

ALEXIAD

(ΑΛΞΙΑΣ)

\$2.00

In the discussion of ebooks versus print, I think it is worth remembering that physical books are subject to deterioration as well as digital files. Fire and rain can wreck physical books. Joe and I have so many physical books that a lot of them are lost in our stacks. I have been spending many hours trying to reduce the collection to a manageable size. I would love to have digital copies as backups for the important pieces of our book collection but I just can't afford to do so. I just put Alastair Reynolds' *Chasm City* in the cull pile. It would have been nice to keep it but we just don't have the space so I am letting it go. I have bought backup copies of books important to me, such as some Walter Farley books. I don't see digital books driving printed books out any time soon. As convenient as my Kobo has been I don't have to worry about being electrocuted if a physical book falls into a sink full of water. When we go to Concave we'll be buying physical books from Larry Smith.

— Lisa

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St. Photini, February 26.

ConGlomeration 2012 will be at the Ramada Plaza Hotel (on Bluegrass Parkway at I-64 and Hurstbourne) on **April 13-15, 2012**. The Guest of Honor will be Michael Z. Williamson.

<http://www.conglomeration.info/>

WonderFest, the fantasy modeling show, will be at the Crowne Plaza Hotel on **May 25-27**

<http://www.wonderfest.com/>

Printed on February 15, 2012

Deadline is **April 1, 2012**

Reviewer's Notes

I have to wonder. When there was this golden age of hundred-page mimeo'd zines in the mailbox every day, what was in them? Not books, since no such person would actually *read* the stuff. Conventions? There weren't that many. So it was personal life, I suppose.

And that answers the question. Now that sort of life is on a blog. Or now, on a Twitter feed — life at 140 characters a chunk. Life for the attention-deficit disorder generation.

Or perhaps not. The advantage of the internet era is that anything can get published and distributed. The disadvantage is that anything can get published and distributed. Example: *Quarter Share* by Nathan Lowell (2010; Ridan Publishing; ISBN 978-0892514542; \$11.95; Amazon Digital Services; \$4.95). It's about a young man whose mother is killed, so he signs up on a ship and goes from port to port selling belt buckles. During the voyage he works in the galley. No problems.

This was part of a series that got seven award nominations. You never heard of it because they were all podcast and e-pub nominations.

Yet this seems to have been a wild overwhelming success, with hundreds of approving reviews. Going by the samples I read, the grammar and prose are competent, but the plot is dull and the characterization bland. And I was worried about *Variable Star*.

This is only an example. Someone who looked around could find vast genres of religious fantasy, romance fantasy (when Dale Speirs talked about seeing NASCAR romance novels, some of his readers didn't believe him; but I saw some), and so on. There are all these snug, self-contained groups putting stuff out that doesn't seem to leak out.

— Joe

RANDOM JOTTINGS

by Joe



Grant is in Jewish Hospital in Louisville, in their Dot Patterson Stroke Center. He had been complaining of vertigo. When he proved unable to walk any distance without stumbling and falling, we had to call the Emergency Medical Service to take him to hospital.

Further status reports as we get them.

SPARTACVS SVM! Starz's *Spartacus* returns for a new season with a new Spartacus (Liam McIntyre), taking over from Andy Whitfield, who died of non-Hodgkin's Lymphoma. Spartacus will have to deal with someone after him, someone last seen apparently fatally stabbed during the dramatic slave revolt . . . Lucretia (Lucy Lawless), the former lanista's widow! The land cried out for a, well never mind.

Spartacus: Vengeance

<http://www.imdb.com/title/tt1442449/>

Liam McIntyre

<http://www.imdb.com/name/nm2553987/>

Kentucky politics will be a lot duller in the next elections. Kentucky character and perpetual candidate for governor Gatewood Galbraith died recently. In his last campaign he secured the endorsement of Willie Nelson. He managed to secure ten percent of the vote, a high percentage for an independent candidate. During his several political campaigns Gatewood was for legalizing marijuana and privacy rights. He was never dull. Extremely different, yes, but never dull. I was tempted to vote for him this time and I'm sorry now I didn't. If he had ever managed to get elected as governor, it would have been a rollicking four years in Frankfort. There would have been no politics as usual with Gatewood but a lot of laughter.

— Lisa

OBITS

Robert M. Sabella died on **December 3, 2011**. Born **August 6, 1948**, Bob went into teaching, and the pages of his fanzine *Visions of Paradise* were filled with the stories of his relationships with his students. He also did more SFnal matters, compiling lists of noteworthy and notable writers and writings, in

the old serconnish fashion. Moreover, he was Official Editor of the venerable Fantasy Amateur Press Association, fandom's premier APA, which is a great blow to them specifically.

His death, coming so soon after he laid down his pointer and chalk, was a double tragedy, for he never got to enjoy the rest he had labored so long for. But we all have lost.

James "Rusty" Hevlin died on **December 27, 2011**. Born in 1922, Rusty was a fixture of Midwest fandom ever since I can remember, and probably before I was fanning. He was the friend and the cheer of fans, best known for his long-running pose as "Bob Tucker's Father". His failing health restricted his fanning, and now the hole will never be filled.

Sam Youd died on **February 3, 2012**. Better known as "John Christopher", Youd was a SF writer, best known for his young adult "Tripods" series, *The White Mountains* (1967), *The City of Gold and Lead* (1967), *The Pool of Fire* (1968), and *When the Tripods Came* (1988). Their portrayal of a simple rustic society with a frightening subordination was a quite clever work. Youd was born **April 16, 1922** and began his writing career early, with his poem "Dreamer" appearing in the March 1941 issue of *Weird Tales*.

He was also known for the International Fantasy Award winning novel *The Death of Grass* (1956) [US title *No Blade of Grass* (1957)], which had the unlikely-seeming admiration of J. R. R. Tolkien. Moreover, "John Christopher" is one of the many fellow pub-crawlers at the eponymous bar in Sir Arthur C. Clarke's *Tales from the 'White Hart'* (1957), along with "John Wyndham" [John Beynon Harris] and "Charles Willis" [Clarke himself].

MONARCHIST NEWS

The Turkish government may be hoping that when Sikandar Kemal Bey [more commonly known as **Boris Johnson**] becomes Grand Vizier of England, he will hand over the criminal **Sarah Ferguson, Duchess of York**. Fergie has become notorious in Turkey for having exposed child abuse in orphanages. It makes the country look bad.

[You do know that the protagonist of Norman Spinrad's novel *Agent of Chaos* (1967) is named Boris Johnson?]

*Alles Gute zu Geburtstag zu Ihnen,
Alles Gute zu Geburtstag zu Ihnen,
Alles Gute zu Geburtstag, Große Friedrich,
Alles Gute zu Geburtstag zu Ihnen,
Und viele mehr.*

24. Januar 2012 war . . . er, January 24, 2012 was **Frederick the Great's** 300th birthday, and in honor of the day there were wreath-layings at his grave at Sans Souci by his heir, **Prince Georg-Ferdinand, Prinz von Preussen**, and by Matthias Platzeck, the *Ministerpräsident* of Brandenburg. A memorial concert was held in Berlin, attended by the German President, Christian Wulff, and the Mayor of Berlin, Klaus

Wowerit. It was interesting to note that beside the flowers and wreaths, there were potatoes laid on the tombstone.

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

Report by Joseph T Major

Florence Green died in her sleep at her rest home in King's Lynn, Norfolk, on the night of **February 4, 2012**. Born **February 19, 1901**, Florence Beatrice Patterson enlisted in the Women's Royal Air Force in September of 1918, serving in the catering service. She was demobilised in 1919.

After the death of Harry Patch, it was discovered that there was still one veteran of the Great War in Britain. Mrs. Green lived a low-key life during her final days.

She is survived by three children, four grandchildren, and seven great-grandchildren. Her husband, Walter Green, also a WWI vet, and a WWII vet, died in 1975.

She was the last veteran of World War I.

Up to mighty London came
An Irish lad one day,
All the streets were paved with gold,
So everyone was gay!
Singing songs of Piccadilly,
Strand, and Leicester Square,
'Til Paddy got excited and
He shouted to them there:

It's a long way to Tipperary,
It's a long way to go.
It's a long way to Tipperary
To the sweetest girl I know!
Goodbye Piccadilly,
Farewell Leicester Square!
It's a long long way to Tipperary,
But my heart's right there.

Remaining is:

Poland

Józef Kowalski* (111) 22 Pułk Ułanów

* "WWI-era" veteran, enlisted between the Armistice and the Treaty of Versailles

In the *Joyleg* category (the novel by Ward Moore about the investigation of why the V.A. is still paying a Revolutionary War veteran's pension), the real-world Department of Veteran Affairs is paying pensions to two children of Civil War veterans. The last Civil War veteran, Albert Woolson, died in 1956, and the last Civil War veteran's widow, Gertrude Janeway, died in 2003.

HUGO RECOMMENDATIONS

Please, please, nominate *Fantasy Commentator* #59-60 for the Best Related Work Hugo! And then vote for it! The thought of *Chicks Dig Free Amazons: A Celebration of Darkover by the Women Who Love It* winning is just too much.

THE WANDERING MATELOT

Commentary by Joseph T Major on
THE MASTER MARINER: RUNNING PROUD (1978) and
THE MASTER MARINER: DARKEN SHIP (1981)
 by Nicholas Monsarrat

House/CLAN Frumpus, who worship Ad and trade in leather, have intermarried with House/Clan Trumpus, who worship Bagel and wish for leather concessions in their sheep business, and are allied with House/Clan Dorpus, whose head is a weak person and who trade in perfume and skins and worship Vinus, against Houses/Clans Drumpus, Corpus, and Bremo, who trade in skins, wine, and pottery and worship Bagel, Ord, and Vinus. Because of Bagel- and Vinus-worship (see RELIGION), Houses/Clans Drumpus, Dorpus, and Trumpus also have a secret understanding against the others. Only one Senator can be elected here. While the Houses/Clans manoeuvre, there is also great jockeying for headship inside the Houses/Clans, and people merrily POISON one another . . .

Anyway, it eventually cancels down to the head of House/Clan Frumpus, because he is on two sides at once, having to sell himself sheepskin and then Poison himself, leaving the four deities glaring at one another.

— **POLITICS**, *The Tough Guide to Fantasyland*, by Diana Wynne Jones (1996, 2008), Pages 147-148

Nicholas John Turney Monsarrat, Commander (ret.) R.N.V.R. (1910-1979) was one of the notable serving officer naval authors who emerged from the Second World War, such as Daniel V. Gallery and Edward Beach. His naval experience provided the foundation for the classic novel of the Battle of the Atlantic, *The Cruel Sea* (1951). This was not the only work that emerged from his naval background, the others being primarily retellings of his own experiences, the most noteworthy of them being *Three Corvettes* (1945, 1953). In his memoirs, *Breaking In, Breaking Out* (1966, 1970, 1971), he admits that he never received the great honour of the command of the frigate HMS *Montserrat* (K586) (ex-USS *Hornby* (PF-82)) (Page 323). (Considering what he thought of the features of that ship's class, perhaps it was just as well.)

He went into the Foreign Service after that, and not surprisingly wrote about the turbulence that sprang up after the Winds of Change, the transition from colonialism to independence. The lesson given in *The Tribe that Lost Its Head* (1956) and *Richer Than All His Tribe* (1968) is the sort that comes from, for example, Robert Ruark's *Something of Value* (1955). Colonialism took down the existing social structures, but new ones were not instituted in their place. (Thanks to Mike Resnick for the

original insight.)

Monsarrat was not devoid of an awareness of the darker side of human nature. Anyone reading the description in *The Cruel Sea* of Lieutenant Bennett, the shirking and bullying Australian officer sent home to become a "Stolen Valor" self-advertised hero would have seen that. Thus a difference: Lieutenant Bennett is the same sort of officer as Captain Morton of Thomas Heggen's *Mr. Roberts* (1946 [book], 1948 [play], 1955 [film]). His treatment comes somewhere between those dealt out to Captain Morton and to Captain Queeg of *The Caine Mutiny* (1952 [book], 1953 [play], 1954 [film]).

As for the latter, Greenwald praised Queeg as being the man who had kept his mother from being exterminated in the Holocaust, but it would seem that Ericson and Lockhart of *The Cruel Sea* just might have had something to do with that as well. To a large extent, though, Wouk was arguing against the progressive intellectual view pervasive in the thirties that "those who join the military are too stupid and incompetent to make it in the civilian world". Not that Queeg, Morton, and Bennett are the best of counterexamples.

This attitude held true in other works. The reader of *The Story of Esther Costello* (1952), about a blind and deaf girl who is used as the center of a fund-raising enterprise, would have an insight into the ways of Greg Mortensen as described in Jon Krakauer's *Three Cups of Deceit* (2010; reviewed in *Alexiad* V. 10 #6). At the time the book was perceived as an attack on Helen Keller, though anyone who read it all the way through would not have had much of a basis to think so. Helen Keller herself didn't, but what did *she* know?

After the publication of *The Tribe That Lost Its Head*, Monsarrat had a spell of writers' block. Sort of, because while he couldn't actually write it, or anything else, he formed the concept of what his next work would be:

. . . what I had in mind now was the longest novel ever written about the sea and about sailors; covering nearly four hundred years of maritime venture from the Spanish Armada in 1588 to the completion of the St. Lawrence Seaway — the farthest foray (2,250 miles) ever made by ships into the heart of a continent — in 1958.

I wanted to tell the story — the whole story — of what sailors had done to open up the known world, by charting its oceans, by fighting, by commerce, by the great voyages of exploration and plunder. . . One day I would write it: all six hundred thousand words of it.

— Nicholas Monsarrat, *Breaking In, Breaking Out*, Pages 537-538

Times have changed. Six hundred thousand words is now the length of Volume One of the multivolume series. There were other considerations, having to do with the nature of the concept of a novel. Making this almost four hundred year span a connected narrative would be difficult. He was aware of the particular life-

style of sailors, and having one connected family be in the trade for that period seemed a little unlikely.

It could be the rivalry of firms. That had a similar difficulty. The closest example that comes to mind is the Yorke family that features in the works of naval historian and novelist Dudley Pope. In his Yorke series [*Buccaneer* (1981), *Admiral* (1982), *Galleon* (1986), and *Corsair* (1987)] the founder of the Yorke family is a buccaneer in the Caribbean in the Commonwealth and Restoration era. In two of his Ramage novels, *Governor Ramage, R.N.* (1973) and *Ramage's Prize* (1974), the heir of the Yorkes appears as a supporting character, a successful shipping magnate. Finally, in what one might call the Later Yorke series [*Convoy* (1979) and *Decoy* (1983)], the heir of the Yorkes, no longer a shipowner, is involved in the effort to unravel the Engima. (Neil Stephenson fans may be disappointed to learn there are no unpronounceably-named islands of cryptographers, morphine-addicted covert warfare operatives, two-page descriptions of eating a bowl of cereal, or any of the appurtenances some need to find necessary to have in fiction on this topic, in Pope's books.)

Pope had an idea of how to structure a book. Far too many writers would have turned such a series into the long-term soap-operatic struggle of the Frumpus family of Frumpus Shipping against the Drumpus clan of Drumpus Mariners, ending in 1958 with the heiress and last of the family owners of one company marrying the heir and last of the family owners of the other. In other words, *The Tough Guide to Fantasyland* has use in evaluating mundane fiction too. (Nowadays, of course, their only child would be so not into this ship thing.)

So family is out and so is corporation. One might do the history of a shipbuilding town, a longer-ranged and more detailed version of *Ruined City* [U.S. title *Kindling*] by "Nevil Shute" [Nevil Shute Norway] (1938). *Ruined City* could be considered to be a portion of such a saga; it tells the story of a businessman who notices that the town is suffering from the Depression and at a personal sacrifice gets it revived. (In another sense, that book might be considered a first draft of *A Town Like Alice* [U.S. title *Legacy*] (1950).)

That would, however, be a different and more constrained topic. Monsarrat worked out a different approach; he wrote, in effect, about the Wandering Jew as a sailor.

The story begins in 1588 with Matthew Lawe, coxswain to Sir Francis Drake, and follows his experiences through the Battle of the Armada. Lawe is sent on one of the fireships that broke up the Spanish anchorage off Calais. In a moment of panic, he deserts another sailor on the ship, leaving the man to burn to death. Only to have the dying man say, "Curse you for a coward! Do you want to live forever?"

And he does. Over the next centuries, Lawe sees the maritime world from many diverse perspectives. He is a buccaneer in the Caribbean (a little too early to meet the Yorkes, much less Jack Sparrow), a sailor on Henry Hudson's expedition, an admiralty clerk under

Samuel Pepys, a fisherman in the Grand Banks cod fleet, an officer under Captain Cook, and a staff officer to Lord Nelson.

Yet in all this long and diversified career he only runs into one person who knew him before. And she is, the second time, a bloated, blowsy harriard of a dockside prostitute — not the sort of person who would be considered a reliable source of information.

The episodes are themselves quite stirring and realistic. Like Gallery, Beach, and Pope, Monsarrat could realize his experience on the page and could understand how previous sailors had existed and acted.

The “master mariner” epithet would be his other fate, apparently. When first told of the Struldbrugs of Luggnagg, Lemuel Gulliver had opined that they might over the years gain great wisdom and experience, only to be informed that like Tithonos, they had unending *life*, but not unending *youth*. One wonders what a Fifth Voyage of Gulliver to the Land of Valinor would have been like. Lawe’s skill seems to have plateaued; he is not unlike the title character of Gerald Kirsch’s “Whatever Happened to Corporal Cuckoo?” (*The Brighton Monster and Others*, 1953), who after four hundred and eight years of service had made it all the way from private to corporal.

The depictions of others are unsparing. The brutality of the buccaneers, for example, towards a group of captured Spaniards is stomach-turning. Not that the Spaniards wouldn’t have done as much to the pirates if the situation had been reversed, understand. Similarly, individuals are shown with all their flaws and talents, and Lawe encounters a quite diverse and noteworthy lot, from Drake to Samuel Pepys, Henry Hudson, James Cook, William Bligh, Horatio Nelson . . . Monsarrat meant to write the history and he had a quite striking cast with which to fill his pages.

What might seem a flaw of characterization is actually more a strength of it. Lawe doesn’t change; he is still a coward at the crisis. His burden of guilt grows with every funkout. He lacks Harry Flashman’s greatest fear, the fear of being found out as a coward, which led Flashy into the most enterprising exploits of derring-do, quivering inwardly from yellow back to loosened bowels, berating the heroes who have dragged him into this latest mess, and emerging with his reputation for heroism expanded and exalted. Instead, Lawe reliably funks out at the crisis. Thus, at the end of the last episode, we find Lawe berating himself for not having taken the bullet for Lord Nelson at the battle of Trafalgar, or at least not having warned his Lordship that there was a Frenchie sniper taking aim. He was not as resilient as Corporal Cuckoo, who had taken several fatal bullets and lived.

Such was the end of *The Master Mariner: Running Proud*. Then . . . Monsarrat died! Yet, two years after that, *The Master Mariner: Darken Ship* came out. How?

E. R. Eddison (1882-1945) died before his Zimiamvia Series was finished. (I wouldn’t call it a “trilogy”, since he seems to have intended more than the three books that were published.)

