

# ALEXIAD

(ΑΛΞΙΑΣ)

\$2.00

In three weeks it will have been a full year since Wullie died and of late I have been remembering my sweet, gentle cat. His loss still hurts. He had the most beautiful personality of any animal I've ever shared my life with and the second whose death I had to authorize. It is strange to be suddenly remembering him like this. I think a large part of this is that we acquired Slim so soon after Wullie's death. Perhaps it is also guilt over filling his slot so fast, which is really irrational because I didn't go out looking for a replacement. Nor do I really think of Slim as a replacement for Wullie. Slim is a very different animal in both looks and personality. There is a spice to him that Wullie, sweet as he was, did not have. No, Slim has his own place. He has not filled Wullie's place in my heart. I very much doubt I will ever again own a cat as sweet and gentle as Wullie was.

— Lisa

S. Kennedy, Rodney Leighton, Eric Mayer, Lloyd Penney, AL du Pisani, George W. Price, John Purcell, Darrell Schweitzer, Joy V. Smith, Milt Stevens, Jim Stumm, Taras Wolansky

Comments are by JTM or LTM.

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Pascha (Orthodox Easter) is **April 19, 2009**  
 The 135th Running of the Kentucky Derby is **May 2, 2009**.  
 The 134th Running of the Preakness Stakes is **May 16, 2009**.  
 The 140th Running of the Belmont Stakes is **June 6, 2009**.  
 The Sherlock Holmes/Arthur Conan Doyle Symposium will be **May 15-17, 2009** in Dayton, Ohio. The theme is "**The Merry Wives of Watson**" and the primary topic will be the long-suffering and much-neglected Dr. John H. Watson, late Army Medical Detachment, memorialist. Membership is \$45 if posted before April 20, \$50 of posted before May 8, and \$55 after that. Send to:

**Cathy Gill**  
**4661 Hamilton Avenue**  
**Cincinnati, OH 45223-1502 USA**

The **World Party** is at 9:00 p.m. local time on **June 21, 2009**.

Printed on April 6, 2009  
 Deadline is **June 6, 2009**

**Reviewer's Notes**

When I got started going to Dr. Y, the former senior partner of my current doctor, Dr. H, the price of an office visit was, as I recall, about \$10. This was twenty-four years ago, understand. Now the price I pay is \$20. But the insurance pays \$\$\$.

Part of this is the general increase in prices. But a lot of it is management issues. Dr. H and his partners have to have management, so does Humana, and other things. For example, lab work is yet another outfit, even though they are all in the same office.

You remember Lisa injured her shoulder back at Christmas. The Magnetic Resonance Imaging scan cost \$\$\$\$ but they knocked off two-thirds. That's still \$\$\$\$. When I had a MRI, a few years ago, Humana paid the whole thing without question.

Speaking of management issues, Humana managed to get it wrong, so the company was demanding \$\$\$ from me. A few calls and I managed to get it adjusted, more or less.

Then there was the problem with my insulin, which ended up with me having to rush off to Dr. H's office to get samples to get me through the gap.

When I endure all this I try to remember that most of this wouldn't have been available back when I started going to Dr. Y in 1985, and the rest would have been proportionately as expensive.

Cathy Palmer-Lister is doing her best to find a good place to eat in Montréal. Y'all come now, heah?/Vous venez!

— Joe

## RANDOM JOTTINGS

by Joe



## Now available on efanazines.com.

Thanks to Tom Feller, John Purcell, and particularly Bill Burns, and I guess those things I said have been invalidated by events. (Something like the Joker saying "I take back almost all the bad things I said about you!" upon being left a fortune in "Joker's Millions".)

Apologies to Gordon Brown, no not about the Region One DVDs: It is illegal in Kentucky to carry a concealed death star. Okay, how *do* we go about incarcerating the Black Cloud?

For a profoundly squamous, rugose, mephitic, and chthonic experience, read:

<http://lovecraftismissing.com/>

Iä! Iä!

Among the amusing things I picked up at ConCave were *Ancient Athens on 5 Drachmas a Day* (2007) and *Ancient Rome on 5 Denarii a Day* (2008) both by Philip Matyszak (both \$18.95). They're amusingly written descriptions of the two great classical cities, with descriptions of the area, the people both great and small, the buildings, the events, and so on. Not to mention guides to the language, even though I suspect some of the Useful Phrases are cribbed. Though not all of them:

Indeed, I assure you that Homer's family name was Simpson.  
*ho dē Homēros ontōs ēn ho Simōnos.*

— *Ancient Athens on 5 Drachmas a Day*, Page 126

D'oh! I guess that would be:

Ω ΔΗ ΟΜΗΡΟΣ ΟΝΤΩΣ ΗΝ Ο ΣΙΜΩΝΟΣ

And of course it should be *Ancient Athens on E Drachmas a Day* and *Ancient Rome on V Denarii a Day*.

Is this becoming a Classic History zine? I also read James Mace's *Soldier of Rome: The Legionary: A Novel of the Twentieth Legion During the Campaigns of Germanicus Caesar* (2006; iUniverse; ISBN 978-0-595-41737-7;

\$18.95) and *Soldier of Rome: The Sacrovir Revolt: A Novel of the Twentieth Legion during the Rebellion of Sacrovir and Florus* (2008; iUniverse; ISBN 978-0-595-48331-0; \$18.95), the story of Artorius the legionary of *legio XX Valeria Victrix* (Valeria Matuchek's namesake (*Operation Chaos* and *Operation Luna*) and Paulinus Maximus's command (*Eagle In the Snow*)) and his experiences in the Augustan army. Mace is an Iraq veteran himself, and if his barracks-talk and action seems to smack too much of today's army, one has to realize that so much of soldiering doesn't change. He has an understanding of the history and can tell an interesting story of what the foot soldier did as well as what his commanders did. Mace's depictions are unsparing in their portrayal of the harshnesses of war then.

As seems inevitable in a POD book, there are some lapses of editing. Computerized spell-checking can leave or even create homonyms, though I do admit that saying "the reigns of power" (*Soldier of Rome: The Legionary*) has a certain appropriateness. His Roman names are handled sensibly, but I mean, having a Gaul named "Farquhar"?

Artorius's grandchildren might be stationed in Asia, and go to the games to see Amazonia fight Achillia. Russell Whitfield has written *Gladiatrix* (2008; Myrmidon; ISBN 978-1-905802-09-8; £7.99) to tell a story about them (there is a memorial to two real gladiatrices called "Amazonia" and "Achillia"). Lysandra, a priestess of Athena from Sparta (apparently there actually was a temple to her there) is shipwrecked and, being an undocumented alien, sold into slavery, to gladiatorial trainers.

Whitfield's description of gladiatorial training is real and unsparing in its harshness. Lysandra/Achillia becomes skilled at arms under a harsh regimen, making friends and losing them to the final judgment, until she finds herself facing the killer of her lover . . .

Whitfield does get melodramatic; he has every bout being to the death, though training gladiators or gladiatrices was a big investment and having such a high death rate would be a huge waste. Also, if you don't care much for the love of Sappho, this book may not be for you. (To be fair, the one time Lysandra thinks she's going to be a man's bedmate, he says that he didn't invite her to dinner for that.)

The **Third International Polar Year** has ended. It began in March of 2007 and ran through March of 2009. The IPY was run under the direction of the International Council for Science (ICSU) and encompassed scientific programs in both polar areas.

The First IPY was proposed by explorers Karl Weyprecht and Georg von Neumayer, running from 1882 to 1883, and included the Lady Franklin Bay Expedition led by Adolphus Greely. The Second IPY ran 1932-3 but did not include the Byrd Antarctic Expedition. The original Third IPY was absorbed into the International Geophysical Year (IGY) of 1957-8, which included the launching of the Sputnik and Explorer satellites and was the background

for James Blish's *Frozen Year* (1957).

And speaking of cold things, the glacial era of, say 150,000 years ago is known as the Riss (Alpine) / Illinoian (U.S.) / Saale (European) / Wolstonian (U.K.) / Santa Maria (South America) Glaciation, which lasted from 200,000 to 130,000 years before present. Nice period for intentional de-technologizers to settle a whole new world, isn't it?

The overlawyered.com site links to a strange lawsuit filed by a girl who says she was run out of the Miss Porter's School in Connecticut by a clique calling themselves the Oprichniki.

Who says our children don't know history? Now if they had had the dog's-head and broom badge, and called their leader Ivana the Terrible, things would have been complete. Hoyda! Hoyda! Hoyda! Hoyda!

## OBITS

We regret to report the death of **Philip José Farmer on February 25, 2009** at home in Peoria. Born January 28, 1918, Farmer had his first story, *The Lovers*, in the August 1952 issue of *Startling Stories*. The novel heralded the theme of sexual exploration that was one of Farmer's mainstays. His next work, the contest entry *You Owe For the Flesh*, was caught in a financial problem, and was not published until several years later as the Riverworld Series. Other interests of Farmer's included pulp adventure fiction, and he wrote several stories featuring his favorite heroes, Tarzan and Doc Savage, in various ways, finally getting to write an authorized Tarzan novel, *The Dark Heart of Time*, in 1999.

We regret to report the death of Canadian First Fan **Chester Cuthbert on March 20, 2009**, at the age of 96. Beginning his fannish life with reading A. Merritt's *The Ship of Ishtar* at the age of 12, Chester achieved a goal by selling two stories to *Wonder Stories* in 1934. He is best known for the Chester D. Cuthbert Collection, now at the University of Alberta, reported to have been at one time the largest single book collection in Canada.

## MONARCHIST NEWS

We are pleased to announce the engagement of **Her Royal Highness Crown Princess Victoria of Sweden** and **Mr. Daniel Westing**. Mr. Westing became a physical trainer after his military service and has a broad background in health and fitness services. He will be created **Duke of Västergötland** and made a Prince prior to the wedding, which is planned to be in the early summer of 2010.

Her Majesty the Queen of New Zealand (and some other countries) has been pleased to authorize the restoration of the rank of Knight/Dame to the upper two ranks of Grand Companion and Companion of her New Zealand Order of Merit, with the appropriate titles for the honorees. Tohu Hiranga.

**WICKS 'N' STICKS**

Review by Joseph T Major of  
**THE BREATH OF GOD**  
by Harry Turtledove

(Tor; 2008;

ISBN 978-0-7653-1711-7; \$24.95)

Sequel to *Beyond the Gap*  
(reviewed in *Alexiad* V. 6 #2)

Count Hamnet Thyssen just might consider himself the sort of guy whose life climaxes when a cloud appears behind him, and a giant hand issues from it, thumb against middle finger, ready to flick him across the back of the head. I mean, the clan he has taken up with has been utterly destroyed by the Rulers, the invading mammoth-riders. Having already survived one humiliating siege of adultery followed by divorce, he has now lost his new girlfriend, who left him for another man. He gets distrusted by the other clans, then when he reaches allegedly civilized territory he is thrown in a dungeon by his emperor. Oh, and having lost his former girlfriend to someone more of a colleague for her, the only person who seems to really care for him is a cannibal. (Which makes the possible additional conditions of that Monica-style connection somewhat hair-raising, if not other diminishing.)

There is a mix of various levels of story. On one level, we have the reaction of those who do not see and do not believe; the indifference of the imperial court to the potential threat of the Rulers. One almost expects Emperor Sigvart to dismiss the events as "a quarrel in a far-away country between people of whom we know nothing". And then, the man of peace finds himself presented with war.

On another level, there is the desperate adventure story, where Thyssen and his followers, fleeing the Rulers after the destruction of the clans, have no recourse but to cross the glacier. Fortunately they have meat and so don't have to send the big Irishman off alone on a 35 mile trip to get help for the little Englishman dying of scurvy. The other problems of crossing an ice cap of such height are not so amenable to solution, and then there's who they find on the mountain plateau that protrudes above the ice.

Not to mention the presentation of the shamaness Marcofeva's people, the cannibals mentioned above. (One hopes they get fats from other sources; eating an exclusive menu of very lean Person can cause problems from too much protein and no fat; see also *To Serve Man: A Cookbook for People* by "Karl Würf" [George H. Scithers] (1976, 1979).) Having Evans, Lashly, and Crean — or maybe Shackleton, Worsley, and Crean (Tom Crean got around a lot) — drop in on the last few guys of the Greely Expedition is a bit disconcerting. Not quite as disconcerting as realizing that they are a trap themselves, as well as being in a trap; and yet they are still superior to the Rulers.

Desperation leads people to extraordinary measures. As when the emperor finally sees, and grants Count Thyssen an extraordinary commission, after having him dragged out of the

dungeons. However, an extraordinary commission only means he's facing extraordinary opposition, and the Rulers really don't make any distinction between the tribal mammoth hunters and the people of the Empire.

Count Thyssen has to face the Rulers again, and what happens next, terrible though it may be, is only a prelude to the great struggle that will occur when this is . . . [To Be Continued]

**CAPTAIN HOWDY**

Review by Joseph T Major of

**PANDEMONIUM**

by Daryl Gregory

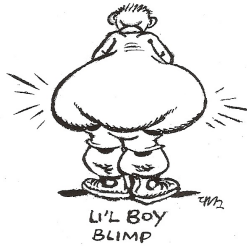
(Del Rey; 2008;

ISBN 978-0-345-50116-5; \$13.00)

**NOTICE:**

The following drawings are based on sketches sneakily made at LoneStarCon Two, San Antonio, Texas, 1997. ...So, recognize yourself?

SCHIRM / 2007



Li'L BOY BLIMP

Howdy would vacate the premises given proper inducement. His own possession is not so easily terminated.

Sixty years ago, demonic possession became a very real thing. But the demons were not legendary things like Pazuzu or any of his other comrades in the legions of Hell; more archetypes, characters as much out of pulp fiction or National Writers' Project collected folk takes as anything else. They are as fatal, though, as Captain Howdy was to Frs. Merrin and Karras, and with less effort.

Pierce was one of those possessed, and his possession led to his (or the demon's, anyway) shooting his mother's eye out with a slingshot. For all the time since then, he has become a captive of his possession, and indeed as the plot progresses, we see how much so.

