

ALEXIAD

(ΑΛΞΙΑΣ)

\$2.00

June 6 marked 68 years since D Day. There were 4,414 Allied deaths and four to nine thousand German dead. It was a day of horrible carnage for both sides.

Last weekend the library held its spring sale. We did not go. We already have far too many books in the house. Part of me wanted to go, part of me didn't want the struggle of finding places to put all the new acquisitions we inevitably bring home. And for the record, I am worse than Joe about bringing home cheap books. I cannot be trusted at library book sales. Had it not been for Grant's lack of mobility after his stroke I probably would have asked to go anyway. But his stroke means we can no longer bring in big boxes from bargain day at library sales. The time has come to read through all the cheap books and send away those we have no real desire to read again. I am still acquiring many cheap books but in digital form. Those satisfy my need to collect without taking up any extra space. The electronic reader fits in my purse and is much more convenient than lugging around a heavy bag of books.

— Lisa

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The 138th Running of the Kentucky Derby was **May 5, 2012**. I'll Have Another won by a length and a half.

The 137th Running of the Preakness Stakes was **May 19, 2012**. I'll Have Another won, beating out the favored Bodemeister by a neck. Bodemeister was thereupon withdrawn from consideration for the Belmont.

The 143rd Running of the Belmont Stakes was **June 9, 2012**. After a heartbreaking scratch of I'll Have Another at the last moment, Union Rags won.

The 58th Running of the Yonkers Trot (1st leg of the Trotting Triple Crown) is **July 7, 2012** at Yonkers Raceway in Yonkers, New York.

The 87th Running of the Hambletonian (2nd leg of the Trotting Triple Crown) is **August 4, 2012** at Meadowlands Racetrack in East Rutherford, New Jersey.

The 120th Running of the Kentucky Futurity (3rd leg of the Trotting Triple Crown) is **October 6, 2012** at the Red Mile in Lexington, Kentucky.

Ray Bradbury

August 22, 1920 — June 6, 2012

Dark they were, and golden-eyed.

Printed on June 13, 2012

Deadline is **August 1, 2012**

Reviewer's Notes

It's been said that the maximum size of a coherent group is about three hundred. That's where everybody has at least an acquaintance with everybody else.

If that's the case, then Fandom is now incoherent. There were two hundred attendees (and six excluded ones) at the NyCon. That was seventy-three years ago. Another one just died. Obviously just because the population was within the limit didn't mean dissension could not arise.

I suspect that ChiCon 7 is planning for a smaller attendance because of competition. How well some of their plans (i.e., videoconferenced joint panels) will work is another matter.

Bigger WorldCons stem from not just more SF available; what has happened is that there are older folks there. The NyCon did not have to have childcare. And other attitudes attend; the party in Room 770 did not have arguments about affirmative action access to panels.

All things age and pass away. I have heard rumors of one or another of the consumer cons making offers to buy the concept of "WorldCon" and all attendant items. Maybe not having a WSFS, Inc. is working out after all.

— Joe

RANDOM JOTTINGS

by Joe



Cup of Deceit Refund: As a result of an investigation by the Minnesota attorney-general, Greg Mortensen, the charitable fabulist so embarrassingly exposed by Jon Krakauer in his *Three Cups of Deceit* (2011; reviewed in *Alexiad* V. 10 #6) has resigned from the board of the Central Asia Institute and agreed to repay the charity one million dollars. And three cups of tea?

Chicks Dig Comics: A Celebration of Comic Books By the Women Who Love Them, edited by Lynne Thomas and Sigrid Ellis (Mad Norwegian Press; 2012; ISBN 978-1935234050; \$14.95) is out. And you thought I was joking. They've probably reserved desk space for the 2013 Best Related Work Hugo Award. Keep your eyes open for *Chicks Dig Billionaire BDSM Stalkers: A Celebration of the Fifty Shades Trilogy by the Women Who Love It*.

Either-Or Department: Production is going ahead with *Atlas Shrugged: Part 2 – Either-Or*. Among other interesting considerations is that none of the actors from Part 1 is returning to take his or her part. Make of that what you will. *Atlas Shrugged: Part 2 – Either-Or* <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt1985017/>

It has been noted that the recent SpaceX launch finally included the package of cretains of such famous people as Gordo and Scotty — i.e. Gordon Cooper and James Doohan.

The development of the SpaceX Falcon-9 rocket was done under a NASA contract. So much for the Kings of the High Frontier.

One of Harvard's best-known grads, environmentalist writer and activist Theodore J. Kaczynski '62, apologized for being unable to attend the fiftieth reunion, due to other commitments. Among his accomplishments he listed his collected writings *Technological Slavery* (2010). Presumably this contains his well-known paper "Industrial Society and Its Future" (1995).

In foramine terrae habitatat hobbitus.
— *Hobbitus Ille*, J. R. R. Tolkien scripsit

Hobbitus Ille will be published in September

MMDCCCLXV by HarperCollins. The anticipated price is 12£ 19s 9 ½d — er. £12.99. Salve!

It's official. On May 31, the International Union of Pure and Applied Chemistry officially approved the name of **flerovium** (Fl) for element 114 (formerly ununquadium) and **livermorium** (Lv) for element 116 (formerly ununhexium). The name "flerovium" is in honor of Georgiy Nikolayevich Flyorov (1913-1990) founder of the Joint Institute for Nuclear Research where flerovium was first produced (and also one of the people to encourage Soviet nuclear weapons research). The name "livermorium" is in honor of the Lawrence Livermore Laboratory, which collaborated with the JINR on the discovery of the element.

Searching in every Kindle and cranny, or how Global Search & Replace can leave you embarrassed: The Nook edition of Tolstoy's *War and Peace* had an unusual coinage. No fewer than eight times, something was "Nookd". What, you ask, is "Nookd"? Is it one of those outré untranslatable Russian terms like "Еб твою мать!" ["Yeb tvoyu mat'!"]?

Not quite. It's what you get when you do a global search-and-replace for the name of the competition, putting your own in its place in the text. This is the sort of mixup that can cost you a lot of Quicken to replace, impeding your drive to Quattro Pro unless you carefully check every last OpenOffice. The proofreaders should take a break and look out the Linux every now and then.

As a result of the transit of Venus I downloaded the first four Venus books from Gutenberg Australia. I am somewhat surprised that *Lost on Venus* (1935), for example, is not more popular now. It has zombies. And a contest that makes Quiddich so obviously a game for limp-wristed Limeys, and makes the Hunger Games look like kindergarten touch-tag. And did I mention it has zombies?

OBITS

"Time is burning up the years and people."

On Tuesday June 5 I turned on the local radio app. I had listened only a few minutes when the newscaster announced the death of Ray Bradbury. I cried out and sat in stricken silence for the death of one of the twentieth century's greatest writers. I grew up with Fahrenheit 451 and the Martian Chronicles. It was an incalculable loss to the science fiction community and the literary community as well.

— Lisa

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

Report by Joseph T Major

Remaining is:

Poland

Józef Kowalski* (112) 22 Pułk Ułanów
* "WWI-era" veteran, enlisted between the

Armistice and the Treaty of Versailles

THE MAN WHO LOST THE ECHO

by Joe

Theodore Sturgeon's "The Man Who Lost The Sea" [*The Magazine of Fantasy & Science Fiction*, October 1959] is about an amateur astronomer who is lying on the beach, looking up at the nighttime sky. He sees a moving star, too slow to be an airplane, and out of curiosity begins timing its perceived orbit. When it reaches zenith, he makes the calculation of its orbital period and determines where he is. Then he remembers how he got there.

Lisa's Uncle Lacy is an amateur astronomer. He noted that the International Space Station would pass over Elizabethtown on a particular evening, and posted said notice on his Facebook page.

That night, we visited Grant at Christopher East, the rehab center. While leaving, I happened to look up in the sky.

The light pollution of the city washes out the stars, and I can only see the Moon and the planets. Venus had been very bright for the last month. However, on this night there was a moving star. Not an airplane, much higher up.

Fifty-two years ago, there was much less light pollution in Hopkinsville. One summer night I still remember, we went out under the stars, which shone bright that evening. There was a moving star among them, too slow to be an airplane, too fast to be a planet.

Metallized Mylar® balloons are now available at just about any function. This one was a bit larger — 100 feet in diameter.

The Echo One (technically "Echo 1A", since the first one had been lost at launch) satellite was a passive reflector communications satellite. It was made of metallized Mylar®, which would reflect radio signals.

On May 13, 1960, the Echo went into space. It wasn't just a balloon, for there were telemetry beacons powered by solar cells on the surface. The Echo was used for tests of satellite triangulation. With a few more satellites and a little more power (particularly computing power) you got GPS.

Fifty-two years from now, will we have lost the sea?

SIDEWISE AWARD NOMINEES

Short Form

"The Iron Shirts," by Michael F. Flynn
"Paradise Is a Walled Garden," by Lisa Goldstein
"Orion Rising," by Jason Stoddard
"Lee at the Alamo," by Harry Turtledove

Long Form

Castro's Bomb, by Robert Conroy
Himmler's War, by Robert Conroy
Then Everything Changed, by Jeff Greenfield
Wake Up and Dream, by Ian R. MacLeod
Planesrunner, by Ian McDonald
Heart of Iron, by Ekaterina Sedia
Camera Obscura, by Lavie Tidhar

... WITH ZOMBIES

Review by Joseph T Major of
LEVIATHAN WAKES (THE EXPANSE)

by "James S. A. Corey"

[Ty Franck and Daniel Abraham]

(Orbit (Little, Brown); 2011:

ISBN 978-0-316-12908-4; \$15.99;

Hachette Book Group (Kindle); \$9.99)

Hugo Nominee

This was one of the books I gave up reading at the Adler Planetarium in Chicago. It was a tale of interstellar civilization, going along in a ordinary, but not outstanding manner. Then, the explorers entered the spaceship, and discovered that due to a mysterious alien virus or chemical or something, all the people on the ship were turning or had turned into ... **zombies!**

THE RETURN OF THE DEAD GUY

Review by Joseph T Major of

THE LOST FLEET:

BEYOND THE FRONTIER:

INVINCIBLE

by "Jack Campbell" [John G. Hemry]

(Ace; 2012;

ISBN 978-1-937007-45-4; \$26.95;

Penguin Publishing (Kindle); \$12.99)

Sequel to *The Lost Fleet: Beyond the*

Frontier: Dreadnaught

[reviewed in *Alexiad* V. 10 #3]

Hemry deserves credit for having provided a well-elaborated, coolly-explained reason why cute cuddly Ewoks are dangerous unappeasable foes while savage destructive Aliens are beings one can do business with, if not make alliance. For his next number, will he have absurd goofy amphibious sapient torn apart in grisly and jarring (indeed jarring jarring) ways?

Admiral Geary, sent off to be out of the way (and perhaps, to become a heroic legend again, living on Avalon III perhaps, this time for real) in an incursion through Syndic space to investigate the Enigmas, the unapproachable alien race who seem to know more about the origins of the Alliance-Syndic war than had been thought. As if he didn't encounter enough troubles, or bring some more with him (i.e., having to take his ex-lover Senator Rhione), he has picked up some more, a group of some three hundred senior officer prisoners, veterans of the bad new ways he had to deal with in the original *Lost Fleet* series.

For the moment, old problems are bypassed for new ones. As with the next new race they encounter, a race of cuddly cute cow-bears. There they are, beating on old Imperial Storm Trooper helmets made into improvised drums (well never mind), heralding the new era of peace, right? Nope. Geary learns, at some cost, that herbivores regard *any* competition as predators; a dangerous and unappeasable enemy that must be destroyed.

Mike Resnick has commented on how one of the ways he creates alien races is to take the characteristics of various other Earthly species and imagine how a sapient would express such characteristics. He has a good follower here, as

contrast the different attitudes of the cow-bears and the spider-wolves. The latter are to all appearances straight out of *Alien*; yet, as said, they are beings one can make a deal with. As in the substance of which another very wise old sapient declared, "Like the Force it is, yes. A light side it has, a dark side too, and the universe it holds together."

Human politics are also a concern. The disintegration of the Syndic has encouraged separatism, and Geary has to tread very carefully amid the antonomous system of Midway, the original Syndicate trying to get it back, the Enigmas, and the Spider-Wolves.

As well as internal problems. While for now whoever is trying to get him within the fleet seems to have taken a break, there are still the problems of block obsolescence and whatever that new fleet being built is going to be for. Not to mention that he finally finds out what is wrong with Rhione's husband and it's nothing to do with his affair with her.

The title is explicated in the text. The fleet has one might say very bad luck with ships named *Invincible*, which prove to be very vincible, as was discovered at Jutland. So, it's a bit of piqued irony that the super-super-battleship they take from the cow-bears is given that name. (I'm surprised they don't use the type-name of "mauler"; Rod Kinnison would understand.)

I noted the tribute to the author's former associate. Also, the little story about what they used to watch on his island base is heartwarming. And, I should note, he is giving the secondary plot its own treatment; even the enemies don't deserve to become merely cliched mooks to get blown away while destroying all but the flagship of the Good Guys fleet, leaving the admiral wounded again (but not her cat).

Did Fatso get longevity treatment, get preserved in an escape pod even longer than Geary, or (gulp) after he was finally forced to retire, get married and have children? A Gallery of admiring readers want to know.

And with all these trends, the fleet is about to come back from beyond the frontier, to encounter more problems when the cruise of this fleet is ... **To Be Continued**

A-VIKING SHALL WE GO

Review by Joseph T Major of

THE LAST SPACE VIKING

by John F. Carr and Mike Robertson

(Pequod Press; 2011:

ISBN 978-0937912126; \$42.00;

Amazon Digital Services; \$7.64);

PRINCE OF TANITH

by Terry Mancour

(2011: Amazon Digital Services; \$3.99); and

PRINCESS VALERIE'S WAR

by Terry Mancour

(2011: Amazon Digital Services; \$3.99);

In his own Conan stories, L. Sprague de Camp often tried to clean things up. That is to say, he would write a story explaining how Conan had got from Place A to Place B, shed the woman he had ridden off into the sunset

with, her slender limbs wrapped about his mighty thews, at the end of the previous story, and so on. (Marvel, in its comic series, did this a time or two.) Somehow, this effort wasn't all that much appreciated by those who liked their *Generic Muscle Bound Hero the <noun> books*.

The first sequel to *Space Viking* (1964) reviewed here is set about a century after the original; that is to say, fulfilling Piper's original concept of one work per century in the Terrohuman Future History. The Space Viking business is going downhill. They are running out of accessible planets to raid and some of the interplanetary governments are getting just a bit touchy.

The Last Space Viking David Morland of the ship *Nebula* is for now just concerned with surviving today. The Captain doesn't particularly like him and some of the other officers are less shy about expressing their opinions. Often, someone in this state of affairs is reminded to close the airlock after them and no, they can't spare any spacesuits.

However, the problem of the less-than-appreciative officers is resolved in a very total, if somewhat bloody fashion. As new Captain by dint of being the sole surviving senior officer, Morland has to take the *Nebula* back to base. And, while he's doing it, keep from taking a bath on the proceeds of the current raid, while managing not to get backstabbed. The people who would do this would use real knives, too.

The trends seen in the original novel are proceeding; every Sword-World but one is undergoing some sort of domestic conflict. And when David finally managed to slide out of the situation at home with not only his skin whole, but his position confirmed, he goes to Tanith (the site of much of the original) and finds out from King Rodrik (grandson of the hero of the original, Lucas Trask and the damned effective lady-love, Valerie Alverath) that not all is well in their part of the galaxy.

But Lucas Trask may have been on to something, and David Morland figures well why not. The next few chapters are a raidlogue (instead of a travellogue) through the still-collapsing remnants of the Federation. The bit with the hot passionate princess who has one little demurrer, for example, which does reflect the opinions Piper put into the original in a way unlike how it was done in other such works.

And after much searching and raiding they wind up on ... Poictesme, site of *The Cosmic Computer* (1963; and not apparently quite the world of its original version, "Junkyard Planet" (*Galaxy*, February 1958)). Morland decides that this must be the place. He begins settling in and then ...

And then the book just ends. Now Carr seems to have learned a few things in the writing department since he began putting out the *Lord Kalvan vs. the Party of Postponement* works. Still, it would have been nice to learn that there was a sequel in the offing.

Piper had wanted to write one novel per century of the TerroHuman Future History. Given more recent novel lengths, it is arguable

that *Little Fuzzy*, *Fuzzy Sapiens*, and *Fuzzies and Other People*, which make one volume in current publishing procedures, are one connected story. So this book and whatever else may come should fill the same procedure.

