

OPUNTIA

55.1

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Whole-numbered OPUNTIAs are sercon, x.1 issues are reviewzines, x.2 issues are indexes, x.3 issues are apazines, and x.5 issues are perzines.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

[Editor's remarks in square brackets]

FROM: Robert Sabella
24 Cedar Manor Court
Budd Lake, New Jersey 07828-1023

2004-05-08

Perhaps I am too cynical, but with so many writers and fans leaving their SF collections to libraries, I've wondered how many of those institutions consider fantasy and SF a priority worth preserving, rather than it ending up packed somewhere in a basement never to be seen again. That would be distressing if it happened.

[I think the best method is to specify in one's will, as I have done, that the donation of books can be sold and the money used elsewhere in the library. The same problem is common among philatelists, as many egotistic stamp collectors leave their collection to a museum in the misguided belief that they will erect a John Doe Memorial Hall to house the collection. There is a particular horror story about one fool who donated his stamp collection to the New York Public Library. Over the ensuing decades, much of it went missing, and the staff really didn't care nor should they. In fact David Beasley wrote a 1994 novel about the thefts, titled THE JENNY.]

I was intrigued by the book IN THE BLINK OF AN EYE. History being an interest of mine, I have been occasionally seeking a few good books on the earliest history of early life, from the Cambrian explosion right through the earliest human prehistory. I don't suppose you might recommend a series of three or four books covering all these millennia to a relative novice?

[I read mostly the scientific periodicals at the University of Calgary Library, so I don't buy too many popular books on palaeobiology. However, a few suggestions are as follow. For the origin of life and the specter of planet-wide glaciation during the Precambrian era (before multicellular life), there is Gabrielle Walker's book titled SNOWBALL EARTH. For the worst mass extinction in Earth's history, the Permian crisis of 251 megayears ago, the book GORGON by Peter Douglas Ward serves as an introduction. During this mass extinction, 97% of all life died out, which makes the better-known dinosaur extinction of 65 megayears ago look like a minor glitch.]

FROM: Mark Plummer
14 Northway Road
Croydon, Surrey CR0 6JE, England

2004-04-04

The mention of the evolution of anecdotes is rather pertinent to London fandom at the moment. We've recently decided that the

long-standing First Thursday meetings will return to an old venue after various fans made repeated online assertions that the old landlord, with whom we had something of a disagreement in 2002, had been dismissed by the brewery. I had become curious about these frequent and confident claims so I did a bit of research. I eventually traced all mentions back to one guy who admitted that he couldn't remember where he'd got the information, but, in classic friend-of-a-friend fashion, he thought he'd heard it from a bloke in a pub. Rumours of the landlord's departure indeed proved to be somewhat overstated. Moreover, it seems the man does Web searches on his pub's name, just to see what if anything is being said about it.

[It is that last sentence which reassures me that paper zines will survive. On the Papernet, no one can do random searches; they have to know specifically in advance about the zine and how to get a copy. As e-zine or Live Journal publishers get sued, fired, evicted, or arrested for what they produce, the Papernet's virtues will become more apparent. The Boss From Hell can't know about your Papernet zine from a random search, but if he finds those Deja.com remarks you made about the company using a Google search, you'll be brought in to the office for a chat. Anonymous re-posting, you say? It is becoming easier and easier to trace posters back to the originating computer.]

FROM: Murray Moore
1065 Henley Road
Mississauga, Ontario L4Y 1C8

2004-04-03

MAIL ART LISTINGS

I enjoyed your precis of Robert Heinlein: "U.S. Naval Academy and sad old git fantasizing about threesomes". This is potential for a game at SF conventions. Name that author from the short description. More fun possibly for the people creating the descriptions.

[This could be made into a Jeopardy-type game with two teams. Each team gets some author names on paper slips (not revealed to others) and has x minutes to come up with a one-sentence description. When time is called, each team takes turn reading the descriptions for the other team to guess. Anyone want to try this at a convention?]

I Also Heard From: Ade Dimmick, Jose Roberto Sechi, Kris Mininger, Babynous, Scott Crow, Henry Welch, Davida Gypsy Breier, Jeanette Handling, Gianni Simone, Ficus, Christine Douville, Pascal Lenoir, John Hertz, John Held Jr, Chester Cuthbert, Billy McKay, Justin Katko, Chuck Stake, Sheryl Birkhead, Lloyd Penney, Joseph Major, A. Langley Searles

The Clown On The Motorbike: Netmailart, Box 2644, D 32383 Minden, Deutschland) Theme is "The clown on the motorbike". Maximum size 70 cm x 100 cm; write your address on the back. Technique: free. Exhibition in Mail Art Mekka Minden; catalogue to every participant. Deadline is 2005-03-31.

