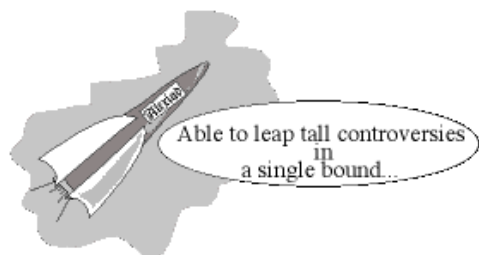


## Letters, we get letters



From: **Henry L. Welch** October 8, 2011  
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Many thanks for these recent issues of *Alexiad*, which I have been horribly remiss in leaving in the to be LOCed pile for several months in some cases.

Herewith are some brief comments:  
No. 2

Rodford Edminston: Coleman has had versions of its two-burner gas stoves that burn both white gas (Coleman fuel) and unleaded gas. I have had one for over 20 years. They don't burn the unleaded quite as nicely as the white gas, but the cost savings is significant over the lifetime of the stove.

No. 3

Like many, I was deadily saddened to hear of the death of Terry Jeeves. He was generous with his art, his fanzine, and he allowed me to reprint his "Carry on Jeeves" series. He will be greatly missed.

No. 4

Our local Borders closed months ago (right after their announcement). We now have to go to the mall for a large book store.

Sounds like you had a good trip through Illinois.

Rodford Edminston complains about the incorrect use of technical terms. As for the flow of electrons, when electricity was first studied they had a 50-50 chance of getting right. They guessed that it was the positive charges that moved, hence the current is always drawn or described in the wrong direction. It actually doesn't matter which way you draw it, the math will correct any sign/direction errors. If this really bothers him, he should stay away from patents. Inventors can act as their own lexicographer and the attorneys who draft their patent applications often don't fully understand what they are writing about. Thus, patents often have words and phrases in them that are often confusing. During patent infringement trials, there is a special phase where the sides argue about what the words and terms mean, the judge rules, and it is almost never write. In fact, these rulings are overturned on appeal over half the time because the appellate court reviews the rulings de novo, meaning they start all over.

This is then all placed in front of a jury that knows even less about the technology. Welcome to my work world . . .

How do you say in legalese, "You keep using that word. I do not think it means what you think it means."?

—JTM

From: **William H. Patterson** Oct. 10, 2011

Thanks for *Alexiad* 59. Reading it made me realize how very far out of things working for eleven years (and counting) on a single, complicated project has rendered me. The first-pass edits for the second volume of the Heinlein biography are just about finalized, and I am just starting to — well, not quite come to grips with, not yet, but at least dimly to sense the possibility of having to deal at some indefinite time in the future with the prospect of being fully occupied with something other than this biography. Say 2015-ish, if the experience with the first volume is any indication.

I have done a little current reading, treading water, as it were, though the recent medical crisis interdicts future book purchases, I'm afraid. Am currently about halfway through *Reamde* and I may have some comments about it 'round about the time the next *Alexiad* is ready. Or not. For reasons that escape me completely, something about the texture of this book, unlike any other Stephenson book I've read so far (and I think I've read all but one [and, yes, I do include *The Big U* and *Zodiac* and the En ten archen ho *Command Line* book]), keeps reminding me of early Iain Banks (of *The Wasp Factory* and *Canal Zone* vintage), which is a darned peculiar thing to be put in mind of.

Before that, two others by writers whose output I also follow as fully as possible: *Rule 34* (Stross), which I thought perfectly fine but didn't really need to be written (I'd rather have seen the energy put into another *Laundry* book, as the cleverness quotient of that series seems ongoingly altogether higher), and *Fuzzy Nation* which ought not to have been written at all, and Scalzi should have known better as soon as he got the outline finished. Look, John Scalzi is a triff writer, but dumbing down *Little Fuzzy* is not merely a waste of his talents, it's a perversion thereof, and Scalzi Has Known Sin.

But it sold. If John F. Carr, Wolfgang Diehr, and T. L. Mancour can do it, John Scalzi can do it.

— JTM

The book also made me sad to realize *Little Fuzzy* was, if not exactly "typical," still representative in a way of the state of science fiction in 1962 and *Fuzzy Nation* is, again, not exactly typical, but still quite representative in a way of the state of science fiction in 2011.

Also read *Clockwork Rocket* (Egan), which was — strange in a way I find difficult to characterize. Egan has begun to become an orthogonal quid (since the characterization of "tertium quid" is far too linear to be applied

here).

From: **Richard A. Dengrove** Oct. 10, 2011  
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My Loc for *Alexiad* August 2011 is late, as is often the case with my Locs. Too many fanzines and not enough time. I will see about sending you a full-scale article to compensate for the delay. In the meantime, I hope you enjoy my letter.

One comment I will discourse on comes from Lisa. She laments the decline of the paper book and the rise of the e-book. I agree we will someday live in a world without paper books. On the other hand, it might not sound the death knell of the small merchant, but ring in a rebirth. I know a number of small merchants sell their books through Amazon. I don't know about Barnes and Noble.

I have changed my mind about the ebook issue after actually experiencing an e-reader.

— LTM

As for the lack of browsing, which is the biggest complaint. No way can you feel the book on the web, like in a bookstore, unless we develop feelie-vision. However, maybe books could be displayed on the web under a subject classification with mucho info, and you could browse that way. That's a thought.

This finishes about books; how about an actual dinosaur, the newspaper serial? Yes, as late as the 1950s, I remember seeing a science fictional tale in the *New York Post*. Newspaper serials were even bigger earlier in the century.

The Hopkinsville paper, the Kentucky New Era, used to run a serial Christmas story at that time of year well into the sixties. They also had Flash Gordon.

Also, there is a connection between newspaper serials and Robert Hutchings Goddard, the rocket man, whom you discuss, and Thomas Alva Edison. Goddard read the newspaper serial "Edison's Conquest of Mars," published in 1898 a month or two after *War of the Worlds* was published in *Cosmopolitan*. If I remember correctly, Goddard's diary says he saved it, and took it out again in the 1920s to read it.

The problem with "Edison's Conquest of Mars" is the same as the problem with John Scalzi's *Fuzzy Nation*. The time, as you say, is past for more Fuzzy novels, just as it is for "Edison's Conquest." To do justice to the novels, you have to wrestle with the controversies of the '50s. Which couldn't be less relevant today.

On the other hand, those novels elude updating. All the updates of Wells' *Time Machine* and *War Of The Worlds* crash on that shoal. Unless movie makers are willing to deal with class warfare and ideas about racial

superiority: flashpoint issues during the 1890s but taboo now: they descend into fluff. And no one is interested in that either?

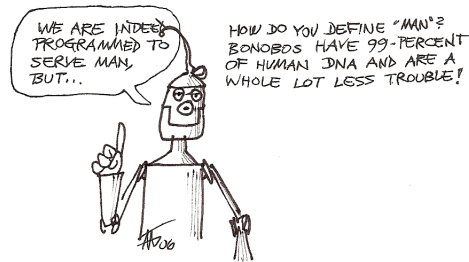
Another idea that is past is the Age of Matriarchy, supposedly destroyed by the Aryans, the inaugurators of our language group. Yes, an egalitarian, peaceful, nurturant age. Socialist? I don't know about that. I know two Marxist ladies in the '70s stuck a knife into that thesis, and turned it. They pointed out that no known society has ever practiced sexual equality although some have come within throwing distance. Men always receive at least a few more prerogatives.

However, the Marxist ladies labored in vain. It is difficult to kill a tradition, real or, like the Age of Matriarchy, imagined. I think Mike Brown found that out in *How I Killed Pluto*. Even though Pluto as a planet only dates from the '30s, it has become a tradition. As for Mike's facts showing it isn't a planet, who cares about stinkin' facts?

Tradition has its advantages, though. It can encourage fen, for instance, to be participants rather than consumers. To read, write, organize and make. Nevertheless, I doubt that that is the current problem with fandom. I have seen a lot of young participants in fandom. In fact, there may be more young fans than old fans who read, write, organize and make.

No, the problem with fandom does not entail a lack of young fans. Instead, it is caused by SF and Fantasy having gone mainstream. *Harry Potter*, the Green Hornet and *Avatar* play to audiences of millions.

That SF has gone mainstream means the young fans have been swamped by a mass of passive consumers who just sit there and expect to be entertained.



On matters of fandom, we have problems with the future; on other matters, we have problems with the past. Darrell Schweitzer mentioned two examples of that. In one, he speculates that New Jersey may yet become a tidal swamp. That inspired me to scream inside to relate its past. Wasn't it originally a tidal swamp? In fact, I hear the settlement of the Central Jersey Coast had to await effective anti-mosquito measures.

In addition, Darrell mentions how his father had a problem with the past, this time the far past. He really wanted to believe the comic strip *Prince Valiant*, set in King Arthur's time, was historically accurate. Darrell is so right. Anachronisms there have abounded like flies.

In addition to the anachronisms Darrell

mentions, I have two more. Didn't Prince Valiant sail to America five centuries before the Vikings? Also, Prince Valiant was supposed to rule Thule, usually presumed to be Iceland. As far as I can tell, Iceland was first settled two centuries after, in the 8th Century, and by monks. No knight errants there.

Messing with the past and the future is a vice; I doubt a desire for vengeance is. It's natural. When Bob Kennedy wished to desecrate bin Laden's body, it was only natural. Of course, we have to keep our desire for vengeance in check – if only to keep civilized.

Unlike the desire for revenge, the desire for relics isn't natural: the Ancient Jews and Ancient Romans believed that the dead were unclean and we should avoid all contact with them.

As well, some have posted another line of objections. For instance, later on, John Calvin objected not out of fear of the dead but that all the contradictory relics couldn't be real. This, Sue Burke infers. He declared if all the drops of milk attributed to the Virgin Mary and displayed in all churches were real she would have to be a cow.

In addition to people being dubious about relics, they are dubious about atomic energy. George Price laments that the Fukushima incident encouraged skepticism about atomic energy because we can turn to no alternative source. All the alternatives to atomic power jostling for position are 'unreasonable.'

Furthermore, I have heard atomic power need not be as dangerous as it is. For one thing, I hear some engineers have thought up the pebble bed reactor. When the atomic reactor heats up sufficiently, the metal on the pebble melts and stops the reaction. An army risking their lives to shut off a reactor, as in Japan, would not have been necessary.

Some may have questions about the pebble bed reactor I suggest, and that is OK because the world is stuffed to the gills with questions. For instance, Joe, do name some zombie romances. Also, Grant, in what issue did you describe measuring the Earth's temperature via its rotation?