It's interesting to watch David Morland grow into his rank, as it were. And, unlike in other works, Morland has the attitudes that were presented in the original. Though some things seem to be coming a little too easy; but then, success is its own attraction. How Morland will work his own rerun of the Tanith Venture, and what else will occur, will be seen when this is . . . **To Be Continued**

Since the original book is in the public domain, due to some slip along the way from CondéNast past Davis to Dell, others can work at this too. The second sequel reviewed here picks up not long after the ending of the original; in fact, it begins with Lucas Trask the *Prince of Tanith* and Valerie Alvarath Trask early in their marriage. One can say, therefore, that it's *Fuzzy Sapiens* if not *Fuzzy Bones* all over again. (Interesting thought; imagine John Scalzi writing a reimagining of *Space Viking* as an aftermath to *Fuzzy Nation*.)

And in fact it goes on with the characters of the original novel, working out how to fulfill Trask's plans. There are, however, enemies old and new who strike back, sometimes fatally for some.

A major plot line has to deal with a mysterious supporter of order in the galaxy, a Hari Seldon type known only as "The Wizard". Some reviewers speculated that the answer that Trask is searching for may be found in another work of the original author's.

Mancour tries to carry on in the same vein, being not quite as forward as Robertson & Carr; i.e., there are no female officers on Space Viking ships, and everyone smokes. However, he is taking a plot element of the original a little further, when Valerie (in spite of being pregnant) goes off after a number of women from Tanith who have been sold into slavery.

The striking back continues with among other matters a most precious hostage being taken, and a portent of political problems from another quarter.

Perhaps while conceiving the TerroHuman Future History and writing the original stories of Paratime, H. Beam Piper paused to listen to "Gang Busters" on the radio. Every week, under the oversight of Phillips H. Lord, some criminal was brought to justice accompanied by very loud gunfights. The Planetary Republic of Aton doesn't have Phillips H. Lord, but it did bring down a criminal in after a what is very silent space fight. (What do you think this is, STAR TREK™?) And, with Lucas Trask sent off to the Atonian salt mines . . . er, secret prison planet, Tanith is at war, and *Princess Valerie's War* looks to be a learning experience for her.

In parallel chapters, Mancour shows Valerie growing into her job under very severe pressure, while Lucas has to solve several mysteries in the course of plotting an escape. There are a number of very strange things going on out

there. Oh, and the government of Aton is lying. As if you didn't expect that.

Valerie seems more successful abroad, if not at home, so to speak. Encouraging various Space Vikings to attack Atonian trade seems to be having some effect, but on the planet Tanith, Garvan Spasso remains a stainless steel rat somewhere in the sewers. Even when attacked, he manages to escape, though without the valuable hostage. Or some of his flesh.

Lucas is assembling several puzzles. Some of the pieces are ironic, as with the restaurant in the prison colony where it is possible to eat like a king. The Atonian royal claimant is the cook and proprietor. And the Atonian dumping of all their dissidents turns out to backfire spectacularly, and to Lucas's benefit too.

It may be indicative of something that Mancour didn't resolve the crisis. Also, he is bringing up a lot of interesting things about Otto Harkaman, the arch-historical member of the Tanith government. One of which is remarkably dubious and extremely suggestive. So there may be a lot more to come when this is . . . **To Be Continued**

Let's hope it doesn't go on too long:

. . . "It's bad, Lucas. She lost almost all the ships: *Queen Flavia*, *Lamia*, the independents *Wildebeest*, *Satan's Wrath*, *Pinkleponker* . . . the *Nemesis* got hit pretty hard too, most of the crew didn't make it and she, well, you'll see."

Trask was shocked by what he saw. Valerie had lost her right arm to the elbow, and her left eye betrayed a certain glassiness that hinted at a prosthetic. She looked up when she saw him. "Isn't he *cute*?" she said. The large white cat that occupied her lap, looking as floppy as the white beret she incongruously wore, opened an eye and made a hostile sound when it saw him.

Valerie continued unheeding. "Give him some celery. He likes it . . ."

— Not from *Princess Valerie's Honor*



KHALKHIN-GOL, or: NOMONHAN

Review by Joseph T Major of
LUCKY STRIKE GREEN

by Timothy Ross

(2010; Amazon Digital Services; \$2.99)

Between one step and the next, Professor Martin Richie found that the world had changed. Darkness had not quite fallen, yet he

could not try foresight war avoidance; indeed, he had come late, not early.

The public authorities did the right thing with this dreadfully deranged man and confined him in a mental hospital. They even kept the strange things he had with him.

A writer, down on his luck and working as a janitor (so he couldn't afford the booze), listened to this nut, looked at his oddly well-made verification, made notes, and wrote a novel of if it had happened otherwise. It became a best seller.

The Greater German Reich and the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere were just a little put out at the amount of embarrassing detail that turned up in that book. Someone somehow had managed to dope out the National Socialist *Kernwaffen* and the efforts of Unit 731. There was a dire security breach.

And so, it looks as if the world may go to war again, this time with weapons of unimaginable power, wielded by people to whom "Mutual Assured Destruction" is meaningless nonsense.

Ross deserves credit for so successfully evoking the different standards of a different time. For example, in his America of 2010, lots of people still smoke. There's no stigmata. Nine out of ten lung surgeons smoke Camels because they bring stimulation to the "T-Zone". And, because there was no demand for copper, hence no shortage of copper-based green ink, Lucky Strike Green never went to war. ("Lucky Strike Green Has Gone To War!" was their slogan marking the change to a white package.) There was no war for it to go to.

And so with little things, the different status of women, the lower standards of minorities, the social pressure for conformity. In such a world the USA would be a different place.

Likewise, he evokes the Aryanism of a triumphant Reich, and even strives to show the gathering of the Eight Corners of the world under the beneficent umbrella of Japan. The rest of the world would be a different place.

Which destroys itself, coming from the very nature of these philosophies and world-views. The ending is inherent in the beginning.

Yet . . . his Point Of Departure, the change that makes this alternate history alternate, just doesn't work as it stands. Ross has the Japanese attacking the Soviet Union, not the west. And they win big.

But in 1938, the Kwantung Army decided they were only Commies, anyway, and moved into Mongolia. The resultant war was about as one-sided as it was possible to get; Japanese casualties have been estimated as being astoundingly close to total. There would have to be an amazingly thorough reworking of the Japanese army for this to work at all. And when they got there, they would find all the ice and snow they could ever use, but the petroleum resources they really needed were not available by the technology of the era. Taking the Northern Resource Area just wasn't a viable option at the time.

And similarly, the other half of the equation doesn't work all that well either. American

public opinion was turning towards an acceptance of the inevitability of war with Germany, and the US was already getting involved, what with Lend-Lease and convoys. You do remember the *Reuben James* (DD-245). To avert this, here would have to be a far more aggressive, influential, and unresisted isolationist movement. Led by a social worker from Chicago, maybe?

(And strangely enough, the POD also seems to have expunged Leinster, de Camp, and Piper. Nobody in the alternate time-line seems to have any idea of the concept of alternate history.)

THE CANDIDATE

Review by Joseph T Major of
UNPUNISHED

by William Peter Grasso
(CreateSpace; 2011;

ISBN 978-1466451254; \$12.95;

Amazon Digital Services [Kindle]; \$0.99)

There was a story in *Galaxy*, during its fading days, about a political campaign. This had ads showing a team of actors doing various acts of public service and betterment, and implying that one of them was the person running for the office of the Presidency. But, this person wished to remain anonymous, and so was only known as "The Candidate". (In the gritty conclusion, it turned out that the man organizing the campaign had just changed his name to "The Candidate".)

And you thought the birth certificate issue was bad. Question, if someone were to change his name to "Connie Mack IV", go to Florida, and file suit claiming that the person holding the seat for the 14th Congressional District, Cornelius Harvey McGillicuddy IV, was there under false pretenses, the voters having chosen "Connie Mack IV", not Cornelius Harvey McGillicuddy IV, what chance of success would he have?

The political candidate in this book is running under his real name, but in a sense he is even more fraudulent than "The Candidate". In another sense, it is a self-planned "Manchurian Candidate".

The first phase of the plot begins on the B-17 "The Lady M" on a bombing raid over Germany. The plane is attacked and damaged. The pilot, Captain Leonard Pilcher, coolly decides to divert to Sweden and internment. This provokes some dispute among the crew, some of whom prefer the comparatively more honorable status of prisoner of war.

"The Lady M" bellies in at Stockholm. Whereupon Pilcher's real motive comes in; his father, a prominent industrialist, has connections in Sweden, and Pilcher firmly believes that Dad can spring him, and he can return home, unharmed, wartime service established, ready for bigger and better things.

But not all the crew is quite in line with the arrangement. As the navigator finds when he and the Swedish official who is overseeing the internees go up into a church tower and see — Pilcher arguing with one of the other internees, and terminating the argument by throwing the man off the roof. It doesn't help that the couple

are having an affair — and each of them is married.

Sixteen years have passed, and Pilcher, floating on a sea of paternal expenditure, has made his way into Congress, in spite of various indiscretions along the way, and in spite of a total lack of accomplishment is heading for the Republican nomination. His former crewmen have had various careers; one is a union leader, another a mob boss, and yet another a shell-shocked recluse. The witness to the murder is now a mathematics professor at MIT, haunted by guilt over his silence, his affair, and the tragic demise of first his marriage and then his wife.

The campaign is brutal, and covert to boot. When a reporter notes some peculiar irregularities in Congressman Pilcher's background, and begins digging, a vast variety of unseemly events come to light.

Indeed, there hardly seems anyone who is untouched or innocent. Pilcher, it turns out, won his first primary due to the convenient death of the incumbent in a plane accident. And the mob boss and union leader (two of the guys who preferred imprisonment to internment) have their own killings to deal with.

The portrayal of Pilcher is by far the most disturbing. He is shown to be unfit for any office of profit or trust whatsoever, having all the bad traits of all the candidates of the era, and completely lacking any countervailing admirable ones, or indeed any ability at all. Yet, through a relentless public-relations campaign, presenting a spurious and glowing image, he advances towards the nomination. (This is the alternate history part, in that he is running against Nixon, sure that Eisenhower will not endorse a successor, and thinking ahead to the campaign against Kennedy.)

The portrayal of flawed and imperfect people, facing an opponent even more flawed and imperfect, is harrowing. And when matters rise to a spectacular climax. . .

Grasso, as noted in the review of *East Wind Returns* (2011; reviewed in *Alexiad* V. 10 #6) is so very much the aviation expert. Fortunately for the reader, he uses his knowledge here the way Ned Beach used his intimate knowledge of submarine operations; to drive the plot and illuminate the story, instead of listing the full name and type of every aviation item mentioned. (I once tried to read a technothriller that out-Clancyed Clancy by giving the full trade name and item number of every item of weaponry or equipment mentioned.)

The climax may be a bit melodramatic. In another sense, it is a return of nemesis upon its actor.

. . . "And this is the famous Italian actress, Anna Maria Sciolone."

Yossarian stepped forward to greet the visitor. Since he had managed to get the B-25 to Sweden, he had become a top executive for M&M Enterprises there, and had buried any problems or qualms he had had with the means of his

arrival. Now he was welcoming a visitor to an international film festival. He held out his hand in greeting and smiled cordially.

"You killed him!" she shouted, and in one quick motion buried a knife in his heart. As Yossarian fell to the ground, dying, he recognized, too late, Nately's whore, who had evidently done very well for herself since then. . .

— Not by Joseph Heller

STRANGERS ON A BRIDGE

Review by Joseph T Major of

BRIDGE OF SPIES:

A True Story of the Cold War

by Giles Whittell

(Broadway Books (Random House); 2010;

ISBN 978-0-7679-3107-6; \$24.95;

Random House Digital (Kindle); \$14.99)

On May Day, 1960, a United States U-2 reconnaissance plane made some type of unplanned landing in the Soviet Union . . . near Sverdlovsk in the heart of the Soviet Union about 1,500 miles from the border it crossed. The plane was wrecked but the pilot was not killed. Much of the equipment in the plane, such as radio gear, was undamaged. The pilot's survival and the condition of the wreckage, plus the undamaged equipment, suggest a forced landing in rough country, such as would result from engine failure.

— Robert A. Heinlein, "'Pravda' Means 'Truth'" (*American Mercury*, October 1960; NHOL G.144)

How about the tail falling off?

. . . The FBI's haste prevented it from detecting our illegal William Fisher (Colonel Rudolf Abel) who entered the United States in 1948 and was not arrested until 1957. The code name of Helen Sobell, the wife of Morton Sobell, a member of the Rosenberg Group, was found in Fisher's wallet when he was arrested. . .

— Pavel A. Sudplatonov, *Special Tasks*, Page 210

Would Heinlein think that "pravda" or "truth"?

When "Colonel Rudolf Abel" died on November 16, 1971, we found out that most of what we knew about him was wrong. Granted, the FBI, "knowing" he was a Russian, had no need to search the Public Records Office for the British birth certificate issued to William August Fisher. Still, fifty years later, there is a good bit to be explicated about his career, and about the careers of those swapped for him.

That's right, plural. While Whittell focuses on the life and times that made and ran the U-2 and this particular pilot, Francis Gary Powers, he points out that there was a third man swapped, an American researcher who was doing work on a paper and blundered.

The bits on the building of the U-2, and of

the employment of its pilots, are demonstrative of a great many things, not least the single-mindedness of the U.S. approach to such espionage. Today it seems utterly amazing that anyone could put up with the sort of maneuvering and manipulating that the U-2 pilot candidates had to undergo.

As for their vehicle, Whittell discusses how *fragile* the U-2 is, or was then anyhow. The plane was the harbinger of things to come, with the taking of materials and structures to the ultimate degree of their endurance. Which sometimes was overstressed; Whittell presents evidence that the U-2 was destroyed through not pilot error or shootdown, or engine failure, but from structural failure (which may have been exacerbated by SAM explosions).

The third man (no, not that third man), Frederic Pryor, could well think he had stumbled into a Hitchcock movie. He was writing a Ph. D. thesis on the East German economy when the Stasi moved in on him. Pryor was arrested, taken to an East German prison, and interrogated on why he was spying.

To jump ahead of our story, once the “German” “Democratic” “Republic” was thrown on the ash-heap of history, Pryor went to the archives to find his own file. Which was **ten thousand pages**, including a copy of the aforesaid thesis. While he was reviewing it, another man came in with his own file, which was **fifteen thousand pages**.

Whittell does not think Fisher/Abel did very much in the United States. He apparently discounts his friend Pavel A. Sudoplatov’s descriptions from *Special Tasks* (1994, 1995) of Fisher/Abel’s missions. Since we know from other sources that he worked with some of the Rosenbergs’ people, and apparently with Teddy Hall as well (see *Bombshell* (1997) for more on this), which Whittell also thinks is less than advertised, this may be an overcorrection.

He does repeat the tale of an embarrassing state of affairs. The FBI made much of the “hollow nickel” with the spy message within. What they didn’t go into was that they couldn’t even decrypt the message, much less tell where it came from. The message was for Fisher/Abel’s assistant Reino Hayhanen, who had probably spent the nickel while drunk, and could decipher the message once he defected. (He was being sent back to Moscow, and he had an idea it wasn’t for a pat on the back.)

The negotiations for the release took a while. In particular, the U.S. insisted on getting Pryor released simultaneously with Powers. Moreover, as a diversion, it was hinted that the exchange would take place at Checkpoint Charlie, in downtown Berlin, and that diverted attention away from the Glienicke Bridge, where Powers and “Abel” were released.

Pryor returned to an uneventful life. The others weren’t so fortunate. Powers eventually died in a helicopter crash on August 1, 1977, because of the correction of a malfunction (the fuel gauge would register wrongly that the copter was out of fuel, but they fixed that and didn’t tell him). Fisher/“Abel” was too notorious to use and they weren’t Stalinists any longer; he did nothing basically until he died

(and then his real name came out).

So . . . was it worth it? The U-2 flights had contributed to an easing of American political tension, showing that the Soviet defense buildup wasn’t quite as advertised. But their effectiveness was declining as methodologies improved. Fisher was trapped in a quandry; too late to get the ideological agents, too old-fashioned to get the greedy ones. And Pryor? He blundered into a real-life Hitchcock movie.

Frederic L. Pryor

<http://www.swarthmore.edu/SocSci/Economics/fpryor/>

Yes, he’s still alive.

TRIPLE CROWN

by Lisa Major

This Triple Crown series will, I think, be forever the one of most what might have been. I’ll Have Another managed to win the Derby and Preakness and then on the morning before the Belmont came up lame. Dan Fogelberg had it right in his song about the Derby. “The chance of a lifetime in a lifetime of chance.”

At least I’ll Have Another, unlike Barbaro, is alive and in good enough health to lead the post parade. I’m not sure myself that he could have done it. My impression was that he had one very powerful run in which he could really kick butt and take names but that that run had to be carefully timed. Not so hard to do in the Derby and the Preakness but the Belmont is not known as the test of champions without reason.

