

ALEXIAD

(ΑΛΞΙΑΣ)

\$2.00

This issue is dedicated to the memory of the 88 sailors from the U.S.S. *Bush* and the 34 sailors from U.S.S. *Colhoun* who died as a result of the events of April 6, 1945. May their memories be eternal.

This morning my scales showed me down nearly 21 pounds. The rate of loss has slowed from pounds to ounces. I am beginning to feel more at home in this new body. I really noticed the difference last Sunday morning when I carried a laundry basket downstairs. It still is strange to touch my shoulders and feel bone instead of padding. Strange and thrilling. I still marvel at how fast it happened. The nurse was happy with my progress. So am I.

— Lisa

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Yuri's Night is **April 12, 2010**.

The 136th Running of the Kentucky Derby is **May 1, 2010**.

The 135th Running of the Preakness Stakes is **May 15, 2010**.

The 141st Running of the Belmont Stakes is **June 5, 2010**.

The Sherlock Holmes/Arthur Conan Doyle Symposium will be **May 14-16, 2010** in Dayton, Ohio. The theme is "**Investigating the AmeriCanon**" and the primary topic will be the canonical and pastiche connections of Holmes in the States. Membership is \$45 if posted before April 20, \$50 if posted before May 8, and \$55 after that. Send to:

Cathy Gill
4661 Hamilton Avenue
Cincinnati, OH 45223-1502 USA
chirpsworth@fuse.net

The **World Party** is at 9:00 p.m. local time on **June 21, 2010**.

Printed on April 6, 2010

Deadline is **June 5, 2010**

Reviewer's Notes

I got my grand-nephew a copy of *Dewey: There's a Cat in the Library!* (by Vicki Myron and Bret Witter, illustrations by Steve James; 2009; Little, Brown and Company; ISBN 978-0-316-06874-1; \$16.99). The day I bought the book was the day the iPad was released, and now I'm reading a gushing article on how "paper print is dead". Which would be more impressive if I hadn't already read a more balanced review about the problems of the iPad.

But those may be solved. And then it will be possible for the would-be reader to download content straight from the infosea. And never go to the library and have to deal with library cats, much less people.

The March 29, 1982 issue of *Analog* had a story titled "Pixie Dixon and the Mystery of the Haunted Playpen". Print media had eroded away, you see, and then the infosea drained away. So lavishly produced editions of the very few surviving paper books were much in demand, and such immortal classics as *Pixie Dixon and the Mystery of the Haunted Playpen* were the subjects of much intellectual discourse.

But that was based on a society that had social capital left. When the iPad or its successor becomes the norm, will there be any?

— Joe

RANDOM JOTTINGS

by Joe



Nancy Kissell, the woman whose marital relationship was the topic of Joe McGinniss's *Never Enough* (2007; reviewed in *Alexiad* V. 6 #6), has won a reversal of her conviction.

Free Range Kids reports a Colorado Science Fair that had the following requirements for presentations:

For safety: Project displays and posters may NOT contain any of the following:

NO: Organisms (living or dead).

NO: Microbial cultures/fungi/molds/bacteria/parasites.

NO: Plants in Soil.

NO: Chemicals.

NO: Flammable Substances.

<http://freerangekids.wordpress.com>

Hugo wept!

On **January 21, 2010**, Ryan Waters and Cecile Skog completed the first ever unassisted and unsupported man-hauling crossing of the Antarctic Continent proper, descending the Axel Heiberg glacier to arrive on the Ross Ice Shelf. They had set out from Berkner Island on the Weddell Sea on **November 13, 2009**. Unlike others' previous crossings, they did not use wind-ski apparatus (never mind Sno-cats, Ski-dogs, or even dogs, dogs, and more dogs). Henry Robertson "Birdie" Bowers would have been proud of this demonstration that man had not yet decayed until he learned that it was a Yank and a Norskie (Norskiess, no less) doing this. Ms. Skog had previously skied unassisted and unsupported to the North Pole.

What is depression? The feeling one gets upon seeing an article in the *Wall Street Journal* for Friday, March 5, 2010 on how out of 130,000 women surveyed, 87% would trade their husband for a **Sparkly Emo Vampire™** — well Rob Pattinson, who plays one in *Twilight*. Calling Dr. van Helsing, calling Dr. van Helsing . . .

L. Vorenus dixit: rumoris mortis mei augitus sint. The rumors of Lucius Vorenus's death appear to be unfounded. A movie continuation

of the brilliant HBO series *Rome* (2005-2007; reviewed in *Alexiad* V. 4 #5-6 & V. 6, #1-2) has been announced. The screenplay is by series creator **Bruno Heller**, and picks up the action in Germania, four years after the last episode. It has been reported that **Kevin McKidd** (Vorenus) and **Ray Stevenson** (Titus Pullo) are likely to be reprising their roles. Whether they will go on quest to find the ice cave where Xena and Gabrielle are returning to life . . .

Meanwhile, since Caesar and Antony are still dead, **Ciarán Hinds** is playing Tardos Mors and **James Purefoy** is playing Kantos Kan in *John Carter of Mars*. **Polly Walker** [Atia] is playing Sarkoja. Unfortunately Lucy Lawless is committed to *Spartacus: Blood and Sand* (where she plays Lucretia, the owner's wife) and so can't play a notorious ex-pirate and gorthan [assassin] out to whack the Jeddak of Greater Helium, or something like that.

The renowned classicist Victor Davis Hanson has commented that he was somewhat disappointed that Lucy appeared nude in *Spartacus*. And in general he liked *Xena* but thought *Spartacus* was less interesting, because it focused on the parts of Spartacus's life we don't know about.

Spartacus is on the Starz Network. I guess most of us will have to just wait until it comes out on DVD.

Rome (movie)

<http://www.imdb.com/title/tt1337124/>

John Carter of Mars

<http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0401729/>

Spartacus: Blood and Sand

<http://www.imdb.com/title/tt1442449/>

Martin Morse Wooster notes the publication of Nicholas Rankin's *A Genius For Deception: How Cunning Helped the British Win Two World Wars* (Oxford University Press; 2008, 2009; ISBN 978-0-19-538704-9; \$29.95), the U.S. edition of *Churchill's Wizards*, reviewed in *Alexiad* V. 8 #5.

The British firm Conway Publishing puts out a series of books on famous warships, their "Anatomy of the Ship" works. These feature drawings of everything from the ship overall to tiny features, along with many photographs and a short history; a guide for the modeller and historian alike. I have several, including *The Destroyer Campbelltown* by Al Ross (2004; ISBN 9780851779973; £25/\$35) [research for a book with the St. Nazaire Raid in it, but it helps in imagining some of the scenes in Taylor Anderson's *Destroyermen* series], but the one that arrived recently is most interesting: *The Battlecruiser Hood* by John Roberts (1982, 2001; ISBN 9780851779003; £25/\$35).

The series also has older ships, such as HMS *Bounty*, HMS *Victory*, and USS *Constitution*. In the totally fictional category, Richard Russ fans can buy a book (not in the "Anatomy of the Ship" series, though) on Aubrey's and Maturin's ship, HMS *Surprise*, and not have to bother with all that plot, characterization, exposition, and other stuff that gets in the way of the infodumps.

Considering the topic of the forthcoming SH/ACD Symposium, I thought it proper to get *Sherlock Holmes: The American Years*, edited by Michael Kurland (2010; St. Martin's Press; ISBN 978-0-312-37846-2; \$25.99), a collection of new stories on said topic..

It would help if they stuck to the Canon. Mucking about with Holmes's early life for example. Similarly, for anyone who's read "A Double-Barrelled Detective Story", having a story with Holmes and Sam Clemens seems a bit outré ("My Silk Umbrella" by Darryl Brock). And Peter Tremayne has a story in it.

OBITS

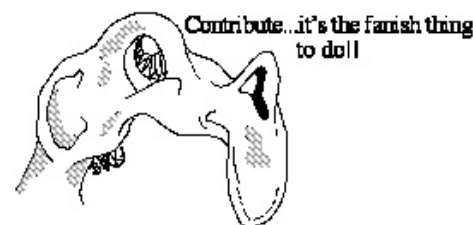
We regret to report the death of **Philip "William Tenn" Klass** on **February 7, 2010**. Tenn was one of the bright lights of the fifties and sixties, writing such piercingly satirical works as *Of Men and Monsters* (1968), a painfully brilliant examination of the purpose and status of humanity, and shorter ones like "Null-P" (*Worlds Beyond*, January 1951) about reversion to the mean, and . . . to list all his noteworthy works is to list all his works, fortunately collected in *Immodest Proposals: The Complete Science Fiction of William Tenn, Volume I* (2001; reviewed in *Alexiad* V. 1 #5) and *Here Comes Civilization: The Complete Science Fiction of William Tenn, Volume II* (2004; reviewed in *Alexiad* V. 3 #6).

He is survived by his wife, Fruma, and their daughter. And all of us, who have lost.

We regret to report the death of **Jim Harmon**, author of *The Great Radio Heroes* and *The Great Radio Comedians*, two memorials of a simpler time, on **February 16, 2010**. However, Jim was best known in Fandom for his role in the infamous Midwestcon door incident. Harlan Ellison™ can sleep safer tonight.

MONARCHIST NEWS

We regret to report the death of **Prinzessin Regina Helene Elisabeth Margarete von Sachsen-Meiningen**, Frau Otto von Habsburg-Lotharingen, also known as Archduchess Regina of Austria-Hungary, on **February 3, 2010** at her home in Pöcking, Bavaria. Born January 6, 1925 in Würzburg, she married Archduke Otto [Franz Joseph Otto Robert Maria Anton Karl Max Heinrich Sixtus Xavier Felix Renatus Ludwig Gaetan Pius Ignatius of Austria] on **May 10, 1951**; there were seven children, including the next heir to the Austro-Hungarian claim **Archduke Karl**, M.E.P. (Austrian People's Party).



WE CHOOSE TO GO

by Joseph T Major

Murchison suivait de l'oeil l'aiguille de son chronomètre. Il s'en fallait à peine de quarante secondes que l'instant du départ ne sonnât, et chacune d'elles durait un siècle.

A la vingtième, il y eut un frémissement universel, et il vint à la pensée de cette foule que les audacieux voyageurs enfermés dans le projectile comptaient aussi ces terribles secondes! Des cris isolés s'échappèrent:

«Trente-cinq! — trente-six! — trente-sept! — trente-huit! — trente-neuf! — quarante! Feu!!!»

Aussitôt Murchison, pressant du doigt l'interrupteur de l'appareil, rétablit le courant et lança l'étincelle électrique au fond de la Columbiad.

Une détonation épouvantable, inouïe, surhumaine, dont rien ne saurait donner une idée, ni les éclats de la foudre, ni le fracas des éruptions, se produisit instantanément. Une immense gerbe de feu jaillit des entrailles du sol comme d'un cratère. La terre se souleva, et c'est à peine si quelques personnes purent un instant entrevoir le projectile fendant victorieusement l'air au milieu des vapeurs flamboyantes.

— *De la terre à la lune: Trajet Direct en 97 Heures 20 Minutes* par Jules Verne

Murchison followed with his eye the hand of his chronometer. It wanted scarce forty seconds to the moment of departure, but each second seemed to last an age! At the twentieth there was a general shudder, as it occurred to the minds of that vast assemblage that the bold travelers shut up within the projectile were also counting those terrible seconds. Some few cries here and there escaped the crowd.

"Thirty-five! — thirty-six! — thirty-seven! — thirty-eight! — thirty-nine! — forty! FIRE!!!"

Instantly Murchison pressed with his finger the key of the electric battery, restored the current of the fluid, and discharged the spark into the breach of the Columbiad. An appalling unearthly report followed instantly, such as can be compared to nothing whatever known, not even to the roar of thunder, or the blast of volcanic explosions! No words can convey the slightest idea of the terrific sound! An immense spout of fire shot up from the bowels of the earth as from a crater. The earth heaved up, and with great difficulty some few spectators obtained a momentary glimpse of the projectile victoriously cleaving the air in the midst of the fiery vapors!

— *From the Earth to the Moon*, Jules Verne

On April 5, the space shuttle *Discovery* was launched on a mission to the International Space Station. In the darkness of the morning, the shuttle made a striking sight, white tiles casting back the floodlights that illuminated the pad, contrasting with the dull orange of the external tank, the dark bracing of the pad.

At minus four seconds the main engines were lit off. Their pale hydrogen fires lit up the night, ghostly and bright against the ironwork, making the shuttle strain against its bonds. At zero, the solid rocket boosters were ignited.

In an instant the night was banished, the light burned away the dark. The immense assembly was released and leaped away from its base, turning, rising on a great pillar of fire into the darkness. And then it was gone.

One of the highlights of the space community has been an extreme divisiveness. A comprehension of the subtle, yet significant differences between the People's Front of Judea and the Judean People's Front (not to mention the Popular Front of Judea, the Campaign to Free Galilee, the . . .) shows itself helpful in understanding the history of the space community.

The moon program was a mistake, you understand. While the U.S. was expending its efforts on this one-time effort, the cunning Soviets would bide their time, then establish themselves on Mars and the other planets.

When the Soviet Union turned out to have even less of an organized effort, the new cunning plan turned out to be composed in Chinese. Or Euronics, the official language of the European Space Program. Or . . .

But not to worry, the Kings of the High Frontier, untrammelled by bureaucratic bonds, free to develop innovative technologies, will leap forward to save the day, though hardly for the Amerikan State; no, they will pioneer the stars for free enterprise. As soon as they finish the latest cool presentation for their nonexistent backers.

There is some small activity other places. The French launch about six or seven payloads a year, though curiously enough there hasn't been one so far this year. There is a small Chinese space program, but given that they orbit a taikonaut mission about every other year, the Heinleinian prospect of the next man on the moon speaking Chinese seems far off.

Boeing's Sea Launch company has filed for Chapter 11 bankruptcy. Orbital Sciences Corporation is doing all right. You do know they use refurbished M-X missiles, don't you?

There is one real private enterprise manned mission. I once saw a list of the contestants for the X-Prize; there were something like fifteen of them. Only one ever actually flew. Now, Scaled Composites is promoting its SpaceShipTwo, which will they say begin operations in 2011. And yet it hasn't even flown once.

The history of the space program for the past forty years has been the cancellation of once-promising ventures because some hot new technology was on the horizon and why stick with old stuff. I got a subscription to *Popular*

Science when I was four. Really. My grandfather (he had the Ace Burroughs reissues, remember?) gave it to me. I still look at it occasionally. The new issue, that is; old issues are a bit painful to read, in a way. They contain announcements of various wonders that are only a year or two away. And that's the last we ever hear of them.

What's wrong?

It cost more than we thought. The Gun Club could whip up a worldwide campaign and raise \$5,446,675, which managed to cover all their bills handily, even including apparently the construction of a 1800 foot high hill in Florida. Seaton could get his bills for the *Skylark of Space* paid for by Crane with no trouble, even though they had to buy a backup sphere after World Steel failed to produce to specs (there was a reason).

Later technology has proven more expensive. Single shuttle missions cost about what the Gun Club's entire fund-raising was, adjusting for inflation, and that doesn't include the infrastructure.

But more than that, it seems, there has been a loss of desire. Do you recall how the Citizen's Advisory Council on National Space Policy was so proud that its statements were quoted in nationally disseminated speeches? How much did Gingrich *actually* do in promoting space activity? And he would listen. There's now no one in office who sees that much of a benefit to promoting space. It's not hot. Or cool.

Orbital Sciences? They use those M-X rockets to launch communications satellites. Useful . . . but optic cable is taking a bigger part of the load. Arianespace? Their next project appears to be launching a European global positioning system.

Old systems were overdesigned; Lisa likes to talk about the hurricane which destroyed the modern, built-to-code houses and left the old ones in reasonable shape. And how is space similar? Current construction is stressed to the max, getting the most result out of the least input, using computerized controls and arcane composites. There couldn't be an equivalent of getting a router and shaving off a couple of inches all round of the heat shield so the capsule would fit on the rocket; the capsule would be so finely and precisely designed, getting the absolute maximum out of its materials, that any similar change would require an entire rebuild.

The social shift affects other parts of the process. As when the KEO program to put messages to the future in space urges that the voices of the illiterate be represented. I once said that if there were a Mars Mission, the landing craft would have to have a ramp wide enough that the thirty-seven representatives of all races, genders, and classes who made up the crew could step off first simultaneously.

There won't be any more dramatic launches like I saw that Monday morning. I wonder how I could explain this to the kid who got Miz Yancey to bring the television into the second-grade classroom so everyone could see and hear John Glenn go around the world three times. We listened to ourselves all too much, and to the others not at all.

FAREWELL TO THE GEEK

by Joe

"Dilbert" is no longer what it was. We all admit that with some weariness.

