by re-reading Lenin's "*Left-Wing Communism, An Infantile Disorder*" (1920); their friends didn't respect them in the morning.) Andrew points out that the people of El Salvador were almost totally opposed to the side favored by CISPES [Pages 127-129], which didn't keep CISPES from passing on KGB forgeries.

In the Middle East, the bidding war for the Arabs was costly and not entirely effectual. The authors describe how the Soviets put forward great effort to make friends and influence people in Egypt, for example, and how Anwar el-Sadat set all that work at naught.

As for the Little Empty Spot In the Levant (a Saudi company snipped the illegal Zionist entity out of a batch of globes it got, only to discover that as a result, they couldn't be inflated), the collapse of Soviet efforts in Israel was reflected by the rising fury and suspicion the country engendered in higher Soviet circles. As Stalin saw the signs of a vast right-wing conspiracy in every failure of Soviet efforts, so did his successors discover Zionists under every root and branch, and strive to cleanse their society of that stain. But in Israel itself, a core of pro-Soviet sympathy failed to produce any gain over all.

The terror network of Palestinians proved less useful than anyone, whether Claire Sterling or Ion Mihai Pacepa, could have intended or believed. There was no Giant Terrorist Central Headquarters in Moscow, directing the efforts of the Arabs against a weak and demoralized Western Society (though not even Sterling said that). The Soviets could not directly control Arafat and his people; their man was Wali Haddad, the director of the dramatic mass

hijackings of the seventies. The authors state that Syria's agent was Abu Nidal [Sabri Khalil al-Banna]. I had understood that he was Saddam Husayn's man (Abu Nidal committed suicide in Baghdad in 2002 by shooting himself in the head several times) and that the Asad dynasty of Syria used Ahmad Jibril instead. Ahmad Jibril does seem to have had connections with the KGB, his faction being a splinter from Haddad's.

The problems of the relationship with China chronicled here are not without precedent. For some intimate details on these problematic connections, see *Tower of Secrets* (1993) by Viktor Sheymov. The Chinese used low-tech bugging devices as well as low-tech harassment. Similarly, Japan is covered by another defector, Stanislav Levchenko; see *On the Wrong Side: My Life in the KGB* (1988) for the front-line picture of life in the Japanese Residency. Arguably, all Mitrokhin does is confirm them, which is reassuring but he could have had some new information to give us.

There is quite a scandal in India over this work. If you thought that the Soviets were pouring out lots of money to subsidize the CPUSA (see *Operation SOLO: The FBI's Man In the Kremlin* by John Barron (1996) for that little tale), it was a bagatelle compared to the treasure that was expended subsidizing Indira Gandhi's rule. Of course, this sort of subsidy is hardly new, as the readers of that long list of people getting money printed in the beginning of *The Secret World of American Communism* (1995) or for that matter the Soviet message Herbert Yardley reprinted in *The American Black Chamber* (1931) would have known.

This however turned out to be another "Ugly Russian" waste; millions of rubles were poured into supporting Indira, and then she let herself be voted out of power. Still, that the KGB should go to such effort to prop up a foreign leader should not go unnoticed. This effort highlights the usual problem of covert action, that it turns out to be ineffective, but it also shows how the Soviets tried to get an edge. No point in complaining about how the CIA was passing money under the table to Italian parties; the other guys were doing it first and doing more of it.

They had to deal with the rest of old Injah, Pakistan and Bangladesh that is. In a way, the Soviets have been dealing with India ever since Lenin read a book of Marx, so to speak. See Peter Hopkirk's works, particularly *Setting the East Ablaze: Lenin's Dream of an Empire In Asia* (1984, 1995).

In his essay "The Taming of the Bear" in Jim Baen's *Destinies* (Spring 1980), Norman Spinrad predicted that Afghanistan would become the Soviet Union's Vietnam. This opinion was set in opposition to the Soviet triumphalism seen on both sides of the divide, particularly in the Politburo itself. In the end it turned out to be not quite correct, either; Afghanistan was worse for the Soviets than Vietnam was for the U.S. After all, many of the Vietnamese actually were on our side. The Soviets found out that trying to keep control of the situation there had only made matters worse.

One point raised by Andrew is "blowback". The SVR, the successor to the intelligence functions of the KGB, had spread the rumor that 'Usama bin Laden had begun his career with the CIA, which in turn came back to SVR director Yevgeni Maximovich Primakov, who believed it [Page 579]. What goes around comes around, and Primakov turned out to be as credulous as the Nazis' spy chief Walther Schellenberg of the SD, who after the war repeated as fact the "Little Tailor of Scapa Flow" story (see *Unreliable Witness: Espionage Myths of World War II* [American title *A Thread of Deceit: Espionage Myths of World War II*] (1985) by "Nigel West" for the refutation of this legend).

A theme that recurs in the book is the severe decline in Brezhnev's health. By the mid-seventies, he was in no condition to do anything — yet he was constantly praised and honored, considered "in control", and the like. (As opposed to how those there saw it; the book reprints jokes about Brezhnev's daily reanimation and the like.) The intervention in Afghanistan was planned by the foreign minister, Andrei A. Gromyko, the KGB chairman, Yuri V. Andropov, and the defense minister, Marshal Dmitri F. Ustinov, working on their own as it were; but Brezhnev seems not to have been in a position to notice anyhow. Small wonder Reagan took so long to meet with a Soviet leader; he had to find one who wasn't dying.

The results of the Soviet effort in Africa were a lose-lose-lose situation. The new African nations did not become the social democratic paradises that writers of the sixties imagined, countries making the jump to socialist modernity under the enlightened guidance of smiling graduates of the London School of Economics. Neither did they become the glorious progressive Soviet road to socialism staunch allies of the Soviet Union as some Westerners feared and official Soviet policy proclaimed.

Rather, all this aid poured into Africa created brutal and cruel despotisms. In the pro-Western ones, the Big Man just ended up becoming very rich (like that "big bourgeois" Jomo Kenyatta). But in the Soviet allies, the Big Man was all-rich and all-powerful, whether merely the god of a cult of personality, like Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana, or an outright avatism, like Haile Mengistu Mariam of the Derg of Ethiopia.

Mengistu was right up there on the savage tyrant scale with Field-Marshal President for Life Dr. Idi Amin Dada, V.C., D.S.O., M.C. [locally awarded], Conqueror of the British Empire, except that he conspicuously lacked Amin's comic flair. For example, he was his own Yurovsky; it was reported that he had personally executed the deposed Emperor (*Negusa Nagast*) Haile Selassie — by strangling him [Page 456].

In Frederick Forsyth's *The Dogs of War* (1974), the dictator is sedulously flattered by the Soviet diplomatic representatives (who despise him, showing they have some humanity), while they are working to expand their presence in the country. As with so much else in the book,

Forsyth has intelligently observed the real world and unlike so many other thriller writers, converted it to fiction in a plausible and realistic portrayal.

Even countries without bloody savage tyrants didn't profit. Of all the examples of the failures of foreign aid that have been recounted in the press and in history, the one that has to hit home as the most outrageous and dimwitted of them all was the aid shipment to Ghana. Of snowplows [Page 438].

All this was the Ugly Russian, that is to say, just as Lasky showed it. Would a slightly more resolute American policy have, for example, forestalled the triumph of the pro-Soviet faction in Angola? Or would this have just mired the U.S. in yet another Vietnam? (Would that be worth forestalling Pournelle's *Janissaries* and its sequels?)

The book ends with a chapter on the KGB's final failure and its subsequent rebirth in the Russian Federation. Far more than other intelligence services, the KGB was the image of the state it served, and its failures were in many ways the failures of its country. The mark of the chekist, the ways and powers of the KGB, are unfortunately still all too common in Russia, to its detriment and to that of the world.

AND WHEN DID HE KNOW IT

Review by Joseph T Major of

WHAT STALIN KNEW:

The Enigma of Barbarossa

by David E. Murphy

(Yale University Press; 2005;
ISBN 0-300-10780-3; \$30.00)

A prime contender for the honor of being the greatest intelligence failure in history has to be the Soviet blindness to the evidence that Nazi Germany was about to attack them. Unlike in the cases of the other such failures, moreover, the indications of the impending attack were multitudinous, clear, and undeniable.

Except, of course, to the Great Leader and Teacher [five minutes of stormy applause], who took the correct Marxist-Leninist-Stalinist line that of historical necessity the capitalist powers must exhaust themselves fighting among themselves for financial hegemony; the bourgeois Germans intended to gain access to world markets by destroying the power of the bourgeois British. There were those who did not agree with this line, but they were obviously deviationists seeking to implement provocations and they must be ruthlessly dealt with.

David E. Murphy, one of the authors of *Battleground Berlin: CIA vs. KGB in the Cold War* (1997), and a former CIA station chief in Berlin, has turned his skills to analyzing this, and the tale he has to tell is one of belief outweighing observation. Or, as the well-known bridge Grandmaster Leonard Marx put it: "Who you going to believe, me or you own eyes?"

Murphy describes how the Organs of State Security, the RU or *Razvedupr* ("Intelligence Directorate", later to become the GRU) and the GUGB of the NKVD (Chief Directorate for State Security of the People's Commissariat of Internal Affairs, later to become the KGB) fed

their superiors with abundant information regarding the forthcoming assault. The future Hero of the Soviet Union Richard Sorge, for example, was one such supplier, who had his information given him by the German ambassador to Japan, General Ott. They didn't even have to break codes, as the Allies did with the dispatches of the Japanese Ambassador to Germany, General Oshima.

And what happened? Stalin, Beria, and their followers (Pavel Sudoplatov for one) denounced these warnings as provocations, attempts by rogue elements in the German government to ruin their relations. Given how Stalinist policy was to consider that every other action that infringed the Soviet polity was directed by a vast right-wing conspiracy aimed at the destruction of the Workers' and Peasants' State, this is a significant difference in attitude.

But Stalin knew better. How did he know? Why his good friend Hitler had written and told him so. Martin prints the texts of the two letters kept in the Soviet archives [Pages 256-258].

As examples of the primacy of belief over observation, Murphy compares and contrasts the careers of two successive chiefs of the RU. Ivan Iosifovich Proskurov was an officer of the Red Air Force who served in Spain (and somehow managed not to fall afoul of the dreaded Nikolsky, chief of the NKVD, or into the bottles of Papa Hemingway) under the former RU chief Jan Karlovich Berzin, as commander of a bomber squadron (the Kondorski Legion?). He was made a Hero of the Soviet Union for his performance there, and held senior commands in the Air Force. Then, on April 21, 1939, Proskurov was made chief of the RU.

He was not a professional intelligence officer, but he turned out to be a good one. He had the always unpopular qualities of independence of thought and forthrightness, combined with keen insight and good judgment. In Stalinist Russia, where it rarely hurt to be in total agreement with the *Vozhd*, those were even more disabling traits.

Not surprisingly, after many such provocations, Proskurov was dismissed, and then arrested for treason. In one chapter late in the book, Murphy describes how, as the German armies closed in on Moscow, Proskurov was one of the Enemies of the People too dangerous to let fall into fascist hands, and so he was taken out and shot without even a farce of a trial.

His successor, Filipp Ivanovich Golikov, was a Red Army veteran with a long career of political-related assignments; he was an associate of Lev Mekhlis, Stalin's hitman for the army. It's not what you know, it's who you know. Golikov said what Stalin wanted to hear, that the prime target of Germany was Britain. After the German invasion, he was punished by being promoted to Marshal of the Soviet Union.

The third figure in this mess was Pavel Mikhailovich Fitin, chief of the First (Foreign Intelligence) Directorate of the Chief Directorate of State Security of the People's Commissariat of Internal Affairs. In short, the head spy. He's better known for his work with the Cambridge Ring of Five, the Atom-Bomb Spies, and the like. In the last days before the

invasion, he assembled a collection of reports that predicted the invasion in devastating detail. And was devastatingly ignored.

Indeed, Stalin's reaction to the attack was bizarrely craven; he refused to mobilize for war and treated the fighting as if it were the actions of some local commanders going off on their own. Again, given the known Stalinist habit of seeing everything as the result of a conspiracy so immense, this seems so out of keeping with normal procedure as to be beyond belief.

Murphy also discusses a number of side issues. One is the "Icebreaker" thesis, popularized by Soviet defector "Viktor Suvorov" [Vladimir Bogdanovich Rezun] in his book *Ledokol: Kto nachal vtotuiu voinu?* [*Icebreaker: Who Started the Second World War?*] (1988, 1993), where he claims that the Nazi attack forestalled a Soviet attack planned for July of 1941. This has been refuted often enough, and Murphy concentrates on how this belief serves to reassure Russians that it wasn't their fault, in effect.

In a side note of some curiosity, Martin refers to a Soviet source who was in contact with staffers of the U.S. Embassy to Germany. One of whom was Donald Hiss, the brother of Alger, and the one smart enough not to sue Whittaker Chambers when Chambers made his accusations. (You will recall that the ALES telegram says that the group "consists mostly of his relations".)

Another peculiar incident has to do with a Ju-52 that flew to Moscow on May 15, 1941. "In any case a German Ju-52 aircraft made its way through Soviet airspace, undetected and apparently unauthorized, and, against all regulations, landed at the central airfield." [Page 190] (Mathias Rust, anyone?) Murphy suspects it was carrying a courier with one of those letters from Hitler.

Some of the material can be questioned. For example, the letters do not have much in the way of authentication. And one can wonder about the style. "Dear Mr. Stalin" for example at the heading. (This would be a retranslation of "*Lieber Herr Stalin!*", I suppose.) And ending "Sincerely yours, Adolf Hitler". How did Hitler complementarily close his correspondence? (Certainly not "*Heil Mich!*")

This is an analysis of an intelligence failure by an intelligence professional, one that is instructive to the historian in general. The failure had many costs; such a failure today could be even more so.

A VIEW TO A KILL

Review by Joseph T Major of
***HER MAJESTY'S SPYMASTER:
Elizabeth I, Sir Francis Walsingham, and
the Birth of Modern Espionage***
by Stephen Budiansky
(Viking; 2005; ISBN 0-670-03426-6; \$24.95)

"Oh, signore, it is so splen-did!" the woman said, her full bosom in his face, almost, its rich brown skin with its scent of cinnamon intriguing him. "The heretic Bruno will go to the stake in a week! Will you be with me then?"

"Perhaps. I'm afraid I missed your name . . ."

"Sofia Scicolone. And yours, signore?" she said as she nuzzled up against him, her big generous mouth pouting sensually.

"Bondo," he said, removing the pipe from his lips and blowing out a ring of smoke. "Giacomo Bondo."

M had given him the mission last year. "Double-oh Seven, our agent Henri Fagot is in prison in Rome," he had said . . .

However, as far as is known, M had never begun his spying career by seeing a massacre.

Sir Francis Walsingham is one of the significant people in both the history of espionage and the history of the Elizabethan era. The author of *Battle of Wits: The Complete Story of Codebreaking in World War II* (2000) now tells about one of the battlers of wits in an earlier war of world-views.

Walsingham was H.M. Ambassador to the Court of France during the St. Bartholomew's Day Massacre. This did not predispose him towards a benevolent view of humanity in general or the French and the Roman Catholic Church in particular.

Summoned home, he was named Principal Secretary to the Queen. This was a job that could be defined by its occupant; The Principal Secretary to Henry VIII, Thomas Cromwell, for example, had risen to power in that job but you remember what happened to him. (He had an unfortunate occurrence; an axe fell on his neck.)

Mr Secretary began asking for information. He built a network of informants spreading over France, Spain, the Low Countries, Germany, Algiers, Tripoli, and Constantinople, and even Rome itself. At home, his agents apparently included Christopher Marlowe and Dr. John Dee, astrologer (and, in an item that seems to have passed Budiansky's observation, translator of the *Al-Azif* of Abdul Alhazred . . .).

One of the unusual informants was a source in the French embassy who used the delightfully cynical nom d'espion of "Henri Fagot". Giordano Bruno worked in the French embassy about then, and the writing style of the reports of Henri Fagot resembled Bruno's style to some extent. As you know, Bruno got in trouble with the Roman Inquisition over something else, and was burned alive in 1600.

In some ways Walsingham had inherited a bad situation. Queen Elizabeth had ceased to become Catholic herself but was willing to work on a "don't ask, don't tell" basis in the expectation that Catholicism in England would dry up and blow away. But then there came the bull of Pius V of 1570, *Regnans in Excelsis*:

The Lord who reigns on high instituted a Church which should be one, and gave its government to Peter, and his successors. We labor with all our might to preserve that unity, now assailed by so many adversaries. Among them is that servant of infamy, Elizabeth, who styles herself Queen of England, the refuge of

wicked men.