But of course, neither I nor anybody else will ever know if we could have had a Triple Crown winner this year. I have heard already the question being raised of whether or not the injury was faked because the New York racing commission doesn’t allow drugs other places do. I think that unlikely. His connections seem to have allowed Dr. Larry Bramlage, one of the world’s top vets, to examine the horse. I don’t think they would do that if the injury were fake.

In the Belmont Mike Smith did a tremendous job of riding Paynter. He almost succeeded in stealing the race by setting a slow pace and thus conserving his horse for the long Belmont stretch. Union Rags came charging through and was just too much horse that day. I still think it was one of the best jobs of stealing a race I’ve ever seen even if it didn’t quite work. Smith certainly earned whatever he made for that second place finish. It must be frustrating to have done that good a job of riding and not win.

At Conglomeration I chanced to buy a copy of *Mysteries of the Diogenes Club* from Larry Smith. It was the best buy of the ten I bought. I think any lover of old style science fiction would enjoy this one, as would aficionados of Sherlock Holmes, whose brother Mycroft is heavily featured here. It is also full of obscure and not so obscure literary references.

— Lisa

CRACKING CHINA: A LOOK AT “THE FAT YEARS”

Review by Taral Wayne of

THE FAT YEARS

by Chan Koonchung,
translated by Michael S. Duke
(Doubleday, 2011, \$29.95)

It seems I don’t read Science Fiction these days unless it’s from left field . . . far left field. I don’t even *look* for SF to read. Instead, I wait for a writer-friend I know to recommend something and lend me *his* copy. This is not just lazy of me, it’s *cheap* of me. But writing these reviews pays rather less than could be desired – nothing, in fact.

Where Bob discovered “The Fat Years,” I don’t know. But he found it refreshingly different and brought it to my attention. It isn’t every day that a science fiction novel about China is written *in* China. “The Fat Years” is subject to harsh legal penalties for reading it, yet is currently the most talked-about book in the country.

The author is Chan Koonchung. He was born in Shanghai, raised in Hong Kong, and currently lives in Beijing. He was the founder and editor of a prominent magazine in Hong Kong, as well as the author of several novels. “The Fat Years” is his first best seller and the first to be translated into English. In fact, in telling the story of Lao Chen, a journalist and novelist, one gets a strong impression that Chan used *himself* as a model. It takes no stretch of the imagination to suspect the author *also* feels Lao Chen’s uncertainties about the new China.

The story is only *barely* a tale of the future. It is set in 2013 – the first chapter is entitled “Two Years From Now.” There’s no reason to worry about it being overtaken by events. The story is really about “now” – and in some ways its view of the present is flawed, so don’t let the aberrant facts put you off.

In “The Fat Years,” the global economic meltdown is presented as far more serious than in fact it has been (so far, cross our fingers), and has persisted, while at the same time China’s rise has been much more dramatic than even in reality. In fact, the Party has declared the beginning of an official “Golden Age of Ascendancy” in which China’s “soft power” extends to every corner of the globe. The whole of the East, including South Korea and Japan, have merged into China’s most intimate sphere of influence, and everywhere in the Developing World there is admiration for the great and shining example of Party-led Consumerism. Europe is little mentioned, America hardly at all, so little relevant they have become.

But, though Lao Chen is one of the most content and smug of a nation of people well-satisfied with themselves, he meets a pair of old friends, Fang Caodi and Little Xi, who bring him unwanted awareness of a crack in the façade. He refuses to believe it, but despite his denial, Lao becomes more and more curious about the odd fact that nobody can remember a “missing” month. According to his friends, an entire month passed between the economic collapse of the West, and the announcement of the new “Golden Age” for China. Those thirty days can’t have just disappeared, but why does nobody remember them? Something must have

happened, but there is no record of it in books or magazines or on the internet. Nor are Lao's friends the only ones. There are numerous people who have fallen between the cracks somehow, and know something is missing – even if they don't know what.

More than that, there is the mysterious, perpetual “high” most people seem to be in, including Lao. Only those who are aware of the missing month seem to have the ability to feel despondency, discontent or doubt. Everyone else wanders the streets with a smile on their faces and no questions in their minds. It begins to appear that the Golden Age of Ascendancy may be either more . . . or less . . . than it seems.

Despite the conspiracy-driven plot, the China portrayed is very much a realistic picture of China as it is today. Money is flowing freely in the cities, fortunes are to be made in graft and shady business deals to which the government turns a blind eye – or even has a hand in, the glut of consumerism is rising to comic levels . . . the bureaucracy is as firmly in control of every detail of life as it has been since 1949 . . . and will doubtlessly continue to be until 2949, if the Party has its way. Unquestionably, this is the strongest virtue of the novel – not its SF content, which is rather minimal, but as a satire of “Capitalism's” newest poster boy, Communist China.

In some ways, “The Fat Years” is a rather primitive book. Although it is a translation, the plot is constructed awkwardly, from narrative scenes, letter extracts, diaries and expository lumps. In that sense, it reminded me of *Dracula*, by Bram Stoker. While perhaps acceptable to late Victorian literature – along with falling asleep in caves as a means of traveling to exotic places inaccessible at the time – it is a cumbersome device to modern readers. Yet the prose is quite transparent, and the reader will have no trouble following the point of view. A little more problematic is the final confrontation in Part Three.

Lao and his friends have kidnapped a senior Party official, He Dongsheng, to demand the truth from him. Under the influence of threats and . . . well, better leave that to the reader to find out . . . He regales them to his life-history, then a 60-page discourse on the Party's long term policies, leading to the final achievement of the government's objectives – restoring the world to its proper order with China as the rightful leader of nations. Howard Roark's endless peroration at his trial, in *The Fountainhead*, invites obvious comparison – except, of course, there was nothing about human rights or the supremacy of the individual in He's speech.

It is in this section that the science fiction element makes itself more strongly felt. There is a definite strain of Hari Seldon's “Plan” in He Dongsheng's speech. Moreover, it is only at the end of the book that you discover what happened in the “missing” month, or why everyone in China except, apparently, asthmatics, has their heads in the clouds. Much of the author's speculations about China's recent past and near future are very shrewd – particularly about how Western financial

wizards played right into the Party's hands – but nevertheless, certain guesses about how the chips will fall seem wishful thinking at best.

So, if you read SF to broaden your mind at all, and not just as predictable escapism, you might take your head out of the Harry Turtledove and Lois McMaster Bujold for a few days and read a book that is actually on the cutting edge of something. Though by no means great literature, “The Fat Years” will expose the SF reader to something that is tantalizingly both *unfamiliar*, and yet *nearly* as familiar as Philip K. Dick.

I took Taral's advice and requested *The Fat Years* from the library. Unfortunately the library only had one copy and it seems to be missing. A search at the world card catalog revealed it was the Main branch which had had a copy. I might perhaps look for it today while I am there. Given the author's oriental name, the book could easily have been misfiled or be in new books.

— Lisa

THE SOCIAL CONQUEST OF EARTH

by Edward O. Wilson

Reviewed by Alexis A. Gilliland

In the frontispiece Wilson is credited with 25 books and two Pulitzer prizes, and as he approaches the end of a long and productive career he seeks to apply what he has learned about ants and other social animals to human beings. Wilson writes beautifully, and with magisterial authority addresses the question of what is human nature—which has brought more than one expert to grief, and the related question, how did human nature evolve. Along the way he discusses kinship selection, also known as inclusive fitness, an idea that he initially embraced back in the 1970s, but which is currently refuted by later evidence favoring group selection. Drawing on his knowledge of ants, he shows how ants became eusocial, (eusocial is the state of sociality that enables an organism, like an ant, to become a super organism, like a nest of ants) and then, by analogy, how humans, with a series of lucky steps, evolved into a mammalian version of eusociality. Steps lucky for us, less lucky for the rest of life on earth, as many species face extinction due to human conversion of their habitat into farmland, or over fishing.

What steps? Wilson traces them, from walking upright, which freed the hands that were originally useful for climbing trees, to becoming meat eaters, specifically daytime predators, tenaciously chasing game like antelopes until they became overheated and could no longer escape, and finally mastering the use of fire, which meant developing the campfire as a defended base, around which several generations—including grandmothers, necessary for the education and raising of children, worked together for the good of the group. Then came the development of language to facilitate cooperation within the group and the increase of intelligence to detect pretend

cooperation, also known as cheating. Interestingly, he suggests that music may be an outgrowth of language, in that infants have a powerful drive to learn to speak, while learning musical skills requires a lot of work for most people.

In Wilson's view, the defended base is the key to eusociality, and in support of this idea he cites eusocial species such as ants, termites, wasps, bees, mole rats, some beetles, and some shrimp. Finally, all those human groups had to compete and cooperate with other human groups, and with the invention of agriculture about 12,000 years ago the equalitarian groups of hunter-gatherers gave way to the more hierarchal tribe which was supported by farming, enabling and encouraging technology as a means of competing with rival tribes.

Long before the invention of agriculture, however, those little groups of humans wiped out their humanoid competition, including perhaps the Neanderthals, since Wilson takes the view that they were a little less than human even as he admits to lacking proof. In the Middle East, we find Neanderthal remains next to Homo Sapiens remains, both at the same level of culture, both shuttling back and forth (some cave sites include alternate layers of Homo Sapien and Neanderthal debris) for about 20,000 years, until about 35,000 years ago, when both groups were displaced by an invading group of Homo Sapiens using far more sophisticated weaponry. I think the Neanderthals must have been fully human, since we share 1-5 percent of their genes based on DNA analysis. Being human, the conservative Neanderthals embraced a big game hunting culture that they were unwilling or unable to change, and being a race of defensive linemen made obsolete by the invention of the forward pass, they were replaced by puny, veggie eating Homo Sapiens playing under the new rules.

Human nature thus evolved on two levels, individual and group. At the individual level, selfish individuals will out compete altruistic individuals. At the group level, however, altruistic groups will out compete selfish groups, so that humans achieved an equilibrium between selfish and altruistic, having evolved with the capacity for both selfish and altruistic behavior. The religious explanation suggests that God and the Devil compete for human souls, so that God, favoring the group, will win in the long run over the Devil who panders to individuals. Wilson argues that both behaviors, selfish and altruistic, are necessary to be human, and that we must learn to live with this contradiction that has evolved in the core of our being. He thinks that our current mastery of technology suggests that except for being mortal and acting like apes a lot, we human beings have become godlike. I think that we will achieve immortality long before we stop acting like apes.

KITTIES OF GREY

Review by Joseph T Major of

DC SHOWCASE: CATWOMAN

<http://www.imdb.com/title/tt1986806/>

"What's your name?"

"Christian Grey, mistress."

WHAP "Your name is Fido!"

SOB "Yes, mistress, my name is Fido."

WHAP "And what will you do, Fido?"

"Anything mistress wants."

WHAP "Clean out the litter boxes!"

"Yes, mistress."

—Not from *Fifty Cats of Grey*

My grandnephew is a little Batman fan. He is not quite five, so he obviously can't be a big Batman fan. He really likes the *Batman: The Animated Series* DVDs I gave him for Christmas last year. I think I'll hold off on this one, though.

The DC Showcase line is a somewhat more advanced animated series. Somewhat more explicit, too.

The Cat — her original moniker — has generally been portrayed as an ambiguous figure, not quite law-abiding, not utterly depraved. Over the years, various explanations of her background and methods have been given out, in the shifting, retconning, and reimagining common to the comic world. For example, before the latest reimagining, she had come to know the secret of her opponent and love. Now, they have er romantic encounters on rooftops in semi-anonymity.

Over the years, the character has developed in an almost dominiatrix mode. What else can you say about a woman who wears tight leather bodysuits and carries a whip?

Speaking of gray cats . . . the story begins with two men trying to shoot a cat. They chase kitty until they drive it over the side of a bridge, at which point they go report to their boss, "Mission accomplished."

Meanwhile on the underside of the bridge, kitty is trembling in immense fear, being held by someone who is wearing stuff thick enough not to get clawed. Having calmed down the cat somewhat, the calmer proceeds to a strip club, in trail of Roughcut, the crime boss in question. I told you this was not for my grandnephew, and I'm not so sure my niece would go for it either.

The stripper on stage gets rewarded with an uncut diamond. (See above.) At this point the girls get a quick break. The announcer must have been pretty good at improvising, as the next performer is wearing a tight leather bodysuit and an odd headpiece. She proceeds to unzip her suit down to the navel . . . far enough to get out the whip, which she uses to disarm the bodyguards and let Roughcut know that he is not universally loved.

The club empties out and the boss dives into his limo for his trip to the docks. Only to be followed by someone who doesn't particularly care about legalities in acquiring transportation. The resultant gunfight looks to be straight out of *The Matrix*, with trucks being flipped over, cars snaking through oncoming traffic in circumstances where there should be massive pileups, and so on, which makes me wonder if I wasn't right after all when I wrote that piece

about them being really in it.

The wildest driving scene takes place at the docks, where the boss himself, a take-charge guy, is operating a crane which will load a cargo container onto the ship which is sneaking in under the cover of night. I don't think union rules cover trying to drive a crane while fighting a woman who has 6" knife-fingernails.

She proceeds to demonstrate one of the disadvantages of driving while distracted, anchoring the hoist cable of the crane. Roughcut, somewhat impaired, doesn't notice this, the crane hits the end of the cable, flips over, and conveniently breaks the back of the incoming ship before going down.

Whereupon, ripped and torn, the rescuer breaks the padlock on the cargo container and finds the real cargo — a group of women, about to be shipped out for personal services, not quite with their consent. Roughcut was in the rough trade, so to speak. Oh yes, the cat? Kitty had a collar with a message.

Yes, that was ambiguous. And there is no Catwoman, much to our loss, to rescue abandoned cats or women being sold into prostitution.

(It is available with *Batman: Year One*. Of course, that has a black Catwoman [think Halle Berry or Eartha Kitt] while this has a white Catwoman [Lee Meriweather, Michelle Pfeiffer, Anne Hathaway].)



HIGH ANXIETY

A Report on

Grant C. McCormick's Health Problems
by his landlord Joseph T Major

Grant was released from Christopher East on April 19. I drove out there, loaded the stuff he had accumulated into the car, and watched as he used his walker to get to the vehicle. We stopped off and he bought some food, then got home and got him settled down for the night.

Charley, Tammi, and Dale, along with other friends, have come by on a regular basis. Lisa has been cleaning out the front and middle rooms with assiduous effort, and she has

acquired a large number of totes for Grant's clothes. Which I have been washing and washing and washing . . .

We now have a detachable shower head in the downstairs barroom. The shower fixture has a disconcerting habit of falling out of its socket and hitting the bather. I had bought it about ten years ago, after liking the one Mr. Thomas had bought for Mrs. Thomas. Grant also has a shower seat.

We had a large amount of things for junk day. One was the wreckage of the couch that Grant had slept on for about five years. It had come in the door when we moved, but there was too much stuff for it to be removed. So it had to be broken up.

His mobility is constrained, but improving. As May ground on, Grant began walking more and more; mostly to the bus stop, about a block and a half away, but more than he had been doing. He walked over to the building where I work to vote in the Kentucky primary, for example.

He has also applied for TARC3 handicapped bus transport. This is a portal-to-portal service for those in need. It will help when he goes back to work. The workers at Christopher East failed to attend to this, which annoyed him once he found out.

He has been eating more regularly. Beforehand, he would all too often announce at Friday night dinners that "this is Thursday's breakfast."

We have felt reasonably secure in going out of town for the weekend, leaving Grant to his own measures.

The brain injury seems to have stopped short of the thalamus. This explains why his speech and memory are comparatively unimpaired. A cortical-thalamic pause, et cetera.

He is planning to go back to work by the end of June. There are various reasons why this is a good idea. But to do so, he has to take some evaluations to determine his fitness to drive.

JOURNEYS INTO SEVERAL REMOTE COUNTIES OF KENTUCKY

by Joe

I have to apologize for the curtness of our con reports. Spare energy and time have been devoted to other matters.

ConCave was **February 24-26**, at the Best Western in Bowling Green. It was a thoroughly enjoyable relaxicon. We saw a number of old friends there, including one really old one, Rickey Sheppard from the old WKUSFS days. Now that we are both married, life is not so hard.

The old faces were there, too, another year older and . . . not that, I hope. The con had the now-traditional availability of food. The congoer can easily get his or her money's worth in eats from the membership fee. Dealing was not so much, and I did do some long-distance shopping. Tim Lane was somewhat disappointed to learn that his favorite comic *P.S. 238* was discontinuing the individual issues for an on line and graphic novel presence.