The last-published book, *The Mezentian Gate* (1958), is set prior to the other two (which is why it really can’t be called “the final book”). While it isn’t completed in the normal sense of the term, it is a complete story. Eddison had written an elaborate outline of the book, and had done several chapters in full, including the ending. (Which has the infamous scene with the boisterous King Mezentius, latest avatar of the God, saying to his treacherous wife Queen Rosma, “So, you want to poison my beloved bastard Barganax!? Here, give me that!” GLUB-GLUB-GLUB-GLUB-GLUB-GLUB *BURP* “Gosh, that sure doesn’t taste like tomato juice!” Well not exactly.)

As Eddison had done, Monsarrat wrote the final scene. Lawe is a lock-keeper on the Saint Lawrence Seaway now, physically aged (a veritable Tithonos, perhaps), thinking melancholically about the rise and decline of British maritime power.

A ship in the lock catches fire, and there is a man trapped in one of the compartments, calling for help. Lawe does something heretofore utterly unimaginable — he plunges in and rescues the trapped man, sacrificing his own life in the process.

The investigators of the incident find an unusual circumstance. Everyone remembers Lawe as an elderly man, yet the body is of a man in his twenties. Just as he had been when he left the other man to die on the fireship.

The writer who feels free to exploit a different means to develop a plot, to consider himself unconstrained by the requirements of “seriousness”, has more variety open to him in his writing. And those of us who like certain kinds of works can be pleasantly surprised that those outside the normal run of the writers we follow can and do do that sort of thing.

Nicholas Monsarrat Lived to See K/S! Unfortunately . . .

I could have done without one such new mind, too inventive for me altogether, which saw in the relationship between captain and first lieutenant [in the film of *The Cruel Sea*] a strong homosexual tie. “The film,” we were told, “deals skilfully with this aspect, which in the book was sadly repressed or ignored, perhaps unconsciously, perhaps naïvely.”

Well, thank you, sir. One never knows what sailors can get up to, particularly when one is writing about them,

— Nicholas Monsarrat, *Breaking In, Breaking Out*, Page 422

YOU OWE FOR THE BRASS

Review by Joseph T Major of
**EXPEDITION TO THE MOUNTAINS OF
THE MOON**
by Mark Hodder
(Pyr; 2012; ISBN 978-1-61614-535-4; \$16.00)
A “Burton and Swinburne” book

GOD WAS STANDING over him as he lay on the grass by the waters and the weeping willows. He lay wide-eyed and as weak

as a baby just born. God was poking him in the ribs with the end of a brass cane. She had a brass helmet and goggles, and She was wearing a corset and a skirt with brass strips.

“You’re late,” God said. “Long past due for the payment of your debt, you know.”

“What debt?” Richard Francis Burton said. He passed his fingertips over his ribs to make sure all were still there.

“You owe for the brass,” replied God, poking him again with the cane.

“Not to mention the steam. You owe for the brass and the steam, which are one and the same thing.”

Burton struggled to get up onto his feet. Nobody, not even God, was going to punch Richard Burton in the ribs and get away without a battle.

God, ignoring the futile efforts, looked at a small brass watch on Her wrist and said, “Long past due.”

God held out Her other hand, its palm turned up.

“Pay up sir. Otherwise I’ll be forced to foreclose.”

“Foreclose on what?”

Darkness fell. God began to dissolve into the darkness. She was a well-proportioned young woman with red hair and round cheeks. She had a smug, malicious, toothy smile on Her face.

“You look like the Devil,” Burton said.

— Not from *To Your Scattered Boilers Go*

Philip José Farmer’s *You Owe for the Flesh* was written around a mind-boggling concept; a planet on which everyone who had ever lived would be reincarnated, to struggle towards some mysterious if not incomprehensible goal. They thought bigger back in the fifties, when all the worlds were open and waiting.

The idea may not have been capable of execution. Its development, first in real life, then in writing, could be said to have failed of its promise. The financial complications that aborted the original publication of the work are well known, and the development of the later revised version in *To Your Scattered Bodies Go* (1971) and its increasingly less adept sequels is also notorious.

Sixty years later our horizons are more shrunken, and the hot new publishing thing is a return to the thrilling years of Frank Reade, Jr. and his Steam Everything.

Or maybe more. The plot bounces around, but it’s energized by bouncing around, since the world changed when time traveller Edward Oxford accidentally killed his ancestor. After that he tried bouncing around in time, offing several other people in the process.

These changes and the knowledge of them has spurred an alternative technological spurt, so you have pennyfarthing mopeds sharing the crowded London streets with horses. Similarly, the government is also off kilter, since both

Victoria and Albert are dead and the Duke of Cumberland's line was excluded from the succession, so there is no monarch. (How the Duke of Cambridge was written off is a matter not gone into.)

Adventurer Sir Richard Francis Burton is going to sail up the river all the way to the Tower . . . er, go into Central Africa with a steam airship to investigate the mysterious area where technology does not work.

Except, he keeps on shifting from time line to time line. Where is Verkan Vall when you need him?

This deliberately shifty plot, added to other misapprehensions (i.e., Hodder doesn't quite seem to understand Oscar Wilde's family) makes the book barely worth following. And besides, it doesn't have a Steampunk Woman. Just Isabel Arundell, Warrior Princess ("Africa cried out for a hero . . .").

BRASS ZOMBIES

Review by Joseph T Major of Cherie Priest's *GANYMEDE*

(Tor; 2011;

ISBN 978-0-7653-2946-2; \$14.99)

A "Clockwork Century" book

Frank Reade, Jr. did not always find proposals worthwhile. A man named Holland had once come to him with a proposal. He would build a submersible vessel. The submersible vessel could destroy great ships. Its master would be very powerful. The submersible vessel would be powered by internal-combustion engines. Frank Reade, Jr. knew that would not work. Only steam power would work with such a craft.

— Not from *Frank Reade Jr. and His Steam Underwater Boat K-1* by "Noname" [Luis P. Senarens]

And in this thrilling episode, a group of daring counter-rebels, led by Josephine, the madame of a brothel which offers hot colored service, sail a brass submarine (oddly enough, it's Diesel-engined, not steam engined, Priest may lose her Steampunk Certification™) down the Mississippi River out of Texican-occupied New Orleans past the pirate hold of Barataria to join the blockading Union fleet. Zeke Wilkes and his mother Briar, the protagonists of *Boneshaker* (2009; reviewed in *Alexiad* V. 9 #3), fly down from Seattle to take part.

Priest brags of having a great love of history but it seems to be "cool parts" history. Perpetual Civil War? Cool. Pirates? Cool. *Femmes de plaisir de color?* Cool. In fact, *travestis de plaisir?* Cool. Republic of Texas? Cool. Airships? Cool. Zombies? Cool.

Trying to create a coherent world where these, along with the modern-day people who see, run, build, and use them, can exist? Look, there are giant mechanical combat men! Cool.

I'VE BEEN TO PARADIESOS

Review by Joseph T Major of
THE IONIA SANCTION
by Gary Corby

(St. Martin's Press; 2011;
ISBN 978-0-312-59901-0; \$25.99)
Sequel to *The Pericles Commission*
(2010; reviewed in *Alexiad* V. 10 #2)
<http://blog.GaryCorby.com>

Nicolaos son of Sophoniscus (Nikolaos Sophoniskou) really likes getting into trouble. He must, he does so all the time. As with this one, where at one point he finds himself being prepared to be impaled.

As Athenian democracy struggles to find out what it is doing, Pericles (Perikles) has to consider a figure from history. Themistocles (Themistokles), who saved the people during the Persian War, has defected to Persia, becoming Satrap of Magnesia (the land of milk . . . oh, you're too young to get it).

But funny things are going on, including the untoward demise of the proxenos of Ephesus. Not to mention that Nicolaos has in the course of the investigation bought a slave girl for the excessive price of 300 drachmas, even if she is a virgin. Also the daughter of Themistocles.

So Nicolaos gets packed off to Ephesus to investigate, and to return the girl to her father. Oh yes, Diotima the priestess, Nicolaos's friend, went there. They couldn't get married, anyhow, her mother was Most Unsuitable, and Sophoniscus is very particular about that sort of thing.

But the investigation leads from Ephesus to Magnesia, and Diotima is also investigating. This makes things very problematic. Not to mention that Themistocles has a very kinky set of children, he wants to return to Athens in the worst possible way, and there are still brigands out there wanting to kill Nicolaos.

Some of the solutions are very extreme.

Corby has a thoroughgoing knowledge of the period, a quite brilliant turn of speculation, and a good turn of wit. Particularly when Anaxagoras wanted to buy this slave boy that Nicolaos brought to the symposium. Socrates (Sokrates), like every obnoxious little brother since the beginning of time, insisted on going along and asking embarrassing questions of the distinguished sophist.

MAKE MINE MARS

Review by Joseph T Major of

THE CASE FOR MARS:

The Plan to Settle the Red Planet and Why We Must

by Robert Zubrin with Richard Wagner

(1996, 2011; Simon & Schuster;

ISBN 879-1-4516-0811-3; \$16.99;

Simon & Schuster Digital Sales; \$12.99)

X is for the ecstasy she ga-a-ave me;

E is for her eyes — one, two, and three-ee;

T is for the teeth with which she'd sha-a-ave me;

S is for her scales of i-vo-ree-ee-ee;

T is for her tentacles ah-round me;

J is for her jowls — were none soo-oo fair;

H is for the happy day she found me;

*Fe is for the iron in her hair;
Put them all to-gether, they spell
Xetstjhfe;
A worrüd that means the wur-r-l-l-d too-oo mee-ee-ee!*

— Cyril Kornbluth, "Make Mine Mars"

"The Silly Season" is not the only story by Kornbluth which draws on his experiences with the wire service. Unlike that story, "Make Mine Mars" (*Science Fiction Adventures*, November 1952) is silly, down to its end.

Robert Zubrin might want to find himself lying in the genuine imported Terran sawdust at Honest Blogri's. Honest Blogri's was on Mars, and Zubrin is actively working on a strategy to go there.

The book combines description with advocacy, giving details of the systems for going there alongside reasons for doing so. There is often overlap.

For example, in Chapter 5, "Killing the Dragons, Avoiding the Sirens", the authors discuss why so many of the alleged problems of long-term spaceflight are not so problematic. These include both physical (radiation) and metaphysical (isolation). They don't say what will happen if one (married) crewmember gets pregnant by the husband of another (much less what will happen to the child if all the rest of the expedition members die and the child is raised by natives . . .). It should be noted that Zubrin is actually doing experimentation in that (see *Mars on Earth* (2003; reviewed in *Alexiad* V. 3 #5)) and the Inuit will be more cooperative in such a situation, even though it would be productive of a less dramatic result.

The technological apparatus is impressive, but speculative. Whether this speculation can survive actual physical testing . . . but Zubrin's people have done real planning, not back-of-the-envelope speculation.

One matter not mentioned is costs. The Artemis Project, a return-to-the-moon plan, was originally going to fund its mission off the proceeds of its documentaries. Never mind the optimistic hopes of those unacquainted with Hollywood bookkeeping, there was a chronological disparity between the income and the outgo. Similarly, Zubrin cites the prospects of abundant Martian land, but discounts the chasm of getting there (much less the inevitable preservationist lawsuits that would be forthcoming were the prospect to arrive).

The idea is promising. The details are, as too often the case, more prospective than definite. Without an idea, we won't even begin.

ВАС НЕ ДОГОНЯТ

Review by Joseph T Major of

STARMAN:

The Truth Behind the Legend of Yuri Gagarin

by Jamie Doran and Piers Bizony
(Walker and Company; 1998, 2010, 2011;
ISBN 978-0-8027-7950-2; \$16.00;
Amazon Digital Services; \$9.76)

“But on that glorious day in April 1961, Yuri Gagarin went higher, faster, and farther than any other Russian — a hundred and eight minutes. He was the first man ever to go into space. And for a brief moment, Yuri Gagarin became **The Greatest Pilot Anyone Had Ever Seen.**”

If Yuriy Aleksevich had managed to jump the iron curtain and taken up with the guys from the other side, he could have fit in with blinding speed. After all, there was that time when his wife came in and found him in bed with another woman, thus giving him an opportunity to practice emergency aborts without a parachute (from a second-floor window, so he escaped with only a cut face).

Yuri A. Gagarin was chosen for the cosmonaut program and then the first flight because he was from a typical proletarian family, even though he shared a name with a princely family (which has, regretting it deeply, said they probably were not related). He wanted to fly, which certainly made him connected with his American peers.

Doran and Bizony describe familiar territory (indeed, one of their sources is James Oberg) as they tell the story of how the Chief Designer chose and prepared his select candidate. It's noteworthy that the cosmonauts were not chosen until after 1957; the training was somewhat focused and abridged. Indeed they would be ЦИАМ в консервной банке (*SPAM v konsyervnoy banke*; “SPAM in a can”), too.

And then came April 12, after which nothing was ever the same. Gagarin seems to have handled the sudden change in status with extraordinary calm and charm. And other things, such as not being concerned about having an untied shoelace at his grand arrival in Moscow. It made him an ordinary little boy.

Then reality rushed (or crushed) in. Gagarin does not seem to have taken the all too common form of escape to be found in bottles. And his burdens were extraordinary. People wrote to him thinking he could Do Something.

He was a Symbol, instead of a pilot. Indeed, he wasn't put on flight status again until Soyuz 1, and the authors describe a good bit of speculation and rumor about the events surrounding that catastrophe.

Then, he had to qualify for flight status again. On March 27, 1968, he went on a check flight in a MiG-15 trainer. The landing was a bit harder than expected.

There were, of course, the usual rumors about murder. There have been a number of investigations, and still no clear evidence. The authors cite Aleksei Leonov's statement that he heard a sonic boom and then what he believed to be the crash. There have been other theories put forward as plausibly.

Afterwards, the family had to deal with it. Valentina Ivanova Gagarina (the wife who found him practicing a docking maneuver) no longer gives public statements; their two daughters have good careers. Yuri's father and brother had to deal with a lot of sympathizers, all of whom offered them a drink, and they were

too polite to decline, with the usual result.

SHIPS OF DISCOVERY AND EXPLORATION

Review by Joseph T Major of
ORDEAL BY ICE:

Ships of the Antarctic

by Rorke Bryan

(Sheridan House; 2011;

ISBN 978-1574093124; \$45.00)

Lincoln Paine's *Ships of Discovery and Exploration* (2000; reviewed in *Alexiad* V. 2 #2) had a broader scope but less depth. The histories of the ships discussed here are longer and more detailed. Bryan not only describes the ships of the great explorers, he discusses the more commercial ones that followed in their wakes, and the cruise ships that succeeded them. The result is a short history of recent maritime technology and design.

Beyond that, he gives short histories of the expeditions themselves. Thus we learn of how Nobu Shirase had to beg for money to explore Antarctica. (Once he got the money he dropped in on Framheim and gave Amundsen a bit of a start.) One can't cover all the bases, and while Bryan describes the Graham Land Expedition in adequate though tantalizing detail, in the discussion of its ship *Penola*, he refers to the captain only as R. Ryder. As you know, Bob, the captain of the *Penola* was Robert Edward Dudley Ryder, who would later on win fame in the estuary of the Loire, while the second mate of the ship was his brother Lisle Ryder, whose fate would be more tragic.

Another theme that prevails is that of economy. The earlier exploration ships were generally improvised, bought on the cheap and adapted. Bryan discusses the failings and inadequacies of these. By a curious coincidence, the two ships built for the purpose, *Fram* and *Discovery* (which was not only used in Scott's first expedition, but the later BANZARE expedition in 1929), are among the few which survive.

In the aftermath of World War II, the United States, overburdened with surplus equipment, used and expended it in various interesting ways. (The carrier USS *Philippine Sea* (CV-47) carried six R4D-5L Skytrains (the Navy's version of the C-47) that were flown to the ice shelf and just abandoned, for example.) Bryan discusses the American *Wind* class icebreakers, of which there were seven, and how this plethora of strong ships was employed opening up the southern continent to knowledge.

With so many ships, there was no urgency for replacements, and so the icebreakers were allowed to wear out. The replacements, the two Polar class ships, are now wearing out.

For information on such obscure vessels as the *Porquoi-Pas?* or the *Aurora*, for the fates of the *Bear* and the *Erebus*, along with their employment and development, this book is hard to beat. A few recent pictures of the *Discovery* and the *Fram* as they are now could be useful.

**IF YOU THINK THIS COUNTRY'S
BAD OFF NOW, JUST WAIT TILL I**

GET THROUGH WITH IT

Review by Joseph T Major of

HAIL, HAIL, EUPHORIA!:

Presenting the Marx Brothers in Duck Soup,

The Greatest War Movie Ever Made

by Roy Blount, Jr.

(It Books (HarperCollins); 2010;

ISBN 978-0-06-180817-3; \$12.99;

HarperCollins [Kindle]; \$9.99)

<http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0023969/>

Appropriately, this is a rambling and exotic book, full of diversions down strange byways and around irrelevant (it got four legs and a big big trunk) paths. Somehow this sounds like the sort of book I would write.

Blount, a man with more patience than a lemonade vendor (particularly one who is having an interesting competition with the neighboring peanut stand guy) discusses the movie in the context of the original script. Some people may not believe there was ever an original script. Or that it mattered. Looking at the script of “Cracked Ice”, the reader understands what this arose from. Nowadays it would be done by Jim Carrey, Robin Williams, and Eddie Murphy, and might take in half their salaries.

Somewhat more seriously, the script does demonstrate the influence of the performers on their performance. This was not always useful; for example, the filming and production elided at least one critical point about one of the characters; Rufus T. Firefly is a weapons salesman. It makes as much sense as believing he is a hotel manager, explorer, or college professor. A stowaway you might believe.

The discussion also requires exploring the Marxes' biographies. Since all their life-stories were governed by the policy of never letting the truth stand in the way of a good anecdote, this tactic has its hazards.

He discusses the other people involved; the director Sam Wood, who was at two with his stars, the supporting cast, and the like. They had experiences and lives of their own.

Blount does explain some of the then-contemporary references that the contemporary viewer might find opaque. Such as the NRA Blue Eagle (nothing to do with firearms, either) that leads off the film. A Marx Brothers movie on the National Recovery Administration might have done its part to explain the seductive appeal of planning.

Blount points out the unusual appeal of the film. In a survey of best war films, *Duck Soup* beat out several famous flicks, including *The Deer Hunter*, *Battleship Potemkin*, and *From Here to Eternity* [Page 91]. None of them had Groucho saying, “Get me a four-year-old,” either. They could all have been improved by having Harpo walk around with a sign saying JOIN THE ARMY AND SEE THE NAVY.

This book will lead to a greater comprehension of this classic film. But would they have wanted it that way?

THE QUAKER CANNON

Review by Joseph T Major of

OPERATION FORTITUDE:

The Story of the Spies and the Spy Operation that Saved D-Day

by Joshua Levine

(HarperCollins; 2011;

ISBN 978-0-7627-7992-5; \$24.95)

"The Quaker Cannon" (*Analog*, August 1961), another product of the team of Cyril Kornbluth and Frederik Pohl, begins with the day of a Lieutenant John Kramer, U.S. Army, who is a crossword-puzzle enthusiast. In a world at war between the United Utilitarian States (or as they are called, the "Yutes"), and the North American and Allied countries, this lackadaisical attitude seems somewhat untoward, particularly in a country so desperate for troops that the draft age is fifteen.

His lassitude stems from his being a security risk. He was captured during an early operation of the war, interrogated, and turned into a Yute propaganda speaker. Then, inexplicably, he was exchanged. The only reason he was not executed was that his ostensible change of heart was extracted by force. But he can't be trusted, and he is now doing crossword puzzles while nominally being in charge of a unit that processes new draftees.

