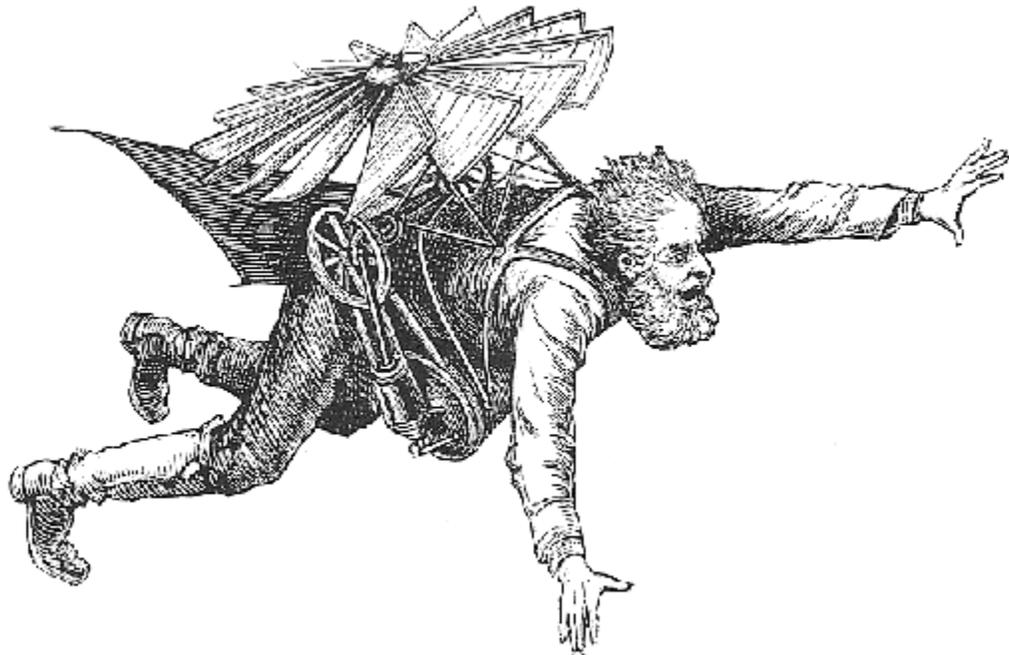


# All Sinking, No Power



Vol. 1, No. 1

## **TABLE OF CONTENTS**

From the editor	2
Jason K. Burnett	
Book reviews	3
Jason K. Burnett	
Consider the Alternative	5
Jason K. Burnett	
Lettercol	7
You, the readers	

Art credits: Cover: oldtimeclipart.com  
Pages 3, 5: Mats Ohrman  
Pages 4, 6, 7: Alan White

A semi-irregular zine by:  
Jason K. Burnett  
[BritHistorian@aol.com](mailto:BritHistorian@aol.com)  
3204 Cypress St.  
Metairie LA 70001

Distributed in FAPA, or  
At eFanzines.com.

Art, articles, LOCs, etc., gladly  
accepted.

Also see my LiveJournal at:  
[www.livejournal.com/~brithistorian](http://www.livejournal.com/~brithistorian)

# FROM THE EDITOR

By Jason K. Burnett

Welcome to the first issue of “All Sinking, No Power,” which is both my FAPA zine as well as my first general fanzine. Years of APAhacking and daydreaming have led me up to this moment, and now I’m panicking – What do I say? Why would anyone want to read what I have to say? What if I pub one ish and can never do another? What if it’s crud? This all ties in with the title, which comes from one of the more memorable quotes from Representative J. Binks (Naboo) “Monsters out there, leakin’ in here! All sinking and no power! When yousa thinkin’ it’s time to panic?” But since I don’t have two Jedi here to knock me unconscious and then take care of things, I’ll just have to do the best I can myself.



So how did I come to be publishing a zine? How did I even come to be a fan? I suppose I’m about as close to a lifelong fan as it’s possible to be. Some of my earliest memories are of going with my grandfather to gas up his car, at which times he would always buy me a comic book from the rack at the gas station. This would have been in the mid-1970s – comic books were 35 cents, and my favorites were Spiderman, Superman, and The Hulk. I suppose I still could have turned away, but when I was seven, parents bought me a stack of books for Christmas – Alice in Wonderland, The Wizard of Oz, Tom Sawyer, Treasure Island, and 20,000 Leagues Under the Sea. After reading those, I was hooked on reading. The next summer, my mother let me read her copy of The Hobbit and I was specifically hooked on science fiction and fantasy.

