

# ALEXIAD

(ΑΛΞΙΑΣ)

\$2.00

We have now turned away cat number sixty-six. Grant and Carolyn spoke to each other on the phone while we were at Poor Richard's Books in Frankfort. During the conversation she asked if we were interested in a kitten and listed its attributes, female, spayed, vet checked. I just said no. We are full up. I did not callously even ask the circumstances. I didn't want to know them. I realize that a limit of five is an arbitrary number but there has to be a limit. Otherwise we would have 71 cats in the house and eventually we would make the hoarding news. I don't want to make the news for animal hoarding. There is no way we could keep 71 cats in any kind of healthy living conditions.

— Lisa

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The 118th Running of the Kentucky Futurity (3rd leg of the Trotting Triple Crown) was **October 16, 2010** at the Red Mile in Lexington, Kentucky. Wishing Stone won.

The 54th Running of the Messenger Stakes (3rd leg of the Pacing Triple Crown) was **November 6, 2010** at Yonkers Raceway. Rock N Roll Heaven won.

Joe's Birthday is **December 24, 2010**

Printed on December 7, 2010

Deadline is **February 1, 2011**

## WARNING!

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

## Reviewer's Notes

Connectivity has become a concern. You understand, we live in a world where someone can have five thousand friends worldwide and not know anyone in the same city. And in general there has been a lapse of social interconnectivity. How do you "loc" a podcast, for example? Generate another?

Even amid more traditional venues there has been a lack of connections. The net is open to everything but somehow it's not getting that sort of response. Here's something I can testify to from personal observation. There has been one new loccer to this fanzine since I started putting it on the cfanzines.com site who stated that he started doing it because that was where he saw it. Where are all the e-locers?

Just as con-going has seen a transition from participating to consuming. Now these huge professionally run mega-cons do have abundant features; I've seen where it's possible to have an entire convention to one's liking and be among several thousand others who are also having conventions to one's liking, yet never share a single experience.

But what happens when Mega\*Con has a financial disaster and vanishes? Having eroded local fan-run cons in the meantime, nobody having bothered to try to compete.

Or when it shifts? The other con has been beset by problems that it's been taken over by Hollywood Blockbuster Promotions. It's a long way from that room in the Muehlbach that hardly anybody noticed during MidAmeriCon, promoting this movie called *The Star Wars*. At least they found another venue.

Send in your Hugo recommendations. Though given the way things have been going, it may not matter.

— Joe

## RANDOM JOTTINGS

by Joe



**Khen Moore, thou shouldst be living at this hour:** My cousin Lewis Faulkner reported on an interesting food item (for some values of "food") that he saw at the North Carolina State Fair. Martin Morse Wooster was there too and saw it. It was a hamburger, about Big Mac™ size insofar as its toppings were. However, it was the buns that astounded (amazed and even analoged) him. They were two Krispy-Kreme™ doughnuts.

Be still, my beating heart.

In looking up something else I noted the article on wuxia (wu-hsia), which is a genre of Chinese stories about adventurous martial artists. They derived from stories about daring assassins called tz'u-k'o (cike), "stabbing guests". So I guess Guy Gavriel Kay had an indigenous version of the pro assassins in his *Under Heaven* (2010; reviewed in *Alexiad* V. 9 #5) after all.

For most of a day, like the people on that financial radio talk show I could shout, "I'm Debt-Free!!!" But then I went out and bought a new laptop. Alas, it failed to fulfill the full and exacting standards laid down by Grant in the June issue (V. 9 #3 WN 51); it can't read Blu-Ray disks. The one that they had that could do that cost \$\$\$ more.

I got a Toshiba Satellite A655 laptop with 4GB memory, a 500 GB hard drive, an Intel I3 quad-core processor, but only three USB ports. Since it seems everything is connected by USB these days, I had to also buy a powered USB port. And it runs Windows 7 ®©™SM Bill Gates is GOD!

So far the only program I've tried to load that hasn't worked is the Globalink translator. It's lighter than the laptop I had, which means I don't need the Acer netbook quite so much.

Through Best Buy's financing program, I even have eighteen months to pay it before the interest payments kick in. But, I am no longer Debt-Free!!! Lisa may forgive me, because I gave her my former Toshiba laptop, which has good speakers and can play the music files. We upgraded it to run Windows 7 ®©™SM Bill Gates is GOD!, too.

As you know, Bob, the thrilling movie *Colossus: The Forbin Project* (1970), about the strategic missile forces computer that achieves

consciousness and proceeds to take over, was based on the novel *Colossus* (1966), by D. F. Jones. For good and sufficient reasons, I'd wondered what Dennis Feltham Jones had done during the War. Then I found out: he was assigned to the GC&CS station at Bletchley Park, decrypting German cipher messages with the COLOSSUS computer. Yes. Now if their computer had by some arcane means linked up with the SD's Konrad Zuse codebreaking machine *HÜTER* ("Guardian") . . .

*Colossus: The Forbin Project*  
<http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0064177/>

**Kevin Brownlow**, director of the alternate history movie *It Happened Here* (1966), has been awarded an honorary Oscar by the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences for his efforts at preserving and restoring silent films, such as Abel Gance's *Napoléon* (1927).

Kevin Brownlow  
<http://www.imdb.com/name/nm0002206/>

*It Happened Here*  
<http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0055024/>

We've learned that modestly, **Martin Morse Wooster** has not mentioned that his book *Great Philanthropic Mistakes* (Hudson Institute; 2006, 2010; ISBN 1-55813-147-7; \$19.95) has been reissued with more and grimmer detail about the flaws of foundations and the perversions of philanthropy.

## OBITS

**Nancy Martsch** of *Beyond Bree*, the fanzine of the Mensa Tolkien Special Interest Group, reports:

To All:

Bonnie Callahan, of the Mythopoeic Society, has asked me to forward this information to my Tolkien friends. I know that not all of you are members of the Mythopoeic Society, or were acquainted with Glen GoodKnight. But those who are might want to know. Glen was very active in Tolkien fandom. Please spread the word.

Sincerely,  
 Nancy Martsch

## Glen GoodKnight 1941-2010

A seminal figure in American Tolkien and CS Lewis fandom has passed away.

Glen GoodKnight founded the Mythopoeic Society in 1967, dedicated to the study of the Inklings (CS Lewis, JRR Tolkien, Charles Williams) and general fantasy. The Mythopoeic Society held its first Mythcon (conference) in 1970, and continues to be active to this day. Glen was long an active supporter of Tolkien and CS Lewis events in the United States. He was also a notable collector of the works of Tolkien and Lewis in translation.

Glen GoodKnight had been in poor health

for a number of years, but still participated in many online activities. He was working on a catalog of his collection at the time of his death.

Glen's Narnia collection is described on his website, <http://inklingsfocus.com>

The Mythopoeic Society's website is <http://www.mythsoc.org>

The Funeral services will be open to all; and all Mythsoc members, friends of Tolkien and of CS Lewis are invited to attend.

Location:  
 Rosehills Cemetary  
 3888 Workman Mill Road  
 Whittier, CA 90501

Time: Saturday, Nov 13, 11:00 am.

We note the death of LASFS stalwart and 1973 TAFF delegate **Len Moffatt** on **November 30, 2010**. Len was born in **November 20, 1923** and was a fan in Pennsylvania (and therefore a member of First Fandom) before becoming involved in Los Angeles fandom after the war. He was also a mystery fan and a Sherlockian, and was married for just under forty-four years; **June Moffatt** survives him.

## MONARCHIST NEWS

The penny has finally dropped!

On 29 April 2011, **His Royal Highness Prince William Arthur Philip Louis of Wales** will marry **Catherine Elizabeth "Kate" Middleton**.

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

Report by Joseph T Major

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.

The *Daily Times* of Delaware County, Pennsylvania had an article on a local Pearl Harbor survivor who was going to their annual convention — which he feared might be the last. The youngest survivor was 84 years old; there were only some two thousand survivors of an original 300,000.

Someday no one will march there at all.

## CHILDREN OF THE ATOM

Commentary by Joseph T Major

The fantasy of Fans is that they will discover they are tendrillless Slans; Golden Children, Children of the Atom, Homines post Hominem, super beings cruelly unnoticed by society, but destined to be the race that shall rule the Sevagram. And many books have been written on this basis. Outside Fandom, people strove to create such beings.

David Brooks, author of *BOBOS In Paradise: The New Upper Class and How They Got There* (2000), evidently fancied himself the latter-day heir to Vance Packard (best known for *The Hidden Persuaders* (1957) [the nonfiction version of *The Space Merchants* (1952)] and *The Status Seekers* (1959), on classes in the classless society). *BOBOS In Paradise* describes a community of “Bourgeois Bohemians”, people who combine progressive politics with capitalist entrepreneurial efforts to spread Good and Beautiful Ways with plenty of cold hard cash. The sort of people who stick “BE CARBON NEUTRAL” bumper stickers on the back of their Behemoth XLIV SUV, in other words.

The Bobos also have children; a socially responsible and environmentally friendly only child, of course. They raise their child with the same effort they put into the rest of their lives; intrauterine Mozart to develop the developing mind, orrery crib ornaments, endangered species flash cards, and so on.

These superbeings’ university applications are themselves remarkable; a 4.0+ grade score since preschool, and Advanced Placement Preschool at that, and subsequently throughout the educational career. Socially responsible community service work during summer, a productive entrepreneurial effort after school, community performance in non-scoring non-competitive low-impact environmentally friendly team sports. Backed up by a thick file of letters of recommendation from positive role models of all genders, races, social classes, and occupations, and a professionally-produced multimedia application essay.

Well, they didn’t have the last back in 2001, but they were getting close to it. In the April 2001 issue of *The Atlantic*, Brooks had an article titled “The Next Ruling Class: Meet the Organization Kid”.

The serious young woman on the cover, eyeing the reader, may be misunderstood by the contemporary observer. While her textbooks and her violin dominate the background, the headphone she has reluctantly pulled down around her neck is not connected to an iPod. That wasn’t introduced until the fall of 2001. The headphones are attached to a Paleolithic device known as a “Walkman”, which used a technology called “cassette tapes”. As you know, Bob, these prehistoric devices encoded sound on a substrate of magnetic media . . . Oh all right. Sony has discontinued production of the Walkman. Oh how the mighty have fallen.

But Brooks’s young woman needed her

Walkman to listen to her taped lessons. Brooks visited Princeton and interviewed — when they could spare the time — these organization kids. They spent all their time studying; no social lives, no time for political activism, nothing but cracking books. He noticed how, for example, there would be no chat in the dining hall, the students would eat and get out.

They were cooperative, responding to this like old guy’s emails — at two and three in the morning. One student confessed to having learned to review lessons in dreams. Only lessons? I like being an Alpha-Plus, I like being an Alpha-Plus . . .

These, Brooks concluded, were the race that would rule the sevagram. The Children of the Atom who would burst forth with will and wit to dominate the coming ages. He was pleased to have found the new version of Bobos.



And now?

The Princeton Class of 2003, the sophomores when Brooks was doing his research, did their part. Their Class Reunion for 2009 featured a questionnaire on life and development, and the return was significant, with the usual constraints (i.e., the billionaire hedge fund manipulator would know that only a loser would go to a class reunion, and the cyberpunk hacker could not be torn from his jacking into the Net).

The class went on to higher education, less than thirty percent of them did not, while Ph.D.s, masters’ degrees, MBAs, M.D.s, and above all J.D.s (lawyers) were widespread. They had the preparation and the position.

They predominantly rented apartments in the city, usually not owning an automobile. The “Vacations are for losers” idea had not taken root, with three weeks vacation being the most common time off; only twelve out of 515 took no vacation. They had time for exercise (nearly ninety percent took more than an hour a week) and for other leisure (only six percent had less than three hours a week). For what it’s worth, forty-five percent had read one to five books in the past year, with 2.9% having read **none**, and only 11.2% being at twenty or more. That’s sad.

They didn’t own handguns (96.4%!) or smoke (96.3%). It would not be surprising, therefore, that the predominant political attitude was “Moderately Liberal” (40.3%), more than the conservative categories put together.

Now how was the next ruling class doing on

its route to the “bourgeois” part? The highest ranking of total annual household income was \$50k or less (31.3%), with on the other hand four of the class reporting income of over a million dollars. Recall, though, that concentration on postgraduate education, which would delay salaries; a doctor, for example, would only be beginning residency or perhaps still be in internship or even extended medical school. By way of contrast, six of the 515 who replied were CEOs or the equivalent.

There is one factor that is bothersome. Perhaps not unexpected, given the social climate described, but still bothersome. Over half were single (52.2%), with a further five divorced and not remarried (there were only six divorces, so there was that). Only **thirty-one**, six percent, had children, and twenty-six of the responses were that they had only one child.

The lecture by the psychiatrist Ryan-Ngana in “The Marching Morons” about the carefully-spaced responsibly-born children comes to mind. One could argue that it comes from Lazarus Long’s comment about how the Howard Families should have bred for brains.

One critique leveled at Brooks’s book was that his topic was not so much “Bourgeois Bohemians” as wealthy narcissists. They spent vast sums of money on possessions and activities that were self-congratulatorily enlightened; the \$17 tall dry foamy cinnamon decaf latté made with fair-trade ingredients using containers and utensils made by authentically indigenous peoples from renewable resources of non-endangered species, produced with a net zero carbon footprint. There was no way to tell that that was the way it was, save by the labelling, and the warm fuzzy feeling of the consumer.

So it is with the presentation of these Serious Young Persons. They come across as so utterly focused that it never quite seems to occur to them what the purpose of it all is.

That lack of any other part of life is perhaps a consequence. The year before Brooks’s article, the Princeton community had done its part to make campus life more serious, get more in touch with the zero-tolerance, lawsuit-averse, gender-sensitive modern society. Princetonians had celebrated the first snowfall of the year by the Nude Olympics; the sophomore class would assemble at midnight, and the more daring, or wilder, or drunker ones would strip off and run around. In 2000, this was officially deemed to be Wrong, and was prohibited.

It makes one want to grab these ever-righteous administrators, these so-sensitive Bobos, these dronish organization kids, thrust a knife into their mouths, and say through scarred mouth as a white-black-and-red painted face is confronting theirs, “Why so serious?”

Except they’d probably want to send the Joker to anger management class. (And they’d deserve it, but that’s another story entirely: <http://www.thejokerblogs.com>) What we have here are groups who can’t imagine that anyone could be different.

**UNDER HEAVEN**

Review by Joseph T Major of  
**NAAMAH'S CURSE**

by Jacqueline Carey  
(Grand Central Publishing; 2010;  
ISBN 978-0-446-19805-9; \$26.99)  
A *Kushiel* Novel

... This Tatar chief was dressed as a Ch'in mandarin, in yellow robe, with the hat of the highest rank on his great hairless head. I thought he had robbed some such official, and went about clad in his victim's garments as a trophy of his ignorant triumph. But he spoke to me in the Ch'in tongue, fluently, clearly, better than I indeed.

"My name is Moirin of Alba," I said in my native tongue, hoping to evade his gaze, his long magnetic eyes of the true cat-green. His eyes, so much like mine, a jade-eyed demon indeed.

"As you will, Moirin of Alba," he said in the same tongue, his voice alternately guttural and sibilant. My heart sank within my breast. "I possess knowledge of the barbarian tongues as well as of the civilized one. I am the Mandarin of the First Rank Chuan Ch'ing-fu, chief of the Seven. Companion Arslan has been most helpful in delivering you to me."

Names have a mighty power, and though my spirit struggled against his, with this entree into my self, I could not resist the force of his will. . . .