Then he gets pulled out of his billet into an important one, as the aide of a general who is planning no less than the invasion of the Yute homeland. He learns the details of the invasion with an insider's perspective.

Which makes his being kidnapped at gunpoint and packed off to the Yutes inexplicable. (Interestingly enough, the kidnapper is a Captain Mabry. My cousin George L. Mabry won the Medal of Honor in the Hurtgen Forest, about the time Kornbluth was getting into the ranks of the 69th Infantry Division.) Not surprisingly, they get this intelligence bonanza and plan accordingly.

Then our protagonist gets exchanged again. No firing squad, noose, needle, or even prison for him; rather, a medal, and the thanks of a grateful nation.

For the plans that were being made were nothing more than a grand deception; and he was the chosen courier to transmit them to the enemy, made more useful by his absolute belief that the plans were for real.

Pohl and/or Kornbluth had, therefore, read about Operation FORTITUDE. But even then, they didn't know half of the story. There have been since then memoirs by alleged originals of the hapless unwilling courier, men who write vividly of how they were dispatched to occupied Europe to persuade the Germans of how General Patton was going to lead the attack across the channel at the Pas-de-Calais. For a discussion of the veracity of such works (or really their lack thereof) one may find useful *Counterfeit Spies* by "Nigel West" [Rupert Allason] (1998).

The real story was far more serpentine, and far more interesting, and required more devotion on the part of its participants. They had to live the lie; they had to know they were lying, and yet project the impression of absolute truth. How they could do this, and how they were

aided by the ignorance and credulity of their ostensible masters, is a case-study in observation.

To understand this, one has to begin with the origins of the Double-Cross System, the astounding tale of complete counterintelligence. Which happened to lie in a shifty, deceitful, self-aggrandizing man who didn't even seem to be sure himself which side he was on, one Arthur Owens, codenamed SNOW.

Being a good dramatist, Levine puts the *Casino Royale* story in first; the tale of how Dušan M. "Dusko" Popov got tired of another player calling for no limits on bets and put \$50,000 on the table. Then there was Popov sending a champagne cork to a singer with more enthusiasm than talent. And so on. Agent TRICYCLE was to play a significant role in the deception. Somewhat more seriously, Popov had been studying at the University of Freiberg where he and a German friend liked to torment the Nazis. They met again.

Then there was the Male Person from Catalonia, Juan Pujol García. (Or, in Catalan, "Joan Pujol Garcia".) I mean, he said the railway fare from Glasgow to London was 87 shillings and 10 pence. It could have been worse, he could have said it was £4.39, and he had spent the entire trip sitting next to a man who was agonizing constantly over whether the slightest thing he could do would change history. Agent GARBO didn't agonize. He had seen the Spanish Civil War from both sides and didn't like either group's allies. (Would have been interesting if he met Papa Hemingway and his buddy Nikolsky [later known as Alexander M. Orlov, NKVD defector].)

A third player was a Danish-German Nazi named Wulf Schmidt. Wulf and his colleague Gösta Caroli were parachuted into Britain and pretty quickly intercepted. Or perhaps Schmidt wasn't much of a Nazi. He cooperated while his colleague didn't. As a result, Agent TATE ended up fairly well off while his colleague ended up in an internment camp. (Levine could have added the story of how Schmidt, under his new name of "Harry Williamson", managed to get registered as a voter for the 1945 Parliamentary election. He was not allowed to vote, and the Tories could have used the vote.)

TRICYCLE, TATE, and above all GARBO, along with their real and notional associates, worked at presenting the idea that the Big Invasion was going to be General Patton landing FUSAG at Calais. (As Kramer's superior in "The Quaker Cannon", General Grote, twits his more aggressive colleague, General Clough.) Levine describes the subtle hints by which these trusted men (the meaning of the Abwehr term "*V-Mann*" used to designate agents) put across this deception.

Who was behind all this? The history of the deception planners has been covered before and the names of Thomas Argyle "Tar" Robertson and Dudley Clarke will be familiar to those who have read Thaddeus Holt's huge history *The Deceivers* (2004; reviewed in *Alexiad* V. 3 #4). Even Clarke's flyer into playing the lead character in "Charley's Aunt". Other people involved include Robin "Tin Eye" Stephens, the

stereotyping chief interrogator of spies, and his enforcer, Lieutenant-Colonel Scotland, veteran of the *Schutztruppe in Deutschwestafrika* and commander of the Combined Services Detailed Interrogation Centre. Under his supervision, British guards beat up SS Colonel Fritz Knöchlein, perpetrator of the Le Paradis Massacre. They couldn't all have known someone from the Royal Norfolks. By way of contrast, Tin Eye Stephens was opposed to the use of torture, because it produced dubious short-term gains and ruled out long-term benefits in intelligence information acquisition. (Alan Dershowitz would be disappointed.)

Now that the players were in their places the Great Game could begin. Robinson and his colleagues had to play a dangerous game. The deception had to seem real. The real, but dubious agents, and the spurious agent network that was the product of GARBO's imagination, couldn't do the equivalent of delivering the planning diary of General Grote's army group into the hands of the Nazis. Rather, they had to make the kinds of observations that they would make for real formations, deliver them to the Nazis, and let the other side draw the conclusions.

A joker in the pack came when what one would think would be a boon of great good fortune fell into the hands of the British. Johannes "Johnny" Jebsen, *Abwehr* officer in Madrid, offered to defect! The problem was that his defection would expose his ace V-Mann, Agent IVAN — Dušan M. Popov. Losing TRICYCLE would not do. Jebsen was persuaded to become a "defector in place". Eventually he was arrested for something else, and the British ended up losing TRICYCLE/IVAN anyway. (In his memoirs, *Spy/Counterspy* (1982) Popov describes how he avenged Jebsen.)

The capper was when GARBO betrayed the Normandy invasion. Since he sent the signal on the night of July 5, it wasn't as if the Germans could do anything to respond. Worse yet, the Abwehr station didn't receive his signal. He sent them another signal bawling how here he and his devoted team were doing all this dangerous work and they uncovered the diversionary landing right off and for their pains were ignored. This raised his standing with the Abwehr to new heights.

The winding-down of the deception was careful. Levine describes the way in which the imaginary FUSAG was redistributed to the very real front. This worked; the Germans continued to regard GARBO and the other sources as reliable and worthy.

Lieutenant Kramer received the Distinguished Service Medal. His real-life, less abused equivalents were rewarded; Popov was made an Officer of the Order of the British Empire (like J. R. R. Tolkien), while Pujol was secretly made a Member of that chivalric order. As Sun Tzu said:

14. Hence it is that which none in the whole army are more intimate relations to be maintained than with spies. None should be more liberally rewarded. In no other business should greater secrecy

be preserved.

— *Ping Fa [The Art of War]*, Book XIII “The Use of Spies”

CRACKED ICE

Review by Joseph T Major of
SOUTH WITH THE SUN:
Roald Amundsen, His Polar Explorations, & the Quest for Discovery

by Lynne Cox.

(Alfred A. Knopf; 2011;

ISBN 978-0-307-59340-5; \$26.00)

There is something self-abusive about wanting to swim in Antarctic waters, and yet it sounds like an incredible adventure. Lynne Cox has swum there and other places.

This is about people who didn't swim, but who prepared and trained themselves for a personal endeavor every bit as self-abusive. Or so it seemed at the time.

On a trip to Siberia (what was that about self-abuse again) Cox was told about the American they admired, George Washington De Long. At first she thought it was just George Washington. She showed curiosity and a noteworthy effort to follow up on it; reading about the hapless tale of the *Jeanette* and the melancholy end of her crew in the Lena River delta. From the *Jeanette* she proceeds to what it inspired, Nansen and the drift of the *Fram*.

Another guy got the use of the *Fram*, and he is the ostensible cover topic of this book. Cox describes how Roald Amundsen prepared himself for this trip, including one little journey that nearly killed him.

There were many events along this path. She discusses the story of the *Belgica* and of how Amundsen applied experience from the other end of the world to save the expedition. She visits the place where Amundsen settled in for the winter during his transit of the Northwest Passage, seeing how change has come in patches. And naturally she discusses his even greater application of Inuit methods at the other end of the world.

But it is as much Lynne's own quest for discovery. She describes how she prepared for her swims in the polar oceans. She recounts with moving, almost bubbly, admiration her experiences with the Antarctic air supply squadron, which had rescued Dr. Jerri Nielsen. Their efforts were as focused and determined as Amundsen's were, she finds, and she is deeply moved by them as well.

Indeed, so much of this book is a tribute to those who devote themselves to accomplishing the unprecedented. From flying the *Gossamer Condor* in a fulfillment of legend, all the way to Mike Collins fulfilling fiction, Cox recounts those who live the dreams. Perhaps they saw something familiar in her.

There is a certain unfocusedness in the book, as if Cox could not quite decide who precisely she was writing about. In an era where a “hero” is a sports figure who has not grown past being a street thug, her topics seem sadly obsolete, legacies of a time when the world really had meaning and purpose.

BLACK GOLD

by Lisa

At the most recent Nota meeting we played a trivia game. The question giver as a kind of joke, I think, ended up giving me questions about Thoroughbreds after someone else failed to know the name of the 1924 Derby winner, Black Gold. Another member made comments about how uninteresting that was. And yet the story of Black Gold is one of the most interesting in Derby history.

An Osage Indian named Al Hoots owned a nondescript mare named Useeit. He raced her in lesser tracks but never in a claiming race where he could be forced to sell his treasured mare until the day he did so as a favor to a friend and with the understanding that nobody would claim the mare. When Useeit won the promise was broken. Hoots refused to sell his treasured horse. This got both him and Useeit ineligible to ever race again. Hoots would not be able to achieve his dream of breeding Useeit to a fashionable stallion named Black Toney. They were still ineligible when Hoots died, leaving Useeit and his farm to his widow Rosa.

After Hoots died, oil was found on his farm. Rosa Hoots wrote to Black Toney's owner, E.R. Bradley. Most owners of a stallion like Black Toney would never have agreed to Rosa Hoots' request to send Useeit to Black Toney but Bradley had a huge sentimental streak.

The resulting foal was born in 1921. Rosa Hoots named him Black Gold in tribute to the oil that had made him possible. He was to win the Derby in 1924. While a fast horse Black Gold was to be troubled by bad feet all his life. He was retired for this but at stud only sired one foal. When that foal was killed by lightning his trainer decided to return him to racing. It was a bad decision.

Black Gold was too game to quit even though he was seven years old and no longer able to perform at his Derby form. In his last race he broke a leg and finished it on three legs and heart. There was no option except to put him down. Though he left no descendants the memory of his rags to riches story and his courage lives on among students of Derby history.

BREEDING NOTES

by Lisa

Rachel Alexandra has given birth to her Curlin colt. Zenyatta is scheduled to foal her Bernardini offspring in March. It would be interesting if the little Bernardini arrived on March 29, the date Man o'War was foaled nearly 95 years ago.

KINDLE FIRE

Review by Patrick McCray

If you're impatient, here's the most important thing to know; in the weeks ahead of this writing (December 15, 2011), it is highly likely that Apple will announce the iPad 3. At that point, prices on the iPad 2 will drop. I'm

sure you'll be able to acquire a humdinger at about the price of a Fire. Please don't waste the time and money on a Fire. Just get an iPad 2 when the prices drop.

Okay, now for the reasons. I largely bought the Fire as a Universal Streaming Media Player. Unlike the 'pad, it plays the Amazon Prime free instant videos, which is a healthy library to say the least. Combined with my Netflix and Hulu Plus subscriptions (for which the Fire has apps), this qualifies the Fire as a BAMF in the movie-streaming department. Yes, I'd be giving up the easy-on-the-eyes e-ink, but with the release of the iPad 1, I gave up on that nearly two years ago, anyway.

Yes, it does stream videos from all three sites. And Youtube. So, I have one more reason to be glad that I haven't subscribed to cable in nearly twenty years. As far as the plusses go, that's about it. Well, that and it's small. In actuality, I'd be happier if it were smaller . . . the length and width of an average, paperback book would have been both logical and ideal. And a tad nostalgic.

That last wish is a problem, though, because at its present size, the Fire is not easy to type on. I hardly have “fat fingers,” and even I have an issue with it. This is ironic, since the iPad's keyboard is a bit too big (or poorly arranged) for long-gorm typing, making me, yes, I know, a Goldilocks in the QWERTY department. In any case, this knocks out the Fire as a solid tablet for email and document composition from the get-go.

As I wrote, it's swell (kind of) at streaming videos (under special conditions), but its merits end there.

In fact, it doesn't even deserve paragraphs, just a litany of shortcomings. Here goes . . .

1. Because it's now wifi-only, we lose out on the Whispernet service that gave you access to books (in the cloud or new) almost anywhere, for free, it's an immediate downgrade from the previous Kindles. Why not give us text-only versions of books on Whispernet and then upgrade them when wifi is available? Without that, Mr. Bezos, you've already made your prior iterations superior. This is progress?
2. The browser can sometimes be glacial in pace.
3. The OS has problems. Mine locked up within the first 24 hours of use.
4. At the top of the home screen is a “carousel” that automatically displays all of your books and most recently-used apps. Real big. And you can't really make them go away. It even displays stuff in the cloud that's not on the device. This is a problem. As in life, there are some books that you put on the coffee table, and there are some books that you don't necessarily need everyone to see. Well, the folks at Amazon want to put EVERYTHING on the coffee table. The only way I could find to “clean the coffee table” was to get rid of some fascinating and treasured titles. Permanently. As in “I had to go to Amazon's website and divest myself of them so thoroughly that I'd have to buy them all over again if I wanted to

read them once more.”

5. The apps run slowly. Why bother?
6. There's no buy-up option for 3G connectivity.
7. In 2005, I had a grand mal seizure from a mysterious foci in my left frontal lobe. This did some brain damage. The medication I take makes me little more than a walking, talking paperweight. And even I have more memory than the Fire.

There's simply not enough Flash and Amazon Prime instant video material in the world to justify this as a legitimate choice if you are in the market for a tablet or e-reader. It's so very close to the iPad (and, yes, other tablets, but I'm an Apple man) that there's no rational reason to choose it over the iPad. If cost is your reason, wait until the iPad 3 hits the shelves and then buy an iPad 2 for about the same price (I'm guessing) or an iPad 1 for even less.

And, yes, there are free Kindle apps for those devices.

Or, if eye strain is a concern, buy a regular Kindle.

I can only imagine that it was called "Fire" because that's the verb employed by Jeff Bezos on the designers once he saw the device in all its glory.

Even in death, Steve's is bigger and more potent.

TO AND FRO IN THE WORLD

Vacation Report for Christmas 2011
by Joseph T Major

Friday, December 2, 2011

Kentucky Horse Park, Lexington, KY

Our visit to the Southern Lights was felicitous but not quite as much so as we would have liked. Grant had training that week, until 1:30 that morning. He did not feel like going out. So we breakfasted at the International House of Pancakes on Hurstbourne, which is easy to get to from the interstate, but it's not so easy to get back on the interstate afterwards.

We got to Poor Richard's well enough, and Rod Smith turned up. We discussed our various works in progress, the state of the city, and the like. Another reminder of my age is that 2013 will be fifty years since we first moved to Frankfort.

Finally, an hour after he said he would be there, I called Tom Sadler. It turned out he had called me three times that morning. He had septic tank problems and had to wait at home. The ringer on my phone was turned down and muffled by my coat.

With that, Lisa and I said good-bye to Rod and went on to Joseph-Beth, then dinner at Columbia Steak House, and out to the Park. There were more lights there, but there's been a little expansion in the aftermath of the Equestrian Games. The museum still has the exhibit on The Horse, which is worth your time, but you better hurry because the showing ends on April 6.

Afterwards, we went to see my cousin Martha, who was homebound with some injuries. She was very pleased with the present I brought her. One of her daughters was there;

the other, who is studying medicine (like her mother), was busy.

We got home at a reasonable hour.

Sunday, December 11, 2011

The St. Matthews Baptist Church had its Christmas Dinner. Elizabeth Garrett had reserved a table, as usual, and we went there to help Tim fill it out. The church had the choir sing a number of Christmas songs.

Johnny Carruthers was there, and somewhat to our pleased surprise, Jack Young's widow Sue showed up, to tell how she had been doing since then. Elizabeth's sister Alice and Alice's husband Loren made the trip from Berea, and we had a few family matters to share. They too had been held up getting to the Garrett reunion back in July, but their route did not take them down I-65 where the big tie-up was.

I was taking my plate to the trash and missed the big event, but fortunately no one was hurt. Merry Christmas to all and to all a good night.

Thursday, December 22, 2011

About 2:30 I started feeling unwell. But I couldn't find any supervisors who could approve time off. I made my way home at quitting time and crawled into bed, with a heating pad over the pain in my abdomen. It came and went; during the less bad times I managed to get a load of laundry done, prepare some disks with family information, and pack my bag. Lisa wondered if I should not have gone to the hospital; she said I felt clammy and looked unwell.

We got to sleep at a reasonable hour.

Friday, December 23, 2011

Louisville — Clarksville, TN — Hopkinsville, KY

In the morning, much to my relief, the pain was gone. We loaded the car and were off. Breakfast in Elizabethtown, at the Cracker Barrel, followed by a drive on a more southerly route than usual. The fields were particularly green for winter. We passed by a Shaker village and by the birthplace of Robert Penn Warren, getting to Clarksville where we would see my cousin Jim, James Lester Major III. Jim's wife, Joyce, had died back in April, and this was his first Christmas without her. His sons, grandson, and great-grandchildren would be coming Christmas Day, so there was that.

Jim was very glad to see us, and after going by his father's old house (where I'd first met him, nearly twenty years ago) and a lot of conversation, we parted. To see another "James Major", this one going by his middle name of "Brooks". Brooks has, I believe, post-polio syndrome (like Sir Arthur C. Clarke); he finds it easier to go around in a wheelchair, though at one point he did walk out to the car to be driven to his son's. He did use a walker for that. His wife, Martha, looks like a stiff breeze would blow her away, but she was still active, albeit complaining of having too many step-great-grandchildren to give presents to.

It was getting close to sunset, so we went on up the road to the Best Western, checked in (we

were just about the only people staying there), and got all our enormous pile of gear into the room. When I was travelling to Nashville on a song and a prayer, I did not need a computer, smartphone (and charger), camera charger, refrigerator for medicines . . .

Dinner at O'Charleys. They have local-themed murals in every restaurant. The one in Louisville has Derby pictures, for example. This one had a picture of a relative of mine.

And so to bed.

Miles driven: 221.8

Books read: *Facing the Wind* by Julie Salomon

Sunrise: 7:57 AM (EST)

Sunset: 4:38 PM (CST)

Weather: Cloudy

Saturday, December 24, 2011

Hopkinsville — Madisonville, KY — Hopkinsville

Fifty-Seven Years and Thirty Years

Older, but not necessarily wiser, I had the hotel's continental breakfast, as did Lisa. Then we drove up to the Cracker Barrel in Madisonville. The rest of the family trickled in over the next half-hour: my brothers and their wives, my niece, her husband (back from Iraq), and her son.

David (the nephew-in-law) had a few things to say about learning the local language, understanding the local situation, and otherwise getting to know the people. We shared gifts and life-experiences; I had some stories about the older generation that they didn't disdain, so that's something, and I did get the usual group picture and birthday picture.

