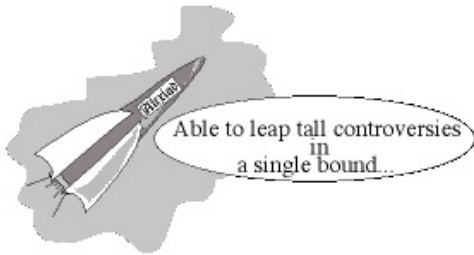


Letters, we get letters



From: **Steve Green** June 20, 2011
ghostwords@yahoo.co.uk

I can sympathise with Robert S Kennedy's disappointment over the first season of *Torchwood*: although the presence of "at least one very unlikable male character" wouldn't be such a dealbreaker for me (quite the opposite, in fact), the scripts were often poorly realised and lacked originality. I would, however, urge him to look out for the third season, a five-part miniseries subtitled *Children of Earth*, which reminded me greatly of the original Quatermass serials.

From: **Cathy Palmer-Lister** June 20, 2011
cathyp1@sympatico.ca

Thanks for *Alexiad* and the letters.

I'm sorry you will not be in Reno this year. I'm looking forward to meeting up with the fans again. Will there be a Feast in Reno?
 Regarding:

In a stop-press moment, there is some concern that the studios are passing over ComicCon this year. The fans' response was not a very good production of ticket sales. But if the big professional cons slump, the entire concept of going to cons may also go. Just as the podcasters are scorning the idea of print, and when they become passé . . .

Apparently, ComicCon has sold out all 4 days, so I'm guessing old habits die hard. Fans are going to ComicCon no matter whether studios are there or not. I don't think I could handle crowds like that. The anime convention in Montreal just keeps growing exponentially, and will someday very soon outgrow the convention centre. I've been hearing from the rumour mill that fan-run anime cons, Otakuthon and Anime North among them, are now thinking about having to hire some professional help — the cons have grown out of their capacity to handle the logistics and still hold down a day job. Not sure how true that is, but it does tell us where the fans are going.

At Con*Cept in Montreal we are running into a problem of authors and actors waffling to the last minute, or just plain not answering our invitations to be GoH. It was hard last year, it's worse this year. Yesterday, I spoke with the

president of a Lego club. I was hoping they would come to display their projects, but they outright refused because we wouldn't be paying them to appear. It's bad enough that actors expect an appearance fee, but now special interest clubs expect payment? Con*Cept has good fan support, but we may have to close shop after this year due to lack of volunteers and GoH. I wouldn't mind having more time to devote to *WARP* and other hobbies.

The shift from participant to consumer, again.

— JTM

From: **John Thiel** June 25, 2011
pabloleannis@frontier.com

I was glad to see John Henry's letter in the June issue; that's hearing back from the writers. It adds to the relevance of your already highly relevant reviews.

Reading Alexis Gilliland's letter, George Price is indeed apt to come up with an interesting theoretical exercise. Noting he generally has a letter in each issue, I'd say he shows extraordinary interest from a scientific viewpoint on some major issues of the day. I appreciate your letter column as much as I do the rest of the magazine; the writers always seem very committed to what they are discussing. So is Alexis himself, for that matter, and there are several others whose letters I am especially enjoying, if not finding anything to add to the commentary myself.

I am saddened to read of Terry Jeeves' death. He had a joke about that and how it would be when the time came, that is a consolation about finding it announced. He said people didn't need to feel too sad when it happened, he'd been expecting it right along. He was a stalwart individual.

From: **Sheryl Birkhead** June 23, 2011
 22509 Jonnie Court, Gaithersburg, MD
 20882-3422 USA

Well, no Triple Crown winner again this year.

Um — it took me two years to get DSL. It lasted 15 months — went out last week. My ISP is in Illinois — they said they filed a repair ticket with my local phone company. Said company requires "an" eight-hour window (i.e. ALL day) and won't call until they are headed your way. This could be a LONG wait.

Many services are still fixed on the concept that someone (the wife, that is) is at home all day to receive workmen, and set schedules appropriately.

— JTM

Condolences to R-Lauraine on Fluffy's passing over the Rainbow Bridge.

TERRY JEEVES — R.I.P.

The car suddenly sounded as if there was a low-flying jet (no kidding — I rolled down the window and looked — nope). Then, when I

made the right turn — headed home, the noise became OBVIOUSLY metal on metal. So new brakes . . . then the "soft spot on the roof . . . then the oil leak after the oil change (with the brakes) — I now know, apparently, Subaru dealerships replace the (um . . . er . . .) oil pan um . . . gasket? with each change. Time but free knowledge.

Well, looks as there won't be any more (very light, but still enjoyed) *Cat Who* books. Apparently Ms. Braun submitted (believe Putnam is the series publisher) *The Cat Who Smelled Smoke* — but according to an Internet search the book was returned — unpublished.

I did read (another light read) *Homer's Odyssey*. I had forgotten Homer was blind. It is not great literature, but enjoyed. I had forgotten that anyone unfamiliar with blind cats would perceive them as truly disabled. No way.

Considering two basement rooms are dedicated to emergency supplies. Yes, I KNOW I'm supposed to rotate the food (NOT) — and I've long ago forgotten what all is stacked in the piles. Ah — but I HAVE stuff. Interestingly, the federal suggestion was to have a 72 hour emergency pack UNTIL Katrina — now they are saying at least six days. The emergency supplies I "routinely" use (e.g., TVP chunks — beef flavor) have been used — so at least those should be replaced. I TRY to add another item to the pile each time I order. Well, at least I "listen", just not too well.

Thanks — forgot how much I need the Internet for work stuff.

July 28, 2011

I did not realize (or if I did I forgot) that Terry (Jeeves) had won the Doc Weir Award. Terry truly was a versatile fan and will be missed.

Hmm — *Cowboys and Aliens* has hit the big screen. It is the first move since *Avatar* that has ever tempted me to go to a theater (but I didn't go then and I won't go now). I never agree with critics, but I am curious to see what they think.

Just got a chance to watch *Secretariat* — enjoyable.

Looks as if I need to see all if the library has *Cryoburn*.

Actually, I just watched *Source Code* (from Netflix) today. I didn't see the ringed planet mentioned by Pat McCray. Yeah, I see the *Inception* "confusion". Not that it would happen, but I'd like to see a series of *Source Code* films.

Borders Books — guess it's R.I.P.

(Pardon me, since, my memory is faulty, but I vaguely recall a snippet — was it Larry Smith that had a stroke? Maybe I'm wrong.)

Lauraine — is organic milk irradiated? Somewhere along the line I thought I'd read that is the case.

All you PC'ers would have died laughing. Part of trying to diagnose my losing DSL involved proving Virgin was at fault (i.e., not my Mac, wires, or modems). Apple techs stayed on the phone 4 hours with me. Part of it involved borrowing a PC — using the same set up to show the results were the same, Mac OR

PC. Uh — the Apple guy, obviously, was Mac oriented as am I. I borrowed a Toshiba laptop from a new neighbor. Then neither the tech (over the phone) nor I could even figure out how to open the laptop — true, it was late and I was tired, absolutely ridiculous!! (More to the tale than this — but this is almost the most ridiculous part.)

I think I've said so in the past — I watched a rerun of Sofa's "acceptance" podcast — and was chagrined that he said he didn't know who the other nominees were (*ALL* categories implied) and was unfamiliar with all the artwork (my interpretation of his actual comment).

You hear . . . pod people.

— JTM

I have got to vote (Hugo that is) — my computer download of the packet has mysteriously disappeared — twice. I have been chipping away at content — leaving long form until last but it looks as if I simply will NOT be able to read it all. I will vote — so may have to skip a few categories. Looking at the cost for a supporting membership, I may have to pass on that — for the first time in many years — ah well, "progress".

From: **Darrell Schweitzer** June 27, 2011
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I note that you have cut my letter this time, a little clumsily, as the recommendation of *China Mountain Zhang* seems to just hang there. The point was that this book leads one to contemplate how there would be a future which is not an American future, in which American capitalism is the loser and something else (Chinese Communist-Capitalism in this case) is the winner. I can see ways how that could happen, although history surely teaches us that history does NOT (some philosophers to the contrary) just recycle the same motifs over and over again. The future could still surprise us. It could belong to some nation, movement, or idea for which we cannot yet see the antecedents, in the same way that a Roman of Justinian's time could never have foreseen the Caliphate.

I note that you've cut back or eliminated most of the global warming arguments. If this is an editorial decision and not just a coincidence, I can only support it. That's your call. In any case, I don't think any of us have much more to say on this subject. When the argument is ultimately about something large and objectively real, then either the sky will fall or it will not. Either the northern polar cap will disappear or it will not. The Northwest Passage is now open for everything from tankers to sailboats. Persons planning to reach the North Pole on foot or by sled may have to plan their trips seasonally. This could become a winter sport only. And I think the mayor of New Orleans would be well advised to invest in a sea wall. But these things will either happen or they will not.

