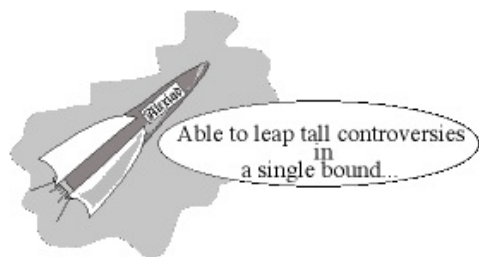


Letters, we get letters



cleeper@optonline.net

AL du Pisani says that the way to get letters of comment is to take your fanzine off the web and send it only to people who contribute. I respectfully disagree. The *MT Void* is email/Usenet only (except for two hard copies), and over the last year we have gotten letters of comment from three dozen people, or about 17% of our subscribers.

Also, in monarchy news, on May 12, Queen Elizabeth II will become the second-longest reigning English monarch. (She won't pass Queen Victoria until August 21, 2015.)

And then on May 26, 2024, she will pass Louis XIV. She will be 98 years old. Look at the Queen Mum.

— JTM

From: **Steve Green** April 11, 2011
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I refute Rodney Leighton's assertion that hardcopy distribution is the only surefire way to generate a healthy letter column: my own e-zine, *The Fortnightly Fix*, has had no problem attracting locs, despite its twice-monthly schedule. In any case, there is no way I could afford to produce a paper version of *The FFix*, let alone post it out.

Like Robert S Kennedy, I watched the movie version of *The Green Hornet*; unlike Robert, I found it to be a hugely disappointing affair. My review at the time read: "Moderately entertaining update of the 1930s radio superhero, with Seth Rogen and Jay Chou as the original dynamic duo. The most pointless 3D conversion I've seen so far."

Sidney Lumet, noted American film director, died Saturday April 9th, aged 86. Movies included *Fail-Safe* (1964). 14 of his films were nominated for Academy Awards, but he never won an Oscar himself.

Have you read *The Fail-Safe Fallacy* (1963) by Sidney Hook?

—JTM

From: **John G. Hemry** April 11, 2011

Ah, sir, you force me to address a discrepancy in the review in the *Alexiad* for April 2011 of the *Alexiad* for April 2011 of *Wild Bill Donovan: The Spymaster Who Created the OSS* etc, etc, etc. The review states "when (the OSS) was dissolved, there came a flood of memoirs from its former members, all recounting in glowing terms of how this unique band of intellectuals and men (and even women) of action had set out to remake the world." All? Not hardly. Is it possible you are unacquainted with *You're Stepping on My Cloak and Dagger* by Roger Hall? Highly recommended for anyone who wants an irreverent and true look at the OSS during World War II, as well as spycraft and spy training in general. Read it if for no other reason than the part where Hall teaches a bunch of tough partisans-in-training how to pull the pin on a hand grenade.

From: **Evelyn Leeper** April 17, 2011

From: **Robert Lichtman** April 17, 2011
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Thanks for *Alexiad* for April 2011, and for that matter the other issues you've been sending largely without response from my end. As I may have said before, I find the fanzine a useful source of possible new reading material because of the extensive reviews; but other than that I'm often at a loss for something to say. A few comments percolated up on this issue, though:

Having recently completed my hardcover set of Sturgeon's short stories, your review of *Case and the Dreamer* caught my attention—and particularly the part where you mention his birth name. I'm reminded of his memoir, *Argyll*, which he wrote in 1965 but which didn't see print until 1983 when Paul Williams put together a chapbook containing it on behalf of the Sturgeon Project. It's a fascinating look at his childhood years with considerable detail. In addition to the memoir it also contains an introduction by Paul and an afterword by Samuel Delany. I have no idea how many copies were produced, but it seems to have fallen out of print. When I looked just now on the book search engines, the few I found available were very pricey. In the course of googling around I also found the Website of the Theodore Sturgeon Literary Trust, which appears not to have been updated since 1999. It mentions *Argyll*, correctly saying that the book is available directly from Paul Williams; but of course this is no longer the case. I also found a long and interesting essay on Sturgeon by Paul at the site that I thought you and some of *Alexiad*'s readers might find interesting, and not published other than here:

<http://www.physics.emory.edu/~weeks/sturgeon/williams.html>

(I no longer have my paperback copy of *Case and the Dreamer*. Once the final volume of the North Atlantic series, launched and edited by Paul, arrived, I pulled it and the other Sturgeon short story collections from my shelves and donated them to Goodwill.)

In the letter column Rich Dengrove ponders

whether readers are as likely to respond to fanzines on the Web as opposed to hard copies in the mail. He opines that "if readers are notified by email and either there is a link to the zine or it is there as an attachment, I doubt there is much difference between that and a totally hard copy zine." I would add that this scenario only plays out as he suggests if those who receive these email announcements are required to respond periodically in order to keep getting them (and if the zine is never made available on efanazines or any other publicly available, non-passworded site).

Eric Mayer writes: "A decent pair of running shoes was so much easier on my feet and legs than the worn out tennis shoes I started running in. It's been years since I've been able to do much more than walk, but I still wear good running shoes in preference to anything else." I think the main point here is to get a shoe that's constructed with a decent, supportive footbed. It doesn't have to be a running shoe. I don't care for the design features of running shoes, so instead I get good quality "casual" shoes. My favorite for many years has been the Clarks Air Mover, but that seems to have finally gone "out of print" with only some mixed sizes available for a handful of sites. Fortunately I have a pair in black obtained only a year or so ago with lots of wear left on them, and a much older but largely unworn pair in brown; so I'm set up for a while. My alternative shoes are all Ecco brand, also well-constructed and nearly as comfortable. As a footnote, when I have located running shoes in styles that I could tolerate I found that their footbed was inferior to Clarks and Ecco. Go figure!

The way I walk, a running shoe would become unwearable in far too brief a time in proportion to the cost of the shoe.

— JTM

From: **Milt Stevens** April 20, 2011
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In *Alexiad* V10 #2, Joseph talks about reviewing self published books. It's a dirty job, but I suppose somebody has to do it. Down at LASFS, Jerry Pournelle suggested that the club might produce such a review as a money making project. The idea has some merit, but I could see one major problem. We would need an unending supply of young penguins that could be thrown off the iceberg of taste into an ocean of literary garbage. To torture this metaphor for a bit longer, we would then have the problem of crowds of young penguins screaming like banshees and frothing at the mouth.

Reviewing self published books is a whole new situation. There is no point to writing a bad review. Of course, bad reviews can be fun to write and fun to read. Bad reviews appeal to the basest part of our natures. While society frowns on ridiculing cripples, it lets us do it in literary form. Why should we give up such an

enjoyable activity. With self published books, the default assumption is that they are all garbage. The trick is finding anything worth reading in this mess. There are several levels to "worth reading." There is really great stuff, pretty good stuff, and tolerable stuff. In this context, you can't slam something for being a book you can read on the bus.