Around sunset we figured it was time to break up, and so we went our several ways. That evening, we went to see my cousin Mae, who turned 92 back in October. She was talking about the trip she had just taken to see her son and granddaughter in West Virginia, and how this spring she would go down to South Carolina, and she had been out and about several other places. Let me repeat that. Ninety-Two. A great-grandmother several times over.

Mae had recommended we go see a local Christmas Light setup. I wish I made a month what that guy's electric bill was. The exhibit was Enormous. And a bit unusual, with everything (it seemed) from a Crucifixion scene to hearty wishes of "Happy Birthday, Jesus". (Just one word away from a Fred Pohl title.) If we hadn't been nearly run off the road by trucks, it would have been more interesting.

And so to bed.

Miles driven: 101.6

Sunrise: 7:00 AM

Sunset: 4:38 PM

Weather: Sunny

Sunday, December 25, 2011

Hopkinsville — Clarksville — Hopkinsville Newton's Birthday and some other things

The Grace Lutheran Church in Clarksville has an Orthodox Mission. Pity there weren't

any other Orthodox there that day to appreciate it. I noticed that the choir director has an icon. Lisa decided to go to the Lutheran service. Why people kept on getting up, going out of one door in the sanctuary, and coming back in the other I didn't understand.

The cross street by the church is Lois Lane. Really.

After that we went back up to Hopkinsville to see my cousin Dan and his family. All of them. His son Chris told me about an odd woman who came to the farm to photograph the headstones in the cemetery there; she had asked me to help get in touch with the owners of the farm, and she was a bit unclear about who they were.

I had the usual ritual with my cousin Mary Alice and her husband Graham. "Merry Christmas, Graham. Happy Birthday, Mary Alice." Their son the Air Force Chaplain has been promoted, their grandson-in-law who flies Harriers is on a deployment.

Cousin Wade had wanted to know about his father's side of the family. This was not as hard as you might think, because his father is related to Lisa. As a result, Wade will come with us to the Thomas-Bridges Reunion this summer — and then we will go see his Aunt Ellen, just down the road! Not to mention seeing Wade's grandfather, Ellen's father, the third "James Major" of the holiday season.

Finally, we went to see Lisa's cousin David's widow Betty, who was holding a Christmas dinner. There weren't many people there. Betty's daughter Amie likes the Kentucky Horse Park, too, and we told the story about the Horse exhibit. Things broke up about seven and we went home, stuffed.

And so to bed.

Miles driven: 76.3

Books read: *Pearl Harbor: FDR Leads the Nation Into War* by Steven M. Gillon

Sunrise: 7:01 AM

Sunset: 4:39 PM

Weather: Sunny

Monday, December 26, 2011

Hopkinsville — Henderson, KY

Uneventful morning and drive to Henderson, where we had a family gathering. Lisa's father drove out and got the fried chicken for the dinner. You remember, the man who back in November had the surgery that he was told he might not survive, and was six hours on the table while they removed parts of his digestive system? Now if he would only eat more. And he got to hold his (step-)great-great-grandson, too.

Miles driven: 76.4

Sunrise: 7:01 AM

Sunset: 4:37 PM

Weather: Cloudy

Tuesday, December 27, 2011

Henderson — Louisville

The morning turned bad, with a mix of rain and snow. This was worrisome, what with the

traffic problems getting into Louisville from Indiana, and we left in something of a hurry. Except, we stopped to eat breakfast at Golden Corral (the one in Henderson is open for breakfast seven days a week), and while we were there, the big snowflakes stopped. Indeed, the drive east was marked by improving weather, and we got back to Louisville just fine, aside from the usual cramped traffic on the John F. Kennedy bridge.

And so to bed.

Miles driven: 137.8

Sunrise: 7:05 AM (CST)

Sunset: 5:29 PM (EST)

Weather: Snow mixed with rain, becoming sunny

Total mileage: 613.9

Gas bought: \$74.51

Time out: 7:46 A.M.

Time back: 1:57 P.M.

PARADISE ON EARTH

Trip report by Sue Burke
on a visit to the Alhambra
Granada, Spain, December 27-28, 2011

The Alhambra is a complex of palaces, gardens, and fortresses on a hill overlooking Granada, Spain. From the 1200s to the 1400s, successive Moorish rulers of the Nasrid Emirate of Granada built and expanded it in a style to reflect "paradise on earth." The Alhambra was later used by Spanish royalty as a residence. In 1984 it was declared a UNESCO World Heritage Site, and for two centuries it has attracted visitors from around the world.

My husband gave me trip to the Alhambra for Christmas. I had been there before, though just for an afternoon, and he had never visited it. We booked train tickets (we don't own a car) and a hotel through Renfe, the Spanish national train service, and bought tickets to Alhambra through its website. Admission to the Nasrid Palaces are limited with timed entrances control the crowds, and even a month ahead, the best times were taken, so we got entrances at 4 p.m. Tuesday and 8:30 a.m. Wednesday.

Tuesday, December 27, 2011

The train departed at 9:05 a.m., so we left our apartment at about 8:15. Because the weather was below freezing and we had a long day ahead of us, we caught a bus around the corner rather than walk to Atocha train station, and two stops later we got off in time to buy a newspaper and drink some coffee before boarding. The doors to the train would close a mere two minutes before it left — so unlike airplane flights.

The train, with comfortable tourist-class seats, was full, and many of the passengers were tourists studying guidebooks in various languages. I could have watched the movie "Thor" but opted instead to read as the scenery coasted past: hoar-frosted fields, patches of fog, occasional windmills (15% of Spain's electricity comes from windmills), a couple of castles, and everywhere olive groves that grew more

extensive the further south we rode. We lunched in the club car, and the sandwich menu special included potato chips cooked in olive oil.

By the time we got to Granada at 1:30 p.m., palm trees had been added to the mix, and oranges were ripening on trees alongside the sidewalks as we walked six blocks to the hotel. Renfe had given us a wide selection of hotels, and we had chosen on the basis of price and location. Los Girasoles (Sunflowers) Hotel boasted two stars. The room was small and clean, and if the heater had been equal to the December chill, it would have been fine.

We checked in, dropped off our stuff, and found a taxi to take us to the Alhambra: a complicated route up narrow, twisting streets uphill in the Realejo neighborhood. With a thick Andalucian accent, the chatty driver asked us about our ticket times and took us to the best entrance to enjoy the site before visiting the palaces.

Temperatures were about 12°C/mid-50sF, seasonal for Granada in December, and we were dressed snugly, since it would grow colder as the 6 p.m. sunset approached. We wandered past the *medina* section where the palace workers lived, and past gardens, ruins (things have not always gone well), archeological digs, the 15th-century monastery (now a *parador* hotel), the baths of the mosque, the church were the mosque had stood, the Wine Gate, and the Justice Gate.

At 4:30, we fed our ticket into the bar code reader at the door of the *Mexuar* Council Building and entered the palaces.

The tour started in the oldest part, built in the early 1300s and remodeled time and again. Tile and arabesque plaster work from other palaces that had been torn down were reinstalled there. It would have been gorgeous in any other setting, but here the rooms merely prepared the eyes for the greater splendor to come.

A doorway led to the Patio of the Golden Quarter, an area whose construction started in 1333, named for its gilt ceiling surrounded by elaborate arches. Facing it was the facade of the Comares Palace, covered with tile panels and carved plaster and wood. A low marble fountain bubbled in the courtyard. Although today the plaster at the Alhambra is mostly plain white like Greek monuments, we know that, like Greek monuments, at one time it was lavishly painted. The Alhambra used mostly blue and red with gold, and here and there, traces remained.

A door in the palace facade led to a twisting hallway ending at the Court of the Myrtles with its long reflecting pool. At one end stood Comares Tower, which housed the Hall of the Ambassadors. Although it's hard to mention only one marvel of that enormous space, the ceiling was a vault of three-dimensional inlaid wood in interlacing polychromatic star shapes designed to invoke the seven levels of heaven that a soul traverses to reach Allah. The walls were lined with tiles and intricately carved plaster, the floor was mosaics, and the windows were framed by carved latticework. Look up, down, or around, and beauty awaited.

Next, the Patio of the Lions — and alas! the repairs were almost complete, and the restored

lions were back in place in the central fountain, but still wrapped in white tarps as plumbers connected new pipes. The ground would soon be re-covered with marble, and the streams of water would flow again to the central fountain from the halls surrounding it.

The Patio of the Lions, built in the latter 1300s, held some of the most splendid halls, but we could only glimpse them through its forest of columns and move on to the Hall of the Two Sisters — but that hall was the most magnificent of all: elaborate plaster doorways of stunning elegance, tile designs of interlaced strips of color of mesmerizing complexity, and a ceiling of stalactite vaulting of 5000 distinct honeycombed cells. Some windows held complex stained glass, others overlooked the Lindaraja garden, and the arches around the windows created a proportional harmony unsurpassed by the rest of the palace, elegant though it all was.

From there, the route passed through the baths, where much of the original paint survived as a feast for the eyes, the rooms of the Emperor Charles V, where Washington Irving also stayed, several balconies, and the cloistered formal Lindaraja gardens — and then, the palace tour was over.

But more paradise awaited. The Partal was an area that included gardens, a palace with a wide reflecting pool in front of its galleries, and archeological remains on a cliff overlooking the Darro River. Even in the chill of December, when many flowers slept, every corner held heavenly beauty, and roses still scented the air. Beyond that, the Promenade of Towers rose alongside the defensive walls, but each of the towers was really mini-palace.

By then it was growing late, so we crossed the ravine to the Generalife area, a labyrinth of gardens with flowers and vegetables and orchards mixed together, a pattern still common in Spain today. We had come see the sun set over the Nasrid Palaces. Unfortunately, the sky was clear as crystal, without a cloud, one of the least spectacular sunsets possible, but even so it was a pleasure.

Then the staff chased us out at closing time, 6 p.m. We caught a bus at the entrance — a mini-bus to negotiate the narrow streets — downhill to the end of the line in front of the cathedral. We took the opportunity for a brief visit to the cathedral and its soaring Renaissance apse.

Then we wandered through the twisting old streets to our hotel, dropped off our stuff, and found a restaurant for dinner. We started with patatas bravas, then Jerry had ox steak and I had salt cod with garlic-olive oil sauce — very traditional Spanish food.

Wednesday, December 28, 2011

We got up early, breakfasted on ham-and-cheese rolls and madeleines, and left. The hotel desk clerk told us, “It’s chilly, bundle up,” but we’re originally from Wisconsin and were already wearing all the clothes we could. It was a seasonable 3°C/37°F when we found a taxi, and this time the driver took us right inside the monument so we could be at the opening of the

Nasrid Palaces on time.

With our breaths hanging in the air, we were among the first to enter at dawn. As at sunset, the sky was cloudless and plain. But the light was good and the crowds were sparse. We had time to enjoy our favorite sights from the day before, more wondrous in their familiarity. More details stood out, and the fascinating variety of embellishments was easier to observe.

The designs were based on mathematics, and the decorations were interlaced with poetry that my guidebook translated: “Are there not in this garden marvels that God has made incomparable in their beauty and in their sculptures of transparent clarity, whose edges are decorated with pearls of dew? Molten silver flows between the pearls, which shine like the pure and beautiful sunrise. It seems that water and marble mix, and we cannot tell which is moving.”

We were surrounded at dawn by mathematics and poetry transformed into architectural joy.

We lingered, then went to the Generalife across the ravine to see the morning sunlight illuminate the palace exteriors. Great Tits, the local version of chickadees, flitted in the trees and bushes, and fountains splashed in the gardens.

We moved on to the Palace of the Generalife, delighting in the patter of the long row of fountain jets in its gardens even before we climbed the stairs to see them. We arrived just in time to be buffeted by successive hordes of Japanese tourists, who were utterly delighted by the beauty. But they were on a schedule and we were not, so we waited for them to move on, and soon we shared the palace with comfortable numbers of fellow admirers. The changes that Fernando and Isabel had made to the palace were interesting to study, and the view across the ravine from the windows was stunning.

More gorgeous gardens awaited above the palace, and finally, in no hurry, we headed back to the Palace of Holy Roman Emperor Charles V, next to the Nasrid Palaces. He had begun its construction in 1526 and then ran out of money, so his square palace with a circular courtyard was not finished until the 1920s. These days the handsome Renaissance building, totally out of harmony with its surroundings, serves as a museum and exhibition space.

We toured an exhibit about Owen Jones, a Victorian-era artist who visited the Alhambra and was among the first to recognize the underlying mathematical precision in the patterns of its decorations; and an exhibit about M.C. Escher, whose visits to the Alhambra and studies of its decorations greatly influenced his own artwork.

Then we stopped for a late lunch at the parador’s café. I had a grilled sandwich of *rula* goat cheese (sort of like brie) and quince jam, and my husband had a serving of tortilla española (potato omelet) — very traditional Spanish food. We washed it down with Alhambra-brand beer. I don’t like to drink for lunch, but I wanted to have an Alhambra in the Alhambra.

Thus fortified, we moved on to the fortress,

climbing up and down its walls and towers. From the top of the tallest watchtower, we enjoyed views of the snow-capped Sierra Nevada mountains. Then we descended and passed through more gardens (paradise must be filled with flowers) on the way out of the fortress. Had we seen everything at the Alhambra? No, not at all, but we were getting tired.

We bought a few souvenirs and caught a bus to the Plaza de Isabel la Católica, then wandered back to the hotel, pausing for warm drinks and to admire the thousand-year-old city walls and gates in Granada’s oldest neighborhood. We picked up our suitcase from the hotel and admired modern sculptures of outstanding Andalusian citizens in a park as we walked to the train station.

The train left at 6:05 p.m. sharp. I ignored the movie, “The Tourist,” with Johnny Depp and Angelina Jolie. We arrived in Madrid ten minutes early at 10:45 p.m., promptly caught a bus in front of the train station, and soon we were back in our well-heated apartment.

Distance traveled:

434 km/270 miles each way between Madrid and Granada by train, plus taxi and bus trips, and plenty of walking.

Prices:

€173.56/US\$225.62 for the train tickets and hotel, and €14.30/US\$18.59 for each of the four tickets to the Alhambra.

Books read:

La Alhambra y la Generalife, Guía oficial de visita, 191 pages. *El Conde Lucanor* by Sir Juan Manuel, a 1335AD book of moralizing short stories; one of them is “The Emperor’s New Clothes.”

Souvenirs purchased:

Postcards, a 2012 photo calendar to re-live the trip during the coming year, and a half-liter of olive oil from the Alhambra’s own groves.

LosCon 38

November 25-27, 2011

Con Report by Robert S. Kennedy

Loscon 38 was held the Friday, Saturday, and Sunday after Thanksgiving (November 25-27, 2011) at the LAX Marriott. The theme was *Where’s My Flying Car?* The Guests of Honor were John DeChancie (Writer), Col. Rick Searfoss (Science), Aldo Spadoni (Artist), and John Hertz (Fan). Among the missing were Milt Stevens, Chris Garcia, and Lee Whiteside. As soon as I got home I e-mailed Milt to see if he was ok. He responded that he was ok and there were some reasons for his not being there. Chris Garcia had been at a number of previous *Loscons* and I don’t know why he was not at this one. Many of you probably do not know about Lee Whiteside. He is an expert on SF TV (as well as movies) and I always enjoy his presence on panels. He is also the SF TV columnist for *ConNotations NewsZine* published by the Central Arizona Speculative Fiction Society. I don’t know why he was missing either.

Friday—The panels I went to were:

Discovering New Worlds: Manned/Unmanned Missions; The Obama Age and Space; Book Piracy and Other Art Crimes. That evening was the always enjoyable Ice Cream Social. As usual they ran out of Chocolate Chip ice cream rather quickly. A modest suggestion on my part would be to have two tubs of Chocolate Chip in the future. This was followed by a presentation of what they called Wicked Lit which was basically a presentation of a couple of novels in the format of radio. It was quite good and if I could just remember the books I would not worry so much about my memory. After that were several "comedians". At this point I should mention that most of the people who were at the Ice Cream Social left at the end of that and there were very few of us left in the audience. Personally, I consider that rather shameful. Anyway, I did not think that the "comedians" were very funny. At 10:00 p.m. I thought they were finished and started to leave. As I neared the door one more was called from the audience. She turned out to be a very fine looking female who had been sitting in front of me. I almost turned back. But, I didn't, went to my room, read for a bit, and then to bed. Oh, I should mention that at 1:30 p.m. I was able to have Dani and Eytan Kollin autograph my copy of their *The Unincorporated Woman* (2011). So, now I have been able to have them autograph the three books issued in the series (with the first two being autographed in 2010). There will be one more book in the series issued sometime in 2012 and that will be the end.

Saturday—The panels I went to were: Future of the Physical Book & The Implications for SF Fandom (electronic media); Future of Medicine; The End of an Era: The Life and death of the Space Shuttle. Col. Searfoss was supposed to be on the last panel. But, he wasn't there. I was not at the Opening (or Closing) Ceremonies and don't know if the Col. was even at the convention. At 8:00 p.m. was the Masquerade. There were even fewer participants than in 2010. The ones who did participate were excellent. But, if it keeps heading in this direction it might be that the Masquerade should be dropped which would be a great shame.

Sunday—The panels I went to were: Robert Heinlein's Future History (in which some of the panelists engaged in too much unnecessary Left Wing political commentary); European Futures: How has the Science Fiction of Europe viewed the Future?; Future Thinking: Are We Bound for the Stars or Trapped on Earth?

There were many visits made to the Dealers Room. Most of the books were displayed with their spines out. It hurts my neck trying to read them and I gave up. Only one purchase was made, a T-shirt. It has a depiction of the Marriott. The sky is full of flying cars and there are flying cars parked on the ground. Up at the top it says LOSCON 38. At the bottom it says: "WHERE IS MY FLYING CAR?!?". I really like it. It is the first *Loscon* T-shirt that I've purchased.

I always drive down on Thanksgiving afternoon in the hope that the traffic will not be bad and that is usually the case. This drive down was probably the best I've seen it. I take

the 101 Freeway East to the 405 Freeway and then South on the 405. The 405 Freeway going North was bumper-to-bumper. But, going South was fine and I made it to the hotel in an hour or a little less. The same occurred going home. The 405 Freeway going South was packed. But, going North was easy and I made it home in an hour despite there being three freeway accidents on the 101 Freeway. Given that it is 50/55 miles to the hotel that's great.

One last note. Among the Guests of Honor for *Loscon 39* in 2012 are Yvonne & Lloyd Penney (Fan).

FANZINES

Beyond Bree December 2011, January 2012

Nancy Martsch, Post Office Box 55372,
Sherman Oaks, CA 91413-5372 USA
beyondbree@yahoo.com
<http://www.cep.unt.edu/bree.html>
Not available for The Usual; \$15/year, \$20 foreign, \$10/year electronic.