Briefly, to answer Jim Stumm's question, I

am not planning to move to higher ground. I already live on higher ground. I'm on a hill. I even have a dry basement. Most of Philadelphia is about the fall line, i.e. not on the coastal plain at all. Some areas down by the Schuylkill River do experience flooding, but not where I live. A couple years ago there was a flood in the low-lying district of Mannayunk. The two River Drives (now called Kelly Drive and Martin Luther King Drive, though oldtimers persist in calling them the East River Drive and the West River Drive because those names tell you which one you are talking about) were underwater. Some while later I was down that way and noted a large tree jammed sideways into the arch of a railroad bridge, a good 20 feet or so above the water level. It had obviously floated there, indicating the extent of the flood, which actually got surprisingly little news coverage. The tree remained for weeks, until someone either figured out how to remove it or it fell. But I didn't even know about the flood when it was happening. It must have risen and fallen quite quickly. Probably commuters failed to notice because it did not rise to the level of the Roosevelt Blvd., which is a major link of US Route 1 in that area, and which crosses the river on a bridge even higher than the railroad bridge in question.

It's places like Atlantic City which are going to have the problem when the sea levels rise. In fact much of New Jersey could turn into a tidal swamp. I do not think this will mean the end of civilization, but the effects on the economy of New Jersey (not to mention other low-lying areas like Louisiana) will be pretty devastating.

On the subject of Romans of Justinian's time, etc., the reason I am picking on *Prince Valiant* is that, contrary to George Price, this is not a bum rap at all. In the 1950s there were a series of Prince Valiant hardcover books, with prose text, but heavily illustrated on every page, so they're not really comic books. One of these was *Prince Valiant Fights Attila the Hun* (Hastings House, 1952) in which our hero and his knights, complete with mail and plate armor and jousting lances, fight at the Battle of the Catalaunian Plain alongside Aetius. The Romans, in finest Hollywood tradition, are all dressed like 1st century Praetorians. This is rather the equivalent of putting modern soldiers on the same field with crusading knights. The Romans are five centuries behind the correct period and the Britons are at least five centuries ahead of it. My father was a Prince Valiant fan, and used to believe that every detail Hal Foster drew was one hundred percent historically accurate. I guess not. Other anachronisms abounded too, including the depiction of Valentinian III as a fat, middle-aged man. Valentinian was 35 at the time of his death. We don't know if he was fat, but I doubt it. He was performing military exercises when he was assassinated, and he was certainly fit enough to inadvisedly run Aetius through with a sword. In any case, my dad should have known better, that anything set "in the time of King Arthur" is at best highly speculative. In any case, there would have been no castles, jousts, or orders of chivalry in Arthur's day. These elements came

into the story later, when the culture of the Britons in Brittany fused with that of the Normans and French and came back to England via the Norman invasion. The Norman version of Arthur, found in Wace, Cretien, etc. imposed the customs of the 11th or 12th centuries onto the much older story.

To reply to George about why I don't think Ronald Reagan was very bright, it is simply that so many people reported Reagan's notorious inability to grasp issues or to follow discussions. It might be that his Alzheimer's kicked in somewhat earlier than his admirers are willing to admit. I will admit that there were some accomplishments of this presidency, notably that there were fewer nuclear weapons in the world at the end of it than at the beginning, and that Grenada had been liberated from a band of usurping thugs and given back to its people, but I think you will admit that a major part of a presidency these days is show business. It has been since the first Kennedy/Nixon debate in 1960. Kennedy looked better on TV and therefore won. I do not doubt that Reagan actually did espouse conservative principles — his backers after all would want to select someone temperamentally suitable; they would not hire the editor of *Ramparts* for this — but the main reason for his success was that as an actor he could play the role of president quite convincingly. It was a triumph of presentation over substance. I think we have to admit that Obama looks good on television too, as did Clinton.

They wouldn't hire David Horowitz?

On the subject of 19th century airship sightings, yes, the idea was in the air, if you will excuse the expression. It was also in the mass-media. The magazines of the period were full of speculative articles about the coming age of flight and, sure enough, most futuristic airships looked rather like zeppelins, if they did not look like hulls of ships held aloft by propellers, as you see in illustrations of Jules Verne's *Robur the Conqueror*, about which more in a moment. Unsurprisingly, the apparitions sighted in the skies conformed to the cultural expectations of the times. No gray, fetal aliens with big eyes carrying people off into saucers to perform what would have been by Victorian standards unspeakable intrusions.

One way we are led to the conclusion that these were not actually real is that, unless all of the airships vanished as neatly as Captain Nemo and the *Nautilus* at the end of *The Mysterious Island*, it is highly suspicious that no such airship ever turned up, even rusting in a barn or field after it was abandoned. No one who invented such a thing or who worked on one (these ships supposedly had multi-man crews) ever came forward, even in old age, well into the 20th century. That would have made a great news story, so you can be sure newspapers would have latched onto it if there had been a shred of evidence. It is also consistent with human nature that someone connected with all this would have desired to be recognized.

Captain Nemo conveniently had a crew of tight-lipped fanatics, all of whom died before he did. Real life does not work so neatly.

We shouldn't underestimate the influence of Jules Verne on the whole phenomenon. His novels *Robur the Conqueror* (1886) and *Master of the World* (1904) are UFO novels by the paradigm then current. Verne had already, in Captain Nemo, created the archetype of the secretive super-scientist with his own hidden establishment (or cult, or army) — who was also, I am convinced, the ancestor of the James Bond villain — and the two Robur novels give this character an airship, which is exactly what people were “seeing.” It is of course never clear how much Verne was responding to the expectations of his time and how much he created them, but as always science fiction and “sightings” are closely related. Sure enough, there were vaguely saucer-shaped craft on the covers of science fiction magazines before UFOs burst into public consciousness, and there is even an abduction scene complete with bug-eyed aliens and nasty medical experiments on the cover of the June 1935 *Astounding*. As the paradigm shifts, so do the reports of what people “see” and “experience.” There were indeed no maurading alien xenoproctologists in 1890. It was all mysterious and occasionally slightly sinister gentleman inventors. Carl Sagan has much of interest to say about this phenomenon in his last book, *The Demon-Haunted World* (1996).

I would think that a more local influence would be the Frank Reade, Jr stories. There were a fair number of them that featured airships, mostly in the oval gasbag above long gondola style.

Monarchist news: This from *The Onion Presents Our Dumb Century, 100 Years of Headlines from America's Finest News Source* for the issue of December 10, 1936:

MEANINGLESS FIGUREHEAD ABDICATES MEANINGLESS ROLE. World Captivated by Powerless Monarch's Decision to Give up Irrelevant Position to Marry Divorcee. London, England, Dec 9. In one of the biggest meaningless news stories of the decade, King Edward VIII, meaningless figurehead of the meaningless British Monarchy, has chosen to renounce his meaningless title for the love of Mrs. Wallis Warfield Simpson, a twice-divorced American considered unacceptable as Queen under England's system of meaningless class distinctions.

Declared King in a meaningless transfer of non-power less than a year ago, Edward is the first meaningless figurehead of the modern era to openly acknowledge the meaningless of his role as prop for the superfluous, powerless system of hereditary nobility. . . .

This is particularly amusing right after

seeing the film *The King's Speech*. In that movie Edward's father, George V, remarks that in the old days all you had to be king was wear your uniform and not fall off your horse in public. But, alas, with the advent of radio the king was supposed to be heard. “We have become actors,” he laments. If the real George V said that it was surprisingly prescient. See remarks on Ronnie Reagan, above. Of course the English hereditary nobility is not entirely meaningless. It may not have direct political power, but it still controls a good deal of money. But otherwise that does have a ring of truth to it. In another movie, *The Madness of King George*, the Prince of Wales (the future George IV) describes his situation not as a position but “a predicament.” The problem with being born to royalty is that your life is pretty well set out before you, and you don't have a lot of choices. Edward VIII escaped. Who's to say he did not live a better life for it?

To answer George Price's question, my street address is 6644 not 66445. It is not an apartment. The 5 is a typo.

To answer his question of what happened to the ancient Egyptians, I see no indication that anything did. Look through enough picture books of Egyptian art, or view Egyptian art directly in museums and you will conclude that (Afro-Centrists to the contrary) the Egyptians of the time of the pharaohs looked very much like their contemporary descendants. At no time in the history of the country was the population wiped out, displaced, or genetically swamped by invaders. The Nile Valley is a closely contained place. The peasantry don't have any opportunity to migrate anywhere. The ancient Egyptians depicted themselves as dark olive-skinned, with features like contemporary Egyptians. They made a clear distinction between themselves and black Nubians, who sometimes served as mercenaries in the Egyptian army (you can find tomb figures representing Nubian regiments) and who were sometimes the enemy. In the traveling King Tut exhibit there are a couple pieces that show the brown-skinned pharaoh mightily smiting darker-skinned enemies. I was particularly impressed by a pair of pharaonic sandals into the soles of which were carved squashed, caricatured black people, so that the pharaoh could tread upon Nubians with his every step. These must have been for ceremonial purposes only, because I can't imagine they would wear very well, even if His Majesty were walking only on sand. There was also a cane in which a bound black person was stretched uncomfortably over the curve of the handle. According to Sprague de Camp the ancient Egyptian name for the country south of them translates as “Land of the Blacks.” I do not know enough about contemporary Egyptian society to know if it's got a color line. Clearly some interbreeding with the blacks has also taken place. Anwar Sadat was half Nubian. There was also a period in antiquity when Nubians conquered and ruled about half of Egypt for about 75 years before the natives drove them out.