His Holiness was fortunate he did not so address Tsar Ivan of Muscovy, styled “the Terrible”, who in retaliation for these most un-Orthodox sentiments would have sent to Rome bits of every Catholic in Muscovy. It was the later parts of this Bull which so angered Elizabeth, the ones which deposed her and forbade obedience to her.

Budiansky describes the various schemes to overthrow the English government, and Walsingham’s efforts to uncover or at least disrupt them. One of the less memorable parts of the history of Catholicism was the ease with which Walsingham could infiltrate agents. A few weeks in a prison cell with a Catholic prisoner was the best and most secure letter of introduction available. Why, Walsingham could have staffed Cardinal Allen’s English college if he had wanted to, or even run his own “Operatioune SOLOE”.

It should be pointed out that Walsingham was not in favor of the off-hand execution of infiltrating Jesuits. It made them martyrs.

Similarly, the story of the brewer who carried Mary Queen of Scots’s secret messages sounds straight out of *The Commissar’s Report*; he was paid by Mary to carry messages, paid by the Spanish Ambassador to get them, and paid by Walsingham to let his Decypherer decrypt them. Then he raised the price of beer.

But given what Mary was saying in those messages, it was a Fatal Glass of Beer indeed.

Court intrigue had its difficulties; Walsingham owed his rise to William Cecil, he did things for Sir Philip Sidney, he sparred with Robin Dudley, the Earl of Leicester. These and other spats hindered government; Budiansky says with some praise that for all Elizabeth valued nobility, her ministers were “new men”, dependent on as well as answerable to her.

In the end it all came together. Walsingham had agents following the mustering and progress of the Felicitous Armada. He had prepared a list of things to do in the event of the prospect of an invasion. He had a quarrel with Leicester.

And then, his work done, he died. “And yet something has been born that could never die. Mr. Secretary had not only won the war; he had won the battle.” [Page 214] The system had been established and set in its course, the path had been laid down that would lead to ENIGMA and the papers of Mitrokhin. As the Queen ordered:

This judgment I have of you that you will not be corrupted with any manner of gift, and that you will be faithful to the State, and that, without respect of my private will, you will give me that counsel that you think best.

Elizabeth R.

UNINFORMATION

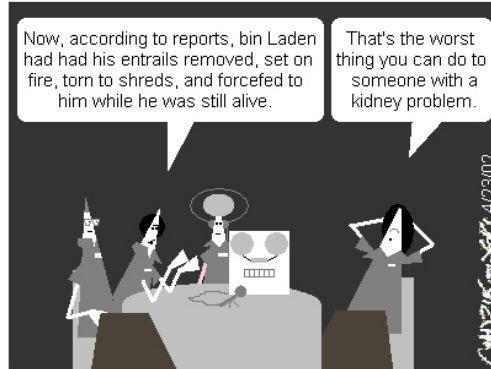
Review by Joseph T Major of
DISINFORMATION:

22 Media Myths That Undermine the War on Terror

by Richard Minitier

[with the aid of the indefatigable
Martin Morse Wooster (see Page 236)]
(Regnery Publishing; 2005;
ISBN 0-89526-006-9; \$27.95)

If terrorism came to Wolf Lake.



Sorry, Paul, while that would be nice, it doesn’t apply. One of the 22 Media Myths dealt with here has to do with ‘Usama’s alleged but nonexistent kidney problem (Myth #3; Pages 33-38). This unfortunate but necessary debunking even ruins the line “Just find the camel with the dialysis machine, and follow it.”

The Internet is a more powerful version of school gossip. When you were young, you knew that the stuff inside golf balls was poisonous, learning it from the most reliable of sources; some kid who knew someone who had heard of someone whose brother had seen it happen to a friend . . . You didn’t believe a thing the teachers told you, but lunchroom gossip was absolutely true.

Nowadays, that passes through a worldwide system of immense complexity and depth. The result, though, is all too often no more reliable than “a friend of a friend had a cousin who saw someone . . .”

Dealing with a matter of such complexity and conceptual density as the al-Qaeda conspiracy invites such constructions. Analyzing them takes much more effort than accepting them, the way that (for example) refuting eleven pages in a David Irving book took seventy pages in the Evans Report. But the media people who spread these myths will never have to pay a penny (well, neither will Irving, either, but they don’t have to).

Some of the results are quite unexpected. For example, far from being a James Bond villain with a powerful underground fortress and a vast secret army funded by his millions, ‘Usama is quite marginal, financially (Myth #2; Pages 23-32). He had to cut costs to the bone for the September 11 attacks. Think the “Cheez-Its Memo”:

. . . I bought a box of Cheez-Its recently, clearly wrote “Osama” on the front, and

put it on the top shelf. Today, my Cheez-Its were gone. Consideration. That’s all I’m saying.

[see <http://snopes.com/rumors/cavememo.htm>]

Some of the “myths” are the sort that were dubious to begin with; the most notorious being the “4000 Jews told to stay home” one. This was debunked often enough, but it goes with the others (Myth #6; Pages 57-64). (How about including the “laughing and dancing Mossad agents filming the fall of the Twin Towers” one, which seems to be still going strong?)

Some of the myths are so widespread that they seem to have infected public discourse, the way a virus infects the body. Ipse dixit: “Myth #11: There is no evidence that Iraq had weapons of mass destruction” except the ones that they had (Pages 97-106). Minitier gives a list of the various minor but by no means insignificant stocks of poison gas and other deleterious substances that were found in Iraq.

Some matters are social. One would think that an analysis of the well-off, even wealthy backgrounds of the nihilist New Leftists of the Red Brigades, Weathermen, and the like would have disproved this (cf. Bill Mauldin’s cartoon where the bored urban terrorist says “Let’s drag race our Ferraris”), but the idea is still put forward that “Terrorism is caused by poverty” (Myth #16; Pages 125-134). But the hijackers were all well educated men from well-to-do families, just as the murdering bombers of today are from well-to-do families. It was ideology that drove them, not deprivation.

Some are technological. While “suitcase nukes” are the McGuffin of many thrillers, the definition of “suitcase” is very broad. The “suitcase” in question would seem to be more like Otis Driftwood’s [Groucho] trunk in *A Night At the Opera* (1935), which he opened to find Fiorello [Chico], Tomasso [Harpo], and Riccardo [Alan Jones]. More seriously (though the whole development is as absurd as a Marx Brothers movie — the Paramount ones, the earlier ones) the statistics of the “missing suitcase nukes” change according to who the source is or even when he is talking. Minitier quotes Alexander Lebed giving contradictory figures and otherwise demonstrating a desire for sensationalism over information. And the things deteriorate. (Myth #17; Pages 135-148)

Minitier is even-handed politically, which will serve to make both sides mad at him. On the one hand, he exposes the depths of the relationship of Halliburton with the government, detailing their fiendish plot to make Halliburton lose money big time (Myth #20; Pages 159-166) and on a cost-plus contract at that. On the other, he discusses why, for all that it is disarrayed and overrun by narcotrafficantes, possessed of one of the leakiest border in history, Mexico is not the most likely place from which hostile foreigners may infiltrate the Great Satan; there is a far more hospitable (both intellectually and organizationally) location elsewhere (Myth 22; Pages 177-188).

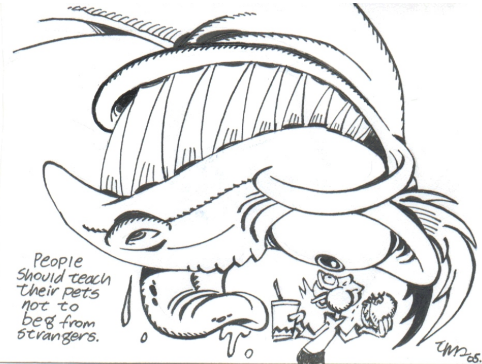
As a polemic, this fails, but through no fault of Minitier (or his indefatigable researcher); the book contains well-documented (often

excruciatingly so) evidence backing up its refutations. But Minter here is arguing against conspiracy thought; nothing he or anyone else says is going to convince the fanatic, the one who believes beyond a shadow of a doubt that these refutations are fraud, and that a shallow but satisfying cartoon by Tom Tomorrow is a more than adequate refutation of them.

FEEDING THE CATS

By Lisa

First, you ascertain that your spouse has not previously fed the cats, not that your precious, innocent little pets would ever try to con you out of extra food. Next you make sure that the animals have indeed eaten all the food from the previous feeding. After this you may start for the food container. At this point, the cats will start circling you, requiring you to go slowly so as not to be tripped up. The circling will get even worse when you actually take the food container down. When you arrive in the kitchen all the felines will mob you in a desperate attempt to frustrate you from your purpose of getting food neatly into the bowls. I remember telling them once that we could feed them every hour on the hour and they would still act like little animals. Elfling just looked at me as if to say "But we are little animals."



DITTO XVII

Milwaukee, Wisconsin, October 14-16, 2005
Trip report by Trinlay Khadro

Looks like I've got a week of pain and fatigue . . . but I'll certainly survive. I overdid it at Ditto and didn't stick to healthy food but I really had fun.

Friday p.m. was mostly settling in and socializing. Con badges bore Schirmer's designs which we were encouraged to color. Henry Osier and I went to dinner at Ponderosa which was nearby. (There isn't one in my section of town so I haven't been to one in years.) I very much enjoyed the grilled shrimp.

Saturday was full of activity: breakfast at the hotel restaurant, then hanging out in the con suite. Around 11 a.m. we gathered for the field trip. First activity was lunch at the famous "Safe House". Safe House is a spy-themed restaurant with a "secret entrance". They'll ask for the pass word and if the visitor doesn't know

it they'll have to do a song/dance/silly behavior to gain entry. We were told to act like chickens — fans seem to be a shy bunch sometimes, we clucked and did the "chicken dance". There are all sorts of fun gimmicks, displays, and puzzles. Menu items have theme oriented names — an ice cream dish for example is called a "James Bomb" and looks like a cartoon bomb including a candle-fuse.

After lunch and exploration we rounded up the troops and headed to Sprecher for a Brewery tour. Sprecher is a microbrewery and I was surprised to find that they shipped all over the U.S. I like some of their sodas; my favorite is the root beer. They are well loved by me because they use honey as a sweetener rather than sugar or High Fructose Corn Syrup. At the end of the tour they had a product testing (limit of four beers in a four-ounce glass and endless soda) served in souvenir glass.

After the brewery tour we stopped at Kapp's custard stand. Custard is kind of like ice cream but better, one of the differences is that frozen custard employs eggs. Despite the chilly day we stood in the sunshine to devour our dessert. (Flavors of the day were "cookies & cream" and "chocolate cherry kiss" — of course chocolate and vanilla are always available.)

When we got to the hotel I was totally pooled and decided to soak in the hot tub before taking a nap. Several fans came to join me: Henry Osier, the Welches, and a few others. Ah, hot fizzy water and socializing, what could be better?

Saturday evening there were a couple of panels including "alternative print methods" which somehow became pumpkin butchery and using leftover bits from jack o'lanterns as our stamps . . . which we used to make a cover for the one-shot. (Typed over the weekend on an old typer.)

Sunday was again mostly socializing. Carpooling with Henry Osier I got home around 4 p.m. and went right to sleep for a few hours.

(Hope Leibowitz reports that Art Widner, Steve Silver, and Murray Moore were also among the attendees, but that Pat and Roger Sims couldn't make it. Looks like you all had a good time.)

WHY LIVE THEATRE?

By Bill Breuer

In our age of cinema and video . . . there has been discussion about "Live" theatre being past it's time, yet there are those like me who prefer this art (though I've done small parts in two movies and anticipate more) I'd like to offer this brief list of why "DO" Live Theatre from both the actor's and the audience perspective:

'Live' theatre is the opposite to a fixed performance that has been captured on film or tape. The fixed performance is set in concrete . . . but who says that is the best portrayal of the role or the best performance of that story that will ever be done?

The actors' delivery will be made to relate significance to the audience at that performance. The show might have a flavor that has been

crafted to strike something in the audience that relates to present current events.

In a live performance the audience is entranced — their disbelief suspended. This requires the audience to further utilize their imagination and their creative abilities. The reactions to the work can have an even greater impact.

The actors can modify their performance to respond to the audience's reactions. There is an energy that flows both ways. With reference to audiences, there are sometimes 'dead' houses though the performance material is good and consistent night-after-night. When feeling the presence of the 'dead' audience, some gifted actors can actually raise the bar, turn up or modify the energy of the performance and even turn the house completely around!

You witness a specialized form of theatre and artistry: the story is being portrayed from beginning to end — the actor living this full arc of life in sequence over a period of perhaps two hours. The maintaining of the created role provides the audience with a unique opportunity to see the actor undergoing a sustained three dimensional experience. Some actors cannot or will not do stage plays due to the subjective emotional and physical intensity of this form of stagecraft.

The audience experiences a 'Human-to-Human' event, an intimacy that is created only with this medium. Finally, when you see live theatre you will experience something that is unique . . . an interpretation or even a once-only performance that results in a brilliant act of serendipity that may never be seen again!

There are those movie actors who would never do Live theatre and are actually scared of it; while some of us actually thrive on it.

THE BROTHERHOOD OF THE ROSICRUCIANS:

A History of the Rosicrucians

By A[rthur] E[dward] Waite.

Barnes and Noble, Inc., 1993, [c1924]

Review by Richard Dengrove

I have across problems with this book for the average reader. One definitely is that Waite never explains what the Rosicrucians are. He expects that readers will know. It is the belief there is a secret society with great knowledge. Often it is about to reveal it to the world. Rosicrucians rarely claim to be actual members; usually they just claim to believe the secret society exists. Even taken as a whole, the idea is very simple. We expect something deeper, but we don't find it.

Another problem for the average reader is Waite never tells the importance of Rosicrucianism. However, we often would have to go to the very borders of our lives to see them. It is true some older people, when they hear the name Rosicrucian, will remember the AMORC Rosicrucians (The Ancient and Mystical Order Rosae Crucis.). They used to advertise in all the science fiction magazines, asking whether you knew the meaning of life.

Another place where many people might

have received an iota of Rosicrucianism is Freemasonry. The 18th Degree of Scottish Rite Masonry is the Knight Rose Cross. Its connection to historic Rosicrucianism is unclear: Masonic symbolism is often very unclear: however, from that name, it is clear that Masonry has in small measure been influenced by Rosicrucianism.

If you are into the occult, you might have come into Rosicrucianism wholesale. Rosicrucianism has influenced most Western occultism heavily, and much Eastern occultism. I am positive Wicca is based on it, both in its origins and the idea behind.

Another problem for the average reader, besides his presumptions, is Waite's style. It is more convoluted than Einstein's brain is supposed to be. When he gets into matters of mysticism, the book gets unreadable.

In short, Waite's problem for the average reader is he is above it all. Waite is so above it all that he omits any mention of a Rosicrucian organization he belonged to, the famed Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn.

On the other hand, this book has one immense positive virtue: Waite did an awful lot of scholarly donkey work. Aleister Crowley, the occultist and self-styled "wickedest man in the world," referred to Waite as a "drunken pedant." His followers have repeated this. However, paraphrasing Lincoln about General Grant, I wish more writers drank what Waite had to drink.

It is obvious that the occult-minded scholars Frances Yates and Christopher McIntosh owe a lot to Waite's very skeptical scholarship. I believe Yates indicated that this book was the main source in English for Rosicrucian scholarship from the 1920s to the 1960s. It may still be.

Because Waite is a such a crusty skeptic, the pattern of the book is this. He mentions beliefs about the Rosicrucians, and then debunks them or verifies them. Usually he debunks because people have tended to build mountains of secret history on the molehill of Rosicrucian fact.

Waite does verify some things, though. He delves deeply into the three inaugurating documents of Rosicrucianism, the three Rosicrucian manifestos, 1614-16; and verifies them. They appeared in Germany. The first, the *Fama Fraternalitatis*, tells how the secret organization, the Rosicrucians, exist; and how they will soon reveal their secrets to the world. It uses the Paracelsian terms *Magia*, *Cabala* and *Alchemia* to describe some of these secrets. Also, it damns the Pope and Mohammed. The first Rosicrucians were very Lutheran.

Finally, the first manifesto tells us the legend of the organization's legendary founder, Christian Rosencreutz. A name, I take it, that means Christian Rosy Cross. Only a few people claim it is not a metaphor but a real name.

The second Rosicrucian manifesto, the *Confessio Fraternalitatis*, tells how disciple s entered the tomb of Christian Rosencreutz and about the allegorical wonders they saw. Among them was the famed ever burning lamp, a notion taken from antiquity.