Do you remember our fun time with Curse of the Vampire?

Our Borders in Simi Valley is still open. It should be able to survive as the only major bookstore in an affluent town of 105,000. Years ago, there was a Crown bookstore which went under and only one used bookstore which also went under. There is also a fairly large Friends of the Simi Valley Library bookstore where you can pick-up lots of fifty cent paperbacks. Unfortunately, they have a lot of books which I wouldn't consider worth the shelf space.

Mad Magazine had become uninspiring the last time I looked at an issue which was quite a few years ago. Their idea of a movie parody was to have the characters sit around talking about how dumb the movie was. They did this to many films which weren't dumb at all. To give you an idea of how long it has been since I saw an issue of *Mad*, I recall them doing a hatchet job on "Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid."

"Botch Casually and the Somedunce Kid", *Mad*, July 1970.
It has been a while, hasn't it?

— JTM

While it is easy to slam Hollywood, their quality is generally pretty good. There are some stinkers and a lot of mediocrity, but there are also quite a few watchable films made every year.

From: **Alexis A. Gilliland** April 20, 2011
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Thank you for *Alexiad* #10.2, featuring 13 of my cartoons, most of which were not reprints. This past weekend we were down at Ravencon, held in Richmond, VA, where Lee was running the con suite with help from me, along with James and Charles, among others. A nice, lively

600 person con, about the same size as this year's Lunacon, which we attended in March, conventions that were differently enjoyable, Lunacon being down about a third from last year was more sedate, while Ravencon is still growing with a lot of children in evidence. Saturday night they had a concert by Coyote Run, which was entertaining if a bit loud for my taste. (Would I sit through a bunch of Beethoven string quartets? probably not.) Alas, on Sunday I came down with a cold, which is still running its course while on Wednesday Lee went in for the outpatient surgery that she had put off so she could run the con suite. Lee has recovered nicely, thank you, and while her meds control her symptoms, her doctor wants to see how well her basic problem has been dealt with before proceeding further. We'll keep you posted.

We're glad to hear the one thing worked out well, and hope the other does likewise.

— JTM

In re the discussion of rising sea levels, let me call your attention to the report from NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory in *Geophysical Research Letters*, dated March 10, 2011, available by googling "JPL sea level rise" and going to "JPL bombshell." The JPL relied on two techniques, the first used satellite radar and ground based observations to build a complete picture of the size of the ice sheets from month to month. The second, using the pair of GRACE (Gravity Recovery And Climate Experiment) satellites launched in 2002 by NASA and the German Aerospace Center to measure minute differences in gravity over the entire planet, found that the ice sheets gave a distinct gravity signature which it was able to measure. Both estimates were in close agreement with each other, in predicting a rise of one foot (an extra 6 inches on top of the expected 6 inches) by 2050 while noting that the pace of melting has accelerated over time, increasing most rapidly after 2005. This phenomenon suggests that global warming may, in fact, be taking place, perhaps using all that excess heat to melt glaciers instead of warming the environment in general. Those denying that such a problem exists should note that any segue from contemporary time to geological time is not likely to be smooth. The short-term signal will be noisy if not contradictory, but all that CO2 we happy humans are dumping into the atmosphere is eventually going to raise global temperatures. How high? History is suggestive: the midPaleozoic warming period averaged 2-3 degrees Celsius above the present, with CO2 levels of 400 ppm. How soon? We don't know, but given that scientists tend to be conservative probably a lot sooner than predicted. We're on track to hit 400 ppm in the next 10 years, but we may already be at or past the critical level. Given the inertia of both the world's thermal system and civilization's appetite for fossil fuels it seems likely we will overshoot the critical point, whatever it might be, before we ever come to any consensus about

what ought to be done about it.

An example of overshooting would be the government's protracted failure to curb the national debt. For years the deficits piled up, wars were fought on the cuff, and politicians were elected on their pledge not to raise taxes while handing out unfunded benefits to the voters. For years it was business as usual and nothing happened over and over again. Then, on April 18th to the shock and horror of the markets, the US credit rating was threatened with the loss of its AAA status as Standard and Poor's changed its outlook on the US from stable to negative, saying that if spending isn't brought in line with revenue, our lovely AAA rating was going to be history. Since a lower rating means higher costs for borrowing, all of a sudden tax increases are going to seem like the lesser of two evils. No longer theoretical, the evil day is at hand and conservatives and liberals will have to work together for the good of the country, or not, as the case may be. Stay tuned for further developments.

Noting our repetition of Prohibition's error, George Price considers the legalization of drugs, an interesting theoretical exercise. Weighing the health benefits of prohibiting drugs against the social and foreign policy costs incurred by such a prohibition suggests that we may be doing the wrong thing. Given the variety of drugs available, there is probably no one-size-fits-all solution, but I am inclined towards the legalization of the soft stuff, and the controlled distribution of the harder drugs by the government. Well, yes, this would be socialized medicine, sort of, but it figures to save money on the cost of drug-related crime that it would eliminate, not to mention the cost of incarcerating non-violent drug offenders. Will there be addiction related health costs? Yes, so care should be taken to minimize them. There is also an advantage in the government becoming the main supplier of drugs to addicts, in that good behavior (such as being faithful to one's spouse) could be made a condition for maintaining one's connection.

Finally Price weighs in on the global warming discussion, wondering how the climate would behave if the human race had never evolved at all. There is evidence to support the notion that greenhouse gases from human activity such as agriculture and deforestation slowed or stopped the natural cooling trend, so that in the absence of humans, the glaciers, following their natural cycle, might well have returned. His question of how the climate might change if by 2060 the whole world evolves up to the level of the US in terms of fossil fuel consumption is more than a little hypothetical. First of all, our fossil fuel reserves are finite, so there wouldn't be enough to go around. Second, if we do manage to consume all those reserves of fossil fuels, we will be faced with historically unprecedented levels of atmospheric CO2, which, as I suggested in an earlier letter, might reprise the Permian-Triassic extinction event a quarter billion years ago. Third, even if atmospheric CO2 does not cause global warming, the depletion of fossil fuels is likely to cause the collapse of any civilization dependent

on fossil fuels, as ours is, resulting in a massive die off of civilized humans.

From: **Brad W. Foster** April 25, 2011
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Best Fan Artist Hugo Nominee

For some odd reason, I seem to be drawing a lot of weird little animal fillos recently. You just ran the "Brick Chick", and now here are a "Holepunch Halibut" and a minimal Frog, that I hope will find homes among future columns of the zine.