The Saturday night parties were more oriented to our tastes than the Friday night ones, and we did spend a bit of time with Gary Robe (at an earlier con, he did like that I understood the origin of the title of his APAzine *Tennessee Trash*) promoting his bid for the 2014 DeepSouthCon, though he didn't quite have a specific hotel just yet. Since he had done earlier ConCaves, we know he has the ability.

Sunday morning we bought our first meal when my niece, Sarah, her husband, David, and her son, Will, all came over for breakfast. Afterwards, we set out to go see another relative but couldn't make it because of health matters.

ConGlomeration was **April 13-15**, at the Clarion Hotel in Louisville. ("Clarion" has a certain resonance with older Fans, naturally.) This, under different names, had been the site of previous ConGlomerations and one RiverCon.

Attendance is dropping, for various reasons. We did see **Leigh Kimmel** and **Larry Ullery** doing their sales, along with Steve Francis and **Bob Roehm** and **Joel Zakem**. Steve went home to get some issues of *Galaxy* for **David Herrington**. And, for the first time in some years, I saw **Gary Flispart**, who was taking his son there for the gaming.

There was actually a program, and for stuff besides gaming. The local publishers (hi, guys) explained their business model. **Mike Williams** talked about his writing career, and got added as a recipient.

As usual, the Friday parties centered around loud music in dark rooms. Saturday, I had to take Lisa to where she could get a ride to Pascha service, so we passed that up.

ConGlomeration continues to hang on.

As a side note, in May, we had to pass up the Sherlock Holmes/Arthur Conan Doyle Symposium in Dayton. My niece and her husband were . . . it needs a little explaining.

Sarah and David had planned to marry in the park in downtown Bowling Green. Then, the Kentucky National Guard was called up to go to Iraq. They got married very quickly.

So, once David was home again safe, he decided to do it right. He made the quite dashing citizen-soldier cavalryman in his dress uniform, accompanied by his troop captain and his best man, a sergeant. Sarah looked divine in a white bridal dress. Her little boy Will escorted her down the path, looking very proper in a little tuxedo. (Later than night, he was writhing and twisting between his grandfather and step-grandmother, refusing to go to sleep, but that's another matter.) Indeed, as part of the cuteness, a little girl preceeded them down the aisle, holding a sign declaring "Here Comes The Bride".

Nice reception afterwards, including a visit from the Hilltopper (the Western Kentucky University mascot), Sarah taking a break for yoga, Lisa photographing the train next to the station, and so on. The next morning we finally saw the relative we had meant to see in February, even if I wasn't quite up to it.

For the Transit of Venus we went to the University of Louisville's Rauch Planetarium.

This was the first time I had ever been to the new one. The old one had been demolished for parking space, while they had moved the playhouse, which was in the same area. For a while it had been proposed not to build a new one, but sanity, or outraged protests, prevailed.

There were a number of people in the courtyard with telescopes, and glad to say no one actually looked through one. Clouds occasionally interfered with the view, though.

We went inside, and got tickets for the 6:30 showing. Yes, it was that crowded. While we waited in the foyer, they showed the NASA feed of the solar image on a big screen TV there. This hadn't been available at the *last* transit.

There was a constant buzz of conversation throughout, drowning out any commentary from the broadcasters. There was, fortunately, one chair, which we appropriated for Grant's use.

First contact was at 6:04, but it took a few minutes for it to be detectable. The planet was about halfway into the solar disc when we were called for the planetarium.

The projection of the image was, naturally, larger. However, we still couldn't quite see if there were a black drop (atmospheric caused) because the doors were left open to let in the last ladders, washing out the screen with outside light — yes, sunlight, too! And there was the buzz of conversation, along with people using their iPads and even taking pictures with smartphones.

One comment I did hear. A little girl behind me asked, "Are there people there?"

I wanted to cry.

For the past few centuries, transits of Venus have come in pairs. The previous one was June 8, 2004. It was live-streamed, and Gary Flispart was watching it eagerly and showed it to the rest of us.

The last transit of Venus before that was on December 6, 1882. John Philip Sousa wrote the "Transit of Venus March" to commemorate it. The next transit will be December 10-11, 2117.

The last time a solar eclipse occurred during a transit of Venus was on November 1, 15,607 BC[E] and the next one will be on April 5, 15,232. Does Galadriel have email?

Transits of Mercury are fairly common, with the last one having been November 8, 2006 and the next one May 9, 1916. Perhaps not surprisingly, mutual transits are even rarer, with the next one due July 26, 69,193.

As Sir Arthur C. Clarke might have noted, transits of Earth from Mars take place on a somewhat more regular basis. The transit of his story "Transit of Earth" (*Playboy*, January 1971) was on May 11, 1984, with the previous one having been May 8, 1905 and the next one November 10, 2084. In 571,471 the Barsoomian astronomical establishment will thrill to a simultaneous transit of Jasoom and Cosoom (Earth and Venus).

YOU'RE SO VAIN

by Joe

There was an annular eclipse of the sun on May 20, 2012. It began off the coast of

Guangxi [Kwangsai], passed through Guangzhou (Canton), Fujian, Taiwan, Kyushu, Shikoku, southern Honshu, Oregon, California, Nevada, Utah, Arizona, Colorado, New Mexico, and ended in Texas. The longest duration of annularity was at sea south of the Aleutian Islands, at 48° 51' 53" N, 176° 29' 4" E, for 5 minutes 36.9 seconds. It was part of Saros 128, which began on August 29, 984 and will end on November 1, 2282. It was the first of two solar eclipses in 2012. The next eclipse in this saros will be June 1, 2030 and will be an annular eclipse, visible in Algeria, Tunisia, Libya, Greece, Turkey, Ukraine, Russia, China, and Japan.

Mike Weasner has reported on seeing the eclipse, which was close to sunset at their home in New Mexico.

The next solar eclipse will be a total eclipse, occurring on November 14-13, 2012 (the track crosses the International Date Line), visible on land in Australia (Northern Territory and Queensland). The maximum totality will be at 39° 56' 54" S, 161° 19' 48" W and will be four minutes 2.2 seconds. This eclipse will be part of Saros 133, which began on July 13, 1219 and will end on September 5, 2499.

There will be two solar eclipses in 2013; an annular eclipse on May 10-9 visible in Australia (West Australia, Northern Territory, and Queensland) and the British Solomon Islands, and a hybrid eclipse on November 3 visible in Gabon, Republic of the Congo, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Uganda, Kenya, and Ethiopia.

<http://www.hermit.org/Eclipse>

<http://www.eclipse.org.uk/>

<http://eclipse.gsfc.nasa.gov/eclipse.html>

NEBULA AWARDS

The Science Fiction & Fantasy Writers of America (SFWA) announced the 2011 Nebula Award winners on May 19, 2012.

Best Novel:	<i>Among Others</i> , Jo Walton (Tor)
Best Novella:	"The Man Who Bridged the Mist," Kij Johnson, (<i>Asimov's Science Fiction</i> , October-November 2011)
Best Novelette:	"What We Found," Geoff Ryman
Best Short Story:	"The Paper Menagerie," Ken Liu, (<i>The Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction</i> , March/April 2011)

Ray Bradbury Award for Outstanding Dramatic Presentation:

Doctor Who: "The Doctor's Wife," Neil Gaiman (writer), Richard Clark (director) (BBC Wales)

Andre Norton Award for Young Adult

Science Fiction and Fantasy Book Winner:
The Freedom Maze, Delia Sherman (Big Mouth House)

2011 Damon Knight Grand Master Award:
 Connie Willis

Solstice Award:
 Octavia Butler (posthumous) and John Clute

Note about the Solstice Awards: They "acknowledge members who have had a significant impact on the science fiction and fantasy landscape. It is especially meant for those who have made a consistent, positive, major difference in the genre."

Service to SFWA Award:
 Bud Webster

FANZINES



Banana Wings #49 April 2012
 Claire Brialey and Mark Plummer, 59 Shirley Road, Croydon, Surrey, CR0 7ES UK
fishlifter@googlemail.com

Beyond Bree April 2012, May 2012, June 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 #2, #3
 Taral Wayne
Taral@Teksavvy.com
<http://www.efanzines.com>

The Drink Tank #313, #314, #315, #316, #317, #318
 Christopher J. Garcia
garcia@computerhistory.org
<http://www.efanzines.com>

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

Fish Out of Water #478, #479, #480, #481, #482, #483, #484, #485, #486, #487
 Marty Helgesen, 11 Lawrence Avenue, Malverne, New York 11565-1406 USA

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

Lofgeornost #107 May 2012
 Fred Lerner, 81 Worcester Avenue, White River Junction, VT 05001-8011 USA
fred.lerner@dartmouth.edu

MT Void V.30 #41 April 6, 2012 — V. 30 #50 June 8, 2012
 Mark and Evelyn Leeper, 80 Lakeridge Drive, Matawan, NJ 07747-3839 USA
eleeper@optonline.net
mleeper@optonline.net
<http://leepers.us/mtvoid>

Opuntia #249 May 2012
 Dale Speirs, Box 6830, Calgary, Alberta T2P 2E7 CANADA

The Reluctant Famulus #87
 Thomas D. Sadler, 305 Gill Branch Road, Owenton, KY 40359- USA
tomfamulus@hughes.net
<http://www.efanzines.com>

Southern Fandom Confederation Update V. 1 #27
 Warren Buff, 22144 B Ravenglass Place, Raleigh, NC 27612-2936 USA
warrenmbuff@gmail.com
<http://www.efanzines.com>

Space Cadet #19
 R. Graeme Cameron
rgraeme@shaw.ca
<http://www.efanzines.com>

The Zine Dump #29
 Guy H. Lillian III, 5915 River Road, Shreveport, LA 71105-4739 USA
ghliiii@yahoo.com
<http://www.efanzines.com>

2014
 London
<http://www.londonin2014.org/>
 NASFiC:
 Phoenix
<http://www.leprecon.org/phoenixin2014/>

London has filed the only bidding papers, so unless there is a really massive write-in campaign, they will win and the San Antonio WorldCon will vote on both the 2014 NASFiC and the 2015 WorldCon.

2015
 Spokane
<http://spokanein2015.org/>

Proposed Dates: August 19-23.

Orlando
<http://orlandoin2015.org/>

Proposed Dates: September 3-7.

2016
 Kansas City
<http://kansascityin2016.org/>

Proposed Dates: August 18-22.

Mariehamn, Finland
<http://mariehamn2016.org/>

Mariehamn is the capital of the Finnish territory of Åland. They had a convention there on May 18-20 of this year.

<http://www.mariehamn.ax/>

Warning — Entirely in Swedish.

If you trust Google Translate there are eight hotels in the town with a total of 493 rooms and eight suites. Get your reservations in early.

2017
 Japan
<http://nippon2017.org/>

New York

2018
 New Orleans
<http://neworleansin2018.org>

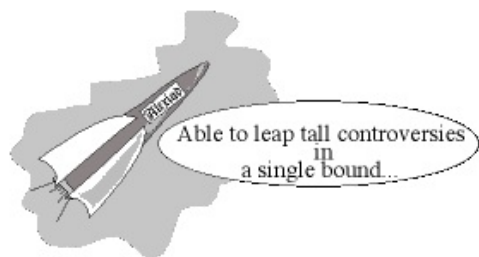
2019

2020
 New Zealand
<http://nzin2020.org/>

And now while we're mentioning these things, does anyone want to have a fanzine dinner at ChiCon? It's been a while since I was there, and if anyone knows of a decent place to eat . . . I asked this on the Faneds page on Facebook and the discussion turned into a stream of jokes about Chinese food.

WORLDCON BIDS

Letters, we get letters



From: **Martin Morse Wooster** April 4, 2012
Post Office Box 8093, Silver Spring,
MD 20907-8093 USA
mmwooster@yahoo.com

Many thanks for *Alexiad*. I don't know about "NASCAR romance novels", but 30 years ago I was in Aberdeen, Maryland, working on a story and discovered a novel in a nearby pharmacy that had a blurb of "A MAN, A WOMAN . . . AND A TANK!" That's all I remember. I'm sure there were other military romances nearby.

And one of the biggest sellers on Amazon.com is *Fifty Shades of Grey* (2012), a novel about a woman who becomes a submissive (Mr. Grey, a typical rich handsome rugged romance wuv object, is her Master).



I enjoyed Sue Burke's report on the Alhambra. I like reading fannish travel reports, and Burke is a good writer. It sounds like a lovely trip. I enjoyed learning that one of the souvenirs she brought back was olive oil from the Alhambra's own groves. I would have bought that too. I love bringing back foods native to the places I visit. When I was in Charleston last month I made sure to bring back Charleston Breakfast Tea, made from tea grown at America's only tea plantation. The tea was expensive at 12 bags for \$9 but the profits went to Historic Charleston, so I thought of this as a charitable contribution.

Taras Wolansky complains about the Arisia con suite. I know that with Capclave the problem for years was that the con suite was in

a function room and local health regulators declared that the con committee could only offer pre-packaged stuff in function rooms. Last year the convention moved the con suite to a private room, so fans could actually bake cookies (a tradition of Disclave) and supply fresh fruit. I have heard the con committee has heard complaints that the room-based con suite was too crowded, and they may once again move the suite to a heavily regulated function room.

Thanks to Milt Stevens for telling us about how little the chair of the Orlando bid knows about Worldcon. Given this lack of knowledge, why should we back Orlando?

And now he's produced a Manifesto showing all the zeal of someone new deciding to throw out all those old ways. Garth Spencer might want to consider expanding his cautionary tale of the Vancouver fans who went to WorldCon and decided they could all on their own do something like that too.

— JTM

From: **Richard A. Dengrove** April 10, 2012
2651 Arlington Drive, #302, Alexandria,
VA 22306-3626 USA
RichD22426@aol.com

This is the first *Alexiad* LOC since I retired from Federal service March 2nd. Should I taunt you unlucky guys because you have to work? Naw. I had to work thirty five years, and only then did I feel I was well-heeled enough to retire. Even then I could only do so because I was lucky. What I better do instead of taunting you is comment on *Alexiad* Feb 2012. And a fertile field for comments, it is.

For instance, I better comment on someone who was unlucky, Grant. I hope his vertigo and debilitation prove a passing malady rather than anything more long term.

This crossed the issue with the report on Grant's malady, which was definitely not "passing".

Unluckier still was Robert Sabella. When I found out he had died, I had just written a letter of comment for *Visions of Paradise*. And I looked forward to many more years of commenting. But that was not to be. And his zines, I gather, constituted a minuscule portion of his activities. He had books to read and books to write, camping trips to go on, and friends of all ages to socialize with. So active a life did he lead no one could have seen his death coming.

Bob Sabella had a lot of good traits; contrariwise, Lawe in the *Master Mariner* series had one bad trait, cowardice. Also contrary to Bob, he lived on from way past his deserves, from the 16th to the 20th Centuries. In short, his story was one of many variations on the tale of the Wandering Jew. Who wanders on for an insult to Christ, until, according to the curse, Christ returns. Of course, none of the variations committed such a sin or had to atone that long.

Lawe and Bob Sabella couldn't be more different. Sometimes, though, when we think something should be different, it's not that different. For instance you would expect that the temperature in Granada would be at least in the 60s, even in December. However, as Sue Burke said, in her trip report, it was 37°F. Of course, that might not be as surprising as I thought: on the map, it looks to be at the same latitude as Virginia.

Another thing that isn't what it seems is Steampunk. Lloyd might be interested to know the Parasol Protectorate series, which, I think, got mentioned, is more Steampunk as satire than fashion. And satire good enough so I felt, at times, its world was real. Also, John Purcell might surprise Lloyd as well. While, at Fencon, I don't remember if he was dressed in the attire of the 1870s, his wife Valerie certainly was.

I just disagreed with Lloyd Penney on Steampunk. Contrariwise, I agree with Darrel Schweitzer that the Fukushima reactor was badly placed. They should have known that placing it on lowlands was not a good idea. It is true its planners showed great fastidiousness when placing it. They determined a tsunami had not occurred there in the past five hundred years. That is pretty fastidious. On the other hand, they were obviously using the wrong criteria.

So much for whether the Fukushima plant was properly placed, how about the word gender. Is it being properly placed these days. Robert Kennedy says no, and wonders when Gender replaced Sex in the fashionable vocabulary. If I am not mistaken, an Irishman used it in the musical *Finian's Rainbow*, which dates back to 1947. Of course, his choice of vocabulary was considered quaint.

So the word gender possibly has some age. It is older than magnetic tape from 1960 which is falling apart. Because of this, Jim Stumm believes that books will last longer. Of course, the digital media most people use, computer files, can be transferred from one computer to another with losing any quality. And there is a big market for changing from one media to another. Tapes and records can easily be converted to computer files. Thus, they too need never stay in one place long enough to fall apart.