What is less clear to me is whether the

Greeks of Alexandria interbred with the native Egyptians very much. The Ptolemies themselves clearly did not. I don't think the Greek population did either.

The actual number of Arabs who entered the country in the 7th century with the first Muslim conquerors could not have been very great. Of course Egypt had been engaged in commerce with Arabia for many centuries before that, but the Arab population was so sparse that more likely the Egyptians bred with the Arabs and made them look like Egyptians rather than the other way around.

From: **Alexis A. Gilliland** June 27, 2011
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Thank you for *Alexiad* 10.3, which was waiting for us after we got back from a Ravencon meeting and picnic down in Richmond, a drive which gave us the chance to use our Global Positioning System for the first time. It worked to Lee's satisfaction, she being charged with navigation. That was on Saturday, while on Sunday a small group of us went out to see “Cars 2” which, to my surprise, turned out to be pretty good. Looking into the anti-global warming point of view, I googled Rush Limbaugh on the subject. Alas, I am not impressed; Rush doesn't say much but he says it loud and with a certain disregard for both facts and logic. In today's Washington Post there is an article about how the municipality of Virginia Beach is looking to deal with rising sea levels. At sea level, a one foot rise of mean high tide by 2050 is a serious matter, given all the sloshing around that goes on. Looking to the future Virginia Beach doesn't want to be stuck with building miles and miles of levees at \$35 million a mile, and is seeking for ways to avoid such an obligation, ways which have more to do with weasel wording lawyers than engineers. In passing it is mentioned that New Hampshire has had four “100-year” floods in the last ten years. Global Warming? Surely not, it is most likely an evil Liberal Plot, and as Rush says (unless it was the somewhat more liberal *Futurama*): “The Future Is Today, Worry About It Tomorrow!”

Jim Stumm asks if the end of Prohibition increased the use of alcohol. Probably it did, a related statistic being that cases of cirrhosis of the liver, a drinking related condition, increased after Prohibition ended. He also says that natural disasters are rare in Buffalo, though his list of such disasters does not include the lake effect snows, an annual non-disaster which might possibly have something to do with that city's loss of 300,000 people in the last 50 years. Like me, Dainis Bisenieks is not thrilled watching horse races, and I suspect it may be necessary to have a bet down before any enthusiasm can be generated. “Guys And Dolls” gives a movie version of the gambler's milieu, but visiting Las Vegas suggested that unhappiness and desperation are more common than the movie ever presented. The number of police and security in Vegas, also suggested that cheating

was expected and commonplace.

What else? Lee got a color Nook, and after a certain amount of back and forth to get one that worked as advertised, likes it a lot. She says now she won't need any more bookcases. A sheet of cartoons is enclosed for your contemplation and possible use.

From: **C. D. Carson** June 25, 2011
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As always, thank you for continuing to send me your publication, despite my sporadic responses. Speaking of which, herewith is the new *Luna!* If you don't plan to make it to Renovation, then I must needs miss you there.

The Vital Fringe Of course, while appeals to "traditional values" may not be explicitly racist, they almost always include a component of "people should know their place". Interesting that they tend to attract people near, but not quite at, the bottom of the social hierarchy, such as the poor whites who flocked to the Second Klan. • I recently heard one Jon Ronson on a programme produced by my local NPR affiliate (*Think*, KERA 90.1 FM), discussing his recent book *The Psychopath Test*. Mr Ronson suggests that, in our present culture, psychopaths & sociopaths have a strong advantage in becoming political & business leaders; it is certainly difficult to find another explanation for the observation that the fraction of such people in such positions is well above the fraction in the general population — much as it is in prisons. So, if you have ever said, "such-&-such a politician is a lunatic who ought to be in prison", you may well be right.

Which explains The Stainless Steel Rat for President (1982).

Divine Mistress Worse than that, Columbus estimated the equatorial circumference of the Earth at something like half the (well-known) polar value, making it out to be a prolate spheroid rather like a Rugby football.

Usamah . . . bin Ladin Of course; the farcial element of the whole thing was that he never had to run anywhere. He was as well hidden as he needed to be in plain sight.

Yabba-Dabba-@#\$% My uncle Joseph knew a fellow in college by the name of Buddy Hickerson, who had an ambition to become a syndicated newspaper cartoonist. He came up with all manner of clever ideas, made them into visually interesting cartoons, & submitted them, being rejected every time. Once, in frustration, he drew the stupidest, crudest thng he could think of & sent it in. It is still running today, under the title of *The Quigmans*. I understand a similar process is responsible for the present dome of the US Capitol. "Nobody ever lost money by underestimating the taste or intelligence of the American public."

Twix Coconut I can't say I have any fondness for coconut flavour. I bought, as a clearance item at the local supermarket, a packet

of "Coconut M&Ms", thinking they might contain shredded coconut mixed with the chocolate, like a chocolate bar I had in New Zealand & found very pleasant, but no such luck.

Solving the 1897 Airship Mystery Certainly there would have been nothing unusual in finding an airship on the ground while repairs were being made. Ten years after the period of the "airship mystery", *LZ 4* was destroyed at Echterdingen while grounded for repairs — or, rather, while waiting for workmen to arrive from the Benz factory at Stuttgart. Later on, repairs were often made in the air; *My Airship Flights 1915-1930*, by Captain George Meager A.F.C. (London, William Kimber, 1970 — net price given as both 75s and £3.75, on a label inside the dust-jacket, pasted over an original erroneous printing of 75s/£3.15), describes many instances in which the engine of a blimp on anti-submarine patrol would stop for some reason or none, or bolts shear through causing the airscrew to fly off, or some such accident occur, leaving the crew to patch things up & go their merry way, with a little bit of speculation as to how often aeroplane crashes were due to the like cause. The book is strangely interesting for its narrowness of subject — Captain Meager mentions gives virtually no biographical details about himself, mentioning his marriage only because it kept him out of the 1928 Gordon Bennett Cup balloon race!

Busby cites one incident where a farmer came upon a grounded airship and the pilot asked him to get some lubricating oil, two chisels, and bluestone, giving him a \$10 bill to cover the expenses.

Gilliland Lunacon down in attendance? I didn't go, partly because of the discontinuance last year of the hotel shuttle from the Metro-North station. Last-mile transportation options somehow have a strong influence on my decisions regarding travel halfway across the continent. • The current Federal Reserve policy of "quantitative easing" may perhaps be more fairly described as a means of lowering the costs of Federal borrowing than an economic stimulus measure, no matter what Chairman Bernanke says. He is taking US bonds off the market, making room for new ones to be sold, & paying for them by creating new Federal Reserve credits (roughly equivalent to "printing money") with those very bonds as collateral. One rarely sees so clear an illustration of the point that inflation constitutes a hidden tax. (The reluctance of the banks to lend on the basis of these credits has so far kept depreciation in check, but for how long?)

Stumm Not only do the Coptic Christian Churches have apostolic succession, the principal one has its own Pope! When people say "the Pope of Rome", do they really mean in contradistinction to the Pope of Alexandria & Patriarch of All Africa? One doubts they've heard of him.

Bisenieks A recent favourite around here is a book entitled *Holy Tango of Literature*, using

anagrams of the names of famous authors as jumping-off points for humorous pastiches of their work.

Price The Arabs have been in the ascendancy in Egypt, & the Copts in decline, since the armies of the successors of Mahomet first turned their swords to the prosperous, populous Roman (or ex-Roman) dominions of North Africa. Their condition has only gotten worse since the advent of Arab nationalism; their numbers continue to decline, & the yernacular use of the language of the Pharaohs has practically vanished. A related {"Hamitic"— as the old term would have it) population group is the wa-Tutsi of Central Africa, notable for the freakish height of their men.

Burke It is worth noting that the Portuguese tauromaquia does not end in the death of the bull with anything like the inevitability of its Spanish sibling. • We may recall that, down to the beginning of the year 1900, there were places in Germany where the Justinian Code was still — nominally — in full force, with all its strangenesses, including what the Romans themselves saw as a relic of the ancient past (but feared to disturb), the terrible *patria potestas*. • Radioactivity is hardly to be measured by weight. Sixteen tonnes of ordinary soil, excavated from anywhere in the world, will contain quite a bit of naturally-occurring radioactive material; the better question is how much above the typical background levels for Madrid (as opposed to, say, Warsaw, one of the 'hotter' European capitals) the 'contaminated' material is.