I've read about the Randi Challenge in the past, about setting up controlled experiments for anyone who wants to prove they have some sort of psychic abilities. I seem to recall he had stopped offering it some time ago. I was confused by your comments at the bottom of page one here. I think I first read it as saying that the challenge itself was somehow a fake or wrong, then did some Google searches (wish you had suggested what words to use in the search!), and what I found were people saying there wasn't actually a real one million dollars.

Without getting into it 'cause I really know less than nothing, I always thought the point was giving someone a chance to prove their claims under controlled conditions that both side agreed to in advance. If that was still valid, sorry to hear that the money might or might not have been there, but seems kind of off the point. Oh well. Guess I'll toss my dowsing rod!

(If you do have any URLs on hand that go to something that goes over this, love to see them. Beauty of Google is it finds just about everything out there. Bad thing about Google is, if you put in slightly different words for the search, will get very different results. Any direction you could pass me would be appreciated!)

<http://www.randi.org/site/>
Try "Randi Million Dollar Challenge" or "Randi Million Dollar

Prize" (without the quotes). The preponderance of opinion outside the JREF is that the award rules are rigged so that there is no possible way to win, though none of the ways stated seems actually to be the case (as you found out, one popular claim was that the million dollars was in worthless bonds with a face value of one million).

— JTM

I know out local Borders is also closing down. Though there is a Barnes & Noble across the street from them! Usually that wouldn't make a personal difference to me, as my budget is very much the bargains-table-at-the-used-bookstore type, so it's rare I can afford a full-price book. But I have been doing some online survey things that gives you credit that can be cashed in at Barnes and Noble, so once or twice a year I get a coupon and can go shopping for something new. Hurray!

From: **Joy V. Smith** May 5, 2011
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An even more interesting selection of books in this issue than usual. Intriguing look at the Theodore Sturgeon stories; thanks for the background on the Children of God. I'd like to see how *Shades of Milk and Honey* plays out. A number of interesting non-fiction books too: *Return to Antarctica* (I loved the quote: "It was a pity Scott was in the Antarctic before. He learned all the wrong things."), *The Invisible Harry Gold*, and *Why I Killed Pluto And Why It Had It Coming*.

I really liked The Joy of High Tech article. Great selection and comparison of camp stoves. I might find this useful . . . Must save it. And thanks for your con trip report and Nebula nominations list. I've read none of the contenders except for *I Shall Wear Midnight*; I did see Doctor Who: "Vincent and the Doctor." (Interesting look at Van Gogh's life, but not a favorite episode.)

Lots more intel in the LOCs, including changes in the Spanish and German languages. Re: Robert S. Kennedy's LOC, I saw *Area 51* too. As I recall, they killed off Boxleiter's character, but that's all I recall.

On the home front, the house remodel is almost done — there's always something more to do or fix — and I'm reviewing books for Amazon Vine so I get to read more books.

Uh, who is John Galt?!

For twelve years, you've been asking that question. It'll all be explained in his speech on November 22.

— JTM

From: **Jim Stumm** April 30, 2011
Post Office Box 29, Buffalo NY 14223-0029 USA

George W. Price: There's plenty of room for global warming refugees in Buffalo. We can take 300,000 just to replace the population we lost in the last 50 years. There's ample room to build since 1000s of old houses have been torn down creating shovel-ready empty space called urban prairie. Plus the streets, utilities, and all infrastructure is already in place. Natural disasters are rare here; no hurricanes, tornadoes, earthquakes, tsunamis, forest fires, or wide-scale floods. Detroit and other rust-belt cities have plenty of additional room. I wonder if Schweitzer and other alarmists are preparing to move to higher ground.

I've read *Cool It*, by Bjorn Lomborg, which is a follow-up book to his *The Skeptical Environmentalist*, which I haven't read. He says: "Climate change is not an imminent planetary emergency that will bring down civilization. It is only one of many problems that we will have to deal with over this century and beyond." page 148

DRUG LEGALIZATION: When Prohibition of alcohol ended, did the use of alcohol greatly increase? It seems to me there was quite a lot of boozing during Prohibition, maybe more than before (the allure of forbidden fruit), although there was a shift away from beer to harder liquor.

Harder liquor was easier to transport; so Prohibition promoted a shift from "Father, Dear Father" spending the entire week's paycheck on beer for everyone at the tavern, to everyone going blind from a few shots of wood alcohol.

— JTM

Murder One would not be the appropriate charge for DUI homicide. I looked online for the definition of various crimes, but it differs from State to State. In PA Murder One is the intentional killing of a person by willful, deliberate, and pre-meditated action.

Murder Two is a homicide committed by a person, or all of a group, engaged in a felony, like armed robbery. It is also the plea bargain that I hear offered to murderers on TV cop shows.

What PA calls Murder Three other States call Manslaughter. I didn't find the Man One and Man Two that I always hear about on TV. Instead I see Manslaughter with various modifying phrases. The most serious, Man One maybe, would be when there is a homicide, but the doer only meant to harm the victim, and didn't mean to kill him.

Finally I come to what you are talking about, DUI homicide where the doer didn't intend to even harm anyone. At worst this would be criminally negligent manslaughter, perhaps Man Two. This would be an increase in seriousness over the way it's often treated now, as a tort, an accident, not a crime at all since there is no intention of harming anyone. The homicide itself is no crime, since there is no criminal intent. But we could treat getting behind the wheel and driving off when you are in no fit state to drive as a crime. But no way is it

Murder One.

What should the charge be if a DUI accident causes injuries, but no deaths? What if the police stop him, and find him drunk out of his mind, before there is an accident?

Darrell Schweitzer: Recalling what I learned as a Catholic schoolboy 50 years ago, the issue of valid sacraments comes down to Apostolic Succession. This means bishops consecrating bishops in an unbroken line going back to one of the Apostles. Then such a valid bishop consecrates valid priests who can administer valid sacraments. That's the dogma I remember being taught. I don't believe any of it anymore.

The Roman Catholic Church claims that it has Apostolic Succession, but it grants that a few other sects have it also, notably the Eastern Orthodox, and I believe Anglicans. Then there are the Uniate sects in the Middle East. Uniates, although they are not Roman Catholic, accept the authority of the Pope. One example is the Maronites, a Uniate Sect that is the largest Christian community in Lebanon. In Egypt, although most Copts are Orthodox, there is a small Uniate section among them. I suppose this means that all Copts are recognized as having Apostolic Succession.

Rodney Leighton: I encounter many Britishisms in the Brit cop shows I watch. DI Frost often says: "He's telling porkies" i.e. lies. He also sometimes says: "He stayed stumm" i.e. he didn't talk, which I notice because that's my name, a genuine German word. I wonder how it got to Britain. Perhaps picked up by Brit troops in Germany after WW2.

As for flatware, why do you call it cutlery when forks and spoons aren't usually used-for cutting. Properly cutlery should be a collection of knives. We used to call it silverware, which fits when it's made out of silver.