However, John Zakour, author of the Zachary Nixon Johnson SF detective novels, and artist Scott Roberts have taken up the slack with "Working Daze", a cartoon about an even weirder company. I mean, Roy the computer tech can do the Vulcan nerve pinch and the Jedi mind control, Dana the manager's assistant can stop time, turn people into their Halloween costumes, and more, and I haven't even mentioned Medusa.

The February 26th strip showed Roy with another worker at the firm — only it was 1940 and Roy was complaining that "We were just born too soon". He is shown reading the October 1940 *Astounding* — Roberts used a picture of the actual Hulbert Rogers cover.

What does the October 1940 *Astounding* have? Primarily, part two of van Vogt's *Slan* and "Farewell to the Master" by Harry Bates. Also Theodore Sturgeon's "Butyl and the Breather", a comical story about encoding smells (or stench, really) as radio signals. There is a Malcolm Jameson story, "Admiral's Inspection", one of his "Bullard of the Space Patrol" series (a predecessor of John G. Hemry's "Paul Sinclair" stories). There is a story by long-time *Astounding* wheel horse (wheel throat? Whatever) Nat Schachner, "Runaway Cargo". And, finally, a minor tale by L. Sprague de Camp titled "The Warrior Race".

None of these would seem to justify the caption "Whatever happened to the Future?" or Roy's description of a world where "by 1970 all crime and poverty will be wiped out, and by 1999, we'll have functioning colonies on Mars!" Klaatu barada nikto to you.

"Working Daze" is available on Comics.com, on the Yahoo Comics page, and then there's the Working Daze blog:

<http://workingdaze.blogspot.com/>

JOHN JONES' CD

Commentary by Joseph T Major

Harry Stephen Keeler [1890-1967] was a quite prolific novelist, but he got so eccentric that in the end he was publishing in very marginal markets. At least he got published.

As a relic of the old days, from before one got pigeonholed in one category (as H. N. Turteltaub will aver), while he was classified as a mystery writer, he did dabble in that Buck Rogers stuff. In 1915, he composed a tale titled "John Jones' Dollar", which was inserted into one of his novels. (He did that a lot.) It was also published in *Amazing Stories* in 1957 (they did that a lot, too).

Keeler was known for "webwork" plots, composed of many diffuse and divergent threads which turn out to be interconnected and related. This is rather simple and straightforward.

In 1921, a man named John Jones deposits a dollar in the First National Bank of Chicago. The terms of the deposit are that the dollar is going to be kept for one thousand years and the deposit is to be paid to his eldest surviving descendant at that time.

The deposit grows in size until it becomes the entire capital stock of the Solar System. Fortunately, the last surviving known descendant of John Jones dies unmarried prior to the termination of the trust, and the fortune escheats to the government, thus creating a socialist solar system state.

Let's look at this. The First National Bank of Chicago is, or was, a real bank. It is now part of Bank One, which in turn is owned by J. P. Morgan Chase. The calculations in the story are based on a three percent interest rate. Oddly enough, that's about what you can get now on an ordinary savings account.

Leaving aside fees and the like, there is one other consideration, namely inflation. Given Keeler's original start date of 1921, the current value of the John Jones' Dollar Account would be \$13.83. But the current value of the original dollar is \$12.16. At least he beat inflation.

We are a bit jaded now. Keeler had the capital stock of the system at the then unimaginable value of some six trillion dollars. Even multiplying this by the difference in value, getting \$73 trillion, it seems unlikely that the net worth of the entire system would be so low.

"John Jones' Dollar":

<http://site.xavier.edu/polit/keeler/etexts/dollar.html>

Inflation calculator:

<http://www.minneapolisfed.org/index.cfm>

THE ADVENTURER

Review by Joseph T Major of

SHAKA II

by Mike Resnick

(PS Publishing; 2009;

ISBN 978-1-848630-59-8; £12)

"O my Spirit, here where thou foundest me when I was young, hundreds of years ago" (he said hundreds, but I suppose he meant tens), "I come back to thee. In this pool I dived and beneath the waters found thee, my Snake, and thou didst wind thyself about my body and about my heart" (here I understood that the speaker was alluding to his initiation as a witch-doctor which generally includes, or used to include, the finding of a snake in a river that coils itself about the neophyte). "About my body and in my heart thou hast dwelt from that sun to this, giving me wisdom and good and evil counsel, and that which thou hast counselled, I have done. Now I return thee whence thou camest, there to await me in the new birth.

"O Spirits of my fathers, toiling through many years I have avenged you on the House of Senzangaona, and never again will there be a king of the Zulus, for the last of them lies dead by

my hand. O my murdered wives and my children, I have offered up to you a mighty sacrifice, a sacrifice of thousands upon thousands.

"O Umkulu-kulu, Great One of the heavens, who sentest me to earth, I have done thy work upon the earth and bring back to thee thy harvest of the seed that thou hast sown, a blood-red harvest, O Umkulu-kulu. Be still, be still, my Snake, the sun arises, and soon, soon shalt thou rest in the water that wast thine from the beginning of the world!"

The voice ceased, and presently a spear of light piercing the mists, lit upon the speaker. It was Zikali and about him was wound a great yellow-bellied snake, of which the black head with flickering tongue waved above his head and seemed from time to time to lick him on the brow. (I suppose it had come to him from the water, for its skin glittered as though with wet.) He stood up on tottering feet, staring at the red eye of the rising sun, then crying, "Finished, finished with joy!" with a loud and dreadful laughter, he plunged into the foaming pool beneath.

Such was the end of Zikali the Wizard, Opener of Roads, the "Thing-that-should-never-have-been-born," and such was the vengeance that he worked upon the great House of Senzangaona, bringing it to naught and with it the nation of the Zulus.

— Sir H. Rider Haggard, *Finished*

Which explains why the gentleman in this story claimed no relationship with Shaka kaSenzangakhona. He must have realized that Zikali would come to get him. But if he were descended from Mangosothu Gatsha Butheleizi, he was descended from Senzangakhona.

Bwana (who is not Koriba) has left the mild and pleasant lands of the Kikuyu for the bloody kraals of the amaZulu, retelling the life of the Great Elephant in a universe beyond that of the imagination of Allan Quatermain or Zikali. Ayesha was in touch with other intelligences, so maybe not (presumably her brains did not deliquesce and flow out her ears when she spoke mind to mind with the beings of Yuggoth).

But it begins with John ole Butheleizi, one of many sons of a man somewhat resembling the prolific Raleigh Renaissance of Philip José Farmer's "Riders of the Purple Wage" (*Dangerous Visions*, 1967), the narrator of our story. Who has an encounter one day with his (half-)brother Robert. Robert has an attitude.

Robert is a very hard man, and yet somehow lacking; lacking in compassion and pity, even self-pity. For example, when he gets beat up, he launches on an intense PT course, and proceeds to send his former attackers to the hospital.

Then he disappears and when he returns, ten years later, he is a hero. Something of a borrowed hero, but that's another story. Then he stands for office, and one way or another, obstacles . . . disappear.

In an incredibly short time, Robert ole Butheleizi becomes President of South Africa. (And if you compare him to the real-life ones, he might not be worse.) From there, he begins using his charisma on the neighboring countries. Not Zimbabwe, but so many of the neighboring lands fall prey to his charisma.

To commemorate his success, he changes his name. To Tchaka. (Which is an early transliteration of Shaka.) But he seems to know his history, as he cleverly turns the objections to his expansionism against the objectors.

One planet isn't enough for him, and he begins to expand to the stars. To create a worlds-spanning empire, in fact, of the Zulu nation. Which he proceeds to do, quite effectively.

Then the charisma and the presence show their down side. Tchaka becomes even more arbitrary, and in a maleficent way at that. How do you say "Death Star" in isiZulu?

And when John and his other siblings thought things were bad, they only get worse, as Tchaka emulates his predecessor in one historical moment . . . and finds that he too has a weakness, which must be dealt with in the same way as he would for another.

The rise of Robert/Tchaka was described in many ways. By Cyril Kornbluth, for example:

Steiner said: "Grayson, the story goes back many years. My predecessor, William Malvern, determined to overthrow the regime, holding that it was an affront to the human spirit. There have been many such attempts. All have broken up on the rocks of espionage, terrorism and opinion-control—the three weapons which the regime holds firmly in its hands.

"Malvern tried another approach than espionage versus espionage, terrorism versus terrorism and opinion-control versus opinion-control. He determined to use the basic fact that certain men make history: that there are men born to be mould-breakers. They are the Phillips of Macedon, the Napoleons, Stalins and Hitlers, the Suleimans—the adventurers. Again and again they flash across history, bringing down an ancient empire, turning ordinary soldiers of the line into unkillable demons of battle, uprooting cultures, breathing new life into moribund peoples.

"There are common denominators among all the adventurers. Intelligence, of course. Other things are more mysterious but are always present. They are foreigners. Napoleon the Corsican. Hitler the Austrian. Stalin the Georgian. Phillip the Macedonian. Always there is an Oedipus complex. Always there is physical deficiency. Napoleon's stature. Stalin's withered arm—and yours. Always there is a minority disability, real or fancied. . . ."

— Cyril Kornbluth, "The Adventurer" (*Space Science Fiction*, May 1953)

What Grayson proceeds to do to his creators is something that Tchaka would understand and probably approve at that. The price needed to break a mold is often very high, and can make an even worse mold.

One of the problems of writing about a larger-than-life person is how to depict him. The super-man is above our comprehension. John W. Campbell touched on various ways to do that, such as in *Slan* (*Astounding* September-December 1940, 1946) where we saw the super-boy. (As for the sense of writing a sequel to that book, the author studied everything closely and missed the point entirely.)

John, the narrator, provides a link between the incomprehensible super-man and the reader. He does our work of comprehending (or trying to) for us.

. . . Umslopogaas stood a moment, drew himself up and lifting the great axe, cried *Bayête*, after which he too turned and went.

"What does that word mean, Allan?" she asked.

I explained that it was the salutation which the Zulu people only give to kings.

"Did I not say that savages are often the best?" she exclaimed in a gratified voice. "The white man, your companion, gave me no salute, but the Black One knows when he stands before a woman who is royal."

"He too is of royal blood in his own land," I said.

"If so, we are akin, Allan."

— Sir H. Rider Haggard, *She and Allan*

IF CHICANERY HAS A NAME . . .

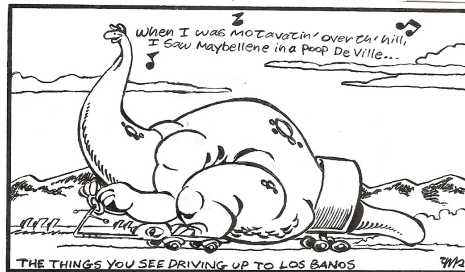
Review by Joseph T Major of
HAZARDS:

The Chronicles of Lucifer Jones 1934-1938

by Mike Resnick

(Subterranean Press; 2009;

ISBN 978-1-59606-230-6; \$35.00)



Resnick's tales of the most notorious con man have reached yet another continent. The Rev. Dr. Lucifer Jones (I think the ink is dry now on his diploma and ordination) having exhausted other fields for cons . . . **evangelism** has now moved to South America.

The settings are pulp-fiction adventure types, but somehow the great white god scheme never quite works, and there's always a sting in the tail of all the rest of the settings.

For a man of the cloth he seems to end up in other men's wives beds an awful lot, and I don't think it's to read psalms to them. (The Song of Solomon, maybe.) This is something that wasn't quite up to the original standards. Harry Flashman might have something to say. ("Damn your eyes, Yank, your fumbling has queered the pitch!")

It's hard to tell whether he is really that naïve or is pitching yet another con, to the reader this time. In either case, grab hold and be ready to be plunged through a roller coaster of adventure, absurdity, and amazement.

To be fair, they do do better when read in chapters, instead of one sitting. Like most such series, the plot is fairly predictable, so one reads for incident and setting. While those are clever and amusing, too much of this at one reading can be overwhelming.

Now that Lucifer Jones has run to the end of his continents, there's only the Great South Seas, and there are dusky maidens and fabulous treasures in store when this is . . . **[To Be Continued]**

WHAT THE VINTNERS DRINK

Review by Joseph T Major of

FLESH AND FIRE

by Laura Anne Gilman

(Pocket Books; 2009;

ISBN 978-1-4391-0141-4; \$26.00)

"Book One of the Vineart War"

Nebula Award Nominee

I've learned that what vintners drink, far from being the wine of quality beyond the comprehension of mere mortals, is the ordinary plonk. The fabulous wine beyond compare can go to oenophiles for big euros, or whatever.

The wine in this story, however, is magic. Once upon a time in the Faerie realm of Vin Land, all such wine was general. The vintner would consume a bumper and become magically empowered in general. But then, they overreached themselves, slaying the petty god sent to show them the errors of their ways in being power hungry, and now the wines of magical power are fraught with problems; different kinds give different powers, the viniculture is tricky and needs special attention, and some of the pests are really nasty. (Classical scholar Victor Davis Hanson should be glad he only has to deal with uninsured illegal immigrants wiping out his vines in automobile accidents.)

The recruitment policy for master vintners, makers and drinkers of magical wine for magical efforts, is grueling. Among other things. We begin with a slave slaving away in the vineyard. Then he shows a touch of talent — enough to get him moved from stoop labor to selection for authority.

Jerzy (they start calling him by his name again) finds that he might have been better off digging in the fields. His education in the ways of the House of Malech slowly but inexorably plunges him into a world of political conflict and methodological complexity.

For one so young he seems to be considered trustworthy. At least, in the final section of this

book Jerzy, having shown he might be a vintner after all, is packed off abroad to learn and share. Which leaves him rather taken aback when things go pear-shaped, and he has to run.

Gilman has created a different social and magical structure from one found in the usual run of fantasy. She has avoided the usual clichés of power and society. The problems of the book, if driven by magic and other forces not encountered in the “real world” (whatever that is), are dealt with (or not) by the characters themselves, not supernatural beings.

TIME TRAVELERS STRICTLY CASH

Review by Joseph T Major of
TIME TRAVELERS NEVER DIE
by Jack McDevitt
(Ace; 2009; ISBN 978-0441017638; \$24.95)

Walsingham’s burning eyes sent a piercing stare through this new recruit. “You understand then that we are at swords’ points with the Spaniard in a secret war. Your deeds may never be recognized; you may die on the public gibbet, or in the donjons of the Inquisition. Do you understand that?”

The man brushed back a comma of dark hair from his face and nodded. “I do.”

“Give me your name, then.”

“Bond. James Bond.”

It had been a strange journey from the depths of Q Branch, when Boothroyd himself had introduced the wild-eyed, disheveled, naive American. “This is the researcher Doctor Emmett Brown . . .”

— Not from *Time Travellers Never Die*

Adrian “Shel” Shelborne has a little problem; his father has disappeared mysteriously. I suppose he’s lucky he isn’t made the prime suspect and convicted without a body. There was a body . . . but the killer was different, and had to do with the different sort of item his father had.

Shel is going to be a bit of a disappointment to the time-traveling audience. He doesn’t make stupid mistakes. The matrix of reality is even harsher on “The Men Who Murdered Mohammed” (by Alfred Bester, *F&SF*, August 1958) than it was in that story; when Shel tests a minor paradox, it ends up fatal to the tester. (Always have a redshirt do the work.) So being an inglorious basterd or using the perspective of *Timescape* (by Gregory Benford, 1980) to keep that guy in Dallas from showing what a good Communist activist he was won’t work.

Indeed, Shel is depressingly sensible. He wants to go to the past; so, he considers the problem of “Language for Time Travelers” (by L. Sprague de Camp; *Astounding* July 1938) and does something about it, bringing in a linguist and learning Italiano as she was spoke.

If you can’t have your hero making stupid mistakes, having (say) to be rescued from the dungeons of the Inquisition after having

learnedly explained to Fra. Torquemada that all people including Judaizers are created equal and endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights, then what can you do?

Present rational observation. Deal with the very real human problems that stem from seeing time pass. Have a personal History Channel that makes the one on cable look pathetic. And get into trademark trouble:

They visited Henry Thoreau, jailed in Concord for refusing to pay taxes during the Mexican War, and Harlan Ellison, jailed in southeastern Louisiana for participating in civil rights protests.

— Page 256

Here the cry from SoCal, “**That’s ‘Harlan Ellison™!’**”

Or other things. Like recovering lost plays. Which in turn leads to some interesting confrontations, as when the translator of the *Leonidas* (fortunately for its credibility, the play does not have Leonidas declaring “**THIS! IS! SPAAAARTA!!**” before providing the Persian emissary with the earth and water he requires) meets a very amazed traveller who doesn’t quite speak English yet. Most writers would have picked Leonardo da Vinci, so McDevitt deserves a Nebogipfel (a time-travel writer’s award) for imaginativeness.