The world is not much better. In interstitial flashbacks we see the effects of these possessions, most of them fatal. The main plot shows others; the proliferation of cults dedicated to explaining these events. And others, as demonstrated by the appearance of Valis the demon — possessing the body of Philip K. Dick. (Phil, you really needed to quit doing drugs, but that was a rather extreme method.)

What is surprising is how much normality there is amid the fray. At one point, Pierce flees to a run-down, small, off the beaten path motel in the backwoods of New York, and his trip is almost platitudinous in his transition of toll roads, gas stations, and the like. If nothing else, Gregory should be commended for his

evocation of such remnants of the past. Similarly, his treatment of the pulps and comics of the thirties and forties is worth noting.

The clues to the business lie in such things, and in Pierce's realization of the connection between his own hand-drawn comics and the repetitious portrayals of a rural scene, created by one of the demons. As he crosses the continent, pursued by his own demons (so to speak) as much as anything, else, joined with a strange partner who herself has a troubling past of possession, for a confrontation with the source, he comes to a terrifying realization about himself . . .

And yet, oddly enough, this is a Campbellsque work; the ordinary novel of the future that JWCjr desired. More an *Unknown Worlds* future than an *Astounding* future, but all the same an ordinary novel of its world, featuring an extraordinary character.

**ELLEANDER EVENING**

Review by Joseph T Major of

**MY DIRTY LITTLE BOOK OF STOLEN TIME**

by Liz Jensen

(Bloomsbury; 2006;

ISBN 978-1-59691-188-8; \$23.95)

Jerry Yulsman's *Elleander Morning* (1984) recounts how one woman forestalled a war following up on the World War, but then the Germans inexplicably decided they wanted to get their arschens kicked by the world just like in the book. Time travel was involved. The book lacks historical coherence (the assassin goes to Vienna in 1913 to shoot Hitler, when he was in Munich) as well. And, no matter how often I tell Ed Meškys the facts, he thinks the author is (technically, was) a woman named "Yulesman" (and that the book is a good AH).

Well, *Elleander Morning* was a lady of the evening, and so is Charlotte Dagmar Marie of Østerbro (that being the orphanage where she grew up). Charlotte is furthermore financially encumbered in this year of grace 1897, having lost two of her more generous clients (one for twelve months barring a reduction for good behavior, and one for good) and still having to put up with Fru Schleswig, the former cook at the orphanage, who has somehow attached herself to Charlotte with loud protests of parental responsibility.

Other work is always a help, and through immense coincidence, Charlotte learns of Fru Krak of Number Nine Rosenvængtes Allé, København, a widow about to be remarried and in need of maid service to get her house in order for her new spouse. Charlotte and Fru Schleswig turn up ready for work.

If only it weren't for the strange stories about Professor Krak, the disappeared (or has he really?) man of the house, and the place of his construction in the cellar, the Oblivion Room, where people enter any time they like, but they never ever leave. While cleaning the house up of any small items that won't be missed but will bring in a few kronor at the pawn shop (a girl has to make a living), Charlotte investigates the cellar. There is something very strange down

there.

However, when she, Fru Schleswig, and Fru Krak are all in the cellar at the same time, and the lady of the house reacts, Charlotte finds herself relocated in several dimensions. Namely, to twenty-first century London.

Charlotte adapts with considerable ease. There is an entire society of Professor Krak's voyagers there, living covertly and doing rather well, it seems. There is nothing like a Dane, I suppose, and with immense good luck, whilst trolling for clients (some things never change), she encounters Fergus McCrombie, an archaeologist with a cute little daughter and a willingness to believe.

And before long, Fergus wants to see the wonders of nineteenth-century Copenhagen. Only, once they get there, they find out that Fru Krak can be scared for a little while, but not forever; and when they escape as best they can, their time machine is not even as reliable as Dr. Moses Nebogipfel's apparatus. Which leaves Charlotte and her friends of the Halfway Club of Danish time-travelers saddled with a remarkable problem. It seems neither Fergus nor Professor Krak went with them . . .

The writing style, my dear readers, may come across as a bit coy & epistolary-novelish. Charlotte does seem less hardened and cynical than most streetwalkers seem to become, and she was fortunate she did not encounter someone with an unfortunate ailment, in either time of work.

For someone who hadn't even read that novel by the English Mr. Wells, she seems remarkably accepting of the concept of time travel, and very practical withal in whatever circumstances she was in. Small wonder Fergus McCrombie thought her a fit caregiver for his daughter, and more along those lines, in spite of her other activity. You'll like meeting her, too.

### A CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF THE DA VINCI CODE

. . . 'Georg says this all reminds him of a book he once read about a murder in the Louvre,' said Fru Jakobsen. 'Everything was a conundrum, & as soon as the hero had cracked one set of riddle-me-rees, up popped another; it went on & on apparently but you couldn't put it down because it was all about Jesus having sexual congress & squiring progeniture.'  
— *My Dirty Little Book of Stolen Time*, Page 246

### THE REVOLUTION OF NIHILISM

Review by Joseph T Major of  
*THE BOOKS OF THE WARS*  
by Mark S. Geston

(Baen; 2009;

ISBN 978-1-4165-9152-8; \$7.99)

Contains *Lords of the Starship* (1967),  
*Out of the Mouth of the Dragon* (1969),  
and *The Siege of Wonder* (1976)

China Miéville's works, particularly the New Croubzon series beginning with *Perdido*

*Street Station* (2000; reviewed in *Alexiad* V. 1 #3), have seemed to have a certain blended ambiance; to have the fittings and equipment of science fiction, but to be told in the style of fantasy. That the imagery is unremittingly ugly, the people predominantly wrathful, does affect the reader.

Before Miéville there was Mark S. Geston. And yes, I did read *Lords of the Starship* when it came out from Ace and for a staggering price of 50¢. And there wasn't even another book tacked on back-to-back.

The Caroline Republic (presumably *res publica*, since it has a king) is just another New Croubzon; a decaying realm in a world living among the ruins of long-ago and long-destroyed greatness. Nothing is done because there's no point to anything.

As our story begins, Sir Henry Limpkin, a bureaucrat, is summoned by a mysterious figure known only as "General Toriman". In his campaigns, the general passed through a most strange place, known as "The Yards". The Yards had, it seems, the machinery and tools to build a spaceship, and as it happens he has a proposal for donig precisely that. And so there's no point in thinking small; the ship should be seven miles long, a third of a mile in diameter, a wingspan of three and a half miles, and a tail fin extending five-eighths of a mile above the hull.

The idea is to give the people of Coraline a goal, something for which they can be persuaded to build public works, industrialize, innovate, save, and so on. If their work is actually going to something, they will actually work for a change. And so the goal will be consumed by the effort, with all the work done on building the spaceship *Victory* in the end spurring people to rebuild their own world, instead of flying off to a new Home. (And besides the People will be put out by the incursion of so many Outsiders dropping in — oops, different Home.)

And so the wars of expansion begin. When the Yards and the route thereto are secured, so does the building.

Some time later, as work on the Ship progresses, a promising young engineer named Rome is approached by a mysterious figure known only as "General Tenn". The general has shocking news — some of the effort being put forth to build the Ship is being diverted.

What Rome should do to organize the workers — known as "The People" (not those People, other People) to resist the autocracy of the higher-ranking engineering and construction staff, the Technos. In due time the People will have their turn, and they can devote all those resources to the building of the Ship.

And they do. Under the leadership of a mysterious figure known only as "Coral", the People stage an uprising. The Technos are destroyed with much carnage, all that effort at development now becomes concentrated solely on finishing the Ship.

Then the Day comes. The Ship is finished. From some mysterious component within it, it sends forth great flocks of loudspeaker drones commanding all who hear to come to the Ship,

that they may travel to the Home. And they do, by their thousands if not millions, frozen and stuffed into the compartments of the Ship.

As do enemies, who fear this, and attack it. A great combat ensues, with brutal and overwhelming fighting on all sides. In the middle of it, the Ship lights off its engines, backs out to sea and — begins to destroy itself.

In the middle of this, an even greater catastrophe ensues, as heretofore unimagined weapons smite the field of battle, turning all the combatants into that greasy gray ash that sticks to the boots. Destruction reigns.

Not long after, a sea raft that Miéville might appreciate approaches, and its passenger surveys the devastation. It is Toriman-Tenn-Coral himself, the leader and herald of an even greater army, come to assault the now ruined and defenseless lands.

Apparently some time later, for there are minor references to what may be events of the previous book (and may be just coincidences), Amon VanRoark, an inhabitant of a seaport that is never named, begins to wonder just might come *Out of the Mouth of the Dragon*. A ship limped into the harbor, returning ruined from a great battle at a place called the Meadows, and was slowly repaired. Then it set off again, leaving behind it a city that wasn't at all concerned about its port silting up because everyone was devoting all their effort to building a cathedral (for, apparently, no gods, there being no religious belief in this decaying world whatsoever).

VanRoark wants to go see the Meadows, so he goes to sea. The technology is the same erratic blend that existed in the other book, with supersonic jet planes flying over ratty sailing ships.

The voyage is long and tedious. VanRoark delves into the histories of his fellow venturers, finding them variously curiosity-driven or merely out for a new fight. Like everything else in the world, even the men are decaying.

Then, he leaves and finds more ventures, most interestingly on a "land train", a steam-powered vehicle of separate cars, run by you guessed it a decaying and strange crew. Since his leaving involved a fight in which he lost an arm and an eye, and one of the steam train people turned out to be a surgeon who replaced them with more capable mechanical parts, it may have been just as well.

He leaves the train for a time, and after various wanderings, returns to his birthplace, home, only to find the city abandoned. He wanders the empty streets, noting the signs of destruction. The cathedral, rather damaged, is now an aircraft hangar — at least several jet fighters are parked in it.

Incurious, he leaves, soon running across the train, abandoned, the last man on board dead in a chair by it — an eerie scene, made more so by his continued conversation. The man was dead, his artificial voice box wasn't, and continued to emit random sounds.

And so, pointless in a pointless world, VanRoark wanders down to the sea pondering the fate of eternity.

As opposed to what a man called “Aden” endures in the Holy City of the wizards during *The Siege of Wonder*. Which is a collage of striking images and events, fighting and destruction.

I had thought that the pervasive, gripping nihilism seen in the destruction for the sake of destruction that runs through all three of these books was unrealistic. Then I remembered the story of the Russian peasant granted a wish, who wished that his neighbor’s cow would die. Such attitudes exist, that is, and what Geston has done is to create a world where there is no other attitude; a world where a revolution of nihilism has triumphed, and cosmic indifference has become personal indifference.

Even when I first read it, I wondered why the characters (in the first book, that is), were so intent on self-destruction. For example, in the grand finale battle, the captain of the cruiser *Havengore*, reconstructed and made fully functional at immense effort and expense, runs her aground at full speed, followed by his two escort vessels. This is so much against naval protocol and self-preservation; it makes absolutely no sense whatsoever. Perhaps that was, in the end, Geston’s point.

The first book presents an interesting example of this indifference, the curious and oblique character of Toriman-Tenn-Coral. A. E. van Vogt was criticized by Damon Knight for presenting in his works conflicts where the same person was secretly running both sides. Alexei Panshin defended that trope on the grounds that it showed the irrelevance of those conflicts. This setting has that character more conveniently, if not quite as plausibly (evidently everyone is so demoralized that they never check out Toriman-Tenn-Coral, or don’t care when he doesn’t check out) masterminding destruction. One can argue that he is the protagonist.

Geston is writing in the theme of the grand devastation novel. While these sort of works go back a ways (*In the Days of the Comet* (1906), *The Poison Belt* (1913), *Sixty Days to Live* (1939), and so on), after the Second World War they tended to focus on nuclear destruction (*Alas, Babylon* (1959) by “Pat Frank” [Harry Hart Frank], *Fail-Safe* (1962) by Eugene Burdick and Harvey Wheeler, *Triumph* (1963) by Philip Wylie) in the U.S. The British field was dominated by J. G. Ballard’s exotic tales of unimaginable devastation and general indifference to survival (*The Wind from Nowhere* (1961), *The Drowned World* (1962), *The Burning World* (1964), *The Crystal World* (1966)). Geston is between Ballard and Miéville in this, writing with great style and skill and brilliantly portraying a world of indifference. Nothing much matters anymore.

### THE BRONZE RAM OF RÓDOS

Review by Joseph T Major of

#### THE SUN’S BRIDE

by Gillan Bradshaw

(Severn House; 2008;

ISBN 978-0-7278-6641-7; \$28.95)

Isokrates poured a libation to the spirits of Menedemos and Sostratos, standing before the urns that contained their ashes. “The memorial is one of the last works of Chares of Lindhos, builder of the Colossus,” he said by way of explanation, but he was a bit concerned that Gaby would launch into song, since it would be an offense to the Lady Dionysia . . .

— Not by Gillian Bradshaw

Isokrates the helmsman of the Rhodian trihemiola *Atalanta* is probably wanting to be doing some running. A mere anti-piracy swoop ends up getting him plugged directly into the turbulent mire of international politics, trapped between the Hellenistic Successor states of Macedon and Egypt and the Seleucid Empire. Not to mention rescuing the discarded mistress of King Antiochos Theos from pirates.

The third year of the 132nd Olympiad has just begun. Among the turbulent people of the border province between the Seleucids and the Ptolemies, it is the 3515th year since the creation of the world. In the far-western lands that Menedemos and Sostratos visited once, it is the consulship of M’ Otacilius Crassus (for the second time) and P. Servilius Geminius (for the second time), in the year DVIII since the Founding of the City. Far beyond the lands of the Parthians, Ch’in Shih-huang-ti (Qin Shi Huang Di) has just had the Mandate of Heaven descend upon his unworthy person. Off the coast of the Middle Kingdom, the lands of the Rising Sun bask in the 45th year of Kōrei. [Times yet to come will say 246 BC(E).]