Borders/Fronteras: (Kris and Lola Mininger, Calle Obispo 4 bajo, Plasencia 10600, Caceres, Spain) Mail art in any medium, any size on borders and frontiers. Deadline is 2004-12-31.

The Penguin: (Jeroen ter Welle, Boeninlaan 393, 1102 TL Amsterdam, Netherlands) Theme on the penguin, size A6 (14.8 x 10.5 cm). Send 16 originals or copies, documentation to every 15 contributors. No deadline.

Think Here: (Jose Roberto Sechi, Av. M29, N° 2183, Jd. Sao Joao, Rio Claro SP - 13505 - 410, Brazil) Mail art magazine. Drawing, design, painting, engraving, gluing, rubber stamp, writing, poetry, visual poetry, photograph, etc.. In black and white, please, maximum 13 cm x 8 cm (horizontal format). Theme free, no return, no jury, no deadline, documentation to every 18 participants.

Brain Cell Fractal: (Ryosuke Cohen, 3-76-I-A-613, Yagumokitacho, Moriguchi-City, Osaka 570, Japan) Send 150 stickers or some other type of small mail art image. These are collated into a collage on an 11" x 17" poster, and a copy sent back to each contributor, along with a list of names and addresses of those participating.

Postcard Mail Art Project: (dott.ssa Tiziana Baracchi, Via Cavallotti, 83-B, 30171 Venezia-Mestre, Italy) Technique: free. Size: 15 cm x 10 cm. No deadline.

Artist Trading Cards: (Chuck Stake, 736 - 5 Street NW, Calgary, Alberta T2N 1P9, Canada) ATCs are works of art created on 64 mm x 89 mm card stock. They are the same size as hockey trading cards, but the similarity stops here. Cards may depict anything, be 2-D or 3-D, they may be original, a series, an edition, or a multiple. Cards are signed on the back by the artist and, if necessary, an edition number is included. ATCs are paintings, drawings, collages, photographs, rubberstamp works, mixed-media, etchings, found images, recycled works of art, assemblages, etcetera. The only stipulation is that the card fits in the standard plastic sheets that hockey cards are normally stored within.

ZINE LISTINGS

by Dale Speirs

[The Usual means \$3 cash (\$5 overseas), trade for your zine, or letter of comment on a previous issue. Americans: please don't send cheques for small amounts to Canada or overseas (the bank fee to cash them is usually more than the amount) or mint USA stamps (which are not valid for postage outside USA). US\$ banknotes are acceptable around the world.]

[SF means science fiction. An apazine is a zine for an amateur press association distro, a perzine is a personal zine, sercon is serious-constructive]

Alexiad V3#2 to #4 (The Usual from Lisa and Joseph Major, 1409 Christy Avenue, Louisville, Kentucky 40204-2040) Lots of book reviews, commentary on horses, publishing, and royalty, and letters of comment.

N.I.N.N.Y. #1 (US\$4 from Randall Fleming, Box 625, New York City, New York 10276-0625) Perzine about life in New York City from a Los Angeles ex-pat. Cue Neil Diamond singing "I am, I cried!"

Kairan #8 (Mail art Usual from Gianni Simone, 3-3-23 Nagatsuta, Midori-ku, Yokohama-shi, 226-0027 Kanagawa-ken, Japan) This issue is a compilation on femail artists (spelling correct; think about it for a moment) and their history and thoughts about doing mail art.

Banana Wings #19 (The Usual from Claire Brialey, 14 Northway Road, Croydon, Surrey CR0 6JE, England) Essays on SF fanzine fandom past and present, and letters of comment.

FOSFAX #208 and #209 (US\$4 from Falls of the Ohio SF and Fantasy Association, Box 37281, Louisville, Kentucky 40233-7281) With 86 pages of microprint, each issue is an evening's read. Lots of book reviews, historical commentary and miscellaneous essays, American politics, and letters of comment.

The Zine Dump #6 and #7 (The Usual from Guy Lillian, Box 53092, New Orleans, Louisiana 70153-3092) Reviewzine of zine reviews. (That sentence is almost a palindrome!) A good starting point for zine editors wishing to expand their presence in the Papernet.

Vanamonde #538 to #557 (The Usual from John Hertz, 236 South Coronado Street #409, Los Angeles, California 90057) Weekly single-sheet apazine with commentary on a wide variety of subjects.

For The Clerisy #54 to #57 (The Usual from Brant Kresovich, Box 404, Getzville, NY 14068-0404) In #54, a paean for eyeglasses and letters of comment bookend the main piece of this issue, with a series of related book reviews on the theme of how humans survive war and other trying conditions. Lots of reviews

in #55 and #56 on older books that deserve a re-visit. #57 is a look at Japanese culture based on Kresovich's experiences there as an expatriate.