The third Rosicrucian manifesto is the

Chymical Marriage of Christian Rosencreutz (Nuptials?). This was an alchemical allegory, which were supposed to tell the secret of making the philosopher's stone. However, while nearly all are more wooden than the old cigar store Amerindians, the third manifesto is an appealing, poetic, surrealistic novel. Its writer, we know: Johann Valentin Andreae, a famed Lutheran clergyman and author of philosophical and theological tomes.

Occultists have been trying to prove that Andreae was secretly a Rosicrucian, maybe their secret leader. Waite said that, in his diary, written in Latin, Andreae called his novel "a joke." These occultists claim the same word could have meant an "educational game." Of course, Waite also reports that, in his diary, Andreae called the novel "my monster", and you never hear them trying to reinterpret that.

One thing Waite mentions, I find very important, although others do not. Before 1633, the Rosicrucians were Lutheran. However, Waite points out, in that year, Robert Fludd, the famous occultist of that era, claimed that they were nondenominational. Slowly, nondenominational Rosicrucians did pop up.

So much for the historical record that Waite verifies. Now for the historical record he debunks. He debunks that Sir Francis Bacon was the leader of the Rosicrucians; and that he wrote not only Shakespeare but most famous Elizabethan literary works.

Waite debunks that the Count Saint-Germain was a Rosicrucian, and lived thousands of years. He debunks that Freemasonry was born out of Rosicrucianism. Rosicrucianism has adopted far more from Freemasonry than Freemasonry from Rosicrucianism.

On the other hand, Waite verifies some tales about the Rosicrucians. He verifies that a Rosicrucian lodge patronized by Frederick Wilhelm II took control of Prussia in the late 18th Century. Also, he verifies that the alchemist Michael Maier and the famous occultist Robert Fludd believed in the Rosicrucians.

In particular, Waite delves into the origin of the rosy cross symbol of Rosicrucianism. He debunks candidates such as the Pagan Rose, the Song of Solomon Rose, the Shekhinah Rose, the Virgin Mary Rose, Dante's Rose, the Zoharic Rose, the alchemical Ros Dew, etc.

Instead, Waite finds that the Rose Cross comes from Martin Luther's Coat of Arms. This makes sense. The Rosicrucians of the first two manifestos were vainly attempting to wrap themselves in the Lutheranism of their country. They may have adopted the symbol from the mystic Simon Studion, who wrote ten years before and made the Rosy Cross into a religious symbol.

Also in particular, this crusty skeptic delves into the incredible number of theories that the Rosicrucians had a pre-1614 existence, maybe even an Ancient existence: e.g., the legends of Ormesis, Raymond Lully, Battista Porta and Paracelsus.

The two best such theories are not the most prominent here. In fact, one is not here at all; Waite fumed about it in another book.

Waite does mention the theory that the Rosicrucians arose in Atlantis and flourished in Egypt under the pharaohs. However, for once, he does not bother to debunk a theory like that. I am sure the reason is its creator Paschal Randolph, founder of American Rosicrucianism, admitted his ideas had no historical basis at all.

The theory Waite omits in this book is Hargreave Jennings', that the original Rosicrucians were phallic worshipping Phoenicians. Other sources inform me the actual theory is even more ridiculous: these phallic worshipers were Buddhists and once settled Ireland.

Why do I find these pre-1614 theories the best? So I can criticize Waite; and other writers, both believers and skeptics. Although none of these theories of the heart are based on one shred of sound evidence, they are not equal. A few are for many people as important as the history of the documents and facts. Often even more important.

Randolph's is still flourishing in the beliefs of the AMORC Rosicrucians, which, I have heard, have spread to France. Jennings' history, while popular in the 19th Century, is deader than a dodo, done in because the mind set that supported it disappeared. Waite may have chosen not to speak of it because it was dead by 1924.

That brings me to my conclusion. This book is a great monument of scholarship. As far as I am concerned, Waite's style and rarified atmosphere only marred it a little. What mars it a lot is that he does not see myth, in its way, has as much value as history. Maybe more.

A WHOLE NEW MIND Moving from the Information Age to the Conceptual Age

by Daniel H. Pink

(Riverhead Books; 2005; 260 pages/indexed;
\$24.95; ISBN # 1573223085)

Reviewed by Jim Sullivan

Certainly the Agricultural Age and the Industrial Age have been long gone from the U.S. But didn't the Information Age just get here? Now that era is over, too. It certainly didn't last long. That's because today jobs can be done as well overseas, and cheaper, also.

The changeover in America is quite evident everywhere you look. Globalization, outsourcing of jobs, corporations relocating overseas, plants closing, unions losing strength, real wages not keeping up with inflation, unemployment, trade deficits, budget deficits, skyrocketing national debt, and more. Yes, the U.S. has got troubles in many areas not the least of which in the employment arena.

Most Americans during the all too brief Information Age had been taught and trained to do their thinking with the left side of the brain. It encompassed linear, logical, and methodical thinking. And such people as computer programmers, lawyers, medical doctors, bankers, accountants prospered. But that was yesterday.

Now, and in the future, during the Conceptual Age, to be specific, success goes to

those who use, or learn to use, and employ the right side of their brains. That's the creative, intuitive, artistic area. Americans will have to become more imaginative in order to find personally meaningful and decently compensated work from now on. Artists, designers, conceptualizers, and synthesizers all have a future in this country.

Right-brain thinking has six important components. This half dozen are: design, the concept that a product or service needs to be planned on paper before coming to fruition; story, the item being created has to relate, and be relayed by, a story, anecdote, or meaningful message; symphony, the product or idea has to flow, to fit in, to conform; empathy, to sell any product or service, you must be able to put yourself in another person's shoes to feel his or her emotions and thoughts; play, a big part of the future is coordinating playtime with worktime, and vice versa, for out of such time changes arise usable ideas; and meaning, any effort has to mean something personally to those creating and to those purchasing said product or idea. With all these factors mastered, you can confidently face the newly changed worklife in America and thrive not just survive in it. And the best news of all, everyone is capable of becoming a right-brain thinking person. Therefore, the future looks bright.

The author writes, "The last few decades have belonged to a certain kind of person with a certain kind of mind — computer programmers who could crank code, lawyers who could craft contracts, MBAs who could crunch numbers. But the keys to the kingdom are changing hands. The future belongs to a very different kind of person with a very different kind of mind — creators and empathizers, pattern recognizers, and meaning makers. These people — artists, inventors, designers, storytellers, caregivers, consolers, big picture thinkers — will now reap society's richest rewards and share its greatest joys."

Daniel H. Pink and family reside in Washington DC. He has written an earlier best seller entitled *Free Agent Nation*. Pink also writes for magazines, among them: *Wired*, *Slate*, *Salon*, and *Fast Company*. He also lectures widely.

Recommended

MARS CROSSING

by Geoffrey A. Landis
(2000; Tor; \$24.95 hc)
Review by E. B. Frohvet

The first Mars expedition came — and died. The second came and got away, but failed to make it back to Earth. This is the story of the third; which came, ran into big time trouble, and found their only hope of survival lay in crossing thousands of kilometers of Mars's cold deserts.

As might be expected of the genuine NASA scientist that Dr. Landis is, this offers a lot more scientific credibility than Bradbury or Varley or even K.S. Robinson. What it fails to produce is their style, intensity, or human involvement. The writing is what you might expect of a scientist, accurate but flat. A plethora of brief flashbacks

prove more irritating than effective at transforming cardboard cutouts into believable characters. The setting is the real hero here, and it's interesting, but not nearly enough to carry 331 pages.

NAVOHAR

by Hilari Bell
(2000; Roc; \$6.99 pb)
Review by E. B. Frohvet

When the alien Vrell invaded Earth, they were immune to most conventional weapons. Terrans in desperation struck back with hastily designed bioweapons. Which won the battle, or at least drove the aliens away; but also had unplanned consequences on the human population. All of this predates the story, which has the starship Henry Stanley landing on the colony world Navohar to check on how the colony is doing. Biologist Irene Olsen and her dying nephew Mark are surprised to find the humans have abandoned the settlement and adopted a nomadic life in cooperation with camel-like native hexapods. More shocking, they have access to a microscopic organism that can cure almost everything. If Irene can isolate it and return it to Earth, it will be a huge achievement. If.

Did not Brian Stableford do a whole series in the 1970's of a Terran starship seeking out lost colonies? Think of Navohar as a Shangri-la story with a twist. Elevating the camels into roles as major characters seems like an odd note. More importantly, though-, the book's leisurely style — "I'm going to tell this story at my own pace, take it or leave it" is the attitude — condemns it to the mid-list, at a time when the mid-list is a vanishing category.

FANZINES

Banana Wings #24 November 2005

Claire Brialey and Mark Plummer, 59 Shirley Road, Croydon, Surrey CR0 &ES, UNITED KINGDOM
banana@fishlifter.demon.co.uk

Nova Award for Best Fan Writer (Claire Brialey)
Nova Award for Best Fanzine

Beyond Bree October 2005, November 2005

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

Catchpenny Gazette #11 October 2005, #12 November 2005

David Burton, 5227 Emma Drive, Lawrence, IN 46236-2742 USA
catchpenny@mw.net
<http://www.efanzines.com>
<http://www.geocities.com/cpgzine>

eI # 22 October 2005

Earl Kemp, Post Office Box 6642, Kingman, AZ 86402-6642 USA
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File 770:145

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<http://www.efanzines.com>
<http://ourworld.compuserve.com/homepages/mglyer/F770/index.html>

The Knarley Knews # 133 September 2005, #134 November 2005

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

Lofgeornost #81

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MT Void V. 24 #15 October 7, 2005 — V. 24 #22, November 25, 2005

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Nice Distinctions #11 September 2005

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[hlabaty@panix.com](mailto:hlavaty@panix.com)
<http://www.efanzines.com>
<http://www.livejournal.com/users/supergee>

Nth Degree #14 October 2005

8600 Queensmere Place #2, Richmond VA 23294-4847 USA
editor@nthzine.com
<http://www.nthzine.com>

Opuntia # 58.5 October 2005, #59 November 2005

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

Peregrine Nations V. 5 #2 July 2005

Jan G. Stinson, Post Office Box 248, Eastlake, MI 49626-0248 USA
tropicsf@earthlink.net
<http://www.efanzines.com>

Vanamonde # 603-612

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

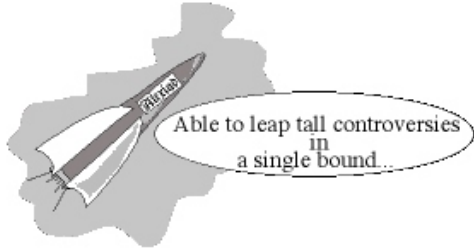
Visions of Paradise #103

Robert Michael Sabella, 24 Cedar Manor Court, Budd Lake, NJ 07828-1023 USA
bsabella@optonline.net
<http://adamosf.blogspot.com>
<http://visionsofparadise.blogspot.com>

The Zine Dump #10

Guy H. Lillian III, 8700 Millicent Way #1501, Shreveport LA 71115- USA
ghliiii@yahoo.com
<http://www.challzine.net>

Letters, we get letters



From: **Bill Breuer** October 8, 2005
 Louisville, KY
sciwriter1@juno.com

In addition to my making my international debut as the male lead in 'Same Time Next Year' this Fall, I want to alert fans to a great production in Louisville next October: FRANKENSTEIN. This original adaptation of Shelley's famous work will be a very serious treatment with updated ideologic and scientific concepts and conflicts — though it will be set in the general time period of her story. It is a show that delivers the 'Your most horrible nightmares will return!' chills as it will be to some degree in the old horror-suspense genre. I have one of the three lead roles but will wait until another time to reveal more 'inside' information.

In the original, the monster could speak — was quite eloquent, in fact, and spiritually afflicted by his monstrous nature. At MilPhilCon I saw 4SJ do the "animation" scene from the Universal movie, and they got the spirit of the book down wonderfully well.

— JTM

From: **Steven H Silver** October 11, 2005
 707 Sapling Lane, Deerfield, IL 60015-3969 USA
shsilver@att.net

Johnny Carruthers reviewed Nestle's Yorkie bar. I was first introduced to this bit of chocolate in 1987 when I spent some time living in a small town in Lincolnshire, England. At the time, Yorkies were made by MacKintosh-Rowntree and the package was similar to the one Johnny described, but without the politically incorrect wrapper. When I first saw the revised wrapper, introduced well after Nestle bought M-R, I learned that it was an advertising campaign based on the size of the chocolate bar.

That said, it was a much better bar when it was made by M-R. It was creamier and divided into seven rectangles (now it is divided into five and is nowhere near as creamy). It still is a good candy bar, and I still buy them whenever

I can, but they are no longer as good as they once were. I curse Nestle for changing the formula, yet tonight I will open a Yorkie in honor of Johnny's review.

When are we going to see Lancasterie candy?

— LTM

I must applaud the insight of contributor Steven Silver for his article on Betty Ballantine and hope the fannish community recognizes her achievements and contributions while she is still around to see that recognition, just as I hope (against hope) that some of the Apollo astronauts can be around to see the return of men (or women) to the moon. That is a hope which has been expressed to me by both David Scott and Gene Cernan. I've had the privilege, over the years, of meeting one moonwalker from each flight, as well as a couple of the command module pilots. You mentioned SpaceShipOne, but didn't mention the fact that it, like The Spirit of Saint Louis, is now hanging in the Smithsonian.

That hadn't happened when I took the issue to the printer.

— JTM

Just to clarify your comments on *Argentus* in the fanzines received section, The Special Edition (gameshows) is only available for download. *Argentus* #5 (the Alliterative *Argentus*) is available for download or in a dead tree format.

From: **Rodney Leighton** October 4, 2005
 11 Branch Road, R. R. #3,
 Tatmagouche, Nova Scotia B0K 1V0
 CANADA

Well, I have, recently, considered a lettersub thing. And also suspending all non-family correspondence. But . . . a few weeks ago, as I may have mentioned, I was pondering a one page copied announcement to the effect that I was temporarily suspending correspondence, discontinuing all small press activities and trading. Not only did I not have the money to drive to Staples nor the money to get it copied, I also decided it was not reasonable or fair. Thought about it occasionally for a couple of weeks. And then for about a month I wondered if I had somehow sent it out via esp or something. In the span of a month I received something like 3 fanzines and 4 letters.

I appreciate Lisa thinking about me but I doubt that Staples hires anyone who is computer illiterate. You even need computer skills to pump gas these days; well, almost every place is self serve now and I almost always pump my own so that observation is not valid but you do need computer abilities to be an attendant at a gas station; which I know because I looked at an ad for such a person once. It looks very much like I am going to have to change "careers" although how I am going to go about that and where I am going to go is beyond me.

I have work; people down the road used

their own money and set up a job for me, which will last until November, or thereabouts. Talking to my main employer yesterday he says there is no money available for silviculture and he doesn't know if it will open up by Nov. or not. I might be able to survive the winter if I make some moves and cut some corners. Trade my 2003 truck for an old clunker or perhaps a new smaller, cheaper, cheaper to operate vehicle. Limit my food shopping to essentials and actually use the food I have . . . I counted up a few weeks ago; provided it is all edible and remains so, I have enough meat in my freezers to make one meal a day for 2 years. Leaving cigars for other people to smoke will please my body as well as saving some money. Cancel all the book club memberships except the one I just started.

One thing I am planning to do is that this week or next I am going to go to Truro; buy a ribbon or 2 for this machine and go to the bitty secondhand bookstore and trade in some books and pick up a few. And then, theoretically, I will learn to spell.

In theory, I am not buying any more ribbons for this thing for some time, until various things come together. I do have a couple of ribbons for my mother's typewriter and one for another machine. Essentially what I am doing is continuing writing and informing people that letters will be longer in coming than usual and may be a long time in coming. And I am making some moves. I have a few people who send me packages of things; I always try to send something back. Going to stop that. No more locs per se.

Of course, there are few fanzines to consider any longer, for me. Even if Jan survives, she likely has enormous debts; I will tell her not to bother sending me a copy even if she does continue. Although it is possible that Henry has decided to hold off on a new issue until that con he is hosting or has been having problems at school or something, for *TKK* to be this late is unheard of in my experience and I imagine he must have encountered something horrible. Bob has switched *Visions of Paradise* to twice a year. I think there is a new *FOSFAX* scheduled; I believe I told Tim to not send me a copy if doing so would be a burden. Who knows when there will be another *Plokta* and more importantly who knows when their US agent will decide to mail it? John says I am welcome to *Vanamonde* forever with no response required. And I think that leaves only you, when it comes to sf fanzines.