ΡΟΔΟΣ, or Ródos, or Rhodes, will be familiar to the readers of L. Sprague de Camp’s *The Bronze God of Rhodes* (1960) or the “Menedemos and Sostratos” novels by “H. N. Turtletaub”. This particular work is set a little later, but the opening scene would be familiar to Chares, Menedemos, Sostratos, or Xena — the *Atalanta* is running down some pirates. Then, the pirate chief’s hostage pulls out of his grasp and dives into the sea, after which the *Atalanta* proceeds to ram the ship and rescue the lady.

Dionysia, the lady in question, has just been sent away from the court of the Seleucid ruler Antiochos Theos [Antiokhos Theos], where she had entertained the basileus in different ways. She had learned the kithara at her father’s knee, and in a world where women were not quite empowered, but better than they had been, made herself a career. But now, it seems, Antiochos has put away his second wife, Berenice [Berenike] and returned to his first, Laodice [Laodike]. Since Berenice had been the seal on a peace treaty between Antiochos and Ptolemy [Ptolemaios Philadelphios], her father, it looks as if Hellenistic politics is in for some turmoil.

Not to mention that Isokrates has fallen for the lady, for all that he is in very constrained financial standards, estranged from his father, and along the way has picked up some powerful enemies. And did I mention that the pirate captain escaped, and turned up at the court of Queen Laodice when Isokrates reported in?

As the politics of the era get all too bloody,

the characters find themselves going from one setting of immense peril to another. Their attraction to each other, however, is more restrained by external restraints. Assuming they live, which between the perils of being slipped hemlock or steel by a royal command, or merely being handed out as part of the swag of a bold pirate band, is hardly a certainty.

Bradshaw uses the social structures of Hellenistic society to make her point. This may not be how it was then, but as far as we know it was close enough. Having this, she proceeds to tell a story of heroic peril and romantic love, placing her lovers in the direst of perils from foes both big and small. Having read this, you’ll understand why Caesar did that to the pirates, even the female one . . .



### THE MAN WHO FOLDED THE WOODROW WILSON DIME

Review by Joseph T Major of  
*THE WALLS OF THE UNIVERSE*

by Paul Melko

(Tor; 2009;

ISBN 978-0-7653-1997-5; \$25.95)

Verkan Vall looked at the toy, a simple mechanism of color-matching. “You say this was introduced to that time-line by a timeline-traveler?” he asked.

The research needed to prove the contamination had been tedious. The innovator had been tracked down after a long, stealthy investigation. Even genetic-particle analysis had not turned up any discrepancy, and it had taken research into a dozen extremely similar time-lines to determine which one had been his original one — all from the Europeo-American Sector, for which they had an adequate selection of people and equipment. This was not the most recent example, but the last such risk had traded crude clothing fasteners and women’s makeup between the two time-lines before the Paratime Police had caught him.

Vall picked up the device and began to move the facets. “Sir?” Parload Pato said. “Sir, will you authorize the removal?”

“When I get this . . .” he said, then broke into some unpleasant oaths he had picked up on a third-level time-line, upon seeing that one block had its colors

in the wrong faces and he would have to undo his work . . .

— Not by H. Beam Piper or Jack Finney

If you've read *The History of Middle-earth*, this author's name seems a trifle unfortunate. (Hint: Morgoth's original name, "Melkor", had picked up a letter in the revisions.)

John Rayburn, of the middle of nowhere, Ohio, may be stalked by guys with sigma-ray needlers. This is because John Rayburn, formerly of the middle of nowhere, Ohio, abruptly showed up out of nowhere . . . a different timeline nowhere, and explained the situation. Then he handed the timeline travelling device to his duplicate, wished himself good luck, and took over his life.

John Prime (the first traveller) had this gadget that he was going to rename "Rayburn's Cube" and Rubik Ernő is just out of luck. Meanwhile John second is just out of luck, running into the traditional loss of all his money and useful things.

John Prime then proceeds to fulfill an old wish, and marries the local time-line version of the girl he longed for in his home time-line. However, he finds the problems of too-young parenthood, on top of working full-time while going to school part-time, to be all too much.

John second is bounding from time-line to time-line, most of them unpleasant. At least he hasn't jumped into the Blight (of Laumer's *Imperium* (2005 (1961, 1965, 1968); reviewed in *Alexiad* V. 4 #3)). When he does settle down, he collects his feelings and sets out on a grand project of reverse engineering. You see, the time-line device has a little problem — it's one way only!

John Prime begins to run into legal problems. Rubik did indeed exist and patent his cube, just didn't develop it. However, this time-line doesn't have pinball machines. So he struggles through the legal problems of trying to patent and develop a new device. At which point some people with decidedly strange names begin making inquiries.

There are other time-line castaways here, men with strange names. Their original time-line was dominated by the Goths, see. (It ends up seeming like the AWB from *The Guns of the South* crossed with the Kromaggs from "Sliders".) Nevertheless they make very good wiseguys. "Nice little business you got here. Be a pity if anything were to happen to it."

Oh, and did I mention the murder? Not that we all haven't had bullies we wouldn't mind seeing getting snuffed, but John Prime's girlfriend turns out to be remarkably ruthless when it comes to being accessory to a murder.

John the original finally works out his own device, and just in, you will excuse the comment, time. This is a case where he really has to save himself . . .

Melko has kept control of his plot. Losing control of the plot is a far too easy error to make when dealing with multiple versions of the same person. Both versions of John run into real-world problems; even though I thought the bit about losing all his money was too cliched, it

was an exception.

And there are human problems too. Seeing how people do better or worse can be heartbreaking; it shows how a life can change for better or worse. Makes one think of the flash-asides in *Lola Rennt* (*Run Lola Run*; reviewed in *Alexiad* V. 2 #2) where the future lives of the people Lola ran past were so different.

In short, it's an ordinary novel about an extraordinary occurrence. John Prime doesn't have to try to pass Woodrow Wilson Dimes after folding himself into the time-line traveling device, he faces the problems someone who wasn't a time-line-traveler was as well.

### TO THE CORAL STRAND

Review by Joseph T Major of  
**DESTROYERMEN: MAELSTROM**  
by Taylor Anderson

(RoC; 2009;

ISBN 978-0-451-46253-4; \$24.95)

Sequel to *Destroyermen: Into the Storm*  
(2008; reviewed in *Alexiad* V. 7 #5) and

*Destroyermen: Crusade*

(2008; reviewed in *Alexiad* V. 7 #6)

Lieutenant-Commander Matthew Patrick Ready, USNR, could probably put up with the antics of Torpedoman Gruber, Motor Machinist Mate Bell, Quartermaster Christopher, Gunner's Mate Edwards, Radioman Moss, and Seaman Haines, provided they could pull off the sort of success against the Grik that they usually did to save themselves from the wrath of Old Leadbottom. Lacking the services of Quintin McHale's gang of reprobates (did you know, by the way, that *McHale's Navy* began as a serious drama?), the USS *Walker* and its far-exiled crew may really be in for it.

They have recovered some of their comrades, and indeed found that there are more; but the enemy is also still out there, both domestic and imported. However, as the preview chapter printed at the end of *Destroyermen: Crusade* indicated, there was a reason that the Grik had English as a secret language and the Lemurians had Latin. And sure enough, when the *Walker* sails to the Philippines on a venture, they run into some of the local humans, along with the survivors of the submarine *S-19* (which, in our world, was scuttled in 1938). Which was less bothersome than the other local humans, who popped up during a search for Someone Important and were just a bit miffed that these bloody colonials should be lowering their standards so.

Meanwhile, the *Amagi* is proving herself more durable than your average cockroach, having suffered severe combat damage, and there are the little carnivorous fish that make underwater repairs a very interesting thing, but she's still going. (Anderson hints at how the *Amagi* managed to escape the Washington Naval Treaty limits by referring to 25.4 cm (oh all right 10") guns. The designed main battery of the *Amagi* class was 40.9 cm. (16.1").)

Oh yes, they still have Captain Kaufman, U.S.A (Air Corps). He's surprised, too.

Captain Ready and his men (and women)

now have prospects of a future — provided they survive the imminent Grik assault, and the attack of the *Amagi*. There are always little problems.

So far, Anderson has escaped the "Party of Postponement" syndrome; the scenario where it turns out that even though last volume's enemy was handily defeated, there was a bigger and more powerful enemy out there that heretofore just hadn't wanted to get involved. Similarly, he has not succumbed to "Arcot, Wade, and Morey" syndrome, where technological advances burgeon at a speed unimagined in our experience with our resources, never mind the limited resources available to our stranded heroes. (Think the Professor in *Gilligan's Island*. By the way, his name was Roy Hinkley.)

Anderson's mining of naval trivia is not without interest for the old sailors. What are we going to run into next, HMS/M *X-1*, the Royal Navy's unsuccessful submarine cruiser?

Will this be continued? There's room for further adventures, and the Grik are still there and still hungry. And indeed, though there is no explicit declaration here, in other sources it has been definitely indicated that the plot lines begun here will be carried on when this sailors' saga is . . . [To Be Continued]

### DESTROYERMEN: ARMAGEDDON

Review by Joseph T Major of  
**A BLUE SEA OF BLOOD:**  
*Deciphering the Mysterious Fate of the USS Edsall*

by Donald M. Kehn, Jr.

(Zenith Press; 2008;

ISBN 978-0-7603-3353-2; \$26.00)

It may be a planet of big ugly scaly things and not so animé cat people, but Taylor Anderson's *Destroyermen* saga begins in a very ugly setting, facing the sort of people who created animé cat people; the doomed campaigns of the remnants of the Asiatic Fleet. One of the real four-piper destroyers of that fleet, one like Anderson's fictively-preserved *Walker* and *Mahan*, was the USS *Edsall* (DD-219). The *Edsall* was not swept into a crosstime vortex, naturally; her fate was less appealing.

One wonders, naturally, if her commanding officer, Lieutenant Joshua J. Nix, USN (USNA '30) remembered that guy a year ahead of him who was on the fencing team, then got invalidated out with TB. Some of Heinlein's stories may have got out to the Far East by then. (Hm, Heinlein writing about a war between cat-people and lizard-people, resolved by humans — I bet Campbell would have bought that without even a second thought!)

One of the features of the book is that Kehn wanted to give the families of the crew closure; to tell them what really happened. And he describes the final days of the Asiatic Fleet. In one of the last commitments of men to the inferno, the *Edsall* was detached to speed to Java with a number of Air Corps pilots (an eerie parallel to *Destroyermen*). Then, as reports had it, she ran into the surface escort of *Kido Butai*,

the Fast Carrier Striking Force.

It had been presumed that there were no survivors. But, Kehn found out, there were a handful of them. Who suffered even more extraordinary mistreatment and abuse before their deaths.

Which, more than the usual Japanese attitude towards those who did not fight to the death, seems also to have been caused by sheer embarrassment. The battleships *Hiei* and *Kirishima* and the cruisers *Tone* and *Chikuma* fired at the *Edsall* for approximately an hour and scored exactly one hit. In spite of the vast time since then and the substantial casualties then, Kehn was able to find survivors, including officers, of those ships who confirmed the narrative of the battle.

Other chapters of the book describe the greater world around the story. Kehn recounts the history of the *Edsall* including her presence at the fall of Symrna, the design failures of the four-pipers, the collapse of the Allied position in Southeast Asia, and indeed the end of colonialism there. The Dutch discovered that the people of the East Indies didn't love them after all.

The families of those lost on the *Edsall* now have a little bit of closure. Being cast away in a world of flesh-eating lizards and cat people would be some kind of relief, but fiction remains, no matter how insightful and entertaining, only fiction, sad to say.

USS *Edsall* (DD-219)

<http://www.history.navy.mil/danfs/e2/edsall-i.htm>

### THE LAUREL NOOSE

Review by Joseph T Major of  
**TOTHE END OF THE EARTH:**  
*Our Epic Journey to the North Pole and the Legend of Peary and Henson*  
by Tom Avery  
(St. Martin's Press; 2009;  
ISBN 978-0-312-55186-5; \$26.95)

The Beagle Project is an effort to encourage the Royal Geographical Society, heir to a century and a half of expeditionary history, to begin organizing expeditions again. Among its sponsors is Tom Avery, polar explorer — one of those entitled to a clasp to his Polar Medal, for having explored both ends of the Earth. In fact, having gone to the extremes of both ends of the world. This is the story of the Northern trip of 2005.

This time, Avery decided that he wanted to show that Peary had indeed gone to the North Pole, no matter what the first man who claimed to have gone to the North Pole and had it proven said. And indeed, it seems, Sir Walter William "Wally" Herbert was very skeptical.

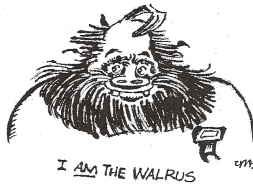
Gathering sponsorship seems to be not as hard as it used to be (i.e., Avery didn't have to emulate Scott and speak in Little-Storping-in-the-Swuff, getting £7.42 mostly in small change, plus that one-Euro coin that Nigel brought back from his trip to *foreign* parts), so that was the case. Personnel problems don't change, and it's not surprising that there was a broken engagement. What didn't happen in the Good

Old Days was that the couple had been both in the team — and she went to the Pole.

The intent of this expedition was to demonstrate that Peary could have made it. Thus every dated entry in the narrative shows how far ahead or behind they are. While they had several advantages that Peary didn't (GPS location, for example, that gets rid of that troublesome need to calculate lateral drift), they had to deal with several problems that he didn't.

Nowadays the explorer has to struggle with a mound of permissions, restrictions, qualifications, and constraints. All the catastrophes and blockages that assailed James Blish's Western Polar Basin Expedition in *Fallen Star* [*Frozen Year*] (1957) hardly needed intervention from albino Martians to come to pass. (For what it's worth, the strictures on albinism and skin cancer asserted in that book don't seem to be the case; the character is a photographer and given the visual problems associated with albinism (Elric wipes out so many people with Stormbringer because he can't see to tell associate from foe), Blish could have made a better case for his extraterrestrial origin on that basis.)

But, in the end, the expedition triumphed. They managed to reach the Pole without killing a single dog, in spite of the last supply drop nearly being aborted by a pilot who deemed it unnecessary. And then, making the obligatory mention of Global Warming thinning the ice pack to the point where the unique ecosystem will be fatally damaged unless We Do Something, they were picked up off the ice, having outdone Peary, and returned home triumphantly.