The Fossil #318 to #321 (US\$15 annually from The Fossils Inc, c/o Gary Bossler, 145 Genoa Avenue SW, Massillon, Ohio 44646) Clubzine of zine publishers whose specific mission is the care and feeding of the Library of Amateur Journalism. This zine library was founded in 1904, and Ken Faig Jr will be publishing its history this year on the occasion of its centennial.

No Sin But Ignorance #46 (The Usual from Claire Brialey, 14 Northway Road, Croydon, Surrey CR0 6JE, England) SF perzine with fannish musings on what, if anything, is zinedom, plus a look at the Elizabeth Peters series of Egyptian mysteries.

The Thought #138 to #140 (The Usual from Ronald Tobin, Box 10760, Glendale, Arizona 85318-0760) Political rants, cutting-edge astronomy, the state of the music industry, and letters of comment.

Plokta #31 (The Usual from Alison Scott, 24 St. Mary Road, Walthamstow, London E17 9RG, England) Personal accounts by various authors ranging from buying corsets to home repairs for the lazy man and drunken parties. Also letters of comment and assorted tit-bits.

Library Journal #? (The Usual from Donny Smith, Box 411, Swarthmore, Pennsylvania 19081) The mis-spelt title is deliberate (or did you even notice?) and I had a heck of a time getting the spellchecker to leave it alone. Perzine in the life of a gay librarian who works at a Catholic college. Not surprisingly, trouble arises.

Hobnail Review #2 (L1 or US\$2 from Hobnail Press, Box 44122, London SW6 7XJ, England) Lots of zine listings from the other side of the Atlantic, for those on this side who wish to expand beyond the usual list. As well, notes, news, and commentary on the small press.

Southern Fandom Confederation Bulletin V8#5 and #6 (The Usual from Southern Fandom Confederation, c/o R.B. Cleary, 138 Bibb Drive, Madison, Alabama 35758-1064) Clubzine with news and notes of SF fandom down yonder, zine and convention listings, reviews, and letters of comment.

The Knarley Knews #105 to #107 (The Usual from Henry Welch, 1525 - 16 Avenue, Grafton, Wisconsin 53024-2017) Personal and commentary articles but mostly given over to letters of comment.

Futuristic Toasters (The Usual from Billy McKay, Box 542, North Olmsted, Ohio 44070) Compilation of cartoons by various artists about toasters.

The New Port News #216 (The Usual from Ned Brooks, 4817 Dean Lane, Lilburn, Georgia 30047-4720) Apazine with commentary on a wide variety of topics.

Statement #316 to #318 (The Usual from Ottawa SF Society, 18 Norice Street, Ottawa, Ontario K2G 2X5) SF clubzine with news and notes, media reports, science news, and miscellany.

Musea #130 to #135 (The Usual from Tom Hendricks, 4000 Hawthorne #5, Dallas, Texas 75219) Short plots for the life of Tommy, and lots of trivia questions. #132 is zine listings, #133 is for kids, #134 about a musical recording project. #135 is a rant about modern art.

Challenger #20 (The Usual from Guy Lillian, Box 53092, New Orleans, Louisiana 70153-3092) Doorstop zine of 86 pages, starting off with eulogies to Julius Schwartz (of comic book fame), the pitfalls of technical writing, Mike Resnick nitpicks errors in SF movies (which is why his wife won't go to the theatre with him), numerous anecdotes and personal accounts, court stories (Lillian is a barrister), and letters of comment.

File 770 #143 (US\$8 for five issues from Mike Glycer, 705 Valley View Avenue, Monrovia, California 91016) Newszine of SF fandom, ranging from convention reports to weddings and obituaries, as well as letters of comment.

Probe #123 (The Usual from Science Fiction South Africa, Box 781401, Sandton 2146, South Africa) Clubzine, this issue being mostly short fiction from a writing contest.

Twenty-Eight Pages Lovingly Bound With Twine #8 and #9 (The Usual from Cristoph Meyer, Box 106, Danville, Ohio 43014) Yes, this zine really is bound with twine, not stapled. #8 has personal accounts of raising baby, septic tank cleaning, computer problems, and miscellany. #9 is the dental issue, which therefore is bound with floss, not twine.

Chunga #7 (The Usual from Randy Byers, 1013 North 36 Street, Seattle, Washington 98103) Genzine with a trip report on Australia and another on Mexico, free speech in universities, an extended book review of John Brunner, and letters of comment.