What I say is: print anything I write that you wish to as long as I don't identify it as being not for publication. Recognize the fact that letters will continue although they may well be a considerable time in coming; no locs per se unless I see something which requires a response and probably no contributions submitted.

Although I have 6 of the books in Stephen King's *The Dark Tower* saga and I understand the seventh and, supposedly, finally, the last one, is coming out next month and I hope to get that and I have had some notion about writing something about that. But who knows.

Well, Sadie B. Hawkins is wailing about it being a new dawn and a new day and it is, in fact, 6:30 and time for me to make a couple of sandwiches; load the truck, and go cut down a few thousand small trees, make a few dollars and come home and do a little work and then relax.

Well, I had a decent day at work, came home and found 2 items in the mailbox which went straight into the recyclables bag and had a night filled with dreams; my mother pleading with me to go to hospital because I had pneumonia, which is actually a memory with the roles reversed; and mother dying and returning to life and then stretched out in a field somewhere and dying as I leaned on a shovel and watched until I started crying and then woke up crying. Ah, man, a shrink would have fun with me if I could remember these dreams in any detail and was foolish enough to go see one.

Very summer-like weather here. 62 at quarter to 6 in the a.m.

Sometime before this job started I was talking to the female half of the partnership and mentioned that I might soon go bankrupt but didn't really care. I then had to endure a long harangue about how lucky I am, just look at all the people blasted by Katrina; I don't have a 9 year old daughter in the hospital dying of cancer and etc. I am too polite these days to argue much and besides it was looking like she might provide some employment; I just waited her out and then stated that all those things were bad but they had nothing to do with me and had no effect on me. I hoped the Lillians were not hurt too much but other than that I had no connection to any of that.

But lately there seems to be lots of evidence of other folks having worse troubles than me. Jan with her health problems. One of the letters I got casually mentioned that he is having serious problems with his brother over the inheritance from their recently deceased parents, something which I did not have to endure. Another, from Australia, gave as "excuses" for a long delay in writing that he had spent 5 weeks in the USA and then had to deal with a major family crisis which is "way too painful and complicated to explain". So, I have always known other folks have worse troubles than I do; that fact seems to be strong currently.

I usually take my vehicles to a dealership for maintenance; the last few years have usually been under warranty, not that such covers oil changes. Although I may look at a Kia, which does. One Chevy dealer in Truro aggravates people to get all sorts of expensive inspections and unnecessary services performed. The salesman when I bought this truck said no, it was not required to have things done at a dealership, just keep records for warranty purposes. I did always have them done at the dealership in Amherst and the GMC dealership in Truro.

Last time I had no money and was going to run over. I had bought, just before work disappeared, 4 new tires . . . \$800 . . . at a place just outside Tatamagouche. They also do oil changes and such. At the dealership you need to make an appointment at least 3 days in advance.

And expect to spend at least 45 minutes on site and spend a minimum of \$35 for oil, filter, etc. Called Tatamagouche Auto Parts at 10 in the morning; got an appointment for 2:00 p.m.; arrived and drove straight onto the hoist; 20 minutes later paid over a bit over \$28 and drove off the hoist and home. And saved about \$25 in gas costs.

I took the Taurus in to have the oil changed at an oil change place because they offered a cheap price, but they nag you into getting other things that jack the price up. So I took it to the dealers next time, and they rotated the tires as well for the same price (though they also tried to get me to have them rebalanced).

— JTM

Sophie B Hawkins; don't know where the Sadie came from, is once again wailing about a new day. I think I am done. There looks like a strong possibility that I will have to visit Truro in January; that may be the next time I buy ribbons for this machine after the upcoming purchase. I could, I suppose, try to learn the meaning of concise but I think I will write what I wish to and if I don't have any ribbon, I won't write anything.

October 28, 2005

I have usually driven GM trucks; Chev dealer a few years ago; well, no doubt they still do, had a service guy who is very aggressive about trying to get things done the GM way. Pay lots of money for unnecessary inspections and such, in other words. He was insisting that I should go in and have oil change and so forth and tire rotation every 10,000 km. The guy who sold me saws and repaired them was also an automobile mechanic for many years and a really good one. I asked him what he thought about tire rotation. He said: "As long as nothing goes wrong, why change it?"

In other words, leave the tires alone. I don't bother with tire rotation.

Happy birthday to Lisa if she still pays attention to such things.

Thank you for the birthday wishes.

— LTM

Mum always made my birthday a special day; come to visit, make a cake; make something for supper I especially enjoyed; bring some gifts with her. Stay for a week or so. The year she died I was still really out of it come mid July but I found my birthday rough. I made it plain to everyone that I wanted no mention of it. This year was just another day; I don't think there was anything to distinguish it from any other boring day. Sister bought those Lewi's books as a birthday present but I didn't see them until September.

Thanks for the latest *Alexiad* which arrived someday not too long ago. I used to note the arrival date of zines but haven't done so of late.

Early this week I believe I read the letter section and some other stuff. I have actually been reading your book reviews and quite enjoyed the review of the dvd Roman tv series. Put it in my rotation. I finished that Koontz story last night. I may have read that book before. In any event *Alexiad* is now in rotation with *Stalkers*.

Talked to my most steady employer the other day. Things do not look hopeful. I gotta do something; what is the question. Just got a couple of books about that. Probably won't be of any help.

From: **Joy V. Smith** October 13, 2005
8925 Selph Road, Lakeland, FL 33810-0341 USA
Pagadan@aol.com
<http://journals.aol.com/pagadan/JoysJournal/>

That *Rome* series sounds like the real thing — blood & guts & sex & politics & accurate armaments, . . . (I miss Xena.) Thanks for the book reviews too. I haven't read any of Bujold's fantasy. (I'm waiting faithfully for Miles.) I haven't read most of the other series either; Jack Williamson's *The Stonehenge Gate* sounds intriguing. (I love portals.)

Vorenius would find her un-Roman, and Pullo would say something coarse and then try to grope Gabrielle (he has more sense than to go after the one with the sharp and pointy objects). Assuming Atia (or Servilia!) hadn't invited her/them to share her . . . er, roof for the night.

— JTM

The Great Game sounds interesting with fictional spy examples included. I imagine that the title came from *Kim*? *Empires of the Word: A Language History of the World* sounds like another interesting book, also *The Cherryh Odyssey*. I'm glad someone found her worthy of such a collection of articles. And kudos to Janine Stinson for being included!

I also enjoyed the candy bar reviews. I'll keep an eye out for Smarties. Btw, did you know that you can order personalized M&Ms? Thanks to Sue Burke for her Spanish eclipse report. Great round-up of fanzines, including *Argentus* Special Edition #5 (game show edition).

Re: LOCs. They're sending real mail Nigerian spam?! I haven't seen *March of the Penguins* yet, but most people seem to have enjoyed it, and I plan to see it. Btw, *Wallace and Gromit* has some real funny bits, and the penguin cartoon with it is very funny.

To Dainis Bisenieks: I like your little book review of *Thud!*, which I'm rereading now. "Thought is required, just as it is in science fiction. Indeed, Terry is guilty of literature." Well said! Have you read *Where's My Cow?* (I bought them together from the SF Book Club.)

From: **Dainis Bisenieks** October 12, 2005
921 S. St. Bernard Street, Philadelphia, PA 19143-3310 USA

Is there to be no end to re-fighting the Civil War? I have no fondness for what I call tea-leaf reading, such as we find, e.g., in the pages of *Newsweek*. What will be the consequences of the latest nomination to the Supreme Court? Of elections in various states? Will I, after reading these lucubrations, have anything that can be even remotely described as knowledge? No. As for retroactive futurism: supposing the will of the U.S. to fight it out to the end was sapped in 1864, I cannot imagine the Confederacy having it all its own way. Control of the Mississippi is paramount; could the U.S. possibly give up all its territorial gains? Something else as I see as a problem is paying off the costs of the war on both sides. As is well known, the war was financed on both sides by the issuance of notes . . . which were not at the time accepted at par with *real* money, that is to say, gold. In actual history, the U.S. eventually redeemed all its notes, the original "greenbacks". Confederate paper, of course, became worthless. What it said on Confederate notes was more or less this: Such-and-such a time after the conclusion of a treaty of peace between the U.S.A. and the C.S.A., the C.S.A. will pay . . . that is to say, in *real* money. Of which there will be damn little except as the South recovers its prosperity: by whuppin' slaves and sellin' cotton. (And waiting for the *Robert E. Lee*.) And will prosperity be there on time?

In Bring the Jubilee, the U.S. was impoverished because it had been unable to redeem the issuance of greenbacks; to some extent, of course, Moore was reversing the consequent circumstances after reversing the conclusion of the war. It's fair to say that a surviving Confederacy would have financial difficulties, and as a raw-materials producer, have other problems.

As background to what strikes me as a properly dramatic story, I am willing to go with tolerably believable assumptions, shown in no more than everyday prices that come up in the course of the story. Enough that I see here a problem that (like the facilities at Caras Galadhon) cannot be overlooked without a loss of plausibility.

But infodumps, or the sort of dialogue obviously meant to feed information to the reader, do not sit well with me. Naming no names . . .

How much was letter-rate postage in the 1920s? I rather believe it was 2¢. It had been to 3¢ around the WW I years but then went down to 2¢ and didn't rise to 3¢ until the 1930s. If you had no more than a stamp catalogue, the denomination of special issues, those that didn't come in sets, would give you a clue. I used to have a source of information, also some overlooked remnants of a stamp collection (or accumulation) that had some sold off years previously. I still have some whole and broken sheets of "Farley Follies" — the one dealer I approached wouldn't even make me an offer on

them. Singles of these are still found in cheap sets sold to tyros. Cheap, but not so cheap that the dealers don't turn a tidy profit.

(FDR's postmaster thought to amuse his boss with "unique" ungummed unperforated sheets, but public outcry forced him to offer the same to the public . . . in quantities that seem to have been good for all time.)

I don't collect boughten things as a rule, scarcely even swapped ones. My wheat-ear cents, which I keep in a typewriter-ribbon tin, are either from circulation or found atop of rain-washed soil. A self-limiting hobby, see! I started with a 1909 cent found here in Philly; the finds of earlier years had been given to young persons. The finds of recent months have included dimes of 1914 and 1954 and a crummy cent of 1889. Silver tends to remain white; the state of preservation of copper varies widely; cupronickel promptly turns brown, and the corrosion just keeps going deeper.

On C. J. Cherryh: I noted long ago that some of her SF novels had exactly the form of contemporary-scene novels in the world of the story. But would it be necessary to write a full-scale academic paper pointing out just how this is done in one or a number of the novels? That way lies tedium. And it was, I recall, in *Rusalka* that I became *too* aware of the prevalence of protagonists who didn't know who their friends or where their enemies were, or when if ever they could have a bath.



Athelstan King, now, made an arrangement at Jamrud Fort — on the premise of his survival — for a bath. Which he duly had on his return from Kinjan; one cake of soap did not suffice.

In Maurice Baring's *Dead Letters*, "From the Mycenae Papers", we read:

Sunium

Dear Clytemnestra,

We have had a very good journey, and I shall reach Mycenae the day after tomorrow in the morning. Please have a hot bath ready for me. I am bringing Cassandra with me. She had better have the room looking north, as she hates the sun. She is very nervous and upset, and you must be kind to her.

Your loving husband,
Agamemnon

One wonders if Norman Bates

thought of Klytemnestra when he went to check on the new visitor.

Alas, "Good and ill wear each a mask . . ."

Gawd, "Dry Bones" is still going? Of the *Jerusalem Post* I see only the weekly magazine, sent by a friend; in it, I cherished the columns of Alex Berlyne, now deceased. It's been ages since I bought the first two paperback collections of "Dry Bones" . . . and had them autographed in the city where the Seelie Court and the Unseelie Court duked it out. (Awright, who spotted the allusion?) Kirschen even added a sketch of his character, which he did with a speed that I have witnessed in Rotsler and in Gilliland.

Er, I know who wrote "Black Friar of the Flame", I just wanted to see who'd spot the allusion. In the fifties I had a pretty thorough collection of pulps, excluding *Weird Tales* and *Unknown*. I had *that*, and the issue in which the signature of a LoC came out as "Isaac Asenion". Oh, the stuff I had, *knowing* that I'd never read anything except the LoCs. They had a style, many of them. I got the feeling of having shared in that time, though in actuality I was but a tad, and in a foreign country at that. By age seven I was reading Verne's *In Search of the Castaways*; I could have been ready for SF had there been any. That had to wait until 1949 or '50, when the resources of American public libraries opened to me.

The nosiness of the cat can be a bit much, but on the whole I am pleased by the dear creature, whose official name, by the way, is Thisby. I thought of it as a nice cat-calling vocable . . . yet I don't actually use it. I find that calling is of no effect; it may attract her attention, but she comes only when she is in the mood. Which is often enough. One sterling merit is that she does not shed one percent of the fur that the former cat did.

October 15 was marked by taking Sarang and Red Wull to the vet for their shots. This required sleeping with the bedroom door open, then isolating them and inserting them into carriers, driving through Louisville at quarter after seven on a moonlit pre-dawn Saturday morning . . .

Joe uses the word insert as if the cats did not resist this process to the best of their ability. We were able to take Sarang by surprise but not Wullie. He squirmed in several different directions at once, sank his claws into the bedspread and at the last managed to delay several seconds by tangling his claws in the cage door.

— LTM

We don't have HBO, we don't have cable, and I don't care much for sex and violence on the screen. It is difficult for the screen to *comment* on sex and violence. Take for example, female gladiators . . . er gladiatrices? Examples can be found in *The Jupiter Myth* by Lindsey Davis and in *Render Unto Caesar* by

Gillian Bradshaw. Whatever these novels might seem to offer in the way of thrills, it is tempered by the view given of them as suffering and mortal human beings. More could be said, but both novels are recent enough to be findable.

Ought the first paragraph of your review of *The Hallowed Hunt* be taken as a dig at the Miles Vorkosigan stories? Clearly Bujold did not want to write stories that did not show Miles *changing*. Or some other character showing a side never before revealed.

A publisher, not to mention fan pressure, would want to see Processed Miles Product, as in Processed Cheese Product, a totally predictable, familiar old story, such a novel every year, guaranteed sales, guaranteed results. It looks good on the balance sheet and gives a certain kind of reader what he or she wants. The Tratyn Runewind approach (one of the saving graces of *Bimbos of the Death Sun*), in other words. I liked it that Bujold did not go that way.

— JTM

Note to Robert S. Kennedy; the hardcover *Tros of Samothrace* comprised the material done in four paperbacks by Avon and three paperbacks by Zebra. How the division went in earlier serialization, I do not know. It might be interesting to watch for places where a new episode might properly be taken to begin; or was recapitulation written out when the big book was compiled? Zelazny's "Amber" books had, after the first, bits of recapitulation. Some years ago an omnibus edition appeared. If the opportunity was not taken to edit out those bits, it damn well should have been.

Any typo may be a transcription error . . . but I'd like to reassure readers that I *did* spell the name Subrahmanyam correctly.

Typos elsewhere: My copy of Hawking's *Theory of Everything* has, beside other errors, a couple of figures beginning with 10 that should continue as exponentials. Which makes them errors of rather a great many orders of magnitude, more than the six (a matter of strings of zeroes) that I once detected in a popular science book. Back then, as a parting shot to the author I meant to write, "What's six orders of magnitude between friends?" But I never did.

Philadelphia just lately had six inches of rain in a midnight-to-midnight day, a record; but little more before and after. Seepage into the basement was not too awful . . . it had only just begun to come from the other half of the duplex. I delegated cleanup to my son.

From: **E. B. Frohvet** October 14, 2005
4716 Dorsey Hall Drive #506, Ellicott
City MD 21042-5988 USA

The "Maryland Million", a special day of racing exclusively for Maryland-bred horses (think Breeders' Cup on local terms) had to be

postponed a week after five+ inches of rain in the preceding 24 hours rendered the Laurel Park racecourse unusable. On a related topic, the special committee to select a site for the "Maryland Horse Farm" — presumably patterned after yours in Kentucky — has chosen a location west of Annapolis, off I-97/Route 3. The primary reason was its accessibility from Baltimore, Washington, and Laurel.

I imagine that I will continue contributing LOC's and some reviews to *Alexiad*. In view of the fact that I may be cutting down on articles after this year, I trust that will suffice.

Happy birthday, Lisa.

Thanks.

— LTM

The first two weeks of October have been highly productive for getting fanzines. Alas, I predict a corresponding drought in November.

Ah, that's Nhi Vanye. "Nhi" being his family or clan name.

"Random Jottings": I was joking about a satellite of "Xena". You mean it actually happened?