Thus, all current media may last forever – and so may mortgages. Jim Stumm claims that a bank can renegotiate mortgages without consulting the scattered owners. Hence, limiting their life. However, I've heard scattered owners are why banks are reluctant to renegotiate mortgages: lest they anger one of their many owners. The word Tranch in mortgages securities doesn't seem to have made a difference. By contrast, I hear, in other recessions and depressions, renegotiation marked the norm not the exception.

Of course, mortgages are authentic pieces of paper. How authentic historically was the comic strip *Prince Valiant*? Let us take the name Thule for Prince Valiant's kingdom. In Ancient times, they may not have known its exact location. However, recently, people have presumed it is Iceland. Of course, you're right – at one obscure point – Harold Foster tells us Iceland isn't Thule. Action, which nonetheless doesn't

erase that most of us presumed it was.

Having said that, historical inaccuracy wouldn't have ruined the strip for me in the least. I thought it was a great, well drawn strip with stories far better told than other places in the Sunday comics. However, I wouldn't go to Harold Foster for historical accuracy like some people I know. In fact, it probably improved the strip that his history was fun and not slog.

While Harold Foster didn't necessarily cling to historical accuracy, Taras Wolansky kept historically accurate on the issue of zombies. Yes, the original zombie in Haiti was someone raised from the dead and held in a thrall. That has been the belief in the south of Africa and Haiti, and that is indeed what Bela Lugosi did in the first zombie movie, *White Zombie* (1932).

With Zombies, I end my letter even though those in question are far from deadly. So I have wound up not pushing in your face that I'm retired, but instead discoursing on Thule, mortgages, the Wandering Jew, Steampunk, and other assorted topics.

Oh great, a steampunk novel about the Wandering Jew fighting zombies who are forcing people to take subprime mortgages on houses in Thule. Somebody's going to do it if they haven't already.

— JTM

May 16, 2012

Alexiad April 2012 starts out with Lisa trying to write a book for the Novel of the Month project. Lisa, maybe you're trying the wrong approach. Maybe, instead of focusing on the need for discipline, you should look within yourself and come out with a novel of 50,000 words that will satisfy you. Which will be more fun. It may even be better writing. I have found that, with writing, you have to balance discipline with spontaneity; or you can't get anywhere.

Other things that we don't think highly of are also a good, like Terry Dixon's stealing the "Prophet of Judea" from Anatole France for his "The Prophet of Zorayne." Joe, you're wrong in your "Plot It Yourself" article that it isn't a homage to Anatole, and meaningless. In fact, all plagiarism is a homage to the original writer. On the other hand, you're right it's stealing and deceit, and should be nipped in the bud.

While I disagree about Terry Dixon, I have to hand it to you when, in your "Keep Looking Over Your Shoulder" article, you claim that the Strategic Defense Initiative helped doom the Soviets. At one time, an engineer friend convinced me the Strategic Defense Initiative was unworkable for the foreseeable future. There is no way to control its blast. Thus, I figured SDI was the wrong strategy.

Now, I suspect now the feasibility of the SDI had nothing to do with Reagan's strategy. The Soviets had to have one of those turkeys of their own, jumped on the bandwagon, and almost bankrupted themselves trying to develop it. As I have said, the Giffer was a genius at public relations; and he knew they would fall

for his con scheme.

The Giffer had some informed luck. I wish your cousin Grant luck, informed or not, in returning from a stroke. The one time I have seen that happen, it depended on will pure and simple. A friend of my late father's had a stroke; and couldn't read, write or drive. Reading and writing was his life. He was up and running in a week or two. Driving, on the other hand, he never re-mastered. He could always depend on his wife.

Some people are good at self-improvement, like my father's friend; but others could use some self-improvement. In your comment on my letter, I get the feeling you believe the teenage girls who watch *Twilight* and read *Time Travel* romances could use some self-improving. That would be a tall order: to some extent, the problem may not be literary, but that that age group can't relate to us.

While other times self-improvement is the word of the day, other times the pristine state is considered the thing. That is why, I heard, Antarctica is so sparsely settled with just forty-three stations, and why its resources are undeveloped: development is banned by international treaty.

One thing that is fair game for being improved is Facebook. However, I'm not certain you're right in your comment to Brad Foster that useful postings need be lost in 'friends' trivia. On the Wall, yes; but not if you send messages. I have often sent my real friends personal messages on Facebook; and they have often answered me back.

Speaking of improvements, could the younger generation be improved? We all could. However, I think Lloyd is being unjust to the younger generation. Looked as a mass, they look in poor shape, I have to admit. On the other hand, when I look at them as individuals, I'm not so pessimistic. Many I have met are as different from the herd as night to day. And, yes, they have imaginations; so the next generation to rule will not be left imagination-less, as Lloyd fears.

If not our youth, how about improving on our atomic reactors. George Price says that we do not recycle spent nuclear fuel rods. I believed that too; but I was told that while there is no overall program of sending them to breeder reactors as in France, individual plants reprocess the rods and use them.

Also, I have to disagree with George not only about nuclear reactors but about private money. He claims if money was issued and guaranteed by banks and not the government, inflation would be unheard of. My understanding is that inflation of private currency was not unheard of during the 19th Century. Which is why the government took it over.

This is all part and parcel of George's belief that everyone, at least business, keeps to their enlightened self-interest; and has some inkling of the past and the future. I have disagreed. I think this belief belongs in Aesop's fables.

Another person I disagree with is Taras Wolansky, about the Constitution. But that wouldn't be a reason for me to respond unless I

had a chestnut to throw into the fire. Here it is: I heard that, in the Federalist papers, Madison was asked what would happen if the Constitution became outmoded. And he said the justices would make new interpretations.

That ends this letter. I started with a short discussion of writing, and ended with a comment on what has been written. In between, there were comments on Anatole France, the Strategic Defense Initiative and *Twilight*.

From: **Bill Patterson**

April 16, 2012

Thanks for *Alexias/Alexiad* 11:2.

In your "Plot it Yourself" piece (not one of Stout's stronger outings, in my opinion), your Stouffer/Rowling, Dixon/Lucas meditation reminded me more of the Deen claim in 1929 that H.G. Wells had plagiarized parts of *The Outline of History* — a suit also dismissed (but IIRC a defense was raised about ten years ago on the ground that too many of the same errors in Deen's ms. were also in the Wells book to have been just coincidence).

"E. B. Frohvet" wrote here about the Deen claim a few years back. If you like I will find the issue and send you a copy.

Although *The Number of the Beast* is not one of my favorite books (and I quite dislike one of the characters), I never found the slightest difficulty in telling who was talking in the earlier part of the book; I never found that "they all sounded alike." The last chapter presents specialized problems: there are so many individuals introduced so briefly that it's regrettable but not past understanding that they are not each strongly differentiated; in that scope, the only way you could do that would be by caricature, which has its own problems.

Of course, different readers have different "ears" for the nuances of rhetorical registers (or "languages" in Bakhtin's usage) — and it's certainly possible that the usage of rhetorical languages among the six principal characters was another misjudgment in that book — but I've also found that claim coming from people who clearly did not read the text with enough attention to have noticed anything more subtle than the grossest sort of flag-raising.

I do not say that is true of you or your remarks here — I had in mind some of the contemporaneous reviews Gerald Jonas published in the *New York Times* when the last several books came out. There is reading and then there is skimming for the gist of the thing, which is not the same thing at all, at all — well, it's certainly not getting what is there (which is supposed to be the first duty of the critic, according to Frye, at least).

You didn't read the review of *I Will Fear No Evil* in *Algol* where the reviewer gloated over how bad he found the book. The book could have stood some rewriting before publication but that was no reason to "wish he wrote many more like

this". That was just spite. (The reviewer was another pro.)

I cannot remember whether I commented on *Reamde* earlier, but your punch-comment seems on target to me. There is an abundance of *good*stuff* in the book, but it is drowned by the page after page descriptions of every tedious move in a fistfight — then more of the same for a fire fight — then for a change more of the same about tumbling down the side of a mountain. Heck, I haven't seen so much unproductive page-after-page jawing since *Of Time and the River*. There is a very nice 400 page novel buried in that 1100+ page tome (and none of the excess prose was used to make any of the secondary characters come to life, either). Too much cardboard being moved around by brute force. Where's the forklift when you need it?



Being behind the curve, I had just seen *John Carter of Mars* the weekend before reading Robert S. Kennedy's loc review. I think he was a little harsh on the lead actor and actress (I think they got him from *Stargate: Atlantis*; about her, I do not know) and a little lenient on the FX.

Taylor Kitsch (John Carter) was in *Snakes on a Plane*. Lynn Collins (Dejah Thoris) was in five episodes of *True Blood*.

Taylor Kitsch
<http://www.imdb.com/name/nm2018237/>
 Lynn Collins
<http://www.imdb.com/name/nm1211488/>

You find out the damndest things from looking at IMDB. Charlton Heston changed his name — from John Carter.

Although the CGI was, indeed, spectacular (my biggest fear was they would try to fudge the four-armed Green Men of Mars), the terrain was not particularly Mars-like in any way, and I had too much déjà vu about the Warner Brothers back lot.

The biggest liability though was the three-D, which was generally used, in my opinion, to trivial effect. I'm glad they have done away with the anaglyphic glasses; I am red-green color blind, and the red lens always gives me too little visual detail to make that effect work properly and leaves me with the sensation of

being blinded in that eye, but the effect is not really convincingly stereoscopic in my opinion, reminding me of that technique invented for animation of painting various layers of the background on different sheets of glass which can be slid back and forth. That too-distinctly "layering" of 3-D effect is jarring to me, and pulls me out of the illusion that I am seeing something in real life. And you cannot simply take the glasses off, as you could for earlier 3-D releases like the *Narnia* film — the separation of the images is so extreme that the background is too fuzzy for comfortable viewing.

My problem is that the vision in my right eye is so bad that the glasses simply don't work.

I look around in the theatre and am reminded of the films of audiences wearing the anaglyph glasses for films in the fifties and how those things are used for ridicule and ironic commentary on that time period. On the other hand, it's hard to think that the terrible teens of this century will encourage much in the way of irony in future generations.

But the biggest problem I found, by far (in a film which I enjoyed greatly nonetheless) was that it followed its model a bit too closely (a surprising comment, and I'm surprised by it myself). Pulp serials written a hundred years ago were introduced in a world that had no other forms of mass popular entertainment — not radio, not television: pulp magazines were essentially the first pop culture medium (unless you count *Tin Pan Alley*) (there were other things that blended into pop culture as it came into existence, but music hall had too small an audience) — so factors and scenes and sequences and so forth that functioned to the rhythm of the pulp serial caused the film to sag from place to place. (Laughed at your reference to "The Advent on Channel 12")

The more I look at the world the more I mourn the death of Cyril Kornbluth.

— JTM

With reference to George Price's comments about returning to species-backed currency, I don't think gold would do it any more — at least not without courting disastrous deflation and currency (liquidity) shortages more severe than existed in the last third of the nineteenth century; the amount of gold that is above ground right now is not really adequate to support an economy as "hot" as the one we've got now — and while cooling it is desirable (for some frames of reference), that's a deep-freeze to put it into. At the current exchange rate, \$1 ≈ 1/50 gram, currency is not for practical purposes freely convertible OTOH, noninflatable species-backed currency could probably be achieved by a mixture of species types. Not a subject to which I've given a great deal of thought, though. The mechanics might be complex to work out. I think the desired effect could be more easily and conveniently achieved by raising the fractional reserve rate to

something more sensible — or at least not so wildly insane as it is right now.

But George's observation that politicians hate the gold standard precisely because it — not quite "prevents" but rather makes it more difficult to play inflationary games — is directly on target.

From: **Rod E. Smith** April 23, 2012
 730 Cline Street, Frankfort, KY 40601-1034 USA
stickmaker@usa.net

I was rather saddened to read of Grant's health problems, as well as Tim's. I mentioned at last Saturday's gaming session (two days before getting that issue) that when I joined fandom we thought we'd all be immortal by now.

My ideal solution to the nuclear waste problem is to reuse it. Nearly all of it could be refined and processed and applied usefully, if only to preheat water for nuclear reactors before it enters the core after leaving the cooling tower. (Note that there is a shortage of the particular isotope of Plutonium used in radio-thermal generators. The same characteristics which make it ideal for this use also mean it could not practically be used for fission weapons.)

My secondary solution is to use the deep mining techniques developed in South Africa and elsewhere to put it in the basement rock of the Appalachians. These are the oldest mountains on Earth; large sections have been geologically stable for hundreds of millions of years. The overburden squeezes cracks shut and reduces porosity, so even when the containers break open the material won't get into the water table. Once a chamber is at capacity, fill the access tunnel with an abrasive concrete, so it would actually be quicker and easier to dig new tunnels through the rock to get back in than to reopen the tunnel.

This would provide jobs to an area which needs them, of a type similar to what many there already know.

There are several other areas which could serve the same purpose, such as parts of the Canadian shield.

I actually worked on a previous project for a new Ohio River bridge, back in the mid-Eighties. We basically decided the only feasible locations were at a few places along I-71 to the east of Louisville.

I have sometimes wondered if the name of Leeja Clane, from *Magnus, Robot Fighter*, was inspired by Dejah.

Oh, the stories I could tell about raccoons and possums. I much prefer the former, by the way. I've never had a raccoon cause a serious problem, or be particularly difficult to evict. Especially the one who wound up cornered, terrified of the elderly former tomcat half his weight. (The cat actually had some of the raccoon's fur in his claws when I found them.)

The way I treat vampires in my *Fox Kid* and related stories (posted at: <http://www.dcr.net/~stickmak/Transformation/FOXKID/index.htm>) is pretty much the opposite of the *Sexy Emo Vampire(TM)*. In my world,

becoming a vampire burns out most of the human social instincts. Like a stalking hunter, they don't move unless they see a need to, and then are very deliberate. Where a normal human, sitting quietly in a chair, would fidget, scratch, look around, etc., the vampire just sits there, unmoving, occasionally blinking, barely breathing. No small talk. No reaction except to stimuli which affect them or an ally. Small wonder people think they're animated corpses.

They can need decades to learn how to fake normal human interactions and pass as one of them.

Maybe people think they're autistic.

— JTM

As for geometric propagation, making a vampire requires more than just taking blood. It is not done lightly.

From: **Darrell Schweitzer** April 24, 2012
6644 Rutland Street, Philadelphia, PA
19149-2128 USA
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As for the film *John Carter*, I have a feeling that this is going to come out from behind a failed ad campaign and perhaps even become a "cult classic" on the order of *Bladerunner*, another film which notably "flopped" when it came out. The ads and trailers were terrible. Removing the words "of Mars" from the title was a blunder, revealing the worst sort of corporate thinking. It was apparently done because such films as *Mars Needs Moms* failed. So the Disney folks decided that then problem was that the word "Mars" doesn't sell. This makes about as much sense as attempting to control crime by banning apples, since a large number of criminals eat apples. The result, in any case, was a movie poster which did not even suggest an interplanetary film. An illiterate could easily look at it and say, "Is this a gladiator movie?"

The director (Andrew Stanton) was indeed a big Burroughs fan. He made this movie for Baby Boomers who have been waiting all their lives to see the vision of Barsoom successfully realized on the screen. Now they have. This IS the Burroughs Mars, as convincing as Peter Jackson's version of Middle Earth. Most Burroughs fans I know liked it. It has been noted that the audience for this film seems quite a bit older than anticipated. The mistake here was to assume that John Carter, like Tarzan, has a kind of pop-culture recognition that he clearly does not have. To know who John Carter is, you have to have read, at the very least, comic books, and more likely real books, and books of a specialized kind. That is entirely too much to ask of a movie audience. Meanwhile the film continues to break records overseas. It's a huge hit in Britain and Russia. But it is seen a failure here. The chairman of Disney stepped down as a result. But in the long run, I think, the director will be vindicated.

Are there weaknesses in the film? Yes, of course. The chief one is that the secondary

characters are not even as well developed as the sidekicks in *Star Wars*. Tars Tarkas is particularly disappointing. He doesn't even have as much personality as Chewbacca. The Ciaran Hinds and James Purefoy characters have little to do. It doesn't quite turn into an ensemble cast, the way those of *Star Wars* or *STAR TREK* do, and this is an important shortcoming. This could be rectified in sequels, if there ever are any. You will recall that the first *STAR TREK* movie was weak on its storyline, and some of the others got better. But of course *STAR TREK* has a recognition factor driving it that the Barsoom series seriously lacks.

By the way, it's more of a *Rome* reunion than you mention. I spotted the guy who played Posca (Nicholas Woodeson, as the butler who leads the young ERB into the chamber of secrets) and also Polly Walker (Atia) voiced Sarjoka. Young ERB as shown in the film is an anachronism, incidentally. He seems to be about twenty, and the real ERB would have been six in the year given, 1881.