It's worth noting that Avery makes his case very precisely. For example, he cites Sir Wally as *sceptically* averring that his *lightly-built*

sledges will be battered to bits, citing his own disbelief — then, during the expedition, noting how the sledges were battered. And similarly, he not only sloughs over Sir Wally's comments but completely ignores the most thorough treatment of the matter, Robert M. Bryce's 1151-page doorstop of a book, *Cook and Peary: The Polar Controversy, Resolved* (1997). Not to mention ignoring one of the biggest problems — Peary's incredibly fast last dash to the pole, an assertion not even supported by the other witness. (See Matt Henson's *A Negro Explorer at the North Pole* (1912), preferably the edition edited by Robert Bryce.)

If you want to read the latest version of it was the best of times, it was the worst of times, and you should get a look at my toes, this is a good choice. In a world where every bit of risk (and every bit of fun) is ligitated away, there's few enough places left where there are no lawyers.

**MARK IST MARK**

Review by Joseph T Major of  
**THE WAGES OF DESTRUCTION:**  
*The Making and Breaking of the Nazi Economy*

by Adam Tooze  
(Viking Adult; 2007;  
ISBN 978-0-670-03826-8; \$32.00 (hb);  
Penguin; 2008;  
ISBN 978-0-14-311320-1; \$20.00 (tp))

### If Hitler Had Invaded England

#### Introduction

THE TITLE tells you what this story is about. So often it has been said, if Hitler had made the attempt to invade Britain after the evacuation of Dunkirk, he would have won the war, that it is worth analyzing his chances. He must be given in this narrative every possible chance, but none of the impossible ones. Before war began he had made no plans, and certainly no preparations, for the invasion of Britain; if he had, history would have taken a different course from that moment. If he had begun to build a fleet of landing craft in 1938, for instance, the British attitude at Munich might well have been different, and certainly British rearmament would have been more rapid. And it must be remembered that with the German economy at full stretch for war production, such a fleet could only have been built at the cost of a diminished output of planes or guns or tanks or submarines.

— "C. S. Forester" [Cecil Louis Troughton Smith]

Fifty years on, the best and most plausible alternate history of the event bears the self-referential title of "If Hitler Had Invaded England" (*Saturday Evening Post*, April 16-30, 1960; available in *Gold from Crete* (1973)). Turning away from the *African Queen*, *The Pride and the Passion*, Captain Horatio Hornblower, and all that, C. S. Forester went into a new field of endeavor. Unlike his later colleagues who take up the forgeries of a man determined to blacken his country, "Forester" looked over the background, studied the resources available, and analyzed the correlation of forces.

Now, there is even less of an excuse. This book has won the Wolfson History Prize for excellence in the writing of history for the general public, so the would-be AH writer can't even claim that it's too technical for her.

Tooze gives a narrative of the troubled and uncertain economy of Nazi Germany. One of the current claims of neo-Nazis is that "Hitler broke free of the chains of the International Jewish Finance System!" Leaving aside the Jew-hatred, this was what he attempted to do, and Tooze shows how the German economy could not achieve the autarky that National Socialist policy required and advocated.

The economy limped along through the

thirties. Indeed, one factor that would prove to be very decisive later that Tooze demonstrates to abundance was how *undeveloped* Germany was; the bustling autobahns and the Mercedeses that filled them were the privilege of a few, while your average German lived on next to nothing. That is to say, mechanization was low, which was why the principal transport of the invincible Wehrmacht whinnied. (Which in turn explains many things, including the reason they didn't use poison gas.) The impoverished vista that greeted Ferric Jaggar when he returned to his native land of Helder was quite real in the original, though at least there were no mutants.

Tooze discusses the employment and unemployment problems that followed in the expansion of the Reich. Taking over first Austria, then the Sudetenland may have helped gain some foreign currency reserves; but it also meant more unemployed to find work for.

And then the war broke out. It was some kind of a solution, in that now it was possible to mobilize and direct the economy, but even these problems cropped up. Tooze provides a number of insights regarding the economic influence on strategy and politics. For example, there was the degree of arms production, which overreached the acceptable peacetime limits (hence "Forester's" comment about building landing craft meaning not building something else). Once the actual fighting began, this was improved in some ways but exacerbated in others.

One of the biggest reputations to suffer here is that of Albert Speer the Supreme Planner. There's already been a vast corrective to Speer's self-serving testimony (e.g. *Albert Speer: His Battle with Truth* (1995) by Gitta Sereny, O.B.E.) but this goes even further, and not just on such things as whether or not he was out of the room while Himmler was speaking about the extermination of the Jews (no doubt having drunk too much coffee and heading for the klo). Rather, Tooze shows how Speer's "great reorganization" only went so far in boosting arms production.

Other debunkings deal with the *Wunderwaffen* so beloved of fanboys, the jet planes, stealth submarines, and supertanks that would sweep away the Allies and win the war. Tooze demonstrates the production problems of the ME-262 jet, the Type XXI U-Boat, and so on. For example, prefabricating submarine sections is one of those ideas that seem so good but can have a very bad slip between the drafting table and the boat in the water.

Getting back to an earlier topic, Tooze discusses the labor shortage in Germany. While debunking earlier conceptions regarding the mobilization of women for labor ("Kinder, Kirche, Küche" ended up being stretched to where kitchens were war plants), he discusses other labor sources, namely the importation of slave laborers from conquered territories. As more and more Germans were requisitioned for the armed forces, the number of workers had to be made up somehow. And then there was the problem of the deliberate destruction of skilled labor of the wrong ancestry . . .

It's worth noting that the quest for

*Lebensraum* meant that the previous occupants had to be removed. Usually to a meter or two down, it turns out. That Reichsgau Götengau that so exercised Himmler's fantasies (see *The Master Plan: Himmler's Scholars and the Holocaust* (2006; reviewed in *Alexiad* V. 5 #5) by Heather Pringle for that story) would be pre-depopulated, as it were.

Tooze has presented a new perspective that increases the comprehensibility of that dark era of the world. It is all very well to present exciting tales of adventure, or insightful commentaries on the essential depravity of those of the wrong class, but those which ignore plausibility and coherence are less than they promise, whether it be science, history, or the dismal science. As the other side put it, "Facts are better than dreams."

### THE LOST WORLD

Review by Joseph T Major of

#### THE LOST CITY OF Z:

*A Tale of Deadly Obsession in the Amazon*

by David Grann

(Doubleday; 2005, 2009;

ISBN 978-0-385-51353-1; \$27.50)

*"Se aventura tiver um nome, deve ser o Indiana Jones!"*

Indy removed his hat, and wiped the sweat from his forehead. Then he put his hat back on, not wanting sunstroke. "Kid, see the darker soil there? That's a posthole. And there's another one, over there, and beyond that in the next trench." He looked into the woods, where the great moat could be seen. "John Roxton's report was right. There was a great civilization here once."

"But where's the gold?" Mutt said. He breathed hard and swatted away a dozen different kinds of insects.

Indy smiled. "In New York," he said, confident. "Lectures, films, books . . ." Then he moved quickly, the whip snapped out, taking off the head of a snake that had been about to bite Mutt. "It had to be snakes," he said.

Back in the sixties, I had a disintegrating cheaply-hardbound book about lost treasures. Some of them were merely petty, such as the pottery cat that had several valuable rubies hidden in it by someone who seemed to have read "The Six Napoleons". (When Holmes insisted on buying all rights to the bust, he wasn't trying to lay claim to the Black Pearl of the Borgias; he was making sure he could legitimately claim the entire reward.) Some were, er, well, historically off; I don't know what Lisa would think of the story of Anne Bonney and the pirate crew of half-dressed wenches.

One story, though, told about Percy Fawcett and the Amazon. This British explorer had traveled into the depths of the Mato Grosso in search of an ancient lost civilization repeatedly. In 1925 he had set off again, only this time he had never come back. The book had described their journey, their final contact with others, and

then they had vanished in the wilderness.

I don't think David Grann read that book. He did read others, though, and the story of Percy Hamilton Fawcett is quite intriguing.

He was a gunner to begin with. He survived boarding school and Woolwich (the training academy for Royal Artillery officer candidates) and his first posting was in Ceylon. Where he went searching for lost treasure, at an abandoned Sinhalese city inland (instead of the Great Basses Reef, but diving technology was not quite so developed then).

Then the Mato Grosso bug bit him. Beginning in 1906, Fawcett launched six expeditions into the uncharted wild of northern Bolivia and western Brazil. This was not the most hospitable of country, to put it mildly. The hostile fauna ranged from midges to giant snakes (it had to be snakes), not to mention the candiru, a small fish that makes the piranha seem friendly. It likes to swim up narrow orifices and I think I'll leave the rest to your pained imagination. Then too, the human inhabitants are to be considered. Not only do they live there, but they do hold a grudge about previous attempts to "civilize" them.

Fawcett was a man very much in harmony with the philosophy put forth by Sir Chris Bonington, but a generation earlier (see Clint Willis's *The Boys of Everest* (2006; reviewed in *Alexiad* V. 6 #2) for this). Rather than the huge, logistically burdened, massively buttressed expeditions that overwhelmed their goals, Fawcett preferred to have only a handful of men, or even less if necessary. This did entail a somewhat ruthless attitude towards falling out. One of the worst cases was that of James Murray, veteran of the British Antarctic Expedition of 1908-9. Murray probably wished he was back with Shackleton, certainly after the maggots . . . er, well, utterly disgusted, he left the country, and signed up with the *Karluk* expedition, where after the ship became beset, he bugged out, and died somewhere on the ice (see *The Ice Master* (2000; reviewed in *Alexiad* V. 2. #1) by Jennifer Niven for this).

But, it seems, Fawcett had his own quirks. One, of course, was not revealing his sources, out of concern over their being exploited by a competitor. In an era where an unguarded site can be totally trashed by pot hunters by tomorrow morning, thanks to the Internet, this attitude becomes more comprehensible.

Oh yes, competition. Fawcett had a number of competitors, of whom he didn't think much. Yes, even the man for whom the Rio Roosevelt is named.

Not to mention interruptions. When the Great War began, Gunner Fawcett went back to the army, sure it would all be over by Christmas. When it was all over, he was Lieutenant-Colonel Fawcett, D.S.O., Royal Artillery, desperately trying to get a second pip under the crown. It was the status of the thing, I suppose. And then there was the time he almost had that man in the fur coat with the French helmet arrested as a Hun spy . . .

Then the last expedition, in 1925. England was worn out by the War (and then too, having a record of threatening Mr Churchill, who was



now the Chancellor of the Exchequer, might not have been the most advantageous thing to do) and so Colonel Fawcett went to the States. It didn't help that one of his competitors was from there, and independently wealthy to boot. But he managed to raise money, and with his older son and a friend, set out to find the Lost City of Z. He was admittedly suffering from a paradigm shift, as that period was when such expeditions were supposed to be carried out by degreed professionals, not amiable amateurs. Nevertheless, they crossed from Bolivia into Brazil, went into the depths of the Mato Grosso forest . . . and vanished.

That was only the beginning of the story. For twenty years, ever more expeditions set out to find Fawcett. Other investigators used other means; rumors, spiritualists, sightings . . . but no clear indication of their fate.

Grann interleaves the chapters on Fawcett with chapters on his own quest. He not only went to the Mato Grosso, he spoke with Fawcett's daughter. Fawcett had given a false location for Dead Horse Camp, the place from where he had set out on his final quest, and Grann managed to determine what the actual coordinates of the place were. In Brazil, he managed to see the original of the ancient document that first described the lost city of Z. (That book I'd read had mentioned it. They sent ahead a runner with a letter. The expedition then vanished. Lot of that going around.) Strangely enough, none of Grann's gear was stolen from him, forcing him to go out exploring with only a crust in his wallet and a song in his heart, but then reality does that sort of thing.

Grann interleaves the story of Fawcett's life with scenes of his own preparation and activities in the Mato Grosso, as well as the other researches. He seems to want to show that he could get a feel for the scene, and having done so does intensify his descriptions. Having these chapters mixed in with the biographical information on Fawcett does break up the flow of the narrative.

I'm grateful to Martin Morse Wooster for having sent me a copy of Grann's original article, from *The New Yorker*, and for having alerted me to the release of this book.

### SETTING THE EAST ABLAZE

Review by Joseph T Major of

#### **THE BLOODY WHITE BARON:**

*The Extraordinary Story of the Russian Nobleman Who Became the Last Khan of Mongolia*

by James Palmer

(Basic Books; 2008, 2009;

ISBN 978-0-465-01448-4; \$26.95)

From a great distance away, a slow thudding sound began to intrude itself. Yarblek's eyes narrowed with hate. "It looks like Silk left just in time," he growled.

The thudding became louder and turned into a hollow, booming sound. Dimly, behind the booming, they could hear a kind of groaning chant of hundreds of voices in a deep, minor key.

"What's that?" Durnik asked.

"Taur Urgas," Yarblek answered and spat. "That's the war song of the king of the Murgos. . . Taur Urgas is always at war. . . Even when there isn't anybody to be at war with. He sleeps in his armor, even in his own palace. It makes him smelly, but all Murgos stink anyway, so it really doesn't make any difference . . ."

The chanting and the measured drumbeats grew louder. Shrill fifes picked up a discordant, almost jiggling accompaniment, and then there was a sudden blaring of deep-throated horns.

A steady stream of grim-faced Murgo soldiers marched eight abreast into the makeshift fair to the cadenced beat of great drums. In their midst, astride a black horse and under a flapping black banner, rode Taur Urgas. He was a tall man with heavy, sloping shoulders and an angular, merciless face. The thick links of his mail shirt had been dipped in molten red gold, making it almost appear as if he were covered in blood. A thick metal belt encircled his waist, and the scabbard of the sword he wore on his left hip was jewel-encrusted. A pointed steel helmet sat low over his black eyebrows, and the bloodied crown of Cthol Murgos was riveted to it. A kind of chain-mail hood covered the back and sides of the king's neck and spread out over his shoulders.