"Award Well Deserved": I read this in *Argentus*; and while I have no problem with honoring Betty Ballantine, I will reiterate the view that there are too many awards already.

Ways to cope with your anxiety: What Dr. Restak is apparently recommending is cognitive therapy, which is based on the principle of convincing the patient that his assessment of the situation is, by definition, false. Psychiatry appears to rule out the chance that the patient may actually understand himself.

Given that the DSM-IV cites as a symptom of mental illness "Patient thinking he's not mentally ill" I would tend to agree.

— JTM

Trinlay Khadro: When I was cat-sitting for friends, the cat slept on my bed, calmly getting up and moving to accommodate me when I moved. Perhaps she was on her best behavior, being a guest in my house . . . It's commonly known in the insurance business that the Social Security Administration is hopelessly backlogged on holding hearings; the usual wait is 18 to 24 months . . .

Local Mystery: I can think of numerous reasons why the local authorities could have scrapped the abandoned boat years ago. I suggest they were either lazy or just didn't care.

Joy Smith says, "There never be too many awards." With all due regard to you, my friend, I strenuously disagree.

Lloyd Penney: I decline to vote on the FAAN Awards. Why should I support an exclusionary group which has clearly shown that it is personally hostile to me? The same applies to TAFF which has been taken over as a subscript of CorfluCult. The FAAN Awards can go to hell, and you can quote me on that.

Richard Dengrove: Teenagers have been making up new slang, new customs, and new music for generations; mostly for the exact

purpose of confusing and pissing off their elders. To get upset over this normal behavior is pointless. Go with it.

Taras Wolansky: I'll stick with my prediction that when/if the extraterrestrials arrive organized religion will in the main reject the evidence of their own senses and refuse to believe it.

Sheryl Birkhead: I'd get a second quote on that flue. It may well be true that it would not pass updated codes, but getting another opinion would do no harm. The last time I called to have my chimney cleaned, the guy shone a light up the flue, and casually said, "You're fine. Call me next year." I paid him \$15 for his time. Previously I scrounged free firewood, but this year I decided it was too much work, and bought half a cord for \$40.

From: **Trinlay Khadro** October 18, 2005
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I've started sending some of my art work, knitted goods, and origami to cons. Most recently Arcon, ConStellation, and by the time this sees print, Windycon and Chambanacn. I'm not able to go much but my work can.

I'm also putting some of my crafts up on eBay; again some of the knitted goods, the origami dragons, and hand-bound journals. My eBay name is "trinlayk" and my eBay shop is "Silly Kitty".

I checked and you had nothing but positive comments. Looks like you can be trusted. What happens when you get those phishing emails about your eBay account?

I've also bought some things on eBay; but I'm being careful, don't want to spend all my earnings. (I bought origami paper and shoes.)

Of course since I'm making most of the stuff in my shop I can also take requests. It's keeping me busy.

KT is back to school and enjoying her last semester of High School. She's eying UWM as a place to start out as she figures out what she'd like to do.

Milwaukee fandom is getting revved up for Halloween. KT is looking for an idea to go with the theme of "Star Wars Job Fair" for the production put on at Lytheria for the trick-or-treaters. (I'll be cocoa mom again, keeping the performers warm and fueled up.)

For the Halloween party I'm pondering a costume as Autumn or merely October. I'm knitting a shawl for it over the next few days.

I think New Orleans will return to much of its former glory. I agree with Lisa in that they need to have a better solution to dealing with influx of water. Levees are only effective up to a certain point. If they build them too high they're more likely to collapse under pressure.

When we had flooding in our neighborhood a few years ago we had minnows in the basement. Closer to the creek, foundations were

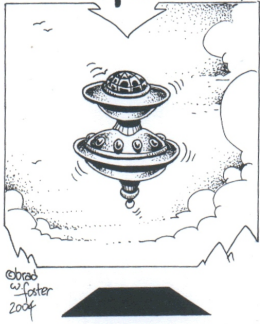
undermined and some were washed out.

Despite claims of it being a "hundred year flood" those homes were not rebuilt. There is now about a lot-deep and several lots long park where the homes were. Also one of the soccer fields was "sunk" so that next time we have a storm like that, there'll be a better place for the water to go. (There's a flight of steps down to the soccer field.) Trees are also being planted on almost every available bit of public land. Drainage ditches have also been cleared out.

Then again we aren't twenty feet below sea level. If I were an engineer I might have some suggestions for New Orleans. Would a series of levees in concentric pattern help? There are some huge holes in my education of which I am sometimes painfully aware.

Re: moon trip: I suspect it will be a very long time before we see Americans on the moon again, or Mars. China might get there though; eventually.

SHOCKING UFO FACT #173



CIRCULAR VEHICLES
ALWAYS CAST SQUARE
SHADOWS. UNBELIEVABLE?
(WELL, OF COURSE!)

I haven't caught Rome on TV. I don't even remember to turn on my regular shows till an hour or two later. (I did pretty well health-wise all summer but autumn is rough.) I like how your review are peppered (gently) with appropriate side cracks.

Is this the time to coax the tale of Daniel Boone's wife and her brother-in-law? (Gee, where would

the Romans have been if they had DNA testing?) History could provide fuel and plot lines for hundreds of soap operas.

Daniel Boone was kept by the Shawnee for two years. He came home and found his wife had a less-than-a-year old infant. Her explanation: "Your brother came by." Dan'l Boone was a man, yes a big man . . .

So a ½ human ¼ orc ¼ elf averages out to "basically human"?

Re: Dr. Restak. Some people with anxiety disorders (like Uncle's OCD) don't seem to have any cause in reality or in that person's inner life. I think that Uncle's anxiety is that, in part, his life is so free of real problems that "Oh I need to take care of something" comes through his mind as "Oh My God oh MY GOD I gotta take care of this . . . I don't think I can handle it myself OMG! OMG! . . ." I suspect there is a biochemical cause since he's NOT the only one in the family plagued with "free floating anxiety".

For me, knitting has turned out to be good

therapy.

As for Janice Crosby, finding real men like Nils Vanye "the stuff of legends", maybe part of her problem is 1) she hasn't had much luck in relationships and 2) like me, she has worked in many places where women did all the real work and men got all the credit and big paychecks. (I've worked in maybe nine different jobs over my lifespan and four of them were clueless males in management positions and women, often single mothers, being bullied into working excess hours and giving up vacation time for a pittance . . .) Daycare assistance covers forty hours and the employer says "You must work fifty hours the rest of the year or you'll be fired."

Talking about single mothers and clueless male superiors:

". . . I saw three big, hairy, male men promoted over my head and not one of them could do a partial integration without a pencil. Presently I figured out that the Atomic Energy Commission has a bias on the subject of women no matter what the civil service rules said. So I took a job dealing blackjack. Luna City didn't offer much choice in those days — and I had you to support."

— The Rolling Stones, Chapter One Heinlein's Children, discussing this and the other juveniles, is coming out in January. Books make great Christmas presents. <Advt.>

Yorkie Candy Bars: What do they mean, "not for girls"? I've noted that males don't get the same rush out of chocolate that we females do. If there's an exception I haven't met a guy yet who'll admit to experiencing chocolate bliss.

Rodney: Smarties are a little tart crunchy candy here, M&Ms are disks of chocolate with a candy coating; they're approximately 8 mm wide and maybe 3 mm thick. I guess I'll have to send you some eventually.

Sue Burke: The last time we enjoyed an eclipse here was several years ago. Very cool but nowhere near the 90% you had.

Alexis: In addition to the Japanese being the only ones producing hybrids at this point. As expensive as fuel is here it's even higher in Japan. In the past few years their government has provided a significant tax break for installing solar collectors on their homes. No one is really "off the grid" but it's brought down the demand on more traditional fuel sources.

You know it's winter in Wisconsin when the cat joins you under the quilt.

The other day, I came home from work nauseated and had to lie down. When I put my feet under the blanket I found that C'Mell was sleeping there.

E.B.: I don't know the origin of Mary "Prince of the North"'s name. It could be fancish or a joke off the surname Prince. She's

one of the fans I cross paths with rarely so I barely know her.

Meet the Weapons included various sorts of swords, maces, battle axes, etc. KT says they let the fans handle them (the weapons, that is).

Actually I recently renewed my drivers license — mail in a check with the form they sent me and they mailed back a sticker for my ID card.

I don't know what CQ10 is either. I got it from the vitamin aisle at the grocery at the doctor's suggestion. That and the fish oil caps seem to have brought my cholesterol way down.

John Hertz: I think Rule 4 "It does not have to be good" got participants to participate and give a go at writing haiku. Otherwise many would have hesitated or just not participated. I think KT and I came up with lovely haiku.

Robert K.: My wisdom teeth were left alone till a dentist figured out they might be a cause of the migraines I was having. I was nearly thirty at the time and I remember it as a difficult procedure and recovery. Apparently yours went more smoothly.

Rodney: I'd heard it as:

"All knowledge is contained in fandom."

Just in Milwaukee fandom I know several engineers of various types, computer guys, librarians, SCA craftspersons, and a home inspector/restoration expert. If I can't find the answer I need through these folks or the rest of fandom, someone will surely be able to guide me to a resource. A question about kitten behavior, asked in a casual way in a LoC, was answered for me in a fanzine.

Oh gosh! Did I misplace and not answer a letter from you? Please forgive me. I have seasons of fatigue and spaciness.

Joseph re: comment ophthalmologist: I actually quite like my bifocals. I think I started needing them a couple years before I actually got them.

Richard Dengrove: Aside from unfortunate birth defects it turns out that skull size doesn't have much to do with intelligence. My mom's side of the family, including myself, tends to have a smaller-than-normal head circumference but somewhat higher than average IQ. For comparison there's my sister: same size skull as I have. Ph.D. in Neurobiology AND currently works doing things to computers ☺ (programming to figure interest rates, etc.). She's the smart sister and I'm the weird arty one.

So much for Holmes's observation about the hat and its owner in "The Blue Carbuncle".

— JTM (I take a 7 1/2)

More bizarrely than your example of teen IM "argot" is the use of 733T "Leet". I'm not even sure it's a keystroke saving device, but it's cryptic enough to appeal to teen minds. There's at least one on-line comic where all the characters speak "normal" except for the geek-nerd-space cadet who speaks in Leet.

I never quite understood fundamentalists' problem with evolution. It seems perfectly natural that evolution would be the perfect tool

for an artistic creator. ("Here's the sketches I based You on . . .")

I'm out of news and out of commentary. Stay well and take care.

From: **Alexis A. Gilliland** October 14, 2005
4030 8th Street South, Arlington, VA
22204-1552 USA

Thank you for *Alexiad* #4.5, which arrived yesterday. My last letter started off with the death of Officer James McBride, and in Tuesday's paper there was an unexpected posthumous article about him, which I have taken the liberty of enclosing.

We saw a couple of movies recently, *Serenity* and *Wallace and Gromit in The Curse of the Were-Rabbit*. I thought the former was excellent action/adventure (and people who had seen the brief (13 episodes) TV series not only loved it but thought it was true to such roots as it had. TCotWR was silly, silly, silly — which was fine, because I was laughing too hard to notice. Also highly recommended, but for entirely different reasons.

I have to keep on reminding people that although it looks as if Wallace is making Rube Goldberg devices, he is actually making Heath Robinson devices.

— JTM

Ignoring my arguments but responding to the word "atheism" in one paragraph of my letter of June 15, Taras Wolansky suggests that belief may have a genetic basis, which is possibly true since faith will help an individual endure through hard times. However, his assertion that belief will prevail over atheism because believers have more children mixes eggs and eggplants, since the birthrate of the faithful tends to be a culturally mediated phenomenon that changes when the culture changes, rather than being the result of a genetic predisposition. Genetically; any predisposition towards anything tends to exist as an equilibrium, since the countervailing tendency will also have some survival value, or it wouldn't be there. Thus, if faith enhances one's ability to get through hard times, skepticism enhances one's ability to avoid parasites and cheats (such as some priests) which is also (but differently) pro-survival. So it follows that religion and atheism will both continue to exist for the indefinite future, and Taras's assertion that we humans are breeding for faith is merely speculative. If a religiously based culture makes breeding compulsory — or otherwise encourages it — the whole population will breed, including the skeptics, and no selection takes place. From which one may conclude that while atheism is not on the march, neither is a demographic landslide of true believers impending. Although the equilibrium point may shift a little; the Red Queen said that you have to run as hard as you can to stay in the same place.

Over the weekend we had Capclave, with Lee running the con suite. She did an excellent job, even with one foot in a walking cast. (A

couple of weeks back she slipped and broke a bone in her right foot, but is tentatively back in shoes as of Monday) I did my panel and helped out a bit, including doing an open Friday night party in our room, one of the two. (The other was the KC Worldcon bid, which I supported by driving the couple throwing it over to the Safeway to buy supplies.) Me, I bought 12 beers, 12 ciders, and a bag of pretzels, and ended up with 3 beers, 1 cider, and half a bag of pretzels, after posting it on the party board as the "DC Hoax Bid." Maybe if I had posted it as the "Faux DC Hoax Bid" more people would have come, but then we might have run out of beer. Saturday night it was almost like the good old days, with lots of parties. Having become efficient after many years of practice, I got to them all and was still in bed by midnight. Thanks to blocking there was a major party next door, of course, but what the hell, I don't sleep well in hotel beds anyway.

What else? Lee picked up Terry Pratchett's *Thud!* which I read and thoroughly enjoyed. Capclave had an attendance of 312, plus a few Sunday day trippers, a bit up from last year, putting us close to the break-even point if not actually there. The con made its room commitment early on, and despite a certain amount of dithering and procrastination on the part of the concom — they were making changes on the program book Friday morning (!) — the con itself went smoothly enough and most people seemed to be enjoying themselves. A few — well, eight — cartoons are enclosed for your consideration and possible use.

From: **Brad W. Foster** October 25, 2005
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Okay, so, how about a few more details in the next issue on the tease you ran in your Reviewer's Notes this issue about Harlan versus the mouths that tried to roar? Details, we want to hear the juicy details.

Your episode by episode look at the "Rome" series was interesting, and now it has saved me the time of actually needing to track down and see the program, but the high point for me was the Joe Bob Briggs riff at the very end. I miss Joe Bob's drive-in reviews. Heard him on the radio the other day, interviewed in relation to his newest book. Nice to know he's still writing, but getting the newsletter every week just can't be beat.

His point about reviewing B movies was that nowadays, A-list movies are the product of a committee; muddled, compromised, diffuse. A B movie may be poorly done but at least it's one person's concept! With luck the late B-movie queen Lana Clarkson could have been competition for Lucy Lawless.

— JTM

Also enjoyed Sue Burke's "E-Day"

article. So nice to read about normal citizens just enjoying the wonder of the natural world, without any religious/mystical layers being added over it.

Had a couple of bad art festivals this year, where I ended up actually losing money when I figured costs-to-sales. Now, I could just have stayed at home if I wanted to lose money! Fortunately the last couple of shows have gone better, though no real big festivals until next March, so hopefully we've socked away enough, and I can scratch out a few more paying gigs, to get us through the winter. If I didn't have so much fun saying I'm an "artist" on forms, I'd look into another way to make a living.

From: **Martin Morse Wooster** Oct. 24, 2005
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mmwooster@yahoo.com

Many thanks for *Alexiad* 23.

I'm more cheered by the X Prize than Joe is. Maybe it is true that only one aircraft flew, but I think the others are still out there and still trying. I don't think that SpaceShipOne will be the only successful aircraft to emerge from the competition. I was also cheered to read in the *Financial Times* that Peter Diamandis, whose wealth fueled the X Prize, has come up with the idea of a "Rocket Racing League" where X Prize competitors would compete against each other in aerobatic races that would be like stock car races. To my mind, this is very cool stuff indeed. In fact, it seems like something a pulp writer of the 1930s — someone who wanted to combine rocket stories with stock car stories — would have thought up. (If you want to read a very good article about how prize-driven philanthropy such as the X Prize is a good road for donors to take, I recommend John Miller's cover story in *Philanthropy*, which you can find on the web at philanthropyroundtable.org.)

And they could have Tom Wolfe writing about it. He wrote about NASCAR racing before he wrote The Right Stuff.

George W. Price's explanation of Advent's "peculiar payment policy" was really interesting — particularly when he throws in an anecdote about Lurton Blassingame and Heinlein. Since Advent has been active for nearly fifty years, the peculiar payment policy must be a good idea. Here's hoping that *Heinlein's Children* sells a lot of copies and makes a lot of money!