My first recollection of Captain Carter is of the few months he spent at my father's home in Virginia, just prior to the opening of the civil war. I was then a child of but five years, yet I well remember the tall, dark, smooth-faced, athletic man whom I called Uncle Jack.

— *A Princess of Mars*, Foreword

So it's anachronistic to "real life" (whatever that is) but follows the text.

— JTM

From: **Milt Stevens** April 26, 2012
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In *Alexiad* V11 #2, Lisa begins by mentioning the 100th anniversary of the *Titanic* disaster. I guess that's an example of the old adage that there's no wind so foul as not to blow into a Hollywood movie. Wars are always good. The bigger the war, the more movies will come out of it. However, there is a qualification. Disasters that hit rich people seem more film worthy than disasters that hit only poor people. Poor people probably have more disasters than rich people, but they don't dress as well while having them.

Lisa has also been trying to write a novel in a month, but she has had problems getting enough words. I have a suggestion. You write a novel about a person writing a novel. Your protagonist encounters situations that reflect all the excuses you have used for not doing all the things you didn't do in your entire life. That ought to produce enough words. If not, start borrowing other people's excuses. If you need a model, try using *Seven Keys to Baldpate*. In that work, a man goes to a defunct resort (Baldpate) to complete a novel. He is told he has the only key to the place. As he tries to work, all sorts of strange characters arrive, and all of them have keys.

You can do a lot of speculation on what all this vampire and zombie stuff may mean. (Aside from the fact that writers will do just about anything for money.) Years ago, I glanced through a book on the art and literature of the Weimar Republic. It pointed out that the graphic arts in Germany of the twenties reflected some form of surrealistic horror. It was as if the artists sensed something bad coming.

Now that I think of it, the TV series *She Wolf of London* was ahead of its time. In that series, the protagonist is an American girl who is visiting England when she is bitten by a slimy, foreign werewolf. This leads to problems. In a later episode, her boyfriend becomes a zombie. She observes, "If you didn't smell so bad, I'd think this was all a bad dream." He laments, "You're a werewolf, and I'm a zombie. What are our children going to be?"

Characters in the latest romance novel.

—JTM



Decades ago, I thought new construction was a good thing. I no longer think that. Simi Valley is a nice place to live. I'd like to keep it that way. When developers talk about low cost housing they mean slums. If they are allowed to build more slums, they will then move in more illegal aliens to occupy them. It doesn't sound like a good idea to me.

From: **Lloyd Penney** April 28, 2012
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Many thanks for the newest issue of *Alexiad*. Much to discuss and much to comment on, as always.

The *Titanic* remembrances were well covered here, especially by the CBC, which covered the Canadian angle of the sinking. Halifax, where the bodies were brought, identified and stored, and many were eventually buried there. There was so much more about

Canadian reaction and involvement, and the reaction of descendants.

Pawn Stars . . . I hate to admit that we do watch that on occasion. I'll also admit to *American Pickers*, and to *Canadian Pickers*. Other than that, news and documentaries make up the rest of my TV viewing. Overall, the Glass Teat is dull and boring.

Future Worldcon bids . . . I think you can add Montréal and Los Angeles to the 2019 slot. I have read mention of both, especially Montréal, but haven't seen anything specific on the Web, and no further discussion. Perhaps these mentions serve as placeholders for the years they want. I think Rene Walling is behind the Montréal bid, and I need to pester him further on this.

I would be more likely to support Montréal than Ellay, but after the \$154 traffic ticket I would want to drive carefully.

—JTM

Interesting Hugo ballot, hm? The best way to react to this ballot is to vote on it, and the actual voting period is on now. All we need now is our PIN numbers so we can vote online.

The lettercol . . . like Rich Dengrove, I love steampunk as well. It allows for some sensawunda, even though we have to stand about 120 years back on the timeline. It surely had a Best Before date on it, whatever that date might be. I will enjoy it while it is here; it has allowed us to get back into costuming to a certain extent. There is more creative anachronism in steampunk than in SCA.

My loc . . . the ad agency job ended prematurely (something to do with money), so back on the jobhunt again. I might need to get information on Etsy. I have been making a lot of steampunk jewelry, and I have been asked several times if I have an Etsy page. Getting it set up is something I'd need to learn...I could use a Dummies book on the subject.

Time to go . . . sometimes, I think I am running out of things to say or comment on. I've been in the local for more than 30 years now, so perhaps it's true. Or maybe I just need to get more sleep. Sounds good to me. Take care, and thanks.

From: **Joy V. Smith** May 3, 2012
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Lisa, I enjoyed your raccoon adventure report. I'd have loved to have seen it jump over Slim.

Joe, I loved your article, Plot It Yourself; I'd like to see that reprinted elsewhere. And you made *Firebird* by Jack McDevitt sound intriguing. Also the books covering the historical backgrounds of Ian Fleming, spies, and SMERSH (Death to Spies). The real deal is complicated, and it's amazing how all this history has been tracked down.

We only know half the story,
and we don't know which half.

—JTM

Thanks for the fanzine, worldcon bids, and the Nebula and Hugo nominees lists. And there's more info in the LOCs. Richard Dengrove: I still haven't gotten any of The Parasol Protectorate series, but it's on my list of Things to Do, especially since you mentioned P.G. Wodehouse in that connection!

Joe, thanks for the info on the Antarctica stations. (So much intel gleaned from *Alexiad*, including the Vostok cosmonauts and landings, the meaning of FUSAG, and more!) I enjoyed your pieces on the last page too (cool twist with Harvey), along with The King's Justice strip.

From: **Brad W. Foster** May 3, 2012
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Best Fan Artist Hugo Nominee

New issue in the mail this week. Nothing on hand to mail, have fallen behind a bit on being able to draw for the fun of it for a while now. But, hoping to get a few things done by the time issue 1.3 rolls around hoping you can use the "they gather" piece next time, figured that one specifically would work to start off the loc column. (A "serving suggestion", as it were!)

Been trying to broaden the base of my own reading recently, and finished *Arrowsmith* from Sinclair Lewis from back in 1924 — a great read, and after almost a century, still feels very contemporary in ways. Unfortunately, it's the bad side of people that seems to have not changed. Also have *finally* gotten around to that hippie bible of the Carlos Castaneda's *Teachings of Don Juan*. Not as interesting as Lewis, and kind of sad in parts with all the "mystery" of "otherness". But, have now read it only 40 years late, on to the next classic!

Unfortunately, Lewis forgot to submit *Arrowsmith* to *Science and Invention*, so its status as a trailblazing work of scientific fiction was obscured. It would have been fun to read his negotiations with Gernsback.

—JTM

Speaking of things that never change, laughed at the 'toon from Alexis on pg 17. Could reprint that one every election cycle, and we would all be able to point to someone that it would apply to.

WAY behind deadline on a couple of projects need to do, but trying to clear the desk today, so now can check this off the list. I love checking things off of lists! It gives me the illusion that I'm organized and getting things done. Of course, if I was, I wouldn't need the list . . . a vicious circle.

From: **Rodney Leighton** April 25, 2012
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CANADA

Thanks for the last couple issues of *Alexiad*.

It was interesting to see the photo of you in *Challenger* 31. I have sent Guy some money in the form of a money order and asked for a copy of *Challenger* 30 if he has one and did request a copy of 34 since Henry said it was all about sex, albeit not very racy. Will see what happens.

First time I have ever sent money to a SFaned. But perhaps it is the way to go. Kind of takes the fun out of it though. On the other hand, like, say, the promo subscription I recently bought from *Time*; I forget how many issues there are; so far I have been totally unimpressed; the issue that came today was tossed on a table to be looked at someday, maybe. Roughly the same amount of money for that as what I sent Guy H. Maybe it was all wasted, who knows.

Sticky quarters are an old and honorable fannish tradition. (A quarter taped to a piece of cardboard as request for a fanzine.) Now, maybe, it'd be sticky doubloons. Given the resounding lack of interest in US dollar coins, it might be harder here.

— JTM

From: **John Purcell** May 13, 2012
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Once again, it is time to write to you and Lisa about another *Alexiad*, which is as stellar as previous issues. You two do good zine.

With that ego-stroking out of the way, onto comments.

Lisa wrote her opening about doing that novel-in-a-month project. I have never been fool enough to do that sort of thing, although I do recognize the discipline that writing a novel — any kind of writing, for that matter — requires. The longest single piece of fiction that I have ever written was a 12,000 word story back in the late 1970s. If I remember it correctly, that was a piece of science fiction that dealt with military issues. It was titled "Chain of Command", was sent out to *Amazing*, *Fantastic* and *Analog*, then promptly returned from all of them. Perhaps fortuitously, that story is long gone, thrown out in a writ of fealous jage, and I remember practically none of it. Like I said, that story was probably worth forgetting.

Then Joe's brief editorial blatherings remind me completely of Pohl and Kornbluth's *The Space Merchants*, a very enjoyable book that serves wonderfully to remind us just how gullible the human race is, that we can be tricked into buying *anything* if the product is sellable. All it takes is proper marketing. I have always loved that book and it is definitely worth rereading.

Well, by now we all know — or at least,

those of us who about this sort of thing — that I'll Have Another won the Kentucky Derby. For the first time in years I didn't watch the race; off doing other things that day. But the horse has the perfect name for winning the Triple Crown. It would be fun to hear the announcers saying "and I'll Have Another has won the Preakness" next week, following that statement with "in two weeks maybe I'll Have Another will win another race, the Belmont." We shall see. Heck, we should know those results probably by the time your next *Alexiad* sees print.

So, it appears that a certain German infantryman may have fathered a child out of wedlock during the first world war, eh? That wouldn't be newsworthy except for the fact that this soldier may have eventually become der führer of the so-called Thousand Year Reich. This is an interesting tidbit of news, I must admit, but not worth worrying over.

The Plot it Yourself article is something that most writers probably worry about to a certain extent. This is why copyright laws exist. Proving statements like "that sonuvabitch stole my story idea!" are hard to establish, especially when the claimant is speaking from a rather dodgy position. One would think that after a number of centuries of story-telling ideas would start recycling through a great number of times. Being innovative with writing requires a LOT of imagination nowadays. All I have to do is look at all the assorted vampire and supernatural romances on the bookshelves at Wal-Mart, Target, Barnes and Noble, or any bookstore to notice what the current genre du jour is. All I can say is, feh! I may just stick to writing fanzines — for now, that is.

I do hope that Grant continues his recovery; the health report you ran on pages 9 through 11 are rather harrowing. You and Lisa have been performing yeoman's duties in taking care of him. Grant is very lucky and blessed to have you guys around.

Rodford Edmiston's article about the tools of dentistry make me grab at my mouth because I need to have some serious dental work done over the summer: getting a new set of chompers made to fill in a few holes where teeth used to be. No implants, thank you very much; appliances for upper and lower are to be developed and inserted. Oh, joy of joys, we're getting older, aren't we? Yuck . . .

I had very bad baby teeth, and had to go to the dentist every three months to get them painted with fluoride. As a result, I don't have an aversion to going to the dentist. I'm still not fond of having the hygienist scrape the plaque out with that little pick, or getting a filling, but I can bring myself to make the appointment.

Yeah, the listing of Hugo nominees is out, and I sent some comments to Christopher J. Garcia's *Drink Tank* after he ran is "handicapping the Hugos" issue a few weeks ago. By the time this loc sees print, everyone will know what I think about all of the

nominations Chris and James Bacon received. In short, my belief is that no-one should have their name listed more than once in any category, fiction, non-fiction, or fannish. Additionally, I would not have allowed the Drink Tank Hugo Acceptance Speech onto the Short-Form Ballot simply because it is NOT a work of fiction. Simple as that. I like these guys, they are both very talented and full of enthusiasm — which is good — but I think they lost some credibility by letting these nominations stand; if they had said something on the order of "thank you for the votes, folks, but no thank you, we're withdrawing that video from consideration", they would have established good karma and an example for others to follow. But they didn't. As for *Drink Tank* versus *Journey Planet*, I would leave the latter on the ballot because in my mind *Journey Planet* is a much better fanzine. All this hoo-haw, of course, will mean naught come mid-September — at least until next year's nominees are announced.

It's the "NOT Doctor Who" Dramatic Presentation Short Form nomination of the year. At the rate things are going, soon we shall also have a "NOT zombies" novel nomination and a "NOT Chicks Dig" related work nomination, and all of them will still lose.

— JTM

My loc: Many thanks for the URL for Arthur's Bookshelf. I shall check that out some day.

And with that, this loc is done. I thank you for the issue and look forward to the next

From: **Jim Stumm** May 4, 2012
Post Office Box 29, Buffalo NY 14223-0029 USA

Richard A. Dengrove: If you think string theory may be a delusion, try googling "conservation of information" or the "holographic principle", to see what strangeness respectable physicists can come up with.

Joseph T Major: Since we already maintain 43 science stations in Antarctica, couldn't we put at least one on the Moon? Skeptics say that we've been there, why go back to the Moon, but it's a whole other planet that needs exploring.

The U.S. has only three of those permanent stations: McMurdo, Amundsen-Scott at the Pole, and Palmer in the Antarctic Peninsula. A large number of the others are from Argentina and Chile, trying to establish their claims to parts of the continent around the Antarctic Peninsula.

— JTM

Taras Wolansky, RADIATION: Zubrin (*The Case for Mars*) presents the numbers for radiation from solar flares and cosmic rays and asserts that radiation dangers have been wildly

exaggerated by skeptics. He says studies of Japanese A-bomb victims found that prompt doses of less than 75 rem caused no apparent ill effects. The Mars missions he proposes would result in exposures of 60 rem or less over the course of many months, which would have even less effect than a prompt dose.

Others have proposed that, since a long mission space ship would have to carry a lot of drinking water anyway, it could be designed so that the living quarters are surrounded by tanks of water, so the water would serve as a radiation shield.

George W. Price, BIOFUELS: The advantage of biofuels is that, while they are growing, they absorb from the air as much CO₂ as they will later release when they are burned, so their net contribution to atmospheric CO₂ is zero.

HEALTH INSURANCE: No one would voluntarily pay out-of-pocket for an insurance policy to cover contraception costs because it would cost them less to pay for contraception costs directly without insurance. Similarly, no one would buy insurance that would pay for oil changes and routine maintenance on a car. Insurance is meant to pay for huge, unexpected expenses, not normal, predictable bills. We've gotten into this crazy situation of expecting health insurance to cover routine, minor expenses because some 3rd party, not the insured, pays the premiums. If someone else is paying, the insured person has every incentive to lard up his policy with every benefit he can think of.

From: **Robert S. Kennedy** May 26, 2012
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Thank you for Vol. 11, No. 2

I read very little Fantasy these days. But, *Once Upon A Tale* by Mercedes Lackey (2012) was purchased from the SFBC. It contains three "Tales of the Five Hundred Kingdoms" — *The Fairy Godmother*, *One Good Knight*, and *Fortune's Fool*. I do not recall reading any Lackey previously. But, these stories were greatly enjoyed and I would like to read more. At the end of the book there is a very short Q&A with Lackey. She says: "You tend to find that men who read fantasy are idealists, in fact." I have never considered myself to be an idealist. But, if Lackey says so... Then there is the last item. I don't know Lackey's politics, but this is excellent. "And when it comes down to cases, everything written is at least in part a fantasy. Except maybe for the national budget. That's horror."

Because I requested it the Camarillo Library (Bless Them) purchased a copy of *The Amazon Legion* by Tom Kratman. Another fine Kratman read. A couple of commentaries struck me as excellent.

"A lot of fairly unintelligent people, who obtain degrees that convince them they are in fact intelligent; no *brilliant*, they must be brilliant to have these wonderful

degrees from such wonderful schools. They see the basic problems usually; that's not too hard. And since they don't see all the subtle problems, and since *brilliant people* like them couldn't possibly miss anything important, then those subtle little problems must not exist or are, at least, unimportant. Then these *brilliant* people barrel ahead foolishly. They tear down all that went before. And, when their reforms fall flat on their foolish faces, they must find scapegoats, since their solutions are too *brilliant* to have failed without active sabotage." (p. 374)

"You see, liberal democracy *almost* works. It's a great system of government provided that the people with power — voters, in other words — won't just vote their narrow self interest and narrower emotions, won't balkanize into selfishly competing factions. Eventually, though, they will do just that. Then all elections go to whoever promises to rape the treasury and the other taxpayers of the largest amount of money for the greatest number of people or gain the most extra rights for the most interest groups, future be damned. Being more or less good looking seems to help a lot too." (p. 395)

That sounds like the sort of thing Goodman Mikhyl said to Goodman Lucas (see Space Viking for what that means).