— David Eddings, *Magician's Gambit*

The story of Baron Nikolai Roman Maximilian Fyodorovich von Ungern-Sternberg is in itself only a tale of human cruelty. In its ramifications, it stretches across half a world, affecting even today, touching peoples across the steppe. Most of them fatally, but cruelty was the issue here.

In the vaster canvas of the Bolshevik Revolution, the Mad Baron was only an afterthought, a feudal aberration made even more feudal by the range and diversity of his beliefs and influences. He was born in Austria no less, to a noble Baltic German family. Palmer makes the interesting point that, due to the difference between the Julian and the Gregorian Calendars, Ungern-Sternberg was born in two different years: December 29, 1885 (o.s.) = January 10, 1886 (n.s.). And somehow, throughout the rest of his life, he always seemed to be between cultures.

His parents divorced, his mother went back to Estonia and remarried, and he grew up to be the terror of the educational system; a discipline problem, dismissed from school. Then came the Russo-Japanese war, and Ungern-Sternberg's aggressive nature found a place; he was enlisted into the army and served briefly at the front.

Then, he signed up as a regular, first going to a military academy, then gaining a commission (first soldier, then officer, where have we heard that before). While learning the essentials of military administration (which he seems to have shed quickly enough when the

opportunity came) he also encountered occultism.

Palmer discusses how, even in eras of overt and thoroughgoing rationalism, outside religious beliefs creep in to replace the discredited native ones. As in the New Age of the eighties, so in Russia a century ago the young and spiritually impoverished studied Buddhism, graduated to Theosophy, and then tacked on their own additions.

Ungern-Sternberg was assigned to the Transbaikal Cossacks, right across the border from Mongolia, home of a lamastic Buddhism. Palmer argues that Buddhism is so broad that just about any belief can be fitted into it; he compares it to the Church of England (but maybe not, since Ann Holmes Redding, the former Episcopal priest who says she is simultaneously a Muslim, has been kicked out for failure to apostatize). In Mongolia and Tibet (and the Mongolian Buddhists derive from Tibet) the beliefs are pretty gory.

A few years later, German explorers seeking the Ancient Aryan Roots of Tibet would observe how un-monastic the monasteries of Tibet were; many of the lamas were armed, the use of prostitutes was so prevalent that gonorrhea was endemic, and so on. (See *Himmler's Crusade* by Christopher Hale (2003; reviewed in *Alexiad* V. 4 #4) for more on this.) Their northern brothers were even more like this. Tibetan and Mongolian monasteries portrayed the wars of the gods and the torments of the damned in grisly and explicit detail, along with how they relieved their emotions afterwards. These matters have been cleaned up for foreign consumption, but not when Ungern-Sternberg came by.

All too soon, the Great War came. Whatever his other lapses, Ungern-Sternberg was lucky. He served in Samsonov's army, and if you know the history, you will be properly amazed when you hear that Ungern-Sternberg escaped unharmed. (The destruction of Samsonov's army by the dynamic duo of Hindenburg and Ludendorff is properly renowned as an example of great skill on one side facing utter incompetence on the other.)

He continued to serve on the German front for the next three years, building a reputation for reckless assaults. One of which earned him a brief spell in the guardhouse, followed by a transfer to the Persian front. Then there came the two revolutions, and all his life came apart.

Other officers noticed that Ungern-Sternberg was an anti-Semite. That should indicate how far out he was, in a milieu where *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion* was known to be the way things really were. And here the neocons, sorry for the anachronism, the Zyd had overthrown the Little Father.

Going east as one of a handful of men, he did his part in winning Siberia for the Bolsheviks. Since he was a White officer, that may give you an idea of the success of his efforts. Ungern-Sternberg organized a military force (to use the terms very loosely) that was kept together by terror, and dominated its enemies by even more terror.

Having eroded support in his political home,

Ungern-Sternberg withdrew to his spiritual home, where he made common cause with the Bogd Lama, the then-current incarnation of the Jebtsundamba Khutuktu, the ruler of Mongolia under the Chinese dominion. Which was itself coming apart. The Bogd Lama had a wife, and apparently a harem.

Terror can only go so far before it runs out of victims and has to find a new field of action. Ungern-Sternberg had killed all the Jews he could find in Mongolia, driven the Chinese out of the country, and had to find something to do. So he attacked Russia.

As a result, his army was destroyed, rather like how Pancho Villa's *División del Norte* disintegrated when it attacked Obregón's better-organized forces at Agua Prieta. The Red Army "liberated" Mongolia and Ungern-Sternberg became a fugitive. One of the more striking images of that time in his life is the portrayal of him become Mongolian shaman, bare-chested, wearing amulets, riding aimlessly across the steppes, seeking . . .

And before long the Bolsheviks got him. He was brought to book for his crimes and received the supreme measure of punishment, passing into oblivion and history. In fiction, the ruthless, brutal ruler progresses from success to success until the lone scorned hero makes a lucky shot; or now, more so, the ruthless, brutal ruling class dominate the world by dint of their superior nature. Reality is less accommodating of such dreams.

The sources for the "Mad Baron" are slender and contradictory. Palmer discusses how the best-known contemporary work about him is full of errors and misstatements.

Yet . . . one of his informants told Palmer that his family regarded Ungern-Sternberg as a god, in the Buddhist way. His actions moved Mongolia into the Soviet orbit, and Palmer points out that either way, Communist rule meant the destruction of lives and ways of living.

. . . One Mongolian may be worth eight Chinese, but there are five hundred Chinese for every Mongolian. They only have to look at Inner Mongolia, where ethnic Mongols, once the majority, now make up less than 5 per cent of the population, to see their likely fate if swallowed by the new Chinese imperium; reduced to a colourful sideshow in dancing displays staged to demonstrate the wonderful diversity of China while their children study Mandarin in school.

— *The Bloody White Baron*, Page 120

## BEING CONVEXED

Trip Report by Joseph and Lisa Major on  
**ConCave 30**  
February 22-24, 2009

This was the hardest thing to find out about. The Internet ate two requests by me to get on the mailing list — which I should have been anyhow, having signed up last year. And the flyer I picked up at WorldCon vanished.

But finally, we learned when the con was,

and resolved to go there. I was just a bit worried when I woke up at three in the morning, and wasn't sure if I ever got back to sleep again. We washed up and got on the road around eight. Grant had shown some interest in going, but his foot was still bothering him and he knew he would be on it all day if he went, so he didn't. In spite of tanking up and stocking up, we got down to the vicinity of **Tim's** and **Elizabeth's** just a little early, so I scoped out what time the Chili's on Bardstown & Hikes Lane closed, before going on to 2265 Bradford.

We had found out that the hotel breakfast was prolonged precisely for the convenience of the congoers (thanks to the enthusiastic endorsement of **Mike Baugh**) but couldn't quite be sure it would be extended to day-trippers, so ate breakfast in Elizabethtown. It was a cloudy day, so I didn't need the sunglasses I'd taken. (I did need something I'd forgotten to take, but that's another story.)

We arrived at the hotel at half-past nine, and I dropped everyone else off under the portico while I went looking for a parking space — and found one in the lot! The hotel is more than full, understand, and there were people parked along the drive.

When I got in, I found them talking to **Tom Feller** while **Anita** sat and watched. After a moment, I decided that hot tea was 1) within the limits of things that could be given away and 2) probably a good idea for staying awake. So I got some, doing a whip around and noting (with hellos), Mike & **Susan Baugh** and Steve & Sue Francis.

After a while, a ghost appeared. This figure was pale white, clad in white, with white hair and a fixed, nigh rigid gaze. Since I (and apparently many others) had expected that Khen Moore was on his deathbed, his presence there was unexpected. Somewhat later, Dan Caldwell came by, and we said hello, but he was busy with the party.

Not long thereafter, Corliss Robe appeared and began taking registrations. I was Member #302, which indicates that they are keeping up numbers.

The dealers room opened about then, and we went in there to see Larry Smith about what he had, which was a fair bit. Steve Francis was there, and so were **Bob Roehm** and **Joel Zakem**. I got from Steve a copy of *The Tyrant*, by Eric Flint and David Drake. It reads more like an outline for a longer novel, I'm afraid.

Then Tim, Elizabeth, Tom, Lisa, and I were sitting around a table and **Warren Buff** came up to us, held out his hand to Tim, and said, "Hello, Joe." Friday night must have been exhausting.

Later that afternoon **Rod Smith** started showing his WorldCon pictures. He had so many prints he was giving them away, and once we logged on the hotel wireless internet, we started doing more. I actually posted pictures of me with Rod and with Tom Feller on Facebook while we were at the con.

We settled up with Larry Smith and among us we had (after discount) \$300 worth of books. Lisa and I had a little more than Tim and Elizabeth, but I had the only full-price hardback.

The LibertyCon party started about five and we all went there. And ended up in a corner talking to Susan Baugh about various things, but it was very enjoyable.

After that we figured we had to leave. While saying our goodbyes, I went into the con suite's service room, found Annette Carrico, and talked for a little while. It's been twenty-five, thirty years since those days at WKUSFS, and now she's retired.

But then we had to hit the road. It was raining, cold rain at that, and the wipers were acting up so the only uncleared patch on the windshield was right in front of my face. The rain stopped about the time we crossed the metro line.

After dropping Tim and Elizabeth off we went to that Chili's and had dinner. It was about nine-thirty, and I'd checked that morning (remember?) and the place closed at eleven. Fortunately, the car has a clock on the dashboard. I'd left my cell phone at home, on the charger (I had thoughtfully and foresightedly charged it up the night before) and had some concern about the time.

We got home then, told Grant a little, I had my shots, and got to sleep about one after catching up on various things.

This is Gary's last year as con chair. Good luck to them and to the new bosses.

— JTM

The last weekend in February was ConCave so Joe, Tim, Elizabeth and I bundled into the car and headed off for Horse Cave. ConCave is a relaxicon so there was no programming. Khen Moore made an appearance. No convention is complete without a huckster room which we visited several times. I found a Winston Churchill paperback and a volume of Sandburg's *Lincoln* at a fifty-cent table. Two dollars bought me a copy of Bob Shaw's *Fire Pattern*. I also replaced my copy of Heyer's *Royal Escape* and also bought a novel about William the Conqueror by her. We spent time with Tom and Anita Feller. One dealer had old convention shirts at half price and I bought a Denvention shirt.

— LTM

## WEATHER NOTES

by Lisa

The cleanup for the ice storm continues. Downed trees and piles of branches can be seen everywhere. No area seems unaffected by the ice storm. Wherever we have driven we have seen uncountable numbers of downed trees, their torn branches testifying to the dreadful wounds they suffered during the ice storm. The marks of the storm will be with us many years to come, I think.

We have had a return to winter. I have been grateful for the eight-dollar light coat I bought from Nearly New, the upscale thrift store in the basement of the mall where I work. It is surprisingly warm, given its light weight. Its label states it was made by Weatherproof under the brand label WP. Because of cosmetic stains

Nearly New priced it at eight dollars. I looked at the company's website but could not find the coat. It was probably a discontinued version. A pity, that. It's quite comfortable and warm, yet not at all heavy.

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### THE ADVANCE OF INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

by Lisa Major

When Grant made mention of there being eight functioning computers in the house, I thought he was exaggerating slightly. But then I began counting. I have a desktop and two laptops. Joe has a desktop and a laptop. Grant has two desktops and at least one laptop. That's eight. Plus there are the two senior citizens which are never turned on these days. One of those I am trying to clear piles away from so that Grant can see if it is still functioning. If it isn't it has to go to the great office in the sky. That also goes for the one in the closet. If they're going to take up space they have to at least store backups.

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### CAT NEWS

by Lisa

March marking a full year of Slim's presence in our house, it was time for his annual shots. On Saturday night I got a carrier out and took it upstairs to the bedroom in hopes that the cats would adjust to it. Very shortly afterwards Slim went into the carrier. He returned to it the next morning and stayed there until it was time to secure him in it. He yowled a bit but was far less unpleasant than either Delenn or C'Mell are. The trick won't probably work on him again but perhaps in a year he will have forgotten. I may get the carrier out a week earlier and establish it as a familiar part of the environment.

I went out with Joe this morning in search of a paper to replace one stolen from the library. At the door a large black and white cat was begging to be let in. "No, no, no, no," I growled at it. "We are not your people. Take a good sniff and you'll see I speak the truth. Go home." One glance made it clear this animal was far from starving. It hesitated when we came out and then disappeared under a car. I hope it does indeed have a home to go to and was not freshly dumped. Some days I just want to haul every animal I see running loose to the clinic and have them fixed.

When I came home Friday afternoon I was relieved to see the animal had apparently gone home but was dismayed to see the animal appear after we were in the car. It watched us drive away with this incredible guilt-producing look on its face. Please don't leave me. It is a very striking animal with beautiful black and white piebald markings. Its condition is good enough that it might be someone's pet. I think I will call it Pied Piper. Cat websites say piebalds are common but this is the first one I remember seeing.

Saturday night the cat came up to us, jumped on the car and climbed up to the roof, where it eyed the inside. I shoed it away and tried to

determine gender but failed in the dark. If the animal is still around Monday morning I'm going to take it to Animal Control for a chip scan. Surely this beautiful, sweet cat has an owner.

It has been several days since I have seen the Piebald. I debated going to Animal Control but decided I did not have the strength to look at all the numerous strays and walk away from those on death row. Had the Piebald been one of our five I would have gone. But the Piebald was not my cat. I did make inquiries of other cat lovers and learned they believed the Piebald had a home somewhere in the neighborhood. Part of me still wonders, though, if the cat failed to show up again because it was dead.

At this moment all the kittes are within sight and all resting peacefully. I suppose they need the rest after the past two days. They have spilled a bag of food everywhere, shredded toilet paper and indulged in numerous spitting bouts. Gemellus has gotten outside and chased the brown and white cat easily twice his size under a car. He has bounced everywhere in the house. In general they have behaved in ways that make me wonder why I don't have nice quiet pets like rattlesnakes.