As Petr Beckmann pointed out (before he went crank):
"Ralph Nader is radioactive."

— JTM

From: **Lloyd Penney** July 10, 2011
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Thank you for the latest issue of *Alexiad*, whole number 57. It's a warm, humid day, and while I should perhaps be outside, there's a lot of interesting fanzines to peruse and comment on. This issue has risen to the top of the pile.

I am often at the local library, in spite of the fact that after fighting the local branch for six years, I finally got my library card. (Not enough ID, not the right kind of ID, how do I know that's you, is that really your passport, etc.) The last couple of times, someone tried to make conversation in the library because I might have had a stack of books beside me, usually making some smart remark about the number of books in the stack, I told them to mind their own business. I get the same kind of stupid remark when we're moving equipment and food out to run a special even, or con suite or green room . . . "Ya moving out?" "Nope!", and the conversation ends there. I make sure of it. Idiotic remarks deserve no less.

You do recall how 4SJ handled

a similar problem. People would look at his library and gawp, "Have you read all that?" and he'd say, "Every last word." Whenever he got a book he'd open it and read just the last word.

A shame about the death of Edward Hardwicke. Not only did I remember him from the Granada Sherlock Holmes, but also from the British Colditz series.

Yes, indeed, Michael Ignatieff did cause the election we recently endured. And, he lost big time, as did the Liberal Party. Ignatieff's riding is just south of the riding I live in. The Liberal MP for my riding lost by a mere handful of votes, and the fellow who replaced him, representing the winning Conservative party, has been quite silent and invisible in the months since the election. I think Canadian voters made a serious error in electing the Conservatives, and I think they will rectify that mistake next time, but only if there is a viable alternative available. Whether that will be the NDP or Liberals remains to be seen... The Conservatives have been the masters of the slimy attack ads, and are now putting through legislation that will do away with federal contributions to the other parties, thereby starving away the opposition, and cementing their dominance. For the record, as some kind of reward for trying his best to win that election, Ignatieff now has a plum teaching position with the University of Toronto.

I am always amazed as how people are mystified by the pre-decimal British system of money. Given I had Scottish grandparents who used to send me British comic books, I know all about pounds sterling and shillings and pence, and some of the more esoteric coins. I have a few wooden thrippennies, and a couple of silver thrippennies, plus some large pennies that are now more than a century old. (They are mystified by this, but somehow understand the Gringotts style of wizards' money. Go fig.)

Not sure if you have ever seen this book, but I must wonder how many Sherlockians have. It's *Gaslight Grimoire*, edited by J.R. Campbell and Charles Prepolec, and published by Edge Publishing of Calgary, Alberta. It's bound to satisfy the steampunks in the crowd, too. I haven't read it yet, but the copy I have is mint, and only cost me \$3. I look forward to opening its covers.

The Aurora Award nominees . . . thank you, and I think I have an excellent chance of winning the Aurora this year. Unfortunately, you are right, Canadian fans don't read fanzines, but then, it has been some years since Canadian fandom had a vibrant fanzine tradition of any kind. Those of us who were shocked by the Aurora for Best Fan Publications not being awarded this year will probably do something about it, I expect. There are Canadian fan publications, and I get most of them, but circulation is always low, and I expect that those who cared to nominate may not have voted in sufficient numbers to make the minimums for the Auroras. Also, notice that there are three instead of the usual five nominees in Best Fan

Other. The Auroras enjoy a larger per capital voting rate than the Hugos, but it could be that the fans who have a wide variety of fanacs to enjoy may simply not care or not be aware of the ability to nominate or vote.

Hardcopy distribution is a fanzine may or may not be the only surefire way to generate a good local, but so many faneds of e-zines have complained in the past, and still do, of lack of response. An e-zine can be ignored out of hand, just like anything else that we might get in our e-mail. I make it a point to respond to e-zines . . . I understand the economics behind it.

I'm not even as optimistic as you are. See Sheryl Birkhead's loc above where she describes listening to the chief pod person of StarShipSofa saying that he didn't know who the other fanzine nominees were, or who the Fan Artist nominees were. Welcome to the future.

— JTM

It's Sunday night now . . . we're scrambling about to get ready for tomorrow, so I think I will wind it up. I have done what I can, anyway. Take care, stay cool, wish you could be in Reno. See you with the next issue.

From: **R-Laurraine Tutihasi** July 12, 2011
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Late still. I have some hope of catching up. What's different? We had to put Fluffy to sleep about a month ago. He was losing control of the entire rear half of his body. I thought for a while about diapers, but it wouldn't have helped for very long, and he would've hated it. It's taken me a little while to recover emotionally, but now I think I'm beginning to catch up with stuff even though I'm using extra time to read for the Hugo voting. I also dropped two more APAe. I'm dropping a few subscriptions, but they won't run out until this fall at the earliest.

I applaud Lisa's efforts to save the wild violets. I hope at least some of them survived the transplanting.

I'd like to inform Robert S. Kennedy that Kage Baker was a woman. She unfortunately passed away earlier this year. But I'm in complete agreement about his assertion that "Words have gender, people have sex". It seems to be a change that's been taking place for quite a while. I've noticed it in older movies and TV shows. I find it very annoying and grating.

I note a lot of little things, like for example stories set during WWII with Chinese words in Pinyin transliteration ("Beiping" instead of "Peiping" — or worse yet, "Beijing").

— JTM

George W. Price made an interesting observation about why employers might not want to hire new people. However, there is an easy way around this. It's temporary employment. At least on one occasion, I was offered a job by a company I was temping for. This way both the company and the prospective hire can see how good the fit is.

I also enjoyed his, and your contribution to, discussion about alternate histories about WWII. I've read Gingrich's first book but not yet the second. To really appreciate the first one, you really need to know your real history. I found myself having to double-check. I need to add the second book, the Turtledove books, and the Conroy book to my book list.

Finally I don't think I've mentioned it, but I really enjoy Joe's parodies at the end of the zines.

From: **Milt Stevens** July 13, 2011
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Thanks for the copy of *Alexiad* V. 10 #3. Thanks also for the second copy which I needed because I was having trouble transferring the first copy from my old computer when I had to make a change. Fortunately, such situations only occur every four or five years, so it shouldn't happen again soon.

Lisa's comments on talking to the women at the library sounded as if the women were just making conversation. Then I thought about it a little more. "Making conversation" is an interesting turn of phrase. It indicates creating something in a situation where it would not normally exist. Humans seem to have a need to communicate even if they have nothing to communicate. It's as if we want to chatter at each other just to inform our comrades that we are still alive. Maybe we want to remind ourselves as well. I have a mouth, and I must chatter.

I occasionally regret not having the time to play computer games. I like some computer games and can easily kill an afternoon playing them. However, they are low on my list of priorities. Even though I am retired, I am still a creature of schedules. If something is not in my schedule, it isn't going to happen. It isn't that I couldn't make time for computer games, but that there is no time for them in my schedule, and I don't have any particular reason to change my schedule.

About the only game I play is *Civilization IV*. "Build a civilization that will be the thief of time!" — when I realize it's around midnight and I have to get to work in the morning.

— JTM

The review of *Source Code* was a remarkable piece of work. After reading it, I had no idea what the reviewer thought of the movie. The reviewer apparently wanted to avoid controversy and succeeded admirably.

Personally, I liked the movie. I was slightly surprised by the way the film reached a satisfactory conclusion. To say any more would create a spoiler. This is the third time travel film I've seen starring Jake Gyllenhaal. The other two were *Donnie Darko* and *Prince of Persia*. I have no idea whether he has a thing for time travel stories, or it is just a coincidence.

The *Mad Magazine* review I remembered was published in 1970. How time flies. That must have been about the time I stopped reading *Mad Magazine*. I used to occasionally notice *Mad Magazine* on a newsstand, but I haven't even seen a newsstand in years. I moved to Simi Valley in 1992, and there aren't any newsstands in Simi Valley. They were a dying breed even years before I moved here.

From: **Robert S. Kennedy** July 19, 2011
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Thank you for Vol. 10, No. 3.

My memory says that I sent you an item or items concerning Stanley Choules. So, if my memory is correct (and it could be wrong) I was surprised to not see my name included on page 13. Just thought that I would mention it. I have some interest in this subject given that my father was in the Army in France in World War I. But, he died in his early 80's.

Lisa: Shocking, absolutely shocking that you would think that Osama bin Laden should "have his head on a stake overlooking the World Trade Center." Now, I have to admit to my fantasy on hearing of his being killed. His head should have been cut off. The body dropped in the middle of the ocean in an undisclosed location to feed the fishes. His head placed on a stake. But, I couldn't decide where to place it. No doubt we both will be considered sick by a number of people. Nevertheless, it sounds good to me. Anyway, what was actually done in the disposal of his body was the correct thing to do.