Broken Toys #1

Taral Wayne, 245 Dunn Avenue, Apt. 2111,
Toronto, Ontario M6K 1S6 CANADA
Taral@Teksavvy.com

Challenger #34 Fall-Winter 2011

Guy H. Lillian III, 5915 River Road,
Shreveport, LA 71105- USA
ghliiii@yahoo.com

The Drink Tank #299, #301, #302, #303, #304, #305

Christopher J. Garcia
garcia@computerhistory.org
<http://www.efanzines.com>

Fadeaway #27 January-February 2012

Robert Jennings, 29 Whiting Road, Oxford,
MA 01540-2035 USA
fabfickbs@aol.com

The Fanatical Fanactivist #8

R. Graeme Cameron, 13315 104th Avenue,
Apt. #72G. Surrey, BC, V3T V5 CANADA
rgraeme@shaw.ca
<http://www.efanzines.com>

The Fortnightly Fix #24.5, #25, #26

Steve Green
stevegreen@livejournal.com
<http://www.efanzines.com>

Fish Out of Water #461, #462, #463, #464, #465, #466, #467, #468

Marty Helgesen, 11 Lawrence Avenue,
Malverne, New York 11565-1406 USA

The Knarley Knews #141

Henry & Letha Welch, 15290 Upper Ellen
Road, Los Gatos, CA 95033-7814 USA
knarley@welchcastle.com
<http://tkk.welchcastle.com/>

MT Void V. 30 #23 December 2, 2011 — V. 30 #31 January 27, 2012

Mark and Evelyn Leeper, 80 Lakeridge

Drive, Matawan, NJ 07747-3839 USA
eleeper@optonline.net
mleeper@optonline.net
<http://leepers.us/mtvoid>

Opuntia #71.1D, January 2012, #71.3 February 2012

Dale Speirs, Box 6830, Calgary, Alberta
T2P 2E7 CANADA

The Reluctant Famulus #85 January/February 2012

Thomas D. Sadler, 305 Gill Branch Road,
Owenton, KY 40359- USA
tomfamulus@hughes.net
<http://www.efanzines.com>

Space Cadet #17

R. Graeme Cameron, 13315 104th Avenue,
Apt. #72G. Surrey, BC, V3T V5 CANADA
rgraeme@shaw.ca
<http://www.efanzines.com>

Trap Door #27 December 2010 (!)

Robert Lichtman, 11037 Broadway Terrace,
Oakland, CA 94611-1948 USA
locs2trapdoor@yahoo.com

Further Hugo Note: Don't put forward *StarShipSofa* ("We got this award. Nobody we cared about was up against us.") again. Instead, nominate Chris Garcia for BDP Short Form, and then we can watch him produce a couple of issues during the Hugo Award ceremony.

WORLDCON BIDS

2014

London
<http://www.londonin2014.org/>

NASFiC:

Phoenix
<http://www.leprecon.org/phoenixin2014/>

2015

Spokane
<http://spokanein2015.org/>

Orlando
<http://orlandoin2015.org/>

2016

Kansas City
<http://kansascityin2016.org/>

2017

Japan
<http://nippon2017.org/>

New York

2018

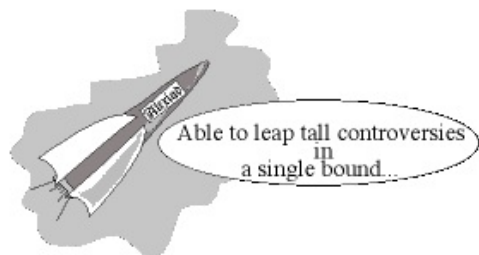
New Orleans
neworleansin2018@gmail.com

2019

2020

New Zealand
<http://nzin2020.org/>

Letters, we get letters



From: **Milt Stevens** December 19, 2011
6325 Keystone Street, Simi Valley, CA
93063-3834 USA
miltstevens@earthlink.net

In *Alexiad* V. 10 #6, Lisa mentions the 70th anniversary of Pearl Harbor. As it happens, I just turned 69. I may have mentioned before that these two facts are related. I might not be here if it weren't for those wonderful folks who brought us Pearl Harbor. It's just another example of there being no wind so foul as blows no man good.

Core fandom is sort of like the New World Order. A year or two ago, I watched a documentary on the New World Order. Everyone who was interviewed hated and opposed the New Word Order. However, there didn't seem to be any agreement as to what the New World Order was. The same thing goes for core fandom. As far as I am concerned, core fandom consists of people who engage in fanac 52 weeks a year or close to it. The people in core fandom tend to know each other. The general structure of fandom is a fairly small core of hobbyists surrounded by a much larger group of hobby consumers.

I don't think science fiction is Jewish. I do think the culture of fandom is Jewish. We have great respect for learning even if we don't see any practical use for it, and we love to argue. If you ask three Jews, you get four opinions. If you ask three fans, you get five.

Buying a worldcon would be a difficult proposition. You might try buying bogus memberships in the worldcon where the vote would occur. If none of the bogus members attended, but a third party bought voting memberships, the administrators would probably be suspicious. The administrators might demand proof that these votes were attached to real people. They might disallow the votes if the proof wasn't adequate.

You do remember the "money-order ballots" scandal at NorEasCon. I may have been one of the few people who actually read *The Guardsman*.

—JTM

I suppose a winning bid could be sublet to anyone. However, the people who won the bid would have to be fairly well known in fandom. Perpetrating a fraud would not be a good idea if

they hoped to remain in fandom.

So the chairman of the Orlando bid had not attended a worldcon before launching a bid. You would certainly have to be mentally incompetent to do a thing like that. He might be suicidal too. I don't know why the Spokane bid is being described as "weak." I don't know their hotel set-up, and I'm a little dubious of going back to the Labor Day Weekend, but I'm willing to wait for further information.

From: **William H. Patterson** Dec. 19, 2011

Thank you for *Alexiad*: 10:6. I had noted previously, but not said anything before, that the Greek you have under the Roman title reads "Alexias," rather than "Alexiad." Is there some reason or supplemental meaning for the variance?

Re your review of *The Astounding, the Amazing, and the Unknown* (Malmont) on p. 3, a local friend, Ken Spell, brought me his copy when the book was new, as I was just out of the hospital (I really should still have been in the hospital) following my amputation and couldn't really concentrate on work. With one exception I found it more entertaining as a story if you don't think of the characters as historical figures, because the situation and often the characters of the individuals are portrayed just so far off from the historical situations and characters that it becomes instantly unbelievable — adding "incredible" to the series of pulp titles embedded in the book's title.

I was glad to see Tesla's name and reputation being perpetuated, as it was in one of the stage magician movies a few years ago — *The Prestige*? Tesla has always seemed to me a very stfnal figure, as the public reputation he cultivated was very much that of a genius far ahead of his time — whereas figures like Edison and Westinghouse were portrayed as fighting the battles of the day.

The exception is Malmont's portrayal of Gertrude Asimov. I don't know and can't say how "true to life" it might be, but I believed her and sym-pathos'd with her — to such an extent that she was much more "living" to me than any of the major characters.

A few nits to your nitpicking in the first column. The Kamikaze Think Tank was not "John Campbell's." In his long letter response to T.B. Buell's questionnaire about his time with King, Heinlein says he was asked to organize it by Naval Intelligence, viz:

In the winter of '44-'45, at NAES Mustin Field I was handed a crash priority project and was warned that it was the CNO's [King] own baby. We were already up to our ears in finding a means to keep B-29 turrets from spontaneously exploding outward at altitude and in anti-Kamikaze handed to me outside of channels by OpNav-23 — both very urgent, and on the latter OpNav-23 used to come to my apartment on Sundays to get the latest work ahead of channels and discuss it — and if he liked it, he could start the

breadboarding that same night and have it flown out and tested at sea by Ingram's special force off Hampton Roads that same week long before the paperwork could pass through several hands.

This letter was published in the Virginia Edition Nonfiction volumes, as it was so large I didn't want to overload the letters volumes — about which more later.

At any rate, the Kamikaze think tank was set up in 1944. The onset is not dated in Heinlein's correspondence of the time, but the Kamikaze attacks began in October 1944, and there was no good solution in standard doctrine, so they specifically wanted out-of-the-box thinking on this matter. Heinlein does include Campbell among others who were "part of" the group in "Eros and Agape."

In your comments on Fantasy Commentator you mention "effort to create the November 1948 'trick issue' of *Astounding*. That "Time Travel issue" was November 1949; it was Dick Hoen's joke letter in the November 1948 issue that set things in motion — whether by Heinlein or by Campbell is really impossible to say at this point, though I've not been able to track down any solid evidence for the Campbell side, and I do have a percipient witness's statement for the Heinlein side of the conjecture.

I did want to mention that Perry Chapdelaine has, in a sense, three volumes of Campbell letters now that the Heinlein-Campbell correspondence (both sides) has been published in the Virginia Edition. Chapdelaine wanted to bring out such a volume in the 1970's but was not able to do so. When this project was proposed for the Virginia Edition, Geo Rule and I did everything we could to make it happen, and contacted Chapdelaine, who provided his entire stock of Heinlein-Campbell correspondence. That volume was issued with the most recent printing a few months ago. I have no idea why they broke the print run between volumes 2 and 3 of letters. Must have something to do with minimum practical size of print run.

As it turned out, the Heinlein files had more Campbell correspondence on point than did Chapdelaine — I suppose because Peg Campbell had vetted the files before turning them over to Chapdelaine, removing anything she thought controversial. Well, that was more than thirty years ago, and we probably have a very different idea of what might be controversial now. At any rate, the Prize Trust's position has been throughout that we don't attempt to soften anything controversial in Heinlein's letters.

This loc has already gotten out of hand so I will confine remarks to the letters to Taras Wolansky: Macmillan's marketing has been crochety throughout the process here. For example, I was at Comic-Con in San Diego, at which Tor had a table, a few weeks before the book was released, but they would do nothing at all to support advance promotion or publicity. I did a few appearances on my own. Nor did they do anything with the 2011 Comic-Con, just

a few weeks after the release of the trade paperback.

In the case of the Hugo ballot package, Macmillan would not allow any electronic excerpt at all from the biography for the Hugo voter package — which prompted a very rare snarl from Eleanor Wood, among others from whom snarls are less rare. That Tor had an excerpt online was fortunate but coincidental. My choice would have been the last 2 or 3 WWII chapters, as I think that has the most condensed showing of Heinlein-the-person of any other particular passage in the book.

However, I disagree with the characterization of the synthetic commentary in the introduction as “grand assertions about Heinlein’s cultural and literary importance,” followed up by “but backs up none of them.” I disagree that there are any “grand assertions” at all. The “assertions” are individually, for the most part, common knowledge for people familiar with the different fields (the exception seems to be that the current generation of policy thinktank people are reluctant to own any influence from the world of science fiction at all — though it was considered quite uncontroversial in previous years, as the forthcoming discussion of Heinlein and Herman Kahn will demonstrate). None of them really require backup — they are common coin within the communities involved, not all of whom speak much to each other. The only novation here is assembling them together in one place and pointing out how rare that is in the history of letters and how taken together they justify thinking of Heinlein as a 20th century culture figure rather than as simply a science fiction writer.

I also suggest that the introduction, whose purpose was to explain to newcomers why people think of the subject as important enough to write a biography about, and possibly pique interest, might not be the appropriate place for the kind of argument Mr. Wolansky is looking for. The biography IS the argument — as he tacitly acknowledges by adding the qualifying parenthetical “(yet).”

The introduction did what it was supposed to do: it casts a wider net and appries the reader that this is not a life of a genre figure. I had to fight hard and compromise greatly to keep it.

But for that very reason I have to second Mr. Wolansky’s disappointment with that selection; it was intended for the *hoi polloi* (insofar as a set of readers of biography can be considered polloi in any sense of the term) and would not serve the sophisticated genre readership that makes up the WorldCon voting membership.

From: **Brad W. Foster** December 21, 2011
Post Office Box 165246, Irving, TX
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<http://www.jabberwockygraphix.com>

Always nice to have a nice big manila envelope in with all the bills in the post office box every other month!

Two new files attached — another dinosaur (for some reason I’ve been doing those more

lately), and a bunch of little people coming ominously closer. Kind of like the loc writers.

Got another book to add to the “look for this one” list with your review of *The Astounding, the Amazing, and the Unknown*. Sounds like a fun if not deep read, and what hit me the most was that I’ve now been around long enough that fictional novels that incorporate people from the real world are starting to use names that are from my own past, not my own prehistory. Asimov and de Camp are now fictional characters? How old am I? Old enough, I guess! If I had read about this a month or so ago, would probably have been on all the Christmas want lists I went out to folks. Maybe for next year.

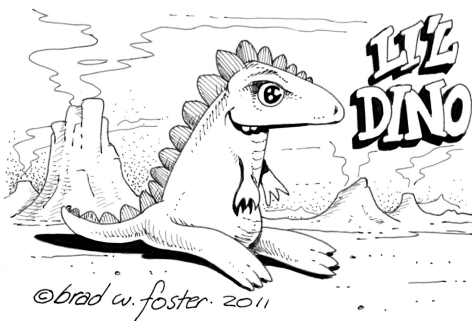
Saw the first *Cars* movie, and while nice once, thought it was the least of the Pixar line. Taral’s review saves me wondering if I need to see the second. (I have, on the other hand, watched “The Incredibles” on tv the other night for probably the 20th time!)

Your reply to Rodney about how some people have the “... attitude that anyone who is not connected to the internet does not exist...” make me think of how I find myself surprised at times when I type someones name into Google and can’t find any results. I think it’s because the type of people we know and the circles we mostly exist in do tend to be more net-connected. But there are still millions of folks who aren’t worrying that Facebook is stealing their souls, and quite happy to stay that way!

The first time I ran into that attitude was when I handed one of the conrunners of ConGlomeration a copy of *Alexiad*. He glanced at it and then said, “Is it online? I only read things that are online.” Coincidentally, ConGlom is losing membership since the committee doesn’t mail out or hand out fliers; they just do things online.

—JTM

Hope you have a fine holiday season, and a few hundred new books to read into the first month of 2012.
stay happy~



From: **John Thiel** December 18, 2011
30 N. 19th Street, Lafayette, IN 47904-

2950 USA

Reacting to your review of *The Last Moonwalker and Other Stories* in the December issue, I’m wondering why Alzheimer’s is enjoying such a vogue in the present decade. It is practically replacing cancer in terms of topicality and has utterly beaten out AIDS and HIV as a theme of danger of public figures in the news. I have not seen any tracing of its progress into the public view. I think AIDS lost its popularity due to descriptions of the way it was transmitted, which is not true of Alzheimer’s as far as I have found, as I have not found out how it is contracted — not that I look for such information; but it is usually blown in advertising when a disease has achieved newsworthy significance.

Having to deal with several relatives who are showing various dementias, I can understand why there is all this interest.

— JTM

I’d think they would have the best medics up in DC, but according to news sources, they seem about like doctors anywhere.

“The Man Who Would Live On” is not Ian’s fiction, eh?

From: **Alexis A. Gilliland** December 2011
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Thank you for *Alexiad* #10.6, which arrived on the day that the Cedar Hill crew was taking down the big old oak in our back yard. Demonstrating that even vegetables are mortal the tree had mostly died, and one large branch had already fallen on our roof so we wanted to get rid of it before any more dead wood fell on anything. The foreman showed us a section from the middle of the tree that was mostly eaten out with dry rot, and thought that the next big storm could have knocked it down. The back yard looks very strange without our old tree, though. Otherwise the winter solstice is approaching so it gets dark early, but so is Christmas, and the neighborhood is enlivened with lights on the trees and houses, not to mention the occasional inflatable snowman or Santa Claus.

A relative of mine in Hopkinsville was killed last November when a tree fell on his car. As for lights, the gargantuan light display we saw in Hopkinsville was certainly “enlivening”.

The discussion of global warming in the letter column expresses a certain amount of skepticism as to whether or how much it might be driven by human activity. A case can be made that we have entered a new geological era, the Anthropocene, complete with its own ongoing mass extinction. The unique feature of this new era is that mankind’s multifarious

activities, including but not limited to the burning of fossil fuel, are what is driving the world's climate change. This is supported if not proven by the fact that in the last 50 years the world's temperature has risen 0.911 degrees Celsius (C). This sudden and sustained rise (sometimes referred to as "the hockey stick") is in line with the conclusions of NASA, NOAA, and the University of East Anglia's Climate Research Unit, and is the result obtained by Dr. Richard Mueller's Berkeley Earth Surface Temperature group. Since Dr. Mueller, an astrophysicist, had been skeptical of the earlier work, he found it easy to attract sponsors (including \$150,000 from the conservative Koch Foundation,) and his four papers (undergoing peer review but released on October 20th) address the criticism leveled against NASA et al in great detail. Basically he says they done good. Climategate to the contrary notwithstanding. A couple of points can be made here. The first is the 2010 survey that found 97 to 98 percent of climate scientists supported anthropogenic global warming (AGW) demonstrated that our climate scientists are going with the science rather than any non-scientific political agenda. The second asks that great science fictional question, what if this goes on? A straight linear projection shows that in 100 years the world's temperature will have risen by an additional 1.822 degrees C, putting us in the vicinity of the mid Pliocene warming period, which was 3 degrees warmer than the 1900-1950 average, and whose sea levels averaged 25 meters higher. But wait, there's more! What if this continues to go on, eh? Where might we happy humans be in 1,000 years, after the climate of the Anthropocene has stabilized because we finally—for whatever reason, stopped burning fossil fuels? Don't ask, but the world then will probably support a rather smaller population than the world now.

Fearlessly aligning himself with the minority, Timothy Lane notes that 30 or 40 heroic climate scientists disagree with the "Gorescam" (a nice coinage, by the way) consensus, and correctly observes that consensus never constitutes scientific proof. However, if Tim imagines the observed 0.911 degree rise in the last 50 years is a natural fluctuation that will presently reverse itself he should say so, even though the facts suggest this is not the case. For my benefit Tim reprises the alarmist litany, to wit: "The world is warming due to anthropogenic greenhouse gases, the results will be catastrophic in 50 years or so, and therefore (something must be done about it ASAP.)" Up to his "therefore" I generally agree with the litany, but what's done is done and cannot be undone, and it is a delusion (and a Liberal delusion, at that) to imagine it is possible to avert the impending changes (catastrophe! cry the alarmists) described in my previous paragraph. Why? The short answer is that our industrial civilization depends on fossil fuels for the energy to support a world population of seven billion, and cutting back on the use of fossil fuels requires imposing immediate and unacceptable hardships of the sort that bring down governments.

Taras Wolansky waves his hands to discredit the survey of 1372 climate scientists who went with the facts, but doesn't dispute the facts. Taras is also optimistic that genetically engineered biofuels will eventually replace fossil fuels. Well yes, biofuels do look to be a plausible alternative, up to a point. As, for instance, maybe several million tons a year when they get the bugs worked out. Given that we burn seven thousand million tons of coal and five thousand million tons of oil a year, that's a lot of energy to be replaced by algae, yeast or microbes cultured in stainless steel tanks. He also seems to view global warming as relatively benign, but nature doesn't do only one thing, and for much of the world warmer will be associated with dryer, dryer with drought, and drought with famine.