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### ALYSHEBA

March 3, 1984 — March 27, 2009

by Lisa Major

Yesterday, March 27, the news broke that Thoroughbred legend Alysheba had fallen in his stall. He had earlier been diagnosed with a degenerative disease. When he was unable to stand, the Horse Park Veterinarians conferred with the Saudi king's veterinarians and the decision was made to euthanize the big bay. I froze and stared at the announcement, for the horse had seemed in excellent health in October, when we saw him prance off the van. I remembered that first Saturday in May twenty-two years ago, the day I saw Alysheba perform an incredible feat of agility and strength.

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### LIL E. TEE

1989 — March 17, 2009

by Lisa Major

1992 Derby winner Lil E. Tee died of colic March 17. His Derby was supposed to be a coronation for the latest incarnation of Secretariat, Arazi. Arazi tired badly at the end. Lil E. Tee gave noted jockey Pat Day his only roses.

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### THE BOUNDLESS DEEP

by Kate Brallier

(Tor; 2008; ISBN 978-0-7653-5809-7; \$6.99)

Review by Lisa Major

On a Friday night expedition to Borders I chanced to see a book titled *The Boundless Deep*. It sounded interesting so I took it off the shelf. The cover was intriguing and I opened the book. I was hooked with the first paragraph. It begins with the narrator in a recurring dream in which she returns to a past life.

It starts with the dream; it always starts with the dream. The ship is rocking, the waves slapping iron-fisted against the hull. A cold wind is screaming out of the south, blasted up from the Antarctic, chapping the cheeks and watering the eyes. There is nothing but ocean on all sides, as dark and forbidding as the backs of the leviathans when they finally surface in swirls of water and spouts of steam. Overhead, the sails creak ominously, taut under the strain of the fierce wind. A momentary lull slackens the canvas, then it snaps into place with the sullen crack of a slavemaster's whip.

— *The Boundless Deep*, Page 15

Narrator Liza's roommate Jane convinces her to go on a summer visit to Nantucket and research her dreams in a whaling town. They will be staying with Jane's Aunt Kitty. She meets Kitty's godson Lucian and visits the whaling museum where she meets Adam, the young curator. *Boundless Deep* alternates between Liza's present-day life and the people whose lives haunt her dreams. After a certain point Liza's life becomes far less interesting than those of the dream ghosts but they are sufficiently interesting, along with the Nantucket history, to make this one of the most fun reads I've had in quite a while.

There are some warnings. If you hated Gothics, don't like explicit sex or loathe the paranormal this book is not for you. The characters are not constantly looking for dark corners in which to screw but the sex is explicitly there. Readers should also be aware Brallier presents a potentially addicting view of Nantucket's history. Her book got me also to sit down and read *Moby-Dick*. I'd read it in high school, of course, but it didn't impress me the way it did when I read it again yesterday.

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### THE LENSMAN IS WORTHY OF HIS DUE

by Grant C. McCormick

There has been some question lately as to the desirability to have another try for a Best All-Time Series Hugo award<sup>1</sup>. There were five nominees for this award the first time it was done, back in 1966. The winner was *The Foundation* Trilogy, by Isaac Asimov.

One of the original candidates for the original Best All-Time Science Fiction Series was the *Lenzman* series by Edward Elmer "Doc" Smith, Ph.D. A question was raised recently<sup>2</sup>, asking if the *Lenzman* series would be worthy of inclusion in a new attempt, and even if it were actually suitable for the first round.

My answer is decidedly: Yes!

E. E. Smith's *Lenzman* series is considered by many people, including myself, to be the quintessential space opera series, but it was not the first such. It was preceded by (most of) Smith's own *Skylark* series, as well as others by John W. Campbell (his Arcot, Wade, and Morey series, and others), Neil R. Jones (the Professor Jameson series), and others.

The main complaints against E. E. Smith's

*Lensman* series fall under the category of writing style. Smith had a style (or, rather, series of styles, since his working style evolved during his writing career) that was all his own, and easy to parody. Smith himself was aware of this – in the climax volume of the *Lensman* series, *Children of the Lens*, Kimball Kinnison goes undercover as the science-fiction author Sybly Whyte. And, as Whyte, Kinnison actually writes a novel (a paragraph fragment of which is quoted in *Children of the Lens* in a hyperbolic amplification of Smith's own florid and verbose style):

Qadgop the Mercotan slithered flatly around the after-bulge of the tranship. One claw dug into the meters-thick armor of pure neutronium, then another. Its terrible xmex-like snout locked on. Its zymolose polydactile tongue crunched out, crashed down, rasped across. *Slurp! Slurp!* At each abrasive stroke the groove in the tranship's plating deepened and Qadgop leered more fiercely. Fools! Did they think that the airlessness of absolute space, the heatlessness of absolute zero, the yieldlessness of absolute neutronium, could stop QADGOP THE MERCOTAN? And the stowaway, that human wench Cynthia, cowering in helpless terror just beyond this thin and fragile wall . . .

Florid and verbose his style might be, but E. Smith knew his language, and he used it to say exactly what he wanted to say, and not some mere approximation thereto. And what Smith has to say in the *Lensman* series is more, much more, than only space battles and overblown writing.

For a series conceived in the 1930s, and written in the 1930s through the early 1950s, he presents some deep thoughts. In *Gray Lensman*, while discussing the upcoming Conference of Science, he expounds upon the virtues of economic freedom and minimal government in what could be taken as a statement of proto-Libertarianism. In *Second Stage Lensman*, while working with the Lyranian matriarchs, through Kinnison he explains that equality of the sexes is a fundamental requirement of a free Civilization.

Because Smith's optimistic and liberating writings tend to buck today's nihilistic, pessimistic, and self-destructive world-view, his popularity with the "intelligentsia" in SF and in society as a whole has declined in recent years. And I think this says much more about our present society than it does about any shortcomings in E. E. Smith and the *Lensman* series.

- 1 Carruthers, Johnny, "Time to Reconsider?" in *Alexiad* Vol. 6 #6, Dec. 2007, Pages 12-14.
- 2 Schweitzer, Darrell, Letter, in *Alexiad* Vol. 7 #1, Feb. 2008, Pages 14-16.

- 3 Garrett, Randall, "Backstage Lensman," *Analogue*, June, 1978.

### NETWORK NETWORK?

IT in a stefnal household,  
by Grant C. McCormick

I remember way back when the SF novel *The Mote In God's Eye*, by Larry Niven and Jerry Pournelle, was published in 1974. One rather far-out 'prediction' that this book has is of portable computing devices capable of connecting with massive databases. To quote from Jerry Pournelle's "Computing At Chaos Manor" article of March 11, 2009:

The new 3G iPhone moves us a long way toward the pocket computer Niven and I described in 1973 in *The Mote in God's Eye*. Of course that book was set a long way into the future, and the pocket computer in the book was something out of my imagination; I certainly didn't expect to have anything like that in my lifetime. In those days computers were large monsters that lurked in air-conditioned rooms and were tended by a priesthood. Science fiction stories of the time envisioned huge computers; Isaac Asimov had one the size of a planet. The notion that ordinary people might not only have, but depend on, personal computers was considered plain silly, and the notion of pocket computers even more so. Yet here they are.

Do c t o r Pournelle goes on to describe how the 3G iPhone connects over either the AT&T wireless cellular network, or an available WiFi (802.11) wireless network.

Here at the Major Muddle, none of us (yet) have an iPhone of any type, though Joseph's cell

phone is pretty capable, and all of us except some of the cats have some form of cellular telephone of some ability or another.

And Lisa, particularly, has her Acer Aspire netbook computer – small enough to fit in the palm of her hand, let alone my larger mitt, and quite powerful. With one gigabyte of RAM<sup>2</sup>, a 160GB fixed disk, and a 1.6GHz 32-bit single-core Intel Atom processor, it's not going to be anyone's first choice for gaming nor data processing. But for casual use, word processing, browsing, and other everyday applications, it is perfect. And it is small enough to be truly portable. And while it does not have any CD- or DVD-ROM drive (Joseph did get Lisa a USB-powered external DVD burner to go with

it), its ability to connect over either wired Ethernet or WiFi (802.11g, to be specific) more than makes up for this lack 99% of the time. And the regular retail price for this unit just dropped by 10%, to \$300 plus state extortion tax.

All in all, we here at the Major Muddle (three adults and five cats) have eight working computers: desktops, towers, laptops, and the one netbook (though both Joseph and I are thinking of getting one each for ourselves). And one of the most important components of our IT environment here is our network. It is based around a secured Linksys 802.11n gigabit router, and allows us all to connect to the Lexmark wireless all-in-one printer/scanner; the 300GB network stand-alone fixed disk (which I have mapped on all of our computers as the 'W:' drive); and as well as to the other computers.

Every now and then the Internet connection dies, or the W: drive becomes inaccessible, and if I haven't discovered this on my own, I'll hear a cry of "The Internet isn't working!" or "Grant, the W: drive is down!" Then we have to reboot the network. So far, this has restored the network to full functionality.

On our network, we have our CD music collections ripped to MP3 files, and we have all of the Baen Books CDs that have been published so far with selected book titles downloaded, as well. We also use the W: drive as a file transfer area and backup file and data storage for our different computers.

Even as recently as ten years ago, let alone as far back as 1974, I never would have dreamed that a smoothly-running computer network, with all of its components, was a necessity for a smoothly-running household.

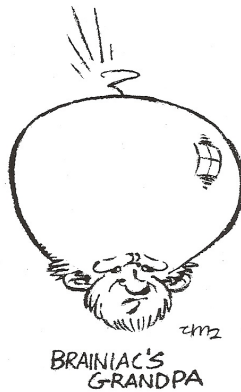
1. Jerry Pournelle. "Computing at Chaos Manor: March 11, 2009," from *The User's Column*, March, 2009, Column 344 of *Chaos Manor Reviews*.
2. Which is enough Random-Access Memory if you are running Windows-XP SP3, which comes pre-installed on the Acer Aspire netbook.

### A HELL OF A JOURNEY

A Review by Grant C. McCormick of  
Larry Niven's and Jerry Pournelle's  
*ESCAPE FROM HELL*  
(Tor, February, 2009; Hardcover, \$24.95  
(\$27.95 Canada); 332 pages;  
ISBN 978-0-7653-1632-5)

When last seen, at the end of *Inferno*, the late Allen Carpenter was watching Benito Mussolini climb up from the grotto beneath Satan up to – wherever. Maybe the Earth's surface, maybe Heaven, definitely Elsewhere: not Hell.

Now, about thirty-three years (Earth time) and six months (Hell time) later, Carpenter is back in the flesh in Hell, and finds himself back in the Vestibule (although not again in his jar), after having an encounter with a Suicide Bomber in the Nadir of Hell. In this cosmogony,



Suicide Bombers do not go to Paradise with seventy-two (nor any other quantity) of Houris – instead, they go to the Hell which they so richly deserve (and there are hints that their ultimate fates may be worse than those of even such villains as Hitler and Stalin).

The first half of the book is told as an extended flashback as Carpenter talks with the main other character, Sylvia Plath. She is not the only ‘real’ character that Carpenter meets in Hell – the *Dramatis Personae* at the beginning reads as a *Who’s-Who of Hell*. As a warning, not everyone listed is actually in Hell, and not everyone in Hell is Damned to be there.

Carpenter has taken as his task the verification that anyone in Hell can (in theory, at least) be rescued from their situation to be allowed to try to escape. This includes the Suicides (such as Sylvia) who are incarnated as trees, the Traitors (frozen in the ice near Satan), and all the rest of those in Hell. Once they have repented; once they have suffered proportionate to their sins, their evil, and their deeds; is there a way for any sinner to escape from Hell? He feels that he finds an answer.

The authors have included both a Preface (at the beginning), and Notes (at the end). They feel that *Inferno* and *Escape from Hell* are concordant with the Roman Catholic Church’s doctrine. However, they warn: “This is, of course, a fantasy novel, not a treatise on theology and salvation.” [Page 329]

Carpenter and the reader encounter some of the same inmates and staff they were encountered previously. Most are new to this work, though. All in all, given the premise of this book and its prequel, I did not find anyone of whose situation I knew in Hell who did not deserve to be where they were placed. One somewhat notorious person has some documentation in the Notes as to why this person was placed where found.

This is an enjoyable book. As a totally-lapsed Catholic, I find the logic of this work compelling, while still not believing in the slightest in the premises. If there were a traditional Hell, this is the way it would be.

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### THE JOY OF HIGH TECH

by Rodford Edmiston

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

#### Absolute Nonsense

As an engineer, I have occasionally been witness to someone being presented with an engineering estimate which has a range value, and seeing that rejected. “Can’t you give me a firm number?”

The problem is that no, you often can’t. Instead, an engineer will specify something as “sixty-two to sixty-eight” or “sixty-five plus or minus three.” Because just saying “sixty-five” isn’t justified. But some people believe that if you can’t give an exact number, you don’t know what you’re doing.

People like absolutes. The problem is, there may not be any.

Newton’s laws of motion were a large part of the “clockwork universe” view which prevailed even among the well-educated for centuries. As we learned more about the universe, though, it began to look less and less like a clock. For most things, Newton was still quite accurate; Einstein didn’t replace Newton, he simply explained a few odd corners where Newton’s laws became inaccurate. Even Einstein has subsequently been refined. But you still get people who don’t understand that — as a standout example — the speed of light is not a firm number.

We all know that the speed of light is the fastest velocity possible. Only, which speed? You see, the speed of light varies with the medium through which it passes. As a general rule, the more matter, the slower it goes. Which is why the speed of light is usually given for passage through a vacuum. Since a vacuum is the least matter we know of light is fastest there.

How slow can light go? Recent experiments have reduced it to the speed of a slow walk.

Einstein himself expected this. He was co-originator of the idea of the Bose-Einstein Condensate. This is a peculiar state of matter, first proposed in 1924 by Albert Einstein and Satyendra Nath Bose, an Indian physicist. According to their theory, atoms crowded close enough in ultra-low temperatures would lock together to form what another physicist has called “a single glob of solid matter.” One property of such a cloud of matter is that it can slow light to a great extreme.