Towards the end, Shel and his associates end up getting into the problems of the device. Not the Niven one of how every time-travel device contains the seeds of its own destruction, but the more personal one of life. While “time travelers never die”, in one sense, in the other they are as mortal as us ordinary linear folks; and accepting the ways of the time-line can be difficult.

SUPERHUMAN BY NECESSITY

Review by Joseph T Major of
HUMAN BY CHOICE
by Travis S. Taylor and Darrell Bain
(Twilight Times Books; 2008;
ISBN 978-1-60619-047-0; \$16.95)

When David Weber took a vacation from Dame-All-the-Honors, he indulged in a bit of skylarking; the *Empire from the Ashes* series — *Mutineers’ Moon* (1991), *The Armageddon Inheritance* (1994), and *Heirs of Empire* (1996). The odd thing about each of these, I thought, was that the initial part of each book was good, but they fell apart in the followup. Thus, in the first book, where Colin found the hidden secret of the moon, or Dahak, and was reconditioned, was quite interesting. Then he found out about the mutineers being the secret powers behind all the bad things that happened to humanity, and the book went downhill from there. And so on, as in the last book where a decent “When In the Course—” (H. Beam Piper, 1981) scenario got overwhelmed by a pathetic court intrigue.

Thus I was underwhelmed by Weber’s latest series, beginning with *Off Armageddon Reef* (2007, 2008; reviewed in *Alexiad* V. 7 #2). Someone seems to think he has good ideas, less than optimally rendered.

Kyle is trying to recover from two different

kinds of traumas; he was wounded in action, and his wife and daughter were killed. He doesn’t want to have much contact with the world, but the contact comes to him. In the form of a lifeboat. A spaceship lifeboat, containing an alien — a first contact!

Now, oddly enough, the alien doesn’t immediately claim to be the heir of the Galactic Emperor and start building up a powerful military force with the purpose of bringing about the destruction of the oppressive religious oligarchy that dominates the land. Well, it’s odd if you’ve grown up on a diet of Weber.

What the alien does do is to acculturate; “go native” as they used to say. Because of the advance of technology, the being can go native in a very thorough fashion — in fact, become physically human. And, for emotional and physiological reasons, become a female human.

The organization of society presents problems. Somehow, those who enter the country without proper sanction, but from Earth, have fewer problems . . . and Jeri the alien doesn’t have an immigrant support structure.

Not to mention that the left hand doesn’t know what the right hand is doing. Which means that while one part of the government is looking for these, er, illegal aliens, another figures that cooperation is better. Or so Kyle thinks, once he survives the original assault by the Men in Black.

Which in turn leads to further escalation. This, regretfully, does tend to trend in the direction of armswank. It would be a good idea not to have a record of oppressing the aliens, if we ever make contact with their home planet, or if not, at least correct the error.

Both the protagonists are becoming human by choice; Kyle, you understand, has to reconnect, and perhaps having to create a connection made his reconnection easier.

Which leads to further considerations of connection . . .

Is this for everyone? Taylor & Bain have elided some of the problems. Even after all this, not everyone is likely to be enthralled with the prospects of nonhuman intelligences, though they have decided not to use the popular and easy target. It might be nicer to see that there is a larger world out there, but focusing on the events of the plot is a dramatic unity.

The ancestor of this is as much Philip K. Dick as it is Weber. In “Oh, To Be a Blob!” (*Galaxy*, February 1964), Dick presents a story of becoming the other, complete with a plot heisted from “The Gifts of the Magi”. Jeri & Kyle are a little better at communicating.

OUT OF THIS WORLD

Review by Joseph T Major of
STEAMED: A Steampunk Romance
by Katie McAlister
(Signet Paranormal Romance; 2010;
ISBN 978-0-451-22931-1; \$7.99)

Lawrence Watt-Evans is sadly unrecognized; his inventiveness and perspective goes unnoticed. For example, take his “Three Worlds” Trilogy: *Out of This World* (1994), *In the Empire of Shadow* (1995), and *The Reign of*

the Brown Magician (1996). The concept is simple enough and I'm surprised it hasn't been done before. Some force opens "portals" between our world and two other worlds; one is a cliché space opera universe and the other is a cliché Fantasyland world. Whereupon we see how the natures of those worlds are not only different, but failing.

This work lacks Evans's introspection. What it does is to send a couple of steampunk fans into a steampunk world. Whereupon the guy finds the beautiful airship captain and proceeds to get her into bed right away for some **Hot Sex™**, followed by the usual violence and confusion, while the girl turns out to be a cipher.

McAlister creates likeable characters; if Octavia Pye the airship captain fell into bed a little too quickly with Jack Fletcher the traveler, she nevertheless does have a real personality. And if Jack scored damn quick, he does have will and direction as well as knowledge, he is not the blank but well-endowed male target of your typical romance.

The world does however seem as shallow and simplistic as it is in "punk" works of all sorts. What McAlister has done, and I don't think she meant to, was to show how characters in steampunk stories are not of their world; the modern thinking and acting people, albeit extravagantly dressed, set in (or against) a very un-modern society. The problem with having people of such a society in a story is that they wouldn't do what the plots need and they wouldn't think in a way the audience would find agreeable.

Just as the characters do come off as people from a lads' magazine. Most guys, to be fair, would like to be like Jack; bold, assertive, daring, resolute, and oh yes he gets a really hawt chick. People in romances do tend to be idealized if not ideal.

It's a quite amusing story, but stopping to think about it probably should be put off until the last page. Except, of course, Octavia and Jack (and his sister, who was rescued from a utterly trumped-up execution) are about to go off and become air pirates when this paranormal romance is . . . **[To Be Continued]**

NOT SO FINE A WAR

Review by Joseph T Major of

RED INFERNO: 1945

by Robert Conroy

(Ballentine Books; 2010;

ISBN 978-0-345-50606-1; \$15.00)

Good News: Conroy does not have American soldiers carrying M-14 assault rifles or 20 mm BAR's. He does not have the Soviets firing off A-10 ICBMs. He does not have the battleship USS *Montana* (BB-67) participating in a dramatic finale for the *rengō kantai*.

Bad News: He does, however, have a "Major" in the RAF (read "Squadron Leader") and a "Field Marshal" (read "Marshal of the Soviet Union") in the Soviet Army. *sigh*

By way of comparison, General George S. Patton likely wouldn't be thinking this particular conflict was *A Damned Fine War* (by Bill Yenne; 2004; reviewed in *Alexiad* V. 3 #5) and

Blood and Guts Is Going Nuts (by Christopher Leopold, 1976)) because he can't launch the decisive thrust towards Berlin he knows he can do. Perhaps because the last thrust towards Berlin was just a little too . . . less than successful.

In our timeline, American troops reached the Elbe during the last campaign of the war on April 9th. They could have pressed on to Berlin; the opposition was the hastily-improvised units of the German 12th Army. They didn't.

And if they had, the opposition might not have been merely German . . .

Conroy switches between the council rooms far apart and the men on the ground, whether the beleaguered soldiers of the U.S. 17th Armored and 55th Infantry Divisions (he can check Shelby L. Stanton's *World War II Order of Battle* (2006) and find these units which never existed outside the fertile imagination of Juan Pujol Garcia) fighting in Potsdam, or the other soldiers and airmen who are drawn into this war that has begun before the other has ended. He demonstrates a knowledge of the multi-polar world that is not usually present in other works.

While the bypassed Potsdam Kessel becomes an even larger and more desperate Bastogne, the Soviet Army continues to drive west. Not as badly as Yenne had them, and indeed one wonders if they would be able to advance so far so soon with what little they had.

Still, as Yenne did, and as few if any writers then would have done, Conroy points up the multi-national nature of the Soviet Army, and the consequent strains. Also, he has a better handle on the composition of forces here.

There may be longer-term consequences here, as the now manpower-short Allies are forced to use one of the handy sources of reinforcements. The anti-Fascist lobby would be horrified at the employment of German soldiers in the front lines, and it's only going to get worse. As it is there's a good bit of demonstration in the streets by those who care about the fight against the principal opponent of fascism (think Illig and Fomenko: those days between August 25, 1939 and June 22, 1941 just did not exist!).

Many of those buffs will be gratified to learn of the catastrophic breakdown of Field-Marshal Montgomery, and his replacement by the less grating Field-Marshal Alexander, which makes the dramatic conference where Eisenhower discusses the weapon that will spare them two dooms (by C. M. Kornbluth, well maybe not) a little more calm. Alex had commanded Germans before. Conroy does have a habit of slighting the Allies, but he gives them more thought than (say) Yenne did.

And the following parallel scene at the Soviet front headquarters, where "Field-Marshal" Zhukov and General Chuikov take a break from planning Operation Bagration II — "This Time It's Personal!" — and look up to see an American bomber dropping something on a parachute . . .

Any West-Soviet war story is going to have the problem that the Soviet Army was exhausted at the end of the war, and that the Western Allies had to wrap up this conflict, finish the other one, and then go home before they came apart. That is, neither would start a war intentionally. Which means a plausible means to start one unintentionally has to be found as a point of departure.

Some minor points get repeated a little too much. (The way, for example, that Roland "Never-Finished" Green puts a gargantuan-muscled second-banana into every one of his works, whether his own, the "Wandor" series, or the continuations of Pournelle's *Janissaries* and Piper's *Lord Kalvan of Otherwhen*.) Such as, for example, the Good Guys having the uniform and ID of a secret policeman (Kempeitai in 1945: *A Novel* (2007; reviewed in *Alexiad* V. 6 #3) and NKVD [should be, of course, SMERSH] here).

And, arguably, the ending was a little too scanted. There are echoes of Yenne and of in fact the current day factors that Yenne raised, but then those were very real, only slighted by those who imagined millions of borsht-breathed Ivans in solid unified phalanx behind Stalin.

BWANA SPEAKS

Review by Joseph T Major of

. . . **ALWAYS A FAN:**

True Stories from a Life in Science Fiction

by Mike Resnick

(Wildside Press; 2009; ISBN 1-4344-0441-2)

Okay, I only read *most* of this over dinner.

This is a collection of various fannish essays penned by Mike Resnick. His colleague Mr. Jacob might well disdain them as money unearned, and upon the other rugose and cthonian tentacle certes Master Lovecraft, Uncle Theobald of eldrich and squamous aeons, would identify with this.

The essays touch on Resnick's life and interests; which covers a broad spectrum of events. Thus, for example, there is the essay on why the movie *The League of Extraordinary Gentlemen* is so wrong (and it doesn't even mention Caleb Catlum once!). Admittedly, a further point would consider the problem of rights. Modern heirs are jealous of the rights inherent in their ancestors. This was why, for example, the Groucho Marx mysteries (reviewed in *Alexiad* V. 5 #3) did not have Groucho's brothers — their rights are owned by different companies. This is the sort of consideration not considered by the fanfic writer who, as Langford cited in one of his satires, proposed a giant crossover featuring all his favorite characters and added, casually, that as the publisher was a big firm they could easily sort out the rights issues. The producers of *The League of Extraordinary Gentlemen* could have said something there — and that's a real world poke in the eye to the concept.

In the experience factor, there are everything from the problem with Roger Sims showering on down. Not to mention that immortal line, "I just love the Torcon 3 Program Committee."

Under interests, we find horses. I'll leave

that issue to Lisa to comment.

One item that could be useful to writers and readers alike is the section where Resnick discusses how he got the ideas for his works. The idea for *Walpurgis III*, for example; or how one could conceive a book where comparative evils have a confrontation.

Melancholically, the book contains far too many obituaries. The intersection of a life filled with encounters with interesting people and the nature of humanity means that those we love pass on, and we can but remember them.

In a noteworthy incident at a convention, John W. Campbell declared that if fandom quit buying *Asounding*, it wouldn't even be a blip on the sales. In response, an audience member held up the current issue and said, "But, John, where would you get your *writers!*?" The writers for said issue all having come from fandom, of course.

There is a connection between the devotees and the writers of SF. This is not altogether good; it can foster a closed-mindedness, a self-referential nature that shuts out new readers, a willing to pander to low standards. None of these is inevitable. A writer who knows the audience, who is connected with the audience, who one might say is part of the audience, has a boost in writing.

Would you see any movie or comic critic who would point out the inconsistencies, lapses in logic, continuity errors, adaptation distortions, and the like in *The League of Extraordinary Gentlemen*? Though I think it would have helped to point out that the attempt to reconcile such divergent concepts (i.e. the fight-to-the-death between Dorian Gray, who can't be killed, and Mina Harker, who's already dead) stems from the basic Caleb Catlism of the original story.

THE MÜLLER-FOKKER EFFECT

Review by Joseph T Major of
VOODOO HISTORIES:

*The Role of the Conspiracy Theory in
Shaping Modern History*

by David Aaronovitch

(Riverhead Books; 2009, 2010;
ISBN 978-1-59448-895-5; \$26.95)

John T. Sladek was one of the bitterly satirical writers of the New Wave era, and indeed his story in *Dangerous Visions* (1967), "The Happy Breed", is a Williamsonesque discussion of carrying all the way the concept of protecting people from harm. And yet he was an American, from Iowa.

In his second novel, *The Müller-Fokker Effect* (1970), he spoofed with a clear and terrible insight the conspiracist right (among other things), the capstone of that plot element being the amateur cryptographer who discovers the secret Rusky message encoded in the digits of pi. And in nonfiction, he discussed other such diversions, setting them up and knocking them down in *The New Apocrypha* (1973).

The more things change . . . In this book, Aaronovitch sets forth the development of conspiracism in the twentieth century. The first such effort, and the deepest and most lasting,

being that which produced *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion*. (Now go out and reread Will Eisner's *The Plot: The Secret History of The Protocols of the Elders of Zion* (2005; reviewed in *Alexiad* V. 6 #2).)

As Aaronovitch moves from the Great Purge Trials to the Conspiracy so Immense and on to less governmental conspiracies, one of his more striking revelations is the connections (connexions) among them. People will go from one conspiracy theory to another. It can be weary dreary to see the LaRouchies turning up here, there, and everywhere, yet that serves as a signal that something is wrong and a touchstone for thought.

It should perhaps be unnecessary to recount the low dishonest trail that drags from Pierre Plantard's self-aggrandizing monarchist fantasy to *The Da Vinci Code*. It was a dirty job but someone had to do it. Dan Brown has profited from the credulity of the world, and the original con man never gained any such benefit.

Likewise, today we have the contrast of troopers and birfers. Each group grasps at straws, builds a counternarrative that is oblivious to refutation, and is always about to succeed. It might help to contrast the popularity of the first and the comparative marginality of the second.

Indeed, the biggest problem is that this book is not long enough. A discussion of the common ground among Plantard and the succeeding royal fantasists Alexis Brimeyer and Michel Lafosse would show the variations among such latter-day Warbecks and Dmitris, and similarly the comparison between Plantard and Martin Allen would be illuminating. But *The Separation* and the "Small Change" series aren't in the Dan Brown league.

Looking over the immense mental effort put forth to expound these theories, the vast leaps of imagination involved in their development, and the stupendous scope of these plots, these seem to be no more than a huge investment in wasted mental effort. Yet, as Aaronovitch demonstrates, some of these fabulisms led to the destruction of lives, from the millions killed in the Great Purge and the Holocaust down to the ruin of Clay Shaw's life by Jim Garrison (who *still* has defenders!).

More than that, though, is that the focus on nonexistent plots diverts attention from very real problems. The anointed cognoscenti praise "Loose Change" because such belief means they don't have to deal with Islamism. Cafavy's phrase is more to the point than ever, like the barbarians, the conspiracies were some sort of a solution.

THE ADVENTURE OF THE GOLD HUNTER

Review by Joseph T Major of
THE POISONER'S HANDBOOK:
*Murder and the Birth of Forensic Medicine
in Jazz Age New York*

by Deborah Blum

(Penguin Press; 2010;

ISBN 978-1-59420-243-8; \$25.95)

Adrian Conan Doyle's attempts to exploit or carry on his father's legacy were less well

regarded than the efforts of other sons. I recall, for example, George H. Scithers quoting a scathing review of *The Exploits of Sherlock Holmes* (1952): "A child has done this thing!"

"The Adventure of the Gold Hunter" is the second story in the collection; one of those done with John Dickson Carr. Its basis is the reference in "The Adventure of the Five Orange Pips" to the "Camberwell poisoning case", in which Holmes wound up the victim's watch, proving it had only been wound up two hours before. (The "Gold Hunter" is a neat syllepsis, referring to both the watch and to the murderer.)

Holmes deduces the murder weapon by noticing a pot of vaseline placed next to the bed, and looking at the dead man's face, which has traces of vaseline on the skin. From that, he concludes that the murderer used chloroform; the vaseline kept it from burning the victim.