**Married with Zombie, Jesse Petersen; Bound: A Paranormal Romance, Shannon Mayer; Love with a Chance of Zombies, Delphine Dryden; I Fell in Love with a Zombie, Sean Kennedy; Graveyard Games, Shen Leigh; VAMPIRES, Zombies, and Ghosts, Oh My! . . . and that is just from the first page that pops up when you type "Zombie Romance Books" into Amazon's search function. I wonder when Chicks Dig Brains: A Celebration of Zombie Romances by the Women Who Love Them will come out.**

Another question yet comes from Al du Pisani. It is one I have often heard from old timers. Is this the future we are supposed to be

living in? The science fiction of their youth talked about space ships and the colonization of the planets, and what do we have? Computers and cellphones. How boring!!

However, it is a trick comparison. The spaceships and the colonization of planets were literary; computers and cellphones are a reality. Reality is always duller. In fact, I remember cellphones being predicted in the '60s, and they were more exciting then because I read about it.

**Cellphones were predicted in Space Cadet (1948; NHOL G.070), as was discussed in that valuable literary guide Heinlein's Children, available from Advent:Publishers and NESFA (Adv.).**

November 23, 2011

This is my LOC for *Alexiad* Oct 2011. Not yet an e-zine, although I am contributing by e-mailing my LOC. It's fine with me. Of course, I'm not picky and it'd be fine if this was an e-zine and not a paper zine. However, I draw the line at Twitterzines.

What line should I draw for Baroness Orczy's *Scarlet Pimpernel* or *I Will Repay*. Attacks on the French Revolution, at one time, meant the attacker felt at home in bed with the Ancient Regime. It was an umbrella for all manner of reactionaries, monarchists, anti-Semites, despots. You were keeping bad company.

Of course, that be damned. The Terror of the French Revolution was bad and that is all there is to it. It was mindless, it avenged petty insults, and it was vicious. In the end, there was the guillotine.

In addition to attacking the French Revolution at its nadir, I would join with you in attacking Amazon for publishing without a transom. The problem is, as you point out, the only transom for a lot of publishers is Will It Sell. Right now, that means zombies, zombies and more zombies. Around 1980, the publishers' transom was sometimes the *Preppy Cat Cook Book*.

So little do editors care about literary matters that such matters have been thrown into the abyss. I remember a *Wall Street Journal* article where, with even many prestigious book men, you had to pay if you wanted your manuscript edited.

Publishers are not the only ones who are traveling down a dark path. We in general are. For one, with the spectre of climate change hanging over us. I agree with Darrell Schweitzer that we consume scads of carbon dioxide and that is making the Earth warmer. Whether it heats in a straightline or a loop-de-loop is irrelevant.

I disagree with him, however, that we can legislate away greenhouse gases. We're energy hogs. On that one point, at least, Taras Wolansky is right. We aren't going to return to the grass shacks. Never happen. It is vastly more practical to figure out how best to adjust to the warming trend.

However, in the controversy over global warming, no compromise is possible. You are either on the side of God or the Devil. That's typical. While both God and Satan reside within us, people like to choose scapegoats from outer Satans, and send them off into the wilderness.

Milt Stevens shows his officer nicknamed Captain Dingbat doing this when he claims there are Satanic cults in the hills of his precinct to justify more arms and ammo. Of course. Blatant Satanists rather than embodying evil are pathetic. More the symbol of the obnoxious than evil. One, not atypical acolyte went so far off the wall he once scribbled the graffiti "Hail Satan."

He could have been like the  
dyslexic devil worshiper who sold  
his soul to Santa.

—JTM

These days people see even greater threats than blatant Satanists. What is worse, they can't send these representatives of Satan into the wilderness because they are our next door neighbor. By the same token, they can't compromise with them either. They have to bludgeon them into submission. Which, for the most part, doesn't eliminate evil either. .

In politics, usually compromise is de rigueur.

This is not to say I disagree with Taras Wolansky that Ronald Reagan won many victories in the Democratic Congress in the '80s. However, that was only after casting overboard his original program for dismantling the welfare state, and inaugurating a policy of sagacious compromise. What politicians won't do and constituencies won't allow these days. Reagan wouldn't have trucked at a tax increase if it meant massive budget cuts.

Another difficult maneuver these days is getting banks to deal with mortgagees on their mortgages, like Jim Stumm suggests. It could happen during the Depression but not now. The problem is that the mortgages are securitized. The banks do not own them, but a bunch of scattered investors, whom it is hard to get in touch with. In the banks' mind, it is better to just foreclose.

With no compromise and homes being foreclosed, we need a miracle such as Whoopee Goldberg claimed. Sheryl Birkhead and you Joe have pointed out that Whoopee's original name was Caryn Elaine Johnson. She claimed that her new name appeared to her in a miracle. A burning bush told her to change her name to Whoopee.

It is a name that has held her in good stead. Whoopee! is not only a good moniker for an entertainer, however, but a good exclamation. It only doesn't scan when you're saying good-bye. Thus, I guess Adios Amoeba! is going to have to do this time around.

From: **Cuyler "Ned" Brooks** Oct. 15, 2011  
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Thanks for the zine. Interesting about finding that an ancient bully had passed on! I tried that with the chief bully at the prep school I went to (much later I learned that he had a relative on the board), but results were inconclusive. The state was right, and the birth-year is the same as mine and he died in 1985. But the middle initial was omitted. His henchman in evil however definitely seems to have shuffled off in 2005.

The guy was the son of the  
secretary for someone important  
in the school system. Keeping a  
good secretary takes concessions.

— JTM

From: **Evelyn Leeper** October 18, 2011  
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I understand what you mean when you say, "[*The Valley of Gwangi*] was Ray Harryhausen's last prehistoric-themed film," but given that it takes place in the early 20th century, it seems odd to count it as "prehistoric-themed", but not to count *Clash of the Titans*.

Jim Stumm talks about the confusion of saying "the 12th century" rather than the "1100s". When we were in Italy, I noticed that the Italians name their centuries in the latter way. I was originally confused because when I saw (for example) "Ottocento", my first thought was "18th century", but "Ottocento" is "the 1800s", not "the 18th century".

I was quite surprised to read pretty much everywhere that Chris Garcia's reaction to winning the Hugo was genuine. It was so over-the-top that I was sure it was planned, much as Roberto Begnini's or Clifford Stoll's antics. (I know Stoll's are part of his schtick because when the occasion calls for something less frenetic, he is less frenetic.)

Chris was effusively celebrating  
the rescue of the Best Fanzine  
Hugo from the pod people.

— JTM

From: **Milt Stevens** October 19, 2011  
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In *Alexiad* V10 #5, Lisa talks about electronic books. She has acquired some sort of an electronic thingie with which she has stored 1852 books. That's a lot of books. It obviously is quite compact and must be very portable. However, I would have a problem with such a device. I like having my house filled with printed clutter. At the rate of 2000 books per ebook, I'd need to whole bleeping Library of Congress to feel comfortable.

I admit to always buying more books than I would ever get around to reading. It's the fannish way. With this new ebook technology, collectorism would be increased by an order of magnitude. Somehow, the whole thing sounds just too easy. There's got to be some sport to

collectorism. You've got to have something to brag about to fellow collectors.

The books are stored on my Amazon account. The actual electronic thingie I have only holds a thousand books. I have some 850 books on the physical electronic reader.

Too easy? Perhaps so. But I think that is outweighed by the way the new technology makes it possible to for some of SF's greatest writers to find new fans. I have now a small library of the world's greatest books. Many of these were free. I am currently 79% through *Anna Karenina*. This library fits in my purse. I'm not into collectorism. For me it is the actual words in the book that are important. What is important, collectorism or a machine that puts long out of print books from great authors into the hands of readers?

— LTM

Like Joseph, I frequently disagree with the results of the Hugo votes in fiction. As far as 2001 was concerned, I wasn't terribly displeased with the Harry Potter novel winning, although I think I preferred *Storm of Swords*. Of the other three novels I don't remember *Calculating God* at all, I thought *Sky Road* was stupid, and I gave up on *Midnight Robber* after 20 pages. I've read a lot of science fiction over the years, and it is undoubtedly harder to impress me than it is to impress a younger reader. On the other hand, some Hugo nominees have flaws I would have noticed when I was 16. I guess if the Hugo nominees weren't as they are, we would have to complain about the weather.

Back in the days when computer memory was incredibly expensive, there was very little of it in existence, so it didn't really make much difference. I once took apart a computer that had a zero megabyte hard drive, the original IBM PC. With that computer, the program was on one 750 KB floppy and your work was on another 750 KB floppy. It certainly didn't take much to impress folks back in themthar days.

I'm surprised Frederik Pohl would remember just one fan who didn't want to become a pro. I think the fans who had a strong desire to become pros were always in the minority. Egoboo may be nice, (if you get any as an aspiring pro) but wretched poverty never did look like all that much fun.

I hadn't heard of either a New York or a New Orleans worldcon bid. New York hasn't had a likely worldcon bid in over forty years.

Well, as for New York there  
was always the problem with  
Robert Sacks.

— JTM

From: **Pat & Roger Sims** October 19, 2011

Just finished reading the latest issue and

rather than add it to the stack of the others that I was going to reply to, decided this is it. First thanks for continuing to send it to us, altho haven't responded in ages! We read them faithfully and always say we must drop a note to Lisa and Joe, but....you know how that goes.

Before I forget, an early Happy Birthday to Lisa!

We wanted to let you know that we appreciated your noting that we were missed at the last ConCave (dealing with some medical issues, now resolved) and it looks like it's been dropped off our list of Cons we'll be attending on a regular basis. It's a bad time of the year for us Floridians, requires us to fly and ends up being a very expensive weekend. These things happen when you get older!

We both read your Zine cover to cover, always enjoy your travel reports and the book reviews. We even know most of letter writers still. And, hearing about the extended family is always fun. Our next Con will be our local one OASIS here in Orlando. But, hopefully we'll see you in Chicago next August.

I think I can say that you will be missed by everyone. We certainly will miss you. Chicago was a wonderful place and thanks to Dana & Mike we saw much more of it than we could ever hope for. See you there.

— JTM



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You sure make the e-readers sound good, Lisa. I'm still thinking about them. Btw, I remember *Island Stallion*. That was the SF story, wasn't it? And congrats on your Kobo bargain!

*Island Stallion Races* was the SF story. Aliens visit Flame's island and take Steve and Flame off to the races.

— LTM

I enjoyed the news in Random Jottings, Joe, especially the conspiracy theories mention.

These people need to get a life! Mike Resnick's "Neutral Ground" sounds interesting. Good selection of reviews. You need to collect these somewhere so people can look them up.

They're on [efanzines.com](http://efanzines.com) for your reading pleasure.