— JTM

Every Thursday I go to the Camarillo Library to see if any of the books that I've ordered have arrived (the Library sometimes fails to contact me) and to obtain a copy of the weekly alternative press newspaper the *Ventura County Reporter*. Also, while there I check the Science Fiction New Book Shelf. Sometimes I strike gold. On April 26 it was the latest Daniel Leary novel by David Drake that I didn't even know had been published—*The Road of Danger* (2012). Another excellent read.

Jim Stumm: In the previous issue of *ALEXIAD* you offered to send to those who requested it some of your SF books. Well, I did so request and you sent an excellent selection. It certainly looks to me as if some thought went in to what you sent and I thank you very much. I had read *Clarke County, Space* (1990) by Allen Steele previously. But, it was enjoyed just as much this second time as the first time. So, once again, thank you very much.

Joe: Thank you for the report on Grant C. McCormick. He obviously has my best wishes. What Grant has to go through is horrible.

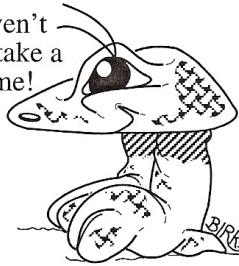
Once again **Rodford Edmiston** has an interesting "The Joy of High Tech"—This time regarding our teeth.

Chris Garcia was actually nominated for a Best Dramatic Presentation (Short Form) HUGO for his acceptance of the Best Fanzine HUGO at Renovation. Excellent! Well, I did

nominate him. But, was certainly not very sure that he would make the ballot. It is my intention to vote him as #1. It would be great if he wins. We'll just have to see what happens. Well he is up again for Best Fanzine and also Best Fan Writer. It would be incredible if he wins all three.

Taras Wolansky: I am greatly enjoying *Once Upon a Time*. If it is a "soap" as you indicate, then so be it. The magical powers of the Wicked Queen/Witch/Mayor are limited and she apparently does not have much left. Well, in the last episode of the season something was happening that caused the Wicked Queen/Witch/Mayor to have a small smile. So, something new is happening. I can hardly wait for the next installment. Then, on the other hand there is *Grimm* that you like a lot. A friend of mine with the last name of Grimm calls it the Monster of the Week. I do watch it, but would not lose any sleep if I were to miss an episode or so. That reminds me, a number of years ago Milt Stevens and I were discussing *Sanctuary* (SciFi Channel). Milt referred to *Sanctuary* as the Monster of the Week. One week it had two monsters and I quit watching. Well, my main reason for watching it was Amanda Tapping for what should be obvious reasons.

Of course I haven't
written- take a
ghood look at me!



From: **AL du Pisani** May 28, 2012
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It has been far too long since my last letter. I have been busy, on holiday, and out of contact for most of the past couple of months. The out of contact was the worst. It took 9 weeks for my local telecoms monopoly to fix up my Internet. (Eventually traced back to lightning damaged wires inside my house.) during which time I had no e-mail etc. I have since put into place a fall back system, but during the time I was without Internet access, I did not communicate.

I have already taken two holidays this year — which is in some respect fitting, since I did not take much holiday last year, and had to use it or lose it.

In January I visited the Golden Gate Highlands National Park, a small reserve in the mountains. I was there the week after the schools had opened, so the place was mostly empty. I slept in a rondavel in the Basotho Cultural Village, and saw only the staff of the

places. I was quite tired, this was a refreshing break for me. I could sit and rest, or drive around and enjoy the scenery. There are no large predators in the park, so you can actually get out and walk most places.

The only two negatives were that I lost the front numberplate of my bakkie, and had to report that at the closest town, and get it fixed afterwards. And that the journey to and from the park took nearly four hours each, and did not do much to enhance my feeling of having rested. And the four days and five nights I spent there were far too short to rest out as much as I needed to. But it is definitely something I want to do again.

I later took a mch longer holiday over Easter, and rested out. I went to my first Arts Festival, with my mother and sister, both of which had more experience at these events than I had. I mostly went for musical performances, whereas they also attended some stage productions.

It was during this time that I had to assist my mother in buying her first computer, and than had to train her in some basic aspects of using it. Lesson one comprised of teaching her how to switch it on and off, and it took a lot longer than I anticipated. It was during this time that I reflected, and realised that I have been using computers for 28 years — inherently I would find some things easy, that she would find difficult. Luckily she had taken typing at school, and relatively soon could start writing her letters, agendas and reports.

I really admire her for keeping on learning new things, even at the age of 72. And she will be going overseas soon on a tour of central Europe.

In trying to emulate her, I have tried to keep on learning new things — such as playing around with electronics and the Arduino environment. The worst is that I can remember learning some of the things in electronics when I was at University, but have forgotten a lot.

I have also taken up loom knitting, to give my hands something to do while I am doing other things which require sitting down and not much thought. I now have the problem of disposing of all the scarves I have knitted during the last couple of months.

Doctor Who accessories are
always popular. Apparently chicks
dig them.

— JTM

I am still finding that I am not finding a lot of books I like in my local bookshops. I recently realised that a book shop that I have been visiting once a week, a couple of years ago, I am visiting a couple of times a year, and are mostly disappointed since I cannot find what I like there.

I hope that life is treating you well, and where it is not, that you have learned to adapt and deal with the bad stuff which happens in all our lives.

From: **Sheryl L. Birkhead** May 26, 2012
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At this point I just have a “fluid” pile of zines I tote around and sincerely hope time will materialize to loc. In that stack is a December ish with no notes on it, so . . .

First off, fairly soon after you get this (with any luck) we’ll know if we have a Triple Crown winner. It will be, um, interesting. Looking at “Another’s” distance run, and that the Belmont is the longest leg — perhaps actual post position may be extremely critical. It took me a while of hunting to figure what the heck he had on his nose and when I researched it was surprised that no other horses were using them or that it was allowed. The manufacturer has information on their website that studies comparing furosemide and the strip for equine exercise induced pulmonary hemorrhage — saying that the strip is pretty much as effective as the diuretic. Many countries ban the use of furosemide (Lasix) the day of a race — I do not know if that is true in any of the states here. I would think that a horse that would bleed without the drug is not a good candidate to use in breeding — to pass on the bleeding factor. Obviously not too many high up seem to agree with me.

Agh — have I been misspelling Whoopi Goldberg’s name wrong all along? Very possible since that is not the spelling I would have gone with first.

The “rescue of the fanzine Hugo” may be shortlived. I have no idea where the heck technology will take us. I think zines are alive and fairly healthy, but I also see that the kindergarten for fanartists and writers seems to be obsolete — e.g. go get fillos off the Internet. Ah well, move with the times or die (or some such shart analogy!). Chris’s (Garcia) dramatic presentation obviously affected enough people to resurface. I recall some fen mentioning it with a laugh at the time — as Hugo worthy — then forgot about it. I, fondly, like the idea that it made the ballot. I just have not seen the dramatic forms (both long and short) — hoped they would be available in the voters’ packet (which I know exists, but have not looked at yet — yeah, I’ll get to it RSN).

I persist in telling people that if they want to be sure I get a message, it would be best to call and leave the message (or if email — say they need a reply — but why give two options). One of the MCSPCA volunteers got miffed with me because I did not get back to her. Well, she was warned — I have not spent time online for a week. I find it truly amazing that I can waste so much time going online — really doing nothing except jumping around from one interesting point to another. When I do not have the time or connection it makes no sense to waste that time in a lump . . . and I did not miss it!

I have not made much if any progress with the fillos I have sketched out and need to get onto computer and then finished. Time certainly can zip right by me when I am working on it — but I have not found any chunks big enough to get started — another of the RSN projects.

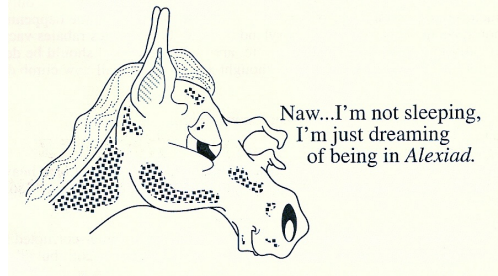
I will watch the fan Hugo results with great interest. As technology makes its leaps and

bounds the sticky quarter/mimeo’d/ditto’d zine gets closer and closer to the dinosaur. Admittedly, if I cannot find the supporting membership fee in the next worldcon or two, I will probably stop watching even that arena.

Now I have seen other people asking the question of where is all this great online fanac? Now that it is possible to produce hundred-page zines without having to pay both legs, an arm, and a child to be named later for postage, how come no one (except Nalini Hayes) is doing so? This may be another factor of the transition from participant to consumer.

— JTM

Okay — with any luck I can get this onto the letterhead I want to use (if I can find it), print it up, and get it mailed. Maybe next time I’ll give a synopsis of the post office machinations — my PO has been changed but they have not changed the zip code and I don’t understand since I thought that is how the zip code was determined. Ah well they still have plenty of time to change their minds!



From: **George W. Price** May 31, 2012
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April Alexiad:

Joe’s review of V. Birstein’s *SMERSH* triggers memories of how the James Bond movies have differed from Ian Fleming’s books.

In Fleming’s original stories the Smersh plots that Bond uncovers and thwarts are all official (though clandestine) operations of the Soviet government in the service of spreading communism. But in the movies as I remember them — and it’s been a long time, so my memories are dim — the Soviet villains are always renegades who are not acting for their government. Thus their evil-doing is not part of the Cold War, and Bond is not fighting communism, but only individual criminals. This fits a Hollywood pattern: many moviemakers could not bring themselves to seriously oppose communism. They kept the action, and made it even more thrilling and far-fetched, but left out the anticommunist motivation.

I missed seeing *From Russia, With Love* and a few other Bond movies, so maybe there were

some where the villains were portrayed as communists acting for communist purposes, as Fleming envisioned them. If so, somebody please tell me.

(I never bothered to read any of the James Bond books written by others after Fleming died, so I can’t comment on those.)

But did you read *Alligator*?

Rodford Edmiston’s “The Joy of High Tech” recounts the history of dental drilling and tooth care, including brushing, flossing, and picking. There’s a story about two men eating in a restaurant. One of them reads on the menu that one dish is “served with aspic.” He asks, “What in hell is aspic?” His buddy won’t admit that he doesn’t know either, so he says, “Well, you know what a toothpick is”

Dainis Bisenieks chides authors for not saying enough about the foundations of their fictional societies. He asks “In the entire Lensmen saga, is there any hint of how all those spacegoing fleets and weaponry were paid for?” The editor’s reply quotes a passage in *Gray Lensman* in which Port Admiral Haynes tells Kinnison how low the tax rate is; the editor comments that “Smith seems to have believed in the Laffer Curve before Arthur Laffer was born.” That passage deserves even more attention; let’s look at it again:

[Kinnison has an idea for a new weapon — the negasphere — but fears that the research will cost too much. Haynes enlightens him as to the Patrol’s vast resources.]

“Here on Tellus alone we have an expendable reserve of over ten thousand million credits. With the restriction of government to its proper sphere and its concentration into our organization, resulting in the liberation of manpower into wealth-producing enterprise, and especially with the enormous growth of inter-world commerce, world-income increased to such a point that taxation could be reduced to a minimum; and the lower the taxes the more flourishing business became and the greater the income. Now the tax rate is the lowest in history. The total income tax, for instance, in the highest bracket, is only three point five nine two percent. At that, however, if it had not been for the recent slump, due to Boskonian interference with inter-systemic commerce, we would have had to reduce the tax rate again to avoid serious financial difficulty due to the fact that too much of the galactic total of circulating credit would have been concentrated in the expendable funds of the Galactic Patrol.”

Note that Doc Smith is saying that prosperity is stimulated by both lower tax rates

and smaller government.

And he was not being radical when he anticipated Laffer, because the Laffer curve is only a catchy restatement of classical economics. Unfortunately, the precepts of classical economics were largely discarded in the 1930s in the panic of the Great Depression (which was itself caused by political refusal to follow those precepts). Doc does deserve great credit for not swallowing the fashionable Keynesian nonsense that abounded when he wrote *Gray Lensman* (and has come roaring back in our time).

Alas, we have no Galactic Patrol with incorruptible Lensmen, so we don't dare concentrate government into a single organization with plenary power.

* * * * *

Taras Wolansky strongly criticizes unions, citing the Williamson County (Illinois) coal mine strike in 1922 "that ended with the massacre of the replacement workers." This is pertinent to the standard leftist complaint that in the bad old days the government used troops as "strikebreakers." But you'll notice that they never ever tell us just how the troops broke strikes.

Did the soldiers man the factories and mines and do the work the strikers refused to do? No, I never heard of that happening.

Well, did squads of soldiers go to the strikers' homes, drag the unhappy workers away from their wailing families, and flog them back to their duties? No, I never heard of that either. So what's left?

Um, ah, might it just be that what the soldiers did was to stop the strikers from violently attacking replacement workers? And maybe also smashing up the plant? Now that sounds more likely. And if a strike can be "broken" merely by preventing mobbery, murder, and property destruction, what does that say about the nature of the strike?

The very fact that replacement workers are readily available to take the jobs the strikers have vacated suggests that the strike is not really justified. That is, the wages and working conditions being offered are already good enough that the company can recruit a new crew from people whose present jobs are worse. In effect, the strikers boost their already-relatively-high wages by violently preventing other workers from improving their even-lower wages. Is that something to be proud of?

From: **Eric Mayer** June 2, 2012

I enjoyed *Alexiad*, although not being an sf reader it is hard to comment on reviews of sf books. It is of interest to see what's going on in the field generally, seeing as how I was an sf addict for years albeit long ago.

I'm leery about attempts to crank out 50,000 words in a month. Perhaps because I am a slow writer. I couldn't possibly produce anything decent at that rate and I'm not sure that producing something lousy, fast, would be good practice. Might tend to form bad habits, in my

opinion. That said, it is good to write something of novel length, at some pace or other, just to prove to yourself you can do it. If you haven't covered the distance before being stuck in the middle of a novel can be very discouraging.

Luckily I have never had a raccoon in the house. Squirrels, yes. It is amazing how fast and agile wild animals appear when they are inside. You don't notice it so much when they are in their element.

Generally, I agree with Conan Doyle and wish that writers would stick to their own characters. My feeling is that the writer, as a character's creator, (or Creator?) is the only one qualified to choose what they get up to and how they develop. Another writer might give a character the same name, but his character is an imposter. Having said that I really enjoyed Michael Chabon's Sherlock Holmes mystery *The Final Solution*. But then again Chabon refrained from actually naming his protagonist.

Ideas of course are a dime a dozen and it would be almost impossible to come up with an idea that someone, somewhere, sometime, hasn't at least hinted at. I thought *The City and the City* used a strikingly original idea and then discovered Jack Vance had used it in a Dying Earth story around 1950.

The story was "Ulan Dhor".
However, Vance's ending was a little more definitive.

Fascinating if harrowing article on dentistry. I admit to being practically phobic about dental work. My terrible experiences with dentists (mostly in my own mind) go way back but not, thank God, to the bow and mechanical drills Rodford describes. (I'd as soon never have heard of those!) Growing up in the nineteen fifties, before widespread fluoridation, I was at the dentist constantly. It was assumed that every checkup would reveal the need for fillings. If you didn't have too many cavities your teeth were considered good. By contrast, I'm not sure my nephew had even a single cavity when he was a kid. During the past decade my ancient metal fillings have begun falling out, usually taking part of a tooth with them. I guess at the time they were state of the art. I preferred having teeth pulled. I didn't have to endure the terrifying long novocain needles (I figured they were that long because that's how far they had to stick them in) or the hideous whining and buzzing of the drills and grinders as they probed for the exposed nerve. For extractions, the dentist used anesthesia. He did it as casually as our family doc doled out penicillin. (Which is why I also hated doctor visits. No matter what you went in for, no matter how mild, you got a shot.)

And that's why we have so many antibiotic-resistant bacteria. I can think of less painful ways to disprove creationism; it seems a most unintelligent design.

— JTM

Have to look out for the next issue at

eFanzines.

From: **R-Laurraine Tutihasi** June 3, 2012
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I worked briefly on the space station project at Rockwell International when it was still in the design phase. Apparently Rockwell got a lump sum to do the job. They wanted us to sit around overtime twiddling our thumbs, and I refused. Doing nothing is just not in my nature. I couldn't even read, because the other people in the project insisted on small talk. We were all in one room. Overtime pay is nice but not when I don't get to do anything at all. I was reassigned to a different project.

It's been my opinion that, had they gone along with the original design, instead of redesigning and revising, then revising and redesigning, and again, the space station would have cost a lot less.

— JTM

A price tag of \$170 for a record player that would transfer to CD might not be that bad. Although some records can be replaced with CDs, I have some that I'm pretty sure are not available on CD at all.

I hadn't heard before that Lloyd Penney was now gainfully employed. That's good to hear.

I really enjoyed the George Bailey/Jimmy Stewart/Harry Potter/Harvey mishmash, "It's a Wonderful ..."