Rodford Edmiston: "The Joy of High Tech"—I found your article about gyrocopters to be most interesting and was not aware that they still existed.

Pat McCray: I could not remember if I have seen *The Quiet Earth* so rented it. No, I had not seen it previously. The more I thought about it after watching it the more questions/problems I had with it. Anyway, on my scale of 1-5 I gave it a 3. Thank you for your comments about *Source Code*. It is scheduled for release on DVD on July 26 and I'll rent it. By the way, I very much enjoyed *Babylon 5* so I guess we'll have to disagree there. Concerning *Inception*, I asked if anyone understood the ending and if so would they please explain it to me. No response.

Steve Green: I think that you misunderstood my comment about the movie *The Green Hornet*. I agree with your comments. The movie was a waste of my money.

R. Laurraine Tutihasi: You made a funny concerning my short report on LosCon 37 (held the Friday, Saturday, and Sunday after

Thanksgiving) and the Masquerade—"dwarfs and midgets" indeed. The reason that I didn't mention the Guests of Honor is that I usually don't pay much attention to them. For the record the Guests of Honor were as follows: Writer Guest of Honor – Emma Bull. Artist Guest of Honor – Phil Foglio. Fan Guests of Honor – Kim and Jordan Brown. If I write something about LosCon 38 I'll try to remember to mention the Guests of Honor.

A good number of years ago I made arrangements with the Neptune Society for when I die to cremate my body and spread my ashes in the Pacific Ocean. (Unbeknownst to me my brother who died in 2006 had done the same and it worked excellent.) Yesterday, I received a letter from them to let me know that they had made a change in their trustee assignment. This has no effect on their arrangements with me. It's the last sentence that had me laughing—"We thank you for your business and look forward to continued service."

Say hello to Robert Heinlein.

— JTM

From: **Brad W. Foster** July 21, 2011
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Best Fan Artist Hugo Nominee

Apologies for the delay in response, have had a pile of things to get to here for over a month, but a single large project has eaten up all the spare time I might have had. Fortunately, that has now been completed, and I'm enjoying a day or two of catching up on "things fannish". Heck even sat down and did a couple of little 'toons for the fun of it gain, and two of those are attached here, since I see you've no more on hand from me. Got to keep the fannish payments moving, as it's getting rarer and rarer to get an actual printzine in the mailbox these days.

The oddest thing about Lisa's opening comments this issue is that the people asking here questions about reading were doing it in a library. I mean, what were *they* doing there? Did they just stumble on it because someone said "You can use computers in there to get on the internet for free", and then were in shock when they walked in and saw books? I could see the questions coming up if you're out somewhere else and had books with you — it's a rarer and rarer sight. But IN a LIBRARY? She's right, it's strange, and a little disturbing.

Regarding your comment "What was wrong with the old one?", about the HBO plans to do a new version of *I, Claudius*: I agree with you totally. What is this push to re-do movies that were not only good, but wonderful — and in the process make changes that make the re-heats look even paler by comparison. If you can't come up with an original idea, how about taking some of the old badly-done movies and put some of the modern techniques and money into them, and see if you can get them into shape? It

was like when I saw some of the modern Godzilla movies recently — it's still Godzilla stomping around, still a monster movie, but damned if they didn't *look* so much better!

There's STAR TREK™ Redux, the episodes of the original series redone with more recent special effects technology. You'll recall some people got extremely mad at George Lucas when he did that to Star Wars Episode IV: A New Hope.

— JTM

I've gotta go, many more locs to write today!

From: **Joy V. Smith** July 23, 2011
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Another fantastic selection of reviews of intriguing books, including *The Patriot* (which told me all I wanted to know), *Feed* (it's really about zombies and bloggers?!), the Connie Willis books (thanks for the British currency background), history books and alternate history books, . . . And I enjoyed another review of *Cryoburn*, which made me reread it yet again.

I'm glad the storms missed you. Btw, there are some good articles on the tornadoes and storm damage and recovery in the latest *Southern Living*. Rodford Edmiston's article on helicopters and gyrocopters was interesting. I'd like to see a documentary on them so we could see them in operation.

Thanks to Taral Wayne for his piece on those nauseating TV shows. The *Solving the 1897 Airship Mystery* review was intriguing. I wasn't aware of that mystery. Ah, more book reviews and a movie review. I think I had crossed *Source Code* off my list of movies I want to see — not a very long list, btw. I enjoyed the con reports too; and thanks for the awards and fanzines lists.

There's a great collection of LOCs. Uh, now that you mention it, Joe, I remember the name John Galt. Why can't I remember who he is?! I'll have to make a note of it next time and put it on the fridge or somewhere. Cute cartoon by Marc Schirmeister on page 28. And thanks to Sue Burke for her report from Spain. (I'm still stunned by the baby naming info.)

John Galt is the mysterious protagonist of Atlas Shrugged.

— JTM

From: **Dainis Bisenieks** July 20, 2011
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A book by George R. Stewart that I have long cherished is *Good Lives*, containing sketches of persons as various as Heinrich Schliemann and William the Marshal. What essential quality, asked the author, united them?

It coems to me that many of those whose deaths were specially noted by *The Economist* could come under this head. Some were of purely local fame; even so. Then again, one of Wilfred Thesiger's books is titled *The Life of My Choice*. Very much to the point.

Otto von Habsburg, dead at 98, did not choose to be a Habsburg, but he made the best of his heritage; his name was not unknown to me. His full name had not been, nor the full Royal and Imperial titles. Where the dickens is Lodomeria? Ah yes, a part of Galicia, which Austria gained at the Third Partition of Poland.

"What is the Argentine Republic? Once there was a Confederation of the La Plata; why can I not find it on my map? The Emperors of Hayti and Brazil do *not* answer their mails, and — is the Confederation of the La Plata the same as the Confederate States, or is it *not*? Do we recognize these American States, or do we recognize only some of them, and if so, *which*? What and where is the Republic of Texas? Things were simpler before Bonaparte, don't you agree, Engelbert?"

Lots of this is fixed in my memory (though rarely verbatim) 'cause I worked on a bunch of the "Esterhazy" stories subeditorially first for their appearance in *Amazing* and then again for the Owlswick Press edition. I have bowed to Avram Davidson many times . . .

Ah yes, exotic remnants. One of Alves Reis's associates shipped the Portuguese 500-escudo Vasco da Gama banknotes from London to Lisbon under diplomatic pouch, using his appointment as consul from Liberia to the Empire of All the Russias. This was in 1925. The Emperor of All the Russias did not answer his mails.

Paddy Fermor's long life was the life of his choice. I am interested to learn that a biography is in preparation. Will a manuscript be found telling of his further youthful travels? In the two published books, he was yet far from reaching his goal of Constantinople. Some sidelights may be found in the July 8 issue of *TLS*, where also a two-page spread is devoted to Mervyn Peake on his centenary. Do I want to get the new edition of the *Gormenghast* Trilogy for the sake of the additional drawings included in it? Not, at any rate, hastily.

Then felt I like some watcher of the even news when a new planet swims into his ken. At last some view of Vesta, though we'll have to wait a month or two for closeups. It is interesting that the huge crater, already known from Hubble photos, does not have the sort of built-up rim we are accustomed to seeing. It's like the ejected material was simply swept away past the curve of the planet. Models of the dynamics of impact on bodies of this size are awaited.

Yes, we have to know more about "The Dynamics of an Asteroid".

My recent reading has included books by Oliver Sacks and by Paul Fussell. As a child in wartime Europe, I was spared the most alarming sights, though a ward full of amputees at a German military hospital did give me rather a turn.

All that stuff about sterling just to make the point that Willis made a boo-boo? Some we forgive, others, not. Sunflower seeds in Falco's Rome? Tsk.

What if he'd paid for them in euros? If the writer does exhaustive research and makes a simple error like that . . .

— JTM

Some readers of *Beyond Bree* want to hear from me; I have written to them and will see what comes of this.

From: **Sue Burke** July 28, 2011
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I am holier than thou.

I just returned from a week-long vacation in Prague and Vienna, and while in Vienna, my husband and I visited the Hofburg Palace, specifically its Schatzkammer (Treasury) (indeed: a 25-room vault), filled with both secular and ecclesiastical treasure.

The secular hoard alone was worth the €12 admission price, especially the crown of the Holy Roman Empire, made in the tenth century, still sparkling like new with gold, precious stones, and pearls. The imperial red coronation mantle, embroidered with gold and studded with pearls and enamel plaques, made in 1134, remains in perfectly wearable condition.

We also saw the crown of Rudolf II from 1602, and his scepter made from a unicorn horn with a head of gold, diamonds, rubies, and a large sapphire. We saw the cradle of Napoleon's son, the King of Rome (more gold); the largest cut emerald in the world; and the treasury of the Knights of the Order of the Golden Fleece, whose members are all high nobility or royalty, so those endless riches alone were magnificent.