I always enjoy your trip reports. I'm glad you made it to the USS *Bush* reunion. Thanks for the Worldcon and awards news.

LOCs: John Purcell: I've come across the Parasol Protectorate books here and there, but haven't decided whether they're worth buying. I might have them on my Amazon wish list; I've put a few books there recently. Thanks to Darrell Schweitzer for background on climate change (Here in Florida, we've seen zone changes.) and Gore Vidal's theories. (I've seen many documentaries on WWII, and I don't see how anyone could be accused of tricking the Japanese into attacking Pearl Harbor. The hard part was getting them to stop. Also, weren't they attacking other places in the US too?) I don't even want to think of the consequences of the US remaining neutral. *Pacific Empire*, an alternate history, had an interesting take on Japan taking Pearl Harbor — and presumably Hawaii — also Australia — over, as I recall, while we kept the rest of our country. I'd have to reread it to get everything straight, but Australia didn't take defeat lying down. . .

Thanks for *The Valley of Gwangi* URL, Joe — and the Harryhausen note. Lots more interesting tidbits, of course, including the S&L (Jim Stumm's LOC) letting people pay off their loan in hard times. I've been wondering why banks didn't do that?! The Spanish Bollywood report was fun. Oh, too much more to comment on, but re: the drunk urinating on the third rail reminds me of a friend telling me about his brother urinating on an electric fence. The results weren't fatal, just electrifying. Thanks again for a great issue.

Darwin Award, anyone?

— JTM

From: **Alexis A. Gilliland** October 19, 2011  
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enjoy the scenery. But first we went to visit our old friend, Mary Chamberlayne, about an hour's drive into the Virginia countryside. Sigh. It had been an uncommonly wet September, and while there were plenty of changing leaves on offer, they were muted, browns, bronzes, some yellows, with a touch of orange here and there, but no red to speak of. Not what you would call a vintage year for autumnal display, and since the weather patterns had been even worse up north, we decided maybe we would catch the changing of the leaves next year.

The other day I picked up Terry Pratchett's *Snuff* which is a Sam Vimes adventure, set in the countryside, during the unwanted vacation which his wife and Lord Vetinari insisted he take. Lots of good stuff, including smuggling, troll-drug running, murder, genocide, the return of the Summoning Dark and Wee Mad Arthur, along with a bit of riverboat piloting strongly evocative of Mark Twain. Paced a bit leisurely at the start but recommended as Pratchett at the top of his game.

It is noted that Dainis Bisenieks is thinking about reading the book *Supervolcano*, subtitled *The Catastrophic Event That Changed the Course of Human History*, which pays particular attention to Toba, an eruption 74,000 years ago which was the biggest eruption in the last two million years. How big was the Toba eruption? Really, really big, ejecting 2,800 cubic kilometers dense rock equivalent, in contrast to Mount Tambora, which erupted in 1815, ejecting a measly 50 cubic kilometers. Tambora memorably produced The Year Without Summer, and crop failures all over the world. Toba produced six years of volcanic winter, and ushered in a thousand years of glacial maximum, hard times that reduced the human race to less than 3,000 individuals, the ancestors of we seven billion modern humans who turn out to be more closely related than we really care to imagine.

George Price mentions the Chicago man who was electrocuted urinating on the third rail. This was something recently investigated on *Mythbusters*, who were unable to make it happen, and therefore concluded that that particular myth was busted. He also wonders about changes in the Egyptians from antiquity to modern times, contrasting Arab Muslims with Egyptian Copts. Historically, most Egyptians converted to Islam, so the Arab influence was cultural rather than ethnic. On the Discovery Channel they showed the excavation of a tomb of a middle-ranking functionary of the Old Kingdom, in which a wooden statue was uncovered which was the spitting image of the local village headman. This anecdote suggests that the Egyptian genotype has been pretty stable.

Have you seen the pictures of the forensic reconstruction of Cheddar Man and of his second-nearest living relative, Adrian Targett of Cheddar, Somerset? It's not just Egypt that has genetic stability.

Thank you for *Alexiad* #10.5, the October issue. Lee enjoys the autumn, particularly the changing colors of the leaves, and we had been thinking about driving up to New England to

George also agrees with Taras Wolansky that we are never going to run out of fossil fuels, because "when proven reserves run low, that is the signal to step up exploration and find more." Well, no, Earth's reserves of fossil fuel may be larger than we imagine but they are still finite, and eventually we *will* run out. Taras also ruminates on AGW, anthropogenic global warming, for a bit, though he concedes that he doesn't "particularly pursue this one issue." The timescale for global warming is different from the timescale for humans, and even though we humans may be injecting however much carbon dioxide into the atmosphere to produce whatever effect gets produced, it will happen slowly enough so that the AGW skeptics will have time enough to change their minds gracefully. Taras allows that the recent opening of the Northwest Passage for a couple of months a year might prove one of the benefits of such global warming as appears to exist. Even better if the Northwest Passage should be open for six months or nine months or even year around, right? That would enable us to extract oil from under the Arctic Ocean, finding new oil reserves to replace the depleted old ones as George Price suggests.

In geological terms, this human combustion of fossil fuels will happen almost instantaneously, but in human terms it will take a leisurely two or three centuries to run its course. How far along this uncharted path have we gone? The mid-Pliocene warming period 3.3 - 3.0 million years ago was about 3 degrees Celsius warmer than the present, the sea level averaged 25 meters higher, and the carbon dioxide level in the atmosphere is estimated to have been 400 parts per million (ppm.) We will blow past that 400 ppm mark for carbon dioxide in three years, and may reach 500 ppm by the end of the century. When will the climate and sea level achieve their mid-Pliocene equilibrium? We don't know, but life is full of surprises so it will probably be sooner than our computer models predict. How long will it take all that carbon dioxide to wash out of the atmosphere? Maybe 100,000 years, a moment in geological time but off the scale for humans. Taras says that when dissident climatologists have results that undermine the AGW/disaster scenario they feel intimidated by the reported politicization of the vast majority (97 to 98 percent) of their fellow climatologists. The naive might imagine that the scientific facts had something to do with the case, rather than understanding that the community of climate scientists had converted *en masse* to anti-capitalistic liberalism.

Sue Burke's account of a Bollywood production being filmed in the Andalusian hinterlands was highly entertaining. It also suggests that Bollywood has found that making better films results in better profits, something that Steve Jobs demonstrated with Pixar.

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I've hedged my bets all around between the Kindle and Nook. I have the apps on my iPhone.

To Rodford Edmiston, I just want to say that I was taught in junior high that electrons move electricity. While that's technically not correct, it certainly keeps me from being confused about electricity.

To answer Sheryl Birkhead's question about organic milk, while irradiation might make sense, that is currently not being done. The pasteurization process for organic milk is done at a higher temperature than other milk. This is because organic milk must often be transported longer distances than regular milk.

Of course *China Mountain Zhang* is fiction and somewhat outdated in its predictions. However, the Chinese seem to have a wait and conquer the world strategy. They are very patient. None of this quarterly results hangup for the Chinese. I'm sure they are rubbing their hands with glee as they see so much of the rest of the world being mired in financial crises. They'll just wait until the rest of us are hoisted with our own petards and step in and take over.

I have to wonder, having read about Chinese "ghost cities" (entire towns without an inhabitant, built as a speculation by property developers). Just like Texas before the big bust.

— JTM

From: **John Purcell** October 22, 2011  
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So I got the latest *Alexiad* in the mail last week; now it has been read, digested, and ready to be locced. This time I'm actually ahead of my usual loccing schedule. Heck of a deal, eh?

A couple things right off the bat got me to thinking. Lisa mused about her Kobo and the classics available thereon. I don't know yet if one of these e-readers is in my immediate future; I do believe that eventually it will be. In fact, discussions with my colleagues always lead to the conclusion that textbooks will eventually all go electronic, which will avert many a student hernia and other posture disorders in the future. I don't mind the change, it's just that I can't afford to purchase one of these e-readers at the moment. As always, as the technology improves and these critters evolve, prices will eventually drop into the mass affordability range, so I am content to wait.

Seeing a row of giant snails crawling along the street and then realizing it's kids taking all their textbooks to school in backpacks . . . is it a realization of JFK's wish for more fitness and vigah? With what I paid for college textbooks I would have appreciated such an economy. However, it does handicap the granting of large sums to ball players "to buy

textbooks".

Kindle, Nook, Kobo and Sony all have free apps for home computers. Also, the price of the Kindle has just dropped to \$79 for the basic model.

— LTM

Then Joe wondered on the bottom right of page one about his changing reading tastes and deciding that the Internet is A Good Thing. First, the reading taste comment. Of course, your choice of reading material matures over time, and you simply don't agree with the mass market, a condition that I believe most intelligent, long-time science fiction readers develop. Nothing wrong with that. I have only read the first Harry Potter novel and liked it, but as you and I know, Hugo voting doesn't necessarily mean that such-and-such novel is the definitive "best" of the year. If anything, it's the "most popular" or "most widely read/known" book of the year. Case in point, the latest batch of Hugo novels. I have read many folks' impression of Connie Willis' *Blackout/All Clear*, and the consensus is that it was good, but not her best work. Many commented that it did not win the Hugo because of its merits, but because Willis is so well known, which is sadly how many people vote on their ballots. Now, I like her writing, and have yet to read *Blackout/All Clear*; chances are I'll get to that at some point next month (I hope). Getting back to your "taste" comment, though, my preferences are definitely changing. In fact, most of my recent reading has been Steampunk or contemporary literature, and I've been enjoying what I read. Sometimes I dip back into the classics and favorite writers for a change of pace, but I have definitely developed a penchant for more experimental literature this year. I like it, and that's all that really matters. So enjoy what you read, Joe, and don't sweat the masses. Unless, of course, they're gathering on your front porch; then it's time to hightail your keester out of there.

As for the Internet and finding names from your past, that is a fun game to play. So you found out that one of the kids who bullied you in school died in 1993? Well, taken from another angle, odds are that person may have left behind a family, which is sad. Your comment "Who says the Internet is all bad?" implies that you're glad he's gone. I trust you are being tongue-in-cheek there; I really can't imagine you holding a grudge for who knows how many years against someone who probably forgot all about those school days. I don't worry about people in my past; 'taint worth the trouble. Even so, it is interesting to note that one can search out names and places from years gone by and see who and what's still there. It has been a long time since I've done that; the last time I did I learned that my high school has changed dramatically in both size and internal structure. The building is still there, but it's been remodeled quite a bit, and the student population is significantly smaller: when I graduated it held only grades 10-12 and had 2400 students. Now it's grades 9-12 with little over half that size (1600 students). The

population shift in St. Louis Park, MN accounts for this change, and that's something else the Internet is good for — research.