Fast-forward a couple of years. It’s October 15, 1983. I’ve just turned 10, and my mother finally allows me to buy the Dungeons & Dragons basic set (she had held fast to the age printed on the box, possibly hoping I’d lose interest in it). This further reinforced my reading habits (as if they needed it) – now I had an arena in which to act out all those fantastic stories I’d been reading.

Fast forward again, to Christmas 1986. I’m now 13 (the “Golden Age of Science Fiction”), and among my presents is a copy of Richard Purtill’s Murdercon. This was my first exposure to organized fandom, and I was enthralled. There was even a passing mention of fanzine fandom, which struck me as a terribly interesting thing.

Fast forward yet again. It’s the summer of 1995. I’m now married, midway through my bachelor’s in history, the father of an infant son, and I’ve just gotten a copy of New Moon Directory. Having been unable to find fanzine fandom in the decade since I’d first heard of it (admittedly not searching too hard during some of that time), I came to the erroneous conclusion that it was no more, and all the fanzine fans had migrated to APAs. I threw myself wholeheartedly into APAhacking, joining Elanor, Butterbur’s Woodshed, Sord and Sworcery, and Mutations, as well as joining several fannish organizations. I was having a ball. Then, in 1998 I graduated, leading to an extensive period of gafiation (see “Consider the Alternative,” below.)

Fast forward one final time, to January of 2004. Somehow (I wish I could remember how) I discover eFanzines.com. I am elated to discover that fanzine fandom is not dead after all. I eagerly devour every zine I can find. I start communicating with other fans, LOCcing their zines, joining listservs, even getting a LiveJournal account. Then I’m bitten by the bug – I want to pub my ish. I arrange to joint FAPA so that I have a means for distribution. I contact some people who might be willing to write or draw something for me (even if they don’t get it to me in time for the first issue, I can still use it on down the road). I start writing things. I scan the web for clip art I can use. Then one night I finally take the plunge and sit down and put it all together. And the result is the zine that you now have in your hands (or on your screen, as the case may be).

# BOOK REVIEWS

By Jason K. Burnett



© Mats Öhrman 1999

If you're looking for any sort of systematized, literary book reviews, you need to put this down and go buy a copy of the Times Literary Supplement, because you're obviously reading the wrong magazine. My book reviews start with strictly subjective assessment of the book – did I like it or not – and then explore my thoughts on the book, how it relates to other things I've read, how it could have been improved, etc., provided either with or without such niceties as a plot summary or any sort of critical apparatus. That being said, let's get to the reviews.

Pierre Berton, The Arctic Grail: The Quest for the North West Passage & the North Pole, 1818-1909. I didn't really know much about arctic exploration before I picked up this book – I knew that Admiral Peary had been the first to reach the North Pole, and that was about it. As it turns out, the little that I knew about arctic exploration was wrong (more on this below) and there was far more to the subject than I had ever imagined. It turns out that the Arctic was to the 19<sup>th</sup> century what space was to the 20<sup>th</sup> – the final frontier. Returning Arctic explorers were greeted with parades, packed lecture halls on speaking tours, and had newspaper battling for the exclusive rights to their stories. But whereas the exploration of space was a series of successes interspersed with the occasional tragedy, the exploration of the arctic was a seizure of failures interspersed with the occasional worse failures. The arctic explorers clung to unsuccessful methods (a diet consisting largely of salt pork, overly heavy man-drawn sledges, wool clothes that froze stiff and failed to protect from frostbite) even in the face of evidence that there were other methods that did work – apparently they never thought to wonder how Eskimos could live their whole life in a region where a European or American crew was hard-pressed to survive three winters. The stock response to each failed mission (barring a few eccentrics who, though they had more successful expeditions, were promptly ignored because they came from the Hudson Bay Company instead of the Royal Navy) was to send *more* men with *more* salt pork, *more* woolen clothing, and *heavier* sledges. Which brings up back to Admiral Peary. The complete case against him having reached the pole is to longer to be recounted here, but it boils down to the fact that his whole case rests on measurements that he made, which were unable to be verified by any member of his party (as he made the final dash for the Pole accompanied only by his black manservant and his Eskimo assistants), and which, if accurate, would have necessitated him traveling at triple the best speed achieved by any previous expedition through ground worse than that covered by any previous expedition. Only the force of his personality and the respect he was accorded as a result of his earlier missions allowed him to pull this off, and once his records were able to be examined objectively, the whole thing collapsed like a house of cards.