Black holes are singularities, point sources of gravity with no dimension. Or maybe not. There is no doubt black holes exist. By plotting the speed of stars orbiting them — and this includes the one at the core of our own galaxy — the mass of a gravity source can be determined. Through other measures we can get firm estimates of the maximum size these dense bodies can be. Some fiddling is required to account for the accretion disk, but even with the known range of error (see first paragraph) there are many bodies where we know enough matter is crowded into a small enough space that the escape velocity is above the speed of light.

That, friends, is a black hole. But is it a singularity? The theory is that so much mass in one place will literally drop out of fourspace, producing a point of infinite density. Whether this actually happens is something we can’t yet see because, well, we *can’t* see inside a black hole. However, even if singularities exist, they may be larger than mathematical points. Some analyses say that the actual singularity could have a finite diameter.

Now, there are philosophical and mathematical absolutes. Absolute magnitude is a good example. Getting the apparent magnitude of a star is easy. A trained human eye can do that. But this doesn’t take distance into account. Neither does it include emissions outside the range of human vision. Absolute magnitude assumes detecting all the electromagnetic energy from a particular star striking a standard area at a standard distance.

There’s a joke in mathematics — especially programming — that constants aren’t and

variables don’t. Physical constants are generally assumed to be, well, constant. As with the speed of light, however, this isn’t always true. There are circumstances where time slows and distance stretches. These are unlikely to be encountered by humans — at least humans who survive to see the phenomena — so generally we shouldn’t worry about them.

Absolute zero is a condition where all molecular motion has stopped. However, there is both evidence and theory that this can never happen. That as long as there is matter there will be molecular motion. Some have even hypothesized that matter will “evaporate” to release the energy to continue the motion. Once it’s all gone, well, since temperature is a measure of the motion of particles, if there aren’t any particles there isn’t a temperature. So, no absolute zero. (There is no “extreme cold of space.” Space is a vacuum. A vacuum has no temperature. Though, as mentioned in the next paragraph, there may not be a true vacuum.)

Likewise, there are those who think that there can never be an absolute vacuum. That once the density of matter drops below a certain value — perhaps one hydrogen atom every few cubic meters — particles will spontaneously precipitate from the quantum foam. (Could the Medieval Catholic Church have been right, just using the wrong terms?)

Water is incompressible. Except that it isn’t. This is an example of the ever-popular “if it’s very difficult it must be impossible” school of thought. Water is far denser than air and far more difficult to compress, but it can be compressed. You can bet that a cubic centimeter of water taken from the surface of the ocean to the bottom of the Mariana Trench will subsequently occupy less than a cubic centimeter.

Yet another speed of light exception is quantum entanglement. This is what Einstein referred to as “spooky action at a distance.” Particles separated in a certain way will remain somehow connected, each reacting instantaneously to what happens to the other, no matter how much distance lies between them.

All of this is beside the problem of practical accuracy and precision. An engineer has a good idea of what is achievable and acceptable in his field. For certain tasks, stating an acceptable range is the practical solution to the problem of pursuing an ideal unattainable in the real world.

Knowing what you need (and can get away with) is important to engineering. During the construction of the Hale Telescope at Mount Palomar the first person in charge of designing and building the mounting was a naval engineer. He thought in terms of battleship turrets. These were in the right mass range, but the precision of aim required was more than an order of magnitude finer than he was used to. He eventually had to be fired, and someone willing to accept the astronomers’ word as to the precision needed hired.

So, please, learn to value vagueness. It can be absolutely essential.

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### THOUGHTS ON A DARK KNIGHT

Review of *The Dark Knight*

by Taral Wayne (no relation)  
<http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0468569/>

I was late seeing the second of the revisionist Batman films directed by Christopher Nolan, and starring Christian Bale.

To be honest, I had doubts about re-launching the franchise after the Shoemaker travesties had destroyed the work of Tim Burton. Even when I had seen *Batman Begins* I was ambivalent. On a minor level, I was annoyed by the actor Christian Bale, whose high cheekbones, narrow face, and slicked back hair is at odds with the customary "Captain Easy" looks of Batman. From Bob Kane to Warner Bros. he had always a square chin, and dark hair loose on his forehead. Bales looked suggestively Latino to me. Maybe that's the future looking back; an American average that is slowly but ineluctably evolving in an Hispanic direction. But I'm a traditionalist. I don't want to think about a "Bruce Juan" under the cowl someday.

In a larger sense, the entire first half of *Batman Begins* was a second rate Kung Fu movie, employing every martial arts cliché in the book. It doesn't bother me that Batman would be a master of Karate, Judo, Aikido and other such skills. But really, anyone can take lessons and I don't know why Bruce Wayne's would be more interesting in particular than anyone else's. Skip ahead to the stuff that matters — the brooding decision to strike terror in the hearts of superstitious criminals by adopting the appearance of a creature of the night. Get to the cavern headquarters under sprawling Wayne manner, to the utility belt and bat signal and all the mythic matter that is original to the character. Why borrow? And why from something as campy as Hong Kong made "B" movies, whose formulas haven't changed significantly since they amused audiences of late night TV in the 1970's?

But all right. The new franchise got off to a somewhat shaky start. I think most people agreed on that. What of the sequel?

Clearly, the movie-going public and the critics loved *The Dark Knight*. It was dark. It was violent. It was cynical. It was just like the reality CNN Headline News has led us all to believe in. People who probably wouldn't have given a second look to Neil Adams, or even Frank Miller, ate *The Dark Knight* up. I wonder if in fact that's what I didn't feel was right about the film. It was made for people with no interest in mythos.

On the most obvious level, other than what was said before in *Batman Begins*. The Joker, on the other hand, is given a riveting interpretation by trendy dead actor Heath Ledger. (Trendy dead actors are the best kind — they leave you an immemorial performance, and are never diminished later by a *Hook* or *How the Grinch Stole Christmas*.) While the Caped Crusader goes through the numbers, The Joker is developed with volcanic force, from new kid on the block to criminal master-mind.

But is he *The Joker*? Not really, not for all that he has greasepaint on his face, and a twisted take on the meaning of life. Every incarnation

of the real Joker I know of is basically a clown. His murderous acts all have a sort of circus flavour, with deadly carnival rides, or poisonous pies in the face. The real Joker has a sense of humour. A corny one, it's true, that turns pain and horror into a bad joke. Ledger's Joker simply finds pleasure in evil, and does nothing to make a joke of it. His Joker is wry, rather than a practical joker.

What makes the Ledger character horrifying is that he is so quick to extreme violence. Where an ordinary thug is thinking of throwing a punch, this Joker has already arranged for his victim to be incinerated or impaled. In such a realistic setting, he comes across as a drug-damaged punk, and the question arises why some cop doesn't just empty a pistol at him. Even if you miss once, surely he must succumb to a hail of gunfire? This is "reality" we're talking about in *The Dark Knight*, isn't it? Maybe not.

This Joker is also five steps ahead of everyone — not just the cops and the city government, but Batman too. He not only plants bombs in his henchmen to create diversions, and choreographs his bank robberies so that his mob is rubbed out one by one, but he spends months smuggling high explosives into a hospital so he can blow it up at the right moment, when Harvey Dent has become Two Face. He is a psychotic *super-genius*. Now where have I seen that before? I know . . . *Silence of the Lambs!* This isn't "reality" after all. This Joker is merely Hannibal Lecter, not an actual coke-crazed maniac.

Do these reflections make *The Dark Knight* a bad movie? No, not at all. I only question whether it is a Batman movie, and I don't think it is. Not only is it not a movie about Batman, it's a movie that doesn't need a Batman.

There is a test, based on the legendary Phantom Edit. If you haven't seen it, I would imagine the Phantom Edit can still be downloaded from three dozen websites on the internet. The gist of it is that a fan of *Star Wars* (Mike J. Nichols) hated the presence of Jar Jar Binks in *The Phantom Menace*, and edited the film to remove Jar Jar wherever humanly possible. The remaining footage segued together seamlessly, producing a superior version of the film according to hard core fans. That was the point, of course. To show up the bad judgment of George Lucas for including an annoying Roger Rabbit knock-off as unnecessary comedy relief.

I propose we apply the Phantom Edit test to *The Dark Knight*. I don't mean that Harvey Dent, or Commissioner Gordon, or some other secondary character should be removed from the movie. Instead, I want to *replace* a character. A principal character in fact. Let us imagine that Batman himself has been replaced. Allow Bruce Wayne to remain in the background, but as a completely separate person who has nothing whatever to do with crime-fighting, and is not preoccupied with avenging the murder of his parents. In every scene where Batman appears though, erase him utterly.

He's not even much of a loss. This isn't a Batman I much admire, it's one who growls to

sound menacing, rages incoherently at criminals, and beats the shit out of the Joker while in police custody. The Batman I admire is one who looked into the abyss, and turned away, who keeps the darkness in him under control. Christian Bale's Batman looked into the abyss and leaned too far forward. He fell in, and the only way to be sure he's the good guy is to check the program. So, away with this Batman.

Then digitally dub in Bruce Willis. Let Bruce Willis perform all the Bat stunts and battle the bad guys, and ultimately overcome the Joker just before the end credits.

Honestly . . . would it make any difference? No. It wouldn't. Not really.

That's why, after giving *The Dark Knight* a lot of thought, I decided I didn't like it all that much. It wasn't a Batman movie at all, but Die Hard 5 or 6. The *Dark Knight* is a contemporary, urban thriller different from other such films only in the odd little detail that Steven Seagal, Nicholas Cage, or Jean-Claude Van Damme is wearing a cape.

Holy red herring, Batman!

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### **EDISON'S CONQUEST OF MARS: a Sequel to The War of the Worlds**

by Garrett P. Serviss.

Compilation and Introduction by Robert Godwin.

Burlington, Ontario, Canada: Apogee Books,  
2005 [1898]

Review by Richard Dengrove

Serviss claimed he wrote this book to calm the public after H.G. Wells' *War of the Worlds*. I am sure that Wells' novel was in a lot of people's minds at the time. It had been published in the States in the November-December 1897 issue of *Cosmopolitan* magazine. Also, I could see why newspapers looked to Serviss to calm the public. He was a journalist, then free lance, renown for explaining science to the masses. They expected a halfway decent product of him. Taking away from this somewhat, Serviss must have written the serial with all due speed, because it ran in the *New York Morning Journal* January 12 — February 10, 1898 and the *Boston Post*, February 6 — March 13.

How is it as a sequel to *War of the Worlds*? Wells complained about how the American press was plagiarizing his novel; and he was right. People often talk about the newspaper serial that set Wells' scenes in Boston. On the other hand, this serial doesn't plagiarize at all; in fact, it has very little to do with Wells' novel.

For instance, while Wells' Martians were octopoid-like beings, Serviss' looked like humans, except that, because of the Martian gravity, they were fifteen feet tall. He does throw a bone to Wells', though. The Martians have perfected the art of phrenology so their troops can learn faster. Often, they do not even have to learn; they know just by virtue of having their brains enlarged. That gets Serviss a little way toward Wells' Martians, who were mostly brain. Of course, Serviss' attitude toward his Martians is different too. Wells considered his Martians to be no better or worse than any other

conqueror. Serviss believed that this enlarged brain meant that their emotions are undeveloped. Many decades later, the advocates of flying saucer abductees mentioned that as the problem with the large headed Alien Greys, who abduct humans.

In addition, I have a hard time seeing how Serviss' Martians could die off from our microbes, like they did in Wells. Mars has as much water, and presumably vegetation, as Earth; it is not the cold and dry planet that Wells describes. It would be microbe filled. Even if the Martians had been vulnerable to Earth's microbes, would they be by now? They had traveled to Earth in the past, built the pyramids, and kidnapped some Aryans as slaves. Presumably, in the process, the Martians would have developed some immunity to Earth microbes.

The fact that Mars has oceans interferes with the plot in another way. Thomas Edison defeats the Martians by going to a central dam that controls the canals, and flooding all of Mars. Why you would need to channel all water on a water-filled world is unclear. There were other reasons as well why the idea of oceans contradicted the idea of canals. In fact, Schiaparelli, the godfather of the canals; Percival Lowell, the advocate of the canals; and others noted them.

The novel differs from Wells' in less important ways too. Wells has his Martians be shot to Earth like shells from a cannon. At the time, many believed cannons would get us into outer space before rockets. Earlier (1865) Jules Verne had the Baltimore Gun Club circle the Moon with a projectile shot from an enormous cannon. On the other hand, we really never learn how Serviss' Martians propel their ships. We do know Thomas Edison develops an anti-gravity drive and that enables his spaceships to get from Earth to Mars.

In short, Serviss doesn't feel he has to stick closely to Wells, or make much sense.

In another way, Serviss is answering Wells more effectively than if he had stuck closely to the plot. He fights Wells' whole idea of Martians and Mars. He returned to prior Mars novels, where the Martians resembled us humans very closely. In Pope's *Journey to Mars* (1894), the Martians are so human-like, that, in parts, the plot resembled a Victorian melodrama. In *War of the Worlds*, Wells discussed the rationale for this: most writers presumed humans were the height of reason and so, on other planets, humanoids had developed. However, Wells discussed it only to debunk it. Instead, Wells designs Martians that, he believes, are more rational, and rationally built. As I said, he made them mostly brain.

As I said too, Serviss returns to Martians that are humanoid, and to the idea that we are the height of reason. Also, he takes a swipe at the idea that large brains would do us any good in the long run. I am sure people cheered that our own brains were the best in the universe. For instance, the Martian military wouldn't have invaded us had their heads been the proper size. Right? Furthermore, their large heads are no match for good old American know-how, like

Thomas Edison's. In addition to the anti-gravity drive and disintegrator ray, he invents that staple of pulp science fiction, the oxygen pill. Also, he succeeds in defeating the Martians. For an American audience, which didn't flinch at racism or jingoism, this was manna to their ears.

As for the oceans and the canals of Mars, they both delighted the people of the time. The oceans meant that Mars supported life, and there was proof considered scientific at the time that Mars did indeed have oceans. That would set the stage for what the public wanted, intelligent life on Mars. The canals, on the other hand, proved that intelligent life existed on Mars: the idea that truly excited the public. Many people not thinking too logically were perfectly happy to accept a Mars with both oceans and canals.