Regarding that same survey, Jim Stumm notes that science is not democratic and "that one Galileo with the evidence on his side trumps any number of eminent Aristotelians." Alas, that all the evidence to date appears to favor the eminent Aristo- uh, the AGW majority. He also says that vehicle fuel will never be insufficient to meet world demand because when price goes up demand will fall. Well, yes, but in a famine people starve because they have no money to buy what little food is available, so from an economic point of view starving paupers do not constitute a demand for food. Might Jim consider that vehicle fuel could someday be insufficient to meet the world's needs? To argue that popular opposition to nuclear power is fading due to concerns about increasing CO2 exaggerates the fear of global warming and ignores the tsunami of opposition generated by last April's disaster at Fukushima, a disaster which resonates with the history of Three Mile Island and Chernobyl, not to mention all those classroom duck and cover drills back in the Cold War. We do know how to build safer nuclear reactors; the pebble bed reactor moderates neutrons with pressurized helium which is also used to move heat to the steam generator, so in the event of an accident, the helium pressure drops and the reactor automatically shuts down. However, building such reactors is expensive and time-consuming and as we have not yet come up with any solution for the disposal of spent nuclear fuel, nuclear reactors are unlikely to spring up like mushrooms after the rain when, as, and if the public mindset changes. In the context of

climate alarmists Jim mentions the "lying mass media," an offhand shot in the general direction of the left, but which the ill disposed might assume includes the Fox Network and Rush Limbaugh.

What else? There is also some discussion of how FDR "let" the Japanese attack Pearl Harbor so as to get into the war against Hitler's Germany. Gordon W. Prange, the historian who wrote *At Dawn We Slept*, immersed himself in Pearl Harbor, from both the American and Japanese sides, and concluded that no, FDR might have been devious and crafty, but on December 7th the Japs whipped us without his permission or assistance. And on December 11th, when Hitler declared war on the US, it was to the drop jawed amazement of the German General Staff with whom he had not consulted. Hitler was many things, but never a stooge for FDR.

A lot of people thought Robert Conroy's first book, 1901 (1995), with its German invasion of Long Island, improbable. Yet there was an actual *Großergeneralstab* plan, admittedly on the order of "Well, we don't have anything else to do today." On the other hand, they also had a plan to "turn the trains around" and only attack Russia — which they quit updating in 1913!

— JTM

From: **Joy V. Smith** October 19, 2011
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I always appreciate the book reviews because they help me make decisions. I can skip the bad ones while learning about the authors, stories, and the authors' mistakes! Lots of fun and interesting books out there, even if some of them are more worth reading about in reviews.

The Last Moonwalker and Other Stories sounds intriguing. Thanks for the background on *Three Cups of Deceit* . . . I was glad to learn of *Fantasy Commentator* #59-60 (John W. Campbell, Jr.). I especially enjoyed the review of *Snuff*. (I'm going to read it again!) Thanks to Taral Wayne for *The Flying Visit* review; that was certainly interesting.

Did you read my essay on "Anthony Godby Johnson" that was in *Challenger*? Bad charity drives out good charity.

—JTM

Thanks to Rodford Edmiston for his column, *The Joy of High Tech*. That was a fascinating article on bullets, firearms, testing, and the speed of sound. Who'd have thought that bullets preceded firearms! And I loved the mottoes on them.

The *Cars 2* review confirmed my opinion of the previews. Good article on alchemy too. And thanks for the fanzines listings. I read an

Argentus issue recently; it was full of great articles too. Even more items of interest in the LOCs, and thanks, Lisa, for giving me the right book title, *Island Stallion Races*. I didn't remember that title at all — just the aliens and the race. And I also enjoyed The Man Who Would Live On.

The aliens also make a cameo appearance in one of the Black Stallion books but I can't remember which one.

— LTM

From: **Lloyd Penney** December 28, 2011
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Many thanks for the 60th *Alexiad*. There's not much time today to get everything done, so a quick loc for this landmark issue.

I am already tired of vampires, werewolves and zombies, and all the interest in them. To me, it's just the hokey side of horror, and horror never really interested me. Guess I'm just showing my age, and the fact that what I do like is pretty defined, at least for me.

I hate to say that you are right about what passed or calls itself Core Fandom. We are aging and changing, our interests are changing too, and it's more difficult to get around and see one another. Our numbers are dwindling, too. We've just lost Rusty Hevelin, and Bob Sabella at the beginning of the month. The kind of conventions we like are on the decline, but the convention model is at least being taken by other interests not our own. I hope not, but we may yet have to escape to the web to overcome the geography that separates us. Our own finances are scary right now, but I am waiting for a return to an assignment, and a possible interview for a dream job.

A nightmare scenario indeed . . . I hope I will be long gone by the time that happens, but I do not think Worldcon will be for sale. I don't think anyone would want to buy it, if it ever was to be for sale; given our ageing fannish population, I am waiting for the first sign of Worldcon's decline, which will be a year where no one bids for it. At Reno, nearly everyone was in their 40s, 50s, 60s and 70s, which is another sign that while we get the numbers Worldcon needs to stay alive, but it was more of a family reunion than a convention.

Speaking of which . . . the 2019 slot on your list of Worldcon bids may now be filled by another Montreal bid. I don't know much about it, other than I heard about it SFContario 2 in November, and so far, people involved in it have been quiet. As I learn more, I will pass it along, but as good as it is to see another Canadian bid, I will be 60 years old should it happen in its intended year.

If we go — if we can go — I think I will be a little more careful about the driving. By then, I may have to replace my car. And that's

the year I turn 65.

John Purcell is getting into steampunk? Oh, how could this have happened? Oh, woe! Well, happened to us some years ago, and it's been a lot of fun. As soon as John gets his costume and we see them, I will pass our own pictures along.

Your comments to Rodney Leighton ring true with us . . . we finally did get onto the Internet in the 90s, and so many around us were already connected to Compuserve. If they couldn't send us e-mail, they just didn't contact us when they easily could have called us. Even these days, you've got to have the right software or programme . . . "Why didn't you come to my party? I put it on my LiveJournal." This was some years ago . . . it's just that people don't understand that if you have the word to put out, you have to be active so that people do see it, and not passive, hoping all will see it, and they don't.

My loc . . . Andrew Murdoch is still involved to some degree in Vancouver fandom, but not in zines any more. Benoit Girard was at the Montreal Worldcon . . . he's dealing with a divorce and just trying to make a living in Quebec City. Scott Patri is up Vancouver Island, and I haven't heard from him in some time, although I do see some of his artwork from time to time in zines, don't know if they are recent.

Thanks for the update. I think people are using old artwork of Scott's. He was often crude and over-the-top, but he understood something about the changing attitude in congoers that many others still don't.

— JTM

Gotta head out, so I will say I read and enjoyed the rest. Off it goes . . . Yvonne and I hope your Christmas was a great time, and we wish you (and all of us) a more prosperous 2012. We all need the break. See you then.

From: **Martin Morse Wooster** Dec. 2011
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Many thanks for *Alexiad*. As much as I'd like to believe that FDR Tricked Us Into War (I mean, I've read Charles Callan Tansill) I think Joe is right here and George Price is wrong. I thought all the evidence about Pearl Harbor was that we had cracked some but not all of the Japanese diplomatic codes and had some vague idea that Something Bad Was Going to Happen but not anything specific beyond that. We tend to look at the past and say, "Of course they knew what we know so why didn't they do what we would have done?" But History doesn't of course work that way. I'm not a fan of war and, for the record, opposed the Iraq War, but like it or not, we entered World War II because Japan bombed Pearl Harbor and Germany declared war on the U.S. For America, World War II (unlike World War I) was not, in any way, a "war of choice."

As for Taral Wayne's contributions, I didn't know Peter Fleming in any way wrote sf, so it was interesting to learn about *The Flying Visit*. But he's stretching things more than a bit when he claims that Fleming's book in any way foreshadows real events. I mean, predicting that Hitler would die from a bomb in an airplane concealed in a thermos of soup is not a very good prediction.

I wonder if he heard of To Be or Not To Be?

This one (1942):
<http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0035446/>
not this one (1983):
<http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0086450/>
— JTM

I do agree with him completely about the ludicrousness of *Cars 2*, the first actively bad Pixar movie. I describe the plot of this movie by turning my hands into fists, making car noises, and then having the fists smash into each other. Pixar's great strength is its *stories*. I saw *Toy Story* and *Toy Story 2* a few years ago when Disney did their 3D double feature and realized that those two movies were well-written comedies with great characters. Pixar could not have made the leap into computer automation without such strong scripts. By contrast, *Cars 2* is a bad script with far too much time given to Larry the Cable Guy. I hope *Brave* is better, it can't be any worse.

As for Leka Zogu, my favorite story about him came from an obituary in the *Financial Times*. Apparently when he first tried to enter Albania after the fall of Communism, he offered his passport, which, under "occupation," listed "king." The Albanians, for some reason, objected to this. I gather subsequently Leka relented and was allowed to live in Albania for the last few years of his life.

The bit about don Francisco Franco being, eventually, the heir to the Franco line was interesting. Am I right that Spain is currently the only monarchy creating new hereditary titles?

From: **R-Laurraine Tutihasi** Dec. 31, 2011
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I just finished reading *Alexiad* for October. Congratulations on getting Android smartphones. Sorry to hear about the battery problem. That doesn't sound good. I just recently replaced, under warranty, my iPhone for the same reason. It was getting so I had to recharge my phone more than once a day even without much usage.

From: **Henry L. Welch** January 4, 2012
15290 Upper Ellen Road, Los Gatos, CA
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Thanks for the latest two issues of *Alexiad*.

Read and enjoyed and even a few comments.

In Vol. 10 No. 5, Jim Stumm complains about the use of long URLs. If the goal is merely to have people find a site rather than knowing the actual URL, then the solution is to use a redirecting service like tinyurl. They will create a web page that redirects to the desired target, but uses a very short URL.

I was sorry to read about the loss of Lisa's laptop and camera in Vol. 10 No. 6. While the loss of the electronics is annoying, I noticed that Lisa did not address the hassle of having to deal with the smashed window and its replacement.

I had to do that. The glass company wanted \$\$\$ but the insurance paid; I expect the insurance will go up \$\$\$\$.

— JTM

From: **Rodney Leighton** December 25, 2011
11 Branch Road, R. R. #3,
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CANADA

Those folks who hoped for a white Christmas in this area got their wish; it's a winter wonderland outside.

If you haven't found it yet, Chuck Connor kept all the shit I wrote to him and put together a zine and then he got caught up in moving and stuff and it was later than he intended. Anyway, *A Leighton Year* is on efanzines. Covers about a year. Sort of like a larger version of *The Leighton Look* with very few fanzines; comments on books and tv shows and hockey.

Just scanning it, it looks like I read about seventy books during that period. But that's not quite accurate; most of the books written about are books Chuck sent to me. I did read other books.

I was sorry to read of Bob Sabella's death, haven't had any contact with him for years. But I thought he was a good guy. Rather strange that you consider his passing as a problem for FAPA.

He was Official Editor; everyone sent him their contributions and he collated them and sent them back out. There may be some trouble getting stuff to the new OE.

—JTM

I was just looking at a couple of editions of eAPA. Graeme Cameron has created some new fan awards. Taral gets to design his own award which sounds kind of fun. Hmmm, I see that Lloyd mentioned this last time. Given the award for Best Canadian Loc Hack. Dunno why Graeme didn't just name the thing the Lloyd Penney Award and be done with it. Given that he is currently the ONLY Canadian Fan Hack that I know of...

Here's a question for you, Lloyd... of the 20 folks you and Taral were discussing, how many were female? Only one woman in Graeme's list of awards. Four women in the list

of loccers in *Alexiad*; out of 24. I guess that's a normal percentage.

Yeah, I know, if you can't access the web and don't have email, you are an uncouth neanderthal fool who is not to be suffered nor communicated with. It used to bother me some that people who communicated with me a lot could no longer be bothered to do so because doing so meant, horror of all horrors, printing out a letter and putting it in the postal system. Doesn't concern me much now.

Chuck, being one of those silly folks who think I should be writing for and to fanzines, considers it important that I am now on the web. Back in 2007 Steve put a couple of zine things on there at my request and some sort of personal page on his idea. I forget whether I didn't like it or what; Chuck has some desire to resurrect the thing. I said: Why? As far as I can recall, part of the thing back then was that people could email me via Steve. Time, effort, and money spent for him. No, don't do that. If someone wishes to communicate with me, write a damned letter.

But I do understand that it is the modern way of life and I do understand that some people think it valuable and important and just as you prented the generic letter as a loc Chuck is going to or has put it on the internet. Who knows; fanzines may start falling on me like rain.

I was going to do another generic thing but I think instead I will try to write the best letter I can to those who write and to those who send a fanzine and see how that goes for the winter.

Work is still going but will likely be over shortly. Mind you, typing is a chore.

But I think that is what I will do... as you have noted I said the opposite in the open letter and yesterday I wrote to Chuck and said I didn't care what he put on the web, I didn't think I would do any more generic letters or any *Look* or anything like that and went upstairs and watched a hockey game on dvd and found myself pondering a sort of *Look* thing. Total insanity may not be that far off.

Here's something some of you technologically minded folks might find of interest; if you read the thing in the Dec. issue you may have noted that the authorities killed my tv reception. Fiddling around one day I found that I could pick up, sort of, 3 stations. They were there before but usually not visible. I still have the same hookup... rabbit ears plus a bitty gadget purchased from Publisher's Clearing House that was supposed to pull in cable stations. But the stations come from New Brunswick; previously the CBC station I got came from Charlottetown P.E.I. The CBC station based in Saint John, N.B. was fuzzy or invisible, CTV from Halifax was ok; CTV from Halifax was ok; CTV from Moncton was crappy; Radio Canada station, based in, I think, Saint John, varied from snowy to invisible. CTV station is not much different than it was before the order to eliminate tv for non paying customers. Radio Canada station is sometimes clearer than any tv reception I have had since I moved here and sometimes invisible; CBC is sometimes fit to watch and sometimes

completely invisible. I was thinking atmospheric pressure might have something to do with it but watching the weather on the French station the other night it was good and clear, video and audio both and suddenly there was a buzz and the audio vanished and the video got very bad. Kind of weird.

Time to go puff on an old pipe and read something.

From: **Darrell Schweitzer** January 11, 2012
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I must disagree with my friend Martin Wooster about Global Warming, in that it is not a theory about the future. It is an observed fact about the present. It is something which is observable by anyone anecdotally (we remember different weather from our childhoods or when the Northwest Passage was not open for shipping) but more specifically by anyone working in any number of sciences. This is why, deniers to the contrary, there is a scientific consensus on this point. Of course the curve does not go up in an absolutely straight line. The BBC announced a couple days into this year that 2011 had only been the SECOND warmest year on record in Britain.

Anyone who pretends the Earth is not warming rapidly is indeed a denier, and one must ask why. That only the far Right seems to have "doubts" and these are groups which nakedly serve the interests of the 1% against the 99% and have an explicitly anti-environmental agenda raises a certain suspicion. If the environmentalists are the Greens, I suppose the Republicans are the Browns -- the pro-pollution, anti-environmental party, only interested in short-term profits rather than long-term consequences.

The long-term effects of global warming are indeed speculative though. What happens when the tundras begin to melt and release all that methane? Will this only raise the temperatures a few degrees, or cause irreversible global catastrophe? The pro-pollution party of course doesn't care. At least the anti-environmental Republicans of Ronnie Reagan's day almost had an excuse. They were religious wackos who thought the Second Coming was at hand and therefore one need not worry about the future. Their logic is hard to follow, though. You can't take your money to Heaven, so shouldn't one be more concerned with getting right with Jesus than with the quarterly earnings report? Or course it be — you don't suppose? — that these people were actually cynics, manipulating the Born Yesterday wing of Christianity for their own ends?

Or could it be that you have to be rich to get into Heaven? Jesus didn't think so, but for so many alleged Christians the teachings of Jesus are a mere inconvenience.

To Richard Dengrove I point out that there was nothing wrong with the technology of the Fukushima reactor. The reactor was built in the wrong place. Since the location of the fault line was known, it should have been easy to predict

which way a tsunami would go. Japan can only be hit from the west. So building a reactor on low ground on the western coast was a very poor decision.

As for relics and the possibly bovine nature of the Virgin Mary, I suppose I should point out that since Calvin's day standards on relics have tightened up. I have never heard of milk from the breast of the Virgin being venerated in modern times. I have only once actually seen a relic of the True Cross, a piece of the actual wood, and this was a tiny splinter in a large reliquary. Allegedly someone in the 19th Century made a count of all such relics and determined that there was about enough to account for the crossbeam. The bit about there being enough to build a battleship is a myth. Remember that most such relics are extremely small. Furthermore, no relic of the blood of the circumcision, much less a foreskin of Christ, has been seen in many, many years. Most bones are locked up where you can't see them. I saw the alleged remains of St. Peter (or some of them) in the Vatican some eysars ago. They were locked in a box about the size of a briefcase, and on display among the collection of embalmed popes in the basement of St. Peter's. But of course I could not see what was in the box. A piece of his skull is allegedly in one of the hanging lamps in St. John of the Lateran. No feathers from the wings of the Holy Spirit have been reported for at least 500 years. The alleged egg laid by the Holy Spirit was a satirical jape by the heretic Luther. The official Church position on relics is sort of a "Don't ask, don't tell," expressed more along the lines of "As long as it creates faith, don't look too closely."

I was offered a relic of the True Cross at a coin show once. I probably should have bought it, just to say I have one. It was a button-sized, coin-like object from the reign of Heraclius, a baked clay disk with a crude image of the emperor and son (or at least two figures) with a cross between them. It resembled the decanumnia of this reign. It was actually a form of Byzantine war bond, probably created to help finance the wars against the early Muslims. A splinter of the True Cross (that object which Heraclius had rescued from the Persians and carried back in triumph) had been burned in the fire to make these clay disks. Since, as is well-known, holiness is essentially homeopathic, one tiny splinter infused holiness equally throughout the entire lot. So this really was a genuine relic of the True Cross, though not a piece of wood. The dealer wanted \$75.00. I have not seen one since. It must have been a good deal.

What I have to admit I wondered about, as a Catholic school student with a scientific turn of mind, is whether or not holiness is carried in water vapor, or if it is left behind in the holy water font when the water evaporates. Since, as we were told, a single drop of holy water would turn a bucket of ordinary water into holy water, what happens if holy water evaporates, then falls as rain into the oceans? Doesn't that mean that the entire biosphere is sacred and the most mystical aspects the Gaia Hypothesis are confirmed by Christianity? I don't think anyone

has quite thought that one through. Then again, theologians are still having trouble with the idea that if you accept the Trinity, and the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are the same being, this means that God the Father, creator of the universe, is Jewish on his mother's side. Try that one out on a Fundie someday.

I don't think it would bother them. Your opponents think what they think, not what you think they should think.

— JTM

If they read their Bibles as they're supposed to, they already know Jesus was born of a Jewish woman.

— LTM



From: **Dainis Bisenieks** January 13, 2012
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The book that actually turned up at the library and told me about Toba and much else was *Eruptions that Shook the World* by Clive Oppenheimer (Cambridge U.P., 2011). Under consideration are eruptions great enough to have far-reaching effects on climate and evolution. It's full of fascinating technicalities — what clues long-ago events have left that might give us some measure of their extent and duration. Much is made of sulfur emissions, in which there is great variability, and estimates of these have particularly wide margins of error. In the case of Toba, the catalogue of uncertainties goes on for pages. As for fauna in the neighborhood, the orang-utan survived, and evidently "mammal populations found refuges in which to survive."

The eruption of Mount St. Helens destroyed a habitat of an endangered species — Bigfoot.

I had vaguely heard of volcanism in Germany. Here I learn of Laacher See in the Eifel district of Germany, where a Plinian eruption comparable to Pinatubo took place some 13,000 years ago. Stone Age humans were present; what myths were generated among the survivors, we can only imagine. The gods are angry!

Ice cores give a superb record of the past, and it is interesting that some major eruptions in the past millennium or two, on that evidence, remain otherwise mysterious. But enough.