— Not from *The Curse of Fu Manchu*, by Sax Rohmer and Jacqueline Carey

And sure enough, just after Guy Gavriel Kay, here comes Jacqueline Carey, with yet another episode set in the world of her different yet similar history. [I can just imagine Verkan Vall having to deal with a sex ring that sends people to this Fourth Level Europeo-American time line. . . .]

Moirin has already delivered Chuan Ch'ing-fu and his Jurchen or whatever equivalents a great boon in expunging the knowledge of the Black Thunder (i.e., gunpowder) from the minds of everyone in Ch'in. Now, as her other half Bao (literally, as their souls have merged) has gone home to his Tatar family, she sets out to follow him. Right, a woman, alone, going out into the steppes, the snow, the hostiles. At least the Si-Fan would give her red-heeled slippers.

She finally runs into him. There's a little problem. He got married, to a daughter of the Great Khan of the Tatars no less. He can't have a second wife? Well, maybe not, the first doesn't like sharing. Which is why Moirin finds herself sold. To a bunch of nasty monotheists, who chain her up so she can learn her catechism and otherwise do penance. It seems to be the instruction that she dislikes, given the Angelina penchant for unusual sexual practices.

Eventually she seduces a friend into helping her get away, and after a confrontation with her former captors, heads south across some very high mountains. She doesn't find anyplace

nearly as interesting as Kaloön, but it turns out that Bao is being held in Durance Vile.

Durance Vile turns out to be a sort of standard-issue wicked sorceress with a magic artifact. Moirin unbewitches Bao, zaps the wicked sorceress, and recovers the magic artifact for return to its proper owner. There are echoes of Merritt (*The Metal Monster* (1920)) and Howard (*The Hour of the Dragon* (1935, 1977)/*Conan the Conqueror* (1950)) here, pale and weak ones.

And then, all's well that ends, Bao and Moirin marry in a splendid Bollywood (well, they are in their time-line's version of India) performance, and we are set up for the final confrontation with Moirin returning to Terre d'Ange to settle accounts when this is . . . **[To Be Continued].**

### OH, ICKE!

Review by Joseph T Major of  
**THE BOOKMAN**  
by Lavie Tidhar  
(Angry Robot; 2010;  
ISBN 978-0-85766-034-3; \$7.99)  
<http://www.angryrobotbooks.com>

One of the fun things about reading this book is picking up the background references. Tidhar has given this steampunk, if not alternate-history, work a quite extensive set of background references to his Victorian-but-not-quite world.

I mean, having the British Royal Family be lizards. That's straight out of David Icke's "reptilian" ramblings, and it's a sign of some talent on Tidhar's part that he can turn that paranoid raving into something useful.

Not that Orphan has anything to do with Her Scaly Majesty Queen Victoria. He just lives in the forgotten netherworld of London, watching the world go by and reporting it to his blind, wise mentor Gilgamesh. Then things begin to happen. . . .

Along the way Orphan learns a lot of things about himself and the world he lives in. Not all of them are bad, and indeed his efforts have some use. They take him to the depths of the Bodleian Library, to the mysterious island (I told you there were a lot of references and indeed about every chapter title is a reference) where the Empire is about to launch a space probe, into the depths of the ocean, and to the mystery of his ancestry.

Orphan serves more as an everyman, a point of view character, and his character seems a trifle bland for someone having such a diverse and informative milieu. Kornbluth's paradigm of extraordinary worlds requiring ordinary observers is relevant here, but Orphan could do with a little more character.

The world has well enough what with Irene Adler, *Gossip Gone Wild* by Jubal Harshaw, Prince Dakkar, the Automaton Chess-Player, *Azathoth and Other Horrors* by Edmond Pickman Derby, Sir Harry Flashman, V.C. . . . amid these, the other automatons, the wonders of Caliban's Island, the vast stacks of the Bodleian Library, and his other inventions seem to flesh out a world. You can't say the author

doesn't try.

And the world Orphan made (there, that's one reference Tidhar didn't make) will go on when in the forthcoming *Camera Obscura* this story is . . . **[To Be Continued].**

### THE INDISCRETIONS OF THE CSS

Review by Joseph T Major of  
**THE SECRET HISTORY OF M16**  
by Keith Jeffery  
(Penguin Press; 2010;  
ISBN 978-1-59420-274-2; \$39.95)

... One day, he recalled, sitting in a traffic jam just outside the National Gallery, Cumming 'turned to me & said "Sykes, I am going to publish my memoirs." "Really, sir," I queried. "Yes" he said. "The book will be quarto size, bound in red, top-edge gilt, subtitled 'The Indiscretions of the CSS.' It will have four hundred pages, all blank."

— Percy Sykes, Paymaster R.N.  
— (Quoted in *The Secret History of M16*, Page 237)

I won't say there's nothing new in here for anyone who has read Christopher Andrew's *Her Majesty's Secret Service* (1985, 1986, 1987) or *At Her Majesty's Secret Service* by "Nigel West" (2006; reviewed in *Alexiad* V. 6 #2). I hadn't known that Hector C. Bywater, author of *The Great Pacific War* (1925) had been with the Service (Page 34), as Agent H2O.

Professor Andrew has written a history of M15 (*The Defence of the Realm* [US title *Defend the Realm*] (2009; reviewed in *Alexiad* V. 8 #6)) and in like measure this is the other side of the divide, the story of how the guy sharing the office with Vernon Kell moved into the complementary line of business.

Those seeking the true and terrible history of how the sinister Secret Service Department manipulated the affairs of the world will conclude that this is but another phase of the coverup. Except for the discussion of the Zinoviev Letter affair (Pages 216-222), and even there it's not quite clear who was involved in the leakage.

[Historical Note: The "Zinoviev Letter" was a note alleged to be from Comintern leader Grigory Yevseevich Zinoviev [né Ovsei Gershon Aronovich Radolmylsky] to British Communists urging them to rebel. It was published in the *Daily Mail* four days before the 1924 General Election and may have hurt Labour at the polls. As you know, Bobya, due to the relentless revolutionary vigilance of the Competent Organs, Zinoviev was unmasked as a counterrevolutionary revisionist traitor in the pay of foreign intelligence services, confessed his crimes at the Trial of the Trotskyite-Zinovievite Terrorist Center in August of 1936, and received the supreme measure of punishment GLORY GLORY GLORY TO THE GREAT STALIN!]

Indeed, this is a sinister Secret Service in which Bob Howard of the Laundry Files would be unexceptional. He certainly would find the

problems familiar. The SIS had budgetary issues, had to deal with threats of being dissolved, and in general suffered from the malaise of the locust years. As one of the new wartime employees observed of the headquarters at Broadway Block (54 Broadway, Westminster, London):

... A secretary who joined in September 1943 thought that, whenever it was that the office had been built (actually in 1924), she did 'not think it had ever been refurbished or redecorated'. The floors were 'covered in worn lino [linoleum], quite dangerous in places, walls were a mucky grey/white/cream, and the rooms were lit with bare light bulbs: only senior personnel were allowed to have desk lamps'...

— *The Secret History of MI6*, Page 478

Jeffrey also discusses its successes. During the World War, the SIS managed a generally successful operation in occupied Belgium, providing useful intelligence to the Allies. Between the wars, it worked against the Communists and Nazis. And, a reassessment which is overdue, during the Second World War, the SIS provided useful human intelligence in Axis Europe while neutralizing German efforts overseas.

The three leaders of the organization during this period are also profiled. (Note that *At Her Majesty's Secret Service* provides more breadth, if not as much depth.) While the interesting careers of Sir Mansfield Smith-Cumming (the above-mentioned author of *The Indiscretions of the CSS*) and Sir Hugh "Quex" Sinclair receive their due, just as the book rehabilitates the wartime performance of the Service, so does it give a more positive and more nuanced portrayal of the wartime Chief, Sir Stewart Graham Menzies. Jeffrey describes a leader skilled in management and political positioning, able to gather intelligence, get it into the right hands, and keep from being outmaneuvered by the competition within government.

You'll recall the amusing self-parodies that circulated around the Circus, or the Security Service, as described by Professor Andrew in *The Defence of the Realm*. There wasn't quite that sort of levity in the other outfit. Except, perhaps, when passing around the pictures from Spain of chief deceiver Dudley Clarke's "Charley's Aunt" moment (Pages 406-407, picture between Pages 522 & 523). ["Monty Python" and Boy George have venerable roots.] He doesn't make a very convincing woman, I think. For more detail on what Colonel Clarke was doing when he wasn't trying to be Brian Cohen's mother, read Thaddeus Holt's *The Deceivers* (2004; reviewed in *Alexiad* V. 3 #4) and Nicholas Rankin's *Churchill's Wizards* (2008; reviewed in *Alexiad* V. 8 #5).

Those who find Philby Penitence to be poignant will get a fair bit of it here. One thing Jeffery shows is that Kim Philby was not running everything in the Firm, thus knocking out the props of hundreds of spy novels, thrillers, and histories. Indeed, the SIS had

already had concerns about his father, Harry St. John Philby, not yet Abdullah, for his ties with the al-Sa'ud. Beyond that, a certain pained irony arises in connection with the SIS security chief Sir Valentine Vivian:

... When Kim joined SIS in the 1940s, Vivian took a personal interest in his progress and was in later life strongly criticized for fostering his career in the Service. It was a cruel irony indeed that the Service's anti-Communist expert should have taken under his avuncular wing the Service's worst Communist traitor.

— *The Secret History of MI6*, Page 208

By way of contrast, the adherents to the *Belarus Secret* theory of the intelligence services becoming the principal collaborators, protectors, and furtherers of wanted Nazis may also feel disappointed by this book. As the Service observed regarding a would-be defector of dubious background:

... 'We cannot do business with war criminals to save their necks,' wrote a Section V officer. 'There is surely nothing very important that this peculiarly unpleasant rat could give us if he was allowed to leave the sinking ship,' added Cuthbert Bowlby on 11 June...

— *The Secret History of MI6*, Page 515

For every question answered, two more are raised. Every conspiracist will consider the lack of proof of conspiracies to be firm proof of the existence of a conspiracy. Those who doubt Official Histories will still find their third-hand, vague, overblown claims to be far more persuasive.

Those who come to the project without preconceptions, or who have studied the reality and not the fever dreams, should find a different sort of confirmation in this work. There are things that the source does not want revealed; there has been much obliteration of facts in the general course of time. There is a lack of assassination squads, secret blackmail, and coup plots (indeed, the description of the painfully unsuccessful and humanly costly attempt to infiltrate Albania makes it clear how successful such matters would be).

As true crimes fail to live up to the wonder of detective novels, so does true espionage history fail to live up to the wonder of spy novels. The truth is far more interesting, and more complex, than fiction, and not just because fiction has to make sense.

## ROCKET TO THE MORGUE

Review by Joseph T Major of  
*IN THE STILL OF THE NIGHT:  
The Strange Death of Ronda Reynolds and  
Her Mother's Unceasing Quest for the Truth*

by Ann Rule

(Free Press; 2010;

ISBN 978-1-4165-4460-9; \$26.99)

As you know, Bob, in "Anthony Boucher's" *Rocket to the Morgue* (1942) the brilliant writer Anthony Boucher (gosh, what an amazing coincidence) discusses the central issue of the book, the murder or suicide of the nephew of the famous author of the Dr. Derringer mystery series. He concludes that the shooting could indeed be a suicide, since contrary to the police's insistence that the bullet track could not possibly have been from a self-inflicted wound, he has been able to place a handgun in any position necessary to shoot himself in any way.

Ron Reynolds of Lewis County, Washington, could not have wished for a better forensic witness; but alas, William A. P. White has passed on, and his creation could not escape the pages of his work. Which may prove a problem should the rebuke to the Lewis Coroner's office described herein lead to further legal issues; for murder never sleeps, there is no statute of limitations.

On the morning of December 16, 1998, Ron called 911 and informed them that his wife, Ronda Thompson Reynolds, had committed suicide with a pistol. They had been married less than a year.

Ronda had had an interesting life, having through perseverance and unremitting effort become a Washington State Trooper. Then, due to harassment, and in the ruins of her marriage to a fellow trooper, she resigned. Ron Reynolds became her counsellor; then her love. They married in January of 1998, but by the end of the year were having problems.

Then Ronda was found in a closet of her home, shot dead.

Her mother, Barbara Ramsey "Barb" Thompson, was not quite believing that the official verdict was in accord with the facts. The police had mangled the crime scene; for example, one officer had carefully secured the lethal weapon, witlessly unaware that the position of the weapon was of importance in reconstructing the death scene. The coroner's office also had a record for carelessness, which is one way of describing their behavior.

Ron's behavior was a bit out of the ordinary, too. He claimed not to have heard the fatal shot, though testing showed he would have had to been deaf, drunk, or drugged for such to happen. Indeed, for a sudden widower, or even the discoverer of a sudden death, he seemed remarkably collected about it all. Still, W. H. Wallace was condemned to death because he didn't seem as upset about the brutal murder of his wife as the police thought he should be, even though the murder scenario they constructed required so many improbable things that it was amazing they got a conviction.

Barb Thompson spent the next few years pressuring Lewis County officials for a reconsideration. In November of 2009, she finally got it. A jury found that the coroner had erred and that Ronda had not committed suicide. There has been no effort to re-open the case.

For what matters are worth, there is more than one suspect in the case. Ron had been entertaining (so to speak) his sons by his previous marriage that evening, and some of

them have some issues, as do some of their associates.

This may be not so much the legendary perfect crime but the failed investigation; it seems obvious that Ronda was murdered, but with the passage of years and the disinterest of the local authorities, there may be no way to establish who did it.

### REPTILIAN WISDOM

Review by Joseph T Major of  
**DON'T VOTE:**

*It Just Encourages the Bastards*

by P. J. O'Rourke

(Atlantic Monthly Press; 2010;  
ISBN 978-0-8021-1960-5; \$25)

The Republican Party Reptile has become concerned about children, now that he has them. For example:

I caught my six-year-old, Buster, playing "health care provider" with one of the little girls in his first-grade class. They were filling out toy forms fully clothed.

— *Don't Vote*, Page 134

In this volume, O'Rourke launches barbs against bureaucracy, authority, security, and seriousness. Where else can one find a comment such as how easy it is to smoke in the shower these days? [Pages 244-245]

The book discusses a variety of topics. His deconstruction of the programs in the economic stimulus [Pages 118-120] may be too much for some:

\$500 million to "Help states and local school districts track student data and improve teacher quality" (Everybody's grades have been posted on Facebook. Bow and muzzle-loader season on teachers opens November 1.)

— *Don't Vote*, Page 119

Other comments savage domestic policy, foreign policy, the resurgence of mercantilism (coming from the author of *On The Wealth of Nations* (2007; reviewed in *Alexiad* V. 6 #1) is this really all that surprising?), the problems of health care reform, and so on down. Even a critique of other prominent conservative voices and their target audiences and means of communication, "A Digression on Shouting at Each Other" [Pages 233-241].

For savagely witty and insightful comment, O'Rourke is hard to beat. And speaking of smoking in the shower, he has cigars in a box stamped "Made in Honduras", too [Page 146]

### GATHERER OF CLOUDS

Review by Joseph T Major of  
**A BATTLE WON**

by S. Thomas Russell [Sean Russell]

(Putnam Adult; 2010;

ISBN 978-0-399-15689-2; \$26.95)

Sequel to *Under Enemy Colors*  
(2007; reviewed in *Alexiad* V. 9 #4)

When we left Charles Hayden after a short and adventurous spell of sailing *Under Enemy Colors*, in spite of a few potential problems his prospects looked remarkably favourable. The fair and noble Henrietta had begun to look upon his suit for her hand with some interest. Prize money for the ships he had taken was forthcoming. He had been promoted to Commander, even assigned to a ship.

But then, almost no one in the Admiralty trusted or respected him. And there were quite a few hostiles still on "his" side to be concerned about. Still, Commander Hayden is feeling that some affairs are now turning in his favor.