And even stainless steel is at least silvery looking. But "silverware" is ludicrous for plastic utensils. What single word would be appropriate for knives and forks and spoons made of any material?

And what's this crockery that you put on the counter? I suppose you mean dishes and plates. But in our dictionary a crock is a thick-walled earthenware vessel, usually of more than one gallon capacity. I have made pickles in a crock, but I would never eat a meal out of one.

From: **R-Laurraine Tutihasi** May 9, 2011
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Still behind in my reading, but I think there's a better chance now of catching up. I'm letting a couple of my magazine subscriptions lapse at the end of this year; a couple of other free subscriptions should also stop soon. I'm also resigning from two more APAe; that leaves just two. We also probably won't be going to either Westercon or Worldcon this year. All those factors should give me more time for other things. There's even a chance I'll finally get around to doing more online reading since I just got an iPad2, assuming I have a chance to

get it set up.

First I'd like to thank you for including obits in your zine. Although other fans also do this, there is always a chance that the others may miss something or just lack sufficient information regarding the deceased. The more the merrier in this case.

Your story about Lisa's sister driving one block instead of walking lays to rest the popular misconception that only people in LA do this sort of thing.

I'm confused about this U-turn thing. In California and Arizona, at least, U-turns are quite legal in most places unless posted otherwise. Doing them in the middle of a block is frowned upon, especially on roads with any amount of traffic; but U-turns are legal at most intersections. What are the laws over in your neck of the woods?

They supposedly ban U-turns except under certain rare circumstances. Nevertheless, I've been known to do them upon seeing a parking space across the street from the house; I go on to the corner and do a circle in the intersection.

Re Robert S. Kennedy's LosCon 37 report, he says "smaller than usual performers at the Masquerade" — dwarfs and midgets? One thing I find to be a glaring omission in this report is a mention of the guests of honour.

Like you we may also not make it to Renovation, although our reasons are more complex than yours. Certainly finances are one of the consideration though. In trying to stretch our dollars, we are unlikely to travel unless we are really really interested in whatever is going on at the various stops on any trip.

I have had a few recipients of my fanzine request that I stop sending them paper copies, but they are still reading them online and responding in the same fashion as before. I've had a couple of responses from people I didn't know, but that's not saying much considering the number of years I've been posting my zine online.

I have had a number of relatives request that I start sending them the family newsletter electronically, instead of by paper copy. Then I run into the problem of people changing their email and not telling anyone.

Milt Stevens asks about organic milk. It comes from cows that are fed a natural diet not containing drugs and other suspicious things. Organic milk is also sterilized rather than just pasteurized, so it will stay fresher longer. This is important if you don't drink a whole lot of milk. After throwing out several partially unused quart-size cartons of regular milk because they went bad, I advised my husband to switch to organic milk. For some reason he's only been able to find the larger half-gallon size rather than the quart size most

of the time, but the organic milk has never gone bad.

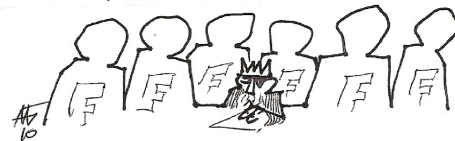
I was happy to read Sue Burke's report that Spain has outlawed smoking in enclosed spaces. That's important to me in planning travel overseas. I also remember that a friend of mine suffered many years ago on business trips to Spain. She's very allergic to tobacco smoke, but her employer wouldn't allow her to use her filter mask. At the end of each day, she was very sick and had to launder all her clothes and wash herself thoroughly.

I "hate Microsoft", too, but haven't been able to get away from Office. I've recently started using iWork, but it'll take me a long time to learn how to use it effectively.

This zine is done in
WordPerfect.

—JTM

WOTAN, KING OF THE
GODS, IS FORCED BY THE
FIRE GIANTS TO SIGN THE
MAGMA CARTA!



From: **Lloyd Penney** May 15, 2011
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Thank you for *Alexiad* WN 56. Hope your weekend was a good one, and writing you a quick loc makes for the conclusion of mine. I got some good news, getting a nomination for an Aurora Award for fan writing. I had to sit on that for a week . . . Also, Yvonne and I announced our retirement from conrunning after 30 years.

The 30th Holmes Symposium comes along at the same time we found in a local thrift store a mint copy of *221B: Studies in Sherlock Holmes* by Vincent Starrett from Otto Penzler's Sherlock Holmes Library. Best of all, we paid only 10% of the cover price. Looks very good indeed, and the essays within are intriguing.

You would have enjoyed the
Symposium, then. See the report.

Live action *Rocket Robin Hood*? Now that idea's going to give me nightmares. The cartoons were made in Montréal, and that was nightmare enough. The idea of the Wells/Brown book is also equally nightmarish.

Indeed, Mike Glicksohn was the lynchpin, the Canfan indeed. It's a shame there's isn't more domestic recognition for his work . . . other than some of Toronto fandom, local friends and fanzine fandom, of course, Mike wasn't well-known elsewhere. He is

well-remembered in this household, though, and he is missed.

Yvonne and I are enjoying steampunk, but I can certainly understand the idea that it's taking over much of SF. I mentioned my mast loc that I wrote a review of Mike Resnick's first steampunk book, *The Buntline Special*. If you like, if it hasn't been reviewed already, I can send it to you for next issue. (I have a copy of Scott Westerfeld's *Leviathan*, but haven't got around to reading it yet...)

I wouldn't mind seeing your review, though I reviewed it myself in the January issue (V. 10 #1, WN 55). Variety is always useful and Bwana likes being thought well of.

My loc . . . as usual, the job hunt is up and down. Yvonne was let go at Allan Candy (overbearing and micromanaging boss), and I got work connected with the annual convention at the Ontario Association of Architects. I think Yvonne will have something shortly, and my assignment at the OAA comes to an end in about three weeks. I like your comments to Rodney Leighton. The podcasters never came to the fanzine lounge, discussions stay on one social media site, and never make it outside . . . just how social is social media, anyway? Not very, it seems, sometimes. I think you should run with and develop the idea of Communication and Community; this is something we all need to be reminded of from time to time.

And now a podcaster has looked at the nominees and declared "who are these people?" A long discussion ensued at the File 770 site — without the contributions of any podcasters. I am tempted to say, "Of course."

— JTM

This is as quick as I wanted it to be, but not as large, but it will have to do, seeing how late it's getting. Thank you for more excellent reading, and bring some more, please. Happy summer to all!