From the latest issue of *Natural History*, I learned that whelks prey upon clams. Not a matter I had ever thought about. Now if this, with added details, all authentic, had been an entry in a medieval Bestiary . . . or the mating practices of certain arthropods . . . might not these accounts appear as fabulous as those we actually find?

For the first time in a long time, a book was sent to me for a final edit. Not SF, a whodunit; the protagonist and narrator is a woman jockey . . . one of those people who, when encountering unnatural death, just can't resist trying to get to the bottom of things. Since the moon was mentioned several times by way of scene-setting, I had to ferret out the exact chronology to make sure that it would behave lawfully. Never trust an author with moons!

A copy of Robert Burton's *The Anatomy of Melancholy* came my way, in an edition in which all the Latin quotations are Englished. I find that it does indeed have a certain charm for me, though I find that much of the work needs to be read at the greatest possible speed, else the prolixity becomes deadly.

Several pages were devoted to notions of the cosmos current in his day, not long after the invention of the telescope. One such notion was that the stars were distant suns, and they just had to have planets, and these planets had to have inhabitants. As for planets, the notion has turned out to be far from wrong. In modern parlance, the protoplanetary disc takes up most of the angular momentum. As for life . . . in the 1940's and '50s, SF writers could still with a straight face present a habitable Venus. And Martians.

Department of Coincidence: I was reading a story in a fantasy anthology, in which an attempt to work magic is capped by the utterance "Corsicanatexas!" I had paused in my reading and marked my place at that page with a leaflet from a tin of fruitcake, and where do fruitcakes come from?

"Narrow Valley" by R. A. Lafferty (F&SF, September 1966).

It has been remarked here and there that the parity-breaking experiment would, if we were sending TV images of our civilization to remote aliens, provide a means of showing them where in these images left and right are. I cannot imagine such images being sent except through transparent space, in which case the aliens (imagined to be on the order of tens of light years distant) can see what we see, including readily identifiable galaxies or groupings of them, which the passage of tens of millions of years would not seriously change. For the measure of things, we can begin with the spectral lines of some suitable element, giving the wavelength of at least one. There's an absolute yardstick, from which we can work up to the macroscopic world. Lots of other things seem possible to me, so that I don't even see

any need to present details. How to show the spectral range of light visible to our eyes. How to make clear our measures of mass, and density, and any physical characteristics whatever.

"Physical science expresses universal facts; necessarily it is a universal language. Heretofore archaeologists have dealt only with pre-scientific cultures."

— H. Beam Piper, "Omnilingual" (Astounding Science Fiction, February 1957)

I suppose this holds true for CETI people, too.

— JTM

Has awareness of the classics of SF faded from our collective memory? Murray Leinster's "First Contact" remains prominent in mine; *Cuckoo's Egg* by C. J. Cherryh goes far beyond it. Aliens whom we can trust (to be no worse than we are) should have nurturance, play, humor, the ability to take pains and not to be enslaved to one's instincts: what else?

From: **Robert S. Kennedy** Jan. 20, 2012
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Thank you for Vol. 10, No. 6.

It was a great shock to read on page 16 of the death of Robert Michael Sabella on December 3, 2011. I sent him some jokes since that date and was not aware of his having died. He had just recently retired and was looking forward to a long and enjoyable retirement.

Oswald Cobblepot publisher (p. 2)? Ho-Ho-Ho!

More like, "Wak! Wak! Wak!"

I read *11/22/63* by Stephen King (2011) which as you probably know is a time travel novel where the protagonist goes back to save President Kennedy. It is a reasonably good, if overly long, novel. I did have a couple of problems with the effects on the future by the protagonist's actions. It is also a love story. But, basically, I would have to say that the main idea of the novel is the Law of Unintended Consequences. Even though the novel is about going back in time to save a life it got me thinking about going back in time to obtain genealogical information or even more so to make investments that would make me rich now. J It also made me think about going back to exterminate someone that would make our current world a better place. I know who it would be. But, I'm not going to name the person. Well, I'll tell one person who it would not be and that surprisingly is Adolph Hitler. Someone else can have that pleasure.

Stephen King's Bag of Bones was on A&E on December 11 and 12, 2011. I watched the whole thing. Well, not actually. I fast forwarded through various parts of it. Why I watched it to the end I don't know. I hope that

the book was better than the movie.

Destroyermen: Rising Tides (2011) by Taylor Anderson was obtained from the library. Readers will know that it is the fifth book in the series. Like the previous books it is an excellent read. Then *Destroyermen: Firestorm* (2011) was obtained from the library. My only problem with this series is that it could very well become the never ending story. So, I hope that at some time in the future Anderson will bring it to a conclusion. Good review by Joe (p. 3).

Two new TV shows that I've started watching are *Once Upon A Time* and *Grimm*. Rather weird that ABC and NBC would come up with the same basic concept at the same time—that the Fairy Tales were/are real. *Grimm* is a good show. *Once Upon A Time* is excellent. For some time I thought that the evil Queen/Witch/Mayor didn't know the truth of what she had done and that Rumpelstiltskin was the only person (other than the boy) who knew the truth. The show before the break disabused me of that idea.

I went to see *Sherlock Holmes: A Game of Shadows* and it was a great disappointment. I was nice and gave it a 3.0 on my scale of 1-5. This was then reduced to 2.5 because they used the word "gender" instead of "sex" and I doubt very much that would have been the case in that time period. As many of you know this is one of my major aggravations. I don't know when "gender" replaced "sex", but I don't buy it. Words have gender, people have sex.

Two books were obtained from the SFBC—*The Revisionists* by Thomas Mullen (2011) and *Strange Relations* by Philip José Farmer (2005). *The Revisionists* was something of a disappointment. There was an item early in the novel that made me mad. Sadly, I didn't make a note of it and have now forgotten it. At one point he has two Caucasian cops in Washington D.C. who don't like Blacks. If that were really the case they would not last long. He claims that we dropped the bomb on Hiroshima because we thought that the Japanese people "were subhuman." (p. 44) One has to wonder what Harry Truman would have to say about that ridiculous comment. He mentions a pro-immigration rally (p. 135) when it was really a pro-illegal immigration rally. Finally there is a comment that Alger Hiss was a spy for the USSR. Well, good for Mullen! That partially offsets some of the other commentary in his novel. On my rating scale of 1-5 I give the novel a 2.5. I will not be reading any of his other books. The Farmer book was very enjoyable even though the dust jacket cover art did not depict any of the stories in the book. I gave it a 4.75. Both books will be donated to the city library.

There is the consideration that people who say "Would it not be wondrous for the entire nation to be destroyed like a beautiful flower?" are not going to be persuaded to change their minds save by extraordinary means.

Joe: You make reference to the SEALs and Cuba in your review of *Castro's Bomb* (p. 4). Roy H. Boehm, the Founder of the SEALs, was a member of my ship association. At one time he served on the USS *Worcester* (CL-144) as a First Class Boatswain Mate. Somewhere in my piles of books is an autographed copy of his book *First SEAL* (1997). I highly recommend the book to anyone interested in the subject. During the Cuban Missile Crises Roy led a small group into Cuba to meet up with anti-Castro Cubans and obtain information regarding the missiles. They exited from and returned to a submarine. I had a long and interesting conversation with Roy at one of our reunions. Roy died December 30, 2008 at the age of 84.

Grant C. McCormick: Excellent review of Sir Terry Pratchett's *SNUFF*. As I am sure you know I made short mention of the book in the previous issue of *ALEXIAD*. I also highly recommend the book. As a possible point of interest I attended the First North American Discworld Convention in Tempe, Arizona in 2009. Very Enjoyable.

Lloyd Penney: Yes indeed, everyone should nominate Chris Garcia's HUGO Acceptance for Best Dramatic Presentation, Short Form.

Perhaps at this point I should explain my interest in the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor. In 1959 or 1960 three of us at work were going to lunch. The other two were politically what should probably be described as on the Left. For some reason the subject of Pearl Harbor came up. I mentioned that there were some people who believed that FDR knew the attack was going to happen and purposely did not warn the Navy and Army Commanders there so as to get the United States into the war. One of the others (a strong FDR admirer) said it was true. My response was shock and that it would make FDR an incredibly horrible person. He responded that FDR had to do it in order to get us into the war. Since then I have accumulated a fairly extensive library on the subject of the Pearl Harbor attack.

In his biography of **Dusko Popov, Codename TRICYCLE** (2005), Russell Miller states that J. Edgar Hoover sent a memorandum to the President with a description of the microdot, some disapproving description of Popov, and the beginning and end of the Tricycle Memorandum. But not the request for information on "Naval Strong Point Pearl Harbor".

— JTM

From: **John Purcell** January 21, 2012
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You have reached a milestone issue, Joe and Lisa: ten full years of publication, if I'm reading your Volume numbers correctly. Congratulations, and keep them coming!

Lisa's opening comment about the Day of Infamy reminded me of the story my dad told us

when he heard about Pearl Harbor that morning. Dad (17 years old at the time) walked up to his father and asked, "Where's Pearl Harbor?" The response was, "Hawaii. That's where we keep our Pacific fleet. Why?" "Well, I just heard on the radio it got bombed." At that news, my grandfather — as dad tells it — shot straight up in his chair about three feet with a look of complete shock on his face. Not quite two months later, John W. Purcell (my dad) enlisted in the U.S. Navy, three weeks shy of his 18th birthday.

Interesting. Where did he serve?

I disagree with Joe's comment that "conventions are also on the decline. Indeed, it seems hard to think of anything that's doing well these days, including us." In terms of numbers, conventions are increasing as science fiction fandom continues its balkanization into assorted interest groups. Additionally, I have noticed a proliferation of newer electronic fanzines and sf related websites and blogs; this, to me, says that fans are writing just as much as before, only moving their activity to the web, which really shouldn't surprise any of us. I am no Luddite who eschews the use of e-publishing (heck, *Askance* is an e-zine, and about 75% of my fanac is done online nowadays), it just seems to me that fans are simply using the technology available to pursue their hobby interests. Makes sense to me. As for "including us", I am assuming Joe refers to the various aches and pains the human body acquires as it ages. If so, I most definitely agree.

So Leonard Nimoy is retiring from *Star Trek* cons. Can't say I blame him; after all, Nimoy is now 80 years old, and Shatner's not that far behind. These gentlemen have given us a wealth of enjoyment over the years, so I say let them enjoy themselves as they see fit.

You know, the promos for the new *John Carter* movie look pretty good. I may have to see it when it comes out — at a matinee showing, of course. Oh, and thank you for the link to "Lee at the Alamo." I shall check that out.

I saw that Dr. Seuss version of *The Call of Cthulhu* online. I liked it!

Once again, you have a wide variety of books reviewed this issue, and some of them sound very interesting, like *Himmler's War* by Robert Conroy. My undergraduate minor was in 20th century Russian History, but I took a couple classes in Military History, so naturally anything dealing with WWII interests me. Alternate History novels about that period should be interesting reading, and it's a bit surprising that I have yet to read any of them. Harry Turtledove, after all, wrote a whole slew of them, and now Conroy's got a bunch. *sigh* I guess I can acquire some of these to help prop up that To Be Read shelf in the bedroom. It is beginning to substantially sag under the weight.

Robert Jennings wrote a very good review of *Fantasy Commentator* #59-60 in his fanzine *Fadeaway* #25 (I think it was). At \$10, that's a pretty good price, and very much worth the

price I'd say. Without John Campbell, the universe of science fiction wouldn't be what it is today. Yes, it would be great to see *Fantasy Commentator* #59-60 win the Hugo for Best-Related Work, but it all depends on whichever pop culture phenomenon book is also on the ballot. Besides, I dig chicks in corsets and goggles, too. It's a good look.

Very good articles by Rodford Edmiston and Taral Wayne. I have no in-depth comments on them except that I really enjoyed reading them. Good stuff from both of them.

I think I will close with a few thoughts about the loss of Robert M. Sabella, the fan editor of the long-running zine *Visions of Paradise*. Bob was probably the only other fan that I know of who read and reviewed more books than Joe Major. He loved writing about SF, and I was so thrilled when he offered to write a twice-yearly column for *Askance* about significant developments in the genre. Sadly, he was never to truly enjoy his retirement after teaching High School math for 38 years. Bob wrote about his students, and as a teacher myself, the obvious love he had for his profession and students showed through, and I am envious of the continuing contact he had with students after they graduated. To have that happen means those youngsters were blessed to have had Bob as their teacher. This is more than a loss to fandom: the death of Bob Sabella is a loss to the world of teaching, especially his High School. I wonder if his school has any plans to honor his memory. A scholarship prize in mathematics sounds like the perfect tribute. It was an honor to have his columns in *Askance*; the one he wrote for the December 2011 issue was probably one of the last things he wrote. *Requiescat in pace.*

It wasn't just Askance. He contributed to Tom Sadler's Reluctant Famulus with just as much seriousness and wisdom.

— JTM

Sad way to end this loc, but I wanted to write that. I will be expanding on this for the March issue.

Many thanks for a wonderful issue, and I look forward to seeing it.

From: **Jim Stumm** January 14, 2012
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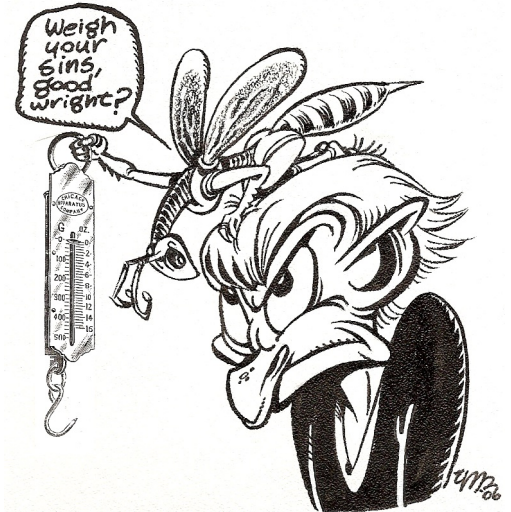
Richard A. Dengrove: Printed books, I think, probably will not entirely disappear, just as radio didn't disappear with the coming of TV. E-books seem especially suitable for entertainment you read once then throw away, but less suitable for books you read then keep for future reference. Some people like the feel of a book as an artifact. Some like having shelves of books, a library. If e-books become the common way of reading books, then owning printed books may become more of a way to show off.

For archives, to preserve information permanently, books printed on acid-free paper

are superior to any digital media. I have read that data on magnetic tape from the 1960s is being lost because the tape is falling apart. By contrast, I have some books printed in the 1800s on good quality paper that are still in excellent condition. And you don't need a machine to read them. Which is the other problem with digital media; the constant change in formats that renders old media, e.g. floppy disks, unreadable.

I once mentioned to a friend that the KEO satellite would have instructions on how to build a compact-disk reader to read the message disks therein. The friend wondered why they just didn't include a reader on the satellite — and wouldn't listen to any discussion of the problems of deterioration and weight.

I have never used an e-reader. I wonder how the book publishing business will change due to e-books. I buy most of my books by mail from Edward R. Hamilton whose catalog lists mostly cheap remaindered books. (For me, a reasonable price is \$5 to \$10 per book.) I don't buy books by phone or internet, and pay only with my checks.



BTW, I have more books than I have room for. I'd like to give some away, so I'll make this offer: free SF books, mailed to any USA address, except no prisons. I buy them from Hamilton, read once, then I have donated them to a thrift store. But I'd rather mail them to SF fans. These were new when I bought them, many hardcovers. I'll mail a package of maybe 6 or 8 books at a time; my choice of titles, no charge. Anyone who wants to get in on this should send me your address, USA addresses only, and tell me you want me to send you some SF books.

Rodney Leighton: "New Tricks" is also broadcast on PBS in Buffalo. That "hot female cop" is no spring chicken herself, and she's also the boss of this cold case squad.

I used to be able to pick up some 6 or 8 Canadian TV stations over the air, along with many local stations. But when Canada converted to digital broadcasting on 1 Sep 2011, they all disappeared. Except a scan did pick up channel 5.1, which is CBC Toronto, but the signal is too weak to watch. I could get several Canadian stations if I subscribe to cable but I don't want to pay the monthly fee.

Alexander Slate: I remember the Whip Inflation Now buttons as a moronic invention of the Gerald Ford administration. The government entirely controls the currency through monetary and fiscal policy. A general increase in prices can have no other cause except inflation of the money supply, though there may be a lag of indeterminate length before the effects are felt. An increase in the level of all prices, caused by overspending by politicians, is equivalent to a fall in the value of the dollar.

Dainis Bisenieks: The rise in the price of silver and gold and other commodities (in dollars) is the flip side of the fall in the value of the dollar. With the huge indebtedness of the US Government, this decline of the dollar can only continue. The only issue is how fast it will fall.

I have seen an ad from someone selling, for \$10, a one-trillion-dollar bill, genuine legal tender. Zimbabwe dollars. Such hyperinflation may be the future of the US dollar.

Precious metals are volatile in price, but I don't see how the long term trend can lead to anything but much higher prices. Once the price of gold was set at \$35 an ounce, which really meant fixing the value of the dollar at 1/35 of an ounce of gold. Soon the dollar will be worth 1/2000 of an ounce of gold. While the price is volatile, we'll never see gold at \$35 an ounce again.

In Henry Hazlitt's *Time Will Run Back* (1951, 1966), the new currency the recovering post-communist regime established was the "goldgram". Since there are 31.1 grams in a troy ounce, the prices (before Adams started issuing paper currency) were not that much different from the real-world prices from when Hazlitt was writing. How do you say "Whip Inflation Now" in Marxanto?

— JTM

Old copper pennies now have a metal value of about 2¢ each at recent copper prices. Nickels are just a hair above face value presently. Old 90% silver coins are never seen in circulation anymore. I collected some out of circulation in the 1960s.

Richard Dengrove: If a bank doesn't own a mortgage on a house, how can they foreclose on property they don't own? Actually, I believe what banks sold to scattered investors was only certain rights, but not the entire ownership. I see the word "tranch" mentioned, which apparently means only certain rights derived from a package of mortgages.

From: **Sue Burke** January 28, 2012
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As was pointed out in last issue under Monarchist News, the Duchess of Alba got married for the third time last October, to the delight of gossip magazines across Spain. Cayetana Alba (as she signs her name in letters to the editor), a spry 85 years old, chose a husband 24 years younger than herself, a mere civil servant but very handsome and fit, and at least one of her children did not approve.

She danced sevillanas at the wedding reception, and she is said to be so rich that she could dance from one end of Spain to the other and never set foot on a square meter of land that she did not own. She has 45 titles of nobility besides duchess, earning herself a place in Guinness for the holder of the most titles in the world. Tana (as she's called by her friends) also has the ancestral privileges to not genuflect to the Pope (the King of Spain bows to him), and to enter the Cathedral of Seville on horseback. (Oh, the things you can inherit in Spain!)

Despite a face made clownish by youthful plastic surgery and some truly odd hair, her generous charitable work and indomitable personality have made her so popular that she gets spontaneous ovations when she's seen in public.

As for the Francos, who cares? We have Cayetana. A week after her wedding, she released her autobiography, *Yo, Cayetana* (I, Cayetana). She held the launch party at the Royal Alcázar in Seville, which her good friend King Juan Carlos lent her for the day.

Family courtesy to a Royal Stuart princess (well, sort of).