Extranjero #1 and #2 (The Usual from Kris Mininger and Lola Lucio, c/o Lucio Carrasco, calle Obispo 4 bajo, Plasencia 10600, Caceres, Spain) Perzine from an American expatriate and his Spanish wife. An introduction to life in Plasencia, dealing with immigration authorities, bullfighting, and Lola's experience of the USA.

Lamplighter #14 (The Usual from Guy Miller, 2951 Archer Lane, Springfield, Ohio 45503-1209) Thin apazine with a report on the 129th convention of the National A.P.A., starting off with

a controversy about whether e-zines should be considered as credentials. Miller comments that it is unlikely that e-zine publishers would be interested in joining an apa; they are in a parallel activity that has its own rules.

Warp V18#2 and #3 (The Usual from Montréal SF and Fantasy Association, Box 1186, Place du Parc, Montréal, Québec H2X 4A7) Clubzine of a very active media SF group. News and notes of fandom, convention reports, articles on how to make chain mail and vampires, as well as various reviews. Plenty of photos throughout.

Word Watchers 2004 Spring and 2004 Summer (The Usual from Jeanette Handling, 2405 Sanford Avenue, Alton, Illinois 62002) Word formation didn't stop when Samuel Johnson published the first English dictionary anymore than evolution stopped when Charles Darwin published his theory of evolution. This zine is a checklist of modern etymology, chronicling new words or new meanings of old words being added to the English language.

Xerography Debt #14 (US\$3 from Davida Gypsy Breier, Box 963, Havre de Grace, Maryland 21078) Reviewzine with hundreds of reviews by dozens of different reviewers, of all categories of zines. Also includes some articles on zine history.

Moz #1 (The Usual from Murray Moore, 1065 Henley Road, Mississauga, Ontario L4Y 1C8) Apazine with comments on Australian SF fans, life in Toronto, and movies.

Pouët-café #6 (\$4 for the annual issue in English (other issues are in French) from La Petite Fée, 6595 St-Hubert, Box 59019, Montréal, Québec H2S 3P5) Poetry zine, with an essay about buying back a book from a bookstore that one had previously sold to it.

Snake Den #22 and #23 (The Usual from Ken Faig Jr, 2311 Swainwood Drive, Glenview, Illinois 60025-2741) Specializing in Lovecraftian studies, #22 has the results of Faig's original research into one of Lovecraft's circle, a seldom-mentioned friend named Dudley Charles Newton. #23 is a set of extended book reviews, mostly on recent Lovecraftiana.

Littlebrook #3 (The Usual from Jerry Kaufman and Suzanne Tompkins, 3522 NE 123 Street, Seattle, Washington 98125) Perzine with accounts of whitewater rafting, a hummingbird ranch, what editors don't like to hear from authors, Janis Ian, and letters of comment.

Memphen #279 to #281 (The Usual from Memphis SF Association, Box 820514, Memphis, Tennessee 38182-0514) SF clubzine with news, notes, and obituaries.

Cherry Monocle #13 (The Usual from Phlox Icona, 1174 Briarcliff #2, Atlanta, Georgia 30306) Handprinted zine (yes, it is possible to publish without a computer) about weird foreign candies.

Blood Money Gazette #1 (US\$4 from Randall Fleming, Box 625, New York City, New York 10276-0625) Perzine about life as a professional experimental patient. American clinics pay test subjects to take new drugs or go through experimental procedures, not to mention the old standby of giving blood for cash. There must be easier ways of making a living, but I suppose it beats working on a loading dock.

Call And Response #1 (US\$3 from Gianni Simone, 3-3-23 Nagatsuta, Midori-ka, Yokohama-shi, 226-0627 Kanagawa-ken, Japan) Life as a photocopy sneak to publish one's zine, an introduction to mail art, trip reports, and miscellaneous.

Door Knob #83 and #84 (The Usual from Robert Lichtman, Box 30, Glen Ellen, California 95442) Apazine with commentary on a wide variety of topics.

Erg #165 and #166 (The Usual from Terry Jeeves, 56 Red Scar Drive, Scarborough, North Yorkshire YO12 5RQ, England) Continuing series on oddball aircraft, and life in the RAF, as well as a look at SF predictions, zine listings, and letters of comment.

Murderous Signs #9 (The Usual from Grant Wilkins, Box 20517, Ottawa, Ontario K1N 1A3) Literary zine, starting off with an editorial about the poor manner in which Canadian poetry is taught in universities. This basically confirms my belief that the best method of ensuring that your children will never read pornography or seditious pamphlets is to make them required reading in school, with questions on the exam. Elsewhere is some poetry, and amusing advice on how to write travelogues. This zine is a cut above the usual run of literary zines.