Oh, my. I think I prattled on there for too long. Let's just say that Internet surfing can be fun and enlightening.

Too bad about Borders Bookstores going out of business. College Station, Texas may have a Borders Bookstore at some point in the past, but if it did, that must have been before I moved here in 2001. To the Internet!

I am going to have to get a copy of "Lee at the Alamo" by Harry Turtledove. Sounds interesting. So this is available on Kindle? Hmm. Or can I download it from Tor.com to my home computer? Have to admit, the price tag of the story is good — 99 cents.

**There's a block of Turtledove short stories on Tor.com which are better received than his long series. As Laurraine said, you can download the Kindle computer app (or the Kindle smartphone app) from Amazon.com and read Kindle works without having a Kindle.**

The reunion report reminded me that my dad's World War II shipmates on the USS *Kitkun Bay* have an annual reunion, too. The 2011 one was held in Virginia Beach in September, and Valerie and I are on their mailing list. Not many of dad's shipmates are still alive, sad to say. Most of those remaining are in their 80s, with a couple now in their 90s. For the most part the reunion is for families of the servicemen, and I'd like to go to one so I can talk to a couple of dad's shipmates before they're gone. We have written to them and received some feedback. Maybe that could be the basis of a brief article. I will have to think about that idea.

**Kitkun Bay (CVE-71) got a Presidential Unit Citation for her service in Taffy 3 in the Battle off Samar. If I were you I would get to the next reunion by any means possible. If it's in Virginia Beach again, you can look up my relatives there, too, or at least their place.**

<http://www.hazegray.org/danfs/carriers/cve71.txt>

— JTM

The final thing I'd like to comment on is Johnny Carruthers' article about the WSFS business meeting and their rules. Fascinating reading, and I'd like to thank Johnny for this. It gave me an appreciation of the inner workings of a WorldCon and how changes can be proposed and acted upon. The business meeting at Renovation sounds like it was quite busy and involved many key policy proposals. Very interesting reading. It will likewise be interesting to see if Cheryl Morgan responds to this article. I would like to get her perspective on this particular topic, that is if she's willing to

discuss it. At this stage, it is probably best dropped since a conclusion was reached. Other things are in the works, it appears, to be addressed at Chicon 7, which I won't be attending. That being said, I really should go to the worldcon website and get a supporting membership. If I can't be there, at least I could have voting privileges this way. One of the perks, don'tcha know.

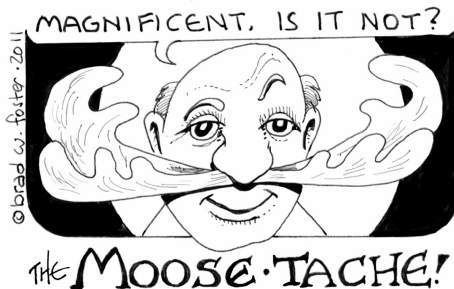
A well-packed issue, Joe and Lisa, full of comment hooks and the usual fine letter-column. Lots of good conversations going on in the locs, some of which I can follow, others that are a bit beyond my ken. Oh, well. Still, a solid issue and I thank you.

At least it provoked me to write to you earlier this time around. Good job!

From: **Brad W. Foster**      October 25, 2011  
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<http://www.jabberwockygraphix.com>  
**Best Fan Artist Hugo Winner**

New *Alexiad* in this week, and continuing to amaze me at the sheer volume of books, let alone the variety of subjects, that you seem to devour! I note in her opening Editorial that Lisa now has 1,852 books to read on her electro-book. My guess would be that will last about . . . oh, what, a year and a half?

Thanks for the congrats on the Hugo win. Though, going by the final voting numbers, I would say I didn't so much win it, as mine was the name used to keep it from going to someone else — and just barely. Next year will be interesting . . . Speaking of fannish art (the proper kind — that is sent to fanzines, don'tcha know!), I've got two pieces attached here for you, unless I forget to do so before hitting "Send". I know — why don't I just do that attaching stuff right now?



....

There, 'tis done. (Or is that "tis" done, with the apostrophe? sigh)

Yeah, this is one of the odder emails I've sent out this week.

Thank you for the two pieces.

— JTM

From: **Rodney Leighton**      2011  
11 Branch Road, R. R. #3,  
Tatmagouche, Nova Scotia B0K 1V0  
CANADA

Everyone I know, almost, is embracing new technology. Sister came to visit awhile ago and brought with her one of those kindle things; instead of reading one of the novels I thought she would or the numerous magazines I thought might interest her, she usually read her kindle. I could never understand how she could read a book while peeling mushrooms, washing dishes or virtually everything else and that is a neat bitty gadget, must be a lot lighter than a novel.

Joe Major being perhaps the most voracious reader I have ever known has really embraced technology. His wife even works in a library. Yet they apparently have a bunch of these thing. In the latest *Alexiad* Joe has taken to reviewing books he read on the kindle thing.

In the notes, he asks: "Who says the Internet is all bad?". Not me. Being barely able to keep my head above water, with things breaking, buildings falling down and the roof leaking, there is no way I could get a computer and internet if I wanted to. My friend Lyn, who is one of the few people I know who still writes long letters frequently now has a website. If I had the necessary things I could go to [www.lynmconchie.com](http://www.lynmconchie.com) and read about what she has been up to and a whole range of things; tales of the cat and book reviews and various stuff.

Me, I much prefer to await the letters and read them that way and read any of her books she chooses to send me. Sister may use her computer and internet connections to buy me a copy of the Bret Hart/ Shawn Michael s DVD which WWE is going to release shortly and which I read about in the most recent issue of the *Wrestling Observer Newsletter*. Or perhaps the book by Jerry Jarrett.

And my friend Chuck uses his computer and internet and puts tv shows on dvd discs and ships them to me. Currently I am watching a show called *New Tricks*; a BBC production about a hot female cop and 3 retired male cops who solve open cases, unsolved crimes. It was not that good at the start but is getting better all the time, very good plots and storylines and acting.

So, the powers that be decreed that no one in Canada could watch tv unless we paid for it. The 2 stations I had vanished. Well. Sister thought that since I have been watching hockey games for decades I should do something to see that I could do so and did some research. Found out that for a bit under 50 bucks a month I could watch all the hockey I could stand, including every game my fave Montreal Canadiens play. I could also watch what passes for pro wrestling. I did a bit of checking and found that for a bit under \$200 I could get tv: one station, CBC from Charlottetown. That would give me the same hockey I have had.

Well, being that at that time I was unemployed, with no idea when work might start and pogeys almost about at an end, I

decided to not do anything tv wise for awhile. As it happened, by buying an occasional newspaper and listening to the radio I find that Les Habs are playing like shit; losing every game and watching them would be frustrating and anger producing.

I skip various portions of WON but I read all the reports on WWE and TNA. Curiously, this has the effect of making me not want to watch their shows. I don't suppose that is the result Dave would wish for and if someone were to put some of their shows on dvd and send them to me I would be delighted to receive them and would watch them. Same for hockey games.

2 television sets. No television reception. Weird, innit?

So, work started really well, got bad, disappeared and has now started again. Boss has said he has enough money to go to Christmas or major snowfall, whichever comes first. Wants me to work every day. I have to work every day it is possible. Try to generate some money.

One result of this is that I do not expect to have time or energy to use this machine. And sometimes I hate the poor old thing. And sometimes I can't stand the thought of typing. Interesting that I used to be bothered that people didn't write or didn't write for ages and now I am doing the same thing. If it is work and or aggravating, it's no fun, right?

So, here's the plan: I am going to launch a new *Leighton Look*, possibly with a different title or even no title. When work ends for this year I will go to Truro and find a helpful person to manipulate the computer and file for a new poezy claim. While there I will stop at Staples and get some copies of whatever I have and will then mail those copies off to people. If you are reading this you will likely get a copy although I might restrict distribution to due to various factors. This is probably the only thing anyone will receive from me the rest of this year.

I am now toying with the idea of resurrecting the *Look* or something like that next year. It could be a way of continuing to receive some zines without trying to write a loc which is becoming harder and harder to do and perhaps keeping in touch, sort of, with friends who don't have time to write or don't want to or perhaps like me find writing to be a chore. Probably will restrict distribution to people I have heard from in some fashion; probably a quarterly thing.

Then again ... most of you have seen this sort of thing before.

I took sister back to P.E.I. this trip. First time I had been there for 8 years. Crossing the bridge my head was full of thoughts of my mother who loved the water, who used to gaze at the water when we crossed the thing, what she could see of it and the last time I was on that bridge was bringing sister and her belongings over to live with father after mother died. We had loaded the bed of the truck with stuff and placed suitcases in the club cab portion of my truck. Arrived at her place and unloaded the stuff from the back, with help from her landlady and her brother. They have a restaurant in the village which they are really proud of. Sister wanted to take me there for lunch. Well, I

haven't eaten in a restaurant in something like 25 years; I have some physical problems and some psychological problems. Well, we will give it a try. So we arrived. And waited. And waited. Finally a menu; much later food. I had been craving homemade baked beans and everything in the restaurant is supposed to be homemade. So I ordered baked beans and fish cakes. Started on the beans and muttered something about coming out of a can; sister's friend said, no, everything is home made. Since she is a nice attractive woman who has been very good to sister I kept quiet. But either the beans were out of a Graves can or the cook uses their recipe; the bread roll was nowhere near as good as those my 80 something year old aunt made for me and the fish cakes were not that great. Chocolate torte was delicious. But what do I know about restaurants. So we went back to their place and walked around the property and I headed home and 20 km. into New Brunswick I stopped for a drink and a piss and noted out of the corner of my eye, guess what?? Suitcases! Turned around and headed back to the damned island. No thoughts of Mum this time, probably because I was so pissed off at myself. So after 8 years of avoiding the place and the bridge I crossed it twice in one day; 4 times, twice each way.

It's only a couple of hours away. I used to visit sister other places she lived; she's the only sibling I have any contact with. Not going to have time this fall and I am not going to P.E.I. in the winter, barring an emergency. But maybe next spring I will go over and give the restaurant another tried. Shouldn't condemn it on the basis of one visit, right?

I am off to take saws to get fixed; buy some stuff; some KFC and perhaps some Chinese food.

There is an increasingly prevalent — I almost want to say "arrogance" — attitude that anyone who is not connected to the Internet does not exist.