Milt Stevens's spam from the alleged estate of Sir "Dennis" Thatcher certainly was brazen. I can't say that I've ever gotten any spam like that. I did once get a letter saying that an "Egnr Wooster" had died and left me 70 gazillion pounds or something. Presumably the guy saved vowels for years to make his money. I also got a string of lottery spams; my favorite was allegedly from the Microsoft Lottery, saying that Microsoft had decided to "test who uses the Internet" by creating a giant lottery, which of course was based in the Netherlands and not in Seattle. I can't say that I've saved any

of these spam letters; I just report them as spam to Yahoo. But those two scammers were the most memorable.

I also enjoyed Joe's lengthy analysis of "Rome." This does sound like a fun series, and since I don't have HBO, I would have missed such lengthy analysis. I gather from a long article in the *Financial Times* that the goal of the producers was to a) teach viewers about ancient history, since most viewers don't know very much about the past and b) produce an entertaining story full of sex and violence. One thing I remember from the article was that the producers wanted people to wear colorful togas, so as to avoid the notion from spectacle-laden movies that Romans only wore white. . .

The people on the RomeHBO
Yahoo group also like the analyses.
— JTM

From: **John Thiel** October 24, 2005
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thiel@dwci.com

I like the lineup of familiar names from fandom on your contents page. I'm not getting a lot of fanzines presently, and *Alexiad* is keeping my up with what's current in fandom. That's pretty helpful with with people at the *Analog* and *Asimov's SF* forums on the internet talking about the decline of science fiction.

Seeing what SF fans like adds interest to my reading. I noticed rap singer Li'l Kim was tried for a civic offense in Teaneck, New Jersey. That doesn't sound like a very large city to me. I wonder if Ben Indick was acquainted with her? He doesn't seem to still be around, or I'd ask him. The New Orleans disaster reminds me of all the SF fans and writers who lived there, too. And fans in Hollywood have a chance to meet the people who have roles in SF movies. So I was interested in the editorial notes in 4/5.

Interesting comment on Claude Degler. He used to visualize the training of the Starbeggotten. Now I hear about a love camp. He sounds like he was cross-culturally influenced by the Lost Generation.

Bisenieks' letter was very erudite, almost an essay, and made good reading. Also as usual enjoyed the jape on the back cover. Cheer up our existence some!

From: **Rod E. Smith** October 30, 2005
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RodE.Smith@mail.state.ky.us

In re. the Foolscap mixup described on the first page, some Seattle fen sent me this URL: <http://www.penny-arcade.com/news.php?date=2005-09-26>

From what one of the *Penny Arcade* guys (Gabe) wrote about it, he (Gabe) himself, was caught being obnoxious, arrogant and ignorant, and not liking that Harlan confronted him over it.

It seems there was plenty of wrong on both sides, but both are claiming to be the

injured/insulted party. I haven't read/heard from Harlan about it, but Gabe's own words condemn him as a major cause of the confrontation. Yet he ignores his own words and blames Harlan, whom he still has no clue about.

In re. The Moon is Hell: I have long realized that a return trip to the Moon could take decades. (How long passed between the last voyage of Columbus and the first of the next explorer? And how long before the first true commercial enterprise?) The biggest problem is that NASA holds an effective monopoly.

Cabot sailed in 1497.
Columbus's second voyage, which established the Hispaniola settlement (now the Dominican Republic) was in 1493 and his last in 1502.

NASA is one of the worst bureaucracies on the planet, in one of the fields bureaucracies are least able to handle properly. (Any organization which allows non-technical managers to override with no appeal engineers and technicians in their specialities is heading for a fall, and NASA has never addressed this problem, even after being told to do so repeatedly by many different people, including the Columbia Accident Investigation Board.)

The Rotary Rocket did fly on rotor lift. In a demonstration of the concept, it took off with two people on board, maneuvered smoothly around the test area, hovered some and landed safely. By that time the backers were already pulling out. (Rocketry is not a quick-return business.)

If Robert Parks really believes manned spaceflight is a pseudoscience, he either doesn't know what manned spaceflight does or doesn't know what pseudoscience is. I suspect he is letting an emotional bias color his writing.

I am keeping up with the MER (Mars Exploration Rover) missions, following Spirit and Opportunity. One of the team geologists, in a recent interview, stated that while the rovers were wonderful pieces of equipment, he kept wishing he were *there*, so he could step up to that rock layer, grab a piece and examine it himself.

That is manned space exploration at its heart.

I've only seen bits and pieces of *Rome*, but did notice that horse riders had to get a boost (no stirrups, y'see). *I, Claudius* it ain't.

Sue Burke's description of a solar eclipse reminds me . . . I hope that all who read this 'zine knew the hype about the recent close approach of Mars carried elements left over from the extraordinarily close approach of 2003, and that much of *that* was relayed wrongly both by the general press and by the Internet. This event was simply the once-about-every-two-years type.

Trinlay Khadro: The Frankfort Big Lots once had some European chocolate of a brand I've never heard of before. I bought some to take to gaming. The white was definitely *not* waxy. We agreed that it was almost as good as sex, in fact. However, the dark was ruled to be

better than sex. (Hey, this was a group of gamers . . .)

Never seen that stuff anywhere else, and can't remember the name after all these years. Otherwise I'd search for it online.

My sister and I largely communicate by e-mail, too, even though she lives less than 30 miles away. (I don't like talking on the phone; it's physically uncomfortable for me, and I have trouble understanding people.)

If KT likes *Vampire Hunter D* I can recommend *Hellsing*. I saw part of the animé at Conglomeration and liked it so much I bought the boxed set, and am now acquiring the original manga (which is quite different in style and plot). It inspired me to write some vampire stories for an e-mail story list which I am now trying to beat into shape for submission.

For more on the pseudoscience of skull volume measurement, read *The Mismeasure of Man* by Stephen Jay Gould.

I've been told that the state may let the parking garage be used during non-work hours as parking for major events at the very nearby convention center. That would explain the FULL sign.

George W. Price and JTM mention pipeline pigs in a James Bond movie. In *Diamonds are Forever* Bond was rendered unconscious and put in a pipeline under construction; he then had a fight with a welding pig. In *The Living Daylights* he uses a modified pig to ship a defector out of his country through a (IIRC) gas pipeline.

JTM mentions his great-aunt Jimmie. My dad's pet name for his younger sister Alice was Bill, and some others in the family may have occasionally used that. When the song "My Girl Bill" came out decades ago I didn't have nearly the reaction to it some did.

Not only did I have a great-aunt
Jimmie, I had a great-aunt James.
And Edgar Cayce's father was
(Mr.) Leslie Cayce; his
granddaughter-in-law is (Ms./Mrs.)
Leslie Cayce. Not to mention one
of my in-laws: Casey Cayce.
— JTM

Any terrorist who claims responsibility for an event of death and destruction should be pursued, captured, prosecuted **and punished** for that event, even if it is proven to have been an accident.

From: **Lloyd Penney** November 2, 2005
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Thank you *Alexiad* 23. Lots to read, lots to say, so much has happened, take a breath, and dive right in.

The world has watched how Hurricane Katrina devastated New Orleans, and how this has been an extraordinary season for hurricanes. That kind of devastation is the kind you read about in novels; to see it actually happen opens your jaded eyes. It also brought out the best and

worst in people, and we may have lost a great place to be and party. My only time in New Orleans was during the Worldcon in 1988, and we had a marvelous time there. The company Yvonne works at has their American branch office in Gulfport, Mississippi. It is rebuilding, in spite of financial attacks from companies they've dealt with who see this disaster as an opportunity to sue for non-compliance of contract. The fact a hurricane wiped the company off the ground seems to matter not. Our veneer of civilization is much thinner than we had thought.

Reviewer's notes: I'd read elsewhere that the altercation at Foolscape was started by Harlan sniping at the other guests, swearing at them and making rude remarks under his breath. When I read all reports, I thought as you did, jerky kids making fun of Ellison, but I also think this may be a case of Harlan being too antisocial to be a good guest any more, and that would be a shame. This incident, plus that of the writer who threatened to sue Langford and Glasgow University, just prove that far too many people are just too eager to be offended.

And I fear Harlan has become the character he is wanted to portray at cons, the scrappy, over-the-top wise-ass, instead of the writer that he was, who pulled striking, thought-provoking images out of the pains of his life.

Xena has a satellite Gabrielle, Pluto now has two more moons, we've named Kuiper Belt objects Sedna, Santa Claus and Easterbunny — truly an age of discovery. Would it be possible, though, to redraw the map of our solar system to indicate where these items are, determine if they are planets, and end the scientific bickering? The work to make those discoveries is adult; the bickering is quite childish.

What happened with the X-Prize? It was won, and all the other competitors either gave up entirely or scaled back their operations, mostly because their funding dried up. The Canadian Arrow project plans to build a spaceport and museum in London, Ontario. The DaVinci project people turn up from time to time, but I don't think anything more will happen with that group. There is now the X-Prize Challenge, something called the Rocket Racing League — it's a case of been there, done that, on the part of the X-Prize organizers, especially Peter Diamandis, and let's go on to something fresh.

Seeing you reprinted Steven Silver's article on an award for Betty Ballantine, I will copy the remarks I made to Steven on the idea. I would certainly agree with you on Betty Ballantine's contributions to SF. Unfortunately, those who would remember her are rarely voting for the Hugos these days. I expect this is one reason why you're appealing to the Los Angeles or Japanese Worldcons. Torcon, I suspect, never thought of anything like this, and certainly never thought of honouring any Canadians who may have contributed to SF as a whole. I suspect that you may have to lean on the Worldcon I expect

will be voted to Chicago for 2008; you are in a unique position to campaign for this overdue award.

Tom Veal (chairman, ChiCon 2000; secretary, Chicago in 2008) is in a better position. Tom?

Chocolate bar reviews I grew up with the Yorkie bar, and I grew up in southern Ontario. Back then, it was just a good, solid, thick bar of milk chocolate, that's what it was advertised to be, and the chocoholics in society were mightily pleased. Similar bars were available around here until Marks & Spencers closed up shop in Canada. Nestlé's Canadian offices are just north of the 401 on Yonge Street in central Toronto. Effem Foods is an American company — FM stands for Frank Mars, the creator of the Mars bar. Their Canadian offices and plant are in Bolton, Ontario, northwest of Toronto. And now, the local.

Categorizing by race, and so-called race science, are just examples of how humans want to segregate each other. The best thing about the human genome project is that it proved that the only race is the human race.

Prix Aurora Awards this is an effort to use a single term to satisfy both official languages. We could have used Aurora Awards/Prix Aurora, or vice versa, but Prix Aurora Awards seems to flow a little smoother. It's all in the marketing.

I see that the eastern provinces and states are appealing to Washington to ease up on the proposed restrictions that would mean American nationals would need a passport to cross the US-Canadian border, no matter which direction they were going. This was supposed to take effect in 2007; it may be postponed a year or two, but I don't see it being suspended. Yvonne and I are going to Rochester in a couple of weeks; we will have our passports with us anyway.

To Robert Kennedy: The spelling Penney rather than Penny is, I believe, Welsh. Penny is English, and I think Pennie is Scottish. There might yet be a connection — many customs agents would fill in the forms of immigrants, and spell their last names the way they thought they should be spelled, not the way they were actually spelled.

Richard Dengrove remarks on a convention where all registrants did so under their LiveJournal pseudonyms? The Tolkien convention that took place here a few years ago did that, too. The convention was mostly advertised on websites, and I may have been among the few who registered for the convention under his own name.

Time to fly, and get this to you. Given the time of year it is, and the fact we'll be celebrating with American friends soon, I wish the both of you a happy and tasty Thanksgiving.

Thank you, and we hope yours was as happy.

— JTM & LTM

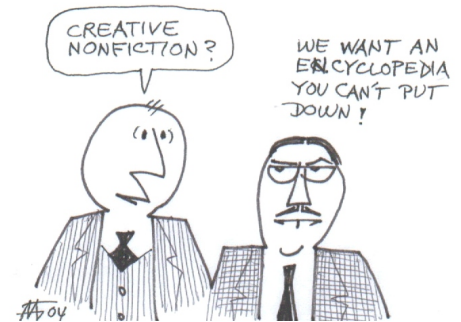
From: **John Hertz**

October 31, 2005

236 S. Coronado Street, No. 409, Los Angeles, CA 90057-1456 USA

If by unreal Wouk titles you mean *Marjorie Morningstar* and *Youngblood Hawke*, those were both pseudonyms chosen by the protagonists and reflected their unhappy choices. About a SFnal novel, do you mean his latest, *Hole in Texas*, about bosons instead of bosoms? Haven't read it yet.

The titles given for Youngblood Hawke's books, in the novel, sounded like duds. As for the attempt at a sf novel, I meant The "Lomokome" Papers (1956, 1968), an attempt at a Cold War satire that poked at a lot of interesting ideas and then skittered away from them.



Ignorantly, I imagine there are lots of reasons spy fiction is less strange than truth, not least of which may be "you wouldn't believe —". I liked Tim Powers's *Declare*.

I tried reading it but gave up after a hundred pages.

— JTM

From: **Carol Clarke** November 9, 2005
4701 St. Andrews Church Road,
Louisville, KY 40214-3866

I would love for us to send lists of favorite movies: Movie and book reviews. Favorite book list. It's fun to see what other people like. Maybe for those of us into comics and graphic novels or Animé we could send list and reviews of our top ten, I think true Sci Fi er's might enjoy some of them.

Ok a quick must read comic list off the top of my head. And remember I did most of my comic reading in the 1980's; I couldn't afford to keep it up in the 1990's so I switched to graphic novels.

My favorite series is called *Infinity Inc*. Only about 28 issues. (Not sure exactly, I am at work) It's a DC world series set near or around the period of time both DC and Marvel did *Secret Wars* and *Crisis on Infinite Earth*, series designed to fix continuity problems of 50 years of comics. Things like they finally let Peter Parker get out of College, grow up. Superman

had grey hair for a while, things like that. Which gets back to *Infinity Inc.*

Its main story was that all the heros were children of classic DC heros. Only they had real problems, and life issues. It was one of the first comic books scenes where the comic book code was used to show two unmarried people/heros get into bed together and not sleep. Well not right away. And there were a lot of living up or down their parents images. One of them was Brainac's son, a villain's son. He had to send his father back to jail. While being very much a DC comic, it really tried to make all the characters three-dimensional.

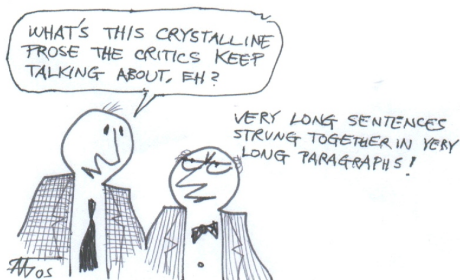
The Graphic Novel *God Loves Man Kills*. I think it's Marvel Graphic Novel #5. It's a Chris Claremont novel. Claremont in his reign at Marvel with the X-Men, made them one of the best series out there. Only if you get into the X-Men you need to get into before they went nuts and tried to mass market it to death with 4 monthly issues, and blue and red teams etc., etc. They branched it out everywhere and kind of lost its charm. Claremont was the one who really made it popular, and *God Loves Man Kills* is the combination of it all. It's a story about prejudice, religion as a tool of prejudice. And if you remember it was written around the time of the worst days of the AIDS crisis when many church people were saying that AIDS was god's judgment. It's an amazing graphic novel. Worth buying a reading copy.

And if you like *God Loves Man Kills*, then the New Mutant Graphic novel is a fun back up after it.

As far as reading the X-Men, anything during the Chris Claremont days is awesome. I would start with *X-Men Essentials* # 4. You need to recover from *Giant Annual* # 2 where all the new characters like Storm, Wolverine, Nightcrawler and Colossal were added. I personally like issue 129, the first Kitty Pryde issue. She was my favorite character. And again I may have numbers or names wrong. But I am close.

For Japanese comics that became Animé I loved a series called *Appleseed*. It had humor and the hardcore Sci Fi.

Last, I really enjoyed several of the Buffy Graphic novels. I enjoyed the one co-written by Chris Golden and Amber Benson. By the way they have a new novel out (not comic) that is a series loosely based on Buffy world, but takes place in Victorian England and has vampire hunters. I haven't read it yet, ordered it a few days ago.



That's all I have to bore you with now, please someone bore me back. I really want to read some of your favorite movies, books, comics, whatever. SHARE!

This publication contains comments about our favorite books, movies, whatever. My comic choices tend to be a bit esoteric; you may have guessed that I find Batman interesting (and Catwoman, even). Back when it was first coming out I read *ElfQuest* with considerable anticipation and pleasure (since then the Pinis have over-marketed it, as you observed about the X-Men). I remember an *Enemy Ace* graphic novel about Hans von Hammer in WWII that impressed me with its grasp of Luftwaffe trivia (the points about the brief lifespan of the Me-262's jet engine and Oberstleutnant Engels and the Communists) of the period. Guy Lillian also likes *Enemy Ace*.