From: **Sue Burke** June 7, 2012
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"I'm very sorry," King Juan Carlos II said on April 18 as he left the hospital. "I made a mistake and it won't happen again." ("Lo siento mucho. Me he equivocado y no volverá a ocurrir.") His mistake was to fall down and break his hip in times of economic crisis — specifically, to fall down while elephant hunting in Botswana, a jaunt costing upwards of €40,000. His apology, along with the fact that a Saudi government businessman and not Spanish taxpayers had paid for the safari, and that Botswana elephant hunting is so closely regulated as to be ecologically sound, softened public discourse, and 70% of his subjects forgave him, but 62% also said he should never accept such gifts again.

But as a consequence of that mistake and deepening in-law troubles with the law, the King and Queen did not celebrate their 50th wedding anniversary on May 9, publicly or privately. And to help bolster public support for the institution of the Crown, more information about it is being made public. For example, the King earns €292,752 per year.

This is 70 times less than the earnings of one bank director whose bankrupt institution, Bankia, was nationalized on May 9. The most recent estimate I've seen (troubles get worse by the hour) is that the rescue of Bankia alone will account for 2% of Spain's GDP, and the rescue of all Spain's troubled banks will cost at least double that amount. No one knows for sure yet. By comparison, the supposed black hole in the budget caused by its socialized medicine system is 1.6% of the GDP. Under new austerity measures, spending on public education will fall from 4.9% of GDP to 3.9%.

Among the many money-saving measures, high school class sizes will increase to 42 students. Drug and medical fees will be increased and sick pay will be cut, but tax evaders and money launderers will be able to come clean and boost government coffers by paying 10% of what they owed to the government: people with cancer get poorer but people with illegal Cayman Island bank accounts get a 90% tax break. Unemployment is still at 24% and rising. Evictions for failure to make mortgage payments have reached a record level, but under Spanish law, people who are evicted must continue to pay their mortgages because the debt is independent of the right to tenancy.

Society is getting more and more polarized, and 78% of the population agrees that 15-M, Spain's Occupy movement, "is right in the things it says and protests about."

Meanwhile, in the last issue I reported that the town of Rasquera had proposed a plan to raise marijuana to rescue its municipal budget. The plan passed 308 to 239 in a referendum April 10, but the measure needed 75% approval to be put into motion. Some voters feared that the town would invest in the project, but it would be ruled illegal and then they would be in worse shape financially than before, so they voted no.

But, on the theory that marijuana can make money, the Museo del C  n  mo (Cannabis) has opened in Barcelona. The restaurant across the street has added marijuana-flavored ice cream to its menu.

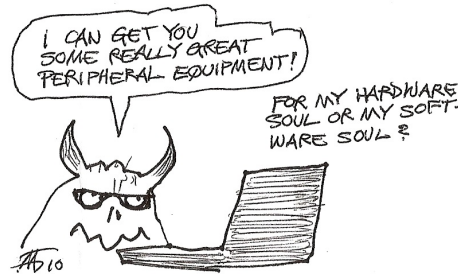
Back here in the plains of Spain, the extreme winter drought ended with downpours during Easter week, answering prayers, although many beloved Easter processions could not wend their way through towns and cities. Spring weather has been normal so far, although a lot of damage was done. Spain's main exports are agricultural, and it needs all the money it can get.

I'm glad people enjoyed my report on the Alhambra. My next big trip will be to the United States, specifically to attend Worldcon in Chicago and to visit family and friends in Milwaukee, arriving at General (Billy) Mitchell International Airport. I hope I'll be able to visit my friend Suzanne Blom, who as you may know has become quite ill.

Brad Foster commented that Facebook posts have a short life span. I've heard they last three hours, which sounds reasonable to me. So you may have missed my post on May 30 saying that my husband, Jerry Finn, and I were

celebrating our 20th wedding anniversary — two very, very happy decades.

Congratulations. November 22
last year was our 15th anniversary.
— JTM



From: **Taras Wolansky** June 9, 2012
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Alexiad April 2012:

Joe: I mislaid my paper copy of the previous issue of *Alexiad*, so I downloaded a copy from e-zines to my Blackberry, and read it while standing in the long, long registration line at I-Con on Long Island. Just so you know posting your zine there is not a total waste of time.

Eric Mayer reads it that way,
but if anyone else does, they
haven't mentioned it.

Saw the rival "Snow White" movies and, on the whole, enjoyed them.

My reaction on leaving *Mirror Mirror* with Julia Roberts was "Best. Dwarves. Ever." Somehow they found a whole crew of dwarves who could act and create differentiated characters. The tongue-in-cheek screenplay cleverly bridged the gap between Disney's Snow White, who found a home with the dwarves due to her housekeeping abilities, and the obligatory kick-ass heroine. She starts as the former, and then the dwarves — highwaymen in this version — train her up as the latter.

Snow White and the Huntsman, on the other hand, struck me as an attempt to see the story through the prism of *The Lord of the Rings*. (They also borrow from Hayao Miyazaki's classic anime, *Princess Mononoke*.)

In places, it's horrific enough to traumatize the small children who were inevitable dragged to see the film by poorly-informed parents. The wicked Queen is clearly based on Elizabeth Bathory — though they stopped just short of having her bathe in the blood of maidens. Even in these decadent times, that might have pushed them from PG-13 to R.

There were times when I found the film unintentionally amusing. Unlike *Mirror Mirror*, for example, it does not bother to explain how Snow White, grown up alone in a dungeon,

becomes obligatory kick-ass warrior girl overnight, able to smite the Queen's armored knights with her broadsword.

"Opponents ... of the I-64 bridge ... have bounced back, managing to stall building with one new opposition after another". In the past, building a bridge took 10,000 men and a lawyer. In the future, I predict, building a bridge will take one man and 10,000 lawyers.

Review of Adieu Farewell: **"In June of 1982, American reconnaissance satellites detected an enormous explosion in Siberia."** It's somehow heartwarming to note that William J. Casey was doing to the Soviet Union what he had previously done to Nazi Germany, years earlier. In many ways, the Reagan Administration was the last hurrah of the Greatest Generation. Historians may eventually see the period 1981-2008 as America's Indian summer.

Review of Ric Locke's Temporary Duty: This is one of the most confusing reviews I have ever read.

Alexis Gilliland: I'm not absolutely sure what it means, but I love the cartoon at the beginning of your letter!

"At some point, the supply of fossil fuel will be unable to meet the population's needs, and people will start to die." My point is that "need" (often a problematic concept) is not a fixed quantity, but one that is falling (like the "need" for flint, or whale oil). Gradually fossil fuels are replaced by other things, for example, as classes of vehicles go hybrid, then electric. Fossil fuel prices might edge upward, but if so that merely nudges marginal users toward alternative energy sources.

In fact, you inadvertently make my point for me when you defend hapless W.S. Jevons' 1865 prediction that Britain would run out of coal: **"Did British coal run out? Not exactly, but they stopped mining it."** That is, it never ran out because it was gradually replaced by cheaper sources of energy.

On global warming, here's an essay by a group of very distinguished skeptics, followed by two replies, and the original group's rebuttal:

<http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052970204301404577171531838421366.html>
<http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052970204740904577193270727472662.html>
<http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052970203711104577199330965279516.html>
<http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052970203646004577213244084429540.html>

One thing that struck me was that, once again, the climate models do a great job of predicting the *past*, once they've been massaged and tweaked sufficiently.

The skeptics point out that the models, assuming positive feedbacks that may not exist, have consistently exaggerated the actual warming. Note that they don't dispute that global warming is going on, just that the sky isn't falling. Predictably, this enrages people who are using the falling sky as a political weapon.

Which brings up a larger point: why should

scientists tell the truth? The first scientists were monks who believed they were reading the God's "Book of Nature", which made lying about it blasphemy, and they established a tradition of telling the truth. But today, people who believe in tradition are dismissed as "conservatives".

Thus, the Climategate and related email dumps reveal climatologists: stonewalling FOIA requests and plotting to destroy emails before they can be requested; urging a boycott of a journal that dared to publish a skeptical article; plotting to get a journal editor fired; vilifying anyone who doesn't fully toe the line.

Bottom line: I think global warming may be compared to the population scare of the late sixties and early seventies, which both of us are old enough to remember well. Population growth was and is real; the "Population Bomb" that would destroy civilization was and is a hoax.

George W. Price: **"Biofuels are carbonaceous and will produce carbon dioxide when burned."** Isn't it merely what they took up in the first place?

"Forcing the Church to swallow its principles and knuckle under to Progressive policy." This may be where gay marriage is heading. One commentator recently pointed out that, down the road, religious organizations that refuse to countenance it will be penalized, first by losing their tax exemptions and, later, with more severe legal penalties.

Ah yes, the Definition of Religion Act from Lars Walker's *Wolf Time* (1999).

Lloyd Penney: **"JFK goes forward in time to become one of the greatest men of letters, humanitarian[s] and scholars of all time."** Only if Theodore Sorensen, the actual author of *Profiles in Courage*, goes along with him! JFK may have had the lowest measured IQ of any President: according to a source I just saw, 119. (Compared to George W. Bush's 125. Both men took the test on entry to the armed forces.)

Dainis Bisenieks: **"All the critics tell us that there are no hints of the Napoleonic Wars in Jane Austen."** Why do you think there are troops quartered in sleepy little English towns, in *Pride and Prejudice*? *Persuasion*, written at the end of the wars, is full of beached naval officers; Capt. Wentworth, the hero, is comfortably retiring on his prize money. War with France was the norm during Austen's lifetime.

Finally, Terry Pratchett's *Monstrous Regiment* follows Hollywood clichés in its presentation of women soldiers as more capable than the men.

I call this the Rule of Inversions. When David Duchovny starred on *The X-Files*, he complained in an interview that when his character got in a fight, he lost half the time – but his diminutive co-star, Gillian Anderson, whom he outweighed by about 85 lbs., always won her fights (with magical karate chops). I'm told, though, by people who watched the show, that eventually she lost a few fights as well.

And this was why we all knew that Katniss would win the Hunger Games. There was an article in *Salon* on anorectic models that mentioned this sort of thing as well, citing the "fierce fragility" of teenage girls who are victorious warrior maids.

– JTM

From: **Dainis Bisenieks** March 16, 2012
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So another horse has run faster than two sets of other horses. A big thrill to some; I watched out of idle curiosity. Already the names of all previous horses have slipped below the horizon; the only ones I can recall and put in their time frame belonged to some 19th century generals – Copenhagen, Rienzi, and Traveller. Like Holmes, I will not clutter my mind with certain categories of knowledge. I can name no yearly champions in sports, nor even name the leagues or conferences that various teams belong to. Now and then the death of some popular entertainer (untimely or otherwise) is reported; of most of them I've never even heard. It is difficult not to know that there exists a Madonna or a Lady Gaga, but I've never caught a glimpse of what they actually do and are famous for.

What about Black Bess?

I can fix in memory the names of authors when I want to. I have lately added Patrick Rothfuss to the list, through I have yet to read his books. When I first chanced to come face to face with Lois McMaster Bujold at a worldcon, I remembered – here was the superb cover letter I preserved and which remains a cherished possession. I am well able to keep my Stevens and Stephens straight, though (in mundania) I'd just as soon double check to see which of the two, Sheed, or Blunt, is a Wilfrid.

But, geez, 95% of the names I see in *Locus* mean nothing to me. I'm a back number; I've been bypassed.

Seeing a back number PBFS announcement, I see that I missed Michael Dirda as guest speaker. The next day, I picked up an old magazine, *Antietam Review*, containing an interview with him. Nice timing! I see his reviews in magazines often enough; I really should look for the collections of them at the library. Will they make me feel guilty for having ignored so many of the world's literary classics? Probably not.

A writer in the June *Atlantic* (I think it was) comments on the decline of serendipity, now that things desired are so easily found. I speak rather of gifts of fortune; this was one. The other term should be used, I think, for finds in a totally different category from those originally sought; and I'm basically after reading matter, though some purely pictorial books are nice to have – like *Impressionist Cats*, which I loved the instant I first saw it. I choose books almost entirely from those that pass before my eyes,

often enough at sales where they're going cheap. Only strict price caps at various levels keep things from getting totally out of hand. At a May Fair in the park, there was a benefit book sale, \$1 hc and so downward. I declined to buy any Year's Best SF volumes at the price . . . but when the closeout \$1 bag sale came around, they were all still there, and I got six Dozois Bests to fill out the 1990s, plus a couple other fat anthos. There would have been room for a bunch of Wollheim/Saha Bests, but I have steadfastly declined to take them even as freebies, simply on the principle that enough is enough.

More curious than eager, I got Stephenson's *Reamde* at a porch sale price, where I also upgraded some Pratchetts to hc. Sampling pages here and there, I found hugger-mugger everywhere. Anyway, it was worth it to be spared thinking about a library due date.

I did borrow Hilary Mantel's *Bring Up the Bodies*, not an excessively long book. A reviewer had complimented her on "novelistic intelligence." Hmm. What I noticed was a devil of a lot of introspection. It put me in mind of this remark; "It is doubtful whether the people of Southern England have even yet realized how much introspection there is going on all the time in the Five Towns." From a story that's been a family Christmas reading, and I'd be most pleased if at least one reader can identify it. How much introspection can we tolerate in the fiction that we read? I'd just as soon have a nice do-or-die wilderness trek, in the course of which a man and a woman can really get to know one another. Let it be under way by the end of the second chapter. Or let the story be about a man and a woman, neither of whom would want to be joined to anyone who was not an equal. (We get this with the wilderness trek, of course.) Gillian Bradshaw has written some nice historical novels; I was just re-reading *The Sand-Reckoner*.

I liked that book. Did you know what Marcellus did to the soldier who killed Archimedes?

– JTM

I'm doing my bit for the economy by spending a bunch of money on home improvement.

WAHF:

Lloyd Daub, with various items of interest.

Marc Schirmiest, who sent a lot of new art, and thanks, now if we can only find it again . . .



IN HOLLYWOOD

"I tell ya, they made a dumb-ass mistake chopping off the series with three.

"Now here's my idea. We take this Boromir guy. Stupid idea, by the way, killing him off so soon. Should have given him a dramatic ending in Episode Three. Bad pacing.

"He wakes up, discovers he's a vampire! The girls go for vampires these days, ya know that.

"Then he sets out to get back at the guys who abandoned him. He gets that fairy, well maybe not the girls all love him, but surely the weird short guys, plenty of room for blood and guts there.

"Only one who can put him down for good is this Arwen chick. We got to find her a good but dumb sidekick, someone who plays a lute and stumbles over her own feet, give them something to laugh about.

"Then, they fight it out in the ruins of that Isenwhatever, where the big sorcerer bought it. Yeah, plenty of mist and fog, a bloody hand-to-hand battle. Maybe the sidekick can pin him with an arrow, like the chick in *Hunger Games*, before she stakes him.

"Yeah, then after the big battle the sidekick gets possessed by the old wizard. Glowing eyes, sinister laugh, all that sfx stuff. That's what we'll do in the next sequel.

"Next one, the little guys aren't completely dead, they turn into zombies. That's the ticket. I tell you, this Tolkien guy didn't know the first thing about fantasy!"

THE CYBER JOKE

... the Cybernaut stalked after Steed, its claws raised, the peculiar pale paint of its head and the unfashionable jacket draped over its torso a bizarre contrast to its menace. He saw where he was, stopped, and took up his brolly.

The thing approached him. Moving deftly, Steed thrust the umbrella between the Cybernaut's legs and stepped back. It staggered, and with one deft push he toppled the thing into the opening.

"Your fashion sense is deficient," he said, then stepped back, surprised, as the Cybernaut began to hoist itself out of the pit.

Mrs. Peel saw it, too. She ran to the lever and pulled it over. The two sides of the crusher moved in, sighing as their hydraulics engaged. The lower half of the Cybernaut gave out a crumpling sound as it was crushed. The two sides rolled back smoothly and the other ends moved in, compacting the thing even more.

Steed moved out of the way as a plate swung over on an arm, then lowered as it compacted the Cybernaut. There was a humming below, and they went to the end of the crusher. A square block of metal emerged from the device, rolling away on a moving belt.

"Concentrated Cybernaut," Mrs. Peel said, lightly.

"You killed Captain Clown!"

They turned at the sound of the cry and saw who had uttered it. He was unnaturally pale, and had made-up his face with black rings about the eyes and red extending the scarred mouth. His hair was an unseemly green.

He was wearing a well-cut, but hardly stylish suit of purple with an ascot and an orange shirt. "Quite odd taste there, old boy," Steed said.

"**You KILLED Captain Clown!!**" the man shouted again, his scarred face twisted in comic anger.

— Not by Bob Kane or Sydney Newman

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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.

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