— JTM

From: **Alexander R. Slate** November 8, 2011  
604 Cider Press Loop, Joppa, MD  
21085-5438

George Price is both correct and incorrect regarding the definition of the term assault rifle. The AR-15s and others like it are not assault rifles, though they do fall under the definition of "assault weapons". Given the typical persons 'oh-so-careful' use of the English language it is certainly easy to see where a lot of the confusion can come in. So the use of the term, while incorrect, is not necessarily one resulting from a conspiracy against the second ammendment. George is incorrect that an assault rifle must be fully automatic is not correct. The term assault rifle was actually originally created to cover sub-machine guns and sub-machine pistols. In fact assault rifles must be capable of selective fire (having both sem-automatic and automatic fire modes). Weapons with only automatic fire mode are

machine guns. What differentiates battle rifles from assault rifles is the amount of force applied (known as stopping power). Assault rifles fall between battle rifles such as the Kalishnikov and M-16 and pistols.

Regarding the term inflation. Again, George is correct concerning the original definition. However, the meaning of terms evolve and inflation in the 70's came to mean the cost increase of goods. Therefore the political catchphrase of the 70's WIN, for Whip Inflation Now — the invention of the Nixon Administration, no lily-livered liberals they. Inflation is something that happens, and sometimes the growth of the money supply preceeds and causes it and sometimes it follows and is not the cause. Inflation is a symptom, not the disease.

Meanwhile thanks for the issue. Didn't take me an insanely long time to respond this go round.

From: **Lloyd Penney** November 9, 2011  
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Thank you for the 59th *Alexiad*, and I look forward to scanning down the pages to see what to comment on. First thing I see is choosing between the Kindle and the Kobo. Kobo's head office is in Toronto; the company was spun off from the Chapters/Indigo chain of book stores here. Yesterday, Kobo sold itself to a Japanese holding company for about \$350 million, if I recall. Head office will stay in Toronto. I shall not yet purchase an e-reader, my Palm Tungsten is fine for now, and I still have a row of paper books to get through.

I know my own tastes have changed; while I am content to keep reading SF, none of the SF shows on television appeal to me in the slightest. The last movie I saw was *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows Part 2*. Now, part of that is the fact I still work evenings, so much of what happens on television and in the movie houses is still unavailable to me. Still, I am not feeling like I am missing anything. Reading tastes are in the 60s, 70s and 80s SF, books that can be cheaply purchased and enjoyed. Vampires and zombies? Meh ...



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

Perhaps in the next *Twilight* book it will turn out that Bella's child was really fathered by Jacob, and then she gets infected and turned into a zombie. Zombie vampire werewolf; how can you lose

with a combination like that?

I have seen 2 and 5Tb servers available here and there at the computer stores downtown. I use a 500Gb drive for backup. 640k should be enough for everyone, right, Uncle Bill? No more Borders in Louisville . . . we still have Chapters, Indigo, Coles, World's Biggest Bookstore, and an independent chain, BMV. What's suffering around here are the used book stores slowly but surely going away. I keep an eye on those that are left.

We were at the Reno Worldcon, but we did not go to the business meetings. I cared once; not so much now. As much as we enjoy Worldcons, we are kind of weaning ourselves away from them. We want to go to the London Worldcon (should they win) because we enjoy Worldcon and want to go to London. We plan to skip Chicon 7 and LoneStarCon 3 in hopes of saving enough to go to London, but even that looks iffy. After London? No more for us. (Yes, we've said that before. We mean it this time.)

Everyone is nominating Chris Garcia for Best Dramatic Presentation, Short Form. Watch him get it, too. I enjoy *Girl Genius* as well, and I try my best to keep up with it. Three Hugos for Phil and Kaja are well-deserved, and they show their class by taking their fine comic out of future contention.

I would like to think so, but we also all hoped that "I Passionately Desire You to Form a Carnal Connection with Me, Ray Bradbury" would get it, too. There are just too many episodes of Doctor Who.

As Joy Smith says, I thought *Babylon 5* was great. And, I have not seen it rerun anywhere. Is the show not available for syndication, or is it simply too awkward a format for evening showings on the usual rerun channel? Not even our own SF channel, Space, is running it, and it does make me wonder what's wrong . . . too expensive, perhaps?

Rodney Leighton's article reflects a conversation I had with Taral recently . . . there's not much Canadian involvement in fanzines, be it publishing, writing, loccing or artwork. I'd say there's about 20 of us involved in fanzines to one degree or another, but that's about it, and that number doesn't say much about any kind of community. Graeme Cameron has created a set of Canadian fanzine fanac awards, but it may be just a few years before we've all got one of them.

There used to be a number of fine Canadian faneds, people like Andrew Murdoch, Benoit Girard, or Scott Patri (well, "fine" may not be quite the proper phrase, but "interesting" he certainly was) who just dried up and blew away into the Void of Gafia. Just like all the former East-Bloc fans who sprang up, generated wonderful fanac, and then were gone.

The morning is flashing past, so I must get on with other commitments before going downtown. Many thanks, take care, and see you with the 60th issue.



From: **Jim Stumm** September 3, 2011  
Post Office Box 29, Buffalo NY 14223-0029 USA

Alexis Gilliland: Vehicle fuel will never be insufficient to meet the world demand because, if the price of fuel increases greatly, demand will fall. People will increasingly, albeit reluctantly, choose to ride motor scooters that get 100 mpg or so, or mopeds, or bicycles. But what is more likely to happen is, if the price of oil rises too high, some alternative fuel will replace gasoline and diesel as the preferred vehicle fuel. Non-petroleum fuel contenders include ethanol, methanol, natural gas (methane) compressed or liquified (LNG), hydrogen, and batteries.

Besides freeing up fossil fuels for transportation, atomic energy can also power vehicles more directly and replace fossil fuels entirely. I mean the electricity from nuclear power plants can be used to recharge electric vehicles, or it can split water by hydrolysis to produce hydrogen to power vehicles. Besides uranium, thorium is also abundant and it's a promising nuclear fuel being developed especially in India. Other types of reactors can be fueled using existing spent fuel rods, thus doing away with most of the nuclear waste "problem," which is mostly political, not technical. Atomic energy resources are abundant enough to provide for all present energy demands for more than 1000 years. As for the popular opposition to nuclear power, that's already fading due to concerns about increasing CO2. And if a time comes when Americans are given the choice: either we build many more nuclear power plants, or you can trade in your car for a bicycle, opposition to nuclear power will shrink to insignificance at an amazing rate.

About those 1372 climate scientists who were surveyed, was that, the 1372 who remained after all known skeptics had been struck off the list? I also wonder how many of those 1372 believed that their grant money would dry up if they expressed skeptical views. But the more important point is that science is not democratic. In science, one Galileo with the

— JTM

evidence on his side trumps any number of eminent Aristotelians.

As we here in Buffalo enjoy a 70 degree summery day in November, I'm reminded that moderate warming will be mostly beneficial to us here in northern cities and southern Canada. But this is something we never hear from global warming alarmists, who always mention only the bad effects. In truth, moderate warming would have both good and bad effects for different people in different places. I understand why alarmists mention only bad effects, and those with as much hysterical exaggeration as they think they can get away with, to promote political activism. But still, it's fundamentally deceptive to mention only half the story, a tactic also frequently used by lying mass media.

George W. Price: In Buffalo there's a bus route that ends at a street named Paradise, so that's what the sign on the bus reads. Whenever I see it I think: there's the bus to Paradise, an alternative, I suppose, to Led Zeppelin's "Stairway to Heaven."

Okay, you've been to Paradise.  
But have you ever been to you?

— JTM

From: **Robert S. Kennedy** Nov. 20, 2011  
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Thank you for Vol. 10, No. 5.

A number of issues ago I mentioned two books by an English author Toby Frost—*Space Captain Smith* and *God Emperor of Didcot*. My reason for mentioning them was that they are just fun reads. Now, thanks to my requesting it from the Camarillo Library on Interlibrary Loan the library actually purchased the third book in the series—*Wrath of the Lemming Men* (2009). It's another fun read. None of the books have any US indicated publisher, just the English publisher. There must be an SF Fan buying books for the Camarillo Library.

I was very disappointed in the final book in the Merchant Princes series (Book 6), *The Trade of Queens*, by Charles Stross (2010). Perhaps I should have been wary on noticing its recommendation by Paul Krugman. Anyway my general impression is that Stross just wanted to finish the series. Also, he left one or two side stories hanging and they just seemed to disappear.

Then the latest book in the Safehold Series by David Weber arrived from the SFBC and all was right with the world. *How Firm A Foundation* (2011) is number 5 and I can hardly wait for the next book. I do, however, hope that Weber finishes the series in just a couple of more books.

This was followed by *The Unincorporated Woman* by Dani Kollin & Eytan Kollin (2011) and *SNUFF* by Terry Pratchett (2011). Both also from the SFBC. Life is good.

So, now I'll recommend another book that I very much enjoyed—*View From the Imperium* by Jody Lynn Nye (2011). Anne McCaffrey

and David Drake both give it praise and I agree.

I recently read that Vladimir Putin is again going to become President of Russia. Why doesn't he just declare himself Czar? He could name himself Czar Vlad I.

Vladimir III. Vladimir  
Monomakh was Vladimir II. He will  
have to summon a zemsky sobor to  
ratify his election. Glory Glory  
Glory to Vladimir III, the Great,  
the Terrible, Tsar of Muscovy!

— JTM

**Joe:** Well, you have done it again. Another fine art piece to go with commentary in my letter.

From: **Timothy Lane** November 25, 2011  
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The article on the Scarlet Pimpernel was certainly quite interesting. The series has lived on in popular culture in several ways. For example, I recall the Purple Pimpernel from the old Huckleberry Hound cartoons. Of even greater interest may be C. E. Lucas-Philips using the title *The Spanish Pimpernel* for his book about the prison-rescuing adventures of Christopher Lance during the Spanish Civil War. (He operated mainly in Madrid, so the Loyalists liked him as much as Chauvelin liked Percy Blakeney — except that Lance was real. I've read about him in one or two general histories of the Spanish Civil War.) After a year or so, Lance escaped to the Nationalists, and Lucas-Philips mentions him meeting Jose Millan Astray. The latter comes off much better there than he does in, say, Hugh Thomas's history.

"Lee at the Alamo" also sounds quite good. Interestingly, Bruce Catton briefly speculated about similar possibilities in *The Coming Fury* (General Twiggs spent much of the winter away from Texas, so if he had been a bit later getting back, Lee would have received the surrender demand). But Catton only wondered idly what might have happened; he never tried to answer the question.

Darrell Schweitzer: I must say, that was a most impressive example of (if you'll pardon the mixed metaphor) beating a dead straw man. You devoted 7 whole paragraphs (close to half your LOC) to the argument that the world is in fact warming, and we skeptics must be idiots for refusing to agree. The only problem is that no one is denying that there is warming going on. (Heck, I don't even think Rick Perry denied it.)