From: **Darrell Schweitzer** May 25, 2011
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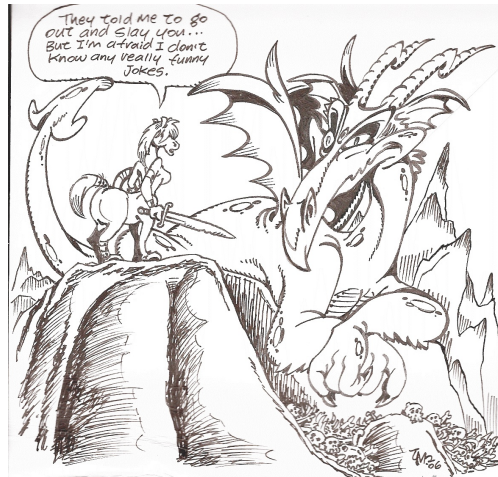
First of all, here is an historical poem, one of an occasional series, this one all about the tragic consequences of a stray thought, whereby the Duke of Ying (former Southern Song child-emperor) ended a very interesting and productive life quite suddenly. Of course those were nervous times. The Mongol (Yuan) dynasty of China was about as successful as the Ostrogothic kingdom of Italy, i.e. it had one successful and enlightened reign more due to the personality of its founder (Kublai Khan) than anything else, and then went into steep decline. Thus someone who could remember its

founding could also see its coming demise. The last thing the Yuan emperor wanted was a living Song heir reminiscing about the good old days.

My apologies for tardiness, but sometimes life and other matters do get in the way of one's LoCs. I have never quite managed to become an epistolarian of Lovecraftian proportions, I fear.

Have many *Alexiados* (if that is the correct plural) read Maureen McHugh's *China Mountain Zhang*? (Tor, 1993). I recommend it. It's interesting from a literary point of view as a "mainstream novel" of the future, i.e. science fiction without overtly fantastic elements. No time-machines, FTL, psionics, visiting aliens, mutant hordes, or whatever. It is what Geoff Ryman and others have called "mundane SF," i.e. that which sticks to things that might be possible. As such it is probably too conservative, but it presents a very vivid picture of a time and society which are not our own, but which clearly have roots in the world we are living in. The central conceit is that by the early 22nd century, it is not American capitalism which rules the world, but Chinese Communism of the Deng Xiao Peng variety, post-Marxist and market-oriented, not a democracy, but a rather bureaucracy-ridden society in which the function of the Party is to protect prosperity. The United States has recently suffered something called the Cleansing Wind campaign to root out reactionary backsliders and capitalist-roaders, but the more sophisticated Chinese wear their Marxism very lightly and regard their American comrades as backward and naive. Nevertheless, American-style capitalism is a discredited failure and there is no going back.

From: **Dainis Bisenieks** May 25, 2011
921 S. St. Bernard Street, Philadelphia,
PA 19143-3310 USA



Well, I watched those horse races, skipping the preliminaries, but I can't say that it thrills me to see horses running, nor do I much care that one should run faster than the others. Actually being there might give a slightly different feeling, but you'd have to compensate me for the trouble of going.

Though I will watch some late-season football games, to this day I do not know what league any football or baseball team is in. Nor "conference," for college football. As a teen, I looked forward to a time when nobody could compel me either to throw or to catch a ball.

Having read two reviews of Mark Crick's book *Machiavelli's Lawn*, I took steps to get his two previous, *Kafka's Soup* (a complete history of world literature in 14 recipes) and *Sartre's Sink* (the great writers' complete work of DIY). I have long been fond of parodies; "Scruts" from Beerbohm's *A Christmas Garland* has been a family Christmas reading. Crick's books have the bonus of being illustrated by him, in a few instances with photographs. The plate of cheese on toast à la Harold Pinter is set on a cracked Formica top . . .

And then I got *Postmodern Pooh* by Frederick Crews. Truly my cup runneth over. This is, if anything, better than *The Pooh Perplex*, since the schools of criticism parodied, even more than the previous, applied an idée fixe to the work in question, treating it as a departure point. The whole is presented as a series of talks at an MLA convention, with the participants previewing the others' papers. Each then has a chance to dump on the previous and present the one right interpretation. The last two are not very polite advocates of common sense. "But the booby prize must be reserved for Victor Fassel's wretched tract, which a moment's reflection reveals to have been utter drivel from beginning to end." "How can one teach a work that teaches itself?" Here and there references are made to various critical works, quoted from and duly footnoted, which we are to believe are all of them authentic. In one case I am readily able to check, as the book is Christopher Milne's *The Enchanted Places*, which I have.

It can't be any worse than what the Poopy Panda Pals have done to poor Pooh, who in the latest incarnation has encountered the Spunky PPP Princess phenomenon. And you thought DC Comics was bad at rebooting the universe every ten years or so.

These cost money; but good sources of free or dirt-cheap books will cause my library to outgrow available space if I don't do something. I managed to get rid of a few things which I judged to be tracts for the times, and some things coming in are meant to be read once and passed on. There are getting to be ever more duplicates for lending or giving away.

Worth noting are:

e: The Story of a Number by Eli Maor. The mathematical parts are mostly beyond me, but it is pleasant to see the history of ideas presented as a story of personalities.

T. E. Lawrence, Selected Letters ed. by Malcolm Brown (1988). This is largely different from the Letters published a few years after Lawrence's death. It is the personal voice which is of interest.

Empire of the Clouds: When Britain's

Aircraft Ruled the World by James Hamilton-Paterson (Faber & Faber, 2010). How Britain had a lead in jet aircraft after WWII and blew it. The test pilot Bill Waterton takes center stage.

He survived, to pass into obscurity; we are reminded of what we owe to him and to many who didn't. The author writes as an enthusiast, bringing his young self (b. 1941) into the picture.

This is what just about any history of SF will do. It's been observed in both *The Immortal Storm* and *The World of Science Fiction*, with the problem that the historian was also a participant, often in controversial issues.

— JTM

From: **Richard A. Dengrove** May 28, 2011
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I hope I can get these comments on *Alexiad* April 2011 to you in a decent time. I am swamped by mail here. And that sets me back although it doesn't seem to set you back.

Of course, that's what we would expect. As you have shown the Sturgeon anthology *Case and the Dreamer* was what we would expect too. What we expect of Sturgeon is that he be a one man *Dangerous Visions*. He certainly acted one in that anthology. For instance, advocating that children have an active sex life.

Unfortunately, in that case, these days, he would have been just asking to be reviled. An actual 'Dangerous' Vision that actually challenged our assumptions would not be so dangerous that it would nauseate us.

While Sturgeon gave us the sturgeon we know, and, to some extent, can make us think, what are we to make of the Harry Gold of Hornblum's *The Invisible Harry Gold*?

You conclude he had no inner life and was a cipher for whoever influenced him. There is an alternative, though. His mind could have been a house divided. He owed his allegiance to both the Communists and America. Who knows what goes on in somebody's mind. Some men have said Women are a mystery. No, everyone's a mystery.

So you think he was like Klaus Fuchs. Gold didn't make that defense, not that it had done Fuchs any good.