Never before and probably never again will I be surrounded by so much gold, diamonds, pearls, and enormous gemstones.

But all this was overshadowed by the glorious ecclesiastical treasures: two pieces of the Holy Cross (one quite large), the Holy Grail (they're wrong on that, though; the real one is in Valencia), one of the nails used on the Cross (at least thirty of the original three or four still exist); the Holy Lance used on Christ during the Crucifixion (one of four known); a piece of the tablecloth from the Last Supper; and room after room filled with exquisite jewel-encrusted silver

and gold reliquaries with teeth, fragments of bone, vials of blood, a link from the chain with which St. Peter was bound, and other relics from an all-star manifest of saints.

One of the popular themes of occultist history is the sacred power of the Holy Lance, which supposedly works even for non-believers. What if two different sides in a war each had a Holy Lance?

— JTM

As you know, relics emit mysterious power and their virtue is transmitted to those in their vicinity: they can remit sins and grant indulgences. Thus my soul benefitted tremendously from that morning spent among them. In fact, it's probably good for your soul just to have read this LOC.

You're welcome.

From: **George W. Price** July 30, 2011
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June Alexiad:

Joe, when you wrote that extended review of *The Patriot*, by Harold Bienvenu (1964), did you intend for us to be struck by the fact that the book's right-wing demagogue, William Allan Boardman, shares a name with one of fandom's best-known left-wingers, John Boardman? I'd be tempted to think that the book was actually intended to twit our John, except that it's unlikely that in 1964 Bienvenu had ever heard of him. Too bad, it's only an amusing coincidence.

* * * * *

Nostalgia Corner: Steve Green expresses disappointment with the movie version of *The Green Hornet*. I haven't seen it and don't intend to; I'd rather keep my childhood memories of the original radio Green Hornet undefiled. By the way, in all the discussion of the movie I've seen no mention of the connection between the Green Hornet and the Lone Ranger. The Green Hornet is Britt Reid, who is the son of Dan Reid, who appeared in the Lone Ranger radio series as a nephew of the Lone Ranger. As I recall, the Green Hornet stories never explicitly said this; it was left to the listener to realize that the elderly Dan Reid who is Britt's father (I'm not sure if he ever came on stage) is the same as the young Dan Reid who sometimes rode with the Lone Ranger. It couldn't have been a coincidence, since both radio series were produced by the same people at the same time. They were just having a little fun.

As I recall, in *The Great Radio Heroes* Jim Harmon quotes a scene where Dan Reid talks about the Lone Ranger to Britt.

* * * * *

Alexis Gilliland comments on my suggested possible climate change scenarios. In particular, he is dubious about the likelihood of the entire world raising its energy consumption by 2060 to the level now enjoyed by the U.S.A.: "First of all, our fossil fuel reserves are finite, so there wouldn't be enough to go around." Well, maybe. The U.S. has enough known coal deposits to last about 300 years at present consumption rates. China also has huge reserves. I'm not sure about the rest of the world, but I really doubt if coal would be anywhere near exhausted in only 50 years, even if world consumption rose to the present U.S. rate. The petroleum might well run out sooner. In any case, Alexis has a good point; burning fossil fuels for power generation and vehicle propulsion is at best only a temporary expedient until nuclear power can take over most of the load.

The Fukushima disaster will stimulate more resistance to nuclear power, but I don't see any reasonable alternative in the long run. All the "sustainable" sources are either absurdly expensive or ridiculously limited in availability, or both. Let's call them the unreasonable alternatives.

The earthquake tsunami killed upwards of 30,000 people in Japan; Fukushima killed no one, but is being treated as if it were the major result of the tsunami, presumably because there's no way we can prevent tsunamis, but we can restrict nuclear power.

Of course, I intended that 2060 scenario to be an extreme case to test the limits of the models that the climate-change lobby uses, and Mr. Gilliland may be right that it might trigger an extreme event such as the Permian-Triassic extinction that he discussed previously. I'm afraid we may find out by direct experience, because I see no realistic chance that the peoples of China and India, etc., will refrain from vastly expanding their energy use. As I've said before, they won't volunteer to stay in poverty for the sake of the planet.

* * * * *

In my screed on legalizing drugs, I proposed that drunk drivers who kill someone be charged with "Murder One." Jim Stumm explains at considerable length why vehicular homicide while intoxicated does not fit the standard definition of first-degree murder — principally that the driver did not intend to kill anyone. This is quite true, but misses my point. I propose to change the definition of first-degree murder to include killings resulting from deliberately putting oneself in a state (intoxication by alcohol or other drugs) which one knows in advance may result in someone's death. The object, of course, is to discourage taking the drugs in the first place. That way we don't have to maintain this huge "war-on-drugs" apparatus that trashes our civil liberties, produces smuggling and gang wars such as Mexico is now enjoying, and still doesn't stop drug use. I want full responsibility pinned

directly on the person who decides to take the drugs, and then we don't have to be concerned with how he obtained them.

* * * * *

On a lighter subject, Mr. Stumm discusses the inappropriateness of calling flatware "cutlery" when it includes forks and spoons that are not used for cutting. Likewise, "silverware" is ludicrous for plastic utensils. Agreed! Our language preserves multitudes of obsolete usages that were once quite literal. I presume that "cutlery" dates to the time, only a few hundred years ago, when knives and daggers were just about the only personal eating tools. Forks and spoons are relatively recent inventions; meat was held in the fingers and soup was drunk out of the bowl.

We see similar linguistic traces in other areas. For example, we still say "plumbing," which derives from lead pipes (plumbum in Latin), even though nearly all pipes are now iron or plastic or almost anything but lead (which we now know is poisonous). And it would take a very long article to cover all the idioms based on horses, such as "giving free rein to"; "unbridled passion"; "saddled with responsibility"; and "spurred into action." I'll bet that even if electric vehicles totally replace gasoline-powered ones, we will keep right on saying "step on the gas!" (Do the British say "step on the petrol"?)

* * * * *

R-Lauraine Tutihasi is "confused about this U-turn thing," citing its legality in California and Arizona, and asks, "What are the laws over in your neck of the woods?"

In the Chicago area, U-turns are illegal almost everywhere. One obvious reason is that almost all residential streets, and a majority of business streets, are only four lanes wide — that is, one parking lane and one driving lane each way. On streets so narrow, a U-turn is physically impossible for cars of normal size, except at intersections where you can swing wide to the right, into the pedestrian crosswalk, and then curve back around to the left. Since drivers on the cross-street are not expecting anything like this, it is quite dangerous unless there is no traffic coming either way. Strictly forbidden. But I see it done occasionally.

About the only place where a U-turn is ever legal is where the street has a wide median, so that you can turn left and stop, and be between the streams of traffic, waiting to make another left turn to go back the way you came. There are very few such places in Chicago.

I have read that when Brigham Young laid out Salt Lake City he commanded that the main streets be wide enough that a Conestoga wagon ("prairie schooner") could make a U-turn. Having seen those streets, I can believe it.

We had hoped to see Salt Lake City; instead we saw Chicago. (I have relatives in both.)

* * * * *

Robert S. Kennedy recommends Tom Kratman's books, including *Countdown: The Liberators*, and says it appears that there is a prior book, "just plain *Countdown*." No, I think he got that impression from the brag sheet opposite the title page of *Countdown: The Liberators*, where "Countdown" (not in italics) appears over the titles *Countdown: The Liberators* and *Countdown: M Day* (upcoming). I believe this "Countdown" is intended as the title to the series, not as a book title. That's why it is not italicized. In any case, I've enjoyed all the Kratman books I've read, including such others as *A Desert Called Peace* and *Carnifex*. However, don't read those if you're either a Muslim or a fan of the U.N., unless you like being enraged.

Or if you're a veteran of the North Nova Scotia Highlanders, Canadian Land Forces.

— JTM

* * * * *

A recent newspaper story reported on a movement in California to split the state into two parts. Thirteen counties, mostly inland and mostly conservative, would become South California. I am reminded of the story about a fellow in northern California, where many people dislike both the San Francisco and Los Angeles areas. When asked if he saw any serious difference between Bay people and Angelenos, he replied, "Oh my yes! It's the difference between 'queer' and 'strange'."

From: **Richard A. Dengrove** July 30, 2011
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I, of course, read *Alexiad*, June 2011 through. Perhaps I should have commented on the more personal stuff, but I'm a reprobate and will comment on the ideas and get myself into trouble.

Other people have met the enemy and they are themselves. Your review of *The Patriot* by Harold Bienvenu (1966) shows this. With the extreme rightist group Harold writes about, and extreme leftists groups as well, they are their own worst enemies because their very idealism prevents them from adapting their ideas to the real world. In the real world, you have to negotiate with others, and your ideas will wind up on the head or tail of other ideas. With these extremists, it's take it or leave. And the public normally decides to leave it.