We nevertheless disagree with some aspect of the Gorescam litany. It may be a belief that the warming is largely natural and cyclic (which seems to be the view of most of the *Alexiad* skeptics), or that the results won't be catastrophic and are best dealt with when they happen (which is the view of Greenpeace skeptic Bjorn Lomborg). It's important to realize that resources are limited, and those devoted to slightly slowing down

non-catastrophic warming could instead be used for other purposes (including many you would support). It's a superb illustration of Taras Wolansky's point (from the previous issue) that you keep making the same errors over and over because you can't be bothered to read the responses to your LOCs.

In case you're curious, I can explain using a pair of sentences from my article on Global Warming for *The Encyclopedia of Environmental Issues*. Explaining the significance of the issue, I said, "If the anthropogenic, catastrophic theory of global warming is correct, or if the theory is wrong but major political/economic decisions are made in the belief that it is [true], there will be extremely harmful consequences." The bracketed word is one that should have been there; something always seems to slip through no matter how much we proofread. And the first paragraph begins, "According to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, the overall global temperature during the Twentieth Century increased by a little under one degree Celsius." Similar points have been made (repeatedly) by Grant McCormick and Taras Wolansky in their comments on the subject.

Well, I don't want to be unfriendly, so as compensation for all I've had to say, I will give you a bonus climate scare — but, coming as it does from me, a real one. Warming weather allows many insects, including disease vectors, to spread to higher latitudes and altitudes.

The former matters little; diseases such as malaria and yellow fever can already occur well to the north in America, for example, but are stopped by excellent pest control. Higher altitudes are another matter; this means that diseases such as dengue fever are spreading to high-altitude tropical areas that do not have excellent pest control. I learned this while researching my article on Climate Change and Human Health for *The Encyclopedia of Environmental Issues*.

Alexis Gilliland: I have encountered the poll of climate scientists you mention in your LOC, but you're the first to provide a citation. Unfortunately, you're also the victim of a bit of sleight of hand, probably by the pollster. I mentioned the alarmist litany to Darrell, and this seems to be a good time to give it: The world is warming due primarily to anthropogenic greenhouse gases, the results will be catastrophic in 50 years or so, and therefore we must apply totalitarian controls on the mass use of energy (controls apparently not needed for the elite advocates, such as Al Gore, who uses more electricity in a month than most families do in a year). By contrast, the poll only found agreement that the world is warming, and that some part of the warming is anthropogenic. (Note that anthropogenic warming could include causes other than greenhouse gases, such as land use. Farmland is warmer than forests, and urban areas are warmer than farmland.)

Thus, the 1300+ climate scientists who agreed with the consensus include not only alarmists, but also most skeptics. (Their position is also mine, for example.) What I find

most interesting is that 30 or 40 climate scientists — professionals who know more about this than you or I or Darrell or any other *Alexiad* reader — actually disagree with the consensus. And, of course, I would assume you know enough about science to know that consensus is hardly proof. The overwhelming majority of professionals specializing in the field are likelier to be right than the tiny majority, but not always.

Robert Kennedy: I agree that Roosevelt was seeking to get the US into the war in late 1941. However, one thing to remember about *Cruise of the Lanikai* is that Roosevelt wouldn't have needed any such maneuver if he had been certain that Japan would attack us. Clearly, at least at the point where he sent those orders, he wasn't.

I have noticed that Pearl Harbor researchers (see for example the Pearl Harbor Attacked site) don't even bother to mention The Cruise of the Lanikai.

Pearl Harbor Attacked  
<http://www.ibiblio.org/pha/>  
— JTM

From: **Sue Burke** November 26, 2011  
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Men wept and said freedom had at last arrived: on October 20, the same day that Gadafi was killed, Spain's Basque terrorists declared a "definitive end to its armed activity." The group called ETA (*Euskadi Ta Askatasuna* or "Basque Homeland and Freedom") had been fighting for independence for 43 years and killed 829 people — 58 since I moved to Spain in 1999.

Hundreds of public officials, including many small-town aldermen and women, can now live without bodyguards. They're free to take out the garbage at night, not trapped inside because a sniper might be aiming at their back door. The rest of us need not fear that our car or our lives will be destroyed by a bomb in some random place like a parking garage at an airport.

How did democracy win? There was no war on terror in Spain, and ETA members were not considered any sort of enemy combatants. That would have elevated them to the rank of soldier, which is a noble calling that they aspired to but were denied. ETA was a criminal organization, and its members were mere felons.

What defeated them was dogged police work. Time and again its leaders and members were identified, arrested, and sent to prison — ordinary prisons: 400 arrests in the last eight years. Its weapons caches were discovered and disposed of. Its funding was cut off. "They had no chance to breathe," one police commissioner said.

Much remains to be settled with the band

and its supporters, and now that can happen. You can't negotiate with someone who has a gun pointed at your head, and now Spain is free.

Meanwhile, the euro's fate has been steadily drifting toward failure, and at every point difficult but effective solutions have been discarded. No solution has been "politically possible," and so, by elimination, the only politically acceptable course is disaster. But that should be no surprise. Democratically elected politicians aren't in charge of the economy anymore. As Churchill said, democracy is the worst form of government except for all the others — and now Goldman Sachs rules the world: corpocracy. Can capitalism and democracy coexist?

As a result, the Spanish equivalent of Occupy Wall Street retains its overwhelming majority support. A new prime minister was elected on November 20, and though he said a change in government would restore investor confidence, Spain's bond yields promptly jumped, and the spread between them and the German bund widened to more than 400 basis points. Investors know any Spanish politician can actually do very little.

By the way, it's not true that all the sequels to *Amadis of Gaul* were more or less rewrites of the book. Only the successful ones were. The tedious, moralizing sequels like *Lisuarte de Grecia* by Juan Díaz, published in 1526, did not sell well at all.

From: **George W. Price** November 27, 2011  
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October *Alexiad*:

Darrell Schweitzer and Robert Kennedy both bring up the allegations that President Franklin Roosevelt and his close advisers knew in advance that Japan was about to attack us.

Schweitzer says that Gore Vidal "has become increasingly a crackpot in his old age" — for example, Vidal "does indeed seem to believe that Roosevelt for sinister purposes suckered the country into entry into World War II by allowing the Pearl Harbor attack to happen."

My own take is that Roosevelt's purpose was laudable, but his method was indeed sinister, in that it was deceptive and underhanded. He recognized the terrible danger of letting Hitler run unchecked, and realized that the U.S.A. had to join the war against the Nazis. However, the temper of the country was dead set against intervention, due to bad memories of how we had been suckered into the First World War for no good purpose. So Roosevelt looked for a "back door" into the war.

Seventy years later, I still wish that he could have found a way more in keeping with constitutional democracy. Should he have worked harder and longer to make intervention politically acceptable? How much longer would it have taken? And how much tougher would the war have been if we had delayed entry until popular support had been achieved? What if the

USSR had fallen by then?

As it was, Hitler was desperately careful to give us no provocation, and refused to respond to our provocations (such as informing the Royal Navy of U-boats our navy detected). So FDR instead provoked the Japanese — who were allied with the Nazis — by demanding that they call off their conquest of China. He embargoed the shipment of oil that was vital to Japan's economy. The Japanese obliged and gave Mr. Roosevelt his war, rather than see their empire shrink back to the home islands. (Considering how well the Japanese did after we forcibly dismantled their empire, we might wonder how they would have fared had they abandoned the road of conquest in 1941.)

Ironically, Roosevelt's apparent strategy depended on Hitler being a man of his word and honoring his mutual-defense treaty with Japan. Maybe Harry Turtledove could write a story in which Hitler refused to go to war with the U.S. in aid of Japan. Then Roosevelt would have had a war with Japan, which he didn't particularly want, and still no war with the Nazis.

I recently saw it suggested that Hitler really did want war with the U.S., but only if Japan came in too, so that the Japanese fleet would make up for the weakness of the German navy. If so, he got what he wanted.

I think it is well-proven that, because we had broken their diplomatic code, FDR did indeed know that Japan was about to declare war. And while he did warn military commanders that war was imminent, he did not make the warnings urgent, to expect all-out attack at any moment.

Not quite. While there were a number of items that indicated that the Japanese were ending negotiations (the **Fourteen-Part Message**, the **Winds Message**) or indicating aggression (the **TRICYCLE Memorandum**) there was nothing definite.

**Fourteen-Part Message:**

[http://www.ibiblio.org/pha/myths/14\\_part.html](http://www.ibiblio.org/pha/myths/14_part.html)

What I have never seen is any evidence that Roosevelt and his clique (or co-conspirators, if you prefer) had any idea that the Japanese would strike Pearl Harbor, or that any attack would be so devastating.

More likely, as Robert Kennedy suggests, he thought the Japanese would attack the Philippines. Kennedy points out that it would make no strategic sense for them to hit the Philippines without also trying to destroy our fleet at Pearl Harbor. True, but then I don't think anyone has ever accused Roosevelt and his cronies of having good strategic sense, however much they fancied themselves as great strategists. They may even have been foolish enough to think that the Japanese would start with a gentlemanly declaration of war, without a surprise attack.

We might also wonder what the world would be like if Roosevelt had found a way to destroy the Nazis without also having a war

with Japan. Would Imperial Japan still dominate China and the Far East? No Red China?

\* \* \* \* \*

Mr. Schweitzer also pokes some fun at the climate-change deniers. My own skepticism concerns how much of the very real changes are due to human activity. While visiting my sister-in-law in Phoenix several years ago, I noticed a book of Colonial American history on her shelf. Published about 1995, well before global warming became a huge issue, it casually mentioned how much the changing climate had influenced colonial exploration and settlement. Temperatures were at a historic low around 1600, the end of the "Little Ice Age," and have been in a warming trend ever since, it said.

Well! Four hundred years of warming could hardly have been triggered by the Industrial Revolution that didn't start until two hundred years later, so the vital questions become: (1) How much of the warming has been due to human activity? (2) How much is reversible by reducing our carbon dioxide emissions? (3) Is the presumed improvement worth the self-inflicted damage to our economy? I have yet to see any substantive discussion of this by the Warmists. Until I do, I must presume that they don't really much care, and that the alleged crisis is primarily an excuse to seize control of our economy. As we might say, socialism by other means.

\* \* \* \* \*

Taras Wolansky, commenting on "The Joy of High Tech," says that "the people who named the electrical poles" were Benjamin Franklin." The story that I heard was that two early scientists in Poland were arguing about what a battery electrode should be named. One strongly said "positive!" and the other just as firmly insisted on "negative!" They were very stubborn and wouldn't compromise, so ever since then every battery has had both a positive Pole and a negative Pole.