As our current volume begins, Hayden learns that HMS *Themis*, his former assignment, is in need of a captain. This is because he is told to go take command of her and sail her out to the Mediterranean, where the commander-in-chief, Lord Hood, will assign a proper post captain to the command of that ship of half-mutineers. Nobody else wants the job, and so Hayden has to take it.

The task involves escorting a convoy down past Spain. One suspects that Hayden does not have the best of luck when, in spite of driving off two French frigates though being acting commodore of the escort (the escort commander went off after another ship and was nowhere to be found) he is still blamed.

After a short break to play a round of golf, which has gone downhill since they cut down the course from 22 holes to 18, he reports in to Admiral Lord Hood in Toulon. Which has been retaken by the Revolutionaries (see in Abel Gance's *Napoléon* (1927; discussed in *Alexiad* V. 9 #4) where Admiral Hood cynically sips tea as he orders the French Fleet burned, after the port has been rendered indefensible) and Hayden has to get away from the place bloody quick.

He might have preferred a French prison camp to where he ends up: Corsica. Here Hayden participates in one of the most intriguing and turbulent campaigns of the entire war, which given its scope says something. A surprisingly large number of famous people were involved here, including not only Admiral Hood but (not-yet-Sir) John Moore, General Pasquale Paoli (friend of Boswell), and oh yes a scrawny little preacher's kid from Norfolk named Horace or something like that.

Then, having helped expel the Froggies from Corsica, for what it's worth, Admiral Hood needs to send his dispatches back home. Well, there is this one ship available . . .

And when Hayden does get home, he finds out how generosity can bite back. He had kindly offered to help a poor refugee French woman, sponsoring her entry to England. When he gets there himself he discovers that she has told all and sundry in Blighty that in Gibraltar she became Mrs. Charles Hayden, on the basis of this getting 600£ of his prize money out of the prize agent and running up even more bills, not to mention getting Henrietta apparently irrevocably mad at him, he discovers what naches helping someone in need will get you. But it could be worse.

When young, I discovered an amusing memoir, *Chicken Every Sunday: My Life with Morther's Boarders* (1943) by Rosemary Drachman Taylor. The "Taylor" was her husband John. But John was already in the writing business himself, under the somewhat truncated and yet expanded name of "Winchcombe-Taylor". Later he was the author of a novel titled *Ram: Being the Tale of One Ramilles Anstruther 1704-1755* (1960). Ram would probably think Charles Hayden was remarkably fortunate. In the one successful part of his career (which is only mentioned in the novel in afterthought) Ram returns from India with several thousand pounds, getting into the nabob category. After a short stay in London, he finds himself being hit up for bills for things he didn't buy. It turns out that his landlord's son forged his name, ran up huge debts, then fled, leaving Ram to pay up. So he ends up in debtor's prison.

Now Hayden can bring suit to avoid paying these debts — I guess Winchcombe-Taylor didn't find that out, or the law changed (unlikely), or he wanted to have something more dramatic. Still, Hayden has a number of legal actions to hand, a reputation to recover, and a woman to persuade. He still hasn't made post, either.

But the navy needs ships . . . and still no one wants to be captain of the *Themis*. Which means Hayden will be sailing into still more peril when this series is . . . **[To Be Continued]**

Some reviewers have taken issue with the one "break" in the novel, where Hayden and some other officers play golf. Yes, they did have it then. (Presumably they would not invite some Indian officer named Napier who opined that "Golf is a mental disorder," apparently mastered bilocation, yet got lost.) The scene does have something of the appearance of having been put in because the author ran across the topic doing research and got interested. It has its moments, all the same.

### FADS AND FALLACIES

Review by Joseph T Major of

**BAD SCIENCE:**

*Quacks, Hacks, and Big Pharma Flacks*

by Ben Goldacre

(Faber and Faber; 2008, 2009, 2010;

ISBN 978-0-86547-918-0; \$15.00)

Martin Gardner's *Fads and Fallacies in the Name of Science* (1952, 1957) dealt with a variety of pseudoscientific afflictions. Some, such as Alfred William Lawson's Lawonomy, seem to have died out; others, such as Velikovskianism, are still sustained by a hard core of True Believers (General Semantics seems to fall into the latter category).

The spirit that animated skepticism seems to have withered. For example, consider the educational programme Brain Gym, popular in Britain, but invented here in the States (and you can get degrees in it!). Whoever knew that it was possible to stimulate the carotid arteries by holding a hand over the chest, next to the breastbone and just below the collarbone? Or

that water held in the mouth is absorbed more directly into the brain?

And sure enough, when Goldacre pointed out the absurdity of this and other features of Brain Gym, he was denounced by its supporters.

In this work the science columnist of the *Grauniad*, or the *Guardian*, remarkably free of typos, discusses yet other facets of the international empire of woo. We get perspective by seeing the opinions of others.

For example, behold the discussion of the vitamin industry. Which, for all its revenues, and all its complaints about how the beneficial effects of megadoses are ignored by Orthodox Medicine, for some reason never manages to fund any testing.

The strictures on homeopathy are more common, and yet still ignored. When you realize that a common homeopathic dose of 30C dilution is the equivalent of one molecule of the original substance in a sphere of water of almost one astronomical unit in diameter, perhaps an idea of the lackwit nature of that body of practice might surface. (To which they speak of “potentializing” and “water memory”, concepts which turn out to be even less well founded.)

One chapter had to be deleted from the first printing. AIDS activists can generate David Irving-levels of wrath and legal action. And worse, as Anthony Brink, a lawyer for Matthias Rath, the man who kept Goldacre from publishing, also filed a brief with the International Criminal Court in the Netherlands against Zackie Achmat, a South African AIDS patient and leader who had been defying the government to get medicines to infected people. He wanted to have Achmat confined in the local equivalent of SuperMax, except when he was strapped down and had his medicine rammed down his throat. (At least he didn't want to have Achmat turned over to the Palestinians; Achmat supports them, and they'd repay his support by perhaps hanging him from a construction crane in downtown Gaza for the crime of homosexuality.)

Exposés of bad science here are varied, and ignored. (Seeing homeopathic “remedies” at the chemists', or drug store, for example.) If nothing else, it's useful to know that these attitudes are hardly confined to these shores.

### NaNoWriMo

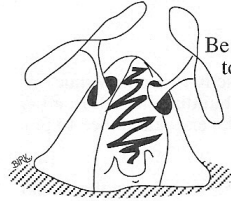
by Lisa

This November I tried National Novel Writing Month for the second time. The first time I only managed ten thousand words. I failed this time also but not as badly. I ended the month with more than 36,000 words. The main difference was that I discovered the power of little minutes. I got a surprising amount done while waiting for food at restaurants and other places. I started doing that too late to succeed at achieving the goal of 50,000 words. But I do not think an average of more than a thousand words a day is a total failure. It has made me look more closely at how I spend little minutes. It is undeniable that what I have done is not quality writing. I was surprised, though, to see that it was no worse than my usual first drafts. I

think I will continue with this project in December and until the messterpiece ends, whenever that is. I will also find a second project for next November.

### THE SOUL OF A NEW MACHINE

by Lisa Major



Be the first one on your block to have dual props!

Joe gave me his old Toshiba for my birthday so that I am once again the owner of two functioning laptops. Grant took it to one of his computer meetings so that he could install an update on it. We met him there and one of his friends asked me which I preferred, the small Acer or the Toshiba? My answer was that it depended on where I was working. At home on a large flat surface, the Toshiba is better. Its screen is easier on the eyes and the keyboard is decidedly easier to use. When I'm working in the car or in a chair with only the arms to put the machine on the Acer is the better machine. It is much more portable than the Toshiba and it fits into a much smaller space than the big Toshiba.

### OF SHOES

by Lisa

I bought a new pair of shoes. They are the same brand as the first pair of jock shoes I bought but with new updates. They have cushion the length of the shoe. The tongue has a new design to keep it from slipping. Most striking of all they have new styling and they look really cool. They are like walking on soft mats all the time, these new Brooks Aerial shoes. It remains to be seen if they will hold up to as many miles as the old ones. I kept the old ones as spares and household shoes. Of course I have yet to test these new shoes in an actual walk. I will report on that when I actually do. It is amazing the difference good shoes make in the way walking feels.

One year into diabetes I feel better than I have in years. I know I have this disease that is potentially deadly but so far I feel great. I've traded sodas and sugary foods for increased stamina and energy. It's a more than fair trade. The last doctor I saw told me I could hope to stay active into my eighties and nineties. My current healthy feeling could be a bit like the man falling from the skyscraper who yells out at each floor “So far, so good!” I'm taking things one day at a time.

### LIFE IN LOUISVILLE

by Lisa

Yesterday whoever is in charge of sidewalk

maintenance decided Christy Avenue needed new sidewalks, or at least the part in front of our house did. Workers tore up the old sidewalk with the result that when I came home last night I had to negotiate carefully. I sighed when I put my brand new shoes into the dirt. We encountered the workers this morning as we left and they promised us we would have a new sidewalk when we return tonight. I think it an excellent reason not to be in a hurry to come home. (There were no sidewalks when we returned home, just a bed of gravel. It started to snow when we reached Louisville which made for a lovely slushy mess. Hopefully the weather will allow the promised new sidewalks on Monday.)

We had our first snow earlier this week. It was a fairly thick snow although there was no accumulation. I thought it rather pretty but then I didn't have to be out in it much. I wore one of my hoodies for the first time. It felt good and snugly against the cold. It is good not to have to face the sweating humidity any longer. I hate July and August. This year it seemed like the heat would never end. But now it is December and the snow made it clear we are now in wintertime.

### IT'LL ALL COME OUT IN THE LAUNDRY

THE FULLER MEMORANDUM —  
A LAUNDRY FILES NOVEL,

by Charles Stross

(Ace Books, New York; July, 2010;  
HC, 312 pp; ISBN 978-0-441-01867-3;  
\$24.95)

A Review by Grant C. McCormick

There's something about the Secret Agent that seems to draw authors like honey draws flies. Even the worlds of fantasy and science fiction have them. Anderson has Dominic Flandry (who went well with Chives<sup>1</sup>), Agent of the Terran Empire. Garrett had Lord Darcy of the Anglo-French Angevin Empire. Terry Pratchett has Lu-Tze: The Sweeper, of The Men In Saffron, No Such Monastery. And Charlie Stross has Bob Howard, of The Capital Laundry Services, Licensed to Hack.

Howard is no Conan, but he's no seven-stone<sup>2</sup> computer geek, either. Computer geek, yes, but not any 98-lb weakling. *The Fuller Memorandum* is Stross's third novel involving Howard and the Laundry (after *The Atrocity Archives* and *The Jennifer Morgue*).

In addition, there are so far four shorter works in the series: “The Concrete Jungle”, included in with *The Atrocity Archives*; “Pimpf”, included in with *The Jennifer Morgue*; “Down On The Farm”, available at:

<http://www.tor.com/stories/2008/07/down-on-the-farm>

and “Overtime”, also available on line at

<http://www.tor.com/stories/2009/12/overtime>

Spoiler warning: Even though “Overtime” was published **before** *The Fuller Memorandum*, it

follows **after** it in series chronology.

The premise is simple: We live in a multiverse, in one universe among either an infinity of universes, or such a huge number of them that it might as well be an infinity — the kind of **big number** that makes a googolplex indistinguishable from '1'. And one of the things that can go from one universe to another is mathematics — specifically, computations. Whether the old-style, done in people's heads; or the new style, done on computers, the results are such that they might as well be called magic. And if it's done right (or, rather, Wrong), it may attract the attention of Eldritch Beings of the type of which you **really** don't want to attract the attention.

Add to this that our fair Earth has previously been colonized by Aliens so powerful that (even billions of years ago) we would be unto them less than the dust under the foot of an ant that was about to be stepped on by Godzilla's big brother. And that it is still inhabited by powerful races in the deepest sea and in the mantle under the continents. We humans still exist because we aren't too much of a bother, and we don't call too much attention to ourselves.

Even before the events of *The Fuller Memorandum*, Bob and his wife, Mo (Professor Doctor Dominique O'Brien), have had their share of adventures: abducted by alien possessed Nazis; being a little too close to Ground Zero of a nuclear weapon; captured by a megalomaniacal billionaire with an Evil cat; pursued by zombies; investigated by Auditors; and much more. Bob and Mo have faced a full spectrum of Evil, but they're still here and their enemies aren't.

Still, all these are only sideshows on the road to the main attraction: **CASE NIGHTMARE GREEN**. All these different situations, scenarios, and predictions have their own code names — and CASE NIGHTMARE GREEN is at the top of the list because there doesn't need to be anything above it: everything is lining up for The Elder Gods to be coming back, and not somewhere down the road, but Real Soon Now.

And to put the icing on the cake, it looks like there are some nutjob cultists out there who want to help speed up the process. To add to the fun and frivolity, Bob accidentally zaps a tea-lady, he has a boss that thinks that "Jesus" is his middle name, and an important Teapot that had been in the Laundry since before there was a Laundry goes missing.

*The Fuller Memorandum* is dedicated to Charles N. Brown (of *Locust*) and John M. Ford (a fellow SF author), who both died in recent years.

A Dr. Mike Ford (an identity that John often used at SF conventions) is a minor but crucial character in *The Fuller Memorandum*. I knew Mike Ford briefly during my one year of Grad School (Physics and Mathematics) at Indiana University Bloomington, from the IUSF club there, before he left for New York. I remember him as a bit of an asshole — he was a young writer (2 years younger than I) who had already been published in *Analog*: smart, erudite, and

full of himself (an affliction common to writers). Later on, I met him several more times at regional SF conventions, where I found that he was much more personable. And it might *just* be possible that I matured a bit in meantime, as well. I was unaware of his diabetes (an affliction from which I also suffer), and was saddened to hear of his death.

*The Fuller Memorandum* is well worth reading, highly entertaining, and most recommended. Several mysteries and loose ends left dangling from the earlier works are resolved in this volume. However, I *strongly* advise you to read it in sequence: (1) *The Atrocity Archives*; (2) "The Concrete Jungle"; (3) *The Jennifer Morgue*; (4) "PimpF"; (5) "Down On The Farm"; (6) *The Fuller Memorandum*; and (7) "Overtime".

Robert Howard is neither a Conan nor a James Bond, but he is a true hero, fully realized and truly self-possessed.

<sup>1</sup> His Shalmuan slave and servant, companion and co-agent.

<sup>2</sup> Ninety-eight lbs, or 44.4 kg, for those who are Brit-deficient.

<sup>3</sup> Won the 2005 Hugo Award for Best Novella.

## BURNED OUT COLD IN THE FREEZER BURN

A Review of Lois McMaster Bujold's

### CRYOBURN

(Baen Books; HC; November, 2010; ISBN 978-1-4391-3394-1; \$25.00)

By Grant C. McCormick

Lois McMaster Bujold seems to be writing mostly fantasy these days, and very good fantasy it is. However, I am a guy who prefers science fiction, and after several years, she has written a most excellent science fiction novel, *Cryoburn*. Like all of her science fiction published to date, it is set in the "Vorkosiverse" — the future-history universe of a humanity which has settled in the Nexus, amongst the stars of our portion of the galaxy. Most of these works involve one family — the Vorkosigans of Barrayar. And most of these Vorkosigan works center around one particular Vorkosigan: Miles Naismith Vorkosigan.

Miles is the son of his father: the most significant Barrayar military *and* political figure of his generation (who in turn is the son of the most significant military figure of *his*); and the son of his mother: a former Captain of the Beta Colony<sup>1</sup> Survey Service, and the most influential woman of the century on Barrayar (a most male-dominated planet); now the viceroy and vicereine of the planet Sergyar. With these two as parents, a body crippled and handicapped from before birth by a failed assassination attempt upon his parents, and a Will to Succeed that allows no failures, Miles himself is an elemental force wrapped in an all-too-fragile container.