Holmes's American correspondents might well have wanted to dispatch a cable to him, breaking his resumed retirement on the Sussex Downs (after the little affair of von Bork and "Altamont") to make enquiries regarding the Camberwell case. In 1915, the concern of the New York coroner's office was not the war, but the German Odd Fellows House in Yonkers, where an attendant with the unusually apt name of Frederic Mors was connected to the deaths of a number of the aging pensioners there. Which, it seems was done by chloroform. Whether any of the deceased had watches is not mentioned.

The Pulitzer Prize-winning author of *A Field Guide for Science Writers* has turned to the history of a very particular kind of applied science; the nature of poisoning and its detection. Specifically, she recounts the story of the whole art of medical detection in New York City in the nineteen-teens and twenties, and its principal practitioners, New York medical examiner Dr. Charles Norris and his chief chemist Alexander Gettler.

Their efforts were overshadowed by their British colleagues, who had the benefit of better publicity and support. Norris was well to do, a veritable Thomas Wayne, and he didn't have to worry about going down Crime Alley, either. He did have to pay many of the expenses of the medical examiner's office out of his own pocket, and a recurring sub-theme of this work is the penurious economies practiced by the city government, along with other political hijinks and excursions. Even Fiorello LaGuardia does not come off well here.

The investigations described here cover substances as commonplace as ethyl alcohol and as exotic as thallium. And of course chloroform. Most of the cases described are obscure, the best known being the Ruth Snyder/Judd Gray murder case and the Michael Molloy murder case. Some are very surprising, as when everyone in the family except the father died — and yet, he wasn't the one responsible!

In a more scientific mode, Blum describes the effects of radium, which was more destructive than had been thought at the time. It killed not only its discoverer Marie Curie, but also the Radium Girls, painters of glow-in-the-dark watches, and even Eben Byers, who drank a thousand bottles of Radithor radium water for

his health and found out, er, that it wasn't really that healthy after all.

Another theme, one that both Norris and Gettler continually harped on, has to do with the ill effects of Prohibition. It left the distillation of booze to the unregulated, which meant that light drinking was superseded by heavy, not to mention that much of the liquor available had wood alcohol in it. It's not recorded what the great prohibitionists had to say about that.

This work focuses on poisons, not on the other kinds of sudden deaths that medical examiners had to encounter. There are other works on such forensic matters, and while Blum does present a constrained view of the efforts of the New York Medical Examiner's office, she has traded breadth for depth. There are so many poisons out there.

DICK FRANCIS

1920-2010

by Lisa Major

An extraordinary life ended last month. As a young man Dick Francis was a champion jockey. When he could no longer ride races he began writing horse mysteries. He became a bestselling writer. The first of his novels I remember reading was *The Danger*. I have a copy somewhere in the stacks. His death is an incalculable loss to the mystery genre.

SUPER BOWL

by Lisa

This year's Superbowl was straight out of Damon Runyon. The hard knock team which had never even been to a championship from an even more hard knock city, a city nearly destroyed only five years ago against an elite team which had been to the Superbowl several times. All the conventional wisdom favored the Colts, the elite team.

I set the channel to the Superbowl for the first time in my life. I watched for a while but tuned out when it was ten to zero in the Colts' favor. I had wanted them to win since they were my home team but I had no desire to watch Saints being creamed that badly. Some time after that Joe entered the room and asked about the game. I decided that since I had somewhat committed to watching this game in the last *Alexiad* I really should finish watching the game. I turned the channel back to the game. I understood very little of what I was seeing except that the Saints had picked up some points. They continued to rack up points but the Colts held to their lead until the point when the Saints turned on this incredible blitz. They pushed past the Colts and kept adding points.

I think all of New Orleans turned into one triumphant party.

The only comparable thing in horse racing I can think of is Seabiscuit against War Admiral.

BIG RED

by Lisa

Today is March 29. It is now ninety-three years since the greatest Thoroughbred was

foaled. His name was Man o'War. It was a mighty name and the big red horse more than lived up to it. He won 20 of 21 races and his sole loss was due to a disastrous start and getting trapped behind other horses during the race. His owner did not enter him in the Derby because he felt it was too early to ask three-year-olds to go that distance. Had he entered Man o'War, I have no doubt there would have been a Triple Crown winner in 1920. After his racing career he sired many stakes winners and one Triple Crown winner, War Admiral.

FOOTLOOSE AGAIN, BUT TOEING THE LINE

by Grant C. McCormick

The year A.D. 2010 is already proving to be very interesting for me. I entered the hospital on Friday, January 1, and on January 2, I had a Transverse Metatarsal Amputation on my left foot. This means that my surgeon cut off my remaining sinistral toes, and the front part of my left foot. With the osteomyelitis (bone infection) that I had, it was the best solution that I had available (the next step would be a below-the-knee amputation of the foot).

Fortunately, I seem to be healing well, and also responding well to the three-times-a-day intravenous antibiotic infusion that I am taking at least through the 17th of February. For those of you that want to know more about osteomyelitis and its treatment, I can recommend the Mayo Clinic's web site:

<http://www.mayoclinic.com/health/osteomyelitis/DS00759>

I spent from 2010-01-01 to 2010-01-05 in Jewish Hospital of Louisville, and from 2010-01-05 through 2010-01-20 in the Bashford East rehabilitation facility, also here in Louisville. On Wednesday the 20th of January, I returned home.

However, this article is not about my health woes, but about my **internet connectivity** while I was in the hospital and in the rehabilitation facility. From previous stays in Jewish Hospital, I knew that they had no available WiFi, nor any other internet connectivity for patients.

So this time I prepared myself. At a local Wal-Mart, I found an adapter from Cricket™ (the cellular telephone company) for internet access through third-generation (3G) cellular technology. The adapter itself is made by Cal-Comp™, and is the CRK A600. It cost a bit under \$80 before sales tax (and includes two free days), and the internet service is a pay-as-you-go \$50 per month (i.e., you pay \$50 plus taxes online, or activate a prepaid Cricket™ card [the option that I chose], and you're good for a month). What you get for your \$50 is low DSL-level service (circa 400 kilobits-per-second) throughput with ten gigabytes (10GB) of bandwidth. If you exceed your bandwidth, you are not cut off, but your speed may be limited.

It will work on both Windows™ computers (Win2K, WinXP, Vista, and Win7), and Apple Macintosh™ OSX™ computers, with an available USB port and enough memory and

speed. In the hospital, I consistently got four bars (the maximum) signal. Once I was transferred to Bashford East, I got three bars in my room. Now, I did not think that this would matter; one of the two reasons that I chose this facility was that they advertised that they have WiFi available (the other reason was a convenient location). They do indeed have a Cisco access point that can be picked up everywhere in the complex, except in the West wing.

Anyone care to guess where they put me?

They were going to transfer me to a room within range of the access point (or so they said) when one became available, but Anthem (my insurance company) discharged me first.

Now, the WiFi connection was faster than my Cricket™ connection, but I could get my Cricket™ connection in my room in the West wing. Of course, I could only get it on one computer at a time — it has to use the USB adapter, after all.

Right now, you're probably asking yourself, "So what that you can only use it on one computer at a time? You're in a rehab center, not a frakking network server room!"

True. But I am me, which means that one computer is not enough.

Here at home I own and use regularly four computers: the Acer™ Tower (that I am on now ? it's the easiest for me to type on) running Windows 7; the older generic tower that I built which uses Windows XP; the HP™ DV7-1175NR laptop that came with Vista (and which I upgraded to Windows 7 while in the rehab facility [and this upgrade {not a re-install-from-scratch!} went without problems!]); and the Acer™ netbook that runs Windows XP. Here at home, they are networked together through our WiFi router, along with Joseph's and Lisa's desktops and laptops, as well as whichever of the cats happen to be online that day.

I took only the HP™ laptop with me to the hospital. It has by far the better speed, sound and video quality, and usability of the two laptops. I watched several movies on it while I was at the hospital. And I took it with me to the rehab facility.

At the time, this machine was running 64-bit-Vista, and the email program that I prefer (Outlook 2000) does not like 64-bit-Vista (or 64-bit anything, for that matter). The quickest solution was to ask Joe to bring my Acer™ Netbook to me, which runs Outlook with no problems. So with the Acer™ Netbook, I was able to download my mail from the webserver to Outlook, and then back it up to a portable drive and to the HP™ laptop.

But I still could get only one or the other on line at a time, but not both. This was very, very frustrating . . . Until I had an idea.

What I was able to do was to set up an ad hoc WiFi network with Internet Connection Sharing (ICS) on the HP™ laptop. An ad hoc WiFi network is one that allows two or more WiFi devices to connect with one another without the use of a wireless router or some other other wireless access point. ICS allows a computer with an internet access on one adapter

to share it over a different adapter — for example, sharing the Cricket™ internet connection (adapter 1) over the wireless network (WiFi) connection (adapter 2). When ad hoc wireless is combined with ICS, it essentially allows a computer to act like a wireless router in its own right. The problem is that it is not compatible with using an actual router. I shared the Cricket™ internet connection on the HP™ laptop with my Acer™ netbook (and with Joe's and Lisa's laptops and netbooks when they visited — one evening we had four computers connected to the internet simultaneously, with decent connection speed for all!), and I had what was essentially my own secured WiFi hotspot, without any separate WiFi or network access, other than that Cricket™ adapter on the HP™. And Joe and Lisa had no more problem connecting to my network than to any other secured WiFi network.

Say someone lives in an area where neither DSL nor cable internet is easily affordable and available, like certain parts of Gaithersburg, MD (yes, Sheryl, I am looking at you!). This might be a solution. For an upfront cost of \$80, and a recurring cost of \$50 per month (plus taxes — can't forget those taxes!), you can have a home WiFi network and internet. If you can get a signal indoors. Now, Cricket™ does show that they have internet available there.

When I got home, I had access to our home network again. This is good, because I have zero (that's 0) bars, and no signal, inside on my Cricket™ connection. This house has the first floor clad with aluminum siding, which makes a very good radio-frequency shield.

If I step outside onto the steps with my laptop, I get two bars — if I step down to the sidewalk adjacent to the street, I get three.

Now, Joe travels a great deal, mostly to visit relatives (You didn't know that Joe has relatives? He does.). Many of these relatives live in areas with limited or no WiFi, nor anything available faster than dial-up. So last year, Joe got a similar adapter from Verizon™ (his cellular provider — mine is TracFone™, not Cricket™). Inside, in the middle of the house, he gets two bars, and in the front room he gets three bars. The technology is the same — the difference reflects the signal strength available from the two providers. Cricket™ is considerably less expensive (by about \$30 per month), but you do get what you pay for in terms of coverage. On the other hand, if there is a nearby Cricket™ cellular tower, you are in the clover.

One further advantage of this method is that if you travel or move, your internet may be able to travel or move with you. Other cellular providers do have similar services. I have not done any comparison shopping as to price, bandwidth, coverage areas, and/or limitations. As usual, your mileage may vary.

Now, with the Cricket™ service, all you get is internet connectivity. You do not get email accounts, email servers, webspace, nor anything other than a connection to the internet. Still, this may be what you need, even if you still have all of your toes.

HOOKING UP

by Joe

A few years ago, we installed a DSL connection at home. This was a money-saving enterprise; the DSL rate was less than that of the two dial-up connections and it meant that we no longer needed a second telephone line. Then Grant moved in, and connections proliferated.

At the end of last year, we started having speed problems. The speed was falling from the old rate to something approaching dial-up speeds. Such is the progress of technology that such speeds, unimaginable fifteen years ago (look at the connection speeds in Niven's and Pournelle's *Oath of Fealty* (1982); I don't think you can even get anything that slow any more) are now a sign of concern.

Email to the provider. It seems the wire connecting the junction box to the socket was going bad. We ended up connecting the modem directly to the telephone box, end of one problem, beginning of another. Namely, doing that meant disconnecting the upstairs phones, for reasons having to do with the layout of the telephone box.

Finally, I bought a line splitter and put it in the socket in the box. Phones reconnected, problem solved. And such is the nature of life that a similar splitter emerged from the litter within the house in a week.

But then . . . the signal speed fell again. More email to the provider. It turns out the conventional line splitter has issues with DSL. So we had to install a DSL filter/splitter on the outside line.

That was, of course, the day the snow fell. Going out and buying one was obviously an extremely foolish thing to do. However, it turned out that there was an unused DSL filter (note; if you get DSL, you will have to have one or more of these on your telephone lines that aren't connected to the modem, unless you are wildly fond of whistling noises in the background of your telephone communications) upstairs. It didn't have an unfiltered socket, but the unfiltered socket on the filter on the downstairs setup wasn't being used; the line ran straight from the box to the modem and then from the modem to the telephones. Filters switched, problems solved.

So the phone was connected and perfectly clear when Lisa called to tell me that her car door was frozen up, at 9:30 pm, in 15°F with wind chill. I drove down to the library, tried to open the door with the aid of various noxious chemical compounds, called AAA when my efforts were unavailing, the helper struggled for an hour and a half with various tools, and finally, with some bending of the door key, I got the driver's side door open and started the car, problem finally solved.

We got to bed after midnight.

I DO KNOW JACK

The magicJack™ Computer/Telephone Device

A Description and Review
by Grant C. McCormick

Lately, telephones have been a pain, here at the Major Muddle. Joe and Lisa have had a land-line phone since forever, and they have allowed me to use it as well. Well, back when I arrived here, I added two extension telephones in the areas I normally use. Since I returned from the hospital and the rehabilitation facility, **both** of these two telephones have been acting very strangely — first they would not ring, but would work otherwise, and then they both quit working entirely: no dial tone at all. And when the other phone on the first floor, in the kitchen (which has been working fine the whole time), rings, I usually cannot here the ring in the area where I hang out. The telephones upstairs (I have been told) are working fine.

So I have been using my cellular telephone a whole lot. My cell is through TracFone, and does not have any free minutes or calls at any time. While it's fairly inexpensive on a per minute basis, after a while the minutes have been adding up. This is called "Ouch!"

A friend of mine, Charley May, told me about something called "magicJack." It is a USB device, plugged into a Windows-based (Windows 2000 or later) PC or a Macintosh computer (neither Linux nor Unix are yet supported), that allows you to hook up a standard land-line telephone and use it in the normal fashion to make and receive calls, provided the computer is connected to the internet.

This sounded . . . interesting. I investigated. Their website is at www.magicjack.com, but it autostarts the most annoying video clip every time you go to it, so I recommend that you go directly to the FAQs page: <http://www.magicjack.com/5/faq/>. It is where everything useful is anyway. The base cost of the magicJack is \$39.95, which gives you the USB dongle (about the size of a flash or thumb drive) and the first year's service. Additional years are \$19.95 (note: that is *per year*, **not per month**).

This last Sunday, I noticed that Radio Shack™, in their newspaper flier, was now advertising the magicJack for the \$39.95 price. So, on Wednesday, following my doctor's appointment, I swung by a Radio Shack and — found out that they had already sold out. However, the associate kindly searched the Louisville Metro database and found another Radio Shack that had several in stock, that was on my way home. I bought their last one, and brought it home, where I plugged it into the computer on which I am now typing (Windows 7, 64-bit), ran the setup program that it included in the device itself (it looks to the computer like it includes a CD), and had it working in less than 15 minutes.

You can select an area code in most areas of the United States as your 'home', and it will allow you to select an exchange that is 'local' for a given area. It does not really matter for calling out — The United States, Canada, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands are included in the free local and long distance plan. However, it matters for who can call **you** without **them** paying long distance charges.

Directory assistance (411) is included at no additional charge. You must register your magicJack with emergency services (911) so they know where to send an ambulance or the fire department. To emphasize: it does not matter where in the world you are to use the magicJack, only that you have an active computer with an internet connection. Geography is meaningless (which is good for most Americans).

To illustrate: Last year, Joseph and Lisa went to the WorldCon up in Montreal, up in Canada. He had his Verizon cellular phone, which worked, but the roaming charges for it up in the Bilingual North were — confiscatory. Both Joe and Lisa had laptops with them. Suppose that they had taken a magicJack, too.

The hotels, convention centre, restaurants, rest stops, etc., on his trips mostly had WiFi (my understanding is that in the case of the convention centre it was more theoretical rather than actual). Joe could boot up the laptop, connect to the WiFi, plug in an el-cheapo land-line phone to it, and check for any voicemail (included free) on the magicJack line that had accumulated while it was off, return calls exactly as if he were at home, make calls ditto, and receive calls that were placed while he was on line and connected. Anyone calling him would dial in exactly the same fashion that they would normally — nothing special need be done. Marginal cost of all this: zero.