— JTM

From: **Robert S. Kennedy** Nov. 17, 2005
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Thank you for Vol. 4, No. 5. This time it took five days to get here. There does not seem to be any consistency in the amount of time it takes to Post Office to get mail here from Kentucky.

I arrived back home from my Navy ship reunion in Niagara Falls late in the evening on September 22nd. It's the 10th reunion that I've attended and it was very enjoyable. There were 10 shipmates with whom I had served in Fox Division on the USS *Worcester* (CL-144) along with wives, an ex-wife, a companion (female), a widow, and a couple of us who are divorced with no ex-wife or companion. One of the stories concerning Niagara Falls was about a sixteen year-old girl and a seven year-old boy who were taken for a boat ride by a family friend. They were caught in the current and both the girl and boy were thrown from the boat. Some bystanders were able to pull the girl from the river. The man was never found. The boy, who was wearing a life jacket, was swept over the falls. He survived and was rescued. He would be about fifty now and can certainly brag that he is the only person to go over the falls in a free fall and not in a barrel. On getting home, and after taking care of a number of things, I was finally able to access my e-mail on the afternoon of September 24. There were 193 e-mails waiting for me. They included 68 pornographic e-mails. I have been inundated with pornographic e-mails for a couple of months now. No, I do not open them and am careful to delete them. There were also 32 e-mails from people whom I had asked not to send me any e-mail until I returned.

Before leaving for Niagara Falls I read *Lost and Found* by Alan Dean Foster (the second book in his The Taken Trilogy) and *E. GODEZ* by Robert Asprin & Esther Friesner. While in Niagara Falls I finished reading *Rule of Evidence* by John G. Henry (part of his Paul Sinclair series) and read *Orphan's Destiny* by Robert Buettner (sequel to *Orphanage*). All good reads. But, I don't appreciate comments like Buettner's in his "Author's Note": "*Starship Troopers* glorified a neo-fascist (*sic.*) future..." *Starship Troopers* is not Fascist or neo-Fascist and I'm really tired of that charge. (By the way, in my rating system of 1-5, I gave the movie a 0. Someone [who?] called it *Ken & Barbie Go To War*).

That's an insult to Ken and Barbie.

I am really getting tired of the weather we seem to get every year about this time. We can have rain followed by high winds and heat. Sometimes it's 90⁺. This can be followed by cool weather. Last night it was cool. Today at 10:00 a.m. it's 80°. The really frustrating thing is to get some good rain, then high winds that dry everything out. The winds also denude my rose bushes. Well, it's not hurricanes or tornados, so I guess we should be grateful.

I don't read much fantasy, but I thoroughly enjoyed *Pyramid Scheme* by Eric Flint and Dave Freer. Maybe it's considered a cross between Fantasy and Science Fiction.

I read *The Light-Years Beneath My Feet* by Alan Dean Foster, the third book in his "The Taken Trilogy". It looks to me that there will be more books and this could be turning into something of a saga.

I also read *Raising Atlantis* by Thomas Greanias (2005). Apparently it was a best selling e-book. What I read was a paperback. It was ok, but I don't see anything to get excited about. My copy is autographed; but, I donated it to The Friends of the Camarillo Library so that they can sell it.

Then there's *THUD* by Terry Pratchett (2005). I continue to be amazed by Pratchett's imagination. "Is that my cow?"

I watched the movie *The Wild, Wild Planet* (1965) on Turner Classic Movies. It's spaghetti SF. It wasn't too bad except for the lead female whose part was that of an idiot.

I went to see *The Legend of Zorro*. It was somewhat of a disappointment and I gave it a 2.5 on my scale of 1-5. My rating would have been even lower if not for Catherine Zeta-Jones-Douglas who is always worth watching.

I also went to see *ZATHURA*. It was a thoroughly enjoyable movie and I gave it a 4. It was in a new multiple screens movie theater here in Camarillo. In that big theater with stadium seating I was, for only the second time in my life, the only person in the theater. (The other movie was *Wild Things* a number of years ago.)

It appears that Dan Brown's next novel will involve the Freemasons. That should be interesting and we'll see what he does with, or to, the Freemasons.

Maybe they'll cut his throat and bury him between high and low tide.

Even though I have the DVD of *The Truman Show*, I purchased the new DVD of *The Truman Show – Special Edition* because it has additional Special Features. I've probably said it before, but *The Truman Show* is one of my all-time favorite movies. I consider it to be Jim Carrey's finest movie.

Barad-dûr, The Dark Tower of Sauron is available from The Danbury Mint for \$99.00 plus \$7.50 shipping and service.

On September 28 I had a Basil Cell Carcinoma removed from near my right ear. It went quite well and all of it appears to have been removed.

I watch the new TV programs *Invasion* and *Threshold*. But, I haven't made my mind up as yet about either of them. *Invasion* had one of its main characters reveal that he is the sole survivor of a commercial plane crash. Where's Dean Koontz?

Anyone familiar with Terry Thomas movies. I'm trying to remember the name of one where he headed a group of crooks. It might be *Too Many Crooks* (1959), but I'm not sure and it may be another of his movies. Also, I many have it confused with Alec Guinness in *The Lavender Hill Mob* (1951), but I don't think so. Any help will be greatly appreciated.

Joseph T Major: I have been unable to find *The Hidden Family* in the libraries of the three counties I can search. I had my local library put out a Interlibrary search for it. I've read *Eurabia: The Euro-Arab Axis* by Bat Ye'or (2005) that you reviewed (p. 11). It's outstanding. I'm looking forward to *The Force of Reason* by Oriana Fallaci, having read her magnificent *The Rage and the Pride* (2001). Her new book has already been delayed twice, so hopefully it will really be out as rescheduled for January. As you probably know, Fallaci has cancer, apparently it's terminal, and who knows how long she has to live. On Wednesday, October 26, Dennis Prager interviewed Nicholas Johnson the author of *Big Dead Place*. Prager thoroughly enjoyed the interview and invited Johnson back after he publishes his next book.

After reading *Big Dead Place* I had dreams about the success of an evocation of the dead in *McMurdo Station*; Shackleton running around, wheezing as he shot dead clueless Raytheon executives, then disappearing into the Congressional Visitors' Quarters with several very appreciative members of the female station staff.

— JTM

Sue Burke: I enjoyed your comments on the October 3 Eclipse of the Sun as seen from Spain. I recall a similar eclipse of the Sun viewed from Woodland Hills (about 30 miles East of here) a number of years ago. I was leaving the building where I worked and there

were a few employees watching the eclipse. One of them handed me the special glasses or something so that I could look at the eclipse. Rather awesome.

Taras Wolansky: It appears that we have a difference of opinion concerning *March of the Penguins*. Well, it looks like I have **Trinlay Khadro** in agreement with me. You're only the second person I know of who has negative comments to make about the documentary. A friend told me that a woman he knows said that it did not belong in a movie theater; rather it belonged on something like the *Discovery Channel*. I disagree. It was much better on a huge screen rather than a TV. (Well, maybe that's because I only have a normal TV and not one of those huge things.) I guess that you may be disappointed when *March of the Penguins* wins a well deserved Oscar for Best Documentary. It's a real documentary and not like one of Michael Moore's pieces of political propaganda.

From: **Milt Stevens** November 20, 2005
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In *Alexiad* V4#5, I found myself wondering where the info on the events at Foolscap had come from. (Idle minds want to know.) I know you don't go to west coast cons, so it couldn't very well be the result of direct observation. My first suspicion was that it was from *Emerald City*. If there is dirt around fandom to be dug, I have faith that Cheryl Morgan will be the first to dig it. So I checked the last couple of issues of *Emerald City*, but I was wrong. You must have seen the information in a publication I don't see or even in private correspondence. How about that.

It was on Trufen.net:
<http://www.trufen.net/>

I don't think you can blame the events at Foolscap on the internet. Bad manners and bad taste were around long before computers. It is certainly a total lack of style for guests of honor at a convention to be publicly insulting each other. If the guests were known enemies before the convention, then the concomm made a really big mistake. It isn't much better if any other panelists at a convention start publicly insulting each other. I know years ago in Los Angeles we had a local pro who would habitually show up at panels under the influence and always became abusive to the other panelists. We stopped inviting him to our conventions.

In many ways, the internet is a failed dream. What was supposed to be the information super highway turned out to be the home of crackpots and perverts. However, it's probably no worse than Sturgeon's Law. The figures E. B. Frohvet quotes in the letter column may be exaggerated, or they may be perfectly correct. But there is still 10% of useful stuff out there, and that is more than enough for me to keep using it. E-mail has long ago replaced just about all of my personal phone calls and much of what I

would have once sent by surface mail. The list of services I use on the internet would be too long to be practical.

Not to mention being able to communicate with other countries for the same price as a local letter/call. Finding ancestors (I don't think I could have found out that Sarah and Jeff were related until after I retired). Inspiration for writing (Heinlein's Children couldn't have been ready in half the time, and my novel writing has also been made easier). There's a lot of trash and one has to filter.

— JTM

E. B. Frohvet also mentions downgrading Pluto from the status of being a planet. I would be unhappy if they did that. I've grown up with the idea there were nine planets in the solar system. Discovering another one doesn't bother me, but downgrading one of our existing planets would make me feel deprived. I don't like feeling deprived.

From: **Richard Dengrove** Nov. 24, 2005
2651 Arlington Drive, #302, Alexandria,
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RichD22426@aol.com

I enjoyed *Alexiad* Oct. 2005 v4 #5. Here are some of my comments

Given Harlan's reputation, it might be a fitting revenge to tell him that I downloaded his work from the web and it was terrible. That is if Harlan's reputation is correct. The next fitting revenge would be to not know who he is or call him "Harlen."

No, I wouldn't do any of these things. However, I might think them a lot.

Of course, the Romans in Rome don't sound any better than Harlan sounds. Come to think of it, they sound a lot worse. All the "noble" Romans sound like thugs. It's no wonder the Republic fell if its highest citizens had the ethics of mafiosi.

I shouldn't be too judgmental. The American Republic has gone the same way in an alternate timeline. Also, it has divided into the Union and Confederacy in many timelines. The Confederacy was a friend of a Germany Union in Europe in one of those timelines, and the Union armed against a Soviet Alaska in another.

In other timelines still, it was a different game completely: the Civil War never happened.

However, it is not a good idea to look at the multitemp with too wide a perspective. Life would all seem so futile because all possibilities would be fulfilled. The villains win in some timelines and, what is worse, the heroes win in others without our help.

While all possibilities probably have occurred, some worlds are too farfetched to be anything but fantasy. In one of them, I had my own fat hero, Zar. Unlike Martin Scott's Thraxas, he was not a reluctant detective. On the other hand, he had his own peculiar way of

doing things. For instance, Zar likes fat women and is appalled when a woman he loves insists on the illusion of thinness. His Conan-esque sidekick cannot understand him but keeps with him because his magic has proven remunerative. The reason is Zar is a scholar of magic. He has read and remembers all the old manuscripts. Other magicians, practical men, scoff at this; always to their chagrin. There are always details in spells they are ignorant of.

Another world that is pure fantasy are the various places people have located Atlantis. Rudbeck was indulging in fantasy when he pinpointed Atlantis as being Sweden. Of course, he is in a whole tradition of fantasists. According to L. Sprague de Camp, a Captain Elgee in England and Leo Frobenius in Germany found Atlantis in Nigeria.

While such ravings are always "proven" by a patina of fact, when you come down to it, they are pure fantasy. It is no wonder since fantasy is powerful. Where there is fantasy and reality; fantasy always overcomes it. For that reason, the belief in psychic powers will be around a long time. While I have to agree with Taras Wolansky that parapsychologists' hypotheses are unprovable scientifically, they undisprovable in our heart of hearts. Psychic powers is not the only such fantasy; astrology is another. Joe, you discuss it with Lloyd Penney. However, I have to defend the astrologers against the charge that they have ignored trans-Pluto planets. According to Ellic Howe, there is one school of astrology that laboriously takes into account Trans-Neptunian planets, the Hamburg School of Alfred Witte (1878-1941). (It was created before Pluto was discovered.) There is Hades, Zeus, Kronos, Apollon, Admetos, Vulkanus and Poseidon. Somewhere there is Cupido, but I don't know where. As to whether they bear any relationship to the two newly discovered "planets" beyond Pluto, probably not.

While astrology seems like fantasy, other things don't but they are. Like your description of a web con report listing screen names. You will accept that it is the ultimate in bad con reports, a completely boring recitation of uninteresting facts. Where does fantasy come in? The writers of such reports are under the delusion they are communicating something. I hate to say it but I couldn't touch that screen name report for inanity. I remember I once did what, I considered, a parody con report, where the person goes on at length about how he had conversations with friends that said nothing. Then he mentions in passing there was an earthquake that destroyed the con. As you can see, my parody report is too interesting.

Sometimes there is a reversal between fantasy and reality; sometimes people are under the delusion that reality is fantasy. In your remarks to me, you wonder if Joe Gould could have killed and mounted the skulls of his Native Americans subjects like the Nazi Bruno Beger did his ethnics. I got the impression Joe Gould found it hard as is to believe that he was measuring the skulls of living people.

Enough of this fantasy and half-fantasy; let's get back to the real world completely. Do I have any objections to Bat Ye'or? Maybe scads.

However, there is one thing I have to know before making them. How does she propose to resist Islam? Your review isn't specific here. How? Have a Christian Jihad? Reinstate the Spanish Inquisition for Islam? Conquer Arab nations? Eliminate freedom of speech and freedom of press? Invade Iraq? If she has chosen a resistance to Islam of my liking, I will have no objections.

Well, we could always try opening our doors to the Hispanics, who at least usually come here to work and build.

— LTM

What she's doing is to warn. Paul Revere rode through every Middlesex village and town shouting "The British are coming! The British are coming!" [until he ran into one of their patrols, when he quickly added, "to Revere Silverwares, to buy my finest silver spoons with the royal cypher! Revere Silverwares, best in all the colonies!"], he didn't muster or command the militia. She had bitter experience as a Jew in Egypt . . .

I saw the review of the book in The London Review of Books, which consisted of the reviewer saying, "I don't think so." That was right about when the Paris riots began.

— JTM

From: **Sue Burke** November 26, 2005
c. Agustín Querol, 6 bis - 6 D, 28014 Madrid, SPAIN
www.sue.burke.name

It was Halloween, and I was in Vigo, a city on the Atlantic coast of Spain, attending IberCon I, the first joint Spanish-Portuguese SF convention. Rainstorm (nee Hurricane) Wilma had crossed the Pond and was dumping much-needed water on the drought-stricken seaboard. Meanwhile, back in Madrid, two weeks early, Princess Letizia gave birth. The convention opened that day with the words: "Buenos y monárquicos días. Es una niña." ("Good and monarchical morning. It's a girl.")

She was 1.54 kilos, 47 centimeters, and plump-cheeked like her royal grandfather. But what to call her? Like many people, I was hoping for Covadonga, a historic name related to the Virgin Mary (as are many girls' names around here), but Prince Felipe liked "Leonor," and so that will be the name of the future queen of Spain . . . after they amend the Constitution to allow the first-born of either sex to inherit the throne.

I'm sure Prince Hugo Carlos de Bourbon-Parma (the Carlist Pretender) and even Prince Louis-Alphonse de Bourbon (the French Legitimist Pretender, grandson of Juan Carlos's uncle and great-grandson of Francisco Franco, who

is still dead) will have some interesting comments.

— JTM

More than 300 journalists were camped outside the clinic to bring us the latest news, no matter how trivial. The Red Cross sent her a doll dressed as a volunteer. So many flowers arrived that they were redistributed to various public sites, including the church housing the patron Virgin of the royal family. The Queen had a photo of her latest grandchild on her mobile phone. The newborn is a Scorpio with Leo rising.

Doña Leonor de Borbón Ortiz will be baptized after Christmas, and royals tend to get a lot of middle names, so I'm still hoping for Covadonga.

IberCon had interesting moments despite organizational problems. I will have reports in *Nih Degree* magazine and on my web site. People are already thinking of ways to make IberCon II better.

Movies tend to make it across the Pond more irregularly than weather. "March of the Penguins" has yet to surface, if it ever does, but I'll watch for it. "Serenity" did come through Madrid, and since my husband and I like Joss Whedon's work, we were eager to go, but it was only shown in a dubbed version, which we knew would disappoint, so we are now waiting for the DVD. I recommend a movie shown at IberCon, available for download at www.starwreck.com. It's a Finnish fan production that combines Star Trek and Babylon 5, in Finnish but with subtitles, and wickedly funny.