Well, Miles has at last survived to a middle age of thirty-nine, married and a father himself, after a career that has seen him as a soldier, spy, mercenary fleet admiral, covert-ops agent (not

the same as spy, but close), diplomat, corpse<sup>2</sup>, detective, and (most recent and current) an Imperial Auditor of the Barrayar Empire. It is in these last three capacities that the Emperor Gregor Vorbarra (his liege and older foster brother) has had him attend the Northbridge Invitational Conference on Cryonics<sup>3</sup> on the planet Kibou-daini, which is sponsored by some of the very large Kibou cryo-stasis corporations. Some of which are looking to expand into the Barrayar Empire. And something just doesn't smell right . . .

At the start of *Cryoburn*, Miles finds himself drugged, dazed, and disoriented, wandering lost through the underworld of Kibou, while his Armsman, Roic, is being held by terrorists, following a botched terrorist attack. Through the kindness of strangers and his own abilities, Miles rescues himself, and helps rescue the others (and many sundried others they are). And then the *real* story begins . . .

*Cryoburn* is an excellent book, well worth reading. I enjoyed it from the opening scene through the last closing drabbles. This book shows us Miles as an adult, where it Counts.

\* \* \* \*

<sup>1</sup> Don't let the name fool you: Beta Colony is an Alpha dog in the Nexus.

<sup>2</sup> Following a needle grenade and a period of cryo-stasis. He got better.

<sup>3</sup> One of the seminars was a *fascinating* one, involving an *extremely* severe case of trauma, involving a needle grenade . . . Miles was riveted — one might even say on pins and needles.

## THE JOY OF HIGH TECH

by Rodford Edmiston

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

## Santayana Was Right (Or: Never Throw Anything Away, Including Ideas)

George Santayana wrote in *Reason in Common Sense* "Those who cannot remember the past, are condemned to repeat it." This is oh, so true.

The Greek concept of the music of the spheres is often misunderstood. While some ancient Greeks may, indeed, have thought of literal musical tones the basic concept was the awareness of the mathematical relationships between string length and period of vibration. This led to the concept that there must be a similar mathematical relationship between planetary orbits. They didn't have good enough observations — being limited to unaided vision and some fairly simple angle-measuring instruments — and so didn't take it much further than that. However, we have better tools. Early modern astronomers noted there was, indeed, a mathematical relationship between planetary orbits.



In school you (hopefully) learned of the Titius-Bode Law, named after two men who independently and at roughly the same time derived it. This gives a mathematical relationship between planetary orbits, even including the asteroid belt. (One reason people questioned Pluto's status as a planet is that it doesn't fit the equation. Neptune isn't a great fit, either, but it's a lot closer to the law than Pluto is.) This law has been around for centuries, and many experts thought it was just some cosmic coincidence . . . like the way the continents appear to fit together on maps. However, modern analysis of planetary orbits (and the average orbit of bodies in the asteroid belt) are due to a complex gravitational resonance. Because of these dynamic interactions, the planets (primarily Jupiter) pumped each other into mutually resonant — and stable — orbits. Producing a — if you'll pardon the expression — harmonious arrangement. As for Neptune, later analyses show it is in resonance with the other planets, it's just not quite the resonance predicted by the Titius-Bode Law.

Oh, and about those continents . . . As soon as the first good maps of the world became available people noticed that some shorelines were mirror images of others. There was much speculation on this. Perhaps continents literally mirrored their opposite numbers across the vast oceans. Many wondered if the continents might float on the sea, somehow.

Of course, as science progressed both of those concepts and many others which attempted to explain the "jigsaw puzzle" feature of the continents were deemed invalid. The consensus eventually ruled that the shapes — which were far from precise on any scale, and became less so the smaller one went — were simply coincidences.

They aren't. Recognizing this, and understanding the reason behind the "jigsaw puzzle fit" of the continents led to a revolution in not only geology but planetology. We now know, pretty well, why the Earth is the way it is (vast crustal plates float on an ocean of molten rock, slowly moving around due to currents in the fluid) and other rocky planets are different. Both Venus and Mars are too small for plate tectonic movement, even though both have cores hot enough to produce volcanoes. The reason Olympus Mons on Mars is so huge is that the crust is fixed in place; the plume which created it keeps feeding it, instead of the volcano moving away and another being created, as happens with the Hawaiian Islands.

In his book *Ignition: An Informal History of Liquid Rocket Propellants* Dr. John D. Clark repeatedly laments that young propellant techs and engineers are so ignorant of the history of their own profession that they make mistakes. One example he cited was a guy who went out of his way to order plain red fuming nitric acid, because he didn't know what the I in IRFNA meant. He then wondered why his acid turned green and the drum began to build up a layer of noxious sludge in the bottom.

That letter stands for "Inhibited." IRFNA has a tiny amount of a fluorine compound

added, for the purpose of producing an impermeable fluorine coating on all metals the IRFNA touches, which inhibits the acid from attacking the drum or plumbing. This has a negligible effect on performance but keeps the acid from ruining itself.

Dr. Clark also reports on repeatedly seeing some young turk have a brilliant idea and running with it, not bothering to check the literature first. Worse, neither do their supervisors. There follows an expenditure of effort leading to grudging acknowledgement that the idea just doesn't quite work. At which point someone taps them on the shoulder and pointedly asks why they wasted so much money and time and money and effort and money duplicating work from the Fifties.

Phages were an early scientific attempt to deal with infections. These are the "ad infinitum" bugs which feed on dangerous bacteria. The problem is finding something which will eat, say, staphylococcus, but not you. Antibiotics presented a much more practical method of disease control. These use natural substances — extracted and purified — or artificially designed compounds to directly attack some molecular pathway used by the offending organism but not us.

Unfortunately, living things evolve. Today there are many strains of dangerous bacteria which have developed defenses against some antibiotics, and are still working on others. Worse, because of a phenomenon known as conjugation — by which bacteria exchange DNA — the resistance can spread rapidly. Phages are coming back into vogue.

Indeed, many uses of living organisms in the treatment of certain health problems are seeing renewed application. Maggots can remove dead tissue while leaving the healthy stuff untouched, working far more precisely than a surgeon's knife. Leeches aid in limb transplants, removing excess blood and reducing the chance of clots.

Dr. Flox and his methods may have occasionally been played for laughs, but he was definitely on to something.

The cause of most peptic ulcers is *Helicobacter pylori*. The problem is, most doctors refused to accept this until very recently. John Lykoudis, a general practitioner in Greece, treated patients for peptic ulcer disease with antibiotics, beginning in 1958. More recently, *Helicobacter pylori* was independently discovered in 1982 by two Australian scientists, Robin Warren and Barry J. Marshall as a causative factor for ulcers. The medical profession took some convincing, but eventually this cause was accepted, and treatment changed.

Part of the reason for this stubbornness is that the basic treatment *worked*! Said treatment including doses of pink bismuth. It turns out, *Helicobacter pylori* is adversely affected by pink bismuth (aka bismuth subsalicylate)! Something which I believe was known back in the Thirties, though I haven't been able to verify this.

Sometimes, though, previous assumptions should be tested . . . though even then with knowledge of the past. Arthur C. Clarke was far

from the first to propose using electronic circuitry to generate sound waves to cancel existing sounds. As he mentioned in one of his White Hart stories that wouldn't actually work, though not for the reason in the story. One of the Rick Brant Science Mysteries actually got it closer to right, with the two equal but opposite waves creating a very loud harmonic much lower in frequency, but even that device wouldn't actually work as portrayed in the story. The biggest problem is one of scale, both distance and time. Sound travels relatively slowly even on the scale of a large room. Active sound cancellation of variable sounds in a large area simply can't work in any sort of practical way. So, those knowledgeable about the matter generally labelled the concept as a clever idea which would only work in specific, narrow circumstances.

Today you can use sound-canceling headphones to reduce or eliminate any steady sound. Not because the laws of physics have changed, and only partly due to smaller, faster electronics. The main reason is simply applying the concept in a different way; directly at the ears. You're countering steady or slowly changing sounds at one point (well, two) instead of trying to block a whole room.

You'd think, with the Internet and everything, that doing a basic check of previous art would be the second step, right after having the idea. However, people today seem to have no more inclination to do this than folks did in the past. Let's just hope some continue to do so.

### PACING THE VOID

by Edward Schafer (1977)

Review by Richard Dengrove

There are lots of reasons to be bored by this book. How many of us are interested in the history of Chinese astrology during the Tang Dynasty(618-907 A.D. )? No less, as told in great part by Chinese poetry, and the author's interpretation.

This is not to say I didn't find this book of some interest — to me. Interest is all a matter of our motivation, and I had a motivation. An author called Guthke claimed the book discussed the Chinese belief in extraterrestrials. A subject that fascinates me. The book didn't by his way of thinking. However, it might by mine.

In addition, interest is also a matter of quirks. I found the multifarious poetry calming. I couldn't wait to read the book on the bus each morning, and relax This is bizarre. Up until recently, I haven't been interested in poetry. It was poetry that had to be explained too. Maybe this is a sign of old age.

I doubt you will have either my motivation or would find Chinese poetry calming. In fact, I don't think you would be able to connect with this book in any way. In short, for once, I am showing some empathy for my readers. Instead, I will give you only subjects I feel of interest, which I have developed from the book.

Let's go with the subject that originally got me interested in this book, extraterrestrials.

There was one theory the Chinese have held where extraterrestrials might be possible. It is

similar enough to the one we have had. That is that the Sun, the Moon and Stars float about in a limitless space. However, we will never know whether the theory harbored extraterrestrials. It may have flourished at one time but its books and masters had been lost by the Han Dynasty (206 B.C. to 220 A.D.).

Unfortunately, by the Tang, it was considered impractical. The astrologers couldn't do anything with it; nor apparently could the Taoist priests and monks. Plus any advocates risked all sorts of ridicule by the common people. It was obvious to them that the sky was solid and the stars attached.

The only circle where the infinity of space and worlds received a respectful hearing was the poets. With the theory in favor during Tang Chinese there was no possibility for life among the stars. Most often, the stars were considered gems on a black wall. In fact, heaven was a macro counterpart of a grotto with the stars and planets on its stone walls. Macro gems the counterpart of smaller gems in a grotto. I gather all this was a Taoist conception of the world.

However, there was one place in space that the Tang thought inhabited: the same one as the Ancient Greeks: the Moon. It does look like another world as opposed to detritus on the sky. Moon men as extraterrestrials is considered cheating by historians of extraterrestrial belief, like Crowe and Guthke; but the Moon does lie in outer space. And if it had life on it, they would be extraterrestrials.

It is true, during the Tang, the Moon's inhabitants were often fantastic. People felt they could see a hare, a crow, a toad or frog in the Moon. I admit I probably would not count them as extraterrestrials. It would be like counting the Man in the Moon or the Green Cheese. Another fantastic being who lived on the Moon was the Moon goddess Change-O. I probably wouldn't count her either. I would be a little bit more willing to count the seven Moon maidens and the goddess Change-O's attendants as extraterrestrials. As I would the palaces on the Moon as a sign of extraterrestrials. What would cinch it would be cities on the Moon; some with a population of 60,000 people. Unfortunately, while I remember reading about them, I can't find them now.

In addition, I haven't made up my mind whether these were extraterrestrials: the Moon and star goddesses who came down from the stars and hobnobbed with humans. The legends are full of them. So are dreams and visions.

In fact, they can be so affecting poets, and other literati often fall in love with the star women. You don't think of the Chinese as lovers, but a few apparently were, especially the poets. Some preferred Change-O, the Moon goddess. Others the Weaver Woman, who, in the sky, is a constellation.

The Taoists had an explanation for this phenomena. The beings were no more stars than they were humans. What they were is bodiless spirits. The form humans meet them in depended on what clothes they wished to wear.

Overall, in a grotto universe, the Tang believed in extraterrestrials if you are willing to include Moon men, and star gods on Earth in

human form. With that, it is probably time to end my discussion of extraterrestrials.

Let us go from extraterrestrials to the actual astrology. First, predictable phenomena. You are very familiar with one such phenomena from Chinese astrology. You doubt me! You mean you have never gone to a Chinese restaurant and seen a placemat where the year of your birth is supposed to predict your personality?

For instance, there is the Rooster 1945, the Dog 1946, the Boar 1947, the Rat 1948. There is a twelve year cycle with each year a different animal type dominating. Each of these personalities is different: the Rooster is perfectionist, the Dog is loyal, the Pig is generous and the Rat is imaginative.

I gather the cycle is based on the same band encircling the Earth as the Zodiac's. In addition, like the Zodiac, it is divided into twelve parts. Of course, because it is twelve years rather than one, it uses different constellations. It follows the orbit of Jupiter rather than the Sun, like our Zodiac. Nonetheless, when the Western Zodiac was first introduced into China in the 7th Century AD, the Chinese figured it was so similar as to be superfluous.

The different animals, however, are not named after the constellations. No, the constellations have names, such as Star Chronicle, Murky Hollow and Loggerhead Turtle. Instead, I gather they are named after personality types; and may represent what the Taoists regarded as differing amounts of Yin and Yang.

So you can safely eat your Shrimp Chow Mein knowing the placemat follows Jupiter's twelve year cycle and a Taoist Myer-Briggs typology.

Now we go from a comment about predictable phenomena to those about unpredictable phenomena. Such omens were very important in Western astrology until modern times. For instance, I have seen an Italian system where the different shaped tails on each comet were thought to represent bad luck for different groups.

In the Tang Dynasty, certain unpredictable phenomena were thought to require tough measures. Very tough measures. The most ghastly were the Heavenly Dogs. They were apparently meteoric fireballs that rushed to Earth and made a noise. The omen they represented was believed to shatter armies and kill commanders.

When a Heavenly Dog popped, the authorities felt they needed a human sacrifice. This was done in secret. The agents of the priests would go out at night in dog skins and iron claws, and waylay unwitting citizens. From them, they would take their liver and heart. They did not do this without resistance, however. When it was rumored these 'officials' were abroad, citizens would not travel at night without bows and swords.

The reaction was different from another unpredictable phenomena, comets with tails. Their orbits weren't worked out until much later; so, in the Tang Dynasty, they were unpredictable.

To prevent the comet from being too bad an omen, the emperor might fast. Also, he might grant amnesty to prisoners. And to falcons. Those probably were tougher measures for the emperor than human sacrifice against peons. Emperor Li Ang, among other things, fasted when Halley's comet approached. And sure enough, its tail decreased in size and it shortly disappeared.

To sum up, noisy meteors got people sacrificed; comets with tails got fasting and clemency.

From astrology, and predictable and unpredictable phenomena, we go to the history of it all. What might interest you here is the Empress Wu Zetian (625-705 A.D.). For all these centuries, she has been the queen of Chinese pornography. Shameless hussy is written on every page.

In addition, it was a typical prediction, doomsaying being typical, that China would again be ruled by a woman, as under Empress Wu. It was as bad as barbarians or faithless vassals attacking the emperor. Or plagues and famine.

Was she any more dissipated than anyone else. Apparently, all rulers were pretty dissipated then, as proven by the tale of her ascension. The real problem with her was that it was a blow to masculine pride that a woman ruled China.

A further blow was that she wasn't a bad ruler. She appointed good men, good literati, to govern her provinces. She never let any of her rumored wrestler and midget lovers within a hundred feet of the levers of power. The literati who derided her admitted that.

A further blow to masculine pride was that she ruled China with a lot of self-confidence. She decided to call her regime the Zhou Dynasty, an older Dynasty (1100-221 B.C.). In fact, even today, she has gotten historians to agree that she had restored the Zhou Dynasty for a brief interlude (690-705 A.D.).