Also, what are we to make of a genre of fiction? One person's meat is another's poison. For you, Joe, vampire erotica is poison. However, it is Carol Clarke's meat. Same with erotic werewolf novels. Sometime back I reviewed Carlo Ginsburg's *Ecstasies*. While the shamans there turned themselves into good werewolves, they have nothing on Carol.

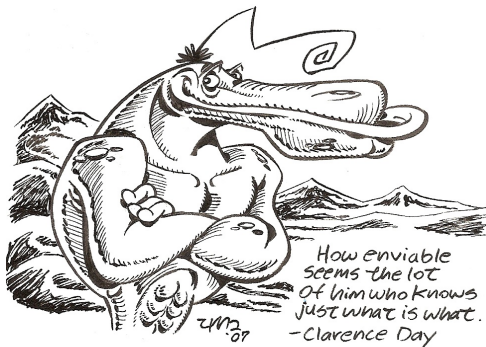
Speaking of vampires and werewolves, is there anywhere where Ronald Reagan comes in? Definitely not. However, in your letters column, Darrel Schweitzer takes a potshot at him.

He claims Ronald Reagan acted his way through the Presidency. I go a step farther. He took Robert Young's persona in *Father Knows Best* for the role. I know this sounds insulting and denigrating, but it isn't.

There is no way for Presidents to get out of being images and the public ate up the Robert Young persona. Reagan was a genius to choose it. Robert Young had no idea of the riches he threw to the winds.

No, it is not on image I disagree with Reagan's Presidency; it is on other issues.

*How strong and steadfast those without
The least uncertainty or doubt.*



If there is chatter here on vampires, werewolves and Ronald Reagan, there is also chatter on some humbler, less exotic beings, relatives. I stated many of my relatives had migrated elsewhere. In turn, you replied yours have migrated too. I guess my problem is not the spread but that only one of my relatives lives in my immediate area. And I doubt I'm on speaking terms with her.

Well, I got this letter at my brother's house, so there's that.

— JTM

Back to the big picture again with George Price. He is trying to poke holes in the Global Warming dogma. To help him, I have a hole of my own. According to it, it really doesn't matter whether the Earth is actually warming or cooling right now. We could be cooling or warming for any one of a number of non-man made reasons.

The important thing is how much CO2 is being poured into the atmosphere and what its effect on temperature is. That will tell us, for the most part, what we humans are doing to our planet — or not doing to it. As opposed to what Continental Drift, El Nino, or Volcanic Eruptions are doing.

Of course, once again I will be ignored. People prefer to go with the hoary fallacy that a correlation is a cause, which neither proves or disproves their point. For them, the temperature going up or down ipso facto must be the cause of tornados, tsunamis and earthquakes. The evidence of cause-and-effect based on science and logic be damned.

Not only science and logic be damned, but the letter be ended. That's it for the comments this time.

From: **Robert S. Kennedy** May 29, 2011
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Happy Birthday to me.

Thank you for Vol. 10, No. 2.

I purchased *Is Anybody Out There?*—Edited by Nick Gevers and Marty Halpern (2010). Probably mainly because of the title. There are 15 stories. I greatly enjoyed 4, couldn't finish 3, and the remaining 8 were ok. Overall it was a disappointment.

I was looking through the DVD's in the library when *TORCHWOOD: The Complete First Season* was spotted. Since I only have basic cable, BBC America, among many others, is not available to me. So, *TORCHWOOD* was checked out and the complete first season was watched. Some good concepts poorly executed. Where were all the promised aliens? At least one very unlikable male character. One of the female character's relationship with her jackass of a boy friend was ridiculous. Overall a very disappointing series and even if I had BBC America it would not have been watched. (Of course I'm assuming that it was/is on BBC America.)

Now for a bit of luck. I am usually in the Camarillo Library on Thursdays picking up a free weekly alternate press county newspaper and checking to see if they have any of the books that I have ordered. (They are supposed to notify me by phone. But, they failed once in the past so I always check every week.) Well, there was a book and they had failed to notify me for the second time. Here's the luck. I always check this shelf they have that is supposed to contain new SF books. What do you know? There was a hardback copy of *The Lost Fleet: Beyond the Frontier: Dreadnaught* by Jack Campbell (a.k.a. John Hemry) (2011). Another excellent read with obviously more to come.

On May 8 the SyFy Channel had *Star Trek: The Wrath of Khan*. Having seen it originally and enjoyed it I watched it again with great pleasure. In my opinion it was one of the best, if not the best, *Star Trek* episodes.

The link to the original series gave it a backstory, Montalban and the script gave Khan motivation and depth, and the literary references didn't hurt.

On May 19 for the 10th time I was the only person in the movie theater. This time it was for *Thor*. I enjoyed the movie even if at times it was rather simplistic. Maybe a reviewer got it right—"Some fun. Lots of silly. Very little punch." I think that I forgot to mention a couple of issues ago that the 9th time I was the only person in the theater was for *The Green Hornet* which, as was mentioned previously, was not worth the price paid to see it.

Joe: Concerning your comments about Borders bookstores closing in Louisville. The nearest Borders to me was the one in Oxnard, the next city north. It's gone and has been gone for a number of months.

Then there's your commentary concerning bullies. When I was in the 9th grade there was this bigger kid who was always picking on me. I was not a fighter and didn't know what to do. One day he was picking on me when one of the other students (whom I hardly knew and was not a friend) started telling me what to do. Suddenly I had the jerk on the ground with my left forearm over his nose. I told him that if he didn't leave me alone I would turn his nose into mush. He gave up and never bothered me again. The best way to stop a bully, if it's at all possible, is to beat the crap out of them.

I got bullied emotionally, by people too dull-witted to understand a response.

— JTM

Grant C. McCormick: I had just finished reading three books by Tom Kratman when I got to your review of *The Amazon Legion* and recommendation of the other books in the series. The three that I read are *A State of Disobedience* (2003), *Caliphate* (2008), and *Countdown: The Liberators* (2011). The Politically Correct/Multiculturalists would not be able to read these books, especially *Caliphate*. Kratman understands. I recommend all three books highly. It appears that there is a book prior to *Countdown: The Liberators*, just plain *Countdown* and another to be published, *Countdown: M Day*. I will try to obtain them as well as the ones you covered. I don't remember reading any Kratman previously. But, now he's got me hooked.

Joe: You being an expert in Sherlock Holmes it is understandable that you had a problem with *Sherlock Holmes – The American Years*. My not being an expert was probably an advantage for me.

From: **George W. Price** May 30, 2011
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April *Alexiad*:

Department of Unfortunate Coincidences: You listed Claude Stanley Choules as the only remaining Australian veteran of World War I — and I saw that note on the very same day as his obituary. R.I.P.