If he were in the Lower 48, and in an area without WiFi (e.g., while driving in his car), and were he to use the Verizon internet card he has for access, that would work, too. Lisa could be sitting in the passenger seat and talking on a land-line phone while Joe is driving (at the legal speed limit, naturally) down I-64 to Henderson, KY.

Here at home, I attached a telephone line splitter and both land-line phones to the magicJack, and they both ring and work. They are entirely independent of the Major's land-line, so I can call it, and they can call me (I cannot hear them upstairs, nor they me from downstairs).

And, yes, so far the sound quality has been excellent.

There are downsides to the magicJack, naturally. It will not work without a powered and working computer and internet access. Fortunately, this Windows 7 tower is left on almost all of the time anyway. But in any case, it does not have to be the same computer all of the time. I can move it to one of my laptops, and use it there.

Still, I have already found it worth the price paid, and my only regret is that I had not gotten a magicJack sooner. Highly recommended.

A FURTHER UPDATED PERSONAL APPRECIATION OF PRATCHETT

By Grant C. McCormick

(Most Recent Revision: February 28, 2010)

These days, one of my favorite authors is the English writer, Terry Pratchett. Mr. Pratchett had the good fortune to be born on April 28, 1948, in Beaconsfield, Buckinghamshire,

England, in the United Kingdom. He has been writing professionally for several decades now (first story published at age 13, first commercial sale at age 17, first novel [the fantasy *The Carpet People*] published in 1971).

As the above shows, from his teen years to the present, Pratchett has always been a writer. Starting in 1965, he worked for the *Buckinghamshire Free Press* and wrote reviews for a publishing company. From 1980 to 1987, he worked for the Central Electricity Generating Board as Publicity Officer (saying Good Things about three nuclear power stations). Since 1987, he has been a very successful full-time professional writer. Most of his output has been fantasy, but he has written two science fiction novels (*The Dark Side of the Sun*, in 1976; and *Strata*, in 1981). In 1990, he coauthored (with another British fantasy author, Neil Gaiman) the novel *Good Omens: The Nice and Accurate Prophecies of Agnes Nutter*. In 2008, he wrote the young adult fantasy *Nation*, set in a world much like ours, but subtly different.

What Terry Pratchett is best known for is his Discworld series. This body of work, based upon the absurd premise of a flat world balanced on the backs of four elephants who, in turn, stand on a giant turtle, has won a worldwide following that is only approached by J. R. R. Tolkien's Middle Earth, J. K. Rowling's Harry Potter, and Piers Anthony's Xanth.

Starting with *The Colour of Magic* (1983), and (as of this writing) running through *Unseen Academicals* (2009), he has thirty-seven Discworld novels in total, four of which are classified as Young Adult (*The Amazing Maurice and his Educated Rodents* [2001]; *The Wee Free Men* [2003]; and its direct sequels, *A Hat Full of Sky* [2004] and *Wintersmith* [2006]). Most bookstores do not include copies of these four with the other Discworld books, and have them filed in Children's' Books, Teens, or Young Adult only. (These four have also won several awards, including the Carnegie Award.) All of Pratchett's novels are known for their humor, their excellence in writing and characterization — and the love and loyalty that they have generated among his fans.

For your convenience, I am including a list of the Discworld books published to date, at the end of this article, in chronological order. Note: these are the novels only, and do not include such things as Pratchett's Discworld short fiction, the *Discworld Guide*, any of the Discworld maps, *The Science of Discworld* or its sequels, etc. The books in the Discworld series are divided into several sub-series, involving recurring sets of characters. It is possible that some of the independent novels may serve as the seed of future sub-series. Most (though not all) of these books are set in the great city of Ankh-Morpork (think London, Lankhmar, and New York City all rolled up into one), largest city of the Discworld and jewel of the Sto Plains, a walled, circular city which is as much a character within the Discworld books as is any person.

The first book in the series, *The Colour of Magic*, is essentially a humorous parody work. Divided into shorter sections, it has sections that

spoof the works of Fritz Leiber, Anne McCaffery, H. P. Lovecraft, Robert E. Howard, and others. The second book, *The Light Fantastic*, is the first that has a continuous plot and story (involving Cohen the Barbarian, a Conan-clone seen in his eighties). Both of these works have as their framing device the assignment of the Wizzard [sic.] Rincewind as the tourguide to the Discworld's first tourist, Twoflower, and the misadventures that they get into. This plot device is dropped in the later works (though Twoflower makes a reappearance in *Interesting Times*).

The next three books, starting with *Equal Rites*, start to get into the true Discworld mode, though at this point Pratchett has not yet closed in on his vision. In my opinion, only with the sixth novel, *Wyrd Sisters*, do you start getting the Real Discworld. Also, the series as a whole shows a consistent rise in the level of development and consistency of writing.

The other subseries within the Discworld books include the *Witches* (Granny Weatherwax, usually with Nanny Ogg, Magrat Garlick, and sometimes others, in the small Kingdom of Lancre up in the Ramtops, where you can see all the way to the Hub); *Unseen University* (UU, the Discworld's preeminent institution of Higher [Arcane] Learning, with its unique faculty, in the heart of Ankh-Morpork); *the Watch* (the adventures of the Ankh-Morpork City Guard, and their commander, Sam Vimes); *Death* (the stories involving Death [tall fellow, rather boney, scythe, hourglasses, rides a pale horse {named Binky}, the Taker of Souls] and his Granddaughter [Susan]); Genghis *Cohen* the Barbarian (mentioned above), the archetypal Barbarian Hero *well* past his prime, who seems like a joke until you remember that he's had decades and decades of experience in *surviving*; *Gaspo*, the dog who doesn't talk (*everyone* knows dogs can't talk!); the *History Monks* (a small group of little yellow men who live in an enchanted valley high up in the Ramtops, who observe and record History — and who sometimes have to erase and re-write [and repair!]); *Angels and Angles* (about Moist von Lipwig, and his lives and time); and the *Chalk* (the adventures of the young girl, Tiffany Aching, as she learns to become a witch in the sheep country of the Chalk, near the border of the Sto Plains and the Ramtops, and near to the land of the Pictsies as well).

All of these books are excellent, and all of them should be read (preferably in sequence, because there is real and true character development occurring in the extended story, and events in earlier books definitely have implications in the later ones). *The Last Hero* is a lavishly illustrated (by Paul Kidby) graphic novel, and has appearances by most of the regular characters in the entire series. *Eric* was also originally published as an illustrated novel, though I have only seen it in the standard, non-illustrated, format.

Many of these books have "themes". For example, *Wyrd Sisters* has a theme of theater, with an emphasis on Shakespeare (particularly *Hamlet* and the Scottish Play). *Eric* is a humorous retelling of Faust and Homer and

Dante. *Soul Music* is Rock-and-Roll. *Maskerade!!!!* is Opera. *Small Gods* is Religion. *Hogfather* is Christmas. *The Truth* is Newspapers. *Going Postal* is the Internet and the Dot-com mania, and the Post Office. *Unseen Academicals* is Football (soccer to us Americans) with a side order of *Romeo and Juliet*.

Both *Wyrd Sisters* and *Soul Music* have been made into animated mini-series (in England), and are available on VHS and DVD. *Hogfather* was made into a live-action made-for-television motion picture in 2006. The first two books (*The Colour of Magic* and *The Light Fantastic*) were combined in a live-action made-for-television motion picture titled *The Colour of Magic* in 2008. Both *The Wee Free Men* and *Going Postal* are scheduled for similar treatment in 2010.

It is **very** difficult to say which is the best book in the series. The best I can do is a top six, which includes (in chronological order only) *Wyrd Sisters*, *Reaper Man*, *Small Gods*, *The Amazing Maurice and his Educated Rodents*, *Night Watch*, and *Going Postal*. But every single book in the series is well worth reading, without exception.

Good Omens (with Neil Gaiman) is not a Discworld book, but still has much of the same “flavor” as the Discworld series. I find that people who like either one will inevitably like the other. His independent young-adult novel *Nation* will also likely appeal to Discworld readers.

The science fiction novel *Strata* is an interesting “prequel” to the Discworld books. It is **not** fantasy, and overtly has **nothing** to do with the Discworld. But it does involve some interstellar explorers who discover an obviously artificial Flat Earth (and I don’t mean any old generic flat world, but a Flat **Earth**). It is **very** Nivenesque in both plot and writing style, and can rightly be called a fusion of Ringworld and Discworld.

All in all, Pratchett is an excellent read. What more can any author (or reader) ask for?

The Discworld Novels (as of February, 2010):

#	Book and year published	Sub-series
1	<i>The Colour of Magic</i> (1983)	Rincewind, Twoflower
2	<i>The Light Fantastic</i> (1986)	Rincewind, Twoflower, Cohen
3	<i>Equal Rites</i> (1987)	Witches
4	<i>Mort</i> (1987)	Death
5	<i>Sourcery</i> (1988)	Rincewind, UU
6	<i>Wyrd Sisters</i> (1988)	Witches
7	<i>Pyramids</i> (1989)	Independent
8	<i>Guards! Guards!</i> (1989)	The Watch
9	<i>Eric</i> (1990)	Rincewind
10	<i>Moving Pictures</i> (1990)	Independent, UU, Gaspode
11	<i>Reaper Man</i> (1991)	Death, UU
12	<i>Witches Abroad</i> (1991)	Witches
13	<i>Small Gods</i> (1992)	Independent, History Monks
14	<i>Lords and Ladies</i> (1992)	Witches, UU
15	<i>Men at Arms</i> (1993)	The Watch, Gaspode

16	<i>Soul Music</i> (1994)	Death, UU
17	<i>Interesting Times</i> (1994)	Rincewind, UU, Twoflower, Cohen
18	<i>Maskerade!!!!</i> (1995)	Witches
19	<i>Feet of Clay</i> (1996)	The Watch
20	<i>Hogfather</i> (1996)	Death, UU
21	<i>Jingo</i> (1997)	The Watch
22	<i>The Last Continent</i> (1998)	Rincewind, UU
23	<i>Carpe Jugulum</i> (1998)	Witches
24	<i>The Fifth Elephant</i> (1999)	The Watch, Gaspode
25	<i>The Truth</i> (2000)	Independent, Gaspode
26	<i>The Thief of Time</i> (2001)	Death, History Monks
27	<i>The Last Hero</i> (2001)	(Graphic Novel) Rincewind, UU, Cohen
28	<i>The Amazing Maurice and his Educated Rodents</i> (2001)	YA Independent
29	<i>Night Watch</i> (2002)	The Watch, History Monks
30	<i>The Wee Free Men</i> (2003)	YA The Chalk
31	<i>Monstrous Regiment</i> (2003)	Independent
32	<i>A Hat Full of Sky</i> (2004)	YA The Chalk
33	<i>Going Postal</i> (2004)	Angels and Angles
34	<i>Thud!</i> (2005)	The Watch
35	<i>Wintersmith</i> (2006)	YA The Chalk
36	<i>Making Money</i> (2007)	Angels and Angles
37	<i>Unseen Academicals</i> (2009)	UU

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YOUR ITCH FOR JUSTICE IORICH

by Steven Brust

(Tor Books, New York City; January 2010;
ISBN: 978-0-7653-1208-2;
Vlad # 12; Hardcover; 320 pages; \$24.99)
A review by Grant C. McCormick

Vladimir Taltos, a Baron of House Jhereg and the Count of Szurke, has been on the run from the Jhereg (the criminal organization as distinct from the house, if there is any such distinction) for nearly a decade now. For bad and sufficient reasons (covered in earlier books in this series¹), the Jhereg as an organization² wants to end his running in the worst way — to kill him with a Morganti³ weapon that will put an end to his story, forever. Now, as a mere human, an Easterner, Vladimir would be expected to kick off on this own in just a few more decades, anyway — he’s already starting to feel his years. His main concern in life these days is staying out of the grasp of those who want him no longer to be.

Most of those who have worked with and for Vlad during his active career in the Jhereg (both in that house and out) are loyal to him even now, as he is loyal to them. And, naturally, he’s just found out that someone that he knows, that he cares about, that he considers to be a

loyal friend, has been arrested on a capital charge — and only by sticking his head in the noose and returning to the capital city can he save her. And Alieria, being the Dragon that she is, refuses even to get a lawyer — in her mind, that would imply she’s guilty. And she has other motives, as well.

Now, the members of each of the seventeen houses of the Dragaerae share certain common stereotypes: Dragons are stubborn, brave, and warlike; Jhereg tend to be criminals (Vlad was); Dzur are impulsive and reckless; Orca most often are sailors, merchants, or pirates; Issola are graceful and polite; and Iorich are usually lawyers or involved in the justice system. And Vlad has to deal with more Iorich than ever before in his life to save his friend.

Most of Brust’s books are in this series, or in the related *Phoenix Guards* series, and I find all of them to be very good, but I think that I like *Iorich* the most of all of them. The world that contains the Dragaeran Empire is radically different from our own, with accepted assumptions that we would find bizarre — and Brust makes it all believable. With this book, suspension of disbelief is not a chore, but a natural result of the quality of his writing.

Two things in particular stand out: the deleted scenes at the end of the book are a real hoot; and the fact that (to the best of my memory) Brust does not make even one lawyer joke in *Iorich* — and you don’t miss them.

¹ See *Phoenix* (from Ace) and *Dzur* (from Tor) particularly, both in this series. It is best if you’ve read all of the previous books — *Iorich* is the latest in the internal chronology, as well as the most recently written.

² Or, rather, as *two* organizations: the (main) Jhereg that we all know and fear, the Mafia of the Dragaeran Empire; and the Left Hand of the Jhereg, the sisterhood of sorceresses that has its own sinister reasons to see Vladimir terminated with all possible prejudice.

³ A Morganti weapon is one that can, will, and (usually) wants to destroy its victim’s soul.

MO’ JAO AND THE SKY LLEIX OF VALERON

THE CRUCIBLE OF EMPIRE

by Eric Flint and K. D. Wentworth
(Baen, New York; March, 2010; HC:
ISBN 978-1-4391-3338-5; \$25.00)
A review by Grant C. McCormick

Once upon a time, the alien Jao conquered the Earth, saying that they knew better and that it was for our own good. Well, had they been humans, those claims would have been terribly suspect. An insane Jao governor, alien ways of doing things, and massive distrust on all sides made any cooperation among Humans and Jao very difficult. But, as the Earthlings found out in *The Course of Empire* (the prequel to *The Crucible of Empire*), the much-more-alien Ekhat really felt that all non-Ekhat life should be silenced forever, and (in spite of everything

Jao and Humans could do together) scorched half of China to prove it.

Back when the Jao were still slaves of the Ekhat, thousands of years previous, the Lleix (yet another alien race) attempted to subvert the Jao from their allegiance to their alien overlords, suggesting that they should be free. For their pains, the Jao exterminated the Lleix. Now, the Jao have honor and integrity and dedication to purpose enough for anyone's taste, but innovation and ability to change: not so much. By the time they considered the suggestion of the Lleix and acted upon it, freeing themselves from the Ekhat, the Lleix were no more.

So much for the back-story. Well, two additional years have passed, and the combination of Jao and Human technologies; of alien and human viewpoints; and (most importantly) of Human and Jao synergy, working to each others' strengths, all have proven most fruitful. New ships, new weapons, and new techniques have evolved that are allowing the two species to stand a chance of defeating the Ekhat in battle.

Now, for the most part, the Jao of Earth (particularly the leadership) have been drawn from rich, powerful, sophisticated clans: the urbane and cultured elite of Jaodom. Clans such as Narvo, Pluthrak, Dano, Kannu, Wathnak, Jithra, and more: most wealthy, most powerful, all sophisticated (for Jao), all respected. And the new 'clan' of Terra, consisting of both Humans and adopted Jao, is drawn from this pool.

A three-ship Jao "fleet" from the clan of the Krant (a clan that is poor in resources, respect, and wealth) encounters a single Ekhat ship and destroy it, but not before two of the Krant ships are also destroyed, and the third damaged so badly it will need to be scrapped. This is a near-mortal blow to the Krant, for these ships represented much of the wealth that the Krant **had** (emphasis on the past tense here).

To complicate matters, there was another force involved in the battle, not Ekhat and definitely not Jao. Could it be a remnant of the Lleix, thought to be extinct? If so, can the Jao (once their nemesis) become their allies?

The Crucible of Empire answers these questions, and more, in a most-agreeable fashion. I like this book, and recommend it highly.

Free electronic copies of the prequel, *The Course of Empire*, are available online from the Baen Free Library. Go to www.baen.com, and follow the links.