Candy bars are uncommon imports here, but the stores are stocking Spanish Christmas candy now. The most traditional is turrón, blocks of almond candy, and my favorite is the Alicante style, made with lots of toasted almonds, sugar, honey, and a little egg white. Though you have to bash it into bite sized chunks with a heavy object, it crunches easily enough even with my weak teeth and tastes simply good. Only available at Christmastime, and only in Spain.

Feliz navidad y próspero año nuevo.

From: **George W. Price** November 24, 2005
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Milt Stevens quotes a scam letter purporting to be from the "executor of the estate of Late Sir Dennis Thatcher"; Stevens suspects that "it comes from somewhere in fandom." The editor points out one error: Thatcher was Denis, not Dennis. Another possible clue is that the scamster says "endeavor to get back to me as soon as possible." A real Briton would have said "endeavour", so likely this came from an American.

* * * * *

Hear ye! Hear ye! Hear ye! Those eagerly awaiting Joe Major's book *Heinlein's Children: The Juveniles* — and especially those who have paid in advance — will be happy to know that Advent sent it off to the printers on November 19th, and expects it to be on sale around the end

of January or early in February. It will be hardbound, xvi + 535 pages, \$25.00 list price for postpaid delivery to addresses in the U.S. and Canada. (Advent:Publishers, Inc., PO Box A3228, Chicago, IL 60690.) This is a revision of the series Joe had in *FOSFAX* a few years ago, with the addition of a brand new essay on *Podkayne of Mars* and an introduction by Alexei Panshin.

Attention! This is the last call for the special prepublication price of \$20.00 (and signed by the author, too).

And now on to Yokohama!

— JTM

From: **Marty Helgesen** December 1, 2005
11 Lawrence Avenue, Malverne, New York 11565-1406 USA
mnhcc@cuny.edu

This is very strange. I thought sure I had written a loc on the August *Alexiad* and had sent it a few hours past the deadline, but I can't find it on my hard disk. Oh, well. On to comments on the October issue.

The review of *Eurabia: the Euro-Arab Axis* is interesting, although depressing. The situation described illustrates the principle that you can't fight something with nothing. Europe, as you say, has secularized itself, and while the progressive elites who supported Communist oppression are now supporting Muslim oppression the ordinary people feel a void. In part because of the climate of opinion created by the progressives they are reluctant to return to Christianity so they settle for Islam. The fact that progressive, secularized Christians are offering a watered down Christianity in which John 3:16 ("For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.") is translated as "God so loved the world that he inspired a certain Jew to inform his contemporaries that there is a great deal to be said for loving one's neighbour." (The "translation" was made by Sir Arnold Lunn, who did not approve of the situation, in the 1930s, which shows the rot (in two senses of the word) is not new.)

Alexis Gilliland suggests that since Googling on "Josephus Jesus" produced the well known passage I quoted, which did not support his position, I try "Josephus Pontius Pilate". I did and got around 96,100 results. That was a bit too much to browse through, but I looked at a few and they seemed to be arguments over the relative responsibility of Pilate and the Jews for the crucifixion. Perhaps he could quote or present specific links to the passages in Josephus he thinks would provide the basis for a secular text of Jesus.

Hypatia was killed by a rioting mob of Christians. I've read that the people of Alexandria were very volatile and were likely to riot over a simple statement that the Gostak distimms the Doshes. The claim that Cyril was responsible for the attack is widely disputed.

He says, "On the question of a life of Christ that is secular, as opposed to the life of Christ

provided in the Gospels, imagine the Gospel version as the movie, with the secular version assembled from the bits and pieces left on the cutting room floor." That's an interesting image, but I'm not aware of any bits and pieces available for assembly.

Alexis asks whether Jesus was perfectly chaste, saying, "if God sent his only begotten son into this world to experience being human, what sort of human experience would it be to die in agony having never made love to a woman?" However, the Bible says Jesus was like us but without sin (Hebrews 4:15). Unfortunately, it is likely that I will die, preferably not in agony, without ever making love to a woman. Although I dated when I was younger I never married, and, by the grace of God, I have refrained from illicit sex. It can be done. More to the point, Jesus was true God and true Man. God the Son, the second person of the Trinity, took to Himself a created human nature in addition to possessing the one divine nature. Persons act through their natures. My human nature is not writing this letter, I, a human person, am writing it. I am acting through my human nature, but I, the person, am doing it. The only person is Jesus was God the Son. Everything Jesus did was, literally, an act of God, God the Son acting through His created human nature rather than His eternal divine nature.

All very well and good, but you do realize that not everyone subscribes to those beliefs in full.

Trinlay Khadro writes of an African-American physician who was born in the Sudan. I've read of a few Caucasians who were born in Africa, came to the United States, and identified themselves as African-Americans. Reportedly that identification was not accepted.

E. B. Frohvert writes of "a sitcom episode where the priest recited the ritual part of the ceremony inviting anyone to object — and the groom's mother spoke up. The best man asked the priest, 'What do we do now?' and the Father replied, 'I don't know, this has never happened before.'" However, the person conducting the ceremony does not ask people to object. I Googled on the phrase "if anyone knows" and got a Church of England web page about marriage which said, in its description of the service, "The minister will read an introduction explaining what Christians believe about marriage. He or she will also ask, as the law requires, if anyone knows any reason why the marriage may not lawfully take place." He's not asking for an objection, such as, "She shouldn't marry him, she should marry me." He's asking for an impediment that would preclude marriage, such as, "She can't marry him. He's her long-lost brother who was carried off by a band of marauding chartered accountants when he was a baby."

Note that it says it's a requirement of the law. I asked on a Catholic list if anyone had heard that question and no one had, not even at their own weddings. The discovery of possible impediments is left to the publication of the

banns. However, if when a clergyman in England asked that question someone spoke up, the response would seem to be to ask for proof of the claimed impediment.

He says to me, "I don't agree with you that the sex abuse scandal is irrelevant to McGrath's premise. He is saying, in essence, that religion is a good thing. The sexual abuse of children by priests contradicts his basic premise and is thus relevant." No the sexual abuse of children by priests is a corruption within the Church. Similarly education and schools are good things. The sexual abuse of children by teachers, which appears to be more prevalent although less widely publicized than abuse by priests, does not contradict the value of schools. Both situations indicate problems that ought to be corrected, but that's a different matter. Churches and schools are good and necessary. The fact that both should be run better doesn't change that fact.

I was amused by John Hertz's observation, "*Fighting Sail* should be a biography of Fulton." Then I suddenly flashed on the idea of a temporally dislocated Ralph Kramden arguing against Fulton.

"One of these days, Robert, one of these days *POW* straight to the Moon!" Like that?

— JTM

Sheryl Birkhead says of the idea that e-zines are the wave of the future, "Well, there goes the fanartist niche!" Not necessarily. An e-zine published on the web can have lots of art. Sending a zine by e-mail would present more problems. It probably would have to be sent as an attachment and some people would be unwilling to open it because of the dangers of viruses.

From: **AL du Pisani** December 1, 2005
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When I last wrote, I had just returned from a holiday, and had a line on a new job. This is four months later: I have been working like a dog, and the new job evaporated. Not completely. In fact the job is still open. I am just not who they are looking to fill it.

The work has been bad, with the past weekend the first one in a month where I was not working on at least one of the days. This has its financial compensations, but tends to wear you out a lot.

Yet I still had the opportunity to fly down to George, where a friend of mine was getting married. A very nice wedding, on the beach. (Complete with fisherman, who caught a fish just after the ceremony was complete.)

My nephew got married on the beach of St. Thomas in the Virgin Islands on November 1.

I will be taking some leave this Christmas, and am looking forward to be in my family's

presence for a couple of weeks. Unfortunately, I will be missing my niece's christening, as that will happen shortly before my leave starts.

One unfortunate side effect of being busy all the time, is that I do not have a lot of time available to read. And often the time I have available, I am not interested in starting something new or challenging. Yet, I have read some new books, including some I did not anticipate that I would like as much as I eventually did. There is still nothing like escaping into a good book.

I have recently read a comment that frames what is happening in South Africa, in a way that makes a lot of sense, yet would not have occurred to me: That when a country is a de facto one party state (i.e. one party has more than 66 percent support, and will retain it for the foreseeable future) the party in government loses all ideology, and becomes the party of government. Standing for nothing except that what will keep it in power.

This is the situation the ANC finds itself in. And so it is starting to lose all knowledge of any difference between the government of South Africa, and the ANC as political party. (Or, as it prefers to be known as, a liberation movement.) This has led to such interesting things happening as some spies being fired, since they were being used by one faction of the ANC to spy on another.

This is also what is driving the main Thabo Mbeki / Jacob Zuma fight, as Mbeki has been a lousy leader, and Zuma is preferred for not being Mbeki. All wrapped up in some court cases, as Jacob Zuma's trial for corruption is still on, and will be occurring for the next couple of months to a year or two. At the same time, Zuma has been accused of raping a family friend. The police and the national prosecuting authority have said nothing other than that they are investigating. Yet this accusal seems to have drawn off a lot of Zuma's support. Seems as if corruption is OK, but rape is beyond the pale.

I have read recently that an interesting experiment is going on worldwide, in which the judicial system becomes the de facto rulers of countries, since everything that is not liked has to go through a series of trials and judging. The comment was that judges have proved to be fragile reeds on which to base rule. Yet this experiment is still going strong in South Africa. The issue of same sex marriage is back in the courts, since some government departments did not like a judge telling them that they should acknowledge same sex marriages. And have led to such interesting cases as a brothel owner taking the government to court for interfering with his business.

Since 1 December is AIDS day, we have been bombarded with AIDS related propaganda, scientific papers and appeals to our wallets, on national television.

This has had the effect of hardening my heart, as a lot of preventable AIDS cases are caused by bad government and denial. Denial, that the cultural things you do can put you into a situation where you can get AIDS. Denial, that you have to change your behaviour, or you will be in situations where you can catch AIDS.

Denial, that you may have caught AIDS already. Denial, in that the things you have changed, are not the things that will not put you in a compromising position. Denial, on how to treat AIDS.

There are a lot of people dying in South Africa. An interesting experiment would be to do a before and after study of South African cemeteries, by making use of satellite imagery. Because I know that the cemeteries of George and of Kimberley have undergone explosive growth in the past couple of years. I just wonder if there is any way to quantify that?

Yet any message by the government about reducing the sexual activity is undermined by the same government, when they decide that the perfect age at which a child are mature enough so that they can buy contraceptives, without the knowledge of a parent or guardian, is 12.

Pray for my country, because we need it.

I am still active in my local congregation. It looks as if we will, in the next year, have two major projects: To build on to our present buildings, and to create an entire new congregation, next door to us. And both of these projects will take time, effort, money and hope.

I recently attended my second synod. About 200 congregations geographically located in the old Southern Transvaal got together for three days, and talked about what we have been doing, what we are planning to do, and what we should be doing. This time round the synod was much less pleasant than the previous occasion, as we ended up having a huge fight about homosexuality. (The other major issue, church unity with the previously non-white churches in our church association, was not as divisive. I do not know if that was because the issue seemed to be facing insurmountable obstacles at the time or not.)

One interesting experience during the synod, was on the second day. Usually, the various charitable and other organisations supported by the church have exhibits at the location of the synod. This year the delegates got split into a dozen groups, and went out to see for themselves what was happening.

Which is why I ended up walking the mean streets of Hillbrow. In daylight, and escorted by a youth worker. He showed us where the street children hang out, and took us down the alleys to the abandoned buildings in which they live.

An interesting experience, especially once you know that Hillbrow used to be the place where people new to Johannesburg lived for a while, before moving on to more permanent residence. Hillbrow used to be the place in SA with the highest population density. And about seventeen years ago, I spent some time visiting Hillbrow. Where you found the shops open very late, and you could catch a bite to eat after midnight.

But then Hillbrow got overwhelmed by all the people moving the Johannesburg for a better life. And Hillbrow went downhill fast.

Now, Hillbrow has turned around: It is definitely going up in the world. Every building not abandoned, is either open for business, or being renovated. Granted, a lot of the new shops are tiny, squeezing four to five shops in what

used to be a single shop. But it is reviving. It does catering for and lot of illegal and legal immigrants from the rest of Africa. And the locals are proud about the schools.

The road between Johannesburg and Pretoria is probably the busiest road in South Africa. I have travelled that road at all hours of the day, and it is always busy. In fact, the busiest intersection in the southern hemisphere is located on that road. A couple of years ago the provincial government decided to do something about the congestion: They will be building a train route to connect Johannesburg and Pretoria. This project, dubbed the Gautrain, has been in the planning stages for a while now, and finally appointed a contractor to do the work. There are only a couple of small problems: It is going to cost a lot more (R20 billion), is expected to have a lot less passengers, and will take longer to complete than originally planned. The high cost has led to an outcry, but it seems that our masters in the government want to build the Gautrain.

And on this gloomy note, I end.

Here in Louisville, it took ten years or so to decide to build a bridge across the river, because the most useful route went through property owned by people who could hire lawyers. And now we are talking about building a light rail system (if it's anything like the ones I've seen, it'll do no good).

— JTM

WAHF:

Lloyd Daub, with various items of interest.

Five people have had a letter in every issue of Alexiad since we started publishing locs.



Congratulations to **Claire Brialey** (Best Fan Writer), **Alison Scott** (Best Fan Artist), and **Claire Brialey & Mark Plummer** of *Banana Wings* (Best Fanzine) for their Nova Awards.

DOCTOR EYE FOR THE TREK GUY

by Paul Gadzikowski.

**FLASHMAN AND THE EYE**

(I am grateful to Lloyd Daub for highlighting the efficiency of the Union Army's Bureau of Military Information, one of the positive legacies of "Fighting Joe" Hooker. General Hooker had dispensed with the services of his predecessor General McClellan's intelligence operative. The man had the charming habit of exaggerating the Rebel strength by two or three times. Makes one wonder how effective the investigation of the Scowrers was . . .)

As the sun set on the first day of the fighting at that formerly peaceful little town in the middle of Pennsylvania, General Meade questioned his staff regarding the strength of the Confederate troops they were facing. "Prisoner interrogations have confirmed that we are facing the corps of Generals Longstreet, Ewell, and Hill, with eight different divisions identified thus far. The bulk of their cavalry, under General Stuart, is to the east, according to reports," said the intelligence chief, whose service to the army ever since the Seven Days had been noteworthy.

"So we are facing the entire Army of Northern Virginia, then?" the general said.

"Ahem. No. Not quite. According to our estimates, the corps of Moore and Kantor, including the divisions of Turteltaub, Gingrich, Dempsey, Hauser, Tsouras, and Forstchen, have yet to be committed.

"These forces remain in reserve, and possibly may arrive on the battlefield within the day, or be sent against Harrisburg, or maneuver to our rear, against the supply head in Winchester. A speedy withdrawal to the Pipe Creek position, or even within the fortifications of Washington City itself, would give the army time to reorganize . . ."

The General watched his intelligence chief with mounting concern. Did the rebels have an endless supply of manpower?

I had my eye on the young lady from across the dining room. Of course, the general himself had sent me there, and though every fiber in my body was screaming to get out, I had against my better judgment continued on my mission. Such decisions had, in my experience, all too often ended up with me being tortured by some great lout of a woman — women, you understand, always make the best torturers, because they haven't any restraints — but I'm always willing to drink any wine once.

She was coming my way and I tipped my hat to her. "Pardon me, ma'am, but you seem familiar. Have we met? In Paris perhaps?"

She blushed like a baby. "Sir! You are most forward!"

"My apologies, ma'am. If I may leave —"

But she was smiling. "No, I wish I had been to Paris. But I've never been away from Chicago. So you've been to Paris! Tell me about it Mr. — Mr. . . ."

"Conder," says I, blowing a puff of smoke and then taking the stogie out of my mouth. "Beauchamp Conder. And may I have the honour of knowing your name?"

She bowed slightly. "Ettie Edwards. But all my friends call me 'Birdy' . . ."

She was old man Pinkerton's private secretary, and if he weren't using her for other duties as well he was an even bigger fool than I thought. Get to the lady, says Flashy, and as soon as you're in her knickers you're in her boss's private papers . . .

— Not edited by George Macdonald Fraser

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Writers, Staff:	Major, Joseph & Major, Lisa

Art: What we are mainly looking for is small fillos. Your fillo will probably be scanned in and may be reused, unless you object to its reuse.

Contributions: This is not a fictionzine. It is intended to be our fanzine, so be interesting.

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