These extremists live in only one what-if world; however, Jeff Greenfield in his *Then Everything Changed* presents a number of alternate worlds. What if Kennedy died earlier? What if Bobby Kennedy hadn't been assassinated? The usual assumption is that this shows free will vs. determinism. It was the decision of people not causes.

Jean Paul Sartre disagreed. He claimed that,

when it comes to human decisions, you need cause and effect, i.e., determinism. Otherwise, there would be no reason to make decisions. It is causes that set up the pluses and minuses of different decisions.

At least, as a cause, competence has always guided the actions of our rulers. Or has it? Joe, your review of *Project Azorian* by Polmar and White shows that's not always true. Far from a race to show whether we or the Russians was more competent, the race was to show which side could be less incompetent in dredging up a submarine.

I guess the Russians proved less incompetent. However, they didn't even know where the submarine was, much less dredge it up. In addition, both sides were falling into the fallacy of attributing to conspiracy what they could have attributed to incompetence.

At least incompetence worries world leaders and their underlings; it doesn't bother the poobahs of the media one iota. As long as something sells, they are going to flog it. Taral Wayne complains about *Family Guy*, *American Dad* and *The Cleveland Show* because they are ripoffs of other shows, showcase obnoxious characters and recycle plots recycled since Bar Kochba's rebellion.

He doesn't seem to realize that the TV producers would just as soon have some tike repeat their ABCs all night if it made them gobs of moolah. Of course, that wouldn't work out. On the other hand, neither will current teleprogramming. The public will grow tired of this swill eventually. Then current producers and directors will be out on their ear, and replaced by new swill.

Apparently more originality and true entertainment is shown by Michael Busby in *Solving The 1897 Airship Mystery*. And this is true even though reviewer Rodford Edmiston claims he's a tendentious and opinionated sonuvabitch. It was the first time I had heard that some of the mysterious airships spotted by bumpkins were experimental airships. Of course, Busby says all of them were.

The theory I had heard played to our 20th Century and 21st Century thinking: that they were the 1897 equivalent of UFO aliens. Perhaps with less imagination since observers usually pictured giants or another race of humans exiting from the airship.

Nonetheless, there are similarities between them. Observing airships must have been almost as contagious as observing flying saucers at times in the 20th Century. Of course, actual experimental craft and interplanetary chimeras are not mutually exclusive: experimental airships could have triggered the contagion.

Speaking of prodigies, like flying saucerites and flying airship-ites, Carol Clarke, in her column *Preternatural Fantasies*, reports on novels with sympathetic vampires and sympathetic werewolves. Why not sympathetic Zombies? I admit that the ecch factor may have something to do with their lack of sex appeal. They are an awful lot, resembling rotting corpses, which they are supposed to be.

However, the ecch factor appears to be breaking down. Someone I know wanted to be

a zombie while admitting that made no sense at all. What next? Romantic zombies? "Take my arm dear. I'll come for it shortly."

There already are zombie romances.

—JTM

Of course, way back, technology was a prodigy like zombies and mysterious airships. That is why Sherlock Holmes' tales are filled with the technology of the time, like train travel and telegraphy. And why Bill Mason could report on it at the *Holmesiana* symposium.

One wonders why, in the late 1890s, Sherlock never made use of radio technology. It was being developed then. However, that was one prodigy the Victorians could not abide by. That is until it became a reality. Traditionally, you couldn't send messages through the ether. That is why every proto-SF writer I know, but H.G. Wells, is mum on it.

A Victorian doing a straightline projection would have excluded radio. Similarly, Darrell Schweitzer talks about the novel *China Mountain Zhang*? And while, unlike the Victorian projectionists, the novel is vivid, Darrel admits it is too conservative. Will there be time machines, FTL and visiting aliens? Probably not, but straightline projection no more resembles real futures than those fantasies. Inevitably, a new divine wind comes out of nowhere to reshape the future.

However, you can project for this letter. The inevitable prediction is that it will have to end somewhere. And its ending is here.

From: **Taras Wolansky** August 2, 2011
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Alexiad 4/11: "The Library of Congress decided that his real name was Edward Hamilton Waldo and 'Theodore Sturgeon' was a pseudonym". Even more comically, Jack Vance's early work was catalogued under "Henry Kuttner". The Library now treats whatever name is on the title page as the author.

That was Ted Dikty's fault.
There was a time when every new writer was believed to be Kuttner.

Review of Allan Hornblum's *The Invisible Harry Gold*: "One of his favorite shows was *Secret Agent*." Well, at least he had good taste in television!

Grant McCormick: Very neat idea to use the Earth's rotation as an indirect but objective measure of the temperature of the Earth's atmosphere. The figures you show go along with many others I've seen, indicating that global warming largely leveled off in the late 1990s. Not that there's no increase, but that it's so gradual that it failed tests of statistical significance. In early 2010, Prof. Phil Jones, a global warming hardliner, admitted there had been no statistically significant warming since 1995 — though, with an additional year of data,

he now says it is significant.

Darrell Schweitzer: According to NOAA, as far as the continental United States was concerned, 2010 was "the 23rd warmest year on record" (since 1880, I think). Even to get to that, judging from the discussion, they had to lower the long-established temperature estimates for previous hot years, like 1921 and 1934. A lot of this stuff sounds a lot more convincing until you look at how the estimates are actually cooked. It's part of the normal, messy operations of science that an effort is made to bring "anomalous" results in line with the dominant paradigm; remember Thomas Kuhn's *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*.

Also bear in mind that, to establish these rank orders of years, we're looking at tiny, fractional degree differences. Thus, the rank order is heavily dependent upon the particular assumptions used — and the particular assumptions used tend to be those which produce results consistent with the dominant paradigm. (According to NOAA, land surface temperatures in 2010 were tied for the second warmest on record [since 1980], and warmest if ocean surfaces are counted.)

Gore Vidal is a crackpot who believes, among other things, that FDR intentionally provoked the attack on Pearl Harbor and knew it was coming in advance — and that Truman refused to accept a Japanese surrender just to have an excuse to use an atomic bomb on a city. (In light of that, it's hardly worth mentioning he's also a "Truther" who thinks George W. Bush knew the 9/11 attacks were coming.)

So when he talks about how Ronald Reagan was a great actor — nonsense to an old movie buff like me — and that some unspecified "handlers" were his puppet masters, one must take this very skeptically. Indeed, people who follow politics know that "amiable dunce" is no longer the Party line on Reagan. Instead, he is the wise moderate whom current Republicans fail to live up to. As early as 1988, a high-level Democratic operative like Chris Matthews could describe Reagan as the best "wholesale" politician in American (while Matthews' boss, Democratic Speaker Tip O'Neill, was the best "retail" politician).

Nor is it any longer true that the Republicans are the party of the "wealthy elite" — who have, for various reasons, migrated into the Democratic Party. Giveaway: Democratic Presidential candidates collect more money than Republicans do — and the Dems are more dependent on large contributions.

Trouble is, Darrell reads thousands of pages of fantasy fiction every year, while I read thousands of pages of politics, so it's not surprising his information is not accurate or up to date. (He also tends not to read responses to his LoCs, so he repeats the same errors over and over.) For example, he writes, "Reagan could plead senility and even get re-elected." This is obviously a garbled reference to the Iran-Contra scandal of 2007 — but, of course, Reagan was re-elected in 2004.

AL du Pisani: With your stories about insurance companies filling potholes, and taxpayers associations hiring local governments,

you seem to be describing a South Africa descending into anarcho-capitalism. Probably the time to worry is when the A.N.C. begins to lose its de facto monopoly of politics. Then, politicians will compete as to who will rip off the whites more, and the downward spiral will begin in earnest.

Alexiad 6/11: "Plans for a new version of *I, Claudius*. What was wrong with the old one?"
A: Not enough nudity and debauchery, as now required in TV shows set in ancient Rome.

Perhaps because they edited out the safe, legal, and rare procedure Caligula (John Hurt) did for Drusilla (Beth Morris) in Episode VIII "Zeus, by Jove!".

Lois McMaster Bujold's Hugo-nominee *Cryoburn* was entertaining, but a fair to middling entry in a long series — an SF "cozy" — shouldn't be a Hugo nominee. I'd rather see a more ambitious work nominated, even if I enjoyed it less. It's embarrassing to present such a light entertainment as among the best SF can do.

You can only nominate what came out that year. I'd rather read a "cozy" like that than a screwball comedy.

Milt Stevens: "While society frowns on ridiculing cripples, it lets us do it in literary form." Good point, about the questionable ethics of the "killer review".

Alexis Gilliland: In your drug-legalization scheme, there's no need to have the government dole out narcotics. In the absence of prohibition, the price of drugs would be very low: even in the current, cottage industry approach, they're not expensive to make. The current high price is a risk premium. A drug addict would be much like a wino today.

According to a recent article in *Scientific American*, there's a huge amount of fossil fuels becoming available right now. For one thing, an "exhausted" oil field still contains two-thirds of its oil — and methods of extracting that are getting better every day.