MAPLE SYRUP AND DEATH STARS

LIVE FREE OR DIE

by John Ringo

(Baen Books; ISBN: 978-1-4391-3332-3; Feb., 2010; HC; \$26.00)

Review by Grant C. McCormick

John Ringo got me into webcomics. Shortly after I first got my own internet connection, back in the paleolithic days of 2002, because of the name of a tank, I followed a link in one of

his books took me to the Baen Books site: <http://www.baen.com>. And among the things there was a link to something called '*Sluggy Freelance*,' with a picture of a vicious-looking rabbit¹. That link is still there.

And thus I discovered the wonderful world of webcomics.

Now, I have long-since gone on to read other webcomics as well (though *Sluggy* still has a fond spot in my liver), among them *A Magical Roommate*, *CRFH!!!*, *El Goonish Shive*, *Freefall*, and *Schlock Mercenary* (and this is by no means an exhaustive list!).

It took me more than a while to try out *Schlock*, in spite of many approving links and good things said about it, because of the title it sounded so . . . well, schlocky. When I finally did look at *Schlock Mercenary*, I regretted the time I foolishly had passed it by. Moral: Never judge a webcomic by its title.

Written and drawn by Howard Tayler², and set a thousand years from now, *Schlock Mercenary* follows Tagon's Toughs. This is the mercenary unit of Captain Kaff Tagon, which includes one Sergeant Schlock (hence the name of the strip), a carbosilicate amorph who bears a striking resemblance to a big pile of crap. The world and galaxy of is one in which humans are a major Galactic Power; in which the primary language of the arm is Galstandard West, a descendent of English; in which humans have remodeled what came before. A world where humans as a species **matter**.

By now you may be asking, What does all of this have to do with *Live Free or Die*? Quite a bit, actually. John Ringo reads *Schlock Mercenary*, and became fascinated by the backstory: How a thousand years before, in the ancient days of the twenty-first century, the Gatekeepers opened a Gate into Sol system, and exposed humanity to the ambient Galactic civilization (and *vice versa*). It doesn't finish, but does start, the story of the rise of humanity and human culture in Galactic society, and why humans are concerned about defense, and why they like Really Big Ships. Also, Howard Tayler wrote the Forward.

The hero of Ringo's novel is one Tyler Vernon, an extremely self-driven former IT guy who did a very successful webcomic (*TradeHard*, about a crew of interstellar Free Traders), until the Gatekeepers' advent caused the human science fiction market to curl up and die. Born in the South (Louisiana), but now living in the conservative state of New Hampshire (the motto of which is Live Free or Die), he makes a very modest living by doing odd jobs: chopping wood, helping to get the maple syrup in, working in the local convenience store, working in a book store, etc.

Like most of the rest of humanity, he is not happy that the alien Horvath sent a cruiser into the solar system, and laid claim to all the precious metals of Earth (gold, platinum, osmium, etc.), under pain of more cities joining Mexico City, Shanghai, and Cairo as craters. And there is **nothing** that Tyler nor any other human (nor group of humans) can do about it.

Then he discovers, at a Science Fiction Convention, through a Glatun (another alien

race, more or less benign towards humans) Free Trader who is a fan of his former webcomic, that the Glatun really, **really**, **REALLY** like Maple Syrup³. . . And thus the resistance to the Horvath is formed.

Live Free or Die is the sort of book that John W. Campbell, Jr., would have loved to serialize in *Astounding* / *Analog* back in the day. Human ingenuity, perseverance, and intelligence triumphing over adversity, and going on to conquer. This book is unabashed Space Opera, of the sort that Doc Smith or Campbell himself would write, but highly literate and very well written Space Opera.

This book, *Live Free or Die*, is not the whole story, but just the very beginnings. While it can (and does) stand on its own as a complete story, it cries out for a sequel or sequels. I hope that John Ringo writes the sequel (and I suspect that he will, since it is advertized as the first book of the *Troy Rising* series), and I suspect that I'll like it as much as I liked *Live Free or Die*.

Highly recommended.

¹ The infamous Bun-Bun.

² Howard Tayler (and please notice the spelling) is a former IT guy at Novell (one of the bigger networking software companies) who quit in 2004 to work full-time on his webcomic. Born in the South (in Florida), he moved to the conservative state of Utah for college, and decided to stay there. He is an active Mormon, married, extremely self-driven, and one of the consistently funniest and most enjoyable webcartoonists out there, while maintaining a consistent high level of scientific accuracy. His *Schlock* story-arc *The Body Politic* was a Hugo finalist at Montreal, and he has been a Guest of Honor at several SF conventions (such as Penguicon in Michigan).

³ Think 'ginger for Lizards' in Harry Turtledove's *World War / Colonization* connected series: maybe not (so) addictive, but they **really** like it and want it.

CHOCOLATE SWEETHEARTS

Candy Review by Johnny Carruthers
<http://chocolatescifi.livejournal.com/>

I think I first saw these two years ago during the Valentine's Day season. For one reason or another, I didn't pick up a box then. More than likely, I was waiting for the after-holiday clearance, and I didn't see any boxes then. And for other reasons I have been unable to fathom, I did not see them at all last year. When I saw the Chocolate Sweethearts on the shelves this year, I was determined to not miss them again.

I think there are several different candy companies making those conversation hearts that we all remember from Valentine's Day parties at school. As far as I know, though, Necco is the only one that makes a chocolate flavored version.

The Chocolate Sweethearts look just like all of the other conversation hearts on the market

— small, heart-shaped candies that seem to have the same composition as those little mints that seem to be de rigeur at weddings. But instead of a rainbow of colors, these are all a light brown. And of course, they have a chocolate flavor to them, rather than a variety of vaguely fruit flavors.

[NOTE: While chocolate is listed in the ingredients, the nutrition facts state that they contain no fat. I suspect that the chocolate flavor is derived more from cocoa rather than chocolate. No fat means no cocoa butter, and without cocoa butter, you have cocoa rather than chocolate. But at the moment, I have no way of confirming my suspicions one way or the other.]

The chocolate flavor is fairly mild. Closer to a milk chocolate flavor than anything else. And as I said, they share some similarities with those wedding mints when it comes to texture. Once you bite down on one, it starts to dissolve rapidly.

And like the other conversation hearts out there, the Chocolate Sweethearts are printed with short messages. Short as in only a couple of words, which is about all that can fit on the candy. I went through a couple of boxes while doing the research for this review, and these were among the messages I saw:

You & Me
Puppy Love
Angel
XOXO

Wink Wink (I guess they couldn't fit
"Nudge Nudge" or "Say No More, Say
No More" on a heart)

Me & You
Marry Me
True Love
Let's Kiss
Sweet Pea
Sweet Talk

The back of the box is designed as a valentine, with "To" and "From" spaces, so that you can give them to . . . well, whomever. I remember getting more than a few boxes of candy hearts when I was in elementary school.

Okay, holiday release, so the usual disclaimer applies. These will start disappearing on February 15, but they should start appearing again right in about 10 months — right after Christmas.

GODIVA DARK CHOCOLATE WITH RASPBERRY

Candy Review by Johnny Carruthers
<http://chocolatescifi.livejournal.com/>

When I went by Louisville's Godiva store to sign up for their rewards program, I also bought one of their chocolate bars. This was the bar I purchased.

Godiva prefers using descriptive terms for its chocolate bars. It does make one aspect of writing a review easier; I don't have to spend as much time trying to describe the bar. It's just what I said at the top — a dark chocolate bar with a raspberry filling.

The chocolate is the same dark chocolate as the chocolate shell of the truffle I received when I joined the rewards program. I'm guessing that it is Godiva's standard dark chocolate, as I have seen one or two extra-dark chocolate products in the store.

The raspberry filling is somewhat fluid. It isn't so fluid that it starts to ooze all over the place once your teeth break through the dark chocolate of each section of the bar (there are four). While not solid, it does tend to stay in place, even after you bite through a section. It seems to be a raspberry puree, as I did encounter seeds while eating the bar. The filling is slightly sweet, and tart enough to provide a marked contrast of flavors between the raspberry filling and the dark chocolate.

Yes, this is a decadently indulgent piece of chocolate. I enjoyed every bit of it, but I don't think I will be buying these bars on a regular basis. As I have mentioned once or twice before, these are as pricey as they are decadent. I might have to keep them in mind for special occasions — and "Saturday" does not qualify as a special occasion.

I'm talking really special here.



A TIP OF THE HAT

A Wandering Review of Tim Burton's
"Alice in Wonderland"
by Taral Wayne

<http://www.imdb.com/title/tt1014759/>

There was no reason at all to see Tim Burton's latest film, *Alice in Wonderland*, on St. Patrick's Day. It was just a coincidence. Nor is there any reason to mention it, but I like to add homely details of this sort to make a by-the-numbers review a little bit more interesting to

read. Expect me to extemporize as the whim strikes . . .

The show got off to a poor start. From what I could tell, the animation industry has decided that all future CGI must be in 3D. Every previewed attraction was a 3D film — *Toy Story 3* for one; a Dreamworks comedy-fantasy about dragons that I'm dubious about; and a re-imagining of *Tron* that I suspect I will avoid seeing for all I'm worth. 3D has become the new flavour in animation, and will likely remain so until people get tired of wearing cheap plastic glasses while watching a film just so they can be *thrilled* by the experience of blurry exaggerated perspective.

I hope they get tired of it soon. Admittedly, the judicious use of 3D in some animated films can really enhance your enjoyment. *Coraline* was superb in 3D. I suspect the effect will be wasted, more often than not, on most films. We may well be subjected to atrocities in the near future such as *Mission Impossible IV*, *Bratz the New Generation* and *The Perry Mason Movie* in 3D. Gotta be able to see those fireballs and that gavel coming down in 3D, man!

Sony has just announced that it will be releasing the first home 3D TV on the market this year. The Blu-Ray player comes with it free, as do four pair of 3D glasses. Only \$3,000. "Is that all?" one asks, breathless. You mean, for only three grand I can watch the same four movies over and over again in 3D? Not only that, but by year's end, I can watch perhaps as many as the same dozen 3D movies over and over again. "Value for your money," is all I can say.

I've heard that George Lucas wants to re-issue the entire *Star Wars* saga in 3D! I wonder if that includes that crappy Wookiee Christmas special?

(Why *doesn't* that man just face up to being a has-been and get a real job? Oh . . . I remember now. Because of the \$3 billion he made by selling us the same movies over and over again. He doesn't have to work.)

I cheered right up, though, as soon as the main feature began. Advertising always has the effect of bringing out my cynicism, but Tim Burton rarely disappoints me. He didn't expect he would this time, either.

My first impressions of this iteration of the Alice mythos came from viewing trailers online. I came away feeling it was likely to be seriously out-of-kilter. But even when Tim Burton fails, he is rarely dull. The single exception I know was the pointless re-make of *Planet of the Apes*. It's the only one of his films that I don't own — and would refuse a free copy of. I think most of us are agreed that it would be best if it were forgotten whenever Tim Burton's films are listed. When I think of his better failures, though, I'm reassured that any interpretation of Alice bearing his name was likely to be eccentric and interesting.

I was dead-on in both guesses. It *wasn't* a good take on Alice, but every minute was *well* worth watching.

The good points of *Alice in Wonderland* were the stunning visual-realization of Wonderland, powerful acting, believable digital

presences, and an Alice who looked *hot* in tight-laced silver armour! Wonderland as painted by CGI is a psychedelic phantasmagoria. There are drug enhanced colours. The landscape is an Art Nouveau painting. At one point a famous Maxfield Parish canvas is recreated down to the marble bench and distant misty waterfalls. Yet all is not well with this Wonderland. Its garden is overgrown and wild. Like fruit too long in the bowl, it is showing signs of rot. Plastered walls are peeling, and upholsteries are stained by the signs of subtle decay. Marble pillars are overturned. A castle stands in ruins. There is a village burned to the ground and never rebuilt.

Curiously, the untended shabbiness and unwholesome character of Burton's Wonderland reminds me very much of a deeply disturbing version of *Alice* I saw some years ago. *Neco z Alenky* was made in Soviet-era Czechoslovakia (1988) by director Jan Svankmajer. It should be seen should the chance arise . . . But you had better be made of stern stuff. It is depressing in ways you cannot imagine — obsessed with images of death, the sight of decay, and the menace of sharp, rusty, broken instruments — and may well rob you of a night's sleep. It is *Eraserhead* territory, and then some.

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alice_\(1988_film\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alice_(1988_film))

<http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0095715/>



(See what I mean about wandering off my topic?)

Despite the convincing performances by Johnny Depp as the Mad Hatter and by Mia Wasikowska as Alice, supported by a cast that includes Allan Rickman, Stephen Fry, Helena

Bonham Carter, Anne Hathaway and Christopher Lee, the film does not entirely satisfy. There is much that is needlessly changed from Lewis Carroll's masterpiece. Alice Liddell becomes the daughter of Charles Kingsley (*that* Charles Kingsley?) for no apparent reason. The Bendersnatch and the Jabberwocky are lifted from the lines of Carrollian poetry and made real beasts. A prophecy is introduced that foretells Alice killing the Jabberwocky. The Red Queen and Queen of Hearts are combined into one who is like *neither*. The list goes on.

Perhaps the most perplexing of many changes in the film are made to the Mad Hatter. Both Depp and Burton were anxious to make the one-note character — who appears little in the original book — into a fully rounded person. But though they succeed in making the Hatter appear more human, is he really the same Mad Hatter? Is he perhaps *too sane*? Too coherent? Too *likeable*? Depp's Hatter is more impulsive and waggish than mad, and pursues an entirely sensible plan to overthrow the selfish Red Queen, and little resembles the self-absorbed and rather cold Hatter from the book. Perhaps this is a good thing; I don't know. There are issues I have with Depp's appearance, too. He is given orange hair, red raw fingers, and sore, sunken, reddened eyes to emulate the mercury poisoning common among 19th century hatters. But it is overdone. You need little imagination to see an uncanny resemblance to Ronald McDonald. (Perhaps all that mercury in the burgers is to blame?)

The characters are unnecessarily given names like Tarrant Hightopp (the Hatter), Iracebeth of Crims (the Red Queen), Nivens McTisp (the White Rabbit), Thackery Earwicket (the March Hare) and Chessur (the Cheshire Cat). Whaffor?

In the end, the Burton *Alice* seems to have forsaken the unique qualities that made Lewis Carroll's *Alice* what it was, and chose instead to adopt a more conventional action-adventure storyline in which the doughty heroine screws up her courage to cut off the head of a nasty monster. Was *that* the point of this version of *Alice*?

I'd like to take the credit for penetrating to the curious lack of purpose at the core of this film, but I have to admit that it wasn't my insight to claim. I saw *Alice* with a friend who, plain to see, was less happy at the end of the picture than I was. He said it *was* gorgeously imagined, but he was unable to see the point of making a film about a book that *wasn't* about the book. Was Burton's point to show a young lady asserting herself? That she had the makings of a sword and sorcery hero? That a fantasy kingdom was oppressed by an evil queen and in need of delivery? Any film might have done this; why use the Lewis Carroll novel as the vehicle of such a routine theme? I'm not sure I entirely agree with this summary, but I think he has a point.

Starting with material that has a special place in English literature, Burton has given us a fairly ordinary story that caters to the sensibilities of the modern audience. It has

swordplay for the guys and a strong female lead for the gals. It tells us nothing of the inverted logic of the author, though, nor anything that relates to the *actual* fight for self-determination of certain women in Victorian times. Nor has this *Alice* anything definitive to say about Alice's adventures in Wonderland — were they real? Is Wonderland a real place, or was it a figment of her disturbed dreams as a child, revived by a bump on the head as she plunged down a rabbit hole? She apparently never gives thought to Wonderland after she returns to her own world and takes up a career. It seems to matter strangely little to her whether any of it happened or not.

Other open questions: What is the basis of the similarities between people in the upper world and people in Wonderland? Alice has twin cousins who appear to match Tweedle-Dee and Tweedle-Dum in some way, but in no way that is clear. Similarly, the man who married Alice's sister is mirrored in the Knave of Hearts. The March Hare resembles Alice's Aunt Imogene. But why? What does it show? Not all the characters in Wonderland are paired with people in the upper world. There is no parallel to the Mad Hatter, for instance, nor the Cheshire Cat.

Perhaps these questions and others will become clearer on a second watching. It will be some time, though, before I have the opportunity. "Pre-viewed" copies of the DVD don't just pop out of rabbit holes . . . not for a year or so, at least.

Bottom line — despite straying into action-adventure territory, and attempting to plant new strands in a classic that didn't need anyone's tinkering, I still enjoyed Tim Burton's *Alice in Wonderland*. It is admittedly someone's "interpretation" of the original, but the interpreter is never boring, and entertained the Dickens (if not the Carroll) out of me. I was never sure what would happen next and *did* actually care about the main actors in the story. Chalk *Alice* up to one of Burton's interesting not-so-successful films.

And you should still never watch his *Planet of the Apes*.