If all this didn't raise people's spirits, Serviss provided other things that did. For instance, the fact that the Moon had once been inhabited and there are ruins to prove it. That all the heavenly bodies have had intelligent life I am sure made people even happier than that only Mars had it. Over the centuries, intelligent life has been considered a good. Another thing that might have raised people's spirits was a solid gold asteroid. While it might not raise people's spirits like intelligent life on all worlds, it was a wonder to ponder.

Before I end my article, I feel compelled to broach a completely different topic than Serviss vs. Wells. Did *Edison's Conquest of Mars* contain many firsts? That is what Robert Godwin, who introduces and comments on this edition, claims. He is wrong on the anti-gravity drive. I know because Gustavus Pope had spaceships with an anti-gravity drive four years before in his *Journey to Mars*. Anyway, it was not some idea completely foreign to the Victorians: scientists then believed that gravity was an electromagnetic force, like magnetism, with positive and negative charges. They believed it until Einstein and his theory of relativity.

However, oxygen pills, alien abductions and aliens building pyramids might have been firsts. A lot of the other firsts that impress Godwin do not impress me: for instance, the shape of Edison's spaceships and spacesuits.

Whatever was first, this serial was heady stuff for the public. One person, in particular, we know was inspired by Serviss' serial was Robert Hutchings Goddard, (1882-1945), the rocket pioneer. Not only as a teenager but as an adult. He somehow preserved each installment in the *Boston Post* and re-read them as an adult in 1929.

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### **BUTTERFINGER BUZZ:**

A Study in Group Tasting

By Christopher J Garcia

**Best Fan Writer Hugo Nominee**

On February 17<sup>th</sup>, at 11:35, I brought in a batch of the new Butterfinger Buzz chocolate bars to the Computer History Museum lunchroom. I handed one to each of the Unofficial Lunch Bunch that enjoy our lunches together early every afternoon. We stretch from our mid-20s through early 40s, mostly White or

Hispanic, half of us are married, and half of the other half is engaged to be married. Everyone but myself self-identify as Democrat, with me the lone Libertarian in the bunch. Most of us buy our lunch every day, but two of us, Radio and Karen, bring their own every day.

Demographics are so important to these things. We're not exactly the most representative group, but we're the best I could get without having to pay them.

As soon as I saw the Butterfinger Buzz, I knew I wanted to put together the taste test. I mean, the concept is enough to make me gag. A candy bar with as much caffeine as the leading Energy Drink! It's bizarre! It's wrong! It's required eating! I bought the 8 we needed and passed them out.

"Alright everybody, here's the bar." I said, making sure each one got their own bar and a small glass of water. "now, take a sip of the water to clear the palette and then eat 1 of the pieces and then another sip and then the second part."

This turned out to be not as strong a suggestion as I had hoped. Karen, the elder stateswoman of our crowd, pushed it away.

"Eating that is a bad idea." She said, though I noticed that she drank the glass of water.

Alex, our foreign friend from Germany, also took himself out of the running. That left six of us.

We all took the sip of water, which allowed me to give a toast — "To Absent Friends," I said.

We all ate our first piece. There was little different from the original Butterfinger. The dry peanut butter sensation that the regular Butterfinger provides is its key. It doesn't feel right unless the flaky peanut butter clumps up in your teeth. It was a little more clumpy than a regular Butterfinger, though the taste was almost exactly the same. The chocolate was exactly the same, not superior, but good and slightly chalky. The flakiness wasn't on the same level, but it still clumped up in my molars, so that's fine.

We all looked at each other and agreed that there was no difference.

"I don't see the difference." Radio said.

"I usually don't like Butterfingers." Alana said.

"I do." Sara added, taking her sip and then starting in on the second piece."

We all ate the rest of the bars and sat around talking.

Now, our conversations roll through a lot of territory, and there's always a loud roar of laughter. There are people who don't like eating in the Lounge because we're a bit rough on each other, but there are other people who think that the stage show is a part of a good lunch. As time went by, we noticed things were getting kinda weird. Around Noon, I noticed that my legs were bouncing. Even more than usual. It was bizarre. I was thinking that the whole caffeine thing was just a come-on, but I looked over at Sara, and she was drumming her fingers on the table. Radio's eyes were huge. Alex and Lux were laughing much harder than usual.

OMG! This stuff is like ChocoSpeed! I was actually sweating! We have a stethoscope in the

Lounge and I checked, and at least my heart rate wasn't much higher than normal, but still, that caffeine was a powerhouse!

We all went back to our desks around 12:45. Now, roughly an hour and a half later, all those who partook in the experiment have come by my cube.

"That was a bad idea." Radio said.

"I'm never listening to you again!" said Sara.

Lux just popped his head and, caught my attention and shook his head.

And thus, I can not recommend Butterfinger Buzz to anyone suffering from a heart condition, but it may well help you get through a long cross-country drive.

### THE FAERY'S KISS — A Romantic Comedy

(Fairy tales can even happen to Grownups!)  
by Bill Breuer

The Bullitt County Theatre Company presents the World Premiere of the Romantic Comedy Fairy tale for Adults (children age 10 and up can enjoy it too!)

There is a new owner of a rural, coastal cottage. Everyone says the place is haunted — but instead he finds the place is inhabited by an attractive adult woman who is naturally mischievous and has a delightful personality . . . but she is not the girl of his dreams! She claims to be a Faery and she doesn't want him there! She keeps his head in a spin as he endeavors to fit in with the townspeople of a new country while she is also trying to protect a secret that others are trying to steal.

A modern stageplay in the old folktale tradition, the story has all the traditional ingredients: love, magic, elements of the bittersweet, mystery, humour and good triumphing over evil — all the things that have made Irish storytelling famous for a millennium. This show will make its Canadian debut this summer.

This play ran March 5-15, too late for this issue, but we are pleased to note it.

— JTM

### And as year follows year, More old men disappear, Someday no one will march there at all.

Report by Joseph T Major

### Liberté Égalité Fraternité

In the Name of the Republic, **Henry William Allingham** and **Henry John Patch** have been awarded the insignia of Officers of the Legion of Honor, having previously been awarded the insignia of Members, for their services to France in the Great War.

Remaining are:

#### Australia

Claude Stanley Choules (108) Royal Navy  
John Campbell "Jack" Ross (110)

Australian Imperial Force

#### Brazil

Waldemar Levy Cardoso\* (108), 2º Grupo de Artilharia de Campanha Leve — Regimento Deodoro

#### Poland

Józef Kowalski\* (109) 22 Pulk Ułanów

#### United Kingdom

Henry William Allingham (112) Royal Naval Air Service/Royal Air Force  
Netherwood "Ned" Hughes (108), Manchester Regiment  
Henry John "Harry" Patch (110) Duke of Cornwall's Light Infantry

#### United States

John Henry Foster "Jack" Babcock (108) 146<sup>th</sup> Battalion, Canadian Expeditionary Force  
Frank Woodruff Buckles (108) United States Army  
Robley Henry Rex\* (107) United States Army

\* "WWI-era" veteran, enlisted between the Armistice and the Treaty of Versailles

National totals: U.K. 4; U.S. 1+1; Australia, Canada 1 each; Brazil, Poland, 1 WWI-era each. British Empire 6.

### FANZINES

Did I mention that *Alexiad* is now available at:

<http://www.efanzines.com/Alexiad/index.htm>

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#### Challenger #29 Winter 2008-2009

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*The Drink Tank* #201, #202, #203, #204, #205,

#206, #207, #208

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#### MT Void V.27 #32 February 6, 2009 — V. 27 #39 March 27, 2009

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#### Opuntia #67.1A Edgar Allan Poe's Birthday 2009, #67.1B February 2009, #67.1C St. Urho's Day

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

#### Pablo Lennis #257 April 2009

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**Best Fan Artist Hugo Nominee**

#### QuasiQuote #8 March 2009

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*The Reluctant Famulus* #68 Winter 2009  
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<http://www.efanzines.com>

*Science Fiction/San Francisco* #81 February  
11, 2009, #82 March 11, 2009, #83 April 1,  
2009

Christopher J. Garcia and Jean Martin  
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**Best Fan Writer Hugo Nominee**

*Steam Engine Time* #10, March 2009  
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*This Here* #10  
Nic Farey, Post Office Box 178, Saint  
Leonard, MD 20685-0178 USA

*Vanamonde* #773-777  
John Hertz, 236 S. Coronado Street, No.  
409, Los Angeles, CA 90057-1456 USA  
**Best Fan Writer Hugo Nominee**

*Visions of Paradise* #137, #138, #139  
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*WCSEazine* #18  
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<http://www.efanzines.com>

## HUGO NOMINEES

### Best Novel

*Anthem* by Neal Stephenson  
*The Graveyard Book* by Neil Gaiman  
*Little Brother* by Cory Doctorow  
*Saturn's Children* by Charles Stross  
*Zoe's Tale* by John Scalzi

### Best Novella

"The Erdmann Nexus" by Nancy Kress  
(*Asimov's* Oct/Nov 2008)  
"The Political Prisoner" by Charles  
Coleman Finlay (*F&SF* Aug 2008)  
"The Tear" by Ian McDonald (*Galactic  
Empires*)  
"True Names" by Benjamin Rosenbaum &  
Cory Doctorow  
"Truth" by Robert Reed (*Asimov's* Oct/Nov  
2008)

### Best Novelette

"Alastair Baffle's Emporium of Wonders"  
by Mike Resnick (*Asimov's* Jan 2008)

"The Gambler" by Paolo Bacigalupi (*Fast  
Forward* 2)

"Pride and Prometheus" by John Kessel  
(*F&SF* Jan 2008)

"The Ray-Gun: A Love Story" by James  
Alan Gardner (*Asimov's* Feb 2008)

"Shoggoths in Bloom" by Elizabeth Bear  
(*Asimov's* Mar 2008)

### Best Short Story

"26 Monkeys, Also the Abyss" by Kij  
Johnson (*Asimov's* Jul 2008)

"Article of Faith" by Mike Resnick (*Baen's  
Universe* Oct 2008)

"Evil Robot Monkey" by Mary Robinette  
Kowal (*The Solaris Book of New  
Science Fiction, Volume Two*)

"Exhalation" by Ted Chiang (*Eclipse Two*)

"From Babel's Fall'n Glory We Fleed" by  
Michael Swanwick (*Asimov's* Feb 2008)

### Best Related Book

*Rhetorics of Fantasy* by Farah Mendlesohn  
*Spectrum 15: The Best in Contemporary  
Fantastic Art* by Cathy & Arnie Fenner,  
eds.

*The Vorkosigan Companion: The Universe  
of Lois McMaster Bujold* by Lillian  
Stewart Carl & John Helfers, eds.

*What It Is We Do When We Read Science  
Fiction* by Paul Kincaid

*Your Hate Mail Will be Graded: A Decade  
of Whatever, 1998-2008* by John Scalzi

### Best Graphic Story

*The Dresden Files: Welcome to the Jungle*  
Written by Jim Butcher, art by Ardian  
Syaf

*Girl Genius, Volume 8: Agatha Heterodyne  
and the Chapel of Bones* Written by  
Kaja & Phil Foglio, art by Phil Foglio,  
colors by Cheyenne Wright

*Fables: War and Pieces* Written by Bill  
Willingham, pencilled by Mark  
Buckingham, art by Steve Leialoha and  
Andrew Pepoy, color by Lee  
Loughridge, letters by Todd Klein

*Schlock Mercenary: The Body Politic* Story  
and art by Howard Tayler

*Serenity: Better Days* Written by Joss  
Whedon & Brett Matthews, art by Will  
Conrad, color by Michelle Madsen,  
cover by Jo Chen

*Y: The Last Man, Volume 10: Whys and  
Wherefores* Written/created by Brian K.  
Vaughan, pencilled/created by Pia  
Guerra, inked by Jose Marzan, Jr.

### Best Dramatic Presentation, Long Form

*The Dark Knight*  
*Hellboy II: The Golden Army*  
*Iron Man*  
*METAtropolis*  
*WALL-E*

### Best Dramatic Presentation, Short Form

"The Constant" (*Lost*)  
*Doctor Horrible's Sing-Along Blog*  
"Revelations" (*Battlestar Galactica*)  
"Silence in the Library/Forest of the Dead"

(*Doctor Who*)  
"Turn Left" (*Doctor Who*)

### Best Editor, Short Form

Ellen Datlow  
Stanley Schmidt  
Jonathan Strahan  
Gordon Van Gelder  
Sheila Williams

### Best Editor, Long Form

Lou Anders  
Ginjer Buchanan  
David G. Hartwell  
Beth Meacham  
Patrick Nielsen Hayden

### Best Professional Artist

Daniel Dos Santos  
Bob Eggleton  
Donato Giancola  
John Picacio  
Shaun Tan

### Best Semiprozine

*Clarkesworld Magazine* edited by Neil  
Clarke, Nick Mamatas & Sean Wallace  
*Interzone* edited by Andy Cox  
*Locus* edited by Charles N. Brown, Kirsten  
Gong-Wong, & Liza Groen Trombi  
*The New York Review of Science Fiction*  
edited by Kathryn Cramer, Kris  
Dikeman, David G. Hartwell, & Kevin J.  
Maroney  
*Weird Tales* edited by Ann VanderMeer &  
Stephen H. Segal

### Best Fanzine

*Argentus* edited by Steven H Silver  
*Banana Wings* edited by Claire Brialey and  
Mark Plummer  
*Challenger* edited by Guy H. Lillian III  
*The Drink Tank* edited by Chris Garcia  
*Electric Velocipede* edited by John Klima  
*File 770* edited by Mike Glycer

### Best Fan Writer

Chris Garcia  
John Hertz  
Dave Langford  
Cheryl Morgan  
Steven H Silver

### Best Fan Artist

Alan F. Beck  
Brad W. Foster  
Sue Mason  
Tara Wayne  
Frank Wu

### The John W. Campbell Award for Best New Writer

Aliette de Bodard\*  
David Anthony Durham\*  
Felix Gilman  
Tony Pi\*  
Gord Sellar\*

\* Second year of eligibility.