But what does this have to do with astrology? Nothing. Another sign of her self-confidence did. Astrologers observed the stars. They also had a religious function. What is important here is that there was a special building to perform rituals and keep sacred text in.

The Empress Wu decided, however, that her astrologers needed a new whoop-de-doodle building. Others had planned a new building too. However, they didn't have it built because they feared the wrath of the star gods. Not the Empress Wu. In fact, she built it in her home city, the remote Lo-Yang. Too far in the boonies as far as the astrologers in question were concerned.

Thus, the much hated but competent and self confident Empress defied the star gods and built a new building to house texts, ritual paraphernalia and astrologers, who were trembling in their boots.

Let us leave China entirely for the world of us Jews in Diaspora. Also, let us leave the subject of Chinese astrology altogether. This has to do with the fact the Chinese drew stars like bulbs or dots as opposed to the star-like shape that has been popular in the West. I have also

seen Chinese constellations linked to one another as if they were letters. Of course, unlike us Jews, the Chinese had no letters. They wrote in pictograms.

Some Jewish Kabbalists did link up stars that way in what they called Eye-writing. They considered the finished product an alphabet although all the letters had their equivalents in the Hebrew alphabet. The purpose of it was not communication anyway, but magic.

My theory is that Jewish people got their Eyewriting from the Chinese. How, I don't know and I frankly admit there is no evidence for it. In fact, there is evidence against it. I have to admit that Jewish Eyewriting alphabets are not only based on the stars but can also be "an alphabet of Angels."

As for the original rationale for Eyewriting, it is unknown. Tractenburg claimed that he found some in Aramaic manuscripts of the early Centuries AD, with no indication of their purpose.

In addition, there is the problem of cultural transference. It is very possible the eye/stars could get from China to Jews in Eastern Europe. Until very recent times, there was a sizable Jewish population in Mesopotamia, which had constant contact with their brethren in the West. In turn, they had constant contact with China via the Silk Road.

Of course, did Jewish people actually receive those eye/stars from Chinese? There is not a tittle of evidence as far as I can tell. Still, I believe.

In this essay, I have chosen from Schaffer's *Pacing the Void* topics that are up and down, right and left, predictable and unpredictable, extraterrestrial and totally spiritual, Taoist and Jewish. I hope you have found them of interest.

### **SHERLOCK HOLMES: The American Years**

edited by Michael Kurland.

Minotaur Books, 2010. 347 pages.

Review by John Purcell

This collection of short stories is based on an interesting premise: the young Sherlock Holmes — most likely in his early twenties — spent a couple years in the United States of America in the 1870s, and naturally experiences a series of adventures, which are chronicled in these ten original stories. The authors who contributed to this book are all fine mystery writers, a couple of whom science fiction fans would be familiar with: Richard A. Lupoff and Marta Randall. The result is indeed a very entertaining book.

Throughout each story runs a common thread: young Mr. Holmes is learning his craft, developing his powers of deduction, sometimes from a unlikely source (such as the Navajo Indian who saves his life in "Cutting for Sign"). The consistency of Holmes' character leads me to suspect that editor Michael Kurland gave a character synopsis to each of the authors: Sherlock in his 20s to early 30s, a tall, thin, hawkish-looking, very British male possessing a pompous attitude while being unschooled in the social graces. (Yep, that's Holmes alright.)

All of these characteristics are used to good effect in the stories. For example, in the lead-off story by Richard A. Lupoff, "Inga Sigerson Weds," the reader is introduced to the entire Holmes family: Sherlock is 21 at the time of the story (set in 1875), and he is the younger son of a baker, whose wife was expecting yet another child, while Sherlock's brother Mycroft ran the shop's books (Mycroft pops up in a couple other stories as a minor character, too), and sister Elizabeth also worked in the bakery, usually behind the counter. The basic crux of the plot revolves around Elizabeth Holmes receiving a wedding invitation from her friend Inga Sigerson in New York, but her parents simply cannot afford to send her on a steamer, let alone voyage overseas by herself. So what happens? Mycroft surreptitiously — he's portrayed as an eccentric yet brilliant man — arranges for Elizabeth and Sherlock (he's essentially chaperoning his sister) to sail as members of the ship's orchestra (she on flute, he on violin), but Elizabeth needs to look and dress like a young man (women not permitted in a ship's orchestra in those days). Naturally a mystery develops during the cruise, and .... well, you get the idea. Plus, there is a surprise guest on board as one of the passengers.

It is under various guises like this that each story in *Sherlock Holmes: the American Years* transpires. The reader likewise gets to meet all sorts of interesting characters in these stories: Wild West bandits in "The Stagecoach Detective" by Linda Robertson; corrupt politicians in Washington, DC ("The Old Senator" by Steve Hockensmith); Native Americans ("Cutting for Sign" by Rhys Bowen); historical figures, such as P.T. Barnum ("The Sacred White Elephant of Mandalay" by Michael Mallory); Mexican General Tomas Pulgon, a genuine Bad Guy in tumultuous Mexico of the 1870s (Holmes is a minor character in this story), in Marta Randall's "The English Senor"; talented American actor Edwin Booth, the younger brother of John Wilkes Booth ("The Curse of Edwin Booth" by Carole Bugge); even Mark Twain narrates one of the stories ("My Silk Umbrella" by Darryl Brock), in which he meets the young and annoyingly smug know-it-all Brit (Twain had a fine-tuned love/hate relationship with the British) Sherlock Holmes at a baseball game in Hartford, Connecticut! It is a wonderful collection of stories, of which only one really didn't work for me — Gary Lovisi's "The American Adventure" because it attempted to make the connection between Holmes and his mentor, Dr. Joseph Bell, the man who was "the model in whose image Sherlock Holmes was cast" (from Michael Kurland's brief intro to the story). I suppose Holmes' famed character traits of observation and deduction can be attributed to learning from someone he deeply respected and admired, but this plot device simply didn't work for me. "The American Adventure" was well-told — in fact the narrative consistency through each story was solid, sometimes very much emulating Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's writing style — but for some reason the underlying premise didn't work for me. Oh,

well. That is going to happen in an anthology; not every story is going to be a gem.

Along those lines, the question naturally arises as to which stories rise to the top. My favorites are Lupoff's "Inga Sigerson Weds" (mainly because I liked the idea of having Elizabeth Holmes narrate the tale) and "My Silk Umbrella"; in the latter tale, I think Darryl Brock does a fine job of getting Mark Twain's cantankerous nature and biting sarcasm across very well. Marta Randall's "The English Senor" is significant for not only being a tightly-written story exploring the possibility of a teen-aged Sherlock Holmes in Mexico, but for Randall's narrative voice: it is decidedly in the voice of the protagonist, Dona Montalvo, but yet maintaining a strong connection to the main premise of this anthology — Holmes' visits to America during the 1870s and 1880s.

Overall, this was a pleasant surprise finding at the local library. I think fans of the Sherlock Holmes canon would enjoy it as well.

### **SKYBAR**

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

I first heard about this candy bar when I was reading *Candyfreak*. I remember being intrigued by Steve Almond's description of a candy bar with four different fillings. I also remember thinking, *Why have I never seen this candy bar?*

Not too long ago, I spotted the Skybar in the front candy display at a local Rite Aid. Seeing the bars on the counter triggered a *Candyfreak* flashback, and I picked up a couple of Skybars right away.

As both Almond and the wrapper state, the Skybar has four different fillings in a milk chocolate bar — caramel, vanilla, peanut, and fudge. There are four sections to each bar, each containing a different filling.

Each section has "Necco" molded into the top. I placed the bar so that "Necco" was right side up, and started sampling the sections from the top down. As it happens, trying it that way meant that I encountered the sections in the reverse of the way they are listed on the wrapper.

The first filling I encountered was the fudge section. It had a slightly richer chocolate flavor than that of the milk chocolate (more on that later). While the fudge filling had a smooth, creamy texture, it didn't have quite the chewiness I normally associate with fudge.

The second section contained the peanut filling. I was expecting something along the lines of a peanut butter-type filling. Instead, it was more of a caramel with just a little bit of peanut flavoring. I found it to be the most disappointing of the sections, because the peanut flavor just wasn't strong enough.

The third section contained the vanilla filling. This was probably the most distinctive of the flavors. It had a strong vanilla flavor, able to stand out against the flavor of the chocolate shell more than any of the other fillings.

And the fourth and final section had the caramel filling. The filling is somewhat similar to the caramel in a Caramello bar. Soft, but not

fluid, with a strong brown sugar flavor to it.

As I have already noted, each section is covered in milk chocolate. Necco uses a slightly richer milk chocolate than Hershey or Nestle. It's sweeter, and it has notes of honey in it. (I checked the ingredients list, though, and honey is not listed.) It has a firm snap to it when you break apart the sections.

From what I've read, Skybar makes the claim that it is the only candy bar that has four different fillings in the same bar. Sampling one was rather like a miniature box of chocolates in one bar (and that's something else used in their advertising). I think I may be trying them again if this is something that Rite Aid will be carrying on a regular basis.

### ORIGINAL MAPLE ICE MINTS

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

I went by World Market yesterday, and I came across these while perusing the candy section. Just the name alone was intriguing enough that I knew I had to buy a tin.

I didn't open the tin right away. For a number of reasons, I put the bag with the tin in my jacket, and I get back to it until this afternoon. Before I even opened the tin — I was removing the plastic wrap, to be precise — his wonderful aroma of maple wafted toward my nostrils, and I already knew that this would be something wonderful.

Maple Ice Mints are a Canadian product, produced by Big Sky Brands. To quote a line from the tin, they are made with real maple sugar. The mints are a very pale tan, speckled with flecks of a darker tan. They are roughly the same size as an Altoids mint, and they have a maple leaf stamped on one side.

If I thought the smell of original Maple Ice Mints were wonderful, I was in for an even greater treat when I placed one on my tongue. These are supposed to be breath mints, and I could detect the faintest hint of mint in my mouth. Honestly, though, this candy is all about the maple. It's like a drop of maple syrup in solid form (which, come to think of it, is precisely what maple sugar is).

This was the first time I had seen Maple Ice Mints anywhere in Louisville. I usually make a swing by Louisville's World Market at least once a week, so I'm certain this was a recent arrival. I'm just hoping that they will stay around. If I see that World Market is out of something, I never know when — or if — I'll see it again or not. I hope I see more Maple Ice Mints. I will be wanting more.

### WILD BLUEBERRY MAPLE ICE MINTS

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

I saw two varieties of Maple Ice Mints when I went by World Market a couple of days ago. And yes, I picked up a tin of each. Then I took them to the register, and paid for them.

[INSERT RIMSHOT]

Okay, enough with the standup routine.

Time to get serious.

I had much the same experience when I opened the tin of Wild Blueberry Maple Ice Mints earlier today that I did when I opened the Original Maple Ice Mints yesterday. In this case, though, the wonderful aroma that tickled my nostrils was a blend of maple and blueberry. Not quite as wonderful as smelling a stack of blueberry pancakes hot off the griddle, but it was pretty damn close. Really damn close, as a matter of fact.

I was just a little disappointed when I opened the tin. I suppose I was expecting the Blueberry mints to have the faintest bluish-purple color to them — reflecting the blueberry in the mints. Instead, they are the same tan color with darker tan flecks that the Original mints do.

When I popped one in my mouth, the blueberry pancakes theme continued. The flavor reminds me of the blueberry topping and maple syrup that's left on your plate once you've finished eating the pancakes. Of course, I think that's the best part of blueberry pancakes. Especially scooping up as much as you can of that blended topping.

These are breath mints, and as with the Original version, I could detect a faint presence of mint. If anything, I think it might have been just a little more pronounced in the Blueberry mints.

After trying both versions of Maple Ice Mints, I find myself thinking two things. First, I really hope that World Market keeps these in stock on a regular basis. Second, I wonder if Big Sky Brands has any other versions that they may be planning to release.

### FANZINES

*Beyond Bree* October 2010, November 2010

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Not available for The Usual; \$15/year, \$20 foreign, \$10/year electronic.

*Dark Matter* #1 October 2010

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*The Drink Tank* #261, #262, #263, #264

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*eI* #52 October 2010

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*Fadeaway* #17 August-September 2010, #18 October-November 2010

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*Fish Out of Water* #400, #401, #402, #403,  
#404, #405, #406, #407

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*Fortnightly Fix* #16

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*It Goes on the Shelf* #32 November 2010

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*Joel's Debris* #8

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*The Knarley Knews* #136 October 2010

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*MT Void* V. 29 #15 October 8, 2010 — V. 29  
#22 November 26, 2010

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*Opuntia* #69.5 October 2010, #70 November  
2010. #70.1A December 2010

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*The Reluctant Famulus* #76 November 2010

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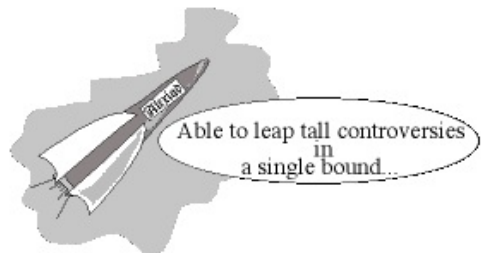
*Visions of Paradise* #157

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*The Zine Dump* #26 October-November 2010

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## Letters, we get letters



From: **Rod E. Smith**      October 14, 2010  
730 Cline Street, Frankfort, KY 40601-1034 USA  
[stickmaker@usa.net](mailto:stickmaker@usa.net)

George W. Price asks about the Shadow just a few days after I read some info. Wikipedia has a good overview.

Greatly simplifying to avoid boring those with only casual interest: The Shadow started as the host of a radio anthology show which was created to promote a pulp mystery magazine. The character proved so popular people started asking at newsstands and bookstores for "That Shadow magazine."

Eventually, the radio show changed to stories *about* the Shadow, and a Shadow magazine was created. The magazine was rather different; no Margo Lane until it had been around for years, true invisibility was not mentioned until very late in the run, and Lamont Cranston was an independent character whom the Shadow occasionally imitated. For a while, the magazine was so popular it ran two issues a month.

Most of the magazine stories were written by Walter Gibson, whose writing output makes Asimov's look paltry. He was a magician, and primarily wrote books and magazine articles about stage magic. This is why in his early stories the Shadow uses many magicians' tricks, such as The Devil's Whisper (today we'd call it a flashbang grenade). In many ways, the Shadow was very like a ninja, but it was all magic tricks. Oh, and don't minimize the effectiveness of magicians at hiding things. During World War II Britain used a famous magician to devise ways of deceiving the enemy, many of which were very successful.

The scene in Harlan Ellison's revenge fantasy "The New York Review of Bird" (Weird Heroes, Volume 2 (1975)/Strange Wine (1977)) where Cordwainer Bird speaks to the aged and decrepit Kent Allard, living alone in a New York residential hotel, using "the power to cloud men's minds" so he can get his Social Security check out of the mailbox before everyone else gets theirs, is one of the few worthwhile parts of the wearisome Caleb Catlumesque "Wold Newton" scheme of Philip

José Farmer's.

— JTM

There was also a Shadow TV show and several movies, at least four comics (all by different publishers) and probably much more.

This link leads to a site on the character:

<http://www.shadowsanctum.net/>

In personal news, my recently completed fantasy novel *Descendants of Empire* still hasn't sold, three months on. (Yeah, I'm being facetious. :-))

From: **Henry L. Welch**      October 14, 2010  
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Thanks for the number of issues of *Alexiad* that you have sent me over the past year and that I have been horribly remiss about LOCing until now. I will plead FAFIA and suggest you see the forthcoming *TKK* 136 for somewhat of an explanation. I have not fallen off the face of the planet, nor even stopped all my fannish activity, but my fanzine activity did get the short end of the stick.

Please note that I have a change of address: 15290 Upper Ellen Rd.; Los Gatos, CA 95033. The forward order on the old Skyline address will expire shortly and anything sent to that address will likely bounce.

Despite my apparent FAFIA, I have managed to read all the zines sent to me, although my comments will be brief. Vol. 9 No. 1

Congratulations to Lisa on the continued weight loss. It is hard to change eating and exercise habits.

Alexis Gilliland: I considered *Avatar* to simply be a remake of *Ferngully*, but on steroids.

John Purcell: I know the owners of Crystal Cave in Wisconsin and have even done some volunteer work there. They are nice people. Interestingly enough, despite by numerous trips to the back end of the cave, I have never seen the commercial section with all the formations. Vol. 9 No. 2

Random Jottings: How do you make a science fair poster without using paper — a flammable substance? Or ink — a chemical?

That's the kid's problem. The school wants to make sure it won't be sued if anything goes wrong.

— JTM

From: **Darrell Schweitzer**      October 16, 2010  
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You remark "apropos of nothing" on page 19 that last winter was the coldest Britain has experienced in 17 years. This is true. There were remarkable photos from space showing the

entire isle encased in snow and ice. But this is not apropos of nothing at all. It is something **predicted** by global warming models. We knew about it for years in advance. As the northern ice-cap melts, more fresh water gets into the ocean, lowering the overall salinity of the North Atlantic. The water coming from the Gulf Stream is saltier, and denser, and it sinks under this fresh water. The Gulf Stream is starting to fail, just as predicted. Britain will get colder. While I do not think Britain will become uninhabitable, it may find itself with a climate more like that of Norway or Finland. This will of course cause major disruptions to British agriculture.

It is of course a sign of good science that it makes such predictions. Global warming is happening fast enough that anyone older than a teenager has actually seen it happen. I can remember when the climate was quite different from what it is now. I can also remember when *Life* magazine made a big deal (about 1960) when an icebreaker actually smashed its way through the Northwest Passage. It is true that one of the early polar explorers (I think it was Amundsen) got through in the early 20th century, but this was a feat of great derring-do, which was still remarkable in the 1960s. Nowadays, the Northwest Passage is open for commerce. It is the new shortcut between Asiatic Russia (or the other northern parts of the Orient) and western Europe. The world's more capable leaders, who cannot afford to deny the evidence of their eyes (or of science) for any of many possible petty reasons, are already working out the implications. There are vast oil reserves in the Arctic, now opening up because the the disappearance of the ice cap. Russia, the US, and Canada, are staking their claims. This will become, in the next twenty years or so, an important part of the world's economy, and may well tip the energy-producing balance of power away from the Arabs. A writer looking for a theme for a near-future technothriller could well spin out a scenario for a post-warming Arctic oil war. (Somebody is probably already doing this.) I don't expect an oil war in the Arctic, myself. I expect the matter to be negotiated. One optimistic conclusion I have come to is that large, vastly-destructive wars between major nations are bad for business. It won't do to knock out your enemy who may otherwise be a major customer for your exported goods. Victory could lead to bankruptcy as easily as defeat. Capitalism and profit may be a more reliable way of keeping the peace than virtue.

The reinforced tanker Manhattan traversed the Northwest Passage in 1969, but took so much damage they decided to build the Trans-Alaska Pipeline instead. Roald Amundsen traversed the Northwest Passage in 1903-6 on the *Gjøa* (named after the original owner's wife) which is now in the Norwegian Maritime Museum in Oslo. Melancholy thought: probably by November 23, and almost certainly by the

time you get this, I will have lived longer than Amundsen did.

Of course scientists of all sorts are witnessing the changes in their own disciplines. Botanists can tell you that flowers bloom earlier in the Spring than they once did. Epidemiologists track the northward movement of tropical diseases. My older brother, Dale F. Schweitzer, the noted entomologist (Google the name and you will see who he is) tells me that all the moth species we were familiar with as kids have changed radically, as the foodplants change and southern species move north.

Here, in Pennsylvania the "summer heatwave" that began in May has finally broken. When I was a kid September and even late August were cool. You could measure the progress of Autumn by the goldenrod coming out, certain Autumn moths appearing, and then the leaves changing color. My family used to vacation in Maine, often into late August, where we would get an early preview of Fall (goldenrod, etc.) and then we'd come back before the first of September (when school started) and see it all over again. Nowadays these indicators are off by a couple weeks at least. It's still summer in mid-September. So we are looking at massive environmental change.

It used to be said "Everyone talks about the weather but no one ever does anything about it." That may be changing too. We can do something about it, if we can first defeat the anti-environmentalists. But as I said last time, I am not convinced that the world will really begin to address this problem seriously until there have been more major catastrophes. You should still think about investing in beachfront property in Arkansas.

I'm not going to deny Global Warming per se, since it is demonstrably happening, but I strongly doubt Anthropogenic Global Warming (AGW). Several reasons. (1) The raw data just isn't there - for an explanation of why it's not there, see Jerry Pournelle's Day Book at: <http://www.jerrypournelle.com/>

(2) We have been warming up from the Little Ice Age (circa CE 1400 - CE 1700) since 1700, and we still haven't reached the temperatures for the Medieval Warm Period (peaked circa CE 850 - CE 1050). (3) It seems to me (and correct me if I'm wrong, please) that, for the True Believers, there is no data and no evidence that can falsify AGW. Pop me for a Popperian, but can you name one thing that, if it were proven, that would make you say, "AGW is

false?"

--- Grant

I am afraid that Alexis Gilliland is one of those people who can't tell his heresies apart without a program, which causes us to worry about his own Orthodoxy and the salvation of his soul, since people who can't tell a Monophysite from a Monothelite and may well lapse into the Monophonic Heresy (which holds that the Heavenly Hosts sing in a single voice rather than an orchestrated choir of voices) or the Econophanic Heresy (which holds that the Devil has a storehouse of sin in Hell similar to God's storehouse of grace, and the Devil gives better interest), or even the Grand Central Heresy (too wicked to be described). . . . (I confess that these last three are the inventions of John Bellairs in *St. Fidgetta*, a book I highly recommend, and now available in a Bellairs omnibus from NESFA.)

Alexis is entirely wrong about Cyril of Alexandria as a leader of "Coptic Christianity." No, not at all. Cyril may have been a bloody-handed thug, but he was an Orthodox bloody-handed thug, which is why he became a Doctor of the Church and is now a saint. Coptic Christianity is Monophysite. It is heretical. The great irony is that the Christianity Cyril was so eager to establish was rejected by the Egyptians, who remained Monophysite, and resented the fact that a Byzantine army had to be stationed in Alexandria to keep an Orthodox patriarch on the throne there. The reason that Egypt went over to the Arabs without much resistance was that the common people, being Monophysites, saw the Orthodox Byzantines as oppressors and felt they would get a better deal under the Arabs. They did. The Early Muslims imposed a tax, and certain other discriminatory practices, but otherwise didn't care what kind of Christian you were.

The "discriminatory practices" were quite discriminatory: see Bat Ye'or's *The Decline of Eastern Christianity Under Islam* (1996) for what they were like.

— JTM

Alexandria was different. There the population was mostly Greek (at least culturally). Indeed, ancient writers spoke of going from Alexandria "into Egypt," rather the way a British colonial might speak of going from Hong Kong into China. Alexandria offered more resistance, and was even briefly retaken by the Byzantines in the reign of Constans II. (646, I think it was.) But the Byzantines could not hold the city for more than a few months, being unable to recapture Egypt itself, where the natives wanted nothing to do with them.

Alexandria did not decline into a "sleepy, pious backwater" after Cyril got done Christianizing it. It remained a major economic center until the Arab conquest. As it had for many centuries, the grain of Egypt still flowed out through Alexandria to feed the rest of the Empire. The only difference was that now the grain ships went to Constantinople, not Rome.

In Justinian's day, it was as important a port as ever. It had declined as a center of learning certainly. The Library was gone. You could study theology in Alexandria, as long as you agreed with the views of the Patriarch, but the secular learning has ceased. But Alexandria did not lose its economic importance until it became part of the Caliphate, because then it was a mere border outpost of a land-based power centered on Damascus or Baghdad, rather than a major port of an empire circling the Mediterranean.

I think Alexis is wrong too when he suggests that pagans and Jews moved to "the more welcoming venue of Constantinople." The Christian emperors proudly proclaimed that Constantinople had been a Christian city since its founding. There were no pagan temples there. Pagan refugees from Alexandria might have found more welcome in Athens, but paganism died out. You probably know the story of how the last dozen or so pagan philosophers, in the time of Justinian, went to Persia after the school of Athens was closed down. They didn't like state-enforced Zoroastrianism either, and were eventually allowed to return to the Roman Empire, and remain pagan, but these were a few harmless old men who died obscurely in retirement, with no followers. Jews of course were persecuted everywhere. Michael Grant in his book *Jews in the Roman World* makes the point that the condition of the Jews deteriorated sharply once the Empire had become Christian. The only "more welcoming venue" for Jews was Persia, which occasionally persecuted them, but usually did not. Certainly by the time of the great Persian invasions of the Middle East in the early 7th century, the Jews proved solidly pro-Persian.

From: **Brad W. Foster**      October 16, 2010  
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Still amazed at how you can pack so much content and analysis into each issue of *Alexiad*. I'd be hard put to read even a tiny percentage of what you do, let alone make intelligent comments about it. Thanks for taking on that job!

Nice to see those little fillos in here, finally feel like I'm contributing some small way to the copies you keep sending. Attached here are two more for your possible use — don't know why I was in a "bug" mood recently, but seem to have done a bunch with that theme!

My own reading right now is into John Sladek's two "Roderick" novels. Someone had recommended these long ago, and lucked into a two-in-one volume at the used book store a few weeks ago. Great stuff.

Great to read that there is a new Mary Roach book. Actually, there are two I wasn't aware of. Became a big fan when read "Stiff", and sought out "Spook" and enjoyed equally. Not only had I not heard of "Packing for Mars", but somehow missed out on "Bonk" as well. That's the problem with doing most of my hit-and-miss book shopping at the used book stores. If an



author is really popular, it will often take quite some time for people who buy the books new to part with them. Oh well, now I at least know what titles to keep an eye out for.

I had two different people tell me I had to read *Packing for Mars*. That may have been why I ended up buying two copies . . .

— JTM

Back to the drawing board —

From: **Richard A. Dengrove** Oct. 18, 2010  
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More comments. I'm still not satisfied. This time on *Alexiad* August 2010.

I'll start with a deep question. What is a soul that The Little Mermaid didn't have one? In modern cadence, a soul is a vague part of us that survives death. Aristotle was more explicit, if I remember correctly. He claimed our soul was reason, and it came from The God and returned to him. It was man's divine part. So, under Aristotle's definition, the Little Mermaid need not have worried. It sounds like she had as much reason as most humans.

From a deep question, we go to trivia: the show with an all Black cast in the '50s with Black judges, lawyers, policemen, etc. *Amos and Andy*, I bet. Also a show with a checkered fan club. Some would say a rainbow fan club. I remember a TV show where Jesse Jackson praised *Amos and Andy*. Also, I remember a late night interview where Sammy Davis, Jr. raved about it. Unfortunately, the show presses too many buttons, especially for people who are only buttons.

Speaking of buttons, in your review of *Pleasure Model*, Joe, you expect fictional societies that proclaim their political incorrectness to be politically incorrect.

That's your interpretation.

— JTM

A vain hope. Not even Larry Niven's society in "Jigsaw Man" in *Dangerous Visions* was politically incorrect. The one where the slightest crime meant your organs would be harvested. No, it's not politically incorrect to say that we're going to hell in a handbasket.

The one fictional society that, I suspect, is politically incorrect is Paolo Bacigalupi's *Windup Girl*. Ostensibly, Paolo is a committed Green. And there is plenty of evidence in the novel for it: by several centuries hence, man has messed up his environment royally.

However, ultimately this is misleading. The royal mess may result in a better state of affairs, and for reasons that are non-green — maybe anti-green.

In addition, the way Paolo inches to the prospect of better times is politically incorrect as well: he uses the Buddhist view of life that it is unpredictable; the only thing we can depend on is spirituality. An idea most people hate if

you tell it to them to their face. On the other hand, it makes for a plot that keeps you on the edge of your seat.

While Paolo Bacigalupi is misleading, Darrell Schweitzer's letter got me to thinking that much of *I, Claudius*, with Derek Jacobi, is misleading too: Only for the sake of low rumor and not any high flown philosophy.

Long ago, I noticed Livia committed all her murders when no one was looking. In short, she left no proof one way or the other. Suetonius' *Twelve Caesars* could just as easily be based on the fantasies of calumniators as any real mayhem.

As opposed to Suetonius' mushy evidence, Alexis Gilliland gave us proven fact about the progress of atomic power. Among the subjects he talked about was Thorium powered reactors. However, he wasn't too certain about India's most recent exploits with Thorium.

According to the Wikipedia article on Thorium, India has made some progress in building a Thorium based reactor. It says that India makes use of Thorium in the Kakrapar-1 reactor for power flattening rather than depleted uranium. I get the impression here that Kakrapar-1 is a breeder reactor and is making the Thorium into Thorium more readily usable in an atomic reactor.

It also is building an advanced heavy water reactor that will supposedly be operational by next year. Which, I guess, means it will be one using Thorium processed from the Kakrapar-1 to generate electricity.

Of course, I may be very mistaken. I am not mistaken, however, that India plans to generate 30% of its power from Thorium reactors by 2050.

I am a lot more certain about the funny tale George Price tells. It proves my point that Scotsmen certainly did want the cool air to circulate around their legs and elsewhere in the vicinity. In fact, that particular Scotsman didn't want anything to interfere with the cool air.

I'm not as certain as Martin Morse Wooster. He says bin Laden fought on the Pakistani side in the '80s war against the Russians in Afghanistan; so we really didn't support him then. End of argument.

Or is it? Weren't we allied with the Pakistanis then? And, in fact, weren't we sending them aid? Also, when Ronald Reagan called the fighters against the Russians Freedom Fighters, did he exclude bin Laden and his compatriots?

Of course, I will have to bone up on my Zelazny before I know whether I disagree with Martin on him. He mentions liking Zelazny. What has astonished me about Zelazny, though, is not that Martin would like him, whom, I presume, is an old fan.

No, what has astonished me is that, at Stellarcon a couple of years ago, some gamers announced a game based on Zelazny's novel *Game of Thrones*. Obviously, they're not, as rumored by us old fuds, total illiterates.

That's it for comments.

I have some comments for *Alexiad* October 2010.

REVIEWERS NOTES: You can only take your car in Sunday at 9 AM, and that interferes with your laundry schedule? My time isn't quite so limited. However, as I get older, I find it more and more limited. I wonder where it flies. Of course, I have made a lot more chores for myself than I used to. A lot more things have to be done that I wouldn't have dreamed of doing years ago.

In addition, there is a matter of perspective because, with age, the next second is a smaller and smaller percentage of my previous seconds.

UNDER HEAVEN. I'm wondering whether our view of the Tang Dynasty wasn't fashioned by 20th Century Chinese blood and thunder tales. I saw a Chinese movie a couple of years ago set in the Tang Dynasty, and it has all the Tang clichés. Including of course the Chinese ninjas.

This seems to be the only novel that mentions what was important in the Tang Dynasty, namely, Chinese astrology. Of course, as I understand it, the novel's only astrology is contained in the title. The plot and setting doesn't seem to depend in any way on it.

However, actual Tang tales often depend on the lacunae of astrology, which the 20th Century is mum about. Among the items that might make a good fantasy, there are star people changing their starry clothes for human clothes, and sojourning among us.

JOCKWORLD. Lisa, are you still trying to lose weight? If I remember correctly from NASFIC, you looked fine. Maybe not thin thin, but normal on the thin side. As for belly fat, aren't women supposed to have more fat on them than men? Of course, they're, I guess, also supposed to worry themselves sick about it.

AS GOD IS MY WITNESS. PART II. Thursday, August 12th. You say you fought Beltway traffic to get from Fairfax, Virginia to Baltimore. Did you, at some point, use Route 295? That goes through DC, and avoids the Beltway.

THE JOY OF HIGH TECH. From Ancient times to the Renaissance, the cognoscenti believed that the planets and the heavens were immutable because they were made up of a more spiritual matter than we, Aether or Ether. The fifth element. That was why their orbits were believed circular and regular.

HUGO RESULTS. I think there is a simple solution to a podcast winning as Best Fanzine. Have a separate category for podcasts. If that means Worldcon is going to have to buy too many rockets, maybe some genuinely out of date categories can go.

Which? I noticed in some categories you had to download the item because it may have been difficult for voters to obtain it. Isn't the best supposed to be widely read to begin with?

LETTER WE GET. ct. Lloyd Penney. I thank Lloyd for thanking me for thanking him for his letters. I fear that's a mouth full.

Ct. George Price. About George's account of 'striking' miners, my impression is that management-union relations used to be quite violent. Would the 1931 Time have reported it

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if there was management violence? Under Henry Luce, I doubt it.

Not that there wasn't union violence.

About *The Shadow*, I gather different people said thumbs up or down for the magazine and the radio show scripts. Whoever OK's the radio's scripts liked a magical, mystical, etc *Shadow*. Lamont Cranston learning to fight crime in Tibet.

The magazine's editor and main writer, Walter Gibson, never ventured beyond that proven by science, or at least the hardest of common sense. It probably helped that he also wrote magic tricks. I notice magicians tend to be very skeptical.

From: **Alexis A. Gilliland**

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He sent one, we got it, and then  
the house ate it. I'm sorry, Alexis.

— JTM

From: **Joy V. Smith** October 20, 2010  
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Interesting background on stories with characters who have jobs in various occupations, including Tugboat Annie and the Earthworm Tractor stories. And thanks for your article, Family Ties. I think those relationships can make a story more interesting — and real. And thank you too for the background on stories with different versions and endings and related books.

I enjoyed the review of *The Murder Room*: (the solving of cold cases), and *Haunted Mesa* by Louis L'Armour sounds intriguing. I'm glad Lisa found it. Maybe it could be reprinted with his other books and find its proper audience.

I enjoyed the ReConStrucTion report — part 2. I remember now that Warren Buff was busy with that 'cause he mentioned it in the *Southern Fandom Confederation Bulletin* updates. (Couldn't remember the con.) The battleship visit (USS *North Carolina*) and the museum visits sounded like fun. (I've been to historical homes where tourists snipped pieces out of curtains; and Plymouth Rock is now Plymouth Pebble.)

And on tour visits to  
Shakespeare's house in the  
eighteenth century, it was de  
rigueur to slice a shaving from the  
chair he sat in to write.

— JTM

More interesting info on science in *The Joy of High Tech*. And more info in the LOCs, including Taral Wayne's background on Roman coins. So that radio show you were talking about was Amos and Andy. It was the only one I could think of, but I didn't know that much about the characters or the moral points! (I learn

so much in *Alexiad*, including the fact that in *Warehouse 13*, they made H. G. Wells a woman! I've pretty much given up that show — and it has such a great premise!) And thanks to Sue Burke for the historical background.

From: **John Hertz** October 18, 2010  
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Thanks for mentioning my "Classics of SF" book talks in your NASFiC report. You allude to Woodrow Wilson Smith. Since Art Widner — in fine form at Aussiecon IV — appears to be the Eldest, perhaps we should call him Woody.

Speaking of Harry Browne, I'm beginning to recall a fantasy novel (*Under the Influence?*) in which such a man had mental powers when tipsy.

A fantasy Gallagher? What  
would the equivalent of Joe the  
Robot be? A glass goblin?

— JTM

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To Goethe is attributed that the Autobiographical Fallacy consists in supposing that an artist can create nothing except about himself. We keep hearing it. Not only is it mean-spirited, it's lazy; it avoids coming to grips with the author's work.

Louis L'Amour was a fine writer. There is a lot to be learned from Westerns. Besides, some are good. Ever read *The Valdez Horses*?

From: **Milt Stevens** October 29, 2010  
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In *Alexiad* V9 #5, Joseph mentions the Jonathan Strange and Mr. Morell Syndrome. If I had read no further, I would have thought you meant a piece of fiction with a bunch of subtitles. That is about all I remember about that particular novel. It was published within the last few years. It won the Hugo for best novel, and I may even have voted for it. I guess I should regard it as a forgettable novel, since I have pretty much forgotten it.

In most cases, I think novels should be predictable. Comedies shouldn't end in death, and tragedies shouldn't end in marriage. I've decided I don't like ironic endings. The universe is a brutal enough place without adding irony to it. I also don't like discovering that one of the good guys is a bad guy. There is more than enough ambiguity in life that you don't really need it in literature. And reality is never an excuse for art.

This is the first NASFiC report I have seen. I've heard the attendance was small, something like five or six hundred. Years ago, I thought NASFiC's were a good idea. I don't think that anymore. The 1999 NASFiC was the last one I attended, and I spent most of the con in the basement between the gamers and the furry

fans. That's what you get when you run the fanzine lounge. However, that wasn't what made me think NASFiC's were a bad idea. NASFiC's were originally conceived as substitutes for worldcons. The early NASFiC's almost made the mark, but they have been getting further and further from the goal in recent years. I think they've reached the point of why bother?

The SF Classics discussions that John Hertz does are a good ideas. I think cons should do something similar even when John isn't in attendance. I think I understand what was being said about *Frankenstein* the second time I read it. *Frankenstein* was part of the gothic tradition which was part of the romantic movement of the early 19th century. The gothic tradition and romanticism are still alive and well in many forms of popular art. They seem to be permanent parts of our culture while many other literary and artistic movements have come and gone since the early 19th century.

I don't know whether I will be the first to inform you, but the Los Angeles in 2015 is currently a hoax. As I understand it, Chris Garcia is the originator of the hoax. Chris certainly does get around. While Los Angeles has no current plans for a 2015 bid, they might always change their minds at some future date.

Well, this means we can see the  
Constitution (ex IX-41) as well as  
the Cassin Young, maybe even the  
USS Salem (CA-139), the USS  
Massachusetts (BB-59), and/or the  
USS Joseph P. Kennedy, Jr. (DD-  
850). And some more relatives in  
the Northeast.

— JTM

From: **Sheryl Birkhead** October 30, 2010  
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Ah — two issues waiting patiently — sorry . . .

There still does NOT appear to be any simple way to loc — computer woes. So, moving on, by hand is the way it will have to be for a "while".

I spent some time planning a "fantasy" trip to Aussiecon to see if I still enjoyed the set-up — Yes. Then I tried the same thing for Reno and found I was still too early to get rates — will try again later. Not happy with the fan Hugos — but that seems to be the usual result. I DO congratulate one and all, but don't have to agree.

I agree with the comments about Bruce Gillespie and Aussiecon. It seems that most non-US host countries fail to nominate their own. This surprises me each year it happens.

I hope that I can figure out a way to get a compatible (to the new iMac-desktop) portable Mac — so I can get back to legible locs. But — maybe (ha!) I can figure a work around, but I doubt it. In any event, — THANKS.

From: **Lloyd Penney** November 3, 2010  
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## 2B2 CANADA

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There's a chill in the air here as fall cools down, and staying inside has lots of appeal. Besides, it's the only way I get things done these days . . . here's some comments on the 53rd *Alexiad*.

Yes, the Canada geese have flown past, and they are often seen grazing on grassy areas on their way south. I still want summer, but have to deal with the dropping temperatures. If it has to get cold, I can hope for a relatively snow-free winter.

Worldcons . . . we do plan to go to Reno next year, but we believe that if we are to save enough money to go to London in 2014, should they win, of course, we will have to skip Chicago and the Texas Worldcons. It's not a decision we like, but it will be the only way to do it.

Martin Morse Wooster should not blame Australian fans for voting for the podcast for the Best Fanzine Hugo, unless he has facts and figures the rest of us don't have. Take out "Australian fans" and substitute "Aussiecon 4 members", and you're correct.

Also, there is more than enough proof for climate change/global warming. Let's take this logically . . . if it does exist, we should work hard to make sure our air is cleaner and the climate doesn't get any warmer. If it doesn't exist, still we should clean the air and bring temperatures down. It's a simple way to make sure we leave future generations a cleaner world. Or do we not think further than our wallets any more? Soon, if we don't smarten up and do something about climate change, it will be too late to do anything about it, if it isn't too late already.

Well, I tried for something beyond the page, but failed, and I don't want to force the issue, literally. All done for the moment, and many thanks. See you with the next issue.

From: **George W. Price** November 14, 2010  
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October *Alexiad*:

Alexis Gilliland feels that no solution to global warming exists, "since repealing the industrial revolution is not possible." He goes into details about the "Permian extinction" and draws conclusions I am prepared to accept — or at least don't feel qualified to dispute.

However, I will enter one small caveat. He says the formation of the Siberian Traps (contemporaneous with the extinction) has been "dated from 251.7 to 251.1 million years ago." Those numbers are unbelievably precise. Is there really any method of dating that will give three-figure accuracy? Anything more precise than, say, "250 to 260" million years ago raises my eyebrows almost to the back of my head. However, I can easily believe that some scientists report their calculations with unjustifiably great precision.

\* \* \* \* \*

I thank Robert S. Kennedy for calling my attention to *The Character of Nations*, by Angelo Codevilla. I will try to find time to read it.

\* \* \* \* \*

Joe's review of Turtledove's *West and East* led me to discover something odd about the Science Fiction Book Club. As a long-time member, I have bought nearly every Turtledove book the SFBC offered, and have been under the impression that they offered nearly all his books. But they hadn't offered this one, and I realized that I hadn't seen a new Turtledove book offered in a couple of years. So I went online to SFBC and searched for Turtledove titles. I found six that I swear were never advertised in the announcement bulletin mailed to members: *Give Me Back My Legions*, *The Golden Shrine*, *Hitler's War*, *Liberating Atlantis*, *The Man With the Iron Heart*, and *West and East*. Now I could believe that I had overlooked one, but six? Nope, they just weren't offered. Further, the search turned up only these six, and not any of the couple of dozen Turtledove titles that the club did offer in the past.

SFBC priced these at the usual club discounts. I ordered them, and separately sent an e-mail asking what was going on. I got back a non-answer that said my order was being shipped, but completely ignored my request for an explanation of why these titles had not been in the bulletin.

They have now arrived, and I notice that they are not the usual book club editions, which generally don't have any price on the jacket. These do have the publishers' prices, and appear to be regular trade editions, the same as sold in bookstores. So it looks like the Science Fiction Book Club is no longer publicizing Turtledove's books in the bulletin, and is not having club editions printed, but will tell you about them if you search their website, and will sell you the trade editions at the usual club discount. This seems very odd to me. Can anyone explain it?

From: **Robert S. Kennedy** Nov. 18, 2010  
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Thank you for Vol. 9, No. 5.

Lisa: Thank you for recommending *Grand Central Arena* by Ryk E. Spoor (2010). I thoroughly enjoyed it. Hopefully a sequel? Maybe a HUGO nominee?

I left for Charleston, South Carolina on September 22 and returned home on October 2. The occasion was a cruise on the Carnival ship *Fantasy* for my Navy ship reunion. (It was my 5<sup>th</sup> cruise with the first three being compliments of the U.S. Navy.) It was a five day cruise and we visited Freeport and Nassau in the Bahamas. On the day we returned some of us went to the South Carolina Aquarium, and then toured around the downtown area. It was raining. But,

that didn't stop us. We had dinner at Hyman's Seafood Restaurant. If you are ever in Charleston I highly recommend the restaurant. I stayed another two days. The first one I just slept and took it easy. The second day I took the tour to Fort Sumter. The Fort is on an island which I did not know. The tour takes 2 hours and 15 minutes with one hour actually spent at Fort Sumter. The other 1 hour and 15 minutes is spent on the boat getting to and from the Fort. I am very glad that I stayed to go to the fort. The overall trip was most enjoyable and it's always nice to get together with my former shipmates.

Once again it looks like in your visiting Virginia Beach you did not go to the wonderful aquarium. I have recommended it before and do so again.

**Martin Morse Wooster:** I agree that *Kick-Ass* "was one of the better movies of the year."

I don't seem to have much to say this time so that's it.

From: **John Purcell** November 20, 2010  
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Hello, Joe and Lisa! I have been remiss in loocking recently, but in my defense I need to plead busy at work. Once again, with enrollment jumping each new fall semester, many faculty are teaching overload classes, and that really takes a bite out of extra time on hand. Oh, well. I truly am grateful for the extra payola in the paycheck, but I feel bad about not writing to all the fanzines I read. Oh, the shame of it...!

At any rate, it's no surprise that I always enjoy reading your fine fanzine, and there's a lot of fun material in these two most recent issues. Since I am a bit behind, I shall condense my commentary.

*Alexiad*, Vol. 9, No. 4 (August 2010): Joe, your comments about vampires and romance novels sound just about right. I really can't abide either genre, but these danged books always sell, and that's the bottom line. An interesting sidelight to this is that in my ESL classroom — which is also used for the developing reading and writing classes — there is a table in the front left corner that's for "give-and-take" books: take a book to read, replace it with another book. On any given day, the genres reflected there are mostly romance novels (I'd say 50%), followed by fantasy, in which I lump Gothic and Vampire tales (25%), and westerns (10%). The remaining 15% is usually a hodge-podge of science fiction, biography, and espionage thrillers. Needless to say, there's a rapid turn-over of these books, but it's interesting to note that the sf books were Orson Scott Card's *Ender's Game* and modern reissues of Burroughs' John Carter of Mars books (from 2005, if I recall the publication date correctly) that were edited for Young Adult readers, and these sf books are constantly rotating in and out of the pile. I find that an interesting observation. But the romance and vampire/Gothic books zing in and out the fastest. My guess is because they are so easy to

read and predictable. What a surprise.

The Vampire/Gothic books are romances with some fantastic trappings, or so it seems. Not all of them are stock and clichéd but having to tramp through the slush leaves me not wanting to bother to go looking.

Say, in my perambulations through the fiction stacks at our local public library I found a fun book on the New Releases shelves: *Sherlock Holmes: the American Years*, edited by Michael Kurland (2010; Minotaur Books). I just finished reading the stories earlier this week, and really enjoyed them all. So much so, in fact, that I plan on writing a review of it over this weekend and get it to you for inclusion in the next *Alexiad*. Even if you've already read and reviewed this anthology — which I am positive you have — it would be a good exercise for me. I see your deadline for the next ish is December 1st, and I see no problem in having it done and to you way before then. Fun book.

In my loc in the August issue, I beg forgiveness for not being able to attend both Armadillocon and Fencon this past summer. \*fout\* (*hangs head in shame*) Next year, Fencon VIII should be a lot of fun because it doubles as DeepSouthCon 49, which I really MUST attend since so many good folks will be there. Seriously. I must go.

Onward to the October issue of *Alexiad* (Vol. 9, No. 5):

I really liked your editorial boo-boo in the Fanzines Received listing on *Askance* 21. One of the fun offshoots of ReConStruction will be Stephen H (no period) Silver editing an issue of *Askance* next summer (probably the June 2011) while I will guest-edit the 2011 issue of *Argentus*, or a "special" issue of that wonderful zine. Stephen and I haven't discussed this yet, but it is something that I would love to do. Already I can envision the covers of each fanzine: the titles of both zines will be listed, but one will be crossed out or over-printed with the other. Something like that. We shall see what Stephen and I come up with.

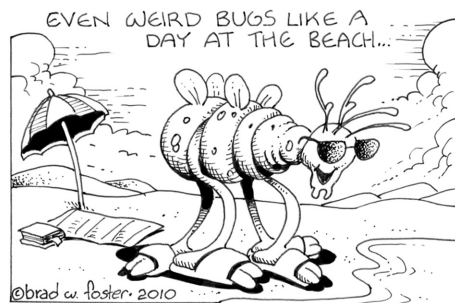
Before I forget, since today is November 20th, a Happy Anniversary wish to you and Lisa on your wedding anniversary (Nov. 22nd). Congratulations, you love-birds. May you have many more wonderful years together.

Valerie and I enjoyed watching many of the Breeder's Cup races on ESPN over the weekend of November 5th and 6th; gorgeous horses, and some very close races made it quite interesting television fare. We were most concerned about Life at Ten in the Ladies Classic race; even watching on the tube, Valerie noted that she (the horse, Life at Ten, not my wife) was favoring her left foreleg; in fact, Val spotted a ripple in the shoulder muscles that didn't look right. It was a good call by the Jockey, John Valasquez, to hold off and let his mount simply run the truck in dead last in hopes of "running out" the cramp, if that's all it was. So I wonder if Lisa might know more about that horse's condition at this date.

The article about H. Beam Piper was very enlightening. His Little Fuzzy stories have always been favorites of mine, mostly for how they are allegories of how we humans treat ourselves, highlighting our failings in prejudice and stupidly believing that the human race is the pinnacle of evolutionary progress. But I really liked the background and analysis of Piper and these stories. Thank you for this, and I may have to read some of the other books mentioned in the article some year when I have spare time — which will apparently be after my death.

Which you could say about the entire TerroHuman Future History. Or other things, such as Trask's comment in Space Viking about how the human race may not be capable of governing itself. If you want to check, the text of the Analog serialization of Space Viking is available as a pdf at [blackmask.com](http://blackmask.com)

One other thing of note herein: I really liked those quotation marks around "Best Fanzine" in the Hugo Winners listing on page 16. All of the postings on the Southern Fandom Classic listserv provided a great discussion of what to do about this particular category, even the Fan Hugo categories in general. I really don't think it's worth getting into this discussion again right now, especially in light of the proposal that seems to be in the works and shall be presented at the WSFS meeting at Renovation next summer. I voiced my thoughts about this in *Askance* #21 (September 2010), so if folks really want to know what I think, they can go to [www.efanzines.com](http://www.efanzines.com) and open that issue. In short, my idea is to create a new Cyber Award for non-print science fiction: websites, podcasts, e-zines, etc. Eventually print fanzines, books, magazines, and what-not will go the way of all flesh, but for now they are all alive and well. That's essentially my idea for now. More intelligent discussion is needed, so let's see if StarShipSofa's producers and supporters are willing to enter into the debate. So far, they apparently have no desire to be engaged in this manner.



That fact alone says much about their attitude. Very sad. And here I've always thought fans enjoyed a good, intelligent dialogue. Silly me. . .

Nicki Lynch observed that the podcasters on her panel were uninterested in that sort of exchange. I think Chris Garcia can confirm that none of them ever came to the Fanzine Lounge, which by the way was a great place. So a Best Cyber Hugo sounds like a valid concept and a good idea.

This seems like a good place to end the loc. Now I have to take care of a few errands, then later I can commence on that book review I alluded to many paragraphs ago. Thank you for the fine issue, Joe and Lisa, and enjoy a wonderful anniversary dinner.

You're welcome, and we had a very good time at Lynn's Paradise Café.

— JTM

From: **Sue Burke** November 27, 2010  
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I'm excited to announced that my first novel, tentatively called *Transplants*, should be released by EDGE Science Fiction and Fantasy Publishing in September 2011. Expect further updates.

In his LOC in the last issue, Fred Lerner talked about how the conquistadores' "violation of their own principles . . . did as much damage (if not more) to their own civilisation." Not surprisingly, Spaniards see that history differently, since their viewpoint is Eurocentric, and the conquistadores sole stated ambition was to get rich, a principle they never violated, regardless of the insane courage expended for its fulfillment. The conquistadores and the New World in general mattered to Spanish history in only one essential way: as a source of revenue. All politics is local, and plenty was happening in Spain and Europe.

While Cortés was conquering the Aztecs, Spain suffered an armed uprising against King/Emperor Carlos I/ V, who put that down, then thrashed the King of France. While Pizarro was conquering the Incas, Carlos was taking on Ottomans, Barbary pirates, and Luther, pausing in his defense of Catholicism to brutally sack Rome.

And when Carlos despaired, at a particularly low point in the campaign against the Barbary pirates, only one advisor spoke up. The Marqués del Valle had been there himself, once upon a time, and his confident words put heart into the Emperor. Now who was this stanch servant? Cortés!

The wealth of the New World paid for these and other European adventures, but the repeated

hyperinflationary shiploads of gold and silver arriving in Seville hollowed Spain's economy into an empty husk. Meanwhile, the Spanish Inquisition was killing people by the thousand and investigating tens of thousands. Spain's overreach in Europe combined with the Inquisition's repression of any glimmer of the Enlightenment created the "desengaño," the disillusionment, the bitter lesson that came at the turn of the 17th century. At least that's how Spaniards see it. The conquistadores were a footnote — and a successful one in their own terms. If they survived, they got very rich.

As for Julian the Apostate, who Taral Wayne brought up, a Canadian archeologist friend named his son after the emperor because 1) it's a name that works in both English and Spanish, and he has a bilingual household, 2) he has issues with Christianity, and he wished to honor a noble pagan, and 3) there is Saint Julian, so his Catholic mother-in-law is none the wiser.

The Spanish-language book in the stack that I'm reading — I read more than one at once, too, and at least one is in Spanish — is the award-winning *Historias de las dos Españas* (*Stories of the Two Spains*), by historian Santos Juliá. It recounts the development of two increasingly antagonistic lines of thought that led to the Civil War, and attempts at reconciliation afterwards. It starts with the restoration of the absolute monarchy after expulsion of the Napoleonic French troops, which left Spanish reformers in a difficult position, especially the 1812 Constitution of Cadiz republicans. Their ideas too closely resembled French reforms, so supporting them was like supporting the despised foreign invaders, yet Spain desperately needed those reforms.

In the political present, leading conservative Spanish politicians have expressed their admiration for the US Tea Party movement. Spanish flamenco entered the UNESCO Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity during the committee's meeting in Nairobi on November 19, along with the castells or human towers of Catalonia, the Cant de la Sibil·la Christmas eve songs of the island of Mallorca, the Mediterranean diet (please pass the olive oil), and falconry. Olé.

And the Bilal bin Rabah Mosque.

— JTM

Happy birthday, Lisa. Happy anniversary, Lisa and Joe. Happy holidays, everyone.

From: **Dainis Bisenieks** November 27, 2010  
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A refreshing thing about Lois Bujold's fiction is the full spectrum of friends and relations. You find courtship, and weddings, and childbirth (or its high-tech equivalent). Even deceased relatives are mentioned here and there. I'd been fond of grumbling that the typical SF protagonist was an only child and an orphan. "Do they have mothers and fathers?

Do they have brothers and sisters? Do they write home to the folks?" Where, then, is population increase? What the trend, or the norm, is in recent SF I really have no idea.

Spell RESTITVTOR REI PBVLICAE, noting that both elements are declined. That wasn't really on the plinth, was it now? Apart from anything else, "constitutor" would have been the word of choice.

In collecting, it is important to know where to draw the limits and where to cap the expense. I have a very few boughten or swapped coins, but from antiquity I have mainly what I found myself in Israel in the 1960s, mostly tiny, ugly, and badly struck bronze coins such as I'd never have paid money for; but they have the overwhelming merit of being personally found. I've got the knack — twice I've been with a group poking around an ancient site, and I was the only one who spotted a coin. Both times, I gathered the group and told 'em to look; after three or four had spotted the thing, I told the first of them to pick it up and hand it to me.

Note that numismatists designate the metals as AU, AR, and AE; the numbers, at least for bronzes, designate a range of sizes. That coin of Julian has been among my finds — indeed, two that had been wrapped together and so were stuck together with corrosion. The state of preservation depends on local soil conditions, as it does here, and on the alloy. Certain Islamic coins are of such good alloy that they actually ring when dropped on a hard surface; and the coins of Maurice Tiberius are prone to deep corrosion.

Indian head cents that I've found here are mostly a dirty green, but I have one with a glossy patina and several that are good clean brown, though not like coins taken from circulation. Speaking of which, I actually got a wartime 5¢ in change, a thing not seen — and I would have noticed — in 40 or 50 years. I do from time to time see (and recirculate) nickels of 1939 or 1940.

Looking at *The Columbian Exchange* by Alfred W. Crosby, Jr., I was reminded of the many different kinds of beans are of New World origin. The ancients had fava (aka "broad" or "horse") beans, and that was it. Chalk up Tom Bombadil's pole beans to go alongside the "taters" and pipeweed, if anybody cares to make an issue of it, which I don't. I am a devoted anachronism-spotter, but this does not strictly apply to other-world fantasy, which *LotR* is, as near as makes no difference.

... And those that sailed far came only to the new lands, and found them like to the old lands, and subject to death. And those that sailed farthest set but a girdle about the Earth and returned weary at last to the place of their beginning; and they said: 'All roads now are bent.'

— Akallabêth

So on those bent roads the Gondorian Francis Drake could have picked up potatoes, beans, and tobacco.

— JTM

I heard from the editor of *Beyond Bree* and submitted a revised and extended version of my remarks on Rivendell, complete with an epigraph, taken from *Something Rotten*. (The lines preceeding "Any gostes?" — show of hands if you recognize.) I am minded to submit some extended remarks on socks. Slipping a toe into fanac, as in my younger days.

My son Hilary was back for Thanksgiving, conveying some other students to intermediate points. One recognized his Cthulhu mascot. Amazing, how HPL's work has gone out into the world.

From: **Jeffrey Allan Boman** Nov. 30, 2010  
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2009 Aurora Award Winner, 2010 nominee

This is Jeff from Johannesburg . . .  
(Apartheid is over, but I still ain't gonna play Sun City!). NaNoWriMo ended less than a day ago as I write this . . . it wasn't a victory for me this year. I wrote every day, but not for enough words. Two power failures on Nov. 30 ended my hopes to finish at least halfway in. My final count: 24036 words. Several things caused me more difficulty, including what would have been Squeaky's 19th birthday.

Next year, hopefully. I have no idea what I'll try to write yet. Right now contract work and my very late zine are more important!

Steve Green: You mentioned the Spartacus TV show being gory. I'm surprised, what with it being advertised here from the makers of the sanitized *Xena: Warrior Princess*.

It's not only gory, it's sexy. The lanista's wife Lucretia (Lucy Lawless) has several nude scenes, and then there's Spartacus (Andy Whitfield) and his wife, Sura (Erin Cummings)! There is a prequel series in production with Lucretia and her husband Q. Lentulus Batiatus (John Hannah) getting into the gladiatorial business, though whether it involves a pirate warrior princess they haven't said.

— JTM

#### WAHF:

**Lloyd Daub**, with various items of interest.  
**Marc Schirmeister**, with first illos, then a Christmas card.

Right...  
I have absolutely no trouble  
eyeballing this!



## THE DOOR INTO BARRYAR

Miles sat at the communicator, ran a hand through his hair in relief and desperation, and began to compose his thoughts for the report he would make. When it turned out that the two main domestic automata companies on this planet had been founded by the same man, who retained substantial ownership of them, his whereabouts became a matter of immense importance.

After a very sordid affair (Miles still flinched away from the memories of Mrs. Schultz and how she had tried to seduce him, or perhaps crush him) he had gone into cryo-stasis. The whereabouts of his body had been lost in a maze of shifting bankruptcies, buyouts, mergers, restructurings, and divestments. But now, now he had been found, and after some effort, they had brought the body to this facility to awaken him.

Naran had been quite pleased. "He looks well. Well prepared and well maintained. I'm surprised, given all the turmoil here. I am curious about that cat with him."

"He seemed to be very fond of it," Miles had said. Mrs. Schultz had been less than happy about her sometime lover's pet. Given that she had secretly married the other partner, then used the stock her deceived lover had given her to take control of the company, she seemed willing to go to great lengths to carry out a plan. Fortunately she was less seductive-looking now. Failure of a cunning plan can do that.

"It shouldn't be a problem. Cats are easy to revive." He paused. "You're sure this is the right D. B. Davis?"

"He's the right one. We got a DNA match from his army records."

There had been enough strange people involved. Miles had had to go interview the partners in the other company in person. They were naturists, and having to go local, as it were, he had drawn a substantial amount of notice for his many scars. They were more than a little reticent about how they had met Davis.

Davis seemed to have become more reticent himself about business relationships, as their company was a simple partnership. Keeping the main partner on ice — literally — was a way to keep control. At least it was easier (not to mention safer) than the last Audit he had been working on behalf of the tech guys.

That case of the manufactured housing company, it was, where the founder's son had been conditioned against voting his stock, so the hedge fund could keep control of the firm. Then they had tricked him into a reality show with a very low survival rate, and Miles had been too close to being electrocuted himself.

When they had Davis revived, they could start asking questions. There was a lot to be discussed here — the communicator broke into his thoughts, and he shouted, "What is it!"

"It" was Ivan calling. Oh God. He'd been out of touch for a month and the thought of Ivan free to wreak havoc for a month was appalling. He was unwholesomely cheerful, too. "Good news, Miles! I've found D. B. Davis!"

Ought to at least give him a little honor before hitting him with the hard — frozen — facts: "Of course you have. Why didn't you come —"

"Do you know how many bars I had to hit before I did? There he was, sopping up the beer, moaning about how he had been put on ice, then cheated out of his company and given a do-nothing job."

Miles shook his head. "You've got the wrong D. B. Davis."

"Do you think I'm a fool? Wait, never mind that. I checked the DNA and it matched. I'm bringing him in right now."

— Not by Lois McMaster Bujold or Robert A. Heinlein

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**Art:** What we are mainly looking for is small fillos. Your fillo will probably be scanned in and may be reused, unless you object to its reuse.

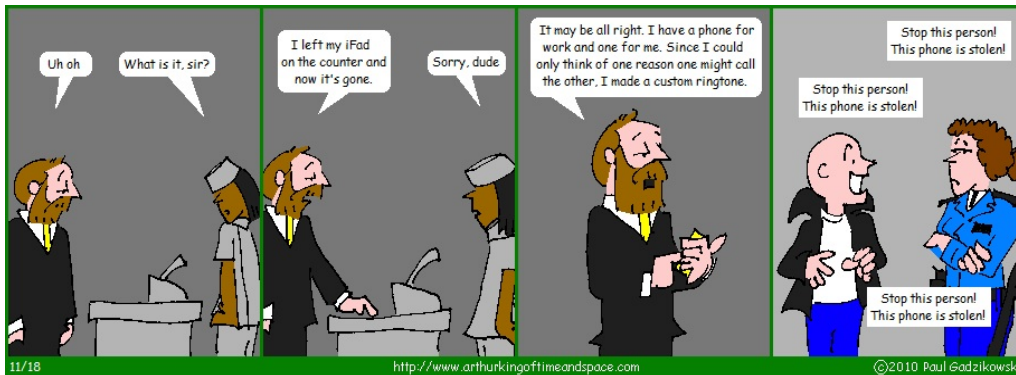
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