THE JOY OF HIGH TECH

by Rodford Edmiston

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

Our Daily Bread

I like simple foods . . . and you can't get much simpler than hardtack.

Classic hardtack is wheat and water — sometimes plus a bit of salt — which is baked, then extensively oven dried. (Hence the origin of “biscuit” — it means “twice cooked” from Latin by way of Old French — because of the double baking.) Stored properly — the primary requirement being that it is kept dry — it lasts indefinitely. There are multiple stories of samples of well-stored hardtack over a century old being tasted and found to be just as edible as a fresh-made.

Now, you may take that as damning with faint praise, but properly made, properly stored hardtack is actually quite good. Bland, yes, but it wasn't meant to be eaten by itself. However, it can be, much like some people like crackers as a starchy snack.

How do I know what hardtack was really like? One of the bakeries which made hardtack for the Civil War is still in business and will sell it to you mail order. The G. H. Bent Company (See: <http://www.bentscookiefactory.com/>) was founded in 1801 and supplied the North with much of its hardtack. They currently make several other products, including “Water Crackers” meant to be used with soup. A warning, here: These are as tough as hardtack is supposed to be. I bought some samples of three of their products, but will focus on the hardtack.

I not only tried the hardtack myself, but took some to gaming one Saturday night. All were pleasantly surprised. A Jewish member of the group noted it reminded him of plain matzoh. Which is — surprise — made from flour and water. It seems that every culture which uses wheat has invented something similar. Hardtack and its cousins are a simple and reliable way to preserve a nutritious food for later use. Sometimes much later. Besides this commercial product, there are recipes (many available online) for making it yourself. Some Civil War reenactors do just that, for themselves and other members of their group.

A classic piece of hardtack looks like an oversized saltine cracker without the salt grains on top. It is a bit denser than a saltine, and quite crunchy, but not nearly as hard as legend suggests. However, some hardtack was actually double-baked, instead of being baked and oven dried, and even harder than regular hardtack. This treatment was usually reserved for stores intended for long sea voyages and other explorations distant from civilization. Those include Arctic and Antarctic trips.

The horror stories of weevilly hardtack come from it not being stored properly. It needs to be kept dry and in closed containers. In a classic wooden sailing ship, of course, keeping anything dry was very difficult, and cases and crates often broke open or were distorted enough to open seams. There are surviving official reports from the War Between the States of Army hardtack going bad due to improper storage and handling. Sometimes the hardtack was transported in bulk and simply dumped on the ground. (Much of this was still used.) Even the tales of how hard hardtack is generally depend on the quality of storage. Contributing

to the problems, contractors often cheated when preparing the hardtack. The wheat might be adulterated, the water tainted, the baking too short, or some combination. There are surviving reports of this, too.

Pilot bread can be thought of as deluxe hardtack. It is made from wheat, water, salt, shortening and a bit of sugar. Because of these extra ingredients, without modern packaging pilot bread will only last months, rather than centuries.

Pilot bread is a bit easier than hardtack to acquire (and much easier to chew). You can get it in vacuum-packed #10 cans for long-term storage (there's your centuries of shelf life) or in small bags. Sadly, the number of manufacturers has declined in recent years, as have the areas of the United States where it can be easily found.

Pilot bread is popular in several widely scattered areas. In the US, it seems to be most common in some parts of New England, Alaska and Hawaii.

You can eat pilot bread by itself. You can butter it and toast it in an oven. You use it to make small sandwiches. You can, in short, use it in just about any way you would ordinary bread. Even when it is decades old. Note, though, that it is made from white flour. The extra fat and other nutrients in whole flour would greatly reduce the storage life.

A distant descendant of hardtack is the shortbread-like food used in lifeboat rations. This is a much more complex product, the extra ingredients greatly reducing the shelf life (though it is guaranteed to last at least five years under any environmental conditions as long as the package remains sealed). However, it is also much more nutritious. It is made primarily of wheat, with other ingredients and considerable enrichment. It is also designed to be non-thirst provoking, cutting back on the need for water. (Remember, when carbohydrates are metabolized this actually creates water in your body.)

These food bars are soft, even crumbly. There are several formulations, but most of them taste sweeter than pilot bread, due to a high simple carbohydrate content. They therefore need less accompaniment to make a meal. You couldn't live on just these long term, of course, largely due to the lack of dietary fiber. However, they'll keep you going for a good while.

Actual lifeboat rations are deliberately bland, so folks won't be tempted to snack on them before the emergency. You can also get food bars made to the same standards, but with considerably more flavor. I usually bring some of these to conventions so I can skip an occasional meal. If you are at a con where I also am and are curious just ask. I'll be glad to show you what I'm talking about, and might even be persuaded to share.

When I was a pre-teen a friend of my father's gave me an unopened case of US Army C-Rations. I remember that some of those came with a piece of bread — about the size and shape of two biscuits stacked one on top of the other — in a can. This fascinated me then, and I wish I could find something similar now.

(There is such a product made in Japan, which is even available from vending machines. However, as far as I have been able to learn this product isn't exported.) The closest I have come in the US is the B&M canned brown bread. It's not bad, but not quite what I am looking for.

Bizarrely, there is a company which cans entire cheeseburgers, one per can, complete with bun. I've never even been tempted to try one, and from reviews I've read the only thing I've missed is a really bad cheeseburger. The bread, naturally, is soggy.

One of the more interesting ways of processing wheat for later use comes down to us from the ancient Egyptians. Leftover bread was mashed with water and fermented to make beer. The support facilities on the Giza Plateau for the workers (NOT slaves) who built the pyramids, temples and other facilities included both bakeries and breweries. However, I have no information on how — or even whether — this beer was preserved beyond immediate use.

There are, of course, many other shelf-stable wheat products, from ordinary crackers to gourmet items. The next time you pull one out for a meal or a snack, or see it at the grocery, remember the history behind this apparently simple product. Without such things, our ancestors — and even many of us, today — would have had a much harder time.

STILICHO'S DEATH

(A.D. 408)

He was a barbarian.
His enemies never let him forget that.
Half-Vandal, though commander of Roman armies,
right-hand man to the great Theodosius,
steward and protector of the entire empire,
devoted servant of God and of the Caesars,
when the Romans had almost ceased to care,
yet still a barbarian,
he had sworn a barbarian's blood-fealty
to the house of Theodosius, and so,
when intrigues turned fatally against him,
when the court at Ravenna clamored for his death,
he could not bring himself to raise his sword
against Honorius,
who was, despite everything, his late master's son.
So his men milled about for a while, then
slipped away,
and Stilicho, being a barbarian, went to his execution,
never having become Roman enough
to learn the easy treachery
that might have saved him.

— Darrell Schweitzer

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

Report by Joseph T Major

We regret to report the death of **John Henry Foster “Jack” Babcock** on **February 18, 2010**

at his home in Spokane, Washington. He was the last Canadian Veteran of the World War.

Born **July 23, 1900**, Babcock enlisted in the Canadian Army at the age of seventeen, after earlier attempts. He served in a Young Soldiers Battalion in Halifax, Nova Scotia.

After the war, he emigrated to the United States, joining the U.S. Army in World War II and rising to the rank of sergeant, and becoming a U.S. citizen in 1946. After the death of Dwight Wilson in 2007, he became the last surviving Canadian veteran of World War I. Rising interest led the government to reinstate his Canadian citizenship in 2008.

There will be no funeral; he was cremated and his ashes will be scattered. He is survived by his second wife, son, daughter, eight grandchildren, and five great-grandchildren.

(Compliments to **Evelyn Leeper**, **Martin Morse Wooster**, and **Lloyd Penney** for noticing.)

Remaining are:

Australia

Claude Stanley Choules (109) Royal Navy

Poland

Józef Kowalski* (110) 22 Pulk Ułanów

United Kingdom

Florence Beatrice Patterson Green (109),
Women's Royal Air Force

United States

Frank Woodruff Buckles (109) United States Army

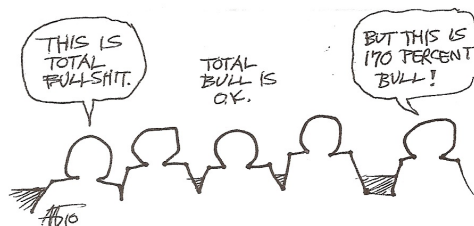
* "WWI-era" veteran, enlisted between the Armistice and the Treaty of Versailles

National totals: U.K. 2, U.S. 1; Poland 1
WWI-era. 2+1 men, 1 woman.

MOST VEXING

Trip Report by Joseph and Lisa Major on
ConCave XXXI
February 26-28, 2010

THE CONCOM AT WORK



This time we were all prepared. We had bought advance memberships. I had made hotel reservations at the overflow hotel — it was too late to get into the room lottery. I even had scheduled a day off.

Then the hotel changed. Under the new management, ConCave was wrenched away from the quiet vistas of Horse Cave to the booming outskirts of Bowling Green. What could I do?

Make reservations at the new hotel, which

had enough for everyone at the con, arrange to see one relative in Bowling Green and another in the area, and set myself for seeing some old sights (I'd lived in Bowling Green twenty-five years ago) and showing them off to Lisa.

We left Friday morning after Lisa got her haircut, and drove down south on a gorgeous clear sunny (albeit chill) day. Once we got past Elizabethtown (and breakfast) the SUVs took over. I was driving the speed limit but every time I looked into the rear view mirror there was another juggernaut trying to blow me off the road. It got nerve-wracking seeing the image of a Mastodon XKE or a Conquistador 95 filling my rear view mirror, headlights, running lights, parking lights, and auxiliary lights flashing, while I tried to get in front of the semi on the right so I could pull over and let them pass.

Somehow we arrived in Bowling Green without deep-treaded aggressive brush-busting mud-mucking tire tracks (pristine because they have never been off the road) running from trunk to hood. Thanks to GPS we drove straight to my cousin Virginia's. Her husband Bernard greeted us, and after a short discussion we went to lunch at Mariah's, a popular and excellent restaurant downtown. My younger brother's wedding reception had been there, my niece had worked there, and we ourselves had eaten there a time or two. We should have got a table.

After many good memories shared we adjourned to the Best Western. Which I had managed to forget was the site of the con, so I drove past it, put the address (I forgot the place but remembered the address, you figure) into the GPS, and came back. We checked in, got a room next to the pool, and began seeing people.

I told **Joel Zakem** "Please don't tell me that there's been a rain storm in Louisville with flooding everywhere." He couldn't, but then there hadn't. **Roger** and **Pat Sims** were sitting at a poolside table with various people, including Steve Francis, discussing old times. **Susan** and **Mike Baugh** were also chatting up people, as were **Naomi Fisher** and **Pat Molloy**. Many of the Nashville people, bereft of their spiritual inspirer, were there, such as **Tom** and **Anita Feller**, **Debbie Hussey**, Dan Caldwell (who said that the SUV thing wasn't so bad, since eventually they'd hit black ice and find out the consequences), and John Hollis. Finally free of the burden of conrunning, Gary and Corliss Robe were sitting around talking. And I saw **Becca Testerman** after way too many years. (See below.) All in all it was very much a convivial affair. Registration opened up soon enough and we got our badges, then went down to shop. Joel and John Hollis had adjoining tables, which was interesting because they are getting to look like each other.

Dinner was at the Denny's, which turned out to be connected to the hotel — something we didn't find out until after we had gone outside. Live and learn. At least our experience was better than the last time we ate at a Denny's.

Partying was represented more by the loud, juvenile, and liquor-serving Xerps 2010 bid, so we went to our room instead. I checked in with Grant and all was well,

On Saturday morning we used the facilities

of the annexed Denny's for breakfast, during which I finished *Time Travelers Never Die*. It was a bit late so I called my niece. She and her little boy had just got home from Disney World. One of her acquaintances was a performer, so they got some additional bonuses. Poop-poop-poop! It turns out that the Simses live about half an hour's drive from there.

I went down to get the Nebula nominees from Larry Smith. He had Laura Gilman's *Flesh and Fire* (which I already had) and Cherie Priest's *Boneshaker*. He was out of China Miéville's *The City and the City*. But, it turned out, the other three nominees were all from petty small presses without much distribution. I think this says something about the Nebula nominations process and nominators. **Tim Lane** and **Elizabeth Garrott** arrived and began adding their choices to our pile of books.

My old acquaintance Bob Embler, now best known for OutsideCon, filled me in on another former acquaintance from gaming days in Clarksville. I had had stimulating experiences with some of those people and after hearing of their fates have come to have a deeper understanding of the term *schadenfreude*.

The banquet was, as customary, at a restaurant away from the hotel. I had to reassure many people that it was a good place, unless something absolutely catastrophic had eventuated in the past twenty-three hours. As you might guess, it was Mariah's. We took the Fellers and Tim & Elizabeth also had a passenger. After the dinner was mostly dined, people began to share memories of Annette Carico, who you will recall would have been the guest of honor had she lived.

We finally settled up at Larry Smith's and I wrote the biggest check for books I've ever written in my life. Even though about two-fifths of it was Tim's and Elizabeth's books. While waiting for the parties to start I read Robert Conroy's *Red Inferno: 1945*, a book I'd been waiting for.

Tim and Elizabeth did leave before that. Elizabeth was tired and I had wondered if they shouldn't rent a room in the Comfort Inn next door, but they had not brought along Tim's special support pillow. So Elizabeth had to drive home and would be getting there about midnight.

We did go to the ConGlomeration party, which gradually filled up with the same old same old people. Having a long discussion of animal ways with Susan Baugh and the Fellers, for example. ConGlomeration seems to be on good terms with the hotel (same place, different management) so we'll see how things go.

Bedtime was very interesting. The abundant number of tattooed women and pierced men present at the con had made for an interesting backdrop, and it seemed that Saturday night was their poolside party night. I said we had a poolside room. Not next year.

Sunday morning everyone was sort of drained and exhausted. People made their goodbyes and went their several ways.

You'll recall from *The Guns of the South* that the AWB sought to disrupt the plebiscite in Kentucky by bringing in a load of guns and

ammunition. A Confederate patrol caught them at Tompkinsville. Investigating this little affair for Cousin Mary's husband Bobby was not on our list of things to do, but we went there anyway. Besides, John Hunt Morgan swept the state for the Confederacy, presumably with the aid of his trooper Cousin Thomas S. Major.

My cousin Jean lives there. She owns the farm where my great-great-great-grandfather Charles Major is buried. (One generation less for her; also, her great-grandfather is buried there, one of whose grandsons was our notorious relative.) Her son the veterinarian had taken her to see it on Saturday, and it turned out to be a gratifying surprise when he was there with her! I returned the favor by showing him what his sister, niece, and daughters were doing on Facebook, using up some of my Verizon Wireless™ internet capacity.

Lisa said the area around Tompkinsville reminded her of the area around Mayfield. I wondered if we could find a notary public there at ten at night. (It's a long story and has to do with Lisa's mother.) Then we stopped at a gas station on the way out. They had an accounting service in the same building, with presumably notary public services.

And so we got home around sundown, tired and broke, but happy. Next year we'll bring swim suits (for the whirlpool), and get a room away from the pool.

— JTM

Joe's cousin in Tompkinsville got me interested in studying art and so I have started a new reading list. The library has some twelve thousand items on art. I am ordering one a week and plan to be taking home others from the Main branch when we go there. This is going to take a considerable amount of time. I may not live long enough to get through all the art books. But with any luck the next time Joe's Tompkinsville cousin and I meet I will know enough to at least converse on a beginning level. My favorite painting so far is Rosa Bonheur's Horse Fair.

I finally added a copy of *Stirling's Ice, Iron and Gold* to the To Be Read piles, but passed on Jo Graham's *Hand of Isis*. I'm not as much into Egypt as I am Greece.

Unfortunately actor Walter Koenig's son died during the convention. Our sympathies are with the Koenig family. It is very hard when fathers bury sons.

We also learned that the Doolittle Raiders will be having a reunion at Dayton this year and made plans to attend.

— LTM

CONCAVE, AND REMEMBERING ANNETTE

By Becca Testerman

I was delighted to find out that ConCave had to change hotels, although I know it was sudden and posed the concom some difficulty. The Best Western, with the indoor pool atrium, lots more room, an attached restaurant, and other eateries nearby, is a much better choice than the Hampton was, especially since the Hampton

was not able to accommodate everyone. No one will miss the room lottery.

With any luck, we will have the whole hotel to ourselves for next year. The few mundane that we shared the place with were apparently OK folks, but the individual that set off the fire alarms by smoking in a non-smoking room on Friday night was a problem.

Although I didn't attend the art auction, I heard afterward that the pool area was noisy and hearing the auctioneer was difficult, mainly because the pool was open and in use at the time. If we have the entire hotel next year, we can close the pool during the auction or other times such as the opening ceremony.