Amapra #20 (The Usual from Guy Miller, 2951 Archer Lane, Springfield, Ohio 45503-1209) Thin zine with a variety of topics, from WW2 memoirs to National A.P.A. business and old newspaper jokes.

Banana Rag #32 (Mail art Usual from Anna Banana, RR 22, 3747 Highway 101, Roberts Creek, British Columbia V0N 2W2) News and notes about what Anna has been doing in the mail art world, news clippings of banana-related items, and reviews of mail art zines and productions.

APAS

An apa is an amateur press association, a method of zine distribution that began in the late 1800s. Members pay annual

dues to cover postage and must publish x number of pages per year. No passive subscribers wanted; apas are only for active zinesters. Each member sends in the required number of copies of zines to the Central Mailer aka Official Editor, who then collates the zines into bundles and sends one bundle back to each member. Most apas are devoted to a common topic of interest. A feature of apas are the mailing comments, where everyone is expected to comment on the other zines in the last bundle.

FAPA #268 (Details from Robert Lichtman, Box 30, Glen Ellen, California 95442) Fantasy A.P.A. with an SF slant but including many perzines in the bundles.

Point Of Divergence #40 (US\$10 annually and 30 copies of your zine at least every other distro. Zines must be 8.5 x 11 because this is a bound-volume distro, not a bundle of loose zines. OE is Jim Rittenhouse, 577 Hitchcock Avenue, Lisle, Illinois 60532) This zine specializes in alternative history. Members are writing alternative history fiction, speculative fact articles, and reviews and commentary on alternative history novels and such. Topics include such staples as the Confederates winning the American War Between The States and the Germans winning the two World Wars, but also such things as obscure people who died young living on to affect history, or what California would be like if it were an island out in the Pacific (hint: sabertooth cats are still extant).

Roadside Crosses In Contemporary Memorial Culture by Holly Everett (2002, University of North Texas Press) is a survey of a common folk activity throughout North America. Everett uses case studies of roadside crosses around her hometown of Austin, Texas. It was interesting to note the similarities and differences between Austin and Calgary. Roadside memorials are not part of any official local histories but are well known to the citizenry as points of pilgrimage. They exist outwith the law (almost every municipality bans them) but are not outlaws (government maintenance workers turn a blind eye to them, and politicians waver if asked for comment). Some governments have official cross procedures, but most flounder on questions of separation of church and state, or whether or not the crosses are a distraction to drivers. These days I doubt the latter; most people are too busy talking on their cellphones to notice the crosses as they drive by. The organization Mothers Against Drunk Driving (MADD) puts up crosses as a warning but there seems to be no effect on the drunk driving rate. Everett spends some time discussing the religious aspect of roadside crosses and the issue of separation of church and state in relation to them. Austin is roughly at the dividing point between the Catholic south of Texas and the Protestant north, and religion is more of an issue there. Calgary and surrounding areas are slightly more Protestant than Catholic, but the population is intermixed enough that there are no

districts

where one religion predominates. (The only religious issue I have ever heard of in Calgary is parking and traffic complaints around churches.)

In my capacity as a Calgary Parks Dept. employee, I and my co-workers have had to deal with roadside crosses marking death sites, usually by ignoring them. I began taking photographs of them a few years ago and discovered that within Calgary alone there are usually 20 to 30 crosses at any given moment. Most are short-lived and disappear within a year. My interest was piqued, and I developed this as a sideline hobby. When I travel out into the countryside, I keep my camera handy. There are more roadside shrines than most people realize. I have found dozens out on the back roads and in the ditches of highways. The largest site I have found is west of Calgary on the old Trans-Canada Highway, with six crosses lining a slope, where a carload of teenagers were in a head-on collision with a truck. Most are like another one I saw in the foothills, at the entrance to a gas treatment plant, where an employee heading home pulled out into traffic without seeing an oncoming vehicle. Other crosses have no names inscribed, just flowers.

Many have gift offerings at their bases. Children's crosses can be identified by small plush animals; teenaged or adult victims have photographs or newspaper clippings about their deaths. I haven't

seen any myself, but Everett documents some crosses with motor vehicle parts, almost certainly from the death vehicle.

Almost all roadside memorials are for traffic accident victims, usually at or near the site of death. Occasionally some are erected for other reasons. Everett mentions a roadside cross for a murder victim who died elsewhere. I have seen one in the Kananaskis mountains for someone who died of cancer in nearby Calgary but enjoyed hiking out there. Many crosses are places of pilgrimage for the family, and the decorations are freshened up on significant dates such as Christmas, the death date, or the birthday of the victim. Everett discusses the lack of personal contact in dealing with death in our modern society. Most people die in a hospital, are whisked to a funeral home for preservation and display, and the ceremony is rigid and defined, both in the chapel and at the grave site. Erecting a roadside cross is an attempt to personalize a traumatic experience for the next of kin.