The Executioner #28: Armageddon Exit. The Executioner books are intellectual junk food of the worst sort – fun, but with absolutely no nutritional value. I read them the same way I read Star Trek books – when I want to read something, but don't want to have to think about it. If you've never read one of the Executioner books, let me sum them all up for you: Mack Bolan (the Executioner) is made aware of a group of Bad People by Hal Brognola, his minder/contact in the federal government. He then either goes undercover and infiltrates their group or just charges in and starts shooting them, either with or without the help of other agents of Stony Man, the ultra-secret federal agency he nominally works for. After several gunfights throughout the course of the book, the finale is an even bigger gunfight during which the Executioner personally kills the Chief Bad Guy. Along the way, he may or may not get laid, at author's discretion, and he will be kind to women and children (unless they are Evil Women, in which case he kills them). Nothing whatsoever to think about, but great stress release when you just want a ripping adventure tale where all the bad guys get blown up.

Sharon Kay Penman, The Reckoning and The Sunne in Splendour. I am very conflicted in my feelings about these books (and books of this sort). On the one hand, the aspiring writer in me feels like writing a novel of this sort is cheating, because one doesn't have to come up with a plot, just to record what has already happened. On the other hand, the historian in me feels like writing a book like this is cheating because one is basically writing a history but has the safety net of being able to explain away any inaccuracies as novelist's license. On the other hand, I *really liked* these books. My mental reservations notwithstanding, I've always felt that historical fiction, done properly, could do more to generate interest in a historical period and to educate people about that period than any number of properly footnoted scholarly works on the subject. Look at the amount of interest in the Napoleonic wars on land and sea generated by the works of Bernard Cornwell and Patrick O'Brian. With a very few exceptions (Stephen Ambrose, for example), historians will not be as widely read as novelists, and so it is from historical novelists that most people learn what little they know of history. That is why I think it is so important that historical novelists do their research and make sure they're getting things right. And Ms. Penman has definitely done that, going back to original medieval chronicles to gather materials for these books, then combining this research with excellent writing skills to produce books that are a joy to read, grabbing the reader's attention in the first pages and holding onto it throughout their (considerable) length. The Reckoning covers Edward I's conquest of Wales in the 13<sup>th</sup> century, while The Sunne in Splendour covers the Wars of the Roses, being particularly dedicated to the case of Richard III and the theory that he was not the hunchbacked devil portrayed in Shakespeare's play. In both cases enough background material is provided that no previous knowledge of the periods in question is required for the reader to thoroughly enjoy the book, and I think both books will amply repay the investment of time a reader makes in them.



Walter Laquer, Europe Since Hitler: The Rebirth of Europe. I picked this one up for a quarter at the UNO Asian Studies Center book sale when I was working there as a grad student. It turned out to be one of those history books that is of value for exposing the values and attitudes of the time in which it was written almost as much as for the information about the time it is written about. In this case, you have a book that discusses the years 1945 to 1970, published in 1970, so that, especially by the end of the book, you're getting current events viewed through the lens of the historian. It wasn't a fun book to read, being rather dry in spots, but it was important. As everything in this book happened before I was born, it was interesting to go back and see how the world as I have experienced it came into being.

James J. Wilhelm (ed.), The Romance of Arthur: An Anthology of Medieval Texts in Translation. I had had this lying around since my last semester as an undergraduate, when, in need of one more literature course I had signed up for Arthurian Literature and Victorian Literature, with the plan of being able to drop one (in the event that I didn't like it) without jeopardizing my graduation. It turned out that I enjoyed them both, but I needed to drop one anyway to keep my workload manageable. So, as Arthurian lit was earlier in the morning, and as at the time I was aiming at a career in Victorian British history, I dropped Arthurian, but held on to the books to read later when time presented itself. I have been fascinated with the Arthurian legends since one year for my birthday my aunt and uncle bought me a copy of James Riordan's Arthurian tales. And as much as I enjoyed Riordan's Arthur (it's still one of my favorites and one I would recommend to someone just starting out), reading this anthology made me realize how much of the Arthurian corpus has been effectively lost to modern times. Some of the stories in this volume, such as "Culhwch and Olwen," have been completely forgotten by the general public, and present an Arthur that most people would find unrecognizable, for in these earlier Welsh tales, Arthur appears as a Celtic warlord, far removed from the chivalric king of the later tales. Other stories here, such as "The Marriage of Sir Gawaine and Dame Ragnelle," were familiar to me, but I enjoyed the chance to read the original version. While it would definitely not be a good first Arthurian book, it would be an excellent book for someone looking to dig deeper into the stories.