We're never going to "run out" of fossil fuel; indeed, the idea of "running out" of a resource is bad economics, as what actually happens is the price simply goes up, causing substitution of other energy sources on the demand side, and increased production on the supply side. Most likely, genetic engineering will make biofuels cheaper and cheaper, until fossil fuels are simply no longer worth the trouble of retrieving.

Darrell Schweitzer: As I recall, Maureen McHugh's *China Mountain Zhang*, written shortly after the end of the Cold War, is a bit dated. Her hero uses chaos theory to disprove Marxism — as if China still worshiped at that church. Then again, whether Western-style democratic capitalism wins the competition with Chinese authoritarian capitalism is still an open question. On the one hand, the people loot the

economy to obtain government benefits; on the other, members of the ruling party loot the economy for themselves.

Robert S. Kennedy: I suspect *Dr. Who* and *Torchwood* are something you have to get imprinted on, like a baby duck, when you're young, or you'll never appreciate them.

"On May 19 for the 10th time I was the only person in the movie theater." By any chance, do you have a glass hand?

I don't think Robert knows Harlan Ellison™.

— JTM

From: Dale Speirs July 27, 2011
Box 6830, Calgary, Alberta T2P 2E7
CANADA

The June 2011 *Alexiad* received today, many thanks. The Papernet was shut down in June due to a postal strike, and the mails are backlogged even today.

In your Monarchist News you refer to Michael Ignatieff, recently deposed leader of Canada's Liberal Party, as Count Mikhail Georgivich Ignatiev. This is not correct. Since the late 1930s, Canadians have not been allowed to assume any foreign title of nobility or any British honour such as a knighthood. Ignatieff is not and cannot be a Russian count, not even by inheritance. No Canadian can legally claim any such kind of title. The newspaper magnate Conrad Black, recently a guest in one of your country's prisons, was a social climber of the worst kind who wanted a British peerage so badly that he renounced his Canadian citizenship to obtain it. After getting British citizenship, he got his ticket into the House of Lords through the traditional manner, that is, buying it. Canadians refer to him as Lord Tubby.

And I thought the Real Thirteenth Amendment types were bad.

— JTM

Speaking of royalty, Willam and Kate visited Cowtown as part of the Royal Tour across Canada in early July. They opened the Calgary Stampede rodeo by zooming down the parade route before the event started. They went by so fast that us lumpenproletariat on the sidewalks barely got a glimpse of them. I held the shutter down on my camera as the motorcade went by and managed to get one photo of them waving to the crowds from the back seat of their limousine. Wills was facing my side of the street. I was actually hoping to see Kate, but the photo shows a good profile of her on the far side of the car.

From: AL du Pisani August 1, 2011
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I am still alive, and still in a bit of a funk. I have recently rested after a hard month, but I am

still not back to where I had hoped to be. The hard month was due to work related stuff, something I had been looking forward to for years, and finally I can assist in the implementation of a system upgrade that as not done in a half assed manner. Did require three Saturdays, and that built up strain after a while.

Anyway, I still have a job, one that I am good at and even like sometimes. And that is starting to become less common.

I recently found out that South Africa will be hosting a spaceflight convention in October. I am hoping to attend. An interest of mine that have been difficult to nurture here. The Internet have made some of it easier. Yet I have to admit that the future I am living in is less interesting than most of what I imagined, or read about. There were other futures, that were less pleasant. And I am thankful that I am not living in one of them. But still, I am disappointed in what had happened to spaceflight.

Please let us know how it comes out.

— JTM

I had to do some research recently on progress with regards to private spaceflight, and remain hopeful that we are close to a breakthrough. I just fear that the money will not last.

Our government have been posed with an interesting dilemma — Walmart offered to buy a controlling stake in the local company that had sort of grown up to fill a similar niche in the local retail sector. The government does not actually want Walmart to operate here, and the local unions have been very vocal about how much they do not like this. But the government also do not want to come out and explicitly deny them the right to buy up the local firm, that will have nasty knock on effects in future. So they have allowed the buy to go through, while being very vocal about how much they dislike having to do so, and while throwing up all sorts of obstacles into the way of a smooth takeover.

Our government have not come over the shock of having to operate in a more or less free market world, to more or less (usually much less) free market rules. They still prefer socialism, and this time they will get it right!

From what I hear, it looks as if there is ructions in the publishing industry. We are not experiencing it as much here. Just interesting how much books I bought in the last year in electronic format only. Will see what happens once we start to get eBook readers at anything other than a rip off price here.

In any case, looks as if the future is going to be interesting. Good luck and live in hope.

WAHF:

Lloyd Daub, with various items of interest.

John Dalmas, with a report on his recent life.

Lacy Thomas, glad to hear I only had phantom itching.

THE HUCK, THE WITCH, AND THE WARDROBE

... Miss Watson was powerful determined to sivilize me. One afternoon I came into my bedroom and there was this almighty huge box a-standing in one corner. Miss Watson was waiting for me. "Huckleberry, this is a wardrobe. It is where you will put your clothes," she said all righteous and proper.

I didn't rightly know what all was wrong with the floor.

Later that night, I skint out the window and went to see Jim. He told me about what all they had had to do. "Huck, that was one big problem. It took four of us to get that box up the stairs and into the room. There's a magic on it, I don't know what, but you better stay away!"

When I was back in the room a-getting ready to sleep, there was this noise. Someone was blowing a horn. Powerful curious, I went and listened in the door to that box. I didn't rightly know how Miss Watson had got a clockwork in there — I reckoned that was what had made it so heavy, so's I stepped in to take a look.

After about three or four more steps I realized there was something that warn't quite right about this here wardrobe. For example, there was snow under my feet, which were getting numb. And trees around me, which I didn't quite reckon fit in this box.

I saw this here light up ahead, a streetlight like they had down in the center of town. Someone was a-prancin' around it, blowin' on a horn. I got a trifle worried about that and tried to find the door of the wardrobe, but it had vanished.

Along about sun-up, as I was stompin' along trying to get some feeling back in my feet, I heard bells ringing. There was a little carriage a-comin' along, what they called a sleigh in some of them picture books Miss Watson and the widder had, drun by two deer as was all white. There was a little bitty feller a-drivin' it and this big tall pale woman sittin' in back.

She gestured and the sleigh stopped. "And what, pray, are you?" she said, all bossy-like.

I was shiverin', but I managed to get out, "Huck — Huckleberry Finn, ma'am."

I didn't care much for the way she was a-lookin' at me, and when she spoke, it was even worse. "Is that how you address a Queen?" she said, all fierce and mean-lookin'.

Now Tom Sawyer, he would of known what to do. I just sayed what I could. "I'm powerful sorry, ma'am, I don't rightly know what to say."

"Not know the Queen of Narnia? Ha! You shall know us better hereafter. But I repeat — what are you?" I still didn't quite know what to say, and she got even angrier. "What are you!? Are you a great overgrown dwarf that has cut off its beard?"

"No, ma'am Queen. I ain't never had no beard, I'm jist a boy."

"A boy!? Do you mean you are a son of Adam?"

Now any sons of Adam they would of been right powerful old, I'd figgered out that much from Miss Watson's readin' of the Bible to me. (I'd started to read this here one book by King Solomon, it said it was, since I figgered a man what had four hundred wives and seven hundred concubines must of known something about keepin' them all happy, and then like an idjit I went and told the widder straight out, and she wouldn't let me read the Bible no more.) All I could say was, "No, I'm a son of Pap Finn."

"I see you are an idiot, whatever else you may be. Answer me, once and for all, or I shall lose my patience. Are you human?"

"Yes, ma'am."

"And how, pray, did you come to enter my dominions?"

"There warn't no prayin' about it, ma'am. I went through this here door in a box, and here I was."

She commenced to mutterin' about some enemy of hers, and about a door to dirt or something like that. For a moment I figgered I had got in on the wrong side of some powerful big feud. Then she turned all mother-like and sweet. "My poor child, how cold you look! Come and sit with me here on the sledge and I will put my mantle around you and we will talk."

I got into that there sledge as best I could. She didn't put no mantle around me but used that robe she was wearin'. My feet commenced to hurtin' as they warmed up. "Perhaps something hot to drink?" she said as I shifted. "Should you like that?"

"I suppose I should." That there little feller handed me a cup with something in it. I was hopin' for coffee, though how anyone could boil it up there was more than I could figger. But it was right tasty and warmed me up just wonderful.

"It is dull, son of Adam, to drink without eating," she said after I had got about half the cup into me. "What would you like best to eat?"

"That I don't rightly know," says I. "Fresh fish, straight from the river and fried up all good and hot —" Before I could say any more that little feller had three big filets, all hot and crackly, and I had them eaten in no time.

"Now all I need is a good smoke," I said once my mouth was empty.

— Not by S. L. Clemens or Jack Lewis

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