What Might Have Been (published 2004 by Weldenfeld & Nicolson, hardcover) is a collection of what if? essays from various contributors, edited by Andrew Roberts. In his introduction, Roberts notes that alternative history is still sneered at by many historians, but is slowly gaining acceptance as a useful tool among professional historians. He observes that alternative history is condemned by Marxists, Whigish liberals, and determinists alike.

Disposed of is the butterfly effect. It may be that some trivial occurrences have had great effects, but most people who cite this aspect of chaos theory are ignorant of the much stronger attractor effect. If not Hitler, then some other fascist rabble rouser. Alternative history writers must play fair and avoid the common mistake of judging people by subsequent events they could not reasonably have foreseen, or by altering their character and behaviour. It is no go for a non-racist Hitler who was not against the Jews, or for Louis XVI to live modestly and cheerfully grant a democratic constitutional monarchy.

Roberts points out that alternative history by its nature must be short to be effective, and is best suited in essay form or novels that cover a relatively short period of time. Extrapolating events over a few years or decades is reasonable, but attempting to do it over generations leads to too many wild cards.

“The Spanish Armada Lands In England” by Anne Somerset is an easy alternative history, since the bad breaks that crippled the Spanish fleet could just as easily gone the other way. Indeed, our timeline is the one that reads like alternative history. Somerset posits a successful landing. The invasion failed in our timeline despite the incompetence of the English, but in this alternative history the invasion succeeds because of the incompetence of the English. The home troops were poorly trained and equipped.

When the victorious Spanish execute Queen Elizabeth, she dies without having designated a successor, leaving no one for the English to rally round. Scotland makes a separate peace. Once England is secured, the Spanish are able to isolate and take out the Dutch at leisure, and thereby extend Catholic Europe.

“The Gunpowder Plot Succeeds” by Antonia Fraser is a world in which children ask “Penny for the Jamie?”, not for the Guy. Elizabeth Stuart, daughter of James I, is on the throne at age 9 after the plot of 5 November 1605 blew her parents and older brother into oblivion. Her younger brother Charles was rushed back to Scotland by sympathizers and proclaimed King there, leaving the two children contesting a throne. Fraser suggests that in the long run there would be an accommodation with Catholic Europe as part of realpolitik, but increased tension between England and Scotland, with possible war by 1639.

John Adamson’s essay is “King Charles I Wins The English Civil War”, where the Parliamentarians rapidly peter out after some battlefield defeats, and suffer a flight of money and supporters to the Royalist cause. Charles bypasses a useless siege of Gloucester and instead hits directly at London, retaking the city in August 1643. As victor, however, he finds that the “King’s party” is almost as bad as the Parliamentarians, and he is forced to concede to a new Parliament that he will be less arbitrary, accept the advice of others, and raise no taxes without consent of Parliament. The

Scots, seeing the Royalist victory as inevitable, did not raise an army against him. Conversely, Charles is now too dependent on the new Parliament to field armies against others. This essay seems to support the Tide of History argument, in that the transition to a constitutional monarchy dependent on the people would come sooner or later.

“Benedict Arnold Wins The Revolutionary War For Britain” is a cheat by Robert Cowley. Arnold’s excellent service on behalf of the Americans has numerous points of divergence that could be run with. Instead, Cowley merely recites the possible divergences without actually addressing the title of his essay. He is like a tour guide quoting measurements of a cathedral without mentioning the door the group is standing in front of was where Martin Luther nailed his 95 theses. Cowley’s essay ends abruptly still in our timeline, having missed its opportunity.

“Napoleon Triumphs In Russia” by Adam Zamoyski uses a divergence from our timeline when Napoleon arrived at the burning city of Moscow, dithered about for five weeks, and then returned home but en route got caught by winter. Instead, Zamoyski posits Napoleon turning south toward Ukraine, then going into Minsk for winter quarters, devastating Russian armies and cities as he goes. The next season, in 1813, he restores the Polish monarchy with a flunky as King, then renews his attack on Russia. The Russian army is down to poorly trained militia that

doesn't put up much of a fight. Tsar Alexander abdicates and Napoleon enters Moscow in triumph on June 29, 1813. Britain is now isolated, and negotiates a withdrawal from Europe. Napoleon turns his Empire into a Commonwealth of Europe, with Paris as the capital, and a common set of laws and financial system. Russia gradually decays into squabbling while the Empire of Europe subsumes nations under a blanket of bureaucracy. I think Zamoyski is too optimistic about how the conquered Europeans would shed their national identities. The Communists couldn't do it in our timeline, and Napoleon wouldn't have made every European proud to be a Frenchman.