* * * * *

Darrell Schweitzer's remarks on the Coptic Church in Egypt lead me to ask, what happened to apparently change the race of the Egyptians? To my eyes, the people who now live in Egypt look like Arabs, not like the pictures of ancient Egyptians. What happened? Was the ancient race gradually replaced through successive invasions, migrations, and intermarriage? Were they wiped out and replaced in one stroke by the

present semitic-appearing people? And when did this happen? Gradual replacement seems most likely, but I can't remember ever seeing anything on the subject.

By the way, I was intrigued by Mr. Schweitzer's address, given as 66445 Rutland Street in Philadelphia. That house number seemed amazingly high — even as big a city as Philadelphia wouldn't have a street 664 blocks from the baseline. It's probably not a typo, since it is the same in past issues of *Alexiad*. The on-line Zipcode directory shows that his code, 19149-2128, includes 6600 to 6698 on Rutland (even numbers only). So presumably his house number is really 6644, and I'll guess that the "5" is an apartment number. Of course, I could have just e-mailed him and asked, but speculation is more fun.

* * * * *

I continue to be fascinated by Mr. Schweitzer's apparent belief (shared with many liberals) that Ronald Reagan was a dunce, but a great actor, whose principal accomplishment was that he could convincingly communicate the lines that his handlers fed him. If true, this leads to some interesting deductions.

In the last few years several books of Reagan's old radio talks and other writings have been published. I haven't read them, but they reportedly are well-reasoned and well-written and show the same conservative principles that he later espoused as president. Are we to understand that way back then, before Reagan got into electoral politics, he already had these handlers who were doing his thinking and writing for him? Those must have been some far-sighted handlers — they latched onto him long before anyone else had any inkling that he would eventually become a governor and then president. (If any of them are still alive, we should put them in charge of the government again; we could use some leaders that smart and far-sighted.) Or are we to understand that all these alleged old writings by Reagan are really modern forgeries put out to burnish his memory? Are there any verified recordings of those radio speeches that we can compare with the published versions?

My own preferred explanation is the obvious: That there are a lot of liberals and progressives who simply cannot bring themselves to accept that anyone can be intelligent, well-informed, and well-intentioned, and still seriously disagree with them.

To be sure, it now appears that Reagan may have started descending into Alzheimer's in the last years of his second term. We should be thankful that the 22nd Amendment limited him to two terms, because he was popular enough that he would easily have won a third term had that been legal.

* * * * *

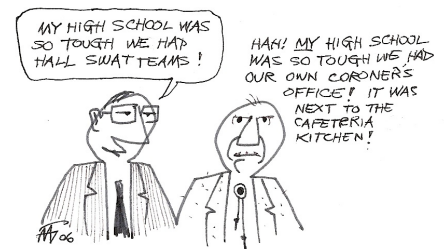
One last note on Mr. Schweitzer: He says that "if King Arthur had fought Belisarius, there would have been no knights in shining armor involved, because of course, Prince Valiant to

the contrary, plate armor and chivalry were many centuries in the future." I suspect that's a bum rap for Prince Valiant. A quick perusal of my set of the complete Hal Foster strips shows only mail armor, though I could easily have missed a few instances of plate. The real anachronisms in Prince Valiant appear to be the castles, which seem way more advanced than fortifications usually were in post-Roman Britain, and the horsemen using stirrups, which didn't really spread to Britain until around the Eighth Century.

The strip is still going, distributed by King Features Syndicate. Hm... at one point, Valiant's son was kidnapped by agents of Justinian. Where were Hank Morgan and Martin Padway while this was going on?

— JTM

* * * * *



The death of Osama bin Laden: At last President Obama has done something right. I can think of some interesting possibilities had bin Laden been taken alive, but I am happy to settle for dead.

What might have happened if our raiders had spirited him out of Pakistan, either dead or alive, without the U.S. government making any announcement at all? Would the Pakistani government have said a word? I doubt it. And if word of the raid leaked out, they still wouldn't have admitted that bin Laden was the target. After all, no Pakistani officials knew he was there, right? And it would be less embarrassing all around to leave it at that. Those wives and other survivors of the raid, who knew bin Laden had been taken, would have quietly disappeared.

His death does ruin my fantasy of the most appropriate way of executing him, inspired by those 9/11 pictures of people jumping to their deaths to escape the flames. Bin Laden should have been put in a helicopter, taken up to 1400 feet above Ground Zero, right where the tops of the buildings used to be, and then chucked out with a cheery "See how many times you can shout 'Allahu akbar' on the way down."

From: **AL du Pisani** May 31, 2011
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A shorter and more somber letter than I had planned. A good friend of mine, fellow SF fan and games player, had died two weeks ago. I had managed to see her about two weeks before her death, and regrets that I did not see her two days before her death. We have known each other for something like 18 years, with me regularly complaining about my job. That was the funny part of our last conversation — I complained about my job and she reminded me that I have been doing that since she met me. And we regularly played boardgames together — in fact I could tell her that I had missed her this Easter, as we usually gathered at her house and played games.

Since the last conversation, and especially since her memorial service, I have been a bit adrift.



In the mean time we muddle through. We had our municipal elections, which I did not see as such a huge affair. But since the ANC have chosen to make everything a referendum on how they are performing, I made sure to go and vote. I still think we lost something since the end of Apartheid, since elections are just too slow. It took me about 45 minutes of queuing before I could vote, which is better than the three hours I had been expecting, based on previous experiences. And it took three days before I could find out the results. I can remember finding out who had won, the morning after the election, back in the old days, of my first election. These days it is taking longer to get the results.

I have read an interesting book by RW Johnson: *South Africa's Brave New World*, and it is an indictment of Thabo Mbeki and the ANC, for all that they have done in South Africa since taking over. It is from the point of view of a liberal English South African, and I sometimes found it difficult to get worked up about the same things he found vexing, and found that he would blithely skip over certain subjects that did not matter to him. He does explain a couple of interesting things I wondered about. The second last chapter is somewhat of a confession from him. With the central question: How did these dumb racists Afrikaner Nationalist have a better understanding of what the ANC would do once in government, than him, who is both smarter and had actually met ANC people? He supplies no answer.

He does not ride Afrikaans as much as some other commentators had, but I am still convinced that the one thing that the National Party did wrong, was to force people who wanted to live in their own Englishspeaking

universe to speak Afrikaans. That is the one sin that was unforgivable. After all, everybody can learn (bad) English, and be laughed at.

Yet in my own experience, when traveling overseas with people that did not speak to me in Afrikaans in South Africa, was the sudden urge that they had to speak to me in Afrikaans, when overseas. Even that is following the oath of tears in the rain.

And so we muddle on. We do not seem to win, yet do not lose.

I hope things are better with you.

I hope things get better for you.