His Royal Majesty, however, has troubles — brother-in-law troubles. (Don't we all?) Princess Cristina's husband, Iñaki Urdangarin, the Duke of Palma, apparently used his position as head of Noós Institute to divert millions of euros into his own pocket. The King got wind and in 2006 ordered him to sever all ties with Noós and, in 2009, to leave the country. Urdangarin moved to Washington, DC, but apparently continued to misappropriate Noós funds, and now he's under judicial investigation. "Justice is equal for everyone," the King said in his annual Christmas Eve message. He's not bailing anyone out, especially the one excluded from the family photo in the 2011 royal Christmas card.

Shortly after Christmas, His Majesty inducted Nicolas Sarkozy, President of France, into the Order of the Golden Fleece. Sarko is now a knight in recognition of his efforts to fight Basque separatist terrorism, which operates in both Spain and France. Or rather, under Sarkozy, France finally abandoned its shit-on-your-neighbor policy of ignoring terrorists who came across the border to hide; in return for being tolerated, they did not attack

any French targets. Now France arrests the terrorists, and they shoot at (and sometimes kill) French gendarmes.

I don't know what special privileges Sir Nicolas acquired through the Order, though he's no doubt now privy to the secret handshake to use when he greets other Fleeceers, such as Emperor Akihito of Japan and Queen Margarita II of Denmark.

You do NOT shake hands with the Tennō.

— JTM

My sympathies to Lisa on the loss of her little netbook. I got one for my birthday last summer, and it's useful.

Speaking of small electronics, Amazon.com opened an Amazon.es branch in Spain in September and began selling Kindles for €99. Amazon doesn't release sales figures for Kindles, but anecdotal evidence suggests that it and similar e-readers sold better than hotcakes for Christmas, and Amazon does say that it sold a million digital titles a week during December in Spain. Up until now, Spanish publishers have opposed e-books or anything else that would shake up their crony-based system, but that's about to change.

Speaking of Amazon, as you know I've been translating the medieval Spanish novel *Amadis of Gaul* for some time. Now Book I of the four-book novel is available through Amazon: 316 pages in paperback and Kindle versions. It includes a preface by a present-day Spanish novelist, an introduction, notes to chapters, and an appendix explaining what eliminated *Amadis* from respectable bookshelves — it wasn't *Don Quixote*.

From: **George W. Price** January 29, 2012
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December *Alexiad*:

Richard Dengrove brings up two more supposed anachronisms in *Prince Valiant*:

"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. . . . [which] was first settled two centuries after, in the 8th century."

I dug out my set of Harold Foster's *Prince Valiant* books, and found that the story starts with the exiled king of Thule, Val's father, coming to Britain by sea. But it doesn't say where Thule is. Maybe Foster is more specific later on; I'm not prepared to hunt through all the strips to find out. I have always taken for granted that his Thule is an entirely fictional kingdom at some unspecified location in Scandinavia. Wikipedia says that in olden days "Thule" was sometimes used to mean Iceland, but also Greenland and almost any other place in the north outside of known geography. Perhaps Foster picked the name precisely because the location couldn't be pinned down.

Prince Valiant's voyage to America is not presented as part of the Norse explorations. He

goes there by accident, pursuing his wife Aleta's kidnapper. In fact, in strip 527 (3-16-47) Val's ship passes an island: "A new land appears out of the mist. Iceland is discovered but two men want one small grey-eyed girl and the discovery is not considered important." So I think we can discard any idea that Foster thought of Thule as Iceland.

Valiant's adventures in America presumably never become known to other Europeans, and there is no implied follow-up by Vikings or anyone else. At the most, his sojourn might account for some of the alleged Viking artifacts found in our time, though I don't recall if Foster put anything like that into the story.

* * * * *

Alexis Gilliland says that *Mythbusters* investigated the case I mentioned of a man being electrocuted while urinating on a third rail, and they "were unable to make it happen, and therefore concluded that that particular myth was busted." Taras Wolansky says the same.

Well, it looks like I must withdraw the story — and it was such a good story, too. I just now looked it up online, finding the lawsuit that the victim's wife brought against the Chicago Transit Authority. It appears there were no witnesses. The man's body was found in the track, but not touching the third rail. His pants were open and his penis was exposed, as if he was urinating. He died of electrocution, but there's no suggestion that the urine stream conducted the electricity. Apparently the papers just assumed that it did, because that made a good story. It could just as easily be that while he was urinating, or getting ready to, his leg touched the third rail.

In the letter preceding Mr. Gilliland's, Joy V. Smith mentions "a friend telling me about his brother urinating on an electric fence. The results weren't fatal, just electrifying." An electric fence, meant to repel animals but not kill them, is unlikely to have the high amperage in a third rail, powerful enough to move trains. That might make a big difference. Still, taking the *Mythbusters* work into account, we have to write off this story as just barely possible, unproven at best, and probably not true.

* * * * *

Mr. Gilliland mistakenly interprets me as saying that we are never going to run out of fossil fuels because when proved reserves run low we can step up exploration and find more. That's not what I said or meant. My point was that saying we have 20 years of proved reserves does not mean that we will run out in 20 years. It only means that before the 20 years is up we'd better explore to find more. Of course Earth's resources are finite, as Gilliland says, and we could eventually run out. But "eventually" might be a very long time.

And, actually, there is one sense in which we probably won't ever run out. We never pump a reservoir dry; we only produce the oil

and gas until the rising cost of pumping out more is greater than the price we can get. In practice, most fields are "shut in" when as much as half or two-thirds of the deposit still remains. We'll go back for more when the price rises enough to justify the rising cost of producing it. With luck, nuclear energy will replace most fossil fuels while there are still vast deposits remaining.

* * * * *

Alexander R. Slate says I am wrong to insist that an "assault rifle" must be full-automatic." His argument confuses me a little. First he says, "George is incorrect that an assault rifle must be fully automatic." And then he says, "In fact assault rifles must be capable of selective fire (having both semi-automatic and automatic fire modes). Weapons with only automatic fire mode are machine guns."

I gather that he thinks I mean that assault rifles must be only full-automatic. No, not at all. I am saying that to qualify as an assault rifle, a weapon must have a full-automatic mode. I don't specify what other modes it may have; in fact some armies require assault rifles to have three modes: semi-automatic, full-automatic, and burst (firing 3 or 4 shots per trigger pull).

Since almost all the rifles that the anti-gun people get their knickers in a twist about do not really fire full-automatic, they do not qualify as assault weapons, and I will reiterate that calling them "assault rifles" is either a display of gross ignorance, or a dishonest ploy intended to make them sound more fearsome.

By the way, the Browning automatic rifle ("BAR") of World War II fame, which I trained on during the Korean War, is a machine gun by Mr. Slate's definition, because it has no semi-automatic mode, and fires only full-automatic.

* * * * *

Jim Stumm tells me that Buffalo has a bus whose sign says it goes to "Paradise," because that's the street at the end of the line. For odd bus signs, I offer one I saw 60 years ago in a city on the way from Chicago to Champaign, Illinois, where I was a student. It read "KKK" — which startled me until I realized it meant Kankakee, the citizens of which presumably saw nothing odd about it. Or maybe back then the Ku Klux Klan was not in such bad odor in downstate Illinois that people would object to the initials.

Ever read about Williamson County? In the Nineteen-Twenties they had 1) a coal mine strike that ended with the massacre of the replacement workers; 2) a Klan-antiKlan war that ended with the mutual assured destruction of the leaders of the opposing sides; and 3) a gangster war that ended with the execution of mob leader Sandy Birger. Sixty years later there

came Dr. Dale Cavaness . . .

— JTM

* * * * *

Sue Burke says, "Democratically elected politicians aren't in charge of the economy anymore. . . and now Goldman Sachs rules the world: corpocracy. Can capitalism and democracy coexist?" I'd say they not only can coexist, they must. Because capitalism — that is, a free-market economy — is the only system consistent with democracy in the long run.

No, I don't believe that Goldman Sachs, or any other corporation, or all of them put together, rule the world. Politicians — democratic or otherwise — still rule, because they command the guns. What is true is that many corporations make tons of money by sucking up to the politicians. At the simplest, they make campaign contributions in the hope that the politicians will screw their competitors, and not screw them. Of course, the end of that road is that the politicians control them all, and everybody gets screwed. Read Hayek's *The Road to Serfdom*.

I believe that the problem is not that "elected politicians aren't in charge of the economy anymore," but that they are in charge — and they shouldn't be. A market economy works much better when the government is restricted to providing a framework of law and order in which the market can operate, and does not try to run those operations. That is done automatically by the interplay of our individual free choices in buying and selling. That's what the concept of "laissez faire" means: no one is "in charge." And it works just fine, when it is allowed to. This is not what most politicians want to believe.

From: **Taras Wolansky** January 30, 2012
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Alexiad, December 2011.

Joe: "Lastish I made a prediction about anime zombies ..." Actually they've been around for some time. The manga *3x3 Eyes* from the late 1980s (animated ca. 1991) featured a major character who was a zombie in the original sense: someone raised from the dead by magic and held in thrall. No particular appetite for brains, though.

Speaking of conventions in decline, I attended my first (and probably last) Arisia a couple of weeks ago. I was always under the impression that the cause of the split between this and Boskone was the latter's aversion to media programming. But judging from what I saw, the disagreement may actually have been over bondage and sex programming.

Wait a minute. You slipped into an alternate time line where events like at DisClave became the norm for programming. And you aren't sharing this with us?

Even when an occasional (non-BDSM) panel sounded interesting, I found I rarely recognized any of the panelists. Too much local competition, perhaps: the pros must go to Boskone or Readercon.

The anime program was a single room and a poor selection — unless you never saw any anime before and so these ten-year-old shows were new to you. The art show was also unexpectedly weak. Dealer's room: mostly costumes and accessories, with an emphasis on steampunk. (Actually, the whole convention might be described that way.)

Con suite: a shabby (I mistook it for a storage area) corner of the same basement as the art show and hucksters. It was not very well supplied; for some reason it featured large quantities of *diced bread*. On the last day of the con, I asked one of the people running the room why diced bread but he claimed ignorance: the "bread people" took care of it, he said. (To be fair, the con suite also featured unpredictable eruptions of savory meatballs, which I skewered and ate with — diced bread.)

The 2015 Worldcon bids were represented at Arisia. I became a Friend of Spokane but stayed away from Orlando, as I find its cuddly Communist theme offensive. A Communist is just a Nazi with a better press agent.

One of the fannish email lists
I'm on had that sort of discussion.
The bid chair didn't see anything
wrong with the theme.

Lisa: "Flights of dragons sing her to her rest."

Alexis Gilliland: As always, wonderful cartoons!

"The Egyptian genotype has been pretty stable." Whenever I see Egyptian mummy maven Zahi Hawass on TV, he strikes me as looking exactly like some of the well-fed Pharaonic bureaucrats who left images of themselves in their tombs. It will be interesting to see how long those images survive, now that the Islamists are in charge in Egypt. (BTW, Hawass was forced to resign last year. No doubt the same thing happened to those ancient bureaucrats when the dynasty changed.)

While we're on the subject: Islam is a religion, not a race. When people argue about how long it will take Muslims to take over, say, Europe demographically, they miss the point. When Islam begins to look like a winner — and remember, it's already made itself the only religion you can't make fun of — people will join the winning side. And once you join, of course, you can't leave: Islam commands the killing of apostates.

According to Wikipedia, just about every detail of the hypothesis that the Toba eruption caused a human population bottleneck 74,000 years ago is still in dispute. Bear in mind, you should not assume that a small human population means a *single* human population: "Toba may have caused modern races to differentiate abruptly only 70,000 years ago, rather than gradually over one million years." (Wikipedia again.) In other words, "modern"

humans would have survived in several, separate ecological oases. One of the oases was probably in the northeast corner of Africa: a moving band of climatic change might have forced the inhabitants to move north or die, and then closed the door behind them.

"Earth's reserves of fossil fuel may be larger than we imagine but they are still finite, and eventually we will run out." Here's a thought experiment. Let's say we use up half of the fuel in this century, and half the remainder in the next century, and half of that remainder in the next century, etc., etc. When do we "run out"?

When Achilles catches the
tortoise and has soup with Zeno
and Douglas Hofstadter.

Here's an alternate history scenario. Responding to distinguished economist W.S. Jevons' warning that coal is running out (*The Coal Question*, 1865), the British government enacts policies to restrict energy use. These slow the growth of the British economy so that, 50 years later, Britain is too weak to resist the German onslaught in the Great War.

I call this the "Cleveland Fallacy". Imagine you're driving from New York to Los Angeles with a group of friends. As you pass Cleveland, they start to scream at you to hit the brakes — because if you don't, you'll fall into the Pacific Ocean!

In other words, we need to think about *when* (if at all) to hit the brakes on the world economy. Sixteen distinguished scientists and engineers — Claude Allegre, Richard Lindzen, Burt Rutan, and Harrison Schmidt are some names you might recognize — signed an open letter in the Jan. 27 *Wall St. Journal*, entitled "No Need to Panic About Global Warming". They point out that the most sensible course may be to grow the world economy for 50 years before beginning to introduce greenhouse gas controls.

On global warming in general, here's a passage worth repeating:

Perhaps the most inconvenient fact is the lack of global warming for well over 10 years now. This is known to the warming establishment, as one can see from the 2009 "Climategate" email of climate scientist Kevin Trenberth: "The fact is that we can't account for the lack of warming at the moment and it is a travesty that we can't." But the warming is only missing if one believes computer models where so-called feedbacks involving water vapor and clouds greatly amplify the small effect of CO₂.

<http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052970204301404577171531838421366.html>

Grant McCormick (Review of Snuff): "Sir Terry [Pratchett] has never been a man who lets political correctness rule him." The only Pratchett book I've read, *Monstrous Regiment of Women*, was very P.C.

Rodford Edmiston: It occurs to me that Lord Kalvan might have faced the problem of "leading the barrel" when he introduced his improved version of black powder to Hostigos.

Dainis Bisenieks: In 1945, my father walked across Germany to rejoin my mother, with two suitcases filled with diapers (for one of my sisters; I was born years later). He came upon a bombed-out train with piles of Reichsmarks lying all around. He thought about filling his suitcases with money, but decided the diapers would be more useful than the currency of a dying empire. Ironically, the bills were eventually honored at one-tenth face value.

Taral Wayne: I skipped *Cars 2*. From the trailers, it seemed too much like an animated Jim Varney "Ernest" movie.

I was underwhelmed by several recent Pixar releases, especially the odious *Up*. Also, in my opinion, *Toy Story 3* merely recycled material from the first two films.

Richard A. Dengrove: **"Hail Satin"** — When I was at Columbia, many years ago, student radicals occupied and padlocked some of the buildings, for as much as a few weeks in some cases. Wise for my years, I was of course on the other side. After we managed to liberate one of the buildings from them we found a huge graffito in the lobby: **"SMASH BOUJOIS IDEOLOGY"**. Perhaps they were rebelling against orthography as well.

Then there was the graffito I saw in a community college men's room: **"NUKE ISREAL"**. I couldn't resist correcting it: "No, no, nukes are real!"

Another sign of the decline and
fall of grammar. Grandpa, too.

— JTM

WAHF:

Lloyd Daub, with various items of interest.

Becca Testerman, Tom & Ruth Sadler, George & Virginia Price, Gary & Cora Flispart, and Ed & Katherine Cayce with Christmas cheer.

Carol Clarke, Lacy Thomas, Bill Breuer, Lloyd Penney, Ben Schilling, Patti & Chuck Lipsig, Joyce Scrivner, Nic Farey, Johnny Carruthers, Mike Resnick, Dara Korra'ti, Karen Sue Francis, R-Lauraine Tutihasi, and Mike Glycer with birthday wishes.

Question for Marc Schirmeister. Please, can you send me your telephone number again? When I got the new smartphone some of my stored numbers were mangled and yours was among them.



RETURN OF THE STEAM GUY

Zeke stood on the balcony of the hotel with the warm brass of his Steam Hand on the shoulder of Josephine, his newly-discovered sister. Down below, the zombies beat on drums and chimes improvised from Texican and Confederate helmets. Up above, Steam Fireworks Projectors lit up the sky with a multitude of colors and glowing shapes.

All across the newly united and reunited North American Union, from the Rio Grande to the frozen tundra of the north, the people were rejoicing in such a fashion, Zeke and Josephine and their friends had worked together to destroy the Brass Moon, the fiendish craft built by Dr. Minnericht and his sinister master to enslave the nations of North America, and now their efforts had been crowned with victory. The frightening battle in the brass corridors of the craft, and its surprising result, had moved Zeke deeply, and he had learned new meanings to his life even as he resolved the older ones.

In the streets of New Orleans, the pirates, tongs, krewes, and the other members of the many-headed hydra of liberation that had overthrown the tyrannies of Richmond and Houston, swept to power in Washington and Ottawa, were celebrating their victory. The Age of Steam was in full flower.

Zeke and Josephine would together revive the teaching of the Force of Electricity, that power that pervaded and energized the world. There would be many adventures yet as they strove to comprehend their powers.

Zeke turned. There, against the veil of steam, he beheld the spirits of Franklin and of Poe, his philosophical and metaphysical teachers. Then, he saw another with them; his father, Dr. Leviticus Blue, no longer encased in the Steam Power Armor of Dr. Minnericht, redeemed, revived, having recanted his errors.

— Not by Cherie Priest or George Lucas

"Where Do You Writers Get Your Ideas?"

Place: The home of Dr. Isaac Mordecai Howard and his family, Cross Plains, Texas

Time: The early nineteen-thirties

"I'll tend to the cow," Robert said, and he went out back to the barn. He looked about carefully for any possibility of ambush, attack, or assault as he went. A man can never be too careful; he was impeded, burdened, he had a bucket in his hand.

The cow lowed piteously as he entered the barn. "Don't worry, bossy," Bob said as he sat down beside the cow. He put the bucket under her udder and began milking. The sounds of squirting milk and its welcome scent dispersed other odors and sounds.

Small mewling sounds greeted the smell. He glanced to one side and saw one of the barn cats, sitting up, mouth opened, beckoning. Bob held the teat just right, pulled and squirted a jet of warm milk into the cat's mouth. And there was another one there, up on her hind legs . . .

When he was done with the milking, he returned to the house, full milkpail in hand, just as carefully. He put the pail in the kitchen where his father could prepare something for Mother. He himself had to go back to his work.

As he sat there before the typewriter, his mighty hands banging the keys, the words flowed out onto the paper . . .

Conan stalked warily, like a panther of the wild Nemedian hills, his keen barbarian senses alert to the ever present possibility of treachery. Burdened with the bright metallic vessel of Zamboula, for the medicinal elixir he aimed to acquire, he had to be particularly prepared for ambush.

There was his destination, the rude shed wherein the keepers of the elixir, and their fierce guards, were pent. Without hesitation, he thrust open the door and stormed within, ready, as ever, to confront his foes and overwhelm them.

They bulked there, their furs bristling with their energy, the peaks of their horned helmets quivering with excitement at the prospect of fighting. Keen curved claws adorned the cestuses that protected their hands, in lieu of more impersonal weapon. Slowly, resolutely, they advanced on Conan, making their low-pitched, rumbling battle chant . . .

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Co-Publishers: Joseph & Lisa Major
Writers, Staff: Major, Joseph, Major, Lisa, & McCormick, Grant

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

Contributions: This is not a fictionzine. It is intended to be our fanzine, so be interesting.

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ALEXIAD

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How To Discuss Philosophy

by Paul Gadzikowski