"The Trent Incident Leads To War" by Amanda Foreman considers the seizure of two Confederate diplomats from a British ship by a Union ship, an outrage that was resolved by diplomacy in our timeline. In this alternative history, both the Union and the British harden their positions and refuse to back down. The War Between The States therefore spreads to Canada, the Atlantic shipping lanes, and the Caribbean. The European nations recognize the Confederacy as a retaliation for the Union violating diplomatic immunity.

Foreman suggests the Union would take Québec (and wouldn't they be sorry!), but this is the usual misunderstanding that the Catholic francophones of Québec were yearning to be a part of the USA. Not likely given the Protestant bigotry of the times. The

USA ends up permanently split and a financial cripple.

Norman Stone considers how "Archduke Franz Ferdinand Survives Sarajevo" when the Serbian assassin just misses the Archduke. In the aftermath, Ferdinand is leery about attacking Serbia immediately in retaliation because he knows Austria is weak, and supposing victory, melding the Balkans together would be difficult. Instead, other than a hunt for the specific conspirators to save face, he has private talks with like-thinkers. Nothing can be done until the old Emperor dies in 1916 and Ferdinand ascends the throne. Somehow, without fighting, the Ottoman Empire is divided up and Germany confined to its core units. Ferdinand then goes on to assemble a new economic bloc to keep Europe united. I think there is a bit too much wishful thinking in this one.

Andrew Roberts uses "Lenin Is Assassinated At The Finland Station" as his divergence. He gets a bit too cute at times, such as the assassin being named Lev Harveivic Oswalt. The result of this divergence is that instead of Lenin's uncompromising rhetoric, there is a compromising politic. A separate peace is signed with Germany and World War One ends in 1919. Kerensky abolishes feudalism, nationalizes the land, and establishes a liberal constitution. The Romanovs go into exile in Switzerland. Stalin was never anything more than an abattoir owner in the Caucasus. It seemed to me that the Bolsheviks were a little too easily outmaneuvered without Lenin.

"Stalin Flees Moscow In 1941" by Simon Montefiore looks at an event that almost happened. If it did, and Stalin flees Moscow for a new capital at Kuibyshev, the Soviet population would panic and there would be political collapse. In this alternative timeline, Stalin is deposed by Beria and executed. Molotov, the new leader, stages a counterattack and beats back the Germans. Then, strangely, history reverts to our timeline with only a few changes in names and details. It ends up via a different route, and an implausible one, with Gorbachev taking over and losing the Soviet empire.

"The Japanese Do Not Attack Pearl Harbour" is by Conrad Black. He is well known to Canadians in general and the newspaper industry worldwide. Black is a newspaper magnate who owned hundreds of newspapers, such as NATIONAL POST (Toronto), CHICAGO SUN-TIMES, JERUSALEM POST, and DAILY TELEGRAPH. Unfortunately for this anthology, his cited credentials were not so impressive by the time this book reached the distributors. Black, an extreme right-winger, picked a fight with then Prime Minister Jean Chretien (of the governing Liberal party) in the early 2000s, and lost so badly that he went into exile to Britain. Black took out British citizenship and bought a life peerage, styling himself Lord Black of Cross Harbour (his hometown in Canada) but is derisively known to Canucks as Lord Tubby. Subsequently his newspaper holding company got into trouble for sharp practice and Black is now under indictment or

being sued in several jurisdictions. He does have legitimate writing credentials, having published several biographies of politicians.

His alternative history mostly concentrates on how FDR wanted a fight with the Germans, no matter how reluctant Hitler was to respond. Black suggests, in a brief bit of hand waving, that if Japan stays out of the war, then Hitler would not be so aggressive. Not a good alternative history, as it spends too much time off topic.

Simon Heffor looks at how "The Brighton Bomb Kills Margaret Thatcher". This alternative timeline assumes that Maggie and most of her cabinet ministers were killed by the IRA bomb. Michael Heseltine is her successor as party leader. He was more likely to intervene in the economy and subsidize failing industries. The result is a slower economy by the late 1980s than with Maggie. Higher interest rates and stronger pan-Europeanism splits the Tories. Labour wins in 1992 and Britain remains a state-heavy economy.