The high point of the weekend, for me, was the luncheon banquet at Mariah's. The restaurant was just as charming as I remembered, and the food at least as good as it had been back in the day. We had a side room to ourselves, and after our meals, ordered from the regular menu, and not a set deal with a fixed price – a good thing for all – many of the attendees shared their memories of Annette Carrico, the long-time consuite manager for ConCave. Annette had passed away in late December, and was to have been the Guest of Honor at this ConCave. I didn't have the breadth of memory of Annette and her contributions to Bowling Green fandom, but since then I have been thinking about her and those days, and it occurred to me that I do have a memory to share.

Around the same time Annette started coming to the WKU Speculative Fiction Society meetings, Bowling Green got its first shopping mall, and there was a bookstore in the mall. I seem to remember going out there one night after the club meeting, and seeing this lady in a wheelchair browsing the SF and Fantasy section. She had this small black loose-leaf notebook in her lap, and was consulting it frequently. I asked her what she had there, and she told me she had listings of the books she had as well as what she was looking for. That level of organization never ceased to amaze me. The wisdom of such diligence has become clearer to me in the past few years. In finishing two additional bachelor's degrees at Ohio State, I had the opportunity to take a few classes either entirely on or mostly on science fiction. For the first of these classes, we were to read LeGuin's *The Left Hand of Darkness*, and I knew I had a copy. But I was very surprised to find that I had somehow acquired two copies of this book. A little over a year later, I was taking a Feminist SF course, and we were again to read this book, and somehow I had lost track of both copies that I owned, so ended up buying yet a third.

But it gets better. I had bought one of the recent David Weber novels in both eBook format and hardcover. Some months later, forgetting I had bought the hardcover, I found a trade paperback advanced copy at a huckster table at a con, and bought it. I have also discovered that I am the proud owner of two copies of Strunk and White's *Elements of Style*.

I think I have to get myself a little notebook, or a PDA or something, and start channeling Annette, and get my library organized and

documented. I obviously can't rely on my memory for such things.

Annette is just one of the many incredible people I have met through the years in fandom. I miss her a lot, as do all of the folks I reconnected with at ConCave. Now that the odious lottery has been done away with, ConCave is a permanent fixture on my fannish calendar.

FANZINES

Askance #19

John Purcell, 3744 Marielene Circle,
College Station, TX 77845-3926 USA
j_purcell54@yahoo.com
<http://www.efanzines.com>

Beam #2

Nic Farey, 3345 Cape Cod Drive, Las
Vegas, NV 89122-3950 USA

Beyond Bree February 2010, March 2010

Nancy Martsch, Post Office Box 55372,
Sherman Oaks, CA 91413-5372 USA
beyondbree@yahoo.com
Not available for The Usual; \$15/year, \$20
overseas.

Challenger #31

c/o Guy H. Lillian III, Post Office Box 163,
Benton, LA 71006-0163 USA
GHLIII@yahoo.com
<http://www.challzine.net>
New Address

Debris #6

Joel Zakem

The Drink Tank #239, #240, #241, #242, #243

Christopher J. Garcia
garcia@computerhistory.org
<http://www.efanzines.com>

eI #48 February 2010

Earl Kemp, Post Office Box 6642,
Kingman, AZ 86402-6642 USA
earlkemp@citlink.net
<http://www.efanzines.com>

Feline Mewsings #39 February 2010

R-Lauraine Tutihasi, 2081 W Overlook St,
PO Box 5323, Oracle, AZ 85623-5323 USA
lauraine@mac.com
<http://www.weasner.com/>

Fish Out of Water #365, #366, #367, #368, #369, #370, #371, #372, #373

Marty Helgesen, 11 Lawrence Avenue,
Malverne, New York 11565-1406 USA

Fortnightly Fix #8, #9, #9.5

Steve Green
stevegreen@livejournal.com
<http://www.efanzines.com>

JOMP, Jr. #28 January 2010

Richard A. Dengrove, 2651 Arlington Drive
#302, Alexandria, VA 22306-3626
RichD22426@aol.com

Lofgeornost #98 February 2010

Fred Lerner, 81 Worcester Avenue, White River Junction, VT 05001-8011 USA
fred.lerner@dartmouth.edu

MT Void V. 28 #32 February 5, 2010 — V. 28 #38 March 26, 2010

Mark and Evelyn Leeper, 80 Lakeridge Drive, Matawan, NJ 07747-3839 USA
eleeper@optonline.net
mleeper@optonline.net
<http://leepers.us/mtvoid>

Opuntia #68.5A February 2010, #68.5B St. Urho's Day

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

Pablo Lennis March 2010

John Thiel, 30 N. 19th Street, Lafayette, IN 47904-2950 USA

The Reluctant Famulus #74 March 2010

Thomas D. Sadler, 305 Gill Branch Road, Owenton, KY 40359-8611
tomfamulus@hughes.net
thomassadler101@yahoo.com

Southern Fandom Confederation Update V. 1

#14 February 2010, V. 1 #15 March 2010
 Warren Buff, 22144 B Ravenglass Place, Raleigh, NC 27612-2936 USA
warrenmbuff@gmail.com
<http://www.efanzines.com>

Steam Engine Time #11, #12

Janine Stinson, Post Office Box 248, Eastlake, MI 49626-0248 USA
tropicsf@earthlink.net
 Bruce Gillespie, 5 Howard Street, Greensborough, VIC 3088 AUSTRALIA
gandc@pacific.net.au
<http://www.efanzines.com>

This Here ... #14

Nic Farey, 3345 Cape Cod Drive, Las Vegas, NV 89122-3950 USA

Trap Door #26 December 2009

Robert Lichtman, 11037 Broadway Terrace, Oakland, CA 94611-1948 USA
locs2trapdoor@yahoo.com

Vanamonde #823-827

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

Visions of Paradise #149, #150

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

NEBULA AWARDS**Novel**

The Windup Girl, Paolo Bacigalupi (Night Shade, Sep 09)
The Love We Share Without Knowing, Christopher Barzak (Bantam, Nov 08)

Flesh and Fire, Laura Anne Gilman (Pocket, Oct 09)

The City & The City, China Miéville (Del Rey, May 09)

Boneshaker, Cherie Priest (Tor, Sep 09)

Finch, Jeff VanderMeer (Underland Press, Oct 09)

Novella

The Women of Nell Gwynne's, Kage Baker (Subterranean Press, Jun 09)

"Arkfall," Carolyn Ives Gilman (*The Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction*, Sep 09)

"Act One," Nancy Kress (*Asimov's Science Fiction*, Mar 09)

Shambling Towards Hiroshima, James Morrow (Tachyon, Feb 09)

"Sublimation Angels," Jason Sanford (Interzone, Oct 09)

The God Engines, John Scalzi (Subterranean Press, Dec 09)

Novellette

"The Gambler," Paolo Bacigalupi (*Fast Forward* 2, Pyr Books, Oct 08)

"Vinegar Peace, or the Wrong-Way Used-Adult Orphanage," Michael Bishop (*Asimov's Science Fiction*, Jul 08)

"I Needs Must Part, The Policeman Said," Richard Bowes (*The Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction*, Dec 09)

"Sinner, Baker, Fabulist, Priest; Red Mask, Black Mask, Gentleman, Beast," Eugie Foster (*Interzone*, Feb 09)

"Divining Light," Ted Kosmatka (*Asimov's Science Fiction*, Aug 08)

"A Memory of Wind," Rachel Swirsky (Tor.com, Nov 09)

Short Story

"Hooves and the Hovel of Abdel Jameela," Saladin Ahmed (*Clockwork Phoenix* 2, Norilana Press, Jul 09)

"I Remember the Future," Michael A. Burstein (*I Remember the Future*, Apex Press, Nov 08)

"Non-Zero Probabilities," N. K. Jemisin (*Clarkesworld*, Nov 09)

"Spar," Kij Johnson (*Clarkesworld*, Oct 09)

"Going Deep," James Patrick Kelly (*Asimov's Science Fiction*, Jun 09)

"Bridesicle," Will McIntosh (*Asimov's Science Fiction*, Jan 09)

The Ray Bradbury Award for Outstanding Dramatic Presentation

Star Trek, JJ Abrams, Roberto Orci and Alex Kurtzman (Paramount, May09)

District 9, Neill Blomkamp and Terri Tatchell (Tri-Star, Aug09)

Avatar, James Cameron (Fox, Dec 09)

Moon, Duncan Jones and Nathan Parker (Sony, Jun09)

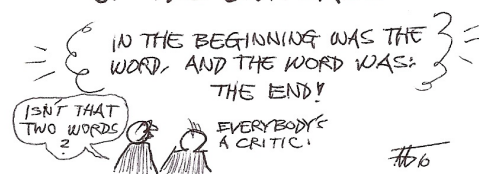
Up, Bob Peterson and Pete Docter (Disney/Pixar, May09)

Coraline, Henry Selick (Laika/Focus Feb09)

THE 2010 HUGO AND JOHN W. CAMPBELL AWARD NOMINEES

864 Total Ballots Cast

BEST NOVEL (699 nominating ballots)

THE AUTHOR DEATH OF THE UNIVERSE

Boneshaker by Cherie Priest (Tor)

The City & The City by China Miéville (Del Rey; Macmillan UK)

Julian Comstock: A Story of 22nd-Century America by Robert Charles Wilson (Tor)

Palimpsest by Catherynne M. Valente (Bantam Spectra)

Wake by Robert J. Sawyer (Ace; Penguin; Gollancz; Analog)

The Windup Girl by Paolo Bacigalupi (Night Shade)

BEST NOVELLA (375 nominating ballots)

"Act One" by Nancy Kress (*Asimov's* 3/09)

The God Engines by John Scalzi (Subterranean)

"Palimpsest" by Charles Stross (Wireless)

Shambling Towards Hiroshima by James Morrow (Tachyon)

"Vishnu at the Cat Circus" by Ian McDonald (*Cyberabad Days*)

The Women of Nell Gwynne's by Kage Baker (Subterranean)

BEST NOVELETTE (402 nominating ballots)

"Eros, Philia, Agape" by Rachel Swirsky (Tor.com 3/09)

"The Island" by Peter Watts (*The New Space Opera* 2)

"It Takes Two" by Nicola Griffith (*Eclipse Three*)

"One of Our Bastards is Missing" by Paul Cornell (*The Solaris Book of New Science Fiction: Volume Three*)

"Overtime" by Charles Stross (Tor.com 12/09)

"Sinner, Baker, Fabulist, Priest; Red Mask, Black Mask, Gentleman, Beast" by Eugie Foster (*Interzone* 2/09)

BEST SHORT STORY (432 nominating ballots)

"The Bride of Frankenstein" by Mike Resnick (*Asimov's* 12/09)

"Bridesicle" by Will McIntosh (*Asimov's* 1/09)

"The Moment" by Lawrence M. Schoen (*Footprints*)

"Non-Zero Probabilities" by N.K. Jemisin (*Clarkesworld* 9/09)

"Spar" by Kij Johnson (*Clarkesworld* 10/09)

BEST RELATED WORK (259 nominating ballots)

Canary Fever: Reviews by John Clute (Becon)
Hope-In-The-Mist: The Extraordinary Career and Mysterious Life of Hope Mirrlees by Michael Swanwick (Temporary Culture)
The Inter-Galactic Playground: A Critical Study of Children's and Teens' Science Fiction by Farah Mendlesohn (McFarland)
On Joanna Russ edited by Farah Mendlesohn (Wesleyan)
The Secret Feminist Cabal: A Cultural History of SF Feminisms by Helen Merrick (Aqueduct)
This is Me, Jack Vance! (Or, More Properly, This is "I") by Jack Vance (Subterranean)

BEST GRAPHIC STORY (221 nominating ballots)

Batman: Whatever Happened to the Caped Crusader? Written by Neil Gaiman; Pencilled by Andy Kubert; Inked by Scott Williams (DC Comics)
Captain Britain And MI13. Volume 3: Vampire State Written by Paul Cornell; Pencilled by Leonard Kirk with Mike Collins, Adrian Alphona and Ardian Syaf (Marvel Comics)
Fables Vol 12: The Dark Ages Written by Bill Willingham; Pencilled by Mark Buckingham; Art by Peter Gross & Andrew Pepoy, Michael Allred, David Hahn; Colour by Lee Loughridge & Laura Allred; Letters by Todd Klein (Vertigo Comics)
Girl Genius, Volume 9: Agatha Heterodyne and the Heirs of the Storm Written by Kaja and Phil Foglio; Art by Phil Foglio; Colours by Cheyenne Wright (Airship Entertainment)
Schlock Mercenary: The Longshoreman of the Apocalypse Written and Illustrated by Howard Tayler

BEST DRAMATIC PRESENTATION — LONG FORM (541 nominating ballots)



Avatar Screenplay and Directed by James Cameron (Twentieth Century Fox)
District 9 Screenplay by Neill Blomkamp & Terri Tatchell; Directed by Neill Blomkamp (TriStar Pictures)
Moon Screenplay by Nathan Parker; Story by Duncan Jones; Directed by Duncan Jones (Liberty Films)
Star Trek Screenplay by Robert Orci & Alex

Kurtzman; Directed by J.J. Abrams (Paramount)
Up Screenplay by Bob Peterson & Pete Docter; Story by Bob Peterson, Pete Docter, & Thomas McCarthy; Directed by Bob Peterson & Pete Docter (Disney/Pixar)

BEST DRAMATIC PRESENTATION — SHORT FORM (282 nominating ballots)

Doctor Who: "The Next Doctor" Written by Russell T Davies; Directed by Andy Goddard (BBC Wales)
Doctor Who: "Planet of the Dead" Written by Russell T Davies & Gareth Roberts; Directed by James Strong (BBC Wales)
Doctor Who: "The Waters of Mars" Written by Russell T Davies & Phil Ford; Directed by Graeme Harper (BBC Wales)
Dollhouse: "Epitaph 1" Story by Joss Whedon; Written by Maurissa Tancharoen & Jed Whedon; Directed by David Solomon (Mutant Enemy)
FlashForward: "No More Good Days" Written by Brannon Braga & David S. Goyer; Directed by David S. Goyer; based on the novel by Robert J. Sawyer (ABC)

BEST EDITOR, LONG FORM (289 nominating ballots)

Lou Anders
 Ginjer Buchanan
 Liz Gorinsky
 Patrick Nielsen Hayden
 Juliet Ulman

BEST EDITOR, SHORT FORM (419 nominating ballots)

Ellen Datlow
 Stanley Schmidt
 Jonathan Strahan
 Gordon Van Gelder
 Sheila Williams

BEST PROFESSIONAL ARTIST (327 nominating ballots)

Bob Eggleton
 Stephan Martiniere
 John Picacio
 Daniel Dos Santos
 Shaun Tan

BEST SEMIPROZINE (377 nominating ballots)

Ansible edited by David Langford
Clarkesworld edited by Neil Clarke, Sean Wallace, & Cheryl Morgan
Interzone edited by Andy Cox
Locus edited by Charles N. Brown, Kirsten Gong-Wong, & Liza Groen Trombi
Weird Tales edited by Ann VanderMeer & Stephen H. Segal

BEST FAN WRITER (319 nominating ballots)

Claire Brialey
 Christopher J Garcia

James Nicoll
 Lloyd Penney
 Frederik Pohl

BEST FANZINE (298 nominating ballots)

Argentus edited by Steven H Silver
Banana Wings edited by Claire Brialey and Mark Plummer
CHALLENGER edited by Guy H. Lillian III
Drink Tank edited by Christopher J Garcia, with guest editor James Bacon
File 770 edited by Mike Glyer
StarShipSofa edited by Tony C. Smith

BEST FAN ARTIST (199 nominating ballots)

Brad W. Foster
 Dave Howell
 Sue Mason
 Steve Stiles
 Taral Wayne

THE JOHN W. CAMPBELL AWARD FOR BEST NEW WRITER (NOT A HUGO AWARD) (356 nominating ballots)

Saladin Ahmed
 Gail Carriger
 Felix Gilman *
 Seanan McGuire
 Lezli Robyn *
 * Second year of eligibility

Our congratulations to **Mike, Chris, Lloyd, Steve, Claire & Mark, Guy, Chris** again, **Mike, Brad, and Taral**. And to Tony C. Smith and all his droogs at StarShipSofa profound shooms of lip-music brrrrrr. And they can kiss my sharries.



The Aussiecon people kicked off on-line voting right after the nominations were announced. However, the deadline is **July 31**, so there's no rush.

We'd be interested to hear your Hugo recommendations. Here's one. Don't vote for StarShipSofa at all, even seventh behind No Award.

As for what Leia is saying to the Na'vi, the box office figure of \$2.70 billion in 2010 dollars reduces to \$670 million in 1975 dollars. May the Force be with you, Jake.