\* \* \* \* \*

I agree with Jim Stumm that it is clearer to refer to centuries as "the 1800s" or "the 1900s" rather than "Nineteenth Century" and "Twentieth Century." That saves us from having to explain why most "18xx" years are in the Nineteenth Century, and that the last year of the Nineteenth Century is 1900, not 1899. But anybody can see that 1899 is the last year of the 1800s. We went through a lot of this twelve years ago, when most people assumed that 2000 just had to be the first year of the new century. That four-digit rollover was irresistible.

My own pet peeve is about pronouncing the years of this century. I hold that the year 2001 should be spoken as "Twenty-oh-one," not "Two thousand and one" (Stanley Kubrick notwithstanding), and this year is "Twenty-eleven." Why? Well, for the same reason that 1999 is pronounced "Nineteen ninety-nine," not "One thousand nine hundred and ninety-nine." Of

course, this only applies to year dates, not to numbers in writing checks or doing calculations, where one is conveying arithmetic magnitudes.



From: **Martin Morse Wooster** Nov. 25, 2011  
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Many thanks for *Alexiad*. I wish Darrell Schweitzer would stop using the phrase "climate change denier" to describe those of us who are skeptical about the idea that human behaviour is primarily responsible for rising temperatures. First off, the phrase is nonsensical. To "deny" climate change is to deny the difference between winter and summer. Moreover, environmentalists use the phrase as a wat to somehow equate climate change skeptics with Holocaust deniers. But there's no comparison between the two, because the Holocaust is a historical fact and climate change is a speculative theory about the future.

I'm pretty much persuaded by Bjorn Lomborg to take a middle stand on climate change. I believe the planet is getting warmer although perhaps not as fast as environmentalists believe. (Don't the records show that the warmest year was 1998, and then temperatures fell a bit and then were flat for the next ten years?) But there might be a less expensive solution than what the greens want — massive energy taxes and gigantic subsidies to companies like Solyndra. Painting rooftops white might work. So might spending more money on dams and barriers. But Lomborg argues that it might be better, instead of spending huge sums on policies that might not actually reduce global temperatures all that much to use the money to help Third Worlders get better medicine and food. (We don't have the money to do both.)

About bookstores: I recently heard a Canadian Broadcasting story that implied that Nashville had no bookstores in its city limits until author Ann Patchett decided to start a small one. The existing bookstores were chains that went out of business. One reason she started the business was that there was no place in Nashville where authors could promote their books.

There is one Barnes & Noble, in the Opryland Mall, but it was

flooded out in last year's storm and is rebuilding. There's another B&N in Goodlettsville, north of the city.

Jim Stumm is right that a URL is a really bad way to steer people to an article. As an editor, I always try to give the reader the title and author of a piece. That way you can search for them faster. URLs in and of themselves aren't useful ways to find an article; titles and authors are.

Like, d00d, don't you subscribe to their Twitter feed? URLs are like sooooooooo five minutes ago.

— JTM

Taras Wolansky compares the intelligence of JFK and Khrushchev. But when Kennedy met Khrushchev, wasn't he heavily doped up on the notorious "vitamin cocktails" of his physician, "Dr. Feelgood"? And we still don't know what was in these "vitamin cocktails"? Any assessment of John F. Kennedy's intelligence has to include the fact that the man was taking powerful, mind-altering drugs during most of his presidency.



From: **Taras Wolansky** December 1, 2011  
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*Alexiad*, October 2011.

*Joe*: When *Pimpernel Smith*, starring the incomparable Leslie Howard, was shown, with some regularity, on local TV in New York in the 1970s, it was invariably under that evocative title, and not under the lackluster *Mister V.*, a name I've never heard before.

If Howard had lived, he should have played Capt. Horatio Hornblower (instead of a miscast Gregory Peck) opposite Deborah Kerr (instead of a grotesquely miscast Virginia Mayo).

*Review of James Butler's The End of History*: "Butler seems to be having a bunch of non-related [historical] points of departure". Sounds like he tried to explain his alternative history, instead of merely providing hints. Let the reader imagine whatever scenario seems most plausible to him.

Nope, it was different people in different places and totally unrelated changes.

*Review of 1612, directed by Vladimir*

*Khotinenko*: "One reviewer complained that the movie dehumanizes the Poles; for example, their leader never has a name, just 'The Hetman'. Perhaps so but I thought that I heard him addressed repeatedly as 'Pan Gedemin'". Since Russians usually substitute "G" for "H" (which they don't have), "Pan Gedemin" may simply be Russian for "Lord Hetman".

"All through the movie there have been scenes of a unicorn walking through the woods." Perhaps the *Blade Runner* reference is appropriate for a movie in which, it seems, every character is a fake or fraud of some kind!

*Worldcon News*: "Just as 'Best Dramatic Presentation Short Form' was 'The Buffy Award' (and then *Buffy* was canceled just in time to miss it)." Actually *Buffy* won the first one; then after that the *Doctor Who* claque mostly took over.

By the way, Bill Patterson's biography of Heinlein may have lost (again, to the *Doctor Who* claque), because of a terrible choice of what excerpt to put in the online Hugo package: the introduction, in which Patterson makes a lot of grand assertions about Heinlein's cultural and literary importance, but backs up none of them (yet). He should have selected some jaw-dropping revelation as his sample.

Like, maybe, the bit about Heinlein's first marriage.

*Darrell Schweitzer*: The most bizarre aspect of the design of the Fukushima reactors is that, with this vast source of energy right at hand, the coolant pumps to keep it going were run off diesel generators in the basement!

I'm sure you recognize that anecdotes about local warming do not address the issue of what causes that warming, even assuming that the anecdotes are accurate, and representative of the world as a whole.

The Tony Auth cartoon you describe sounds pretty funny. Which makes it rather atypical for him: I just looked at his work since the end of September and, boy, humor is in short supply. Even when he has a clever idea (see 11/6) he bungles the caption.

I hesitate to call him a liberal, as he's a bit to the left of that. Just in the last couple of months, three cartoons praising the "Occupy Wall Street" movement and two attacking banks (next, the Cross of Gold?); about a half-dozen attacking the G.O.P. and one defending Obama. One (11/11) that's a bit obscure but seems to be an attack on the Catholic Church; another (10/5) seems to be attacking the natural gas industry — no, it's an attack on the Republican Governor of Pennsylvania.

Remember, news stories are collections of selected anecdotes: some facts are left in, others are left out. Unfortunately, the reportage on environmental subjects is particularly slanted. For example, I was feeling sorry for those Greenland Eskimos who, according to the *Philadelphia Inquirer* article you cited, were being inconvenienced by melting ice. Then I read the following line in the Wikipedia article on Greenland and burst out laughing: "Nearly

**all Greenlanders live along the fjords in the south-west of the main island, which has a relatively mild climate.”** Go North, Young Inuit!

Another fact in the *PI* article reveals the power of climate and, perhaps, hints at what a warmer world will be like. It states that the population of Greenland is 56,000 people. Greenland is 600 times the size of Long Island – which has a population 130 times as large.

I was reading a travelogue about transiting the Northwest Passage in the sixties. (One of the participants was the historian Robin Lane Fox, who brought and worked on the only manuscript for his *Alexander the Great* (1973).) At one point, the party went with some Inuit on an umiak, a large boat made by skins on a wooden frame. It had an outboard motor. One of the southerners wondered why, to which the Inuk replied that anyone who didn't have a motor was a fool who liked wearing himself out paddling.

Struggling to explain growing skepticism about anthropogenic global warming (mostly a “boy who cried wolf” effect), warmists have concocted dark conspiracies of oil companies who spread misinformation; though where they spread it is a little vague, as the warmists control the high ground of the media. I see TV commercials from oil companies nearly every day: how many of them express doubts about global warming, anthropogenic or otherwise? Answer: none. Instead, they tout each company's own “green” credentials.

Why? This has to do with the economic concept of externalities, which few people seem to understand. It doesn't pay for an oil company to fight the global warming scare, because that oil company would pay the costs of the campaign, while the vast majority of the benefits (if any) would be shared with the rest of the fossil fuel industry, of which that one firm is a tiny part. Instead, each company tries to present a positive image of itself, thereby internalizing the benefits.

That's an example of a positive externality; negative externality is why corporations make or sponsor movies and TV shows that portray corporations in an unfavorable light. Each such corporation gets all the profits of those movies and TV shows, while the bad effects of the propaganda – mind pollution, as it were – are shared with all corporations and the country as a whole.

*Alexis Gilliland:* I especially liked the cartoon on page 18. Was that “Construction Shack” by Clifford Simak in which explorers find the plans – the botched plans – for the solar system? Then there's the great “Far Side” cartoon in which “God as a kid tries to create a chicken”. (Feathers everywhere.)

IMHO, genetically engineered micro-organisms producing biofuels will eventually

price fossil fuels out of the market. There was a major breakthrough announced just a few days ago.

“Global warming, of which Taras appears to be cautiously skeptical”: rather, I remain aware of the uncertainties in the science — the course of global warming does not run smooth — and the demagoguery of many global warming activists. I am least skeptical of the raw fact that temperatures have (irregularly) trended upward since the middle of the 19th century. I am most skeptical of the doomsday scenarios — warm times are usually good times for Earth's biosphere — and the draconian solutions proposed; which assume, among other things, that there will be no relevant technological progress. In fact, it's happening all around us right now.

By the way, you get points for thinking in shades of gray (which takes more processing power, as it were), rather than black and white. For some people, AGW is either 100% TRUE or 100% FALSE. Then they present evidence that it's not 100% FALSE, and conclude it must therefore be 100% TRUE.

**“A 2010 study in the Proceedings of the National Academy of Science surveyed 1,372 climate scientists to find that 97 to 98 percent agreed that humans were contributing to global warming.”** Let us set aside the likelihood that most so-called climate skeptics would tend to agree that humans are making *some* contribution to global warming. When I looked this up, I was surprised to find the survey flimsier than I expected. For one thing, it isn't a survey of 1,372 climate scientists (a suspiciously low number, by the way). It's a literature survey of the published papers of 1,372 climate scientists. Thus, on the one hand, skeptical scientists are less likely to have been selected for the 1,372 in the first place; on the other, articles with a skeptical tendency even from the 1,372 would have more trouble getting into print in the surveyed climate journals. And on top of that, let's remember the late Stephen Schneider's advice to climatologists, to keep their doubts about global warming to themselves, and to sensationalize as much as their personal ethics will permit.

All in all, I'm surprised it was only 97-98%! *George W. Price:* I seem to recall that the Mythbusters tried to recreate the story of the homeless man electrocuted for answering the call of nature in the vicinity of the third rail, but were unable to. How good is your source?