Isaac Asimov, the Foundation trilogy. My parents bought me these for Christmas about 15 years ago, and I've lost track of how many times I've reread them. The stories hold up remarkably well to this sort of rereading, as each time I bring something new to them, and so am able to take away something new. This was my first time rereading them since finishing my degrees in history, and also the first time since reading I. Asimov, the third volume of Asimov's memoirs. The first thing that struck on this rereading was that, even with all I have learned since the first time I read the books, I still believe in psychohistory. I think I have a better idea of the problems that would be inherent in turning history into a quantitative, predictive science of this nature, but I still believe that it would be possible. The second thing that struck me was that, despite the fact that Asimov was a lifelong nonsmoker and, indeed, an active anti-smoker, a great many characters in the books smoked. Looking at it with a historian's eye, I would have to say that this is a case where a historical document tells as much about the time in which it was written as it does about the time which it is covering. Since smoking was almost as common as breathing at the time that Asimov was writing the Foundation stories, he carried this behavior that he was seeing every day over into the future. The third thing that struck me this time through was that I was bothered by the way in which the Second Foundationers had developed psychic powers. At first it seemed rather out of place, introduced as sort of a *deus ex machina* at the end of Foundation and Empire in order to provide a way to stop the Mule. But as I reread Second Foundation, I started thinking more about how little we know about the brain and its function and it seemed more plausible – this was just another of these sufficiently advanced technologies that is indistinguishable from magic.



## CONSIDER THE ALTERNATIVE

By Jason K. Burnett

Have you ever wondered where you'd be if you weren't in fandom? I have seen firsthand some possible answer to that question, and let me tell you it is not a pretty sight.

Here is my story: The mid-90s were the height of my fanac to date – I was a member of four APAs (Elanor, Mutations, Butterbur's Woodshed, and Sord & Sorcery) as well as belonging to N3F, Ista Weyr, and Queen's Own. At the time I was working as a weekend unit clerk in the neonatal ICU of a local hospital while going to college (majoring in history), when in 1998 I suffered the worst fate that can befall any undergraduate fan – I graduated. After an abortive attempt to join the Coast Guard, and having no means available to repay my student loans, I was left with no other choice but to go to graduate school. Naturally, the massive amount of reading this entailed (I don't know anyone who read everything they were supposed to have read during grad school) left absolutely no time for recreational reading. So I gafiated – I resigned from the APAs, let my memberships lapse, buckled down, and got to work.

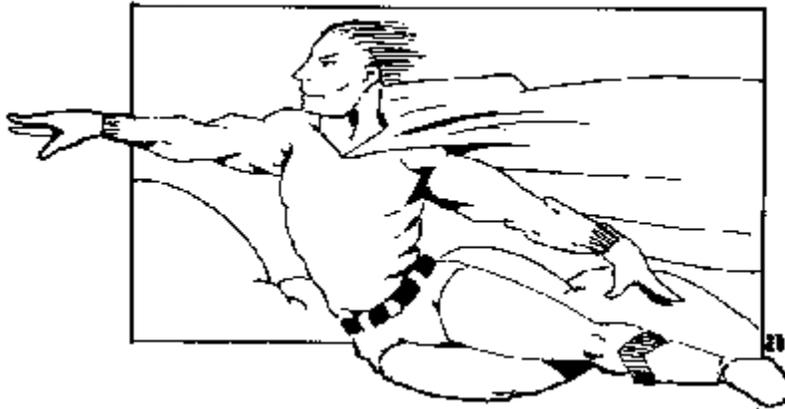
Two years later, having survived my coursework and have become, as one of my professors put it, "the leading authority on a subject no one else cares anything about," I was awarded my master's degree. As I was neither crazy enough nor wealthy enough to go on for my Ph.D. at that point, I found myself with free time again. Not being the sort to just veg out in front of the TV, I had to have a hobby to fill my time. For some reason that I still don't quite understand, it didn't just pop into my head to re-enter fandom. Instead, I tried a variety of other things, only to give up each for one reason or another.

Historical Miniature Wargaming: I probably enjoyed this the most of any of the other things I tried, and if the gaming group I was in hadn't collapsed I'd probably still be doing this. Wargamers are, with the exception of the few freaks you'll find in any crowd, generally nice people. They are, on the whole, rather conservative politically (occasionally some particularly broad-minded individual would go so far to the left as to consider voting for a conservative democrat), and I would quite commonly find myself to be the only person in the room who had not served in the military, but we still got along fine. The chief drawbacks of wargaming, as I saw them were: First, painting figures is very time consuming, especially if,

like me, you're not a very fast painter. Each figure would take me about an hour to paint, so consequently it would take me quite some time to paint the hundreds or thousands of figures necessary for an army of any size. But, as it turns out, this was rather a moot point for me because of the second drawback: Miniatures are expensive. At \$1.50 and up per foot figure, \$2.50 and up per mounted figure, \$5-10 and up for cannons, vehicles, etc., one finds wargamers whose armies cost more than their cars.