— JTM

From: **Sue Burke** June 7, 2011
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History was made: On April 30, a 500-kilo, four-year-old bull named Arrojado galloped out of Maestranza bullring in Seville to a future of sweet green pastures and the courtship of fighting-breed cows. He had fought José María de Manzanera, a leading toreador, in a way that lived up to his name, “Daring.” He never hesitated to attack and in fact became more brave as the fight went on, although bulls normally tire and effectively surrender. Exceptionally brave bulls are pardoned, but since La Maestranza was built in 1733, only twice has a bull left it alive after a fight. Olé!

History is being made: On May 15, a protest march calling for “real democracy now” was broken up by Madrid police because an election campaign was underway and the protest “might have affected the outcome.” Only political parties may legally attempt to influence voters. In response, inspired by the Arab Spring and using social media, a indignant pro-democracy camp, the #spanishrevolution, sprang up in downtown Madrid and in cities around Spain. Corrupt political parties and a failed economic system have left young people with little hope for getting a job, settling down, and raising a family, which is what they yearn for. Now the movement is trying to solidify itself. On May 28, it organized meetings in 41 neighborhoods in the city of Madrid and in 80 towns and suburbs in Madrid province to agree on four goals involving political reform. My neighborhood is conservative and quiet, and 500 people came. Similar organizing is going on in every other province in Spain. Public opinion polls show about 80% approval for the protest and 60 to 70% disapproval for top politicians — a disapproval rate that’s been high for years.

History moves slowly: Babies can now be named within 24 hours of their birth. A law passed in early May overturned a prohibition against registering newborns that had been based on practices inherited from the Roman Empire. Ave Caesar!

History is still waiting: In the last issue, I reported that minute amounts of radioactivity from Spain’s bomb project had been discovered in 2006 at a Madrid university campus, and that it had been scheduled for prompt cleanup. But now it seems that *minute* means “16 tons” and *prompt* means “we’re not sure when,” although the sports fields, children’s playground, and vegetable gardens located over the contaminated soil have been closed. I suppose that’s some progress.

History was wrong: For a long time, we all believed that Madrid sprang up as a town around the Moorish military observation tower erected in the 800s where the Royal Palace now stands. But archeological excavations around the palace show that a military post but no civil population existed there until after it had been taken by Christian troops in the early 1100s. This means that the legend about Our Lady of the Almudena, the statue representing the city’s patroness Virgin Mary (*almudena* is Arabic for “city wall”), is even more completely fictive than we had thought. El Cid could never have helped find the statue since he never helped liberate the town since there was no town — and not a city wall in which to have hidden the statue centuries earlier when the Moors invaded, with two candles that miraculously burned the whole time so that the Virgin wasn’t alone in the dark.

“History is generally patchy and unreliable,” wrote the late Diana Wynne Jones in *The Tough Guide to Fantasyland*. And here I thought I was living in Spain.

But if I am in Spain, I can answer Dainis Bisenieks’s question about changes in Spanish language rules. Are they coordinated with Latin American countries? Yes. The Real Academia Española, founded in 1713, works with associate academies in 22 countries. The oldest, in Columbia, dates back to 1871. The Academia Norteamericana, which covers the United States of America, joined in 1980. Someday I expect there will be an Academia Lunar and an Academia Marciana: History marches on.

A friend told Samuel Johnson that it had taken the forty members of the Académie Française forty years to compile the first dictionary of the French Language. The Grand Cham of Literature, who had undertaken to do his Dictionary in three, said, “Let me see; forty times forty is sixteen hundred. As three to sixteen hundred, so is the proportion of an Englishman to a Frenchman.”

[It actually took the Académie 53 years and Johnson 9, but that’s the breaks.]

— Jos: Major

WAHF:

Lloyd Daub, with various items of interest.

FLASHMAN AND THE FAMILY HISTORY

You might not be surprised to learn that I've not been the only chap in the long and inglorious history of the Flashman family to write up a few of the more inconvenient and desperate events of my life. Got the custom from my own pater, the distinguished (in knavery, cuckoldry, revelry, and cowardice) Buckley Flashman.

One boring rainy afternoon, on one of the days here in Gandamack when there was no one around and I was too fagged out to go anywhere, I took up one of his journals and took to reading his recounting of one of the seamier parts of his life . . .

. . . After the War, seems, there was this gaggle of young women from the provinces. They had all come up to London to snag themselves a Lord, or so they were saying. They usually had a queer accent and never quite said where they came from or who they were related to, and all too often had only the vaguest idea of how matters went.

Biggest problem, it seemed, was that they all had the same plan. They would find their Lord, who was a right proper rip if not a rake, and set about engaging his interest, but meanwhile they'd be flirtin' with a Bad 'Un, who would come close to ravishing them away, and at the last minute their Lord would mend his ways, rescue them from the clutches of the Bad 'Un, and after he put the ring on he would settle down and let her lead him around like a prize steer.

I made a pretty pile being the Bad 'Un. Most of the coves who were seized on by these dollys had no desire to give up their ways, understand, and wanted to duck the old marriage bonds for as long as they could. And when they did finally go under the yoke, it would be for someone with money, position, or preferably both, not some nameless dolly from the provinces.

So they were willing to look for aid in getting shot of the lass, and I was quite happy to be of assistance. My favorite way of taking care of the issue was to introduce the dolly to opium. They never quite had the head for it. Two or three trips and they'd be staggering out of the den, fuddled, to lie face-down in the mud. If that didn't do it, and the pox or the flux didn't get 'em, the madams in cheap brothels always needed new recruits.

One such dolly had a queer scar, I'd noticed, running across her belly. They'd quit disemboweling traitors about a century ago, but this looked like that and it got me to wondering. She had dropped the name of a place out in the country during one of our romps and once I got shot of her by the usual means I went out there.

It was a closed-mouthed place and it took all my efforts to get this round-heeled little milkmaid to open up. She took me into this barn and while we were at it, there was this queer sensation like a thunderbolt about to strike. I've developed a talent for getting out and dressed quickly when interrupted in such efforts, and we hid in the loft.

This queer device, all springs and crystal and polished metal, was standing there in the barn where it hadn't been not a minute ago. A young lass in high fashion — really too fine for travelling, but I reckoned she'd find that out soon enough — got off the device, said something to the man in it, and then . . . it vanished. She hoisted up her skirts on one side, picked up her little travelling bag, and went out the side door.

When my little milkmaid came to, she admitted she'd seen that a couple of times. She wondered if it were the Devil's work, but I managed to cajole her into a different sort of devilry . . .

I put down Pater's journal and wondered. That description . . .

There had been this invitation from a friend of a friend to have dinner at some high-nose mechanic's home. Quite a rum name the chap had, 'Moses Nebogipfel' it was. After dinner and a few brandies, he took us into his workroom to show us his latest invention. As best as I recalled — perhaps I'd had more than a few brandies — it was a queer device, all springs and crystal and polished metal, and he said what it was for, but if I believed it, I couldn't remember . . .

— Not from the Flashman Papers

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