**You've heard of the latest Mythbusters demonstration: “What would happen if you fired a cannonball into a suburban home?”**

On the awfulness of public rail transit: In October I decided to experiment with using rail to get from upstate New York to my office in New Jersey. I took advantage of NJ Transit's interactive route finder. Except that every time I selected the destinations from their menu, I got an error message telling me I had misspelled one of the names (which, remember, I had

selected from a menu). After considerable frustration I found where they had pdf's of the paper schedules. Turns out all the rail lines north of the NJ border had been knocked out by the hurricane, months earlier, which is why I was getting those misleading error messages. (I hear the line just went back into service a couple of days ago.) Now, you'd think they would post such important information prominently.

This parallels my experience when I attended the Glasgow Worldcon in 1995. I had selected a hotel close to the underground so that I might use it to get to the convention center. It was only as I was actually trying to change trains that I saw a small paper sign on the gate, informing me that the line I needed had been flooded out months earlier.

Speaking of conventions, *John Purcell* mentions Fencon in Texas. This reminds me of something funny that happened at the Fencon party at Philcon, a couple of weeks ago. I picked up this year's Fencon “program” (i.e., souvenir) book and leafed to the page on Art GoH Stephane Martiniere, whom I've voted for the Hugo the last few years.

There was something odd about the article. Eventually I realized, every time the context indicated that the title of a work was about to be mentioned, that title was simply missing. I puzzled over this for a moment or two, and then noticed there were no italics anywhere on the page.

Aha, I thought: the titles were missing because they were italicized, and the software couldn't handle italics. But then I looked through the rest of the book: italics (and titles) were missing, it seemed, only from the Martiniere page.

There was something else unique about that page: it was the only one that included vowels with accents; for example, in the name of Martiniere's art school in France. I concluded that, to get the accents, they fiddled the character set, inadvertently making italics unprintable.

When I pointed all this out to one of the Fencon people, he was amazed — because no one had reported *anything* wrong with the book. Which may suggest something about just how many con goers read convention “program” books.

Earlier that day, I had a hard time answering when somebody asked me what I do for a living. It occurred to me now that what I had just done was a significant part of what I do for a living!

*Martin Morse Wooster:* *Chicks Dig Time Lords* is my nomination for the most disgraceful Hugo winner of the year; “[Bleep] Me, Ray Bradbury”, the most disgraceful nominee.

**Just you wait till Chicks Dig Highlanders: A Celebration of Diana Gabaldon's Outlander by the Women Who Love It wins.**

—JTM

Next year, let's have our own award ceremony: the NUGOS! One category could be Literary Awards Voted by People Who Don't

Read.

From: **Dainis Bisenieks** November 25, 2011  
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I've been re-reading the books on cosmology on my shelves: *Coming of Age in the Milky Way* by Timothy Ferros (1988, and showing its age); *The Inflationary Universe* by Alan Guth (1997); and *The Big Bang* by Joseph Silk (3rd ed. 2000). I took a few side glances at my cherished copy of *Watchers of the Skies* by Willy Ley (1963), which I now find rather diffuse and slanted toward planetary astronomy; and at *Matter, Earth, and Sky* by George Gamow (1958), which I think I must give up cherishing. So much more is now understood!

The history of science records failures to put two and two together; even Newton made some boo-boos. Unless the histories I have read conceal it from me, there's an idea that should have been firmly established by about 1800, awaiting only accumulated data and indeed the means of obtaining the data. Once gravitation was understood, it was clear that the stars couldn't just sit there; they had to be moving about the center of mass of the visible agglomeration (the Milky Way). If the system was lenticular, the motions had to be in a preferred plane, and it made sense for the whole system to have net angular momentum. Where that momentum came from is an interesting question, but about origins (or eternity) only pure speculation was then possible. In any event, such a system (and most astronomers thought it was the only one) could maintain itself forever and ever.

Gravitational collapse. From a standing start, everything might just crunch together at the center. But introduce random motions, and things swoosh in and swoosh out again. You get something like a globular cluster.

In the 20th century, the home galaxy was shown, from accumulated data, to rotate; but this cannot, should not have been a surprise. And then we had Einstein, and De Sitter, and Hubble, until we arrive at the advanced state of bafflement that we have today. If we can imagine, merely imagine, other universes with other fine-tuned constants than the ones we have, is there any hope of a theory to tell us what the universe must be like?

Feeling a desire to know more about the Magellanic clouds, I was gratified to find a piece in the December *National Geographic*, with a modicum of information and some nice pictures.

As I stroll out, I keep an eye out for long-lost coins on rain-washed ground. An interesting repertoire of finds this year: a wartime nickel-free 5¢; a buffalo nickel, 1916, no worse than discolored; a worn and corroded Liberty Head nickel, 1907; an even worse Shield Nickel — the last two not really "collectable". Also an Indian head cent, a "Mercury" dime, and a quarter of 1950. I am content to keep a small hoard of silver, a few dozen assorted coins, including several Dutch guilders and a bit of Canadian. Me and Scrooge

McDuck . . .

It is scarcely believable, but I've just read of somebody who has amassed several hundred thousand nickels . . . having, after all, a metal value exceeding their face value. Just how he might cash in when the crunch comes is a bit hard to imagine. I've read somewhere about an outfit that, some years ago, separated out bronze cents from coated zinc ones, until the gummint put a stop to it. The Royal Canadian Mint (if I have the name right) is reportedly doing the same, withdrawing bronze and nickel as well. I recall how in postwar Germany all the small change was the cheap wartime stuff; not one prewar coin did I ever see in circulation.

I just read about someone who hoards copper pennies, waiting for the law banning melting them down to be repealed. It's getting to sound like the guy in *Galactic Pot-Healer* who somehow had several dollars in silver coins, at a time when small change was all cardboard.

— JTM

CENTRAL BANKING  
ALONE CANNOT SOLVE  
THE WORLD'S PROBLEMS!  
EVEN THE ONES  
WE CREATED.



those days, were about as concentrated as you could get.



Is it even possible nowadays now to have umlauts and everything else? In *The Battle of Britain* by Hough and Richards (1989) there were none (and the usual quota of typos). Editors wishing to restore umlauts should beware of surnames in fixed form using ae or oe. By contrast, I have seen the Commandant of Auschwitz as Höß.

#### WAHF:

Lloyd Daub, with various items of interest.

Guy Lillian, John Purcell, Steven Silver, Lloyd Penney, Steve Green, Charlotte Proctor, Julie Johnson-Tate, Sue Burke, and Carol Clarke with happy anniversary greetings.

As a hedge against inflation, one might well hoard other commodities with a shelf life, but I do not share that mentality. One might reflect on the schizophrenia of those who are both buyers and sellers of gold and silver. Is it a good time to sell, or a good time to buy? But the dealers take their cut either way. There was a previous bubble in precious metals.

Now, when absolute, unmitigated disaster strikes . . . I see that Harry Turtledove has latched on to the hot topic I mentioned in my last letter and written *Supervolcano Erupts*, a saga To Be Continued.

I recall being a refugee in 1944, with no more than my mother and I could carry; what she took of food, I don't recall. Jars of lard, in

The big stop-press item seems to be that British fanartist **D. West** won the Rotsler Award form 2011 — and declined it. To which people are saying that one can't decline such awards. This seems a little much.

A problem with Bob Sabella's death is that he was OE [Official Editor — we live in an age of uniformed barbarians!] of the Fantasy Amateur Press Association. Nowadays an APA needs a good activist in it to keep going, as Guy Lillian has done for SAPA.

As for the other political party in Bob Bloch's "A Way of Life" [just read the story], it now seems that the NFFF has given up publishing except electronically.

## THE MAN WHO WOULD LIVE ON

... Bond took a drag on his Royal Blend cigarette and looked over at the American pilot. The man had spent the previous evening entangled with two women he had found in a bar near the docks of Kingston. In the afternoon, he was supposed to fly Bond in a seaplane to meet with the would-be defector from SMERSH, Captain Karla, in a little village on the Miskito Coast.

Karla had dispatched an emissary to the Service; a woman who claimed to be his psychic advisor. She had said she had detected a hardening of attitudes among the higher ranks of SMERSH, and on her advise he was going over to their side. Hence this.

Commander Smith was a fabulist, he had concluded. He had described in lurid detail a number of experiences he had had in the War. If he were credible (which Bond firmly doubted), he had made the most kills of any pilot in the attack on Pearl Harbour, been wounded in the battles for the Dutch East Indies, rescued several lost missionaries in the Philippines, carried out a number of commando raids on the mainland of Japan, and scouted out the atom-bomb targets.

His pale, ginger-topped rangy figure would make him stand out fatally in a Japanese crowd, and the excuse Smith had made about his heroic record being suppressed by certain family connexions was in Bond's experience the hallmark of a poseur. There had been other experiences recounted to him that he had found less than credible. That queer tale young Scrubb had told, before his unfortunate demise in the railway accident, for example . . .

"I said, ain't you coming along?" Smith said. The characteristic unpleasant look of unbridled lechery that generally occupied his face had hardened at Bond's silence.

Bond crushed out the cigarette and took a drink of the strong black Oolong tea that the resort's management had provided for their guests. "Commander, not if you are going to get yourself drunk before flying this mission."

The warmth the tea generated in his body made Bond think of the peculiar countersign that Karla had insisted on. Bond was to say, "What will you have to drink?" and if he were not under control Karla would reply, "Tea. Earl Grey. Hot." The Americans drank tea iced, as Felix Leiter had once attempted to make him consume, and he thought the falling-off of standards a sign of their gradual decline into chaos.

Smith took offense at the formality. "Don't go getting your back up. I said you can call me 'Woody'."

"A not inappropriate name, but perhaps a bit too revelatory."

Bond's attempt at disdain seemed to have had the opposite result. Smith's rangy face broke into a wider and more sensual leer, and he said, "Buddy, you don't know the half of it."

Bond reached over and picked up the flat black gunmetal cigarette case, thought of either opening it for another smoke or throwing it into Smith's smarmy visage, and discarded both thoughts as ill-advised if not unworthy. "And I would rather not," he said.

"I bet we're kin. Are you kin to the Howards?"

Bond lifted one eyebrow. "The Duke of Norfolk? I should say not. I am a Scots peasant and I shall remain a Scots peasant." What was it with these Americans? That man Bauer who had tried to establish a connexion with the de Greystocks for him, for example.

"I'm sure you are!" Then he got up and went out the door, singing. Or it was supposed to be singing, but resembled more the dying sounds of a gut-shot panther, "I'm gonna live for-eeever! I'm gonna learn how to fly!"

Bond had hoped he had already known that.

— Not by Robert A. Heinlein or Fleming, Ian Fleming

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## The New iPhone

By Paul Gadzikowski