"The Chads Fall Off In Florida" by David Frum is perhaps more significant to Canadians who know who Frum is. He is the son of the late Barbara Frum, a much-beloved CBC talk show host with small-l liberal leanings. Canada Post issued a stamp to honour her memory in 2000. Her son can politely be described as a

neo-conservative self-promoter who jumped on the right-wing bandwagon, or less politely as a opportunistic shithead. He will never get a stamp but no doubt would lobby hard for one and write a newspaper column about how he deserved it. David Frum now lives in the USA, working as a speechwriter and consultant and generally trying to live up to every stereotype of a Young Republican, the kind you know will eventually be indicted for something. He claims to have invented the “axis of evil” phrase. This is relevant to his contribution to this anthology, where Al Gore is elected President. The essay is a conversation between Gore and his advisors after September 11, 2001, where they discuss politically-correct methods of dealing with the terrorists. A litany of how Democrats would have wimped out, compared to Bush’s firm response. Basically a neo-conservative wet dream.

Ponzi: The Incredible True Story Of The King Of Financial Cons by Donald Dunn (2004, published by Broadway Books, trade paperback). Few people can have the immortality of having a thing or process named after them that enters the popular lexicon. In the world of science, Bunsen had his burner and Erlenmeyer is immortalized by his flask. Every doctor hopes to have a syndrome named after him. Economists are remembered by economic cycles; Kondratieff has his long wave and Kuznet his short business cycle. But only one criminal in history had a fraud named after him. Carlos Ponzi did not invent the pyramid scheme

that pays earlier investors out of the money invested by later suckers. But he carried it to such excess in 1920 that ever since then that type of fraud has been known as a Ponzi scheme.

Ponzi made International Postal Reply coupons as the basis of his scheme. An IPR is used to enable your correspondent to reply with you paying for the postage. You buy the coupon at your post office, and your respondent cashes it in at his post office in whatever country he lives in for a postage stamp to pay the foreign surface rate. Today the service fee in every country costs far more than the value of the stamp. In Ponzi’s time, countries with depreciated currency sold coupons at a fraction of what it cost to buy one in the USA. Ponzi spotted this exchange rate difference and initially used it to buy IPRs in Europe and redeem them in the USA. The American stamps were then sold at a discount to postage brokers to make a profit. When the Universal Postal Union realized what Ponzi was doing, they had to meet in special session to change the rules.

That didn’t bother Ponzi, since he didn’t like the trouble of redeeming millions of IPRs, even if the USPO would accept that many. Instead, he told investors that he was cashing in the IPRs overseas for money, not stamps. He paid 50% interest on their money, and used the later investors to pay off the early ones, robbing Peter to pay Paul. Ponzi proceeded to live like a king.

When his pyramid of cash finally toppled over in late 1920, he brought down several banks with him. What is fascinating are the details on how Ponzi calculated IPR coupon exchange rates, and explained how, in theory, one could double one's money every few months. Practice was different, but Ponzi assured investors that he had a secret method of doing it. Ponzi was such a slippery character that the American prosecutors had to go to consider trouble to demonstrate that the USPO was not cashing in millions of dollars of IPRs, and that foreign countries were not selling them in the quantity Ponzi would have needed.

The Hungarian Hyperinflation of 1945-1946 by Robert B. Morgan (US\$55 from Collectors Club of Chicago, 1029 North Dearborn, Chicago, Illinois 60610) This will be the definitive reference for many years to come of the postal history of the world's worst inflation. This hardcover volume covers the hyperinflation period in a series of chapters that are sorted by chronology and by rate type (letters, parcels, registered, etcetera). There are numerous tables and charts that summarize the 27 rate periods so that a collector can sort out his covers. Also included are identifications of forgeries.

Between May 1, 1945, when the Hungarian postal system gradually re-started after Soviet occupation, and July 31, 1946, when the stable forint replaced the pengo as the country's currency, there were 27 changes in the basic postage rates. At the

beginning of this hyperinflation period a local letter under 20 grammes cost 0.50 pengo to mail. At the end, it cost 200,000 adopengo, where one adopengo on the last day of hyperinflation was equal to 2,000,000,000,000,000,000,000 pengo pre-hyperinflation. To give an idea of how fast the hyperinflation accelerated, price increases were 10% per hour, if you could find anyone who would take cash; barter was the order of the day. It was all the post office could do to keep up. They not only had to rebuild the postal system destroyed during the war, but print and overprint stamps to keep up with rate changes.

Although it is popularly believed that Communists deliberately started the hyperinflation to destroy the currency and make people dependent on them, that belief is debatable. Hungary had horrendous reparations imposed on it by the Soviets, and its economy was left a shambles by the fighting. Much like the hyperinflation that afflicted Germany after World War One, the causes appeared to be economic, albeit assisted in some degree by political problems. In our modern times, extreme monetarists shout that central banks must always keep inflation under control, otherwise hyperinflation will result, but this is not an automatic given. Hyperinflation is the result of extreme economic and political collapse, not because auto workers got a 10% annual wage rise. When it does happen though, it is enough to scar a generation, as the example of Hungary demonstrates.