Competitive chess: This seemed like a good idea – all the strategy of wargames, but without the expense of investing in armies. I got out of this one because, as it turns out, at the higher levels of the game, chess is bloody boring. It's all pattern matching and memorizing lists of moves (called "lines"). In order to stand any sort of chance as a competitive chess player, you can't attempt to get by with just thinking about your moves and moving your pieces according to a strategy you come up with yourself – you have to recognize which line your opponent is playing, then respond with the appropriate line. But apparently they think this is fun! On top of this, politics in the chess world beats any amount of politics in fandom. There are no clearly defined procedures to determine who gets a shot at the top titles or how often and under what conditions a reigning champion must defend his or her title, so any match involving a possible shot at the title is preceded by more negotiation than an international treaty. The whole thing is made worse by the fact that the various national governing bodies constantly squabble with each other and with FIDE, the world governing body. Recently the reigning women's world champion was "unavailable" to defend her title for several years, so FIDE held a tournament and bestowed the title on someone else. Yet for year's thereafter this woman's byline in *Chess Life*, the official magazine of the US Chess Federation, listed her as women's world champion, with a footnote explaining that even through FIDE no longer recognized her as the champion, she had never been defeated as champion. And people within the chess world wonder why people outside the chess world don't take them seriously. At least during the brief time I was involved in chess I did manage to make my mark in the chess world – half of the letter page (yes, they have just one page) of the Winter 2004 issue of *Chess Life* consists of a letter from me outlining my suggestions for reforming/improving the USCF.

Comic book fandom: This should have been great. After all, I'd enjoyed comics a great deal when I was younger. It should have been a lot of fun. But I hadn't counted on the fact that comic books are a hell of a lot more expensive now than they were when I was younger. I can remember paying 35 cents for comic books, and my previous collecting days lasted up until they got to a dollar apiece. And now I find that three dollars seems to be the standard price for a comic, with some going for more than that! Plus, and maybe I'm just remembering things as better than they actually were, but it seems to me like the comics of my youth had more pages, had more words per page, and advanced the storyline more in each issue than comics do today.



Anime/manga fandom: This is another one that should have been a great idea, but just didn't work out for economic reasons. I understand that anime will be more expensive because of translation expenses, but that still didn't make the idea of shelling out 20 dollars for a 40-minute video any more palatable. So I decided to try manga instead. After all, *Shonen Jump* is only about a dollar more than a standard American comic, but it's hundreds of pages thick, then I can buy the graphic novels for the titles I enjoy and don't have to both with the others. As it turns out, manga have an even lower plot advancement to page ratio than American comics – a single fight can take 30 pages! I quickly abandoned this plan, leaving comics to the fond memories of my youth and anime to the few shows available on the local broadcast channels. (*Jackie Chan Adventures*, anyone?)

Historical reenactment: As a trained historian, this seemed like a natural outlet for me. My wife and I had played a bit with our local SCA group before the birth of our son (around 1993-94), but due to personality clashes with some of the people in our local group and clashes within the group driving away the people we are closest to, we left the group and even though we considered to coming back, decided not to. So I searched on the web for other historical reenactment groups. As it turns out, there are tons of them. On the other hand, in America, historical reenactment groups tend to be located either in the same geographical region as the event they're reenacting or else in New England or California. Here in Louisiana, that meant I was free to reenact any period I wanted, so long as it was either the Battle of New Orleans or the American Civil War. As what I really wanted to do was medieval, it just wasn't in the cards for me to travel 6-8 hours or more in order to participate in an existing group, and I don't have the time or money to invest in starting a new group (especially as I hope to not be living in New Orleans for too very much longer), this pretty much knocked historical reenactment out of the running for the time being. If the opportunity presents itself, I may take it up again in the future, but for now it just remains a nice thought.

And so, without really planning to, I find myself back in fandom. And I hope my adventures have shown you that there are worse places to be. So relax and enjoy yourself.

## LETTERCOL

This is where I'd be publishing your letters, if you had sent me any. This being the first issue, I'll let you off the